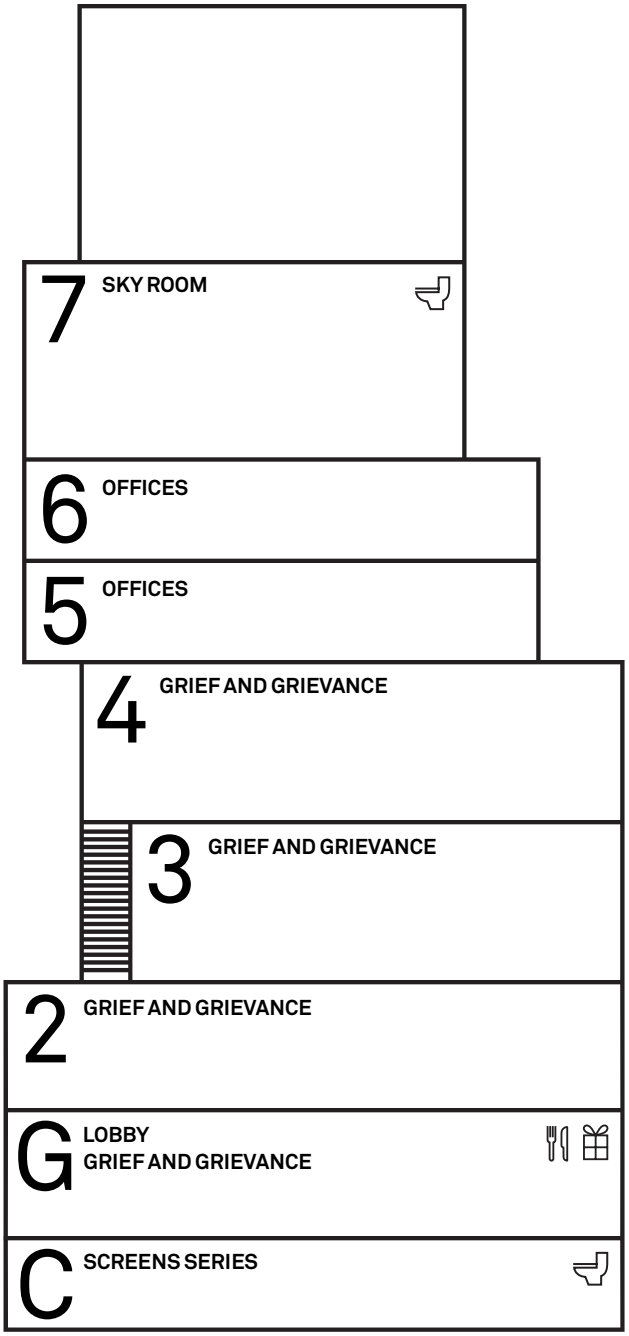
SPRING 2021



NEW
235 BOWERY
NEW YORK NY
10002 USA
MUSEUM

New Museum
235 Bowery
New York, NY 10002
newmuseum.org
@newmuseum

212.219.1222
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Wi-Fi
Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the Museum.

Hours

Mon	Closed
Tues–Sun	11 AM–6 PM
Thurs	11 AM–9 PM

G, 2, 3, 4

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE: ART AND MOURNING IN AMERICA

February 17–June 6, 2021

"Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America"—on view throughout the entire museum—is an exhibition originally conceived by legendary curator Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) for the New Museum, and presented with curatorial support from advisors Naomi Beckwith, Massimiliano Gioni, Glenn Ligon, and Mark Nash. "Grief and Grievance" is an intergenerational exhibition, bringing together thirty-seven artists working in a variety of mediums who have addressed the concept of mourning, commemoration, and loss as a direct response to the national emergency of racist violence experienced by Black communities across America. The exhibition further considers the intertwined phenomena of Black grief and a politically orchestrated white grievance, as each structures and defines contemporary American social and political life. The works included in "Grief and Grievance" encompass video, painting, sculpture, installation, photography, sound, and performance made in the last decade, along with several key historical works as well as a series of new commissions created in response to the concept of the exhibition.

Above: Kerry James Marshall, *Memento #5*, 2003. Acrylic and glitter on unstretched canvas banner, 107 5/8 x 157 1/2 in (274.3 x 396.2 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: acquired through the generosity of the William T. Kemper Foundation – Commerce Bank, Trustee

Cover: Diamon Stingily, *Entryways*, 2016. Door with locks, bat, 79 x 25 in (200.7 x 63.5 cm). Collection Dr. Gerardo Capo. Courtesy the artist and Queer Thoughts, New York

YOUR VISIT

Screens Series
The New Museum's Screens Series, located on the Lower Level, is a rotating platform for presenting new video works by emerging artists.

Getting Around
You may use both of our elevators to access all galleries. You may also use Stairwell A to ascend the stairs, and Stairwell B to descend the stairs.

Restrooms
Restrooms are located on the Lower Level and in the Sky Room. Single occupancy restrooms are only located in the Sky Room.

Tours
Tours are suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sky Room
The Sky Room is open to the public during our open hours. Please check our website for closures prior to your visit.

Accessibility
Our free accommodations include wheelchairs and portable stools, and large-print versions of exhibition wall labels. Assisted listening devices are available for programs in the Theater. Please inquire at the Visitor Desk in the Lobby for assistance.

Admission

General	$18	Admission is Pay-What-You-Wish on Thursdays from 7 to 9 PM
Seniors	$15	
Students	$12	
Members	Free	
18 & Under	Free	

Photography
Nonflash photography is allowed for personal, noncommercial use, except where noted. We do not allow tripods, selfie sticks, or videography. Please do not touch the works of art.

Shopping
Find books, limited edition art objects, and gifts in the New Museum Store, located in the Lobby and at newmuseumstore.org.

Join Today
Apply the cost of your ticket toward a New Museum Membership, which starts at $70. Members enjoy unlimited express admission, invitations to events, and much more. Join today at our Visitor Desk or visit newmuseum.org/join.

COVID-19 SAFETY

Our Safety Protocols
The New Museum is committed to providing an environment that ensures the health and safety of visitors and staff, and the following safety measures will be implemented upon reopening:

Wear a Mask
In accordance with current NY State policy and CDC recommendations, the Museum requires all visitors aged four and up to wear a mask or solid face covering over their nose and mouth for the duration of their visit (face shields without masks are not sufficient). The Museum's staff are also required to wear masks. In order to ensure the safety of our staff and visitors, we are unable to accommodate your entry if you do not wear a mask or solid face covering at this time. We look forward to welcoming you back when these safety protocols are no longer necessary.

Maintain Social Distancing
All visitors will be required to stay at least six feet apart from visitors from different households/family groups. All visits will be self-guided, with guided tours suspended at this time.

Coat and Bag Check Closed
Large bags will not be permitted as coat and bag check is closed. Visitors with large bags may be denied entry to the Museum.

Hand Sanitizing Encouraged
The Museum will encourage frequent hand washing and provide hand-sanitizing stations throughout the building.

The Museum will clean and sanitize high-touch, high-traffic areas frequently throughout the day; and the Museum has also upgraded its air filtration system.

Café Closed
The Café will be closed and public water fountains will not be available. Use of closed water bottles is permitted in areas outside of the Museum's galleries.

Contact Us
Please email info@newmuseum.org with questions.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Bodies in Space: Storytelling and the Moving Image in Extended Reality
Tuesday February 2, 11 AM

(Not) Dancing On My Own
Wednesday February 3, 10, and 17 at 7 PM EST

Curatorial Roundtable: "Grief and Grievance"
Tuesday February 16, 7 PM EST

Workshop for Educators: "Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America"
Wednesday February 24, 4:30 PM EST

Theaster Gates in Conversation with Massimiliano Gioni
Thursday February 25, 4 PM EST

Melvin Edwards in Conversation with Massimiliano Gioni
Tuesday March 2, 2 PM EST

LaToya Ruby Frazier in Conversation with Margot Norton
Friday March 12, 7 PM EST

Kerry James Marshall in Conversation with Massimiliano Gioni
Thursday March 18, 4 PM EST

Adam Pendleton in Conversation with Andrew An Westover
Thursday April 1, 7 PM EST

Hank Willis Thomas in Conversation with Margot Norton
Thursday April 8, 7 PM EST

Rashid Johnson in Conversation with Massimiliano Gioni
Thursday April 15, 7 PM EST

All public programs are hosted virtually on Zoom. Please visit **newmuseum.org/calendar** for more information and to RSVP for programs.

ABOUT

The New Museum is the only museum in Manhattan devoted exclusively to contemporary art, and is respected internationally for the adventurousness and global scope of its curatorial program. The New Museum was founded in 1977 by Marcia Tucker. Previously a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Tucker wanted to present the work of unsung and underrecognized artists within a scholarly framework usually reserved for established artists. Lisa Phillips, the Museum's current director, succeeded Tucker in 1999, and has continued to push the idea of what a museum can be. Today, the New Museum is home to groundbreaking initiatives such as NEW INC, the first museum-led incubator for art, design, and technology; IdeasCity, an international program that investigates the future of cities; and Rhizome, the leading arts organization dedicated to born-digital art and culture.

In December 2007, the New Museum reopened on the Bowery with a building designed by acclaimed architects Sejima + Nishizawa/SANAA. SANAA conceived of the Museum as a sculptural stack of rectilinear boxes shifted off-axis around a central steel core. The use of industrial materials is in keeping with the commercial character of the Bowery, and SANAA has used them in a way that is at once beautiful and rough. The exterior is clad in a seamless, anodized aluminum mesh that emphasizes the volumes of the boxes while dressing the whole building in a shimmering skin. The structure appears as a mutable, dynamic form, animated by the changing light of the day.

Land Acknowledgment
The New Museum sits on the unceded Indigenous homeland of the Lenape peoples. We acknowledge the genocide and continued displacement of Indigenous peoples during the colonial era and beyond. The island of Mannahatta in Lenapehoking has long been a gathering place for Indigenous people to trade and maintain kinship ties. Today, these communities continue to contribute to the life of this city and to celebrate their heritage, practice traditions, and care for the land and waterways as sacred.

Site Heritage
We acknowledge the significant history of African Americans on and around the Bowery. Manhattan's first free Black settlement was on the Bowery and the second earliest known African American burial ground in New York is adjacent to the New Museum's site.

The New Museum extends our respect and gratitude to the many African American and immigrant communities who have lived and moved through this place over hundreds of years.

GROUND FLOOR

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE

Terry Adkins
b. 1953, Washington, DC; d. 2014, Brooklyn, NY

Left to right:

***Ars Upperville*, 2012**
Pigmented inkjet print
Courtesy Estate of Terry Adkins and Lévy Gorvy, New York

***Ars Memoria Norfolk*, 2012**
Digital print
Collection of Alan Kluger and the Honorable Amy Dean

***Ars Antietam*, 2012**
Pigmented inkjet print
Courtesy Estate of Terry Adkins and Lévy Gorvy, New York

Opposite wall, left to right:

***Ars Upperville*, 2012**
Pigmented inkjet print
Courtesy Estate of Terry Adkins and Lévy Gorvy, New York

***Ars Memoria Norfolk*, 2012**
Digital print
Collection of Alan Kluger and the Honorable Amy Dean

***Ars Antietam*, 2012**
Pigmented inkjet print
Courtesy Estate of Terry Adkins and Lévy Gorvy, New York

Alone:

***Ars Memoria Alexandria*, 2012**
Digital print
Courtesy Laura M. Hall, Los Angeles

In his interdisciplinary work, artist and musician Terry Adkins transformed and recontextualized a range of found materials and archival images using a process that he termed "potential disclosure": the possibility of uncovering the life held in inanimate or salvaged objects. A trained musician, Adkins listened to free jazz as part of his working process and approached visual art like music composition. He created a number of "recitals," installations in which he recovered lesser-known events from Black history as well as underrepresented aspects of the lives of famous Black historical figures such as the intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois and the botanist and inventor George Washington Carver.

Death is the inspiration for a number of works, including the works on view here, which Adkins created in 2012, the same year George Zimmerman murdered Trayvon Martin, an event that became a driving force for the Movement for Black Lives. In these large-scale X-ray photographs, Adkins amasses memory jugs, traditional funerary objects originating in Southern Black communities between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Small, bonelike objects—rings, bracelets, spoons, keys, nails—associated with or valued by the deceased are assembled on the surfaces of memory jugs with clay or plaster; these embellished vessels are then used as grave markers or placed in domestic interiors as sentimental objects. Adkins collected more than 120 memory jugs throughout his life. In his X-rays, Adkins calls attention to the lines drawn between personal and public memory.

—Mlondolozi Zondi

Garrett Bradley
b. 1986, New York, NY

***Alone*, 2017**
Single-channel 35mm film transferred to video, sound, black and white; 13 min
Courtesy the artist

Garrett Bradley's storytelling centers the specific experiences of her subjects amid the greater sociopolitical matrices in which they live. Combining various forms of documentary, scripted and improvised narration, and experimental filmmaking techniques, Bradley's work confronts the construction of race and class, the incompleteness of the archive and the stories it represses, and the intimacy of relationships—familial and otherwise—especially in the U.S. South.

In the artist's 2017 film *Alone*, Bradley introduces the story of her friend Aloné, a single mother in New Orleans facing the decision to marry her beloved, Desmond, who is incarcerated in a private prison near their home. In the opening scene, Aloné explains that Desmond has asked her to marry him. The first words we hear from Desmond are, "I hate your hurt." Bradley is attuned to the hopeful romance between Aloné and Desmond and their longing for each other amid a violent separation. The audience is also made privy to the reactions of Aloné's mother and grandmother, who are at once furious and desperate for their child to reject the proposal. Contrasts permeate the film—formally, in its black-and-white rendering, and thematically, by interrogating the emotional status of the free compared to the incarcerated. As the court continually delays a verdict for Desmond and the warden rejects their requests to hold a small wedding ceremony, Aloné registers her physical isolation, lamenting the impossibility of sharing body heat with her beloved. This intensely personal story is engaged historically with what the artist calls the "chronic possibility of separation" for Black families, a condition that has pervaded African-American communities from slavery to Jim Crow to contemporary mass incarceration.

—Molly Superfine

Arthur Jafa
b. 1960, Tupelo, MS

***Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death*, 2016**
Video, sound, color; 7:25 min
Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

As a filmmaker in the 1990s, Arthur Jafa sought to create a Black cinema defined through form rather than content. He developed the concept of Black visual intonation to describe how film might approximate the timbre of Black musical performance through movement, structure, and composition. In his work as an artist, Jafa continues to look to music as he develops visual strategies that aspire to the intricacy of Black experience.

Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death (2016) comprises clips culled from YouTube, historical collections, and the artist's own oeuvre—a montage of affective images set to Kanye West's 2016 gospel anthem "Ultralight Beam." Jafa's archive of Blackness combines the iconic and the anonymous: President Obama singing "Amazing Grace" in Charleston, a couple wading through waist-high floodwater during Hurricane Katrina, Angela Davis casting a sideways glance, and Black cowboys at a rodeo. Devastating scenes of police brutality are frequent, but so is dancing: dips, swag surfing, the dougie, and the crip walk, the last performed by Serena Williams at the 2012 Olympics. Through these diverse manifestations of Black life, *Love Is The Message* presents Black experience beyond the limiting binary of adversity and survival. Jolted from one emotion to the next by fast-paced cuts, the viewer is forced to surrender to the work's rhythm and experience what Jafa calls "polyventiality"—the coexistence of "multiple tones, multiple rhythms, multiple perspectives, multiple meanings, multiplicity."

—Maya Harakawa

Tiona Nekkia McClodden
b. 1981, Blytheville, AR

***THE FULL SEVERITY OF COMPASSION*, 2019**
Manual cattle squeeze chute, paint
Courtesy the artist

Philadelphia-based artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden has developed a multidisciplinary practice that challenges fixed historical narratives of race, gender, and sexuality. Engaging with issues of memory, the archive, and documentation, she questions how traditions within the global Black community persist across time and space.

THE FULL SEVERITY OF COMPASSION (2019) is a fully-functioning cattle squeeze—a piece of machinery used to provide a false sense of comfort to a cow before it is slaughtered. By painting it black, McClodden aestheticizes an operational object, turning it into an abstract sculpture of lines and planes that cohere into a readable composition. The physical sensations of pleasure and pain and the threat of immanent death complicate a straightforward reading of the sculpture, charging it with a multiplicity of possible interpretations.

THE FULL SEVERITY OF COMPASSION alludes to the personal as well. The artist has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum, and she selected the cattle squeeze for its historical significance: the apparatus was the inspiration for the device that autism advocate and animal behaviorist Temple Grandin developed to alleviate hypersensitivity for people with autism. Furthermore, the work was the centerpiece of the exhibition "Hold on, let me take the safety off," presented at Company Gallery in 2019, which was inspired by the sexual practices of BDSM, a community that McClodden is openly a part of. The body implied in the work is not the neutral body heralded by modernist sculpture, but one that is premised on difference and marked by McClodden's identity as a queer woman of color.

—Maya Harakawa

Adam Pendleton
b. 1984, Richmond, VA

***As Heavy as Sculpture*, 2020–21**
Mixed media installation
Courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery

Adam Pendleton's work is driven by a self-professed desire to "repoliticize the avant-garde." His paintings, works on Mylar, installations, and videos are in keeping with a methodology Pendleton calls "Black Dada," a process that, in its reference to the European avant-garde, questions how Blackness can generate meanings unbeholden to fixed notions of reason or identity. Through a decidedly combinatorial approach, Pendleton develops interpretive frameworks that reassess the histories of art and social movements alike.

As Heavy as Sculpture (2020–21)—an installation made for the New Museum lobby on the occasion of "Grief and Grievance"—explores the limits of historical representation. The installation consists of what the artist calls "Wall Works"—floor-to-ceiling artworks applied directly to the walls—and framed works on Mylar, both of which incorporate drawings, sketches, writing, marks, and images. Some of the language is drawn from the protests against police brutality that swept the U.S. in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd: Pendleton has transcribed slogans sprayed on walls and windows, combining them with his own improvised language as well as photographs of art objects and artifacts (sculptures, masks, and figures). The work points to the poetic pressure that uprisings place on language itself, compressing it in some cases into the barest of forms, as, for example, simple sequences like "ACAB" (the acronym for "All Cops Are Bastards") and its numerical translation, "1312"—both commonly seen in popular protests against police violence—which the artists further fragmented into the elements "A, B, C," "1, 2, 3." These splinters of language address viewers as an embodied presence, forcing them to assess where and how histories of cultural politics might ramify in the present.

Cameron Rowland
b. 1988, Philadelphia, PA

***7.5'*, 2015**
Exit height strip
The height strip allows for identification. Typically it is used at the door of gas stations and convenience stores.
Collection Daniel Buchholz and Christopher Müller, Cologne

***Presumption of guilt*, 2020**
Door alert
A door alert is used to ensure observation of potential theft.
Courtesy the artist and Essex Street/Maxwell Graham, New York

FLOOR 2

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

This wall, left to right:

(The following artist's texts are excerpts from the book *The Notion of Family*, selected and edited by the exhibition curators.)

***1980s Welcome to Historic Braddock Signage and a Lightbulb*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Along the ancient path of the Monongahela River, Braddock, Pennsylvania, sits in the eastern region of Allegheny County, approximately nine miles outside of Pittsburgh.

A historic industrial suburb, Braddock is home to Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thomson Works, which has operated since 1875 and is the last functioning steel mill in the region.

***Self portrait (March 10am)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

A descendent of
Scottish
African
Braddonian
Blue-collar
Steel workers
I embrace my heritage.
Looking both inwardly and outwardly, I desire to move beyond boundaries. Similar to Annie, Lucy, and Xuela, heroines from a Jamaica Kincaid novel, I am in search of a new space, place, and time. There is a tight pressure and sharp piercing pain in my chest. The lack of deep sleep has not worn off. I feel a sense of imbalance.

***Home on Braddock Avenue*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2007**

Grandma Ruby, Mom, and I grew up in significantly different social and economic climates; each of us are markers along a larger historical timeline. Grandma Ruby, born in 1925, witnessed Braddock's prosperous days of department stores, theaters, and restaurants. Mom, born in 1959, witnessed the close of the steel mills, white flight, and disinvestment at the federal, state, and local levels. I was born in 1982. I witnessed as the War on Drugs decimated my family and community.

The main street was Braddock Avenue. Grandma Ruby always described it: "There use to be three theaters, the Capital, the Paramount, and the Times. There were restaurants, five-and-dime stores, children stores, and furniture stores. Aww, we use to have everything."

By the 1980s, when my generation walked the streets, most of the steel mills were closed and there were few businesses left: twelve bars, three jitney stations, Bell's Market, Stromboli's Poultry Market, the pawn shop, Braddock News, Al's Market, and one restaurant, which was the cafeteria in Braddock Hospital.

***Grandma Ruby holding her babies*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2002**

Grandma Ruby's husband died on Mom's first birthday. Left to raise six children during the '60s could not have been an easy task. She worked as a manager for Goodwill. Grandma Ruby internalized the idea that Black women aren't supposed to cry; they're to remain silent and endure suffering.

***1990 Family Portrait at Kmart (Mom, Brandy, Brandon and Me)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Grandma Ruby's interior design was a firewall that blocked external forces. She would not be subjugated to a lesser status.

Fourth generation in a lineage of women, Mom sent me to live with Grandma Ruby. Mom believed it was the better and safer environment for me. I was raised under Grandma Ruby's protection and care off Eighth Street, at 805 Washington Avenue.

The shadow from the steel mill always hovered above us.

***The Bottom*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Behind this 1980s Mercury Grand Marquis, where BOC Gases now stands, is the former site of the Talbot Towers, a 210-unit Allegheny County housing project where I was born and raised, between Ninth and Tenth Street on Washington Avenue.

Built in 1956, Talbot Towers was demolished in 1990, two years after resident Cheryl Sanders and her neighbors filed a housing-discrimination lawsuit that claimed Allegheny

County clustered Black residents in public housing into certain communities. In 1994 the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's admission that it was party to a decades-long system of discriminatory housing resulted in the Fair Housing Service Center. The Sanders Consent Decree gave Allegheny Country an opportunity to desegregate.

BOC Gases is the industrial gases business of the British Oxygen Company Group, the worldwide industrial gases, vacuum technologies, and distribution services company for the steel industry. It produces more than fifty thousand tons of gas worldwide. Located at Eleventh Street and Washington Avenue, BOC Gases encroaches on remaining residents' property. Day and night, BOC Gases emits an industrial hissing sound that reverberates throughout the borough.

The haze that forms the sky is from millions of tiny particles. They pass through my lungs and into my bloodstream. Like carbon monoxide, they are odorless and have the potential to kill.

***Mom Holding Mr. Art*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

Mom's boyfriend, Mr. Art, was my rival for Mom's affection.

Detached and numb, he reminded me of Stan, the father from Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep*. Working menial wage jobs is exhausting. It's never enough to build a foundation.

The collapse of the steel industry throughout the 1970s and '80s limited upward mobility. A majority of us would never own our homes and businesses or gain access to higher education or better jobs. For generations we inherited debts we did not owe.

Our husbands, brothers, sons, and boyfriends were relegated to menial wage jobs, underemployment, or layoffs. Undermined by the mainstream economy, social isolation kept them company.

***Mom and her cat Ziggy on American redcross*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

A grandmother

A mother

A nurse's aide

A caregiver

And lover of cats

Mom is a humanitarian who makes jitney trips to and from food banks, to ensure community members without transportation in isolated food deserts receive food to eat.

Seldom is there relief or aid for Black women living below the poverty line in our healthcare system. Tired of waiting in emergency rooms and being told by UPMC doctors that her migraines, chest pains, seizures, and shortness of breath are psychological. Mom stays inside. She has become a prisoner in her home.

Emotional fatigue has erected barriers around us.

***Grandma Ruby's Installation*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2002**

They are in every room of the house, sitting at the table, on her couches, standing on the mantle above the fireplace. Lately I wonder if her compulsive collecting has anything to do with her lacking close relationships with her real children. "These are my children, my babies," she would say as she groomed them and chain-smoked Pall Malls. I too became part of her collection.

She adorned me.

I was a porcelain doll she kept locked away in a glass case until she decided to take me out and exhibit me. "You are one of my dolls. I dressed you like a baby doll because I wanted to. Everybody saw you. You were so cute."

I wore a big, light-blue dress that had ruffles and lace around it, with a fluffy white slip underneath that made it look full. She put a part in the middle of my head and put two large twist pigtails with light blue ribbons and white hair ballies wrapped around them. She made me wear white stockings and Mary Jane shoes. When I outgrew Grandma Ruby's dresses she would always say, "I want to smash you back into a little doll."

***The Bedroom I Shared with Grandma Ruby (227 Holland Avenue)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

After Gramps passed away in the house at 227 Holland Avenue, Grandma Ruby moved to a tiny apartment with the Brandywine Agency senior citizens housing, at 40 Holland Avenue.

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

This wall, left to right:

(The following artist's texts are excerpts from the book *The Notion of Family*, selected and edited by the exhibition curators.)

***UPMC Global Corporation*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2011**

Braddock Hospital served our community from June 27, 1906 to January 31, 2010. Braddock Hospital merged with University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) in 1996. In October 2009, the community found out that UPMC chose to close our hospital due to claims it was underutilized and losing money.

***Momme Portrait Series (Floral Comforter)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2008**

Mom and I found another way to keep making portraits of one another without showing the domestic interior. We took our mattresses, stood them upright against the wall, and draped them with our comforters. For approximately one hour, we would quietly rotate, posing for each other and mimicking each other in front of the camera. The bedroom became a stage and a studio.

***UPMC Professional Building Doctors' Offices*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2011**

A historical hospital building

A community center

A cafeteria and restaurant

123 licensed beds

652 employees

277,000-square-foot facility

A behavioral health/drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation program

Braddock Council president Jesse Brown challenged the UPMC decision to abandon our town. The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted an investigation. The final settlement allocated shuttles to health-care services in a nearby neighborhood for outpatient service, and extended hours at the Braddock Family Health Center.

***Grandma Ruby on her bed*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

Grandma Ruby would shout our nicknames while she was in bed: "Midgie! Pee Wee! Cookie! Toy!" Sometimes she would call on the Lord. The doctor told us that if he operated on her, there would only be a fifteen percent chance the cancer would go away. Grandma Ruby waited a few days. I supported her decision. "Don't worry, Toy, I'll tell you when," she calmly told me.

Third quarter of the Super Bowl Playoffs, Steelers-Ravens game, Mom called again. Grandma Ruby said she could not breathe. There was too much fluid in her lungs. Her heart was overworked from pumping for oxygen. She could see Gramps. Her organs failed.

Grandma Ruby passed away in UPMC Braddock Hospital January 18, 2009, at 9:15 pm.

***Mom making an image of me*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2008**

Mom was playing her 45 records. She put on her favorite song, "Girls Nite Out" by Tyler Collins, because it was our night to go out drinking. "It's irritating when you put that camera in my face. Why do you like taking pictures of me?" she said. Because it's my way of accepting you as you are and gaining back all that time we lost. The shutter clicked, then we switched places. I asked her, "What do you see when you look at me?" She looked through the view finder and said, "I see a lot of me in you. It's like you're lost, like you don't have nobody. You got your mother, but right now you don't understand." She paused and made a picture of me.

All works:

Gelatin silver print
Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery,
New York and Brussels

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

LaToya Ruby Frazier uses photography to contend with the human costs of racial capitalism, focusing on situations in which the pursuit of financial gain for some is prioritized over long-term prosperity for all. Born in the former steel mill town of Braddock, Pennsylvania, Frazier challenges the predominant political narrative that characterizes the Rust Belt as the seat of the white resentment driving reactionary politics in the United States today. Her photographs—which are often linked to the social documentary tradition of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks—insert Frazier and her family into a still-unfolding history of deindustrialization in order to represent and validate Black loss.

Frazier's project *The Notion of Family* (2001–14) tells the story of three generations of Black women whose lives are financially, biologically, and emotionally bound to the boom-and-bust history of Braddock itself. In 1873 Andrew Carnegie built one of America's first steel mills in Braddock. More than a century later, Frazier and her working-class Black family are forced to grapple with the negative repercussions of the steel industry's demise. In photographs of crumbling buildings, we see the effects of divestment and economic decline on the city itself. A photograph of Frazier's grandmother, upright and staring into the distance, reminds viewers that the toxins that ultimately killed her—and that made Frazier and her mother chronically ill—are vestiges of the steel mill that once fueled Braddock's prosperity. Part exposé, part family album, the series documents the mechanisms driving racial inequality and the social bonds that sustain Black communities on the brink of collapse.

—Maya Harakawa

Dawoud Bey
b. 1953, Queens, NY

Left to right:

***Imani Richardson and Carolyn Mickel*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Fred Stewart II and Tyler Collins*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Janice Kemp and Triniti Williams*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

Right to left:

***Timothy Huffman and Ira Sims*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Wallace Simmons and Eric Allums*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Taylor Falls and Deborah Hackworth*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Michael-Anthony Allen and George Washington,* from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

The photographer Dawoud Bey rose to prominence in the 1970s as a street photographer, capturing the dynamism of Harlem and its residents. When Bey eventually turned to portraiture in the 1990s, he continued to use his camera to valorize everyday life in African-American communities. *The Birmingham Project* (2012)—a series which commemorates the 1963 murders of four Black girls by members of the Ku Klux Klan at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and of two young men in the resulting protests—furthers this goal in response to the legacy of the civil rights movement.

In the early 1960s, photographs of Black protesters attacked by fire hoses and police dogs cemented Birmingham as the epicenter of the Black freedom fight. Yet Bey's intimate portraits eschew the dramatic didacticism of those iconic images, offering an alternative model for documenting political struggle. The drama of Bey's images derives not from the brutality of injustice but from the direct gaze of the sitters, who confront and implicate the viewer. The series is composed of diptychs: one image of a child photographed at the same age as the bombing victims when they were murdered, and one of an adult at the age the victims would have been had they lived. This juxtaposition creates a narrative that is open to themes of violence, memorialization, and intergenerational trauma without being overdetermined by them.

These photographs are a potent reminder of the ever-present existential threats that still menace African-American communities, as Black churches and Black people remain targets of white supremacist terrorism, and also stand as testaments to resilience.

—MH

Charles Gaines
b. 1944, Charleston, SC

***Manifestos 3*, 2018**
Two graphite drawings on paper, monitor, pedestal, two speakers, hanging speaker shelves
Single-channel video, sound, color; 15:53 min
Love, Luck & Faith Foundation

Charles Gaines, an innovator of Conceptual art since the 1960s, creates photographs, drawings, and works on paper that mine the rules of systems such as language, aesthetics, and politics while acknowledging viewers' subjective responses.

Gaines turns revolutionary manifestos into musical notation. In *Manifestos 3*, his source texts are a 1967 speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Newcastle University, in which King decries racism, poverty, and war as the major problems in global society, and James Baldwin's 1957 essay "Princes and Powers," in which the writer addresses questions of Black unity, diversity, and cultural identity and their relevance to struggles against Western colonialism. Transforming these texts into a set of graphite drawings, a single-channel video in which the texts scroll slowly across blue screens, and a musical score, Gaines creates a direct relationship between art, politics, and rhetoric—rendering the concept of the manifesto visceral.

In this installation, visual art is song, and music is visible. For the musical scores, Gaines uses a system whereby letters are connected to notes, an approach associated with the Baroque compositional and notational tradition. Resting on multiple transcriptional systems, the installation treats political speech and manifestos as both historical documents and living tools of expression, touching epitaphs and strong calls to actions.

—MZ

Daniel LaRue Johnson
b. 1938, Los Angeles, CA; d. 2017, New York, NY

***Freedom Now, Number 1, August 13, 1963–January 14*, 1964**
Pitch on canvas with "Freedom Now" button, broken doll, hacksaw, mousetrap, flexible tube and wood
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Given Anonymously, 1965

As a student at the Chouinard Art Institute in the early 1960s, Daniel LaRue Johnson began making textured dioramic assemblages that addressed the intensification of mob and state-sanctioned anti-Black violence that gave rise to the civil rights movement. A close attention to both commemoration and craftsmanship characterizes Johnson's approach. In 1963 he created *Yesterday*, a meditation on the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, in which Ku Klux Klan members bombed a Black church, murdering four Black children.

Johnson began to work on *Freedom Now, Number 1* in August 1963, the month in which the March on Washington was held. This mixed-media assemblage, from the *Black Constructions* series, was created while the artist traveled through the American South. During his travels, Johnson collected materials, including a broken doll, a hacksaw, a mousetrap, a flexible tube, wood, and a "Freedom Now" button—an artifact of the Congress of Racial Equality, an activist group that organized sit-ins and freedom rides in protest of segregation. Johnson obscures the objects' appearance with pitch, a resin used for waterproofing boats, but also for tarring people in acts of public torture. In doing so, he squashes, tears, and conceals these materials so that they are not immediately visible. Johnson invites viewers of *Freedom Now* to note how instruments that induce anti-Black injury are not always immediately recognizable as a means of violence. Directing attention to palpable but unacknowledged or suppressed procedures of unmaking Black life, the painting addresses how histories of Black resistance are crushed and painted over.

—Mlondolozi Zondi

Jennie C. Jones
b. 1968, Cincinnati, OH

***Score for Sustained Blackness Set 3*, 2016**
Acrylic paint, collage on paper; 10 parts
Courtesy the artist, PATRON Gallery, Chicago, and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Jennie C. Jones identifies as both a sonic and visual artist. Her work interweaves the visual vocabulary of minimalism with the experimentalism of jazz, breaking down superficial distinctions between white and Black avant-gardes to revise canonical narratives of American modernism. Taking a collage-like approach to history, she gathers and juxtaposes multiple traditions to expand the horizon of artistic possibilities in the present.

In a suite of works on paper collectively titled *Scores for Sustained Blackness*, Jones reworks the visual language of sheet music into sparse black-and-white compositions. The thin parallel lines that populate the works evoke music staffs; unmoored from their strict horizontality, however, they become the content itself rather than simply a container for it. These blank staffs recall John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), a piece of music that similarly lacks notes. While Cage's silent composition is a temporal singularity—a musical event with a clear beginning and end—*Scores for Sustained Blackness*, in contrast, emphasizes an act of extension, support, and maintenance. The work poses a critical question: what would it mean to sustain Blackness, to care for it, and allow it to continue indefinitely? A score is a visual representation of music that abstracts time and sound. Jones has described her scores as a "time signature" for Blackness, a way of thinking about race through tempo and rhythm. Employing the language of abstraction, Jones uses time to engage with Blackness without having to define it.

—MH

Kahlil Joseph
b. 1981, Seattle, WA

***Alice™ (you don't have to think about it)*, 2016**
Single-channel HD video, color, sound; 18 min
Courtesy the artist

Collaboration and improvisation are important methods for artist Kahlil Joseph, who has worked on videos with musicians such as Blvck Spvde, Flying Lotus, Sampha, Kendrick Lamar, and Beyoncé. For *Black Mary* (2017), a collaboration with singer Alice Smith, Joseph invited musicians for a jam session in Harlem; he challenged himself to capture Smith's artistry, while preserving her intention to renounce fame and celebrity. To picture the community of Harlem in *Fly Paper* (2017), the artist studied photographer Roy DeCarava's portraits of jazz musicians such as Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, and John Coltrane. Joseph's practice asserts Harlem's ongoing impact as a Black creative epicenter.

In *Alice™ (you don't have to think about it)* (2016), Joseph again captures Smith during a recording session, picturing the process using intimate close-angle lenses, blurred shots, and suspended movement. Smith's undulating voice imparts an acute sense of grief that both artists were experiencing during the session: the filming took place shortly after Smith's grandmother passed away and Joseph's brother, Noah Davis, died following a prolonged illness.

Joseph documents the session with an attention to mundane gesture that avoids deliberate voyeurism and amplifies tension and contradiction. This tension arises in part from the difficulty of filming Smith without making her into an icon when the camera is an instrument that traditionally ushers subjects into increased public attention. Another tension lies in the act of capturing improvisation on record and film: *Alice™* invites the viewer to ask if improvisation and recording are antithetical or if improvisation is already, in some sense, a recording itself.

—MZ

Deana Lawson
b. 1979, Rochester, NY

Left to right:

***Congregation*, 2012**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

***Funereal Wallpaper*, 2013**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

***Jouvert*, 2013**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Deana Lawson is known for developing close relationships with her subjects and calls the resulting images "visual testimonies" of her expanded community. Best known for her posed and highly stylized interior scenes, Lawson positions the body as a site of personal and communal histories. Themes of family, spirituality and religion, romance, and domesticity are all explored through the combined languages of vernacular family photography, portraiture, and documentary.

Congregation (2012) positions the viewer above the heads and faces of a group gathered under the auspices of religion; we are removed from the congregation itself but perceive its sense of unity and communal belonging. By contrast, *Jouvert* (2013) places viewers on the same level as the photograph's subjects; we are thrown into the middle of the festivities. The celebration of J'ouvert has its origins in Carnival masquerade balls thrown by French colonialists in the Caribbean in the late eighteenth century. Enslaved people, who were banned from the white celebrations, held their own smaller versions that incorporated their own rituals. J'ouvert festivities signal the start of Carnival, a celebration traditionally associated with the subversion of hierarchies and power relationships. In contrast to both images of outdoor gatherings, *Funereal Wallpaper* (2013) is devoid of bodies. A pervasive sense of emptiness haunts the image; it is we, the viewers, who populate the scene, immersed in a space of grief and thus compelled to take part in mourning.

—MS

Julia Phillips
b. 1985, Hamburg, Germany

***Drainer*, 2018**
Ceramic, steel cable, and concrete
Marciano Art Foundation

Julia Phillips is a sculptor who works primarily in ceramics and metal. The artist often invents tools and names them in the corresponding titles, which explain the functions of the fictitious devices and designate an imagined actor/acted-upon relationship. Though these apparatuses are never meant to be used, they produce psychological and physical terror in their straightforward medical presentations, which allude to systems of clinical scrutiny against living bodies. The metal tools are often accompanied by fragmentary representations of the human form made from fragile materials such as ceramic, impressions cast from the artist's own body.

In *Drainer* (2018), a ceramic cast of the pelvic area bent at the waist hangs from steel cables above a gray concrete shower drain. The side of the ceramic pelvis that faces downward has a matte-black surface, while the bodily reds and blues of the glazed side evoke entrails and veins. The cast's color and form indicate a black woman's body, though the artist has said she resists biological identifications in her titles, which never include gendered language. The physical torquing of the partial cast suggests the possibility that pain or injury has compelled her bent-over position. The floor-bound concrete drain awaits that which flows from the fleshy fold of a stomach over the tops of thighs, a movement whose compression and forced pressure on the body result in the titular action. *Drainer*, like Phillips's other sculptures, leads viewers to contend with the internal and external forces that condition living bodies today.

—MS

Sable Elyse Smith
b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA

Left to right:

***8345 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8401 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8400 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8336 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8345 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8440 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

Sable Elyse Smith works in video, sculpture, photography, installation, and text. Her work explores the myriad ways carceral and anti-Black violence is wrought upon bodies, resulting in physical and psychic wounds that are both personal and communal. This topic is personal to the artist—she has made works that expose the choreographies of visiting her father in each of the six prisons in which he has been incarcerated over the past twenty years. Smith resists mainstream narratives of incarceration and instead errs toward the personal stories of her subjects, which can be recognized by those with similar experiences.

In the artist's series of works taken inside prisons, Smith reworks the tradition of family portraiture. Family members visiting their loved ones in prison are able to commemorate their time together by having Polaroids taken of the family by other inmates or sometimes prison guards. The people posing for the image stand against murals painted by the inmates themselves, who are usually not compensated for their labor. Recalling the tradition of studio portraiture, the murals—often depicting dreamed tropical landscapes—provide an escapist backdrop, removed from the bleak space of the prison visitation rooms. The artist presents these images against black suede backgrounds and often obscures the facial features of subjects, an act of protection to preserve the privacy of the family. The photographs are evidence of intimate moments, yet they are captured within the surveillance state of the prison—and by an employee of the prison itself. The Polaroids cost a few dollars and can only be purchased by inmates on behalf of their visitors. Of course, the prisoners must weigh the cost of the Polaroid against their earnings, which typically range between twelve and forty cents per hour. This exploitative and insular economy becomes the locus for this body of work.

—Molly Superfine

Tyshawn Sorey
b. 1980, Newark, NJ

***Pillars*, 2018**
Audio recording; 3 hours 51 min
Performers: Tyshawn Sorey, Stephen Haynes, Ben Gerstein, Todd Neufeld, Joe Morris, Carl Testa, Mark Helias, and Zach Rowden
Courtesy the artist

Tyshawn Sorey is a multi-instrumentalist musician whose complex musical scores roam across genres and musical idioms. Sorey, who first gained notice as a percussionist, has released a number of critically acclaimed albums, including *Alloy* (2014) and *Verisimilitude* (2017)—both lauded as complex works of melancholy. While *Alloy* is suspenseful and contemplative, the sounds of *Verisimilitude* evoke theorist Fred Moten's connection between moaning and mourning. As a musician, Sorey moves seamlessly from percussion to piano. He is interested not only in playing multiple instruments, but in exhausting a number of different methods for playing a single instrument. These include using his mouth to blow on the surface of an instrument not traditionally played that way and sliding the palm of his hand down the strings of a guitar, an approach that requires a revision of conventional technique.

Pillars is a gathering of eight musicians playing electric and acoustic guitars, percussion, and brass instruments. As Sorey has explained of his hybridized form of improvisation and composition, "The idea of what is composed and what is improvised is pointless." During certain passages, a drum rolls for minutes on end, while at others, quiet is reasserted until a horn lets out a sound like a distant cry, a hushed grievance. Taking inspiration from a range of ritualistic and experimental precedents, including Tibetan ceremonial music and free jazz, the work disorients, runs across and away from the lines that distinguish tonality and atonality, jazz and new classical music, composition and freestyle.

—MZ

Henry Taylor
b. 1958, Ventura, CA

***Untitled*, 2020**
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy the artist, Blum & Poe and Hauser & Wirth

Henry Taylor has consistently expanded the language of portraiture and history painting, blending personal experiences and collective memories to document the lives of African Americans and reimagine America's collective past and future. His subjects range from friends and family to famous musicians, athletes, and political leaders. Taylor has also liberally drawn on the found material of everyday life by painting on discarded objects and relying on chance encounters with strangers for new subjects. He has often incorporated images of historical figures to celebrate and amplify Black achievement, while remaining attentive to the equally powerful experiences of hope, desire, celebration, and loss that are felt by individuals from all walks of life.

Taylor has created several works that examine the inseparability of grief and mourning from the reality of the life of Black Americans today. His portraits memorializing Sean Bell and Philando Castile, victims of police shootings ten years apart, take different approaches to addressing the particularly American forms of horror and injustice that these events represent. These works are both journalistic documents of the seemingly unending succession of similar incidents across the country, and highly personal, emotional responses to the way in which these events remain tragically familiar. In his new work created for this exhibition, Taylor combines pop culture and politics in another highly personalized composition. A young Black man stares at a rotating turntable while an ominous figure resembling a judicial figure looms in the background. The text in the work, "Every Brotha Has a Record," inscribed at the top of the painting suggests both the influential history of Black music in America and the American judicial and carceral system that is disproportionately punitive towards Black men. The "soul" record playing on the turntable again reflects music history, as well as suggesting that the central figure is contemplating existential questions of identity and grief.

Nari Ward
b. 1963, St. Andrew, Jamaica

***Peace Keeper*, 1995; re-created 2020**
Hearse, grease, mufflers, and feathers
Courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York/Hong Kong/Seoul, and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Havana

Through his collection and manipulation of found objects—many of which he mines from his adopted neighborhood in Harlem—Nari Ward creates sculptures and installations that explore issues of race, poverty, religion, and consumer culture.

Ward first exhibited *Peace Keeper* (1995; recreated 2020) at the 1995 Whitney Biennial, an exhibition seen by many as a retreat from the identity politics that infamously surrounded the Biennial's previous iteration. That Ward's work fell outside of the purview of the 1993 exhibition is a testament both to the limited conceptualization of "identity politics" that continues to dominate art and politics today and to the artist's oblique and poetic approach to questions of Blackness. Destroyed after its initial presentation but re-created for this exhibition, *Peace Keeper* is a monumental sculpture composed of a hearse encased in tar and feathers. The hearse sets the work in a funerary context, thus connoting commemoration and respect. But tarring and feathering is an act of humiliation, vengeance, and vigilantism. Ward emphasizes the sense of an interrupted procession by placing a cage around the car, immobilizing it and framing it as an object of aesthetic contemplation. Rusted metal pipes litter the floor like industrial bones, and mufflers hang ominously overhead. The title *Peace Keeper*—along with the work's evocation of death, terror, and imprisonment—clarifies the stakes of Ward's longstanding engagement with grief and the many forms it can take in a world that refuses to embrace the full humanity of Black life.

—Maya Harakawa

Carrie Mae Weems
b. 1953, Portland, OR

***All the Boys (Blocked 1)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Floor 2

***All the Boys (Blocked 2)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***All the Boys (Blocked 3)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Left to right:

***Mourning*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***Birmingham Rising*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Iris print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Endless Weeping of Women*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Right to left:

***Looking Forward/Looking Back*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Assassination of Medgar, Malcolm and Martin*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Capture of Angela*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

For the last four decades, Carrie Mae Weems has created a body of work that distills the complexities of representation, power, and invisibility. Predominantly working in photography, Weems's highly choreographed scenes and appropriated pictures, which are often accompanied by text or video, mine the functions of the photographic apparatus as well as its performative effects.

For her *Constructing History* series (2008), Weems worked with art students from Savannah College of Art and Design and Atlanta residents to restage well-known moments from the civil rights movement, including the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the imprisonment of Angela Davis. The resulting images feature incongruous details and makeshift scenic design as a means of deploying the Brechtian device of alienation, in which the apparatus used to make the image is consciously revealed. This awareness of the constructed nature of images also extends to the staging of bodies in Weems's scenes: in pictures such as *The Assassination of Medgar, Malcolm and Martin* and *Birmingham Rising*, the figures facing away from the camera defy the first rule of the theater: to never turn one's back to the audience.

Weems continues to tackle the theme of mourning in the photographic series *All the Boys* (2016), which responds to recent killings of young African-American men, and the performance *Past Tense* (2016), in which the artist speaks blatantly about the refusal to give proper burial to victims of police brutality such as Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and Michael Brown. As Weems explains it: "Black people are turned away from, not turned toward. We bear the mark of Cain."

—MZ

FLOOR 3

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE

Jean-Michel Basquiat
b. 1960, Brooklyn, NY; d. 1988, New York, NY

***Procession*, 1986**
Acrylic on wood
Private Collection

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a self-taught artist who rose to rapid fame in the 1970s and '80s. Known both for his graffiti work (signed as his alter ego, SAMO) as well as his immersion in hip-hop and new wave music scenes, Basquiat created vivid line drawings and paintings incorporating words, numbers, diagrams, logos, and accidental marks. In Basquiat's work, both abstraction and figuration function as overt and coded social commentary, making use of bold formal gestures to address concepts of colonialism, class struggle, state authority, and police violence.

Basquiat created several works reliant on the invocation of the grief caused by the historically disproportionate use of police force against Black communities, including the painting *Untitled* (1983), also widely known as *The Death of Michael Stewart* or *Defacement*. Stewart, a young Black artist, was attacked and murdered by police that year for allegedly tagging a wall of a downtown New York subway station. Distraught over Stewart's death, Basquiat reflected: "It could have been me. It could have been me."

Basquiat's reflection on mourning also extends to histories of the Black Atlantic. *Procession* (1986) depicts four Black silhouetted figures facing a figure painted in red, white, and blue and carrying a skull—a symbol repeated in many of his other works. Part of a body of work relating to the American South and the artist's Haitian-Puerto Rican heritage, *Procession* calls to mind both the deep psychological pain of slavery in the region and the spiritual terrain of traditional jazz funerals, during which processions of mourners follow the remains of the deceased.

—Mlondolozi Zondi

Kevin Beasley
b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA

***Strange Fruit (Pair 1)*, 2015**
Nike Air Jordan 1 shoes, polyurethane resin, polyurethane foam, tube socks, shoelaces, rope, speakers, hypercardioid and contact microphones, amplifiers, patch cables, and effects processors, with unannounced performance
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Commissioned with funds contributed by the Young Collectors Council with additional funds contributed by Josh Elkes, Younghee Kim-Wait, and Julia and Jamal Nusseibeh, 2014

In a body of work that spans sculpture and musical performance, Kevin Beasley explores the physical materiality and cultural connotations of both objects and sound. His sculptures typically incorporate everyday items like clothing and studio debris, bound together using foam, resin, or other materials. *Strange Fruit (Pair 1)* also contains embedded audio equipment that warps and amplifies the ambient tones of its surroundings. Within the open sonic environment of a museum, the work offers a potential experience of intimacy, absorbing and reflecting the sound of the crowd and condensing it into a human scaled object. *Strange Fruit (Pair 1)* embodies this spirit of dialogue in its two-part structure—at its core are two Nike Air Jordan shoes, each paired with a microphone. Suspending these objects in space, Beasley compounds their technological interchange with additional layers of meaning, bringing to mind shoes hanging from overhead wires or poles (itself an open-ended form of communication). At the same time the work's title refers to the history of lynchings in the American South memorialized by Bronx schoolteacher Abel Meerepol in the 1937 protest song "Strange Fruit." Through these associations, the hanging forms of Beasley's sculpture resonate not only with his body, which molded the work by hand, or with the bodies moving through the museum, but also with those inscribed in the deplorable history of race and class in the United States.

In past presentations, *Strange Fruit (Pair 1)* has been intermittently activated by invited musicians and other performers, but safeguards against COVID-19 have restricted this possibility. Rather than a simple absence, this adjustment can be understood as an enriching act of care that mirrors current social-distancing measures. In the midst of a pandemic that has disproportionately impacted communities of color, this emphasis on protecting others deepens the work's engagement with the body and race.

Melvin Edwards
b. 1937, Houston, TX

Opposite wall, right to left:

***Texcali*, 1965**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***Kikongo si*, 1992**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***Haitian September*, 1994**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***Before the Bar*, 1996**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***Year by Year*, 1994**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***No Rem*, 2012**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***Equal Rites*, 1987**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***A Symptom of*, 1999**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

Left to right:

***Memory of Winter*, 1996**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

***WTC NYC*, 2001**
Welded steel
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

Throughout his prolific career, Melvin Edwards has used sculpture to test the boundary between abstraction and figuration. Born in Houston, Edwards moved to Los Angeles in 1955, where he studied art at the University of Southern California. There he began to develop his *Lynch Fragments*, a series of small-scale reliefs that he made until 1967, resurrected in the 1970s, and continued to develop throughout the 2000s. The first African-American sculptor to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum, Edwards probes the convergences and antagonisms between American modernism and racial politics.

Texcali (1965) is part of the first series of *Lynch Fragments*, which Edwards began in 1963, a pivotal year in U.S. history. By directly referencing lynching, he inserted the works into a conversation about the country's enduring history of racist brutality, just as the civil rights movement was forcing similar issues to the forefront of public discourse. Rather than contribute to a proliferation of imagery of violence against Black people, these abstract steel sculptures evoke that violence through process, iconography, and display. Welding is highly physical, and Edwards implicates his own laboring body through the making of the work. The chains, hooks, gears, and other mechanical objects that comprise the *Lynch Fragments* imply a person at once in and freed from bondage. Edwards's mandate that the works be installed at eye level further emphasizes their human scale. These fragments stand in for the disregarded remains of Black bodies destroyed by lynching, yet their abstract forms allow mourning and elation to coexist in one artistic experience.

—MH

Theaster Gates
b. 1973, Chicago, IL

***Gone are the Days of Shelter and Martyr*, 2014**
Video, sound, color; 6:31 min
Courtesy the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Raised on the West Side of Chicago and trained as an urban planner and ceramicist, Theaster Gates is fiercely committed to reimagining the social and architectural fabric of his city. Gates's wide-ranging body of work consists of architectural rehabilitation, institution building, assemblage, archiving, and performance. These disparate modalities of making are united by a preoccupation with Black space—how it is produced through economic dispossession, maintained through racist stereotypes, and reimagined by the creative potential of everyday people.

Gates's childhood experiences in the Black church were fundamental to his thinking about racial imagination in spatial terms. In the gospel choir, Gates found a community that emphasized possibility and restoration, but the creativity embodied in the choir's call and response contrasted profoundly with the abandoned buildings that filled his neighborhood. These two experiences of racialized space—of presence and absence, regeneration and decline—haunt the artist's video *Gone Are the Days of Shelter and Martyr* (2014). Filmed at the now-demolished Roman Catholic Church of St. Laurence on the South Side, the video features Gates's frequent collaborators, the Black Monks of Mississippi, an ensemble inspired by the musical traditions of the Black South and the asceticism of Eastern monasticism. The Monks' performance reanimates the abandoned church, harnessing its dormant creative potential and resurrecting its social function. The repetitive slamming of two wooden doors, long separated from their hinges, acts as a metronome keeping musical time or a heartbeat attesting to the persistence of spiritual life. The piece, with its melding of music and architecture, challenges the racist tendency to equate the physical state of the South Side with racial inferiority by instead emphasizing resilience, vitality, and possibility.

—MH

Ellen Gallagher
b. 1965, Providence, RI

***Aquajujidsu*, 2017**
Oil, acrylic, ink and paper on canvas
Kirby Kulkin Family Collection

Left to right:

***Dew Breaker*, 2015**
Pigment, ink, oil, graphite and paper on canvas
Collection Marc Leder

***Dew Breaker*, 2015**
Pigment, ink, oil, graphite and paper on canvas
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

***Dew Breaker*, 2015**
Pigment, ink, oil, graphite and paper on canvas
Private collection

The paintings, works on paper, and projections that comprise Ellen Gallagher's *Dew Breaker* series (2015) are emblematic of the artist's intertwined approach to material and race. Since the 1990s, she has engaged with questions of transformation, using processes of accumulation and excavation to build layered works that, by challenging principles of order, rethink the aesthetic and historical contours of Blackness.

The *Dew Breaker* series (2015) is inspired by the Afro-futurist myth of Drexciya. Originally conceived by the eponymous Detroit electronic music duo in the 1990s, Drexciya is an underwater world populated by the unborn children of pregnant slaves thrown overboard during the Middle Passage. Cutting into the surfaces of her paintings, Gallagher reveals collaged elements, abstract textures, and topographic features that come to constitute her phantasmagoric subjects, which break apart the structure imposed by the paintings' gridded blue backgrounds. Hovering between figuration and abstraction, these works underscore the violent liminality of the Middle Passage, the stage of the slave trade in which captured Africans began their transformation from subjects into objects. The central figure in *Aquajujidsu* (2017), for instance, is neither fully anthropomorphic nor aquatic. Its shattered form, unencumbered by normative anatomies of race and gender, coheres and disassembles out of corporeal legibility. In the work, Gallagher reimagines the trauma of the journey from Africa to the New World, offering an alternative vision of a Black feminist future rooted in mutability and change.

—MH

Simone Leigh
b. 1967, Chicago, IL

***Sentinel IV*, 2020**
Bronze
Collection of Sascha Steven Bauer, New York

Simone Leigh combines premodern and contemporary materials and techniques to engage with histories of Black emancipation, feminism, and Pan-African cultural legacies. Her work spans sculpture, ceramics, social practice, installation, and video. The artist is also devoted to creating communal spaces and has staged several participatory environments in which histories and traditions of care for Black women are presented as alternatives to discriminatory practices in the United States.

In her sculpture *Sentinel IV* (2020), Leigh looks to the ceremonial ladles in Dan communities of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These oversized wooden spoons were carved to reflect various stylistic elements of masks and figurines and presented to women as tokens of gratitude. Leigh's engagement with the ceremonial spoon also recalls Alberto Giacometti's *Spoon Woman (Femme cuillère)* (1926–27), wherein he likens the concave bowl of the Dan spoon to the womb of a woman. Combining figuration and abstraction, Leigh's figure indirectly points to a century-long debate around issues of appropriation of African culture by the European historical avant-gardes, raising questions around notions of exoticism and originality, ownership and restitution. As in her other sculptures, the facial features are simplified, and the eyes appear to be closed or reduced. And yet Leigh's sculptures are not blind: instead, their gazes look inward. This gesture recalls Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity, which posits that a subject and their identity are irreducible and can be known fully only to themselves. The result is a powerful statement of individual celebration and memorialization of Black women's labor.

—Molly Superfine

Kerry James Marshall
b. 1955, Birmingham, AL

***Untitled (policeman)*, 2015**
Acrylic on PVC panel with plexiglass frame
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Mimi Haas in honor of Marie-Josée Kravis

***Memento #5*, 2003**
Acrylic and glitter on unstretched canvas banner
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
Purchase: acquired through the generosity of the William T. Kemper Foundation – Commerce Bank, Trustee

***Souvenir II*, 1997**
Acrylic, collage, and glitter on unstretched canvas banner
Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, purchased as the gift of the Addison Advisory Council in honor of John ("Jock") M. Reynolds's directorship of the Addison Gallery of American Art, 1989–1998

***Souvenir IV*, 1998**
Acrylic, collage, and glitter on unstretched canvas banner
Whitney Museum of American Art. Purchase, with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee

Kerry James Marshall's work explores the limitations and possibilities of Eurocentric painting traditions. Trained at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, where he studied with the legendary African-American artist Charles White, Marshall highlights the exclusionary standards of beauty and humanity perpetuated by Western painting and elevates quotidian Black experience to the idealized realm of the grand manner.

By painting his subjects entirely in shades of black, Marshall literalizes the way in which race can homogenize and overdetermine identity. The realism of his works lies in the materiality of Blackness, expressed as pure, unmodulated color. His *Souvenir* and *Memento* series, which pay homage to the civil rights movement, incorporate glitter, commemorative posters, and domestic kitsch, adding visual and emotional texture to one of the most mythologized eras in the history of the United States. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert and John F. Kennedy watch over the central figures in both *Souvenir II* (1997) and *Memento #5* (2003). In the former, this figure is adorned with glittering wings; in the latter, she grips onto cascading strips that function simultaneously as curtains, cell bars, and markers of the decade's passing years. In *Untitled (policeman)* (2015), a relatively sparse painting of a solitary Black police officer, the subject's three-quarter pose infuses him with gravitas and ambivalence. Through a command of painting techniques, genres, and language, Marshall emphasizes the humanity of his anonymous figures, transforming their Blackness from a tool of objectification into a marker of compassion and dignity.

—Maya Harakawa

Okwui Okpokwasili
b. 1972, New York, NY

***Poor People's TV Room (Solo)*, 2017**
Performance and installation with wood, plastic, raffia, motor, video projection, and light
Courtesy the artist

Performer, choreographer, and writer Okwui Okpokwasili is known for her interdisciplinary approach to questions of identity, globalized culture, and gender, which she expresses in incantatory and virtuosic performance pieces. The title of *Poor People's TV Room (Solo)* (2017)—a collaboration with designer and director Peter Born—is borrowed from Nigerian writer Okey Ndibe's novel *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014) and refers to an air-conditioned room in the home of a wealthy, corrupt politician, which he reserves for the poor to watch old basketball reruns on TV—his perceived form of philanthropy. In this work, Okpokwasili brings together music, dance, video, and text. During the performances that periodically activate the piece, the elevated enclosure leaves Okpokwasili only partially visible while lighting and video footage create dramatic shadows, raising questions about seeing and not being seen.

The piece references the 1929 Women's War in Nigeria and the more recent kidnappings of young Nigerian girls by Boko Haram. Okpokwasili's work attempts to rectify the elision of women who initiated the #BringBackOurGirls movement, after the viral hashtag became a tool of Western savior mentality. Similarly, noting that the Women's War—in which Nigerian women protested British colonial officials—had been suppressed in history books, Okpokwasili decided to recover the political struggles of Nigerian women and their role in anti-colonial resistance. These women would gather at a man's compound and perform disrespectful acts known as "sitting on a man"; song and physical action were part and parcel of their protest. This practice transgressed expectations that Nigerian women would be docile in the face of oppression. In *Poor People's TV Room (Solo)* Okpokwasili considers "how bodies can resonate in a space and leave a deep imprint," suggesting that dance and choreography can serve as their own kind of protest.

—MZ

Howardena Pindell
b. 1943, Philadelphia, PA

***Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts*), 1988**
Acrylic and mixed mediums on canvas
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Primarily known as an artist, Howardena Pindell is also a curator, educator, activist, and writer. Her artworks are inspired by Pan-African textiles and decorative arts, historical events, sociopolitical movements, and mathematics. In some of her most well-known works, Pindell cuts and sews strips of canvas together to create templates that are then collaged with thousands of amassed hole-punched chads, glitter, and other crafting remnants, a labor-intensive process that results in highly detailed abstract works.

Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) (1988) tells a history of the transatlantic slave trade. Pindell has described this work as an effort to excavate the "guts of [her] own past," as she recasts the story of one of her ancestors being blinded after a lashing by their enslaver. On the bottom left is a ghostly white rendition of the diagram of the British slave ship Brookes, which carried 609 enslaved people from Africa's Gold Coast to Kingston, Jamaica in 1786. A red circle to the left of the body references a story Pindell has shared, to which she attributes her interest in the form of the circle: Once as a child, in either southern Ohio or northern Kentucky, Pindell and her father stopped at a root beer stand for refreshments. Indelible is the memory of the red circles on the bottoms of the mugs she and her father were given, which indicated that they were to be used by people of color only. The lower right quadrant of the piece has lines from a North Carolina slave law, under which Pindell quotes the edict "separate but equal" from the Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), in which the Court ruled that racial segregation laws were constitutional. *Autobiography: Water* is a testament to the legacy of slavery and its effects on black families, and a refusal to forget.

—MS

Lorna Simpson
b. 1960, Brooklyn, NY

***Night Light*, 2019**
Ink and screenprint on gessoed fiberglass
Private collection

Lorna Simpson's oeuvre spans photography, collage, performance, film, and, more recently, painting to dismantle traditional systems of representation. In her famous phototext works from the 1980s, Simpson merges the vocabularies of figuration and abstraction to problematize the status of the photograph as a direct document of reality.

Night Light (2019) was inspired by the story of Matthew Henson, an African-American explorer who discovered the geographic North Pole alongside the more famous white explorer, Robert Peary, in 1909. Her points of departure are vintage photographs of polar expeditions, landscapes, advertisements, and articles in *Ebony* magazine from the 1950s to the 1970s. Once the artist digitally enlarges these images, she screenprints and transfers them onto painting surfaces such as fiberglass and wood. She then collages portions of texts from various sources onto the images and paints over them with ink. In *Night Light*, Simpson interrupts the seductive vastness of the polar landscape with vertical strips of text. Simpson manipulates the opacity and iridescence of the hue, with some blues so deep they read as black or purple. This color has a specific "gravitational pull," as the artist phrases it, and she connects these works to historical blues: blue like indigo, which was harvested by enslaved people and whose profits outpaced those of sugar and cotton in the 1700s; blue like the musical blues; blue like the darkness washing over our country today; and blue like blue-black skin, what Richard Pryor called the "original black."

—MS

Diamond Stingily
b. 1990, Chicago, IL

Left to right:

***Entryways*, 2016**
Door with locks, bat
Collection Adam Sherman, New York

***Entryways*, 2016**
Door with locks, bat
Collection Dr. Gerardo Capo

***Entryways*, 2019**
Door with locks, bat
Collection Gabe Schulman

Diamond Stingily draws on her childhood memories to connect the specifics of her family history to larger themes of race and class. Raised on the West Side of Chicago, Stingily brings everyday objects from her community into the rarefied spaces of galleries and museums. Her sculptural works challenge misconceptions of the Black working class by attending to the strength, joy, and agency often denied to Black women.

Stingily's *Entryways* are composed of baseball bats propped up against wooden doors. The *Entryways* were inspired by Stingily's memories of her paternal grandmother, Estelle, who would keep a baseball bat at her front door for protection against would-be intruders. Because of this relationship to her grandmother, Stingily has described the *Entryways* series as a symbol for matriarchy and an emblem of female power. While the works necessarily foreground the reality of violence in some urban communities of color, by connecting multiple generations of Black women and attesting to their strength and self-reliance, they reject stereotypical narratives of racial violence that cast Black women as victims. Thus, these works are unabashedly feminist, not because of content or form but because of the deeply personal motivations that undergird their politics.

—MH

Hank Willis Thomas
b. 1976, Plainfield, NJ

***14,719*, 2019**
Embroidered stars on polyester fabric
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

In his early work, Hank Willis Thomas explored photography's use alongside text in advertising, which he views as a form of propaganda. Inspired by figures such as Gordon Parks and Roy DeCarava, Thomas draws from historical and personal archives. Thomas harnesses the rhetoric of branding and commodification to reflect how narratives of colonialism and slavery are at once suppressed and reproduced in contemporary popular culture. The artist now works across photography, installation, sculpture, social practice, and film to examine the exploitative relationships between capitalism, consumerism, and racism.

While Thomas's earlier textile works have utilized decommissioned prison uniforms and sports jerseys, in *14,719* (2019) he harnesses the iconography and materiality of the American flag. Each of the 14,719 stars represents a death caused by gunshots in 2018. Black men in the US are more likely to die from gun violence than by other means, and this reality has affected Thomas's loved ones, as it has so many other Black Americans. Thomas's cousin and best friend, Songha Willis, with whom he was living at the time in New York, was shot and murdered in Philadelphia in 2000. The evocation of the flag and its iconic stars brings into sharp view a critique of a patriotism that allows Americans to wield guns against fellow citizens. Setting the stage for an encounter akin to mourning in a place of worship or in front of a war memorial, *14,719* honors and grieves the thousands of lives lost to the wholly American epidemic of gun violence.

—Molly Superfine

Kara Walker
b. 1969, Stockton, CA

***Book of Hours (ICBM's for HBCU's)*, 2020**
Graphite, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper; 10 parts
Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

***Book of Hours*, 2020**
Watercolor, Sumi ink, white ink, pencil, Gofun and collage on paper; 15 parts
Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Since the early 1990s, Kara Walker has investigated the violent history of slavery in North America, exploring the emotional and physical trauma of the antebellum period as it continues to resonate in contemporary life. She has produced drawings, paintings, and films, as well her signature large, cut-paper silhouettes installed directly onto the wall, which surround and implicate the viewer in their horrifying narrative tableaux. Although Walker's work has often referenced the specific characters, costumes and landscapes of a particular moment in American history, her work also speaks to more universal themes of forced migration and exploitation, political and social violence, and the ways in which the historical past constantly shapes the present.

In contrast to the precision and labor-intensive nature of her cut-paper works, Walker's drawings on paper are characterized by a loose, gestural style and expressive use of diverse materials. Walker's drawings vary in size, with some appearing as studies for larger works in a variety of mediums and others as visceral responses to current events. For this exhibition, Walker has produced two new series of drawings both of which she has imagined as versions of a medieval Book of Hours. These small, personalized prayer books were common during the Middle Ages and were characterized by their intricate painted decorations. The works in these two series are enigmatic images that appear to traverse a range of time periods, from scenes of biblical and mythological origins to images of historical violence to others that suggest more recent political strife. Walker has spoken of these drawings as her own way of responding to the bombardment of contemporary media by turning towards a process of quiet, internal reflection. The highly personal nature of these images, akin to the individual collection of spiritual texts in a traditional Book of Hours, capture Walker's own response to the intersection of past and present in understanding our contemporary political moment and serve as in, her words, "an attempt to transmit, nonverbally, an experience of being."

FLOOR 4

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE

Mark Bradford
b. 1961, Los Angeles, CA

Untitled, 2020
Mixed mediums on canvas
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Mark Bradford's practice spans collage, installation, video, photography, and printmaking. Engaging in communal networks of exchange, the artist transforms materials that he gathers from urban spaces and hardware stores to create his massive, map-like collages. Bradford is concerned with the lived experience and hidden sites of urban communities, and the tension and flow between public and private space. His works often take on the formal structure of a grid, exploding its intersecting vertical and horizontal vectors to reveal an energy within. In Bradford's works, maps are densely layered with scraps of paper, rope, caulk, and other materials, suggesting the multitude of narratives unaccounted for by any rigid abstract system of representation.

Untitled (2020) is one of several works that take as their starting point a map from the McCone Report, an inquiry commissioned by California Governor Pat Brown eight days after the infamous 1965 Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles. Former CIA director John McCone, who spearheaded the report, identified the root causes of the riot as high rates of unemployment, poor schools, and other challenging living conditions in the predominantly African-American Watts neighborhood. The original map was marked with green, blue, red, and orange dots to denote types of crime, civil unrest, and decay in certain areas of Los Angeles: damaged and destroyed buildings, looted spaces, and deaths. These "hot spots," as Bradford has called them, "flattened the pain" of the people in the Watts neighborhood. In excavating these areas from his works with an X-acto knife, Bradford reimagines the urban grid as "urban jungle," in his words. His forms become organic and unpredictable—allegories of how history is filtered through media and lived experiences.

—Molly Superfine

Rashid Johnson
b. 1977, Chicago, IL

***Antoine's Organ*, 2016**
Black steel, grow lights, plants, wood, shea butter, books, monitors, rugs, piano
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Rashid Johnson creates sculptures, photographs, paintings, videos, and installations that speak to material history, personal identity, and African-American intellectual and creative history. He is well-known for his geometric "shelf" constructions which display objects from the artist's life as both personal and collective effects.

Antoine's Organ (2016), a monumental sculptural installation made from a rigid armature of black steel scaffolding, assembles a chorus of materials associated with collected social histories of the African diaspora: copies of Randall Kennedy's *Sellout* (2008), Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* (2015), and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) are lined up alongside piles of shea butter and black soap, while video monitors playing selections of Johnson's previous works sit amid a gridded ecosystem of different plant species. The living installation is a fully sensuous experience, in which the aroma of the plants and illuminant grow lights expand the symbolic associations of the materials on view. The installation also features a performance component: the steel scaffolding is arranged in a grid, with an upright piano in the middle for pianist and music producer Antoine Baldwin (also known as Audio BLK) to play at scheduled times. Music has long been an inspiration for Johnson, who often places musical albums in his installations. But here the "organ" can be understood as a corporeal force of the project as well. Not only are organs musical instruments, they also are body parts, organic living matter: in *Antoine's Organ*, life, growth, composition, and, ultimately, decomposition become entwined.

—Mlondolozi Zondi

Julie Mehretu
b. 1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Left to right:

***Black Monolith, for Okwui Enwezor (Charlottesville)*, 2017–20**
Ink and acrylic on canvas
Kravis Collection

***Oceanic Beloved (A.C.)*, 2017–18**
Ink and acrylic on canvas
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

***Rubber Gloves (O.C.)*, 2018**
Ink and acrylic on canvas
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

***See Gold, Cry Black*, 2019**
Ink and acrylic on canvas
Private collection

Julie Mehretu makes large-scale paintings that are layered and built up using various materials such as pencil, ink, and acrylic paint. A new type of history painting, Mehretu's works often feature manipulated maps and images of current events that become abstract scenes through processes of additive layering over silkscreened images. The underlying images are often culled from various archival sources such as ancient city maps; architectural sites such as public squares; and other types of urban designs. Other times, the images are taken from news media, with the paintings acting as screens superimposed with traces and memories of various traumatic events. Blurring the boundaries between figuration and abstraction, Mehretu's work resists the hypervisibility of contemporary regimes of spectacularized violence.

In *Rubber Gloves (O.C.)* (2018), the artist begins with an image of the burning Grenfell Tower, a social housing project in West London that was destroyed by a fire in 2017. The found image is first blurred and reduced to clouds of colors; Mehretu then builds up the colossal painting using screen-printing techniques, ink, acrylic paint marks, airbrushes, and erasers. *Black Monolith, for Okwui Enwezor (Charlottesville)* (2017–20) uses images from events such as the white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, and the Ferguson, Missouri protests in 2014 after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson. Mehretu memorializes the labors, deaths, and surrenders of those affected by these harrowing moments, not by depicting their features or their actions but by way of concealment.

—MS

Jack Whitten
b. 1939, Bessemer, AL; d. 2018, New York, NY

***Birmingham*, 1964**
Aluminum foil, newsprint, stocking, and oil on plywood
Collection Joel Wachs

Alongside peers Sam Gilliam, Alma Thomas, and Howardena Pindell, Jack Whitten was part of a generation of abstract painters working in the 1960s and '70s who exceeded the ethos of the Black Arts Movement, in which representational work was considered the primary artistic vehicle in the struggle for Black liberation. Insisting instead on what he dubbed a "Black sensibility" in his attitude towards abstraction, Whitten dramatized abstract painterly gestures in relation to social politics. Before moving to New York from the segregated South, he was active in student civil rights protests.

In the painting *Birmingham* (1964), Whitten assembles found materials such as aluminum foil, newsprint, and transparent nylon stockings, much of it blackened with oil paint, as a response to the 1963 bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, which claimed the lives of four young African-American girls. This act of violence further accelerated the civil rights movement, where African-American protest was met with even more violence at the hands of police. In Whitten's painting the opening at the center of the canvas reveals a 1963 newspaper photograph of a policeman and a police dog attacking an African-American protester in Birmingham. The artist has covered the photograph of the attack with a nylon stocking, drawing attention to the gratuitous violence against Black people as it is experienced in both spectacular and mundane ways.

Whitten consulted African-American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) during the creation of *Birmingham*. The split on the canvas recalls, in a literal manner, Du Bois's discussion of the African American's split consciousness. The stocking also alludes to "the veil": Du Bois described African-American personality as "born with a veil and gifted with second sight," and encompassing "two souls . . . two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

—MZ