



NEXT



PROGENY

The NEXT Generation of Contemporary Art

The concept of *progeny* is one that arises every so often in the appreciation of the creative process. In common use, progeny describes a set of artists or type of artistic production or sensibility handed down through a genetic link. The term can also be used in a more expanded sense to describe something that results from a creative effort. In this way, one can begin to think about a work of art as the progeny of the artist, or a type of aesthetic representation as the progeny of its maker. I have written about this idea before as a means of expressing the artistic process as a kind of inheritance.

I am most concerned with the second usage of the term for the purpose of this text. The

writing that follows will consider the work of art as the collective result that derives, not only from the artist, but also from the many sources of influence that permeate the creative process. In keeping with this framework, one can begin to see the exhibition as the progeny of the curator, or the result of a kind of curatorial thinking.

NEXT Generation is situated within this context. The exhibition features the work of twelve emerging artists – **Derrick Adams, Kajahl Benes, Sonya Clark, Caitlin Cherry, Alex Ernst, Wyatt Gallery, Kira Lynn Harris, David Huffman, Jayson Keeling, Karyn Olivier, Gary Pennock and Cheryl Pope** – each selected for inclusion by an advisory

group of artists. The “jurying” group of artists is of particular interest due to the supporting role they played in guiding the curator in the selection process. Each of these artists – Nina Chanel Abney, Nick Cave, Rashid Johnson, Rodney McMillian, Gary Simmons, Xaviera Simmons, Shinique Smith, Henry Taylor, Hank Willis Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems – were included in the *30 Americans* exhibition opening in 2008 at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami, Fla. The show was designed to highlight the work of 30 African-American artists, who have made, and continue to make, a substantial impact in contemporary visual arts.

The *30 Americans* show is an important thematic group exhibition in that it takes up a thesis that aims to articulate a visual “now” moment in contemporary art as it relates to the practice of African-American artists. The Rubell family cites other survey exhibitions with similar goals – *Freestyle* and *Frequency* at the Studio Museum in Harlem; *Black is, Black Ain't* at the Renaissance Society and The Barkley Hendricks retrospective at the Nasher Museum of Art – as the genesis for their curatorial undertaking. However, the Rubell family

show has the added feature of owning all the works in the exhibition, highlighting the family’s substantial collection of contemporary art by African-American artists and positioning their collection as being pivotal in representing the contributions of African-American artists in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The *NEXT* exhibition is the newest iteration in this sequence of curatorial projects. For clarity it is necessary to include the types of work in this multimedia exhibition, which includes photography, installation, painting, textile, video, and drawing. But it is more precise to write that many of the pieces in this show are located somewhere in between media, in a kind of interstice zone that keeps urging contemporary art forward into uncharted or less charted territory.

Derrick Adams incorporates walls both physical and metaphysical in his installations that co-opt sculpture, performance, drawing, painting and photography into his visual lexicon. Kajahl Benes is a painter that is challenging the medium by creating portraits that are a science fiction of primitive, modern and contemporary art historical cues. Sonya Clark works with the idea of hair by using thread, combs and comb parts to create thrilling tapestries

in variety of forms. Caitlin Cherry's paintings are virtually coming off the wall in juxtaposition with the sculptural objects they are tethered to in the space. Alex Ernst uses wood, string and metal to construct his sculptural pieces that are intentionally minimal in their constitution. Wyatt Gallery's photographic series entitled, *Tent Life*, beautifully depicts life in Haiti after the devastation of the earthquake in 2010. Kira Lynn Harris is a multimedia artist whose light installations and drawings transport the viewer into alternate spaces. David Huffman's paintings are an investigation into lights and darks as they relate to both the formal and social concerns in painting. Jayson Keeling uses the canvas as the surface for his painterly-like motifs, but instead of paint, the canvas is finished with glitter – creating a luster that illuminates the mystery his work. Karyn Olivier's practice incorporate sculpture, painting and photography. Her installations are often visual contradictions in that they most often negate the functionality of their use. Gary Pennock makes light installations that radiate a kaleidoscope of color and other worldly constellations. Cheryl Pope brings the element of play into her practice

with her artistic rendition of dodge ball, and gold chained installations of basketballs and hoops.

The *NEXT Generation* debut coincides with *30 Americans* while it is on view at the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, D.C. The curator, Lauren Gentile, smartly recognized an opportunity to extend the progeny of culturally specific exhibitions by asking artists to choose who they thought were significant cultural producers making a mark on the contemporary, visual landscape. The promising aspect of taking on the subject matter of culturally specific exhibitions is that there is always something to be added to the discourse. The result (or progeny) of the creative effort in this instance is a wonderful array of artists and artworks brought together on a platform that designates them as the *NEXT* generation of noteworthy art-makers. For this exhibition, they are not linked to the signification of racial identity, suggesting that this next generation is less concerned with the "whom" (of the artist) than the "what" (of the artwork).

- **Kalia Brooks, Exhibitions Director at MoCADA (Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts) in Brooklyn, N.Y.**



CHERYL POPE

(b. 1980)

Cheryl Pope is a multidisciplinary artist based in Chicago, Ill. Her sources of inspiration are limitless in that her work addresses relevant issues that presently affect daily life. She begins her process by examining the confrontational relationships in her everyday life. Pope, then, makes work that addresses specific questions that extend into social, political and global conversations. Research, experimentation, and collaboration are an intrinsic part of her practice. These methods allow her to develop communities in the process of making an artwork. Pope is part time faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Fashion and Continuing Studies Department as well as teaching artist and consultant at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. She cites these experiences as offering her the opportunity to discuss contemporary art with a general public of all ages and backgrounds. These conversations greatly influence her artwork and the ways in which she engages with the audience.

30 Americans artist Nick Cave chose Cheryl Pope

Hoop Dreams, 2010.

Metal chain, metal shackle, velvet pillow, basketball and gold paint.
28 x 28 x 49 inches.



WYATT GALLERY

(b. 1975)

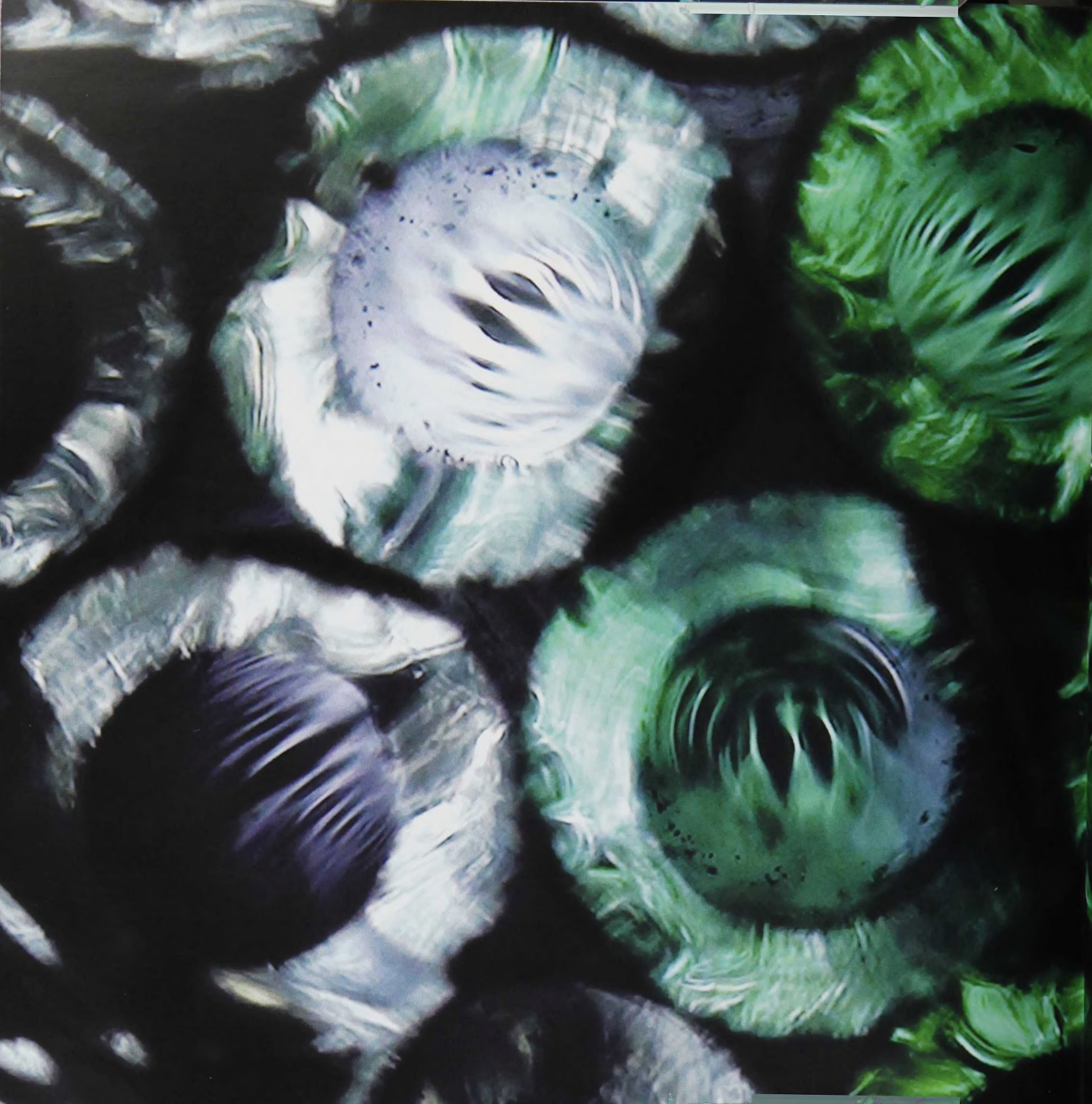
Tent Life: Haiti (2010-2011) is a series of photographic prints that were taken during photographer Wyatt Gallery's visits to Haiti after the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in 2010. The photographs, which have also been published as a book with the same name, provide an honest and visually compelling portrayal of the people, living conditions, architecture and landscape after the natural disaster. These images capture the prevailing beauty of the place and its inhabitants despite the severity of the crisis, which still persists to this day. The photographs remind us that the devastation that took place in 2010 is still a daily reality, and the effort to rebuild is an on-going struggle. The series has been released to wide acclaim. The book, *Tent Life: Haiti*, has sold out the first edition of 2000 copies and 10 percent of the proceeds from sales go to Haitian relief organizations. Gallery currently lives and works in New York City.

30 Americans artist Hank Willis Thomas chose Wyatt Gallery

Sisters in their Tent, Bobby Duval's Soccer Field, 2010.

Archival Pigment Ink Print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Paper, edition of 5.

22 x 17.6 inches.



The background of the page is a dark, almost black, space filled with vibrant, ethereal green light. The light appears to be composed of many thin, overlapping layers or ribbons, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a light installation or a video work, with the green light glowing and shimmering against the dark background. The light forms abstract, organic shapes that suggest a natural, perhaps biological, structure like a plant or a microscopic organism. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a dreamlike and immersive atmosphere.

GARY PENNOCK


(b. 1978)

Gary Pennock is a Brooklyn, N.Y.-based installation artist who works primarily with light, sound and video. His psychedelic installations transport the viewer into another visual dimension as evident by the titles of his work such as, *A Line Through the Center of Space* (2009), *Across a Stillness of Time* (2010) and *Porous* (2011). The work emphasizes the ability of art to act as a vehicle for new experiential possibility. He uses light for its ability to transform space and trick the eye. The result is a kind of interplanetary effect that hallucinates the viewer into perceiving the work. The idea of beauty is a central theme to Pennock. He hopes to trigger the imagination by using non-materials to stimulate the mind as a means of negotiating with an immersive artwork. Pennock's time-based compositions are attuned to the human senses as an attempt to uncover how phenomena resonate with our bodies.

30 Americans artist Shinique Smith chose Gary Pennock

Tempered Glades, 2012.
Light Installation. 2 Unique Editions.





KARYN OLIVIER

(b. 1968)

Karyn Olivier was born in Trinidad and Tobago and currently resides in Brooklyn, N.Y. She works in sculpture, photography, public art, video and drawing. All of these media are conduits by which Olivier composes, enacts and documents her version of the monumental. She creates both small and large-scale installations that expose the limitations of form. She achieves this by removing familiar objects from the usual contexts and reshapes them into useless forms that can only function as works of art. Much of her sculpture appropriates objects typically experienced on the playground, for example, a sliding board, carousel, seesaw and monkey bars. Olivier modifies these objects of play so that they are rendered ineffectual. The work in this exhibition, *Tether ball* (2005), is her version of the game. It is comprised of 130 white powered tether balls hanging from the top of a steel pole. The sculpture is grounded in space like an ancient cultural artifact that has become petrified over the course of time.

30 Americans artist Carrie Mae Weems chose Karyn Olivier

Double houses, 2012.
C-print, edition of 8.
13.25 x 20 inches.

JAYSON KEELING

(b. 1966)

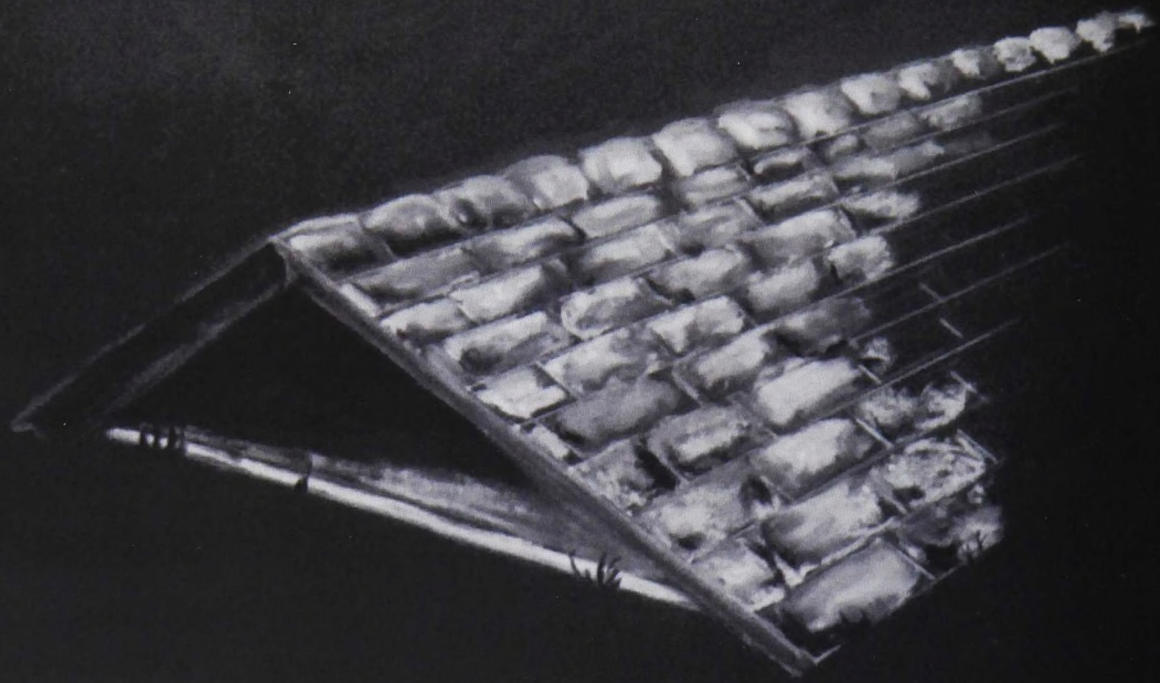
Jayson Keeling is a New York-based, multimedia artist who comes to the visual arts with a background in fashion illustration. This history lends itself to explain his highly stylized artworks, which, in this exhibition, seem to elicit an ominous glamour. For instance, the artwork incorporates glitter on canvas to depict skeletons, nuclear explosions, and military camouflage. The images seem to be associated with death or some other kind of preoccupation with the hereafter. This visual contradiction between material and content creates a tension in the work that draws the viewer into his dark compositions. Keeling encourages the viewer to slow down and take notice of the messaging in his images. The work in many respects defies description. In some instances Keeling uses text. In others, he uses the image like brand messaging. Each approach communicates very effectively to the viewer, and demonstrates how the image can function like text – and text like image.

30 Americans artist Xaviera Simmons chose Jayson Keeling

The Hunter, 2007-8.

Glitter and debris on canvas.

24 x 18 inches.



KIRA LYNN HARRIS

(b. 1965)

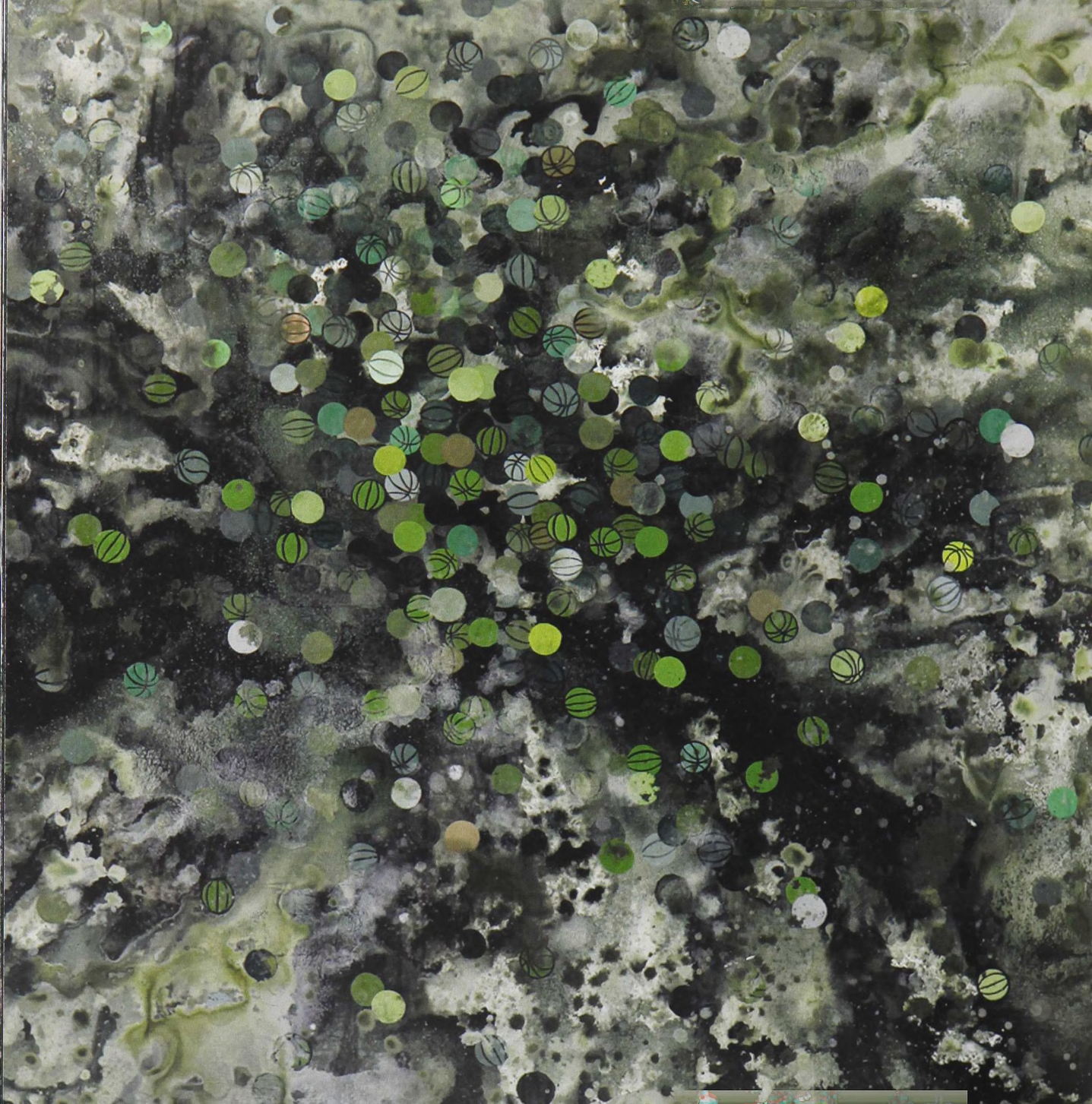
Kira Lynn Harris has lived and worked in Harlem, N.Y. since 1999. Originally, born and raised in Los Angeles, Calif., Harris keeps close ties to the West Coast where she continues to exhibit and dialogue frequently with many artists there. Her interests in light, space and perception date back to her upbringing in Southern California where the convergence of the built and natural environment became formal and conceptual investigations by the time she entered college. For this exhibition, Harris is contributing a site-specific light installation and two drawings based on Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut and Gaudi's Basílica de la Sagrada Familia. Harris's projects often provide a disorienting encounter for the viewer. In her installations she is concerned with destabilization and re-orientation. She achieves this by reversing the sensorial experience of up and down, exterior and interior – as well as by creating architectural and environmental interventions that use light and reflective surfaces to invert subject and object or figure and ground.

30 Americans artists Rodney McMillian and Henry Taylor chose Kira Lynn Harris

Buried, Partially (Detail), 2009.

Pastel on paper.

40 x 40 inches.



DAVID HUFFMAN

(b. 1965)

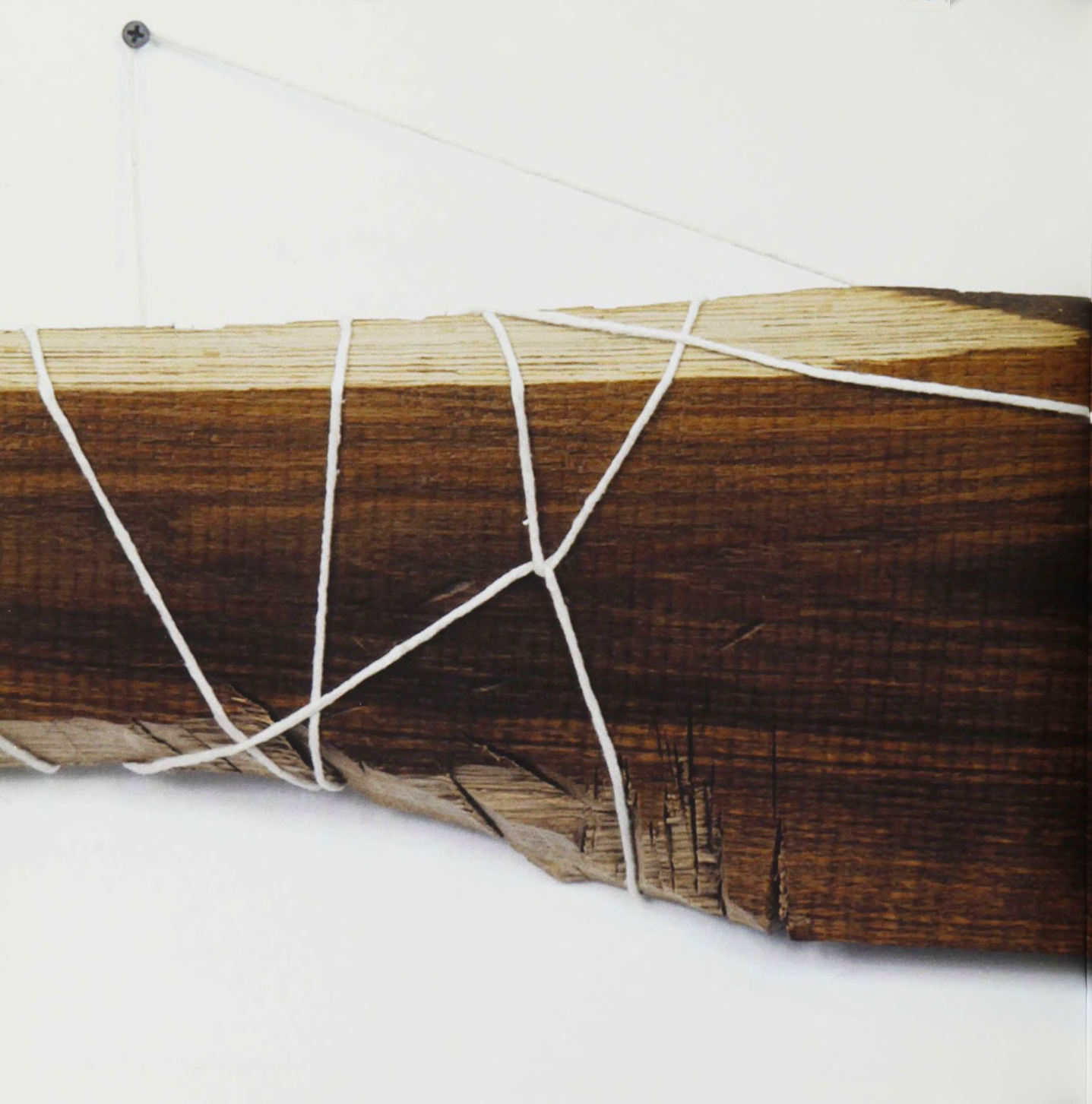
David Huffman is an artist whose work is a confluence of ideas about painting and social identity. His paintings are an amalgamation of social and formal concerns. Huffman's practice is centered on social signifiers of race. He employs the non-representational expressions of abstraction (color, texture, form, composition and sensation) to challenge the viewer's preconceived social references and to take in the boundless possibilities of abstraction. Huffman's *Dark Matter* series is an inquiry of the varied and visually tangible fluctuations that emerge through a close examination of darkness. He uses the concept of dark matter in astrophysics to address ideas about race and value in contemporary society. For Huffman, the scientific shift in the recognition of dark matter and dark energy as constituting a majority of the universe's make-up is analogous to the reevaluation of the significance of people of color in formation of the human world.

30 Americans artist Gary Simmons chose David Huffman

Collard Green, 2011.

Oil on canvas.

50 x 60 inches.





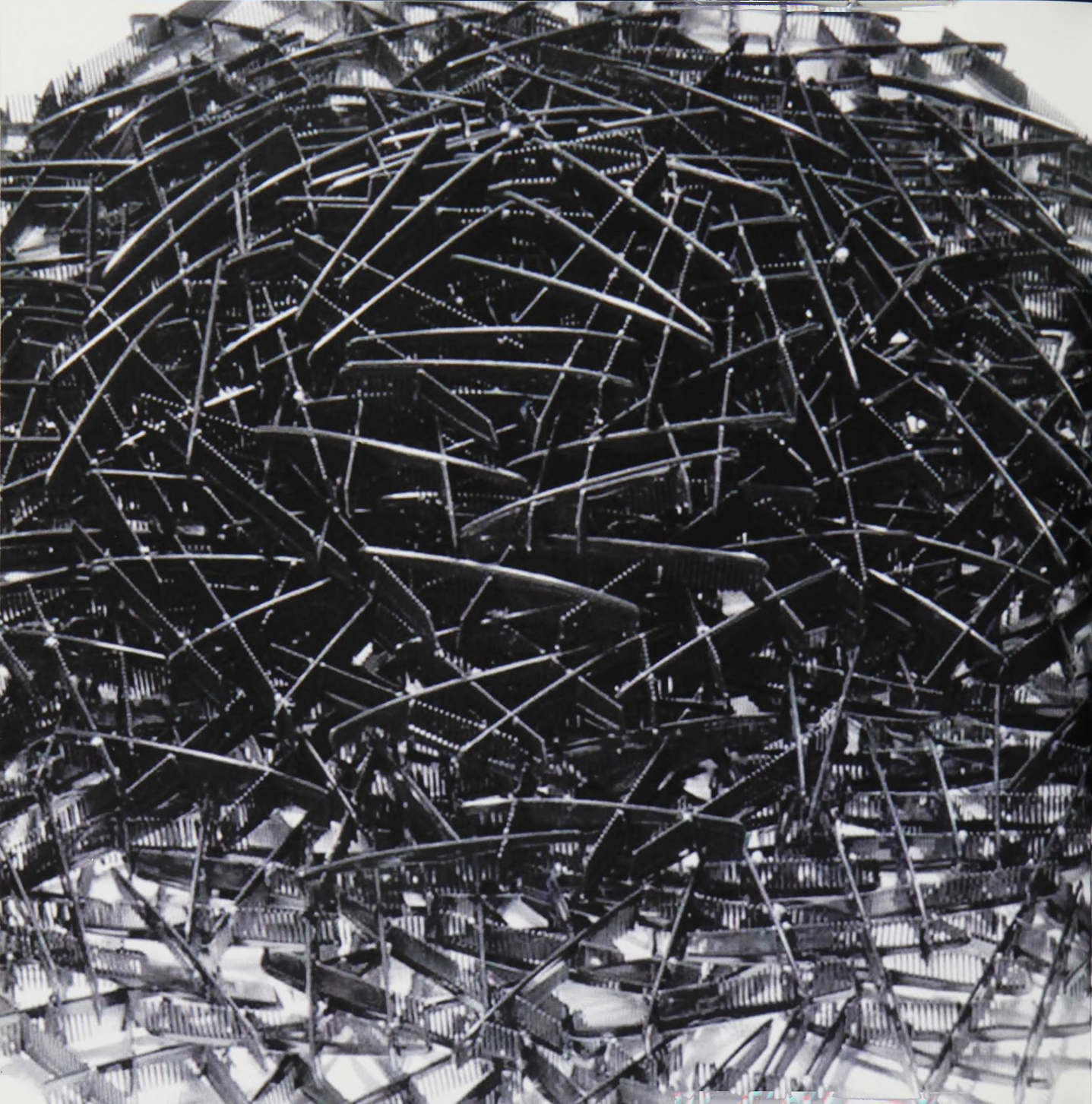
ALEX ERNST


(b. 1987)

Alex Ernst is a New York-based sculptor who uses wood, string and metal to make sculptures that play with the idea of gravity and reflect the relationship between form and space. The sculptures look like discarded or found materials with their rough surfaces and uneven edges. Ernst intentionally applies a minimal amount of physical exertion in the construction of her work in order to highlight the simplicity of her materials. With titles like, *Hack* (2011), *Bound* (2011), and *Caught* (2011), the sculptures become records of the artist's physical impact. She uses rudimentary tools that only require the power of her own effort, which further exemplifies the minimalist approach to her practice. Ernst works in an industrial neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y. where she receives much of her influence as an artist. She takes away the functionality of her materials by using them for their inherent formal qualities. In this way, the sculptures become studies of physical effort and aesthetics.

30 Americans artist Rashid Johnson chose Alex Ernst

Caught (Detail), 2011.
Aged red oak, rope, screw.
11.5 x 54.5 x 2 inches.





SONYA CLARK

(b. 1967)

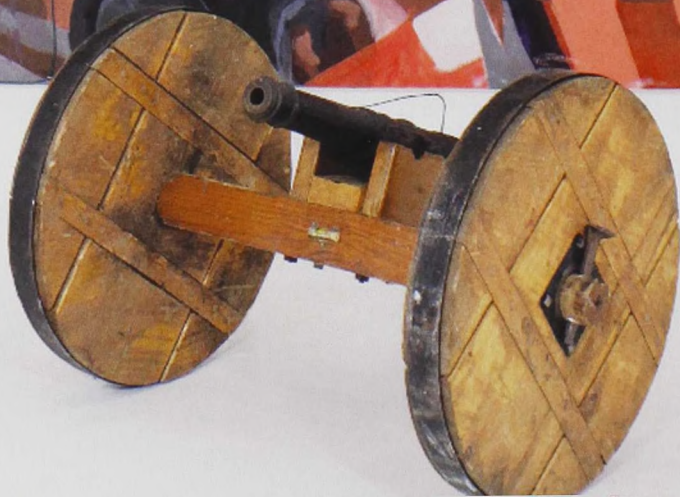
Sonya Clark is an installation, fiber, and textile artist based in Richmond, Va. She often employs combs and thread to make pieces that derive from her artistic investigation of hair. For Clark, it is not so much about the hair itself, that is to say the biomaterial that grows from the human body, as it is about the social meaning of hair – and especially the loaded contexts of race and assimilation for people of color. Clark is most intrigued by that which the hair represents - the ideas of beauty and conformity. The comb then becomes her medium and the subject is hair. It is a clever omission that Clark does not include the actual material in her artwork and instead uses fiber or thread. By doing so, she keeps the abstraction intact – encouraging the viewer away from the actual and into the metaphor of her image.

30 Americans artist Nick Cave chose Sonya Clark

Seven Layer Tangle, 2005.

Combs.

8 x 30 x 30 inches.



CAITLIN CHERRY

(b. 1967)

Caitlin Cherry is a painter and installation artist from Chicago, Ill., who currently lives and works in New York City. Her densely painted canvases are abstracted self-portraits in which she replaces her own image with that of an avatar. In Hinduism, an avatar is an incarnation of a deity in an earthly body. In computing, it denotes a graphic representation of the user. Cherry's rendition is located someplace between these two usages where she is manifesting her likeness in the complex and disorienting worlds she depicts on canvas. Each of her avatars appears to be entangled in deeply personal scenarios. For example, in the piece entitled, *Disney Movies Taught Me To Cry* (2011), Cherry has painted a fantastical scene where a princess-like figure is standing in observation of a distorted form laid reclining on a staircase. As these are self-portraits, it is unclear whether one or both of these characters is depicted to represent the artist. In either case, this painting demonstrates Cherry's use of surrogates as a means of coping with complicated emotions.

30 Americans artist Nina Chanel Abney chose Caitlin Cherry

The Fate of the Rebel Flag (America Provides), 2011.

Oil, fireworks, smoke and cannon fuse on canvas and cannon.

98 x 74 x 62 inches.



KAJAHL BENES

b. 1985

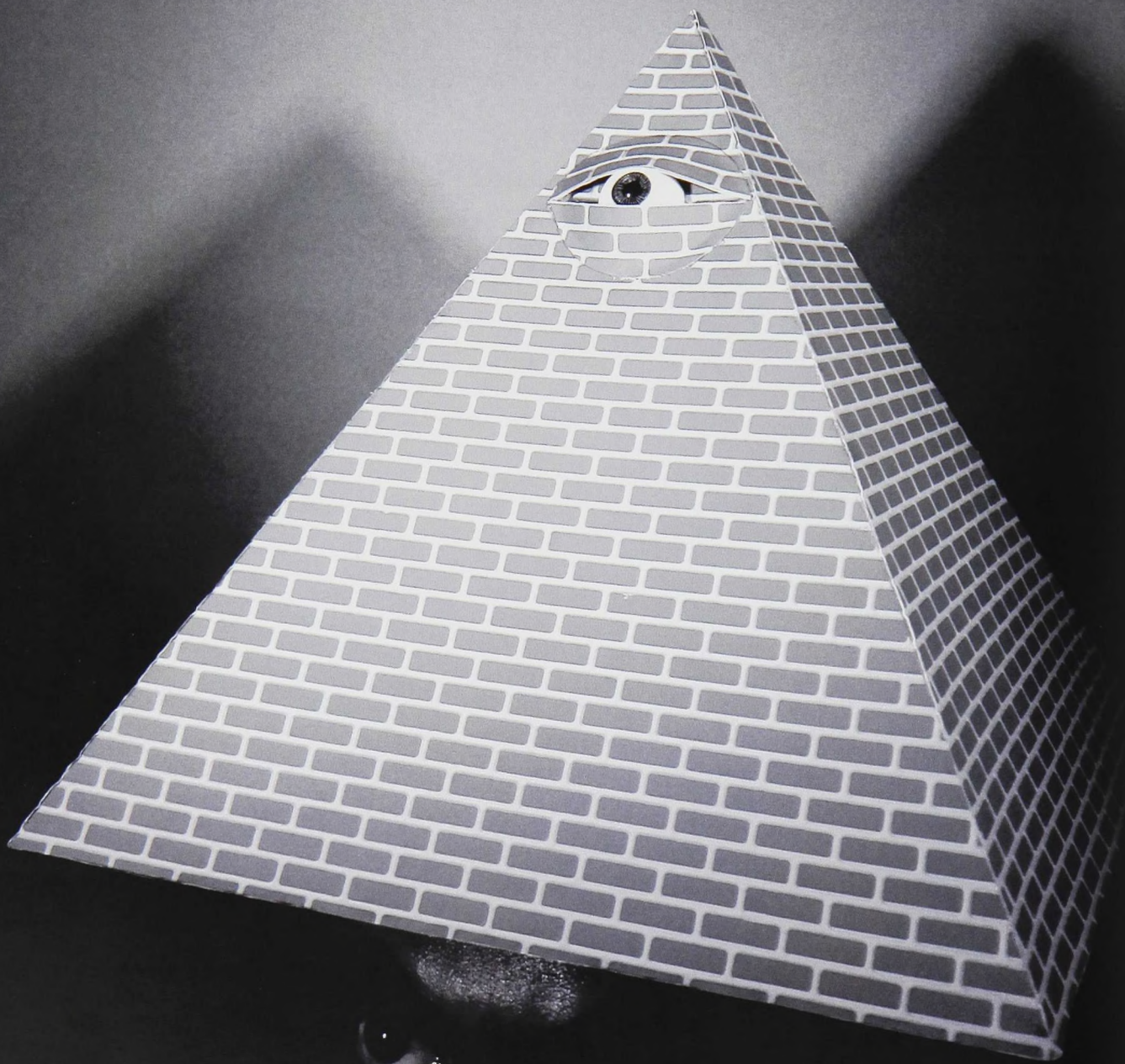
Kajahl Benes is a painter from Santa Cruz, Calif. who currently lives and works in New York City. His large canvases reveal a mixture of contemporary and ancient symbolism. The three works on view all have a central, African figure adorned in opulent fabrics and jewelry. Each one has the poise of an exalted figure displaying the highness of his status. Sometimes the figure is masked, obscuring the details of the face. Other times, unmasked, with the eyes closed to the viewer. These commanding figures are situated in the pictorial field of a still life, accented by the trappings of a domestic setting that resembles a kitchen or dining area. The interiors are in contradiction with the classical African figures. For instance, they include the conveniences of modern electronic appliances and technology such as oscillating fans, refrigerators and two-way pagers. The domestic scenes allude to the prefabricated architecture of sub-division homes with an abundance of food items on display as an additional signifier of wealth. What emerges from these compositions is a sense of other-worldliness. The awkward comfort one takes from the feeling of something that is at the same time foreign and familiar.

30 Americans artist Hank Willis Thomas chose Kajahl Benes

In the Process of B.O.O.C., 2011.

Oil on canvas.

60 x 50 inches.



DERRICK ADAMS

b. 1970

Derrick Adams is a multidisciplinary New York-based artist whose practice is rooted in the perception of ideals attached to objects, colors, textures, symbols and ideologies – and how they are formed. His work focuses on the fragmentation and manipulation of structure and surface while exploring the shape-shifting force of popular culture in daily life. The two photographs on exhibition, *Totem* (2009) and *Root of it All* (2010), feature a recurring theme in his work – the wall. This primary architectural form replays here in two versions. The first, *Totem*, shows the wall in repetition, laid over the neck of a figure whose head is turned to look away from the camera. This image repeats four times, one stacked on top of the other, creating the linear effect of a totem pole. In the second work, *Root of it All*, the wall is fashioned into the shape of a pyramid with an eye located at the pinnacle. The image calls to mind the Eye of Providence on the Great Seal of the United States notably depicted on the one-dollar bill. In both instances, the wall is a central element in the artist's narrative, where the body appears to be performing the tasks of physical, mental and spiritual elevation.

30 Americans artist Mickalene Thomas chose Derrick Adams

Root of It All, 2010.

Digital photograph, edition of 3, 3 AP.

36 x 24 inches.

SPECIAL THANKS

Nina Chanel Abney | Nick Cave | Thomas P. Daley | Richard Dubeshter | Thomas Gentile
Lori Graham Design | Veronica Jackson, Jackson Design Group | Rashid Johnson | Blake Kimbrough
Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery | Rodney McMillian | Monique Meloche Gallery | Kate Nicholson
Michael Pollack | Kevin R. Riegler | Schwanda Rountree | Sheldon Scott | Jack Shainman Gallery
Gary Simmons | Xaviera Simmons | Shinique Smith | C. Adam Stifel | Henry Taylor | Henry Thaggert
Mickalene Thomas | Hank Willis Thomas | Susanne Vielmetter Gallery | Carrie Mae Weems

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Contemporary Wing

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CONTEMPORARY WING



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