



Arcmanoro Niles

*The Nights I Don't Remember,  
The Nights I Can't Forget, 2018*

Oil, acrylic, and glitter on canvas

Despite the vibrant pinks and glitter of his canvas, Niles' figures are decidedly somber. This tension between the bright cheer of the materiality and his subdued subject matter gives the work mesmerizing intensity. The artist observes how those around him cope with heartbreak and disappointment. His figures are experienced as a kind of traumatic, often sexualized reverie, and his art comments on how pain and loss can echo down the years, remaining with a person for life. Niles derives his portraits from family and friends. He frequently depicts them in private, interior spaces, in states of deep personal contemplation that transform viewers into voyeurs—witnesses to the most intimate scenes. (Lehman)



# Sadie Barnette

## *Untitled (People's World)*, 2018

Archival pigment prints on Epson Hot Press Bright paper

Sadie Barnette (b. 1984; Oakland, CA) works primarily in drawing, photography, and installation. She addresses themes of black identity through personal and material histories, incorporating glitter, family portraits, crystals, and found objects. Barnette's *Untitled (People's World)* alters pages from the FBI's file on her father, Rodney Ellis Barnette, who worked with Angela Davis and the Black Panthers at the height of the civil rights movement. The artist's spray-painted markings—acts of artistic reclamation—transform official documents of surveillance and suspicion into highly personal art objects. (Lumpkin-Boccuzzi)



Eric N. Mack

## *Pain After Heat, 2014*

Rope, paper, acrylic paint, dye, ink, dried orange peel, wood, plastic, magazine pages, and grommets on quilted moving blanket

Eric N. Mack (b. 1987; Columbia, MD) asks, “If painting is an object, then how does it speak? I’m trying to get people to feel a closeness to painting.”

To that end, Mack uses materials that signify intimacy: hand-stained textiles, pegboard, photographs, and images clipped from magazines. The artist considers *Pain After Heat* a fabric collage, which, like many of his pieces, hangs on and off the wall, altering the work’s relationship with the gallery space and inviting the viewer to engage with it in different ways.

(Lumpkin-Boccuzzi)



# Henry Taylor

## *Split*, 2013

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas

Split is, from the standpoint of both the figures depicted and the urban setting, a portrait of Taylor's community. The artist works on expanding his portraiture, while also pointing to the social and political issues affecting African Americans today. However, Taylor does not paint his people to be ideals or "types". Instead, he paints them the way they are, in all of their difficulties, simply asking that we see them. From racial inequality, homelessness, and poverty, to the importance of family and community, Taylor is engaged with contemporary life. He says, "My paintings are what I see around me...they are my landscape paintings. (Lehman)



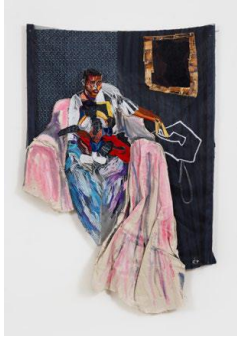
Jennifer Packer

*Untitled*, 2011–13

Oil on canvas

Packer creates expressionist portraits, interior scenes, and still lifes that suggest casual intimacy through their vigorous, loose brushwork and soft color palette. She views her works as the result of personal encounters and artistic exchanges. The models for her portraits are most often friends or family who appear relaxed and seemingly unaware of the artist's or viewer's gaze. Here, she leaves the subject's eye deliberately obscured, blocking the viewer's connection to the figure. The arresting pattern of a shirt, slim lines, and the suggestion of a beard allow the figure to become a poignant portrait of age. Packer says, "I think about images that resist, that attempt to retain their secrets or maintain their composure, that put you to work."

(Lehman)



## Chiffon Thomas

### *A mother who had no mother, 2018*

Embroidery floss, acrylic paint, and canvas on window screen

In *A mother who had no mother*, the central figure is seated on a colorful pink chair, as its fabric breaks the picture plane, hanging below the frame as if she were about to rise from the past to enter our world. Thomas based this work on an old photograph of Thomas with her mother, but they have chosen to omit themselves, to focus the viewer's attention on the strength and power of their mother, transformed into a monumental symbol of maternity. Thomas describes the struggle their own mother faced providing parental guidance and support without role models of her own. Thomas asks: "How do you learn how to be something if you never had an example? How do you learn how to be nurturing? She would use her story to remind us to be appreciative of her and I do not know what I would do or the type of person I would be if I did not have that guidance." (Lehman)



Jarett Key

*Key Family in the Garden, 2019*

Embroidery floss, acrylic paint, and canvas on window screen

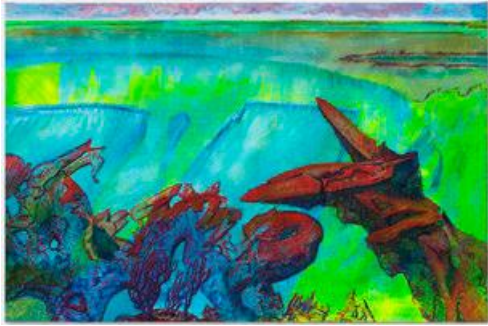


## Mickalene Thomas

### *Sleep: Deux Femmes Noires*, 2011

Embroidery floss, acrylic paint, and canvas on window screen

Best known for her paintings adorned with rhinestones and enamel celebrating female sexuality, Thomas in *Sleep: Deux Femmes Noires*, directly references the French painter Gustave Courbet's highly sensual painting of two intertwined women, *Le Sommeil (The Sleepers)*, 1866. Courbet's painting shocked viewers during the nineteenth century with its blatant depiction of lesbianism. As a gay artist of color interested in issues of femininity, Thomas updates Courbet's theme as a normalization of homosexual love and returns power and sexual agency to her subjects. Thomas reimagined the scene with two African American women embracing on a pile of patterned textiles in a landscape composed from photographs of Thomas's trip to Africa. (Lehman)



# Cy Gavin

## *Reef, 2018*

Acrylic, chalk and oil on denim

Gavin has conducted archival research into his family's history in Bermuda within the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which has been an important source of inspiration for his work. He notes, "What's interesting to me about Bermuda is its role in the industry of tourism to places that are subtropical or tropical.... With the establishment of the tourist industry of the 1920s, ships would come, and those on board would throw coins into the water while local people would dive and retrieve the coins as a reward for their efforts. If you were a local person, how can you regard that space as pleasurable now? It is, in your mind, crystallized into a work space, or a place where you are treated like an animal retrieving something for an over-lording class." (Lehman)



Jennifer Packer

*Untitled*, 2014

Oil on canvas

Packer has created a series of still life that embraces paint for its beauty and form – creating a soft and satisfying visual composition, reveling in paint for itself. This embrace of the lushness of paint recalls the late still life compositions of Edouard Manet. Like Manet, Packer captures the solace of touches of nature, and the quick dash of inspiration captured on canvas.

(Lehman)



Clifford Owens

*Untitled (Photograph of Cliff Nude in Green bushes), 2015*

C-print

A man appears diminutive and vulnerable amongst the verdant green of the landscape. His sex concealed, his hands raised above his head, he is not engaged in an Arcadian revel, but rather something more somber. Viewed from a magisterial vantage point, he seems a supplicant to an unknown god of nature. Owens is a photographer and performance artist known for his advocacy for the increased visibility and recognition of black performance artists. As in this example, much of his work engages directly with his body. In his performances, he often requires his audiences to manipulate, move, dress, touch and engage directly with his body. (Lehman)



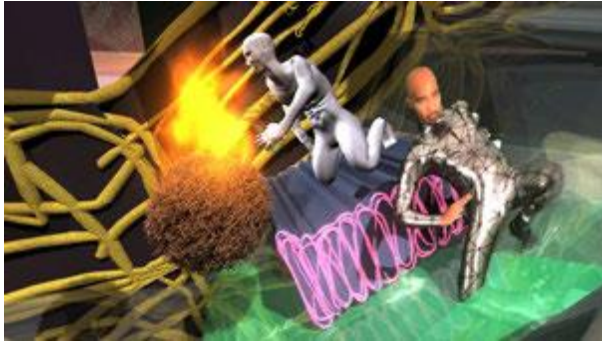
Caitlin Cherry

## *Ghost Leviathan*, 2018

Oil on canvas

Cherry is interested in how the black female body can be represented in new ways that incorporate elements of science fiction or broken technology.

Ironically, in a world that is increasingly reliant on screens, the medium of painting itself threatens to be seen as an outmoded strategy of conveying information to the viewer. Much of Cherry's work is waggishly tongue in cheek, and she creates beautiful, highly sexualized female figures of stars and sex workers. *Ghost Leviathan* draws its title from a large and aggressive sea creature in the video game *Subnautica*, which allows the player to explore an alien ocean. Acknowledging that identity is shaped by a confluence of sources, one critic notes that Cherry's figures seem shaped "in equal part by society, technology, and their own selves." (Lehman)



Jacolby Satterwhite

## *Reifying Desire 5, 2013*

HD digital video, color 3-D animation, 8:45 mins

*Reifying Desire 5* features sensuous inventions of Satterwhite's mother's design. A reclining water seat holds five still 3D models of idealized black female nudes, positioned in the manner of Picasso's famous 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*. Flying above in a silver jumpsuit, Satterwhite spills digital globules of incendiary bubble bath labeled "Pussy Power" onto the women's enlarged pubic hair, then animates their bodies with multi-hued lasers. By queering his mother's fantastical re-imaginings of culturally proscribed self-care products as well as art historical representations of black female sexuality, Satterwhite pursues what he has described as “an alternative, utopian space for performance.” (Lehman)



Vaughn Spann

*Radiant Sunshine, The Morning After  
(For Lula), 2017*

Oil and acrylic on paper

Still life painting taken to an unusually monumental scale, *Radiant Sunshine* blooms and brims with optimism. Interested in a wide array of artistic styles, Spann paints in both figurative and abstract modes. He resists the art world tendency to try to stylistically pigeonhole artists, noting that “It's such an unfortunate position for artists to be in, being determined by external factors. I'm really challenging a way of making work that tries to embody all the things that I am, the people I encounter, the places I've gone, the things I've touched.” Here, Spann both references the work of such still life painters as Janet Fish, and marries the visual with the olfactory, tucking into a corner of the composition a bottle of Elizabeth Taylor's famous floral fragrance White Diamonds. (Lehman)



# Christina Quarles

## *Now Top That, 2016*

Acrylic on canvas

Quarles' vibrant expressionistic work captures a figure of hunched, constrained energy. Many of her figures appear literally and metaphorically at the edge, and many of her paintings deal with the contradiction and bisected quality she feels in her Black ancestry and her fair skin. She says, "as a Queer, cis-woman, born to a black father and a white mother, I engage with the world from a position that is multiply situated. My project...seeks to dismantle assumptions of our fixed subjectivity through images that challenge the viewer to contend with the disorganized body in a state of excess." (Lehman)



## Jonathan Lyndon Chase *peeing in snow foot prints, 2018*

Acrylic, marker, rhinestones, oil stick, glitter, paper on cotton sheet

Many of Chase's figures seem to represent new forms of nonbinary gender expression—the artist will often pair watches, track pants, and Nikes with hoop earrings, eyeshadow, and lipstick. Critics have described how the artist's use of gendered items and symbolization, such as fashion and makeup, "is rich in Ball Culture, an underground subculture that has thrived for generations as a haven for LGBTQ people of color." The artist often emphasizes the emotional disconnect between the moods of his figures and their environments, which emphasis underscores the struggle "to unite different components of gender identity and psychosocial adversity, especially within the black community." (Lehman)



# Deana Lawson

## *Three Women*, 2013

Pigment Print

Lawson loves to photograph strangers. Her *Three Women* are dazzlingly specific, while also conjuring other trios of women, such as the historical personifications of beauty, the three Graces. Lawson frequently derives her compositions from family scrapbooks, effectively combining the historical with the personal. Her models are often strangers, but she selects those whose appearance is reminiscent of people she knows. Distinctly staged, her images, critics have noted, are “suspended somewhere between European Renaissance painting and African studio portraiture.” Many of her subjects are nude, and frequently her images are imbued with a provocative sexual tension that plays with the viewer. The images are ultimately positive, as the artist says she wants to “affirm the sacred black body.” (Lehman)



# Kevin Beasley

## *Wrong*, 2013

Resin, body pillows, T-shirt, and hooded sweatshirt

Kevin Beasley (b. 1985; Lynchburg, VA) works in sculpture, installation, sound, and video. In his sculptures, the artist takes found objects—most often clothing—as a starting point and excavates their personal and cultural meanings. In *Wrong*, Beasley stuffs a body pillow inside a T-shirt and hooded sweatshirt, using resin as the glue that holds the items together. Through a process of molding and manipulating the adhesive material and objects into a final form, Beasley allows the inherent properties of the material to shape the sculpture's finished structure. The final product, both figurative and abstract, references its own process of creation with the actions of the artist's body impressed on the surface. (Lumpkin-Boccuzzi)



# Kerry James Marshall

## *Den Mother*, 1996

Acrylic and charcoal on paper

Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955; Birmingham, AL) depicts ordinary African Americans in everyday settings: young lovers embracing in a park, school-children running in a playground, barbers cutting hair in a neighborhood shop. At the same time, as seen in *Den Mother*, the way the artist renders his familiar subjects elevates them to a larger-than-life, even heroic, stature. While the Scouts have traditionally symbolized white suburban culture, Marshall sees beyond that definition and adds new layers of meaning. His den mother stands tall and black and proud: her uniform stretched tight like armor and her super-sized fist ready to strike. (Lumpkin-Boccuzzi)

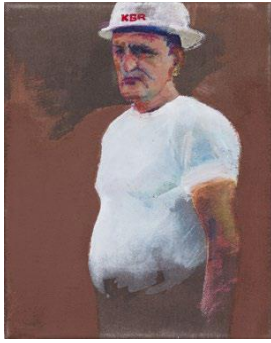


Derrick Adams

## *The Great Wall, 2009*

Digital photograph and metallic paint

In this arresting image, Adams depicts a man's face obscured, morphing into, or being screened by rows of bricks. The artist portrays boxer Mike Tyson here, presented formally by Adams in a full-frontal stance to the viewer. Adams' take on Tyson reads as a detached neutrality. As a famous black man, Tyson has been both celebrated for his sports prowess and condemned for a 1991 rape conviction. Signaling the duality of every persona, Adams suggests Tyson is both confined and protected by the bricks. The title of the work seems not to refer directly to Tyson's imprisonment but to The Great Wall of China, the famed structure designed to both protect and contain. (Lehman)



## Gerald Sheffield *kbr contractor (Iraq in 2007), 2018*

Flashe on canvas

A tired looking man wears a hat marked with the name of the huge American construction company, and “KBR” stares out at the viewer—he is a portrait of weariness personified. Sheffield’s most recent work explores his time deployed in Iraq after enlisting in the United States Army. Much of his work seeks to complicate society’s oversimplified understanding of soldiers and the people of Iraq. One of those complications is the role thousands of American companies like KBR played in Iraq outside of the U.S. Army, and their dangerous circumstances, in which hundreds of contractors were killed. Through his paintings Sheffield investigates and questions the way in which the media depicts and has depicted both people in the Middle East, and the United States’ chaotic mismanagement in Iraq during the war.

(Lehman)



Chase Hall  
*Eric Dolphy, 2020*

Acrylic and coffee on cotton canvas



# D'Angelo Lovell Williams

## *The Lovers*, 2017

Pigment print

Williams' portraits represent the desires and aesthetics of a marginalized subculture. Here, the artist shows the heads of two black men kissing through the veils of reversed black do-rags. The artist evokes the taboo of black male love, while at the same time referencing René Magritte's famous 1928 surrealist painting, *The Lovers*, of a white heterosexual couple.

Williams creates an image of frustrated desire, in which the fabric prevents a truly intimate embrace, and also frustrates our abilities to unveil the identities of our loved ones. Williams has stated that "As an artist, I think that vulnerability is something we need to see more of." (Lehman)



Kara Walker

*Untitled*, 1995

Paper collage on paper

Kara Walker (b. 1969; Stockton, CA) is known for works that problematize and complicate the seemingly simple genre of black-and-white silhouettes. Walker uses this historical form—the popularity of which dates back to the founding of the United States—to illustrate the painful history of race and racism in our country. In *Untitled*, Walker depicts a folkloric scene of a little girl playing with the entrails of a pig. Is it a playful scene? Or is it a metaphor for slavery and racial violence? (Lumpkin-Boccuzzi)



## Paul Mpagi Sepuya

### *Dark Room Mirror Study (0x5A1531), 2017*

Archival pigment print

Sepuya's work is based in traditional portraiture, homoerotic visual culture, and the role of the artist's studio. As with any relationship between artist and model, there is a constant negotiation between the artist, the sitter, the viewer, and the work itself. Sepuya describes his subjects as friends, intimates, and muses, and he sees these relationships as being deeply affected by the making and production of his photographs. Using a combination of draped fabric, careful framing, and layering of images of his previous work, he allows the viewer to see arms, thighs, torsos, and hands, but rarely the whole of the subject's body. His deliberately provocative approach is designed to create a feeling of longing within the viewer, to see what is concealed and to create desire. (Lehman)



LaToya Ruby Frazier

## *Momme Floral Comforter, 2008*

Gelatin silver print

For the past decade, Frazier's art has been an investigation of the social, economic, and environmental deterioration of her home town of Braddock, Pennsylvania. This once flourishing, but now decaying steel town, produced the real effects of these reduced circumstances on Frazier's immediate family. Huge mill closures beginning in the 1980s have led to economic and urban decline, felt by the remaining residents of the city. *Momme Floral Comforter* is one in a series of collaborations between Frazier and her mother. The title, a conjunction of "mom" and "me," references both the collaborative nature of the project and the conjoined appearance of the sitters in the photograph. The dual portrait highlights the similarities between two generations of women living through the problems of impoverished communities. (Lehman)



Allison Janae Hamilton

*Untitled (Three Fencing Masks), 2017*

Found vintage fencing masks, painted feathers, horsehair, velvet, cotton trimming, and acrylic paint

Hamilton presents the viewer with a trio of unusual fencing masks that lead one to imagine in what unusual tournament they might be used. Hamilton is part of a number of African American artists who have embraced masks to suggest their latent power as a tool of social disruption through concealed or altered identity. The artist began her fencing mask series after finding a vintage photograph of two African American soldiers engaged in a fencing match. In taking this image as a point of engagement to make masks ornamented with feathers, horse hairs, and decoration, she created wall sculptures that simultaneously suggest allure and danger. (Lehman)



Jordan Casteel

*Kenny, 2014*

Oil on canvas

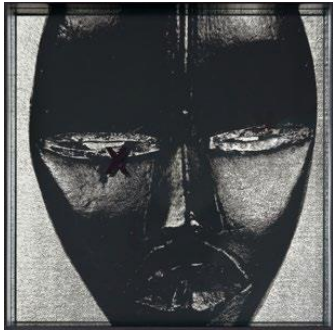
Casteel notes that, “As an artist, I have been exploring for some time how painting could tell the story of black men I have known throughout my life.

The black men in this body of work are representative of the power, vulnerability, and humanity of my family, friends, and community. Sadly, currently it seems even more important to share this narrative.” Luscious

with color, Casteel’s canvases actively work to undermine the societal narrative that both sexualizes and criminalizes the black male body. Often showing nudes, she includes personal objects, and paints her subjects in

their domestic settings, relaxed and in repose. She emphasizes the

individuality and humanity of her subjects, allowing them to be seen with fresh eyes. (Lehman)



Adam Pendleton

*System of Display, X (EXPRESS / Poro  
secret society mask, Mano, Liberia), 2016*

Silkscreen ink on plexiglass and mirror

Pendleton is an artist and writer, who is engaged with the ideas of Dada, the movement formed in Europe after World War I as a response to the horrors and atrocities of the conflict. The Dadaists work was frequently nonsensical or satirical in nature. In 2017, Pendleton published *Black Dada Reader*, a collection of documents and essays from various sources that relate to the conceptual framework of Black Dada. Within this context, Pendleton inserts his art into the conversations about appropriation and representation. Much of Pendleton's work is about fragmentation and the obscure relation between image and text leading to a multiplicity of meanings. Pendleton proposes that Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while addressing the past. "Black" functions as an open-ended signifier and Dada as a reference to the avant-garde art movement. (Lehman)



# Nayland Blake

*4.3.15, 2015*

Colored pencil on paper

Blake ruminates that one of the recurring themes that resonates in their work is an involvement with the “history of toys and puppets and surrogate beings. I think there’s something in there about being played with, or putting myself at the disposal of other people.” The artist’s themes are reflected in this delicate drawing of two woebegone fantastical characters—a sad-eyed mouselike being, and a spikey creature who seems to have fallen and can’t get up. *4.3.15* is part of a drawing series that Blake initiated on January 1, 2015, to make at least one drawing every single day. Combined, this year of drawings captures a range of moods and becomes a kind of ongoing artist’s diary. (Lehman)



## William Villalongo

### *Sista Ancesta (E. Kelly / D.R. of Congo, Pende), 2012*

Archival pigment print

Villalongo combines myth and allegory by using images of Abstract paintings to represent radical Modernisms with the "colonial gaze." One critic has noted that, "In the artist's hands, these paintings appear as masks sported by a clan of exotic brown women." The artist's work underscores the well documented idea that the aesthetics of Modernism was developed from an outward-looking European continent employing a hybrid language born out of conflict, desire and Imperial oppression. In Villalongo's words, "That outward look was squarely focused on the plunder from distant lands which was detained in ethnographic museums and on exotic postcards by the turn of the 20th Century." (Lehman)



# Chiffon Thomas

## *A New Dad, 2017*

Embroidery thread and fabric

Thomas' work is deeply entwined with the story of their family. They comment "I am very happy that the first embroidery project I did focused on family. It continues to be a way to elevate moments with them." Intensely personal, their works evoke memories one might recall flipping through a family photo album. But identifying as a non-binary queer person, Thomas has had to work to reconcile their identity with powerful ideas of family shaped by their childhood and raised as a Jehovah's Witness. Thomas describes the challenge of negotiating staunch religious ideals and the reality of their queer, Black body: "The way I dress and the way I carry myself has seemed to always cause people to feel stumbled by me. Trying to practice the faith was always a challenge because I could not fully be myself, trying to put on a new personality to make people feel more comfortable."

(Lehman)



Tomashi Jackson

## *Magnet School 1, 2014*

Acrylic and silk screen on canvas

Jackson is deeply invested in the blurring of boundaries. She notes that she has “intended to challenge my work to bridge public and private spaces via subject matter.” Jackson has explored a variety of issues around modern urban life, focusing in particular on issues that have affected black and brown communities in New York City. She has examined issues around school desegregation and contemporary resegregation as gentrification has taken hold in Brooklyn. The partially obscured figure in *Magnet School I*, leads us to ruminate on both the intended and unintended consequences of policies of modern education, such as the creation of magnet schools, designed to attract more diverse student bodies. (Lehman)



Samuel Levi Jones

## *Agency, 2018*

Football tackling pad covers on canvas

“My attention is on unbinding material legacies of power in a broad sense, including systems of history, law, medicine, athletics, and the arts,” says Jones. He explores the framing of power structures and struggles between exclusion and equality by desecrating historical material (here, football tackling pads), then re-imagining new works.



Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle

## *A Strong Wind*, 2014

Collage, India Ink, and Acrylic Paint on transparency

In this striking work, Hinkle demonstrates the artistic power in the compositional collision of past and present, color and black and white. The artist's title, *A Strong Wind*, suggests both storms and ideas of social change. Created using imagery derived from a vintage-turn-of-the-twentieth century postcard showing images of French colonial Africa, Hinkle gives the objectified figures in the image a new agency in the swirling, scattered color that now surrounds them. An interdisciplinary visual artist, writer and performer, Hinkle embraces the idea of the "Historical Present," as she examines the shadows and residue of history, and how they affect our perspectives today. (Lehman)



# Lonnie Holley

## *Still a Family in Business, 2009*

Mixed Media

Born in 1950 in Birmingham Alabama, Holley worked a variety of laborious jobs, after overcoming a difficult and chaotic childhood in poverty. At the age of nearly 30, Holley devoted his life to improvisational creativity that included both the visual and musical arts after the death of his niece and nephew in a house fire. In the tradition of earlier African American sculptors, his pieces are made from modest found materials that commemorate people, places, and events in the artist's life. Represented in *Souls Refused to Die*, a 2018 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Holley is enjoying late career recognition at the nation's most prominent museums. Holley says, "I didn't understand that, just being a simple African-American, self-taught, never having a proper education, I could come into an art world like this now." (Lehman)



## Rashid Johnson

### *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club "The Kiss," 2010*

Silver gelatin print

Johnson's work concentrates on issues of ethnicity, as it combines elements of childhood experience, religion, and culture. He says "I've never been able to separate those issues and look at them apart from myself.

Race, class, childhood experience, the books I found on my mother's bookshelf, the albums I found in my father's basement, these things are all part of who I am and will always be a part of my work." "*The Kiss*" is part of a series, *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club*, of double exposure portraits of polished looking African American men. Here, the conventional masculinity of the image is playfully undercut by the 'kiss' of the double exposure. Johnson does not feel compelled to explain every aspect of his artistry, as he says of exhibitions of his work, "I am happy if you leave with more questions than answers." (Lehman)



# Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

## *Non Loin d'Ici*, 2010

Oil on canvas

Yiadom-Boakye describes her work as being ahistorical, set amidst fictional scenes which are enhanced by enigmatic titles like *Non Loin d'Ici* (Not Far From Here). In this canvas, we see a single male figure against a dark background, engaging the viewer in a sidelong glance, painted in the artist's trademark loose, gestural style. As a black artist of Ghanaian descent, Yiadom-Boakye has said that "Race is something that I can completely manipulate or reinvent or use as I want to." The characters brought to life in her works are almost always black, and are designed to recall the near-absence of people of color from centuries of European painting, while at the same time asserting the continuing relevance of black portraiture. (Lehman)



Lorna Simpson

## *Gold Head #1, 2011*

Ink and embossing powder on paper

In her *Gold Heads* series, Simpson highlights the beauty of the diverse textures and styles of black women's hair, using sweeping yet simple brushstrokes of gold to crown the heads of women, their faces obscured in favor of their coiffures. The lack of facial detail emphasizes the beauty of the subject's hair's texture, but also abstracts the identity to allow viewers to see themselves within the images. The artist conjures literary parallels, from Rumpelstiltskin, who famously spun straw into gold, to the Greek myth of King Midas, cursed to turn everything he touches to gold. Simpson's use of gold is a pointed reflection on racial and social narratives that have valued "golden" bloneness. But she also engages the social implications of prototypical African hair transformed into a golden royalty, by creating glorious crowns worn by queens. (Lehman)



David Hammons

## *African American Flag, 2011*

Printed fabric with painted-wood pole

Hammons' iconic *African-American Flag* series is among the artist's most significant works. The powerful imagery represents the idea of a new flag for a new nation and a new kind of future. The first flag in Hammons' series was created and shown in 1990 for the landmark exhibition *Black USA* at the Museum Overholland, Amsterdam, which was a significant venue because it recognized the lack of exposure of African American artists in Europe at that time. The original work indicated a moment of political optimism, coinciding with Nelson Mandela's release from Robben Island and the election of David Dinkins as the first black mayor of New York City. (Lehman)



# Narcissister

## *Untitled*, 2012

C-print

We are confronted with a figure that seems a combination of doll, mannequin, and mask, in a work that unnervingly turns conventions of female beauty upside down. Narcissister uses photography, video, and performance to explore ideas of gender, race, and racially-based fetishism in sexuality. The artist is particularly known for her use of a mask in her performances, derived from a 1960s wig form, utilized to comment on unrealistic and narrow ideas of femininity. The mask also keeps us distanced from each other, and reflects on the idea of the artist pushing away the viewer. Narcissister challenges our own attraction and repulsion, and, in the humorous pun of her name, comments on the role played by narcissism on the artist. Her various and changing roles enact a shifting sense of self, and by using a mask, allow her to see through another's eyes.

(Lehman)



# Troy Michie

## *Dematerialization, 2010*

Mixed media with frame

In this simple and delicate work, Michie poignantly gives visual form to the terrible feeling of invisibility and isolation faced by so many children.

Michie's works focus on black consciousness, the Latinx experience, immigration and queerness. Here, the shag rug, patterned blanket, and television set, all suggest a setting of the 1970s, and an era of increased "latch key" kids, left alone with the television as a babysitter. The dim, ghostlike image of winter in the reflection of the tv screen, seems to echo the bleak result of electronic alienation, a neglect which now spans several generations. (Lehman)

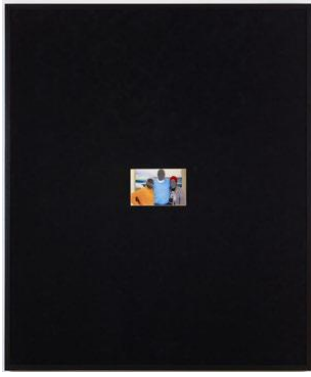


Bethany Collins

## *Too White To Be Black, 2014*

Graphite, charcoal, and latex paint on Arches paper

Collins is of mixed race: her father is black, her mother white. Like many mixed-race people, she identifies as black because that is how she is perceived by the society. In *Too White To Be Black* Collins presents a refined composition of barely legible jumbled letters and erased phrases, a pictorial translation of shifting identity. The artist comments, "My current body of language-based work, made up of chalkboard drawings, dictionary erasures and photographs of erased chalk dust, highlights the inability of language to fully capture notions of modern racial identity." (Lehman)



Sable Elyse Smith

*8032 Days, 2018*

Digital C-print, suede, and artist's frame

Smith's series of photographs of figures with their faces obscured, surrounded with deep borders of black suede, seem to suggest mourning, but they are actually a potent rebuttal to our broken criminal justice system. Smith uses photographs that inmates paid their jailers to take with their visitors in front of vacation-style mural backdrops that belie the prisons in which they were taken. One critic has noted that these images "function as a kind of souvenir, creating a false event, a fake memory of freedom." Smith has noted that these images are produced and paid for by forced labor, as the murals are painted by inmates, who pay for the photos with money they earn by working in their prisons. (Lehman)



Nari Ward

## *At any time prior to no later than, 2009*

Stencil ink and basketball cards on paper

Ward frequently makes use of discarded objects that he collects, repurposing them to give fresh context and meaning to these unwanted or forgotten items. Here, he uses collectible basketball cards to draw connections between sports, entertainment and African American culture. Embedded in basketball's history are many of the topics driving current social issues, such as commercialization, racial equity, and women's roles in sports. Designed in an overlapping pattern, the artist has blacked out the players, leaving only the orange basketballs exposed, creating a glowing celestial sky. In this way, Ward moves objects that are highly culturally specific into to the realm of the universal and eternal. (Lehman)



# Tunji Adeniyi-Jones

## *Blue Dancer, 2017*

Oil on canvas

Adeniyi-Jones has pointed out that “Every memorable Greek myth that we know of has an equally compelling African counterpart, but because of reductive concepts like primitivism, one rarely sees the expansive world of ancient West Africa represented outside of the continent.” In response to this shortcoming, the artist has created his own series of images, designed to suggest royalty and ancient gods in the ancient Yoruba city of Ile Ife.

Heavily stylized, the works in this series feature curving, sinuous limbs, lush foliage, a bold but restricted color palette, simplified forms, and lines that suggest body scarification. Critics have noted that Adeniyi-Jones’ designs draw from such varied sources as Dutch wax-printed fabrics and the late cutouts of Henri Matisse. (Lehman)



Alteronce Gumby

## *Gumby Nation, 2014*

Plastilina and oil bar on canvas

In this black on black painting embedded with subtle color variations, Gumby finger paints repeating silhouettes suggestive of the famous Claymation figure with whom he shares a name. The artist describes color “as a shapeshifter.... Often, I ask myself, ‘What does it mean to be an artist of color and make paintings about color?’ There seems to be no rest for a person of color in America. The ability to re-contextualize hue through abstract painting is the most emancipating act in my practice. I consider color to be more than just a hue, race, mood, shade, a mark, a line, a man, a woman, a country, a nation. It’s an amalgamation of experiences, signs, and signifiers that tell a story, my story, written and rewritten with each painting.” (Lehman)

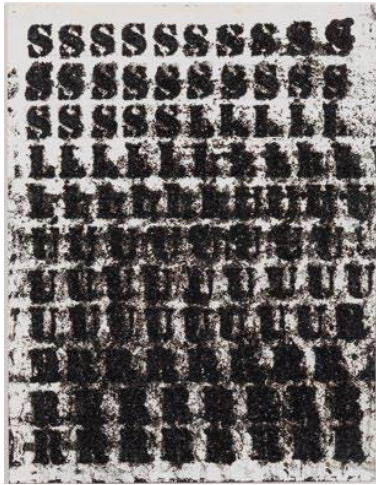


Wardell Milan

## *Desire and the Black Masseur, 2005*

Mixed media on paper

A scene of seeming frenzy, violence, and chaos, *Desire and the Black Masseur* is part of a series by Milan, in which the distorted figures, their mouths open in the anguish of the silent scream, are shown entwined, gesticulating wildly, with dislocated limbs. Parts of bodies are detailed, while other passages are smudged and soft and confuse the action. The writhing suggests such disparate historical sources as the ancient writhing Laocoön, as people are devoured by snakes, or as the distorted shrieks of Francis Bacon's screaming popes. Milan has borrowed the series' title from a short story by Tennessee Williams, about a shy young man who is fascinated with a black masseur. Ideas of repressed desire infuse Milan's work, and the heightened, operatic passions it raises. (Lehman)



Glenn Ligon

## *Study for Impediment, 2007*

Oil stick and coal dust on paper

Ligon is best known for his text-based paintings, prints, and sculptures. He often explores issues of violence, sexuality, and racial identity within American history through an intersection of the written word and visual arts. The artist's signature hand-stenciled paintings often portray a series of phrases that, when exhibited in the gallery context, prompt the viewer to read them in a fresh way. Here, the artist selects to repeat the letters in the word "slur," mimicking visually a word that that can easily be drawn out in speech. At the same time, *slur* functions with a double meaning: the result of an impediment of speech, and the social impediment that comes from a cast aspersion. (Lehman)



## Wilmer Wilson IV

### *Pres*, 2017

Staples and pigment print on wood

Wilson has adapted imagery derived from flyers for parties, concerts, strip clubs, and church plays that he sees stapled to telephone poles around his Philadelphia neighborhood. In *Pres* the artist enlarges two figures from these images to life size and mounts them on a sheet of construction plywood. Wilson does not use glue, but rather mounts the prints with more than 10,000 staples. The volume of metal material causes light to ripple and shimmer across the works' surfaces, as if across the surface of water. The dense surface of staples obscures the images, but creates a kind of modern chainmail surface, which both protects and pins those figures like butterflies to the board. (Lehman)



# Andy Robert

## *A song for us, 2016*

Oil on canvas

Robert's canvases walk a line that balances abstraction with recognizable imagery. Here, the cheerful title underscores a formal composition that suggests the bluebird, a harbinger of happiness in many cultures. Much of Robert's imagery is based on the idea of deconstructing and then reconstructing an image. His light color palette suggests the work of the late Impressionists, pushed several degrees further into abstraction. As a Haitian-American immigrant and painter, Robert views the world as a contradiction of social media's mass communication and individual voicelessness. He says, "I want my paintings to feel like sketches—quick with the immediacy and intimacy of a rough draft, but thought out in terms of their scale, detail, and consideration." (Lehman)