



YASHUA KLOS  
*OUR LABOUR*

October 22 – December 3, 2022



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SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.

530 WEST 22ND STREET NEW YORK, NY 10011 TEL 212 929 2262

[WWW.SIKKEMAJENKINSCO.COM](http://WWW.SIKKEMAJENKINSCO.COM)



Yashua Klos approaches the idea of identity as multi-faceted, adaptive, and ever-changing. He explores identity as a composite of self-conception, family histories, environmental influences, and mythologies. In his portraiture and collage work, Klos explores how material and social conditions shape one's identity and experience of moving through the world. His process employs a unique intervention on the traditional method of woodblock printing: carving, inking, and hand-pressure printing to create his own source material for collaging. He then cuts and arranges these separate printed elements to form exquisitely textured, amalgamated portraits.

The body of work featured in *OUR LABOUR* is significantly personal for Klos, who recently reconnected with his estranged patrilineal side of the family through a match on a DNA test. A message received from a then-unknown relative turned into a life-altering encounter for the artist, who was soon welcomed back into an extended network of long-lost uncles, aunts, and cousins. Klos foregrounds these developing bonds of kinship and the new dimensions invoked within his own identity through large-scale, collaged portraits. Studying and recreating the faces of his family members opened an intimate space of reflection for Klos, tracing in their features shared physical lineages and familiar subjectivities. Intertwined Michigan wildflowers and overlaid Art Deco motifs reference the shifting environmental identity of Detroit, where Klos' family has resided since the Great Migration. Adorning the portraits, these elements speak to the aesthetic ambitions of the city's economic past, and the underlying resilience of natural forms to grow and reclaim the urban landscape.

The central piece of the exhibition, sharing the title *OUR LABOUR*, seeks to represent the various manifestations of labor that have shaped the architecture of Klos' family for generations. The monumental woodblock print and ink canvas was inspired by Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry Murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which Klos first viewed while visiting his relatives in the city. Sometime after, Klos began to conceptualize Rivera's murals as a compositional blueprint for his own family tree, and the legacy of his family's work in the Detroit auto plants. In it, the original faces of Rivera's anonymous, mostly white male workers are replaced with portraits of his own Black relatives. For Klos, reimagining these subjects becomes its own form of record-making and keeping—an affirmation of his family's labor, both within their relationships to one another, and the larger, overlooked history of Black labor that built the United States.

The new works featured in this exhibition of *OUR LABOUR* include new pieces from his African welding mask series. Constructed from individual maple cubits, the masks draw influence from the designs of West and Central African cultures, including those in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Congo—regions to which Klos traces his own distant ancestry. These masks were traditionally used in a public, religious contexts, covering the individual identity of the wearer during performances of conjuration and spiritual activation. In the modern-day context of welding, masks are a necessary occupational safeguard, and an essential part of an industrial worker's uniform. Klos' sees his sculptures as hybrid creations, existing between and mediating the dual capacities of invocation and protection. He completes each mask by torching its wood exterior, allowing the flames to indiscriminately char the surface. Klos views this torching as transformational: fusing together these forms and histories, while activating and releasing the mask's power beyond the hands of its creator.

Yashua Klos (b. 1977, Chicago, IL) received a BFA from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb (2000) and an MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York (2009), both in Fine Art. Recent exhibitions include the major solo show *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR* at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY (2022) curated by Tracy L. Adler, and *Yashua Klos: OUR LIVING* at Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockland, ME (2022). His work was also included in the group exhibitions *Elegies: Still Lives in Contemporary Art* at the Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2022); and *Africa, Imagined: Reflections on Modern and Contemporary Art* at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, MI (2022). His works are included in the permanent collections of the Seattle Art Museum, WA, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, MI, and the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY. He has been awarded residencies at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, BRIC Arts, the Joan Mitchell Center, Skowhegan, and the Vermont Studio Center. Klos is the recipient of a 2014 Joan Mitchell Foundation grant and a 2015 New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship. Klos lives and works in Harlem, NY, and the Bronx, NY, respectively.













*Monkey Mask for Welding, 2022*  
Stained and charred wood, Plexiglas, metal  
18 x 11 x 12.5 inches (45.7 x 27.9 x 31.8 cm)





*BWA Hawk Welding Mask, 2022*  
Stained and charred wood, metal  
14.5 x 53.5 x 13 inches (36.8 x 135.9 x 33 cm)





*Dan Protection Power Welding Mask, 2021*  
Stained and charred wood  
13.25 x 10.75 x 11.125 inches (33.7 x 27.3 x 28.3 cm)











*Kifwebe Welding Mask 2, 2022*  
Stained and charred wood, Plexiglas  
29.5 x 10 x 21.25 inches (74.9 x 25.4 x 54 cm)



*BWA Sun Disk Welding Mask, 2022*  
Stained and charred wood  
24 x 20 x 12.5 inches (61 x 50.8 x 31.8 cm)

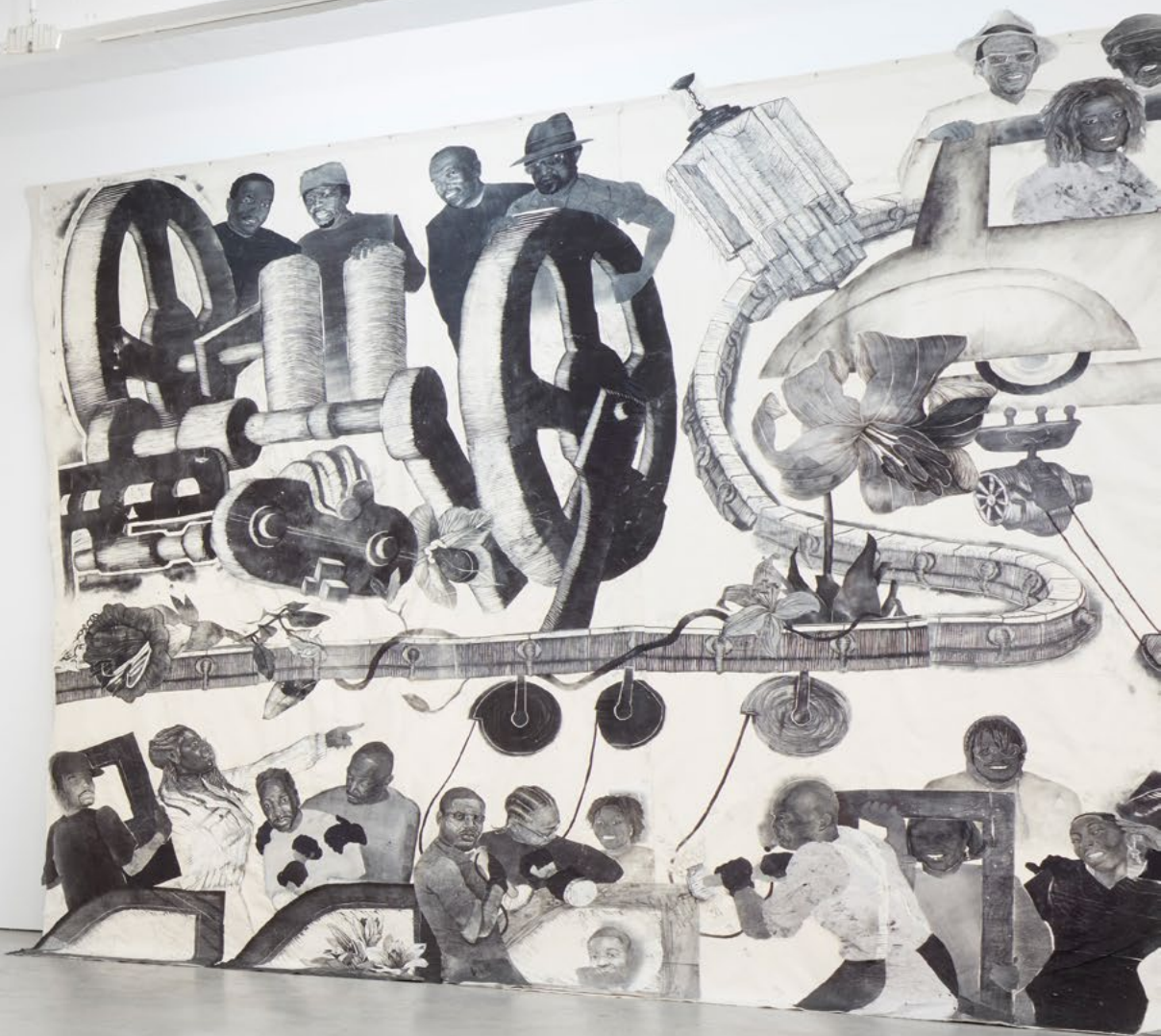




*The Hard Work Of Remaining Gentle, 2022*  
Woodblock prints on Japanese rice paper, acrylic,  
spray paint, muslin, and wood, mounted on archival paper  
51 x 50 inches (129.5 x 127 cm)











*Paige 2, 2022*

Woodblock prints on archival paper, Japanese rice paper, acrylic,  
spray paint, colored pencil and wood mounted on canvas  
72 x 60 inches (182.9 x 152.4 cm)









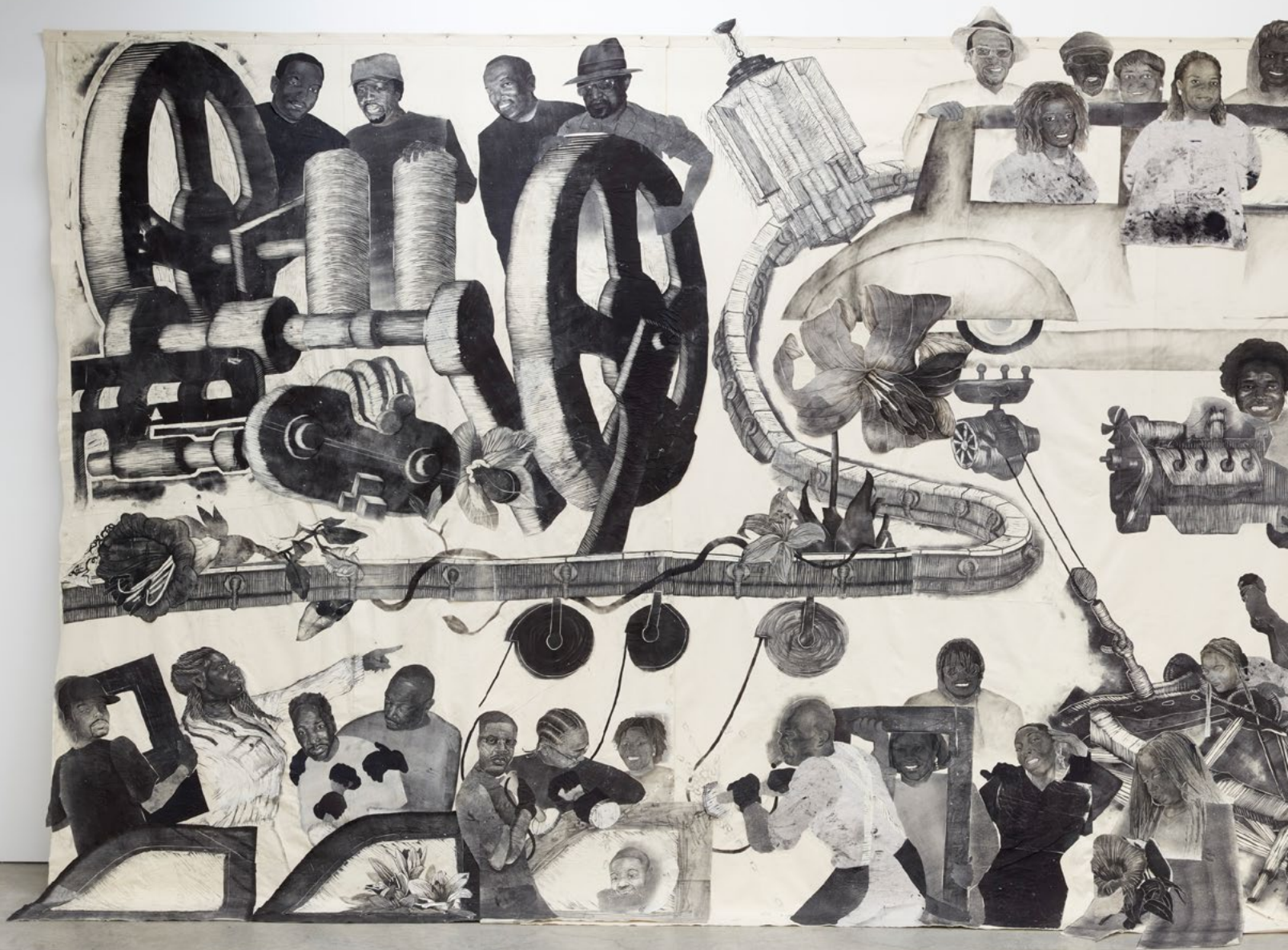
*Uncle Scott, 2022*

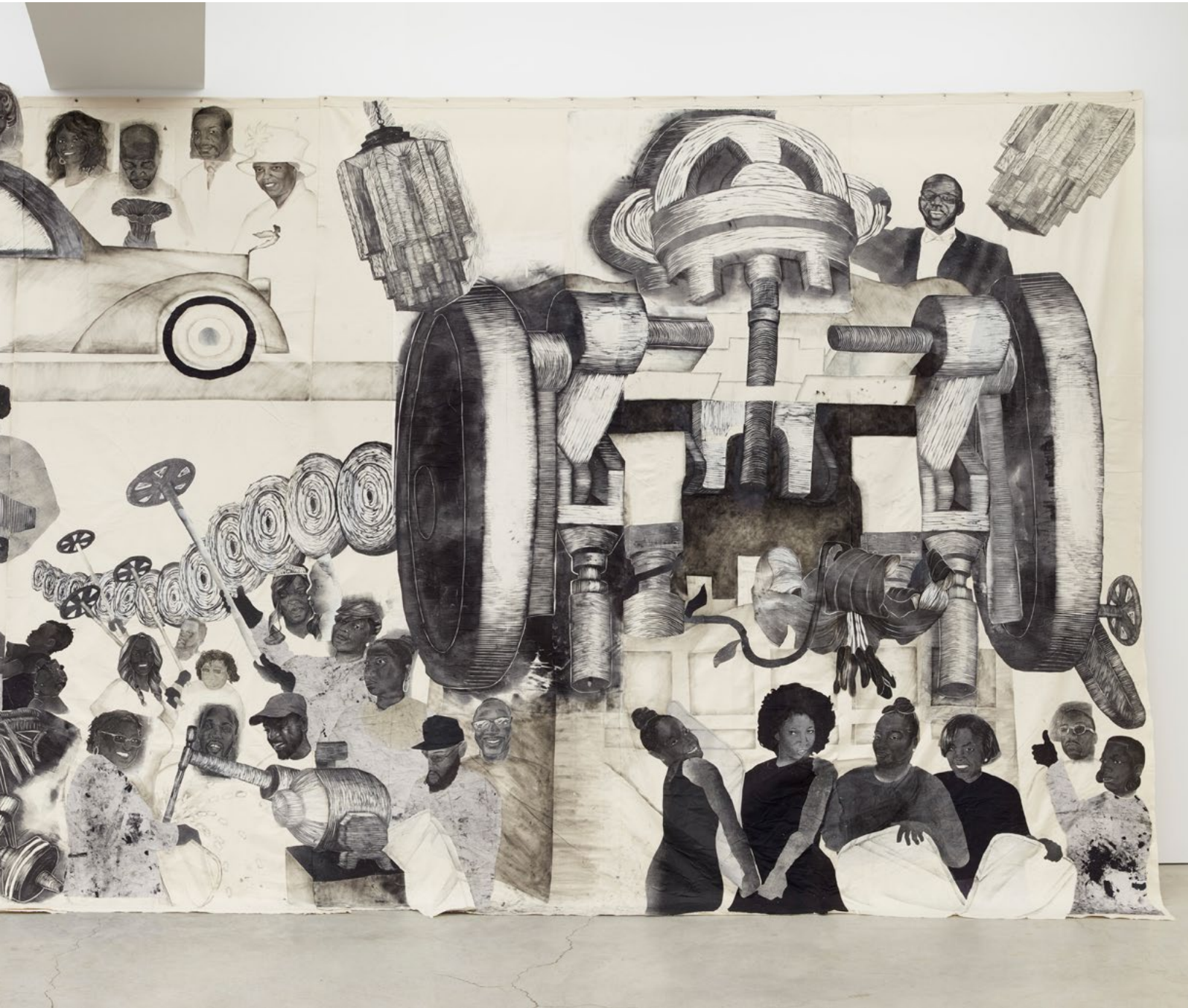
Woodblock prints on archival paper, Japanese rice paper, acrylic,  
spray paint, colored pencil and wood mounted on canvas  
72 x 60 inches (182.9 x 152.4 cm)











*OUR LABOUR*, 2020-2021  
Woodblock print on muslin and oil-based,  
relief block ink on dropcloth, mounted on canvas  
188.375 x 451.25 inches (478.5 x 1146.2 cm)









*Tyla*, 2021  
Woodblock print on muslin, acrylic, graphite, Japanese rice paper,  
spray paint, and wood, mounted on canvas  
97.5 x 109.5 inches (247.7 x 278.1 cm)











*Auntie Grandma*, 2021  
Stained maple wood  
72.875 x 65.75 x 92 inches (185.1 x 167 x 233.7 cm)















*Larger Diagram Of Remaining Gentle, 2022*  
Woodblock prints on archival paper, Japanese rice paper,  
acrylic, spray paint, colored pencil on canvas  
Dptych: 60 x 144 inches (152.4 x 365.8 cm) overall







## YASHUA KLOS

Born in Chicago, IL

Lives and works in New York

## EDUCATION

2009 Master of Fine Arts, Hunter College, New York, NY

2002 L'Atelier Neo Medici, Monflanquin, France

Northern Illinois University, Dekalb, IL

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022 *OUR LABOUR*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, NY, October 22 – December 3, 2022

*We Hold the Wildflowers: Yashua Klos*, Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg, September 22 – October 29, 2022

*OUR LIVING*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockland, ME, May 28 – September 11, 2022

*OUR LABOUR*, Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton, NY, February 12 – June 12, 2022, curated by Tracy Adler

2021 *How We Hold It All Together*, UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles, CA, March 12 – April 10, 2021

2016 *Blank Black*, Galerie Anne DeVillepoix, Paris, France, September 7 – October 29, 2016

2015 *As Below So Above*, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY, September 9 – October 17, 2015

2013 *We Come Undone*, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY, February 20 – March 30, 2013

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022 *Dialogues Across Disciplines: Building a Teaching Collection at the Wellin Museum*, Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, September 17, 2022 – May 20, 2023

*Elegies: Still Lives in Contemporary Art*, MoAD - Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA, March 30 – August 21, 2022, curated by Monique Long

*Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere: Freedom Dreams in Contemporary Art*, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, State University of New York at New Paltz, February 5 – April 10, 2022, curated by Nico Wheadon

*Africa, Imagined: Reflections on Modern and Contemporary Art*, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI, January 22 – May 1, 2022

*Shrubs*, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, January 8 – February 5, 2022

2021 *Something To Say*, Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, MD, September 11 – October 16, 2021

*Alternating Currents*, Fridman Gallery, New York, NY, July 14 – August 20, 2021

*Summertime*, Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg, May 29 – July 24, 2021

*Frida Love and Pain*, High Line Nine, New York, NY, February 2 – 27, 2021

2020 *Living in America: An Exhibition in Four Acts*, International Center for Photography, New York, NY, September 30 – December 19, 2020

2019 *Plum Line: Charles White and the Contemporary*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA, March 8 – August 25, 2019

2018 *Cosmic Traffic Jam*, Steven Zevitas Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, July 7 – September 1, 2018

2016 *Black Pulp!*, International Print Center New York, NY, October 12 – December 19, 2016

*Look up here, I'm in heaven*, Gallery at BRIC House, Brooklyn, NY, June 30 – August 14, 2016

- 2015 *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa, September 26 – November 11, curated by Hank Willis Thomas
- 2014 *In Plain Sight*, The ARC, Opa-locka, FL, November 15 – December 14, 2014  
*DRAW2014*, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburg, PA, February 27 – March 1, 2014
- 2012 *Fore*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, November 11, 2012 – March 10, 2013  
*Bigger Than Shadows*, Dodge Gallery, New York, NY, November 10 – December 22, 2012  
*Singular Masses: An Examination of Racial Identity*, Memphis College of Art, Memphis, TN, October 2012 – March 9, 2013  
*Art on Paper 2012: The 42nd Exhibition*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC, October 21, 2012 – January 13, 2013  
*Paperwork*, Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY, May 19 – June 18, 2011

## AWARDS

- 2022 Joan Mitchell Artist-in-Residence  
 2015 NFA Grant  
 2014 Joan Mitchell Painter and Sculptor Grant

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Wellin Museum of Art, Clinton, NY





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