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Editors. "The Art Angle Podcast: How Photographer Dawoud Bey makes Black America Visible." *artnet news*. April 16, 2021.

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Dawoud Bey, portrait by: Whitten Sabatini. Courtesy of the artist.

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The Art Angle

How Photographer Dawoud Bey Makes Black America Visible

The Art Angle

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Welcome to the Art Angle, a podcast from Artnet News that delves into the places where the art world meets the real world, bringing each week's biggest story down to earth. Join host Andrew Goldstein every week for an in-depth look at what matters most

Last updated: 16 April 2021

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in museums, the art market, and much more with input from our own writers and editors as well as artists, curators, and other top experts in the field.

This month, the murder trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for the death of George Floyd has brought the racial justice protests of the last summer viscerally back into the public consciousness, reigniting conversations in the news and in households everywhere about the reality of the Black experience in America.

This weekend, those same conversations will also have a powerful new point of focus at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where a retrospective of the photographer Dawoud Bey presents his magisterial exploration of the subject, in the form of his penetrating portraits of Black lives from all points on the national compass. Ranging in registers from jubilation to agony, to ingenious self-invention, to blissed-out hope, the show is curated by Elizabeth Sherman and SFMoMA curator Corey Keller.

Open through October 3, 2021, the show is titled "[An American Project](#)" and it is a project that is very much still in the works. It so happens that this is a very big year for Dawoud Bey. The winner of a 2017 MacArthur "genius" grant and a professor at Columbia College in Chicago, the artist has already been the subject of two other retrospectives in his 46-year career, but this one at the Whitney is not only his largest, it's also one of the largest surveys of a Black American photographer ever.

If that's not enough, his work is also currently featured in the New Museum's staging of the final exhibition of the late curator Okwui Enwezor, "[Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America.](#)"

On this week's episode, Bey joins Andrew Goldstein by Zoom to discuss how his childhood and early exposure to work by African Americans informed his interest in photography, his ongoing collaboration with David Hammons, and what he hopes visitors will take away from the Whitney exhibition.

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