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Valentine, Victoria L. "On View: 'Dawoud Bey: An American Project' at Whitney Museum of American Art in New York." *Culture Type*. September 27, 2021.



On View presents images from noteworthy exhibitions

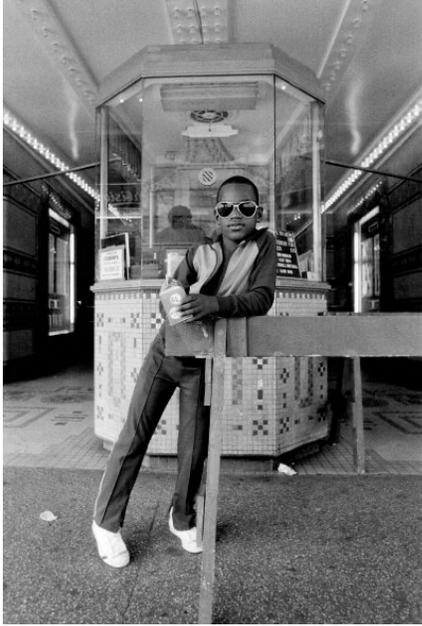
CHICAGO PHOTOGRAPHER **Dawoud Bey** has been chronicling America since the mid-1970s, training his lens on individuals, communities, and histories that are often unseen, yet central to the nation's narrative. "Dawoud Bey: An American Project" surveys eight bodies of work, including his early Harlem U.S.A. portraits, Class Pictures, The Birmingham Project, and his most recent work capturing Underground Railroad sites in Ohio. More than 70 works are on view. Describing the exhibition in the video below, Bey said: "My 'American Project' is that piece of the American fabric that is not always engaged or amplified in the great American narrative. Looking at those histories, those subjects, who throughout the great American project have very often been marginalized. My work over the past 40 years has been about amplifying those presences and amplifying those narratives and those subjects in a visually ambitious way that also engages with the history of photography and how photographs visualize and represent the world. That's my piece of the great American project." **CT**

"Dawoud Bey: An American Project," Co-organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, is on view at the Whitney Museum in New York, from April 17-Oct. 3, 2021
FIND MORE about the exhibition



Installation view of "Dawoud Bey: An American Project," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (April 17-Oct. 3, 2021). | Photograph by Ron Amstutz, Courtesy Whitney Museum

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DAWOUD BEY, "A Boy in Front of the Loew's 125th Street Movie Theater, Harlem, N.Y.," from *Harlem, U.S.A.*, 1976 (gelatin silver print, printed 2019, 14 x 11 inches / 35.6 x 27.9 cm; Frame: 20 5/8 H x 16 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco



DAWOUD BEY, "Three Women at a Parade, Harlem, N.Y.," from *Harlem, U.S.A.*, 1978 (gelatin silver print, printed 2019, 11 x 14 inches / 27.9 x 35.6 cm); Frame: 16 3/8 x 20 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco



DAWOUD BEY, "A Woman at Fulton Street and Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y.," 1988 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 40 x 30 inches / 101.6 x 76.2 cm; Frame: 50 1/8 x 41 1/8 x 2 1/8 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection

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of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco



DAWOUDE BEY, "Two Girls from a Marching Band, Harlem, NY," 1990 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 30 x 40 inches / 76.2 x 101.6 cm; Frame: 41 1/8 x 50 1/8 x 2 1/8 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco



DAWOUDE BEY, "A Couple in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY," 1990 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 40 x 30 inches / 101.6 x 76.2 cm); Frame: 50 1/8 x 41 1/8 x 2 1/8 inches | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco



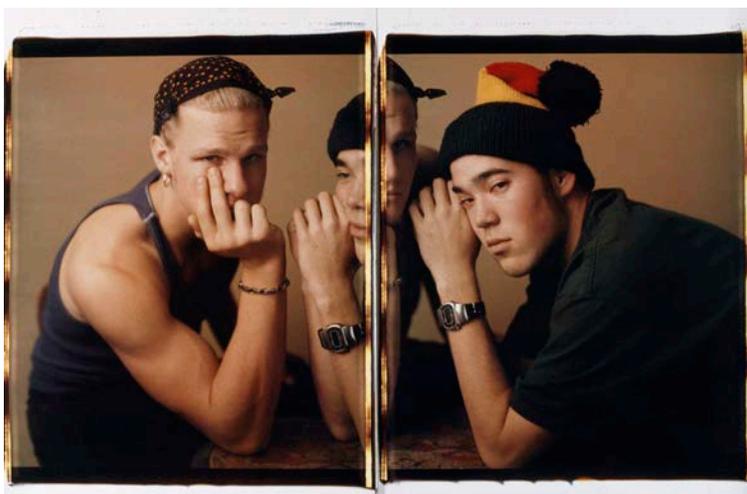
Installation view of "Dawoud Bey: An American Project," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (April 17-Oct. 3, 2021). | Photograph by Ron Amstutz, Courtesy Whitney Museum

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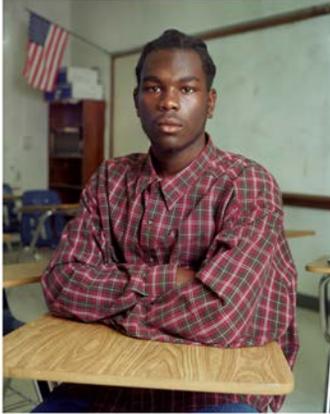
DAWOUD BEY, "Martina and Rhonda, Chicago, IL," 1993 (six dye diffusion transfer prints, Polaroid, overall: 48 x 60 inches / 121.9 x 152.4 cm). | © Dawoud Bey, Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Eric Ceputis and David W. Williams, 2018.82a-f

Dawoud Bey began producing large-scale Polaroids in 1991, when Polaroid made its 20 x 24-inch camera available to artists through the corporation's Artist Support Program. Artist friends such as Lorna Simpson, Whitfield Lovell, and married couple Kerry James Marshall and Cheryl Lynn Bruce, were his subjects, along with teenagers he encountered during a series of residencies at high schools and museums across the country. Bey worked with the 200-pound, six-foot-tall camera for eight years, experimenting with a variety of techniques including multi-panel portraiture.



DAWOUD BEY, "Hilary and Taro, Chicago, IL," 1992 (two dye diffusion transfer prints, Polaroids, overall: 30 1/8 x 44 inches / 76.5 x 111.8cm); Frame: 33 3/4 x 47 7/16 x 1 3/4 inches / 85.7 x 120.5 x 4.4 cm). | © Dawoud Bey, Whitney Museum of American Art, Purchase with funds from the Photography Committee, 94.18a-b

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I am a hardworking man and I am black.
I have a nice smile and nice long hair.

Gerard

DAWOUD BEY, "Gerard, Edgewater High School, Orlando, FL," from Class Pictures, 2003 (inkjet print, 40 x 32 inches / 101.6 x 81.3 cm). | © Dawoud Bey, Courtesy the artist, Sean Kelly Gallery, Stephen Daiter Gallery, and Rena Bransten Gallery

Dawoud Bey embarked on his Class Pictures (1992–2006) series during a residency at the Smart Museum of Art in Chicago. He made portraits of teenage students, inviting them to sit for photographs in empty classrooms in between class periods and submit autobiographical statements to accompany their images.



I can speak four languages, I am an actress, and when I was about thirty seconds old I reached up and took my dad's glasses off of his face. When I was eight years old, I visited my cousin's school in India. They didn't have a roof, so during the monsoons they got rained on. When I went home, I raised enough money to build them a roof and buy some school supplies.

Usha

DAWOUD BEY, "Usha, Gateway High School, San Francisco, CA," from Class Pictures, 2006 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 40 x 32 inches / 101.6 x 81.3 cm); Frame: 40 3/4 x 32 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, Stephen Daiter Gallery, and Rena Bransten Gallery

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Installation view of "Dawoud Bey: An American Project," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (April 17-Oct. 3, 2021). | Photograph by Ron Amstutz, Courtesy Whitney Museum



DAWOUD BEY, "Don Sledge and Moses Austin," from *The Birmingham Project*, 2012 (pigmented inkjet prints, Each: 40 x 32 inches / 101.6 x 81.3 cm); Framed, each: 41 1/8 x 33 1/8 x 2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Rennie Collection, Vancouver

Dawoud Bey commemorated the 50th anniversary of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., with a series of diptychs. Carried out Sept. 15, 1963, by the Ku Klux Klan, the act of terror killed four Black girls. Later that day, two Black boys were murdered in racially motivated incidents. Bey's photographs feature Birmingham residents—boys and girls the same age as the victims were when they were killed, paired with adults 50 years older, the age they would have been if they had lived.

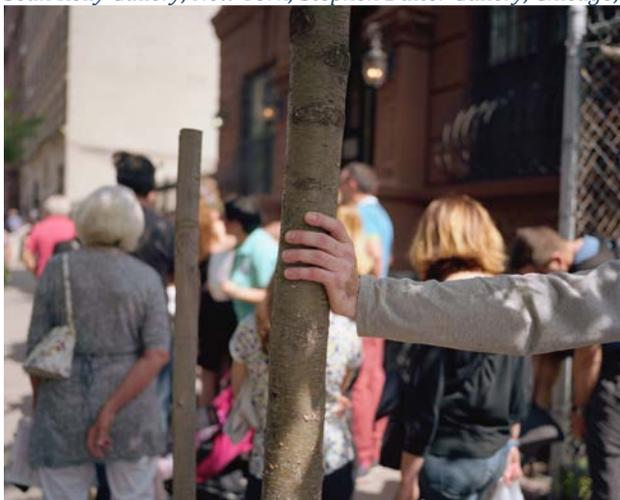
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DAWOUD BEY, "Mathis Menefee and Cassandra Griffin," from *The Birmingham Project*, 2012 (pigmented inkjet prints, Each: 40 x 32 inches / 101.6 x 81.3 cm; Framed, each: 41 1/8 x 33 1/8 x 2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Rennie Collection, Vancouver



DAWOUD BEY, "Girls, Ornaments, and Vacant Lot," from *Harlem Redux*, 2016 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 40 3/8 x 48 1/4 x 2 inches; Framed: 40 3/8 x 48 3/8 x 2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco

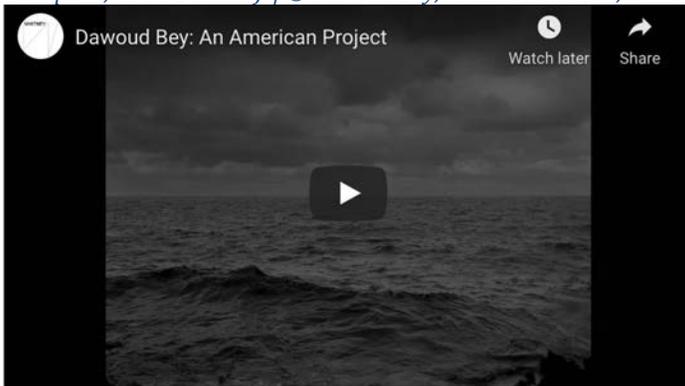


DAWOUD BEY, "Tourists, Abyssinian Baptist Church," from *Harlem Redux*, 2016 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 40 3/8 x 48 1/4 x 2 inches; Framed: 40 3/8 x 48 3/8 x 2 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco

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DAWOUD BEY, "Untitled #1 (Picket Fence and Farmhouse), from *Night Coming Tenderly, Black*," 2017 (gelatin silver print, 48 x 55 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Rennie Collection, Vancouver



Photographer Dawoud Bey introduces his exhibition "An American Project" and explains the significance of his subjects and his approach to image making. | Video by Whitney Museum

TOP IMAGE: DAWOUD BEY, "A Young Man Resting on an Exercise Bike, Amityville, NY," 1988 (pigmented inkjet print, printed 2019, 30 x 40 inches / 76.2 x 101.6 cm); Frame: 41 1/8 x 50 1/8 x 2 1/8 inches). | © Dawoud Bey, Collection of the artist. Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco

Over the course of the exhibition, Dawoud Bey has been in conversation with artist Torkwase Dyson and Jason Moran, the artist, musician, and composer. He also delivered the Whitney Museum's 2021 Walter Annenberg Lecture on Sept. 14

FIND MORE Dawoud Bey's Whitney museum survey coincides with "In This Here Place," his first exhibition with Sean Kelly Gallery in New York

READ MORE In 2020, Dawoud Bey was named one of The Greats and was profiled by The New York Times "T" magazine

BOOKSHELF

A major volume, "Dawoud Bey: Seeing Deeply" explores Chicago photographer Dawoud Bey's work over the past 40 years. Also consider "Dawoud Bey: Two American Projects" and "Dawoud Bey on Photographing People and Communities: The Photography Workshop Series."