
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Andre D. Wagner, *Manhattan*, NY, 2017.

The Culture From Which I Sprang

Participating Artists: Dewey Crumpler, Wadsworth Jarrell, Gordon Parks, Greg Rick, Andre D. Wagner and Philemona Williamson

July 13 - August 23, 2024

Jenkins Johnson Gallery announces its West Coast exhibition *The Culture From Which I Sprang*, commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It features work by Dewey Crumpler, Wadsworth Jarrell, Gordon Parks, Greg Rick, Andre D. Wagner and Philemona Williamson.

The exhibition title is a quote from Richard Wright's, acclaimed autobiography *Black Boy*: "This was the culture from which I sprang. This was the terror from which I fled". Wright's novel recounts the agonizing years of the Jim Crow Laws between the years of 1912 to 1927 following his childhood and young adulthood. Delving into the complexity of the south from which he "sprung", Wright grapples with achieving his dream despite being forced into a society and culture that proclaimed otherwise.

The signing of the Civil Rights Act not only marked the prohibition of discrimination based on color, race, religion, sex or national origin, but it also gave an end to the Jim Crow Laws. Despite this landmark civil rights and labor law, many achievements and hard-won rights are under threat once again in the 21st century. This exhibition brings artists to the forefront whose work recognizes a call to action, who respect sacrifices of the past while continuing to fight for a vibrant future.



Wadsworth Jarrell, *Revolutionary*, 1972.

Dewey Crumpler creates surreal experiences that merge video, mixed media, sculpture, and traditional painting techniques. Crumpler examines themes of race, capitalism, and the history of oppression that continue to transcend boundaries. He has long been preoccupied with the ways in which objects can be sites of exploration for what it means to be Black, bringing light to the aesthetic freedom that leads to Black liberation. Recently, Crumpler turned to examining contemporary capitalism and the shipping industry with its connections to the Transatlantic slave trade. He renders nautical vessels, shipping pallets, and containers that flit between abstraction and representation within this body work.

Wadsworth Jarrell is a painter, photographer, and founding member of the infamous black artist collective AfriCOBRA. His pattern-intensive portraits, combining vibrant colors and Black Power slogans, depict his drive for political activism. AfriCOBRA is a Chicago-based collective of black artists who developed their own visual aesthetic in the art world to empower black communities. Along with his wife, Jae Jarrell, and the other founding members of AfriCOBRA, the Jarrell's interest in Transnational Black Aesthetics led them to create one of the most distinctive visual voices in 20th Century American art. Characteristics of the classic AfriCOBRA look are vibrant "Cool-Aid" colors, bold text and positive images of Black people, essential to everyday life in the community from which the movement emerged. Jarrell documented the musical life that flourished in Chicago in the late 1960s-1970s and was a member of the Organization of Black American Culture that painted the "Rhythm and Blues" section of The Wall of Respect mural in the South Side of Chicago. Currently, he continues to experiment in his practice with past and present topics surrounding Blackness.

Gordon Parks was one of the seminal figures of twentieth-century photography and was a humanitarian deeply committed to social justice. As the first Black photographer for Life Magazine, he documented crucial aspects of American culture from the 1940s to 2006, focusing on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life, often putting himself at risk to capture pivotal moments in history. In addition to his photography, Parks was a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker, engaging with many leading figures of his era, from politicians and artists to athletes and celebrities. His extraordinary pictures allowed him to break the color line in professional photography while he created remarkably expressive images that consistently explored the social and economic impact of poverty, racism, and other forms of discrimination. A true Renaissance man, Gordon Parks passed away in 2006.

Greg Rick confronts the history of our turbulent political and cultural landscape, both steeped in violence. While rooted in his own personal experiences, his work transcends the individual, offering both a means of escape and a voice to grandiose aspects of myth. Rick's canvases straddle a precarious historical line, infused with humility and conviction, populated by archetypal characters that evoke self-exploration. He considers his work a form of historical painting, exploring the obscure, forgotten, and deliberately excluded narratives of global histories. For Rick, art is not a magical solution to the world's problems but a safe space to coexist with them.

Andre D. Wagner is a Brooklyn based contemporary photographer, exploring and chronicling the poetic and lyrical nuances of daily life and the human condition; using the city—particularly his own neighborhood and community as subjects. His artistic journey aligns with the rich tradition of street photography, capturing the essence of the American social landscape through themes of race, class, and cultural identity. Wagner's commitment to his craft also extends to the meticulous process of developing his own black-and-white negatives and producing silver gelatin prints in his personal darkroom.

Philemona Williamson creates dynamic and vibrant paintings focusing on themes of adolescence with dreamlike scenes that beautifully encapsulate aspects of time and memory. Williamson reveals fleeting moments that are at once unknown yet turned familiar, inspiring infinite narratives and inviting questions as her subjects entice the viewer. She explores the tenuous stages between adolescence and adulthood, encapsulating the intersection of innocence and experience at its most piercing and poignant moment.



Gregory Rick, *Gettysburg*, 2022.

Press

Jenkins Johnson Gallery

All images courtesy of the artist and Karen Jenkins-Johnson.

For appointments please contact: info@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com

1275 Minnesota Street, #200

San Francisco | CA 94107 | USA

+1 415.677.0770 | sf@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com

www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com

[@jenkinsjohnsongallery](https://www.instagram.com/jenkinsjohnsongallery)

