

Witness and Testimony
Cressman Center for Visual Arts
100 East Main Street

On view July 16-Sept. 3, 2021
Opening Reception Friday July 16, 2021 5-8 pm

For Immediate Release:

New Exhibit explores the impact of community and race on the aesthetic of Black Artists

Louisville, KY July 2021: The University of Louisville's Hite Art Institute is proud to present *Witness and Testimony*, an MA Thesis exhibition curated by recent graduate and co-owner of E&S Gallery, Cathy Shannon. The exhibition, featuring the works of male and female black artists from the renowned to the rising, from the self-taught to the formally trained, opens with a Meet the Artist reception **Friday July 16th, from 5 pm to 8 pm** and runs through Friday, September 3rd. The opening reception and exhibition are free and open to the public.

Utilizing various mediums and techniques the exhibition explores the language of black artists as informed by the communities that nurtured and encouraged them. It also seeks to show that the circumstances that fueled the social justice protests of 2020 and caused contemporary artists to bear witness and give testimony to this time, are not new and have in fact been happening in the black communities since the end of slavery. Participating artists include Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Leroy Cambell, Woodrow Nash, Sherry Shine and Kevin A. Williams.

Artists Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence gained national prominence during the Jim Crow era of the 1930s and 1940s, but in the more progressive northeast; Catlett in Washington DC's HBCU environment and Lawrence being in the Harlem community. The art images featured by each speak to the social injustices of their time and the humanity of people. They achieved national recognition and great distinction during a period when major art institutions and the general public ignored black artists.

The exhibition also features art by Leroy Campbell and Woodrow Nash, both of whom came of age during the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s. and their aesthetic approach was informed by the communities in which they lived and how they experienced life during the post-Civil Rights era. Campbell was in the segregated South but thrived in the Gullah community of Charleston, SC. because of his father's strong influence and insistence that his children find their worth in knowing their history. As a result, Campbell seeks to inform, inspire, and uplift. Nash came of age during the same period but in the heart of the industrial Midwest of Akron, OH under the strong influence of the black

power movement and his signature African nouveau works reflect the strength, dignity and pride of the African people.

The final two artist in the exhibit, Sherry Shine and Kevin A. Williams, both came of age artistically during the 1980s. Shine's upbringing in New York often involved trips back south with family to visit relatives and listen to their stories of the old days and how they survived and flourished during Jim Crow. She eloquently tells their stories and shows their humanity through her art quilts. Williams emerged from the close knit, unforgiving streets of the Southside of Chicago at the height of the war on drugs that ravished black communities. His illustrative technique captivated young urbanites and earned him street cred because of their positive messages.

Witness & Testimony seeks to present fresh voices and approaches that have not been featured in major exhibitions next to the work of those artists who have. The exhibit is concerned with how black artists give testimony to the humanity of black people, while providing a counter narrative to the negative portrayals perpetrated against blacks for centuries. For more information contact Cathy Shannon: 502.568.2005 for information on visiting hours please visit the Hite Art Institutes website:
<https://louisville.edu/art/exhibitions/current>