



Julie Moos (Canadian-American, b. 1965)
Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Pleasant (Hat Ladies), 2001
C-print, 40 x 52"
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001.05

Photographer Julie Moos shoots portraits of couples that address the complexities of human relationships. Among her series of portraits are couples who are either best friends or worst enemies; so-called “hat ladies” from a Southern Baptist church; or pairs bound through domestic service — such as a grown man paired with his childhood nanny. Moos shoots against non-descript backgrounds and asks the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions about her pairs’ relationships through behavioral subtleties reflected in body language, facial expressions, and styles of clothing and hair. Moos’ remarkable *Hat Ladies* project began with an invitation to photograph the ladies of the New Pilgrim Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The resulting large-scale formal portraits of these impeccably dressed women not only commemorate the dying art form of their fantastically adorned hats, but also highlight the spiritual and historical underpinnings of the ritual. Critic Robert Hobbs described this work, saying, “One hat lady connotes individuality, two imply a collaboration, and a series of pairs indicates an ongoing practice ... making them subscribers to set of known rituals.” In these striking photographs, Moos creates a documentary record of vibrant individuals while revealing many nuances of a rich cultural history that adds to a greater understanding of Birmingham’s past and contributes to its future.

Julie Moos was born in Ottawa, Canada, and she lived and works in Birmingham, Alabama, for many years. She has degrees from the International Center of Photography; New York University; the Sorbonne, Paris, France; and McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Julie Moos

- American, b. 1965 in Canada
- Lives and works in Toronto, formerly in Birmingham, Alabama
- In 1991-2 she studied at the International Center of Photography, New York; 1989-1991 New York University; 1989, Sorbonne University, Paris, France; 1987 BA, McGill University, Montreal, Canada



Body of Work

In her last three bodies of work, Moos has developed a signature formal device of pairing her sitters centrally within the frame, arms casually by their sides, their faces relatively expressionless. Moos' *Hat Ladies* series was exhibited in 2004 at the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach Florida. Using simple lighting and a traveling studio, Moos created the series of large-scale, formal portraits of women who belong to the New Pilgrim Baptist Church in the African-American community of Ensley in Birmingham. Other series include *Radiant* (2005), which depicts a group of sixth grade students from the Birmingham Elementary School as they prepare for a theatrical performance of *Charlotte's Web*. In August of 2001, Moos photographed pairs of Missouri and Illinois farm owners—husband and wife, father and son, a pair of brothers—standing amidst their crops.



Domestics (2000).

(2000-2001, *Hat Ladies* (Mrs. Foreman and Mrs. Daniels), C-Print)

Moos' work allows us to compare and contrast individuals through a formalism that, to use Allan Sekula's words, "neutralizes and renders equivalent" its subjects whose relationship is otherwise made clear in the series title whether it is the fierce competitiveness of the *Hat Ladies* (2001), the stark binary relationships that define adolescence as in *Friends and Enemies* (2000) featuring teenagers in an Alabama high school graduating class, or simply that of employer/employee as in

(2004, *Radiant* (Templeton with arm behind back), Polaroid)



(2001, *Monsanto Series*, Ken and Anita, C-print on Plexiglas)





Linda Besemer (American, b. 1957)

Fold #84, 2002

Acrylic on aluminum rod, 46.25 x 54"

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003.03

Linda Besemer treats paint as a sculptural, malleable instrument of expression. By painting multiple layers of acrylic paint on top of one another, Besemer literally lifts her paintings off its traditional canvas, linen, or panel base. *Fold #84* is from a series of works that include acrylic stripes and grid patterns mounted directly to the wall and draped onto the floor plane. The dried 2-sided painting here is folded over an aluminum rod. Sharing some characteristics with traditional painting, textile, and sculpture, but existing somewhere in between, Besemer's work challenges definitions and remains difficult to categorize. More recently, she began creating sculptural "slabs," in which layer after layer of vibrant acrylic color is built up to a thickness of up to five inches, then the mass is sculpted, revealing colors, shapes and patterns. She also includes more curved lines and optical illusions of spherical forms and waves. She stated, "Although my work has taken other forms (folds, slabs, sheets, zip folds) my fundamental interest in the detachability of signification as a way to re-construct form and desire continues to be an underlying motivation in my work."

Born in South Bend, Indiana, Besemer received her BA and BFA from Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1981 and her MFA in 1983 from Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. She teaches at Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA. Besemer participated in the JCCC Gallery of

Art's group exhibition *ColorLove* in 2002, and her work was in the group exhibition *Queer Abstraction* at the Nerman Museum in 2019/2020.

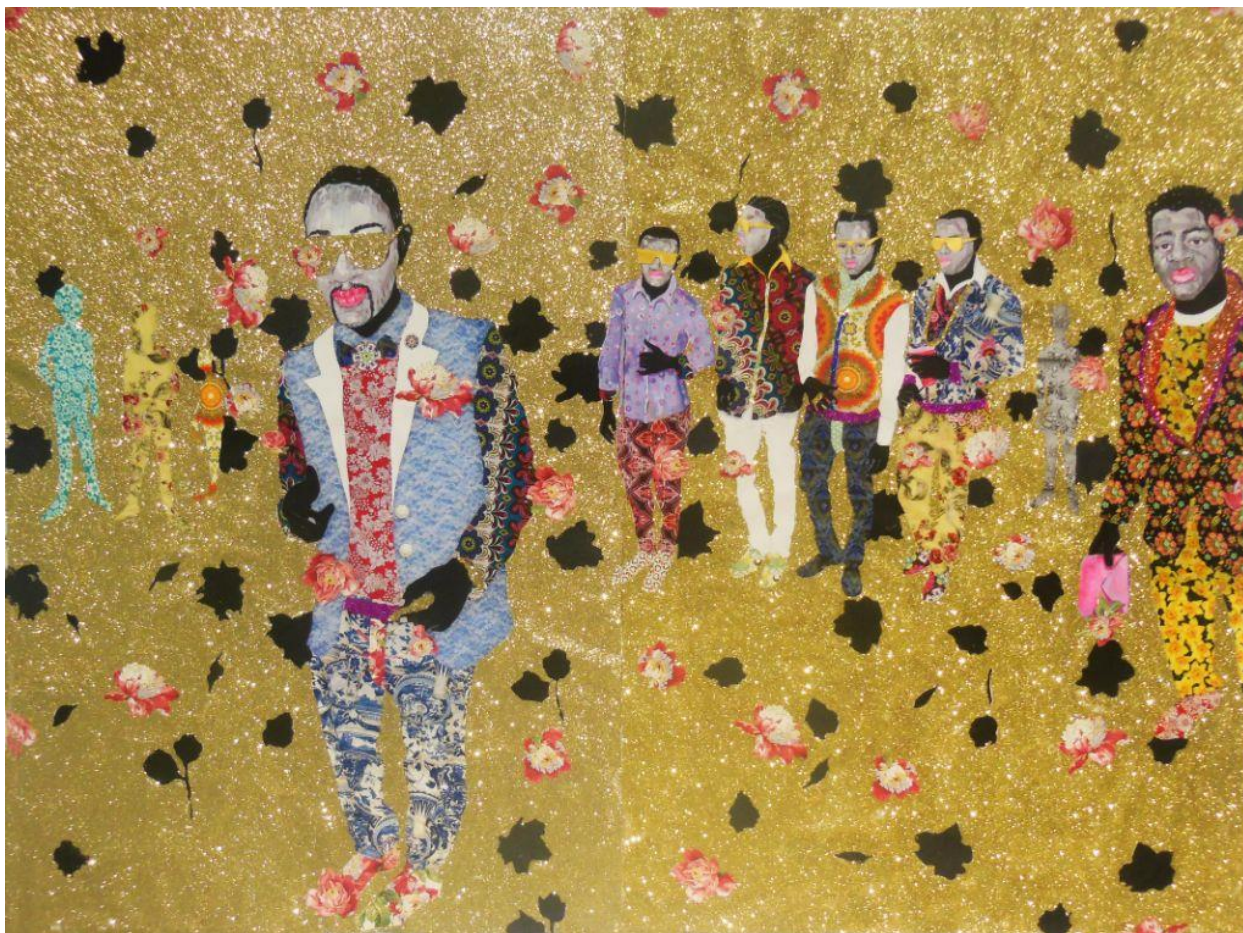
2019 exhibition label:

Linda Besemer has been producing abstract paintings that reflect her identity for more than four decades. During the 1980s, she found herself torn between “my politics as a feminist and my sexual-cultural identification as a lesbian.” Besemer continues, “...curators would ask to visit my studio, presumably to see my ‘lesbian-feminist’ work. Almost immediately upon arriving they would remark with disappointment —‘these aren’t feminist’— and make a quick dash for the door.” For those curators abstraction did not reflect feminism, but only propelled the status of iconic, heterosexual male artists associated with it. In turn Besemer developed a unique approach to producing abstract art that upends this. In *Fold #84*, for example, Besemer recalls “hard-edge painting,” an artistic style rooted in the mid-twentieth century that features shapes or bands of color created from crisp contour lines. Instead of hanging on the wall, though, Besemer chooses to drape this painting over an aluminum rod. In doing so, she inverts the rigid hard-edge technique—and a longstanding tradition in art installation—and transforms straight lines into curvy, bending channels.

2019 book essay:

Linda Besemer carefully applies layer upon layer of acrylic to a glass or plastic panel, finally peeling off a double-sided, pliable sheet of paint covered in intricate plaids or stripes. Hung unevenly with each side exposed over a metal dowel, Besemer’s brilliantly colored sheets of acrylic may be mistaken at first glance for beach towels or picnic blankets. The physical form and visual motifs of her paintings share a kinship with historically feminine crafts including weaving and sewing and call to mind domestic tasks such as laundry. For Besemer, it’s the lack of canvas support that constitutes the feminist underpinnings of her work. Exposed as a graduate student to feminist critiques of formalism that interpreted the act of applying paint to canvas as a metaphor for male domination, the artist decided to completely detach paint from all supports, eliminating the figure/ground binary. The resulting thin, elastic slabs of paint confuse distinctions between painting and sculpture, and her practice of exhibiting these hybrid works folded over a metal rod confounds traditional relationships to gallery walls and floors. Despite their rigorous conceptual underpinning, there’s a playfulness to Besemer’s work. “I’ve always thought of my paintings as humorous,” she remarks. “I’m not interested in the ironic, it seems so mean-spirited and cynical. But a good laugh can be shared by all.”

Linda Besemer received a BFA from Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1981, and an MFA from the Tyler School of Art, Temple University, in Philadelphia, in 1983. — Theresa Bembnister



Ebony G. Patterson (Jamaican, b. 1981)

Untitled Lightz II, 2013

Mixed media on paper

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.03

Gift of the H Tony and Marti Oppenheimer Foundation

Ebony G. Patterson's body of work explores constructions of the masculine image within Dancehall culture. She challenges traditional notions of beauty and gender ideals within so called 'popular black' culture, examining the similarities and differences between 'camp aesthetics' – the use of feminine gendered adornment – in the construction of urban masculinity. In this work from her *Until You See Them* series, Patterson raises questions about body politics, performance of gender, beauty and stereotyping, and body and ritual. By increasing her use of mixed media, her work has become more decorative, decadent, iconic and confrontational. In *Untitled Lightz II*, Patterson's signature, monumental mug-shot portraits have grown into a complex grouping of full figures, starting with sourced images of men from Jamaican party sites. The models pose themselves, and they are aware of the camera without looking directly at it. Notions of the feminine, fashion, pattern, decoration and pastiche abound in this work-on-paper. The busy background provides a curtain of mystery, and the bleached faces are even more visible with the added rhinestone bling. Patterson had a solo exhibition called *dy/nas/ty* featuring tapestries and installation sculpture at the Nerman Museum in 2014.

Ebony G. Patterson received an Honors Diploma in painting from the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts, Kingston, Jamaica, in 2004. She earned an MFA in printmaking/drawing from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2006.

Ebony G. Patterson

- Jamaican, b. 1981 born in Kingston
- 2006 MFA, Washington University in St. Louis; 2004 honors diploma in Painting, Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston
- Lives and works in Lexington, KY where she is an Assistant Professor in Painting at the University of Kentucky
- ebonygpatterson.com



Body of Work

In her large-scale, mixed-media works on paper and installations, Ebony Patterson explores contemporary notions of fashion and masculine beauty, considering practices like skin bleaching, eyebrow shaping, and flamboyant dressing that are common among dancehall culture, and now in urban gang culture as well. For the tapestry works in her *Fambily* series, she starts with a modeling session to allow her subjects to “compose themselves in relation to the camera.” After the shoot, photos are then sent to a commercial weaver who feeds the picture through a computerized loom.

She has shown her artwork in numerous exhibitions, with solo exhibitions at Monique Meloche in Chicago (2011 and 2013) and Bermuda National Gallery in 2012, and group exhibitions including the National Biennial, National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012); *Six Degrees of Separate Nations*, Frost Art Museum, Miami, 2013; *eMERGING: Visual Art and Music in a Post-Hip-Hop Era*, The Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Brooklyn, 2013; *Aruba Biennial: Happy Islands*, 2012; and *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, co-organized with El Museo del Barrio and the Queens Museum of Art, NY, 2012-2014.

Artist's Statement

Self, metaphor and the body are pertinent interests in my work I seek to reference a beauty that is inherent in objectification while making specific references to the female body. For decades Feminists have sought to critique the representation of women within ‘visual culture’, through exploring notions of body and the feminine. They have challenged the so-called ‘male gaze’, perpetuated by white males within a patriarchal world as a reason for induced objectification of women. The feminist of the 1970s therefore sought to use female imagery as a means to empower and to validate the value and position of women within society.

While I empathize with the position taken by 1970s feminists, my interests in objectification articulate a different assessment. I seek to claim objectification as a position that may be asserted by the ‘female gaze’, while making clear references to the female body as objects. My explorations are excavations and observations that feed my own concerns with my own objectification. I find great appeal in decomposition, disease, female scatology, Jamaican obscenities, and environments that induce bodily objectification.



Brad Kahlhamer (American, b. 1956)

Eagle Fest USA, 2005

Oil on canvas

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005.31

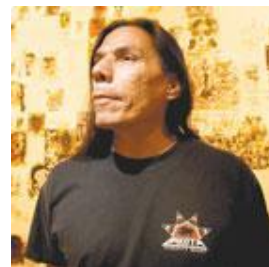
Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer

Born to a Native American woman in Tucson, Arizona, Brad Kahlhamer was adopted at birth by German American parents and was raised in the Midwest. After earning his art degree he spent ten years as an art director for the Topps Company in New York before becoming a full-time artist. In his highly expressive paintings, drawings, and sculptures, Kahlhamer explores the world of his Native ancestors and his own contemporary experience, mixing representations of the real and the symbolic worlds into what he describes as a visionary “third place.” The artist is particularly interested in what he sees as the spiritual realm between sex and death. In this large and visually aggressive painting, floating skulls of varying dimensions trail around an explosive desert landscape. Screeching eagles and shadowed buffaloes mingle with a crowd of linear caricatures, some suggestive of pop culture icons. Reclining across the bottom is a giant human skeleton described in some areas through thickly crusted paint, in contrast to the dripping washes seen elsewhere in the landscape. The teeming composition envisions cycles of life and death, violence and revolution.

Brad Kahlhamer earned a BFA in 1982 from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Brad Kahlhamer

- American, b. 1956 in Tucson, Arizona
- Lives and works in New York
- 1982 BFA, University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac and Oshkosh
- www.bradkahlhamer.net



Body of Work

Born to an American Indian woman, Brad Kahlhamer was adopted at birth by German-American parents and was raised in the Midwest. Kahlhamer spent 10 years as a road musician before moving to New York in 1982. He had a career as the art director for the Topps Company and has been a full-time artist since 1993.

Kahlhamer's paintings are an arena for him to explore the world of his ancestors and to create his own hybrid landscape that fuses his heritage with his own contemporary experience, scrambling the real and the imaginary. Kahlhamer fuses an exuberant embrace of expressionist painting with the visionary tradition of Native American art. Drawing from country western and the Native American rock music scene, the artist's visionary landscapes swirl with an atavistic energy; the paintings seem to have a sound that accompanies their visual rhythm. The great American bald eagle sweeps through the paintings almost as a surrogate for the artist, an intercessor representing his immersion into his own personal American landscape. Large scale works allow him to capture "total cosmology," in his own words. He is conscious not to make paintings with spatial divisions typical of landscapes, rather he prefers to use an axial ground instead of a horizon line, with floating images more like a ledger drawing. He creates narrative works in the Euro / American tradition of history painting, but his subject may appear without a background, or the two layers are merged. Kahlhamer has created his own world in these paintings mixing representations of the real into a visionary "third place," as the artist describes it. For the artist, his "first place" was his birth, the "second place" was his adoptive family, and his "third place" combines the two.



(2005, *Black Hills Beauty Boutique*, watercolor and gold leaf)

In 2005 he had an exhibition *Let's Walk West: Brad Kahlhamer* at the Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art. In 2006 Deitch Projects presented *Girls and Skulls*, an exhibition of works on paper. He participated in the 2005 *Beyond Bounds: Gold Rush* fundraiser at JCCC, and he had several works on paper including a wall collage "Community Board" in the Nerman Museum's inaugural exhibition *American Soil* in 2007-2008.



The Nelson-Atkins exhibited *Bowery Nation* in 2013.



Kerry James Marshall (American, b. 1955)
Untitled (Altgeld Gardens), 1995
Acrylic and collage on canvas
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999.16

Kerry James Marshall's narrative paintings are honest assessments of the social, political, and economic ramifications of his experiences as a black man in America. His paintings often focus on neighborhoods, and his figures are usually painted with dark skin to emphasize their visibility in a world where blacks have historically been invisible to the dominant (white) culture. In *Untitled (Altgeld Gardens)* Marshall presents a young man in front of a housing project. A boom box plays the lyrics "our day will come and we'll have everything," (recorded by the Ruby and the Romantics in 1963) which is tragic in regards to the actual place called Altgeld Gardens. Marshall's paintings in the series called The Garden Project, pointedly refer to places with names that suggest an idyllic existence which is far from reality. The actual Altgeld Gardens is a low income public housing project on Chicago's southeast side. The site is known for being polluted with hazardous wastes and has the highest cancer rate of any place in Chicago. An organization called People for Community Recovery has lobbied the state and federal government to investigate the high cancer rates in the housing project and their relationship to the hazardous wastes dumped there. AFDC stands for "Aid for Dependent Children."

Now based in Chicago, Marshall was born in Birmingham, AL. Marshall received a BFA in 1978 and an honorary Ph.D. from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Marshall is a MacArthur Fellow, having received one of the famous MacArthur "genius" awards. He is currently an associate professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago. The JCCC Gallery of Art hosted a solo exhibition for Marshall in 1995.

2019 book essay: Kerry James Marshall addresses the African-American experience through images that are culturally specific, implicitly political and subtly ironic. In his portrayals of the often-bleak realities of urban life, Marshall subverts stereotypes. That approach is evident in "*Untitled (Altgeld Gardens)*," which depicts an African-American male in an urban garden, along with a boom-box and what may be assumed to be a soft drink. Contrary to routine depictions of black men as potentially violent, he stares at the viewer nonthreateningly. The image is in keeping with Marshall's signature style of rendering figures with skin so dark that they stand out in bold relief against his urban backdrops. Thematically, "*Untitled (Altgeld Gardens)*," is related to "*Watts 1963*," a Marshall painting in which a housing project is idealized as a place of blooming gardens and bluebirds. In 2013, Marshall told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that, as a kindergartener in Birmingham, Alabama, he decided to become an artist after gazing at a scrapbook of clippings that the teacher had put together. "I've never really wanted to do anything else," he said. Marshall has been praised for his originality and insight, yet he is not narrowly defined as an "African-American artist." — Calvin Wilson

Kerry James Marshall

- American, b. 1955 in Birmingham, AL, raised in LA
- Lives and works in Chicago
- Received a BFA in 1978 and an honorary PhD from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, CA



Body of Work

Kerry James Marshall has made African American life the predominant subject of his art. His paintings portraying figures in urban and suburban landscapes are partly inspired by the narrative tradition of old master paintings. He stated, "I think as artists in the late 20th century, we inherit or are the beneficiaries of all of the stylistic and conceptual developments that artists from previous generations have handed down to us...I think we simply incorporate it and then find ways to synthesize all of those things into something that none of the artists who preceded us had access to or had an opportunity to achieve." As a younger artist he worked on a small scale with paper collage and wood panels. In the early 1990s, he moved to Chicago, and his apartment studio space allowed him to work on a much larger scale. Soon he was working on large unstretched canvases, keeping the collage aesthetic by starting with a layer of paper sheets in a grid adhered to the canvas with acrylic matte medium, and he would roll them up to store when he was finished so he could work on the next piece.

In 1994, Marshall became intrigued by the frequent use of the word "garden" in the names of Chicago and Los Angeles housing projects. He set out to explore the successes and failures of these much-maligned developments in a group of 5 paintings, a series entitled *Garden Project*. With these works, the artist, who had himself lived in Nickerson Gardens in LA, hoped to challenge stereotypes of public housing. "The projects were different then--considerably different," he remembers. "There were grass and flowers. There was a place where you rented your tools to keep up the lawn and garden. . .It had a huge gymnasium and a large field where we flew kites. There was a toy library and you checked out the toys for the day like you do books and returned them the next day...We think of projects as places of utter despair. All we hear of is the incredible poverty, abuse, violence and misery that exists there but there is also a great deal of hopefulness, joy, pleasure and fun."

Marshall has also created several photographic series depicting streetscapes, landscapes, and architecture. His video and sculptural works include the comic strip series *Rythm Mastr*, in which an urban superhero battles the forces of evil using a combination of futuristic and traditional African objects.



(1995, *Brownie*, Lithograph, Walker Art Center)

Marshall has had solo exhibitions throughout Europe and North America and his work was included in the 1997 Whitney Biennial, 2003 Venice Biennial, and two Documentas (1997 & 2007). His paintings are in museums including the Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City, the MCA and Art Institute in Chicago, Museum of Modern Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, LAMOCA, and the National Gallery of Art. In 2016 a 35-year retrospective was organized by LAMOCA, MCA Chicago, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Kerry James Marshall

JCCC Gallery of Art exhibition Jan. 15- Feb. 22, 1995

Born before the passage of the Civil Rights Act, in Birmingham, Alabama, and witness to the Watts riots in 1965, Marshall has long been an inspired and imaginative chronicler of the African American experience. Couching his visual language in terms of ironic ambiguity as well as romantic beauty, he makes paintings that undermine our need for clear-cut stereotypes and simple solutions. His outsized tableaux concoct a spell - equal parts magical and tragic - from a complex recipe based on such diverse sources as traditional fairy tales, African and Haitian parables, the symbolic imagery of Renaissance painting and the iconography of contemporary American media, from Harlequin romances to Hollywood blockbusters. Complicating his sumptuous, theatrical recountings, however, are social and political allusions that ground his allegories in the plain-spoken, often painfully frank, terms of the real world.

As Marshall commented in 1994, "I stylize my figures purely for effect, to be troublesome, to be extreme, to try to explore the cultural stereotypes that polarize us in our everyday interactions. Nothing is simple black or white. Both of these are extreme positions, and I want to take a position against the rhetorical stances people use to define themselves. This is a part of the theatrical spectacle of narrative picture making. I want a slow read; I want people to be intrigued enough by the arrangements to spend the time to unravel the narratives."

Chicago artist Kerry James Marshall was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955 and received a BFA in 1978 and an honorary Ph.D. from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, California. Marshall studied with acclaimed social realist painter Charles White and participated in the residency program at the Studio Museum in Harlem from 1985-1986.

The gallery guide features the essay "Telling Stories" by Terrie Sultan, curator of contemporary art, The Corcoran Gallery of Art (essay courtesy of Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art).