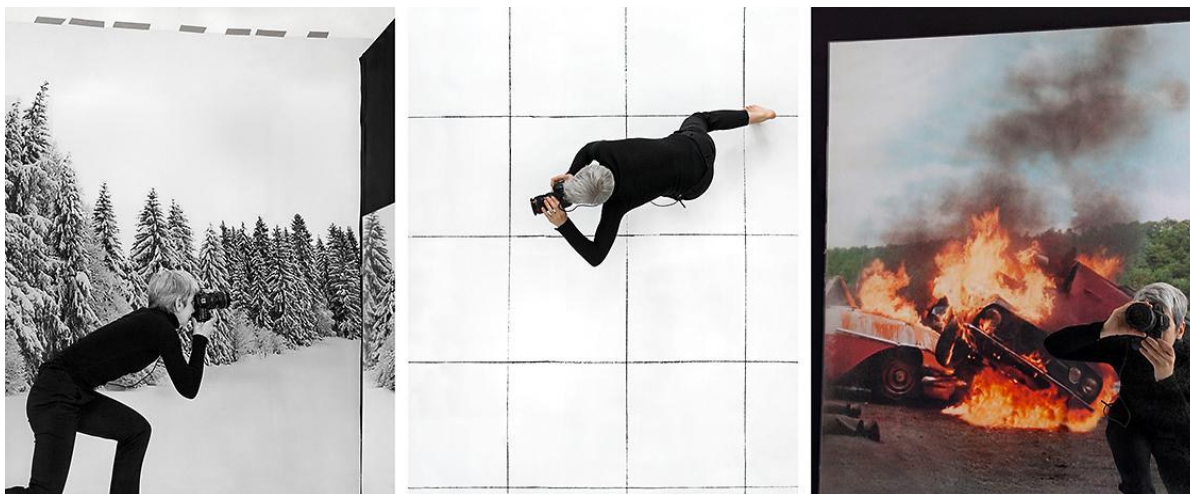


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FotoFocus Announces Featured Projects for 2024 FotoFocus Biennial: *backstories*

America's Largest Photography Biennial Returns This Fall for Most Ambitious Edition Yet, With Major International Survey of **Barbara Probst**; Solo Exhibitions by **Chip Thomas** and **Ming Smith**; Retrospectives of **Ansel Adams**, **Rotimi Fani-Kayode**, and More



Barbara Probst, *Exposure #185: Munich, Niederligerstrasse 68, 04.21.23, 2:35 p.m.*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist

(Cincinnati, OH — March 12, 2024) — **FotoFocus** is proud to announce Featured Projects for the seventh edition of the **FotoFocus Biennial**, which takes place throughout the month of **October**, with an Opening Weekend Program **September 26–28, 2024**. The largest of its kind in America, the FotoFocus Biennial programming extends across Greater Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, and Northern Kentucky. A collaborative effort between FotoFocus and the region's museums, galleries, universities, and public spaces, the FotoFocus Biennial is a **month-long celebration** of photography and lens-based art that unites artists, curators, and educators from around the world. **The Biennial returns with 106 projects presented at 83 venues, making 2024 the largest program in FotoFocus Biennial history.**

This year's artist commissions and programming center around the theme of *backstories*, referring to past experiences that may have happened out of view or gone unnoticed—histories that have not been told or have lacked perspective. These stories fill in the possible blanks,

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providing essential context for art and images. Programming will ponder the relationships between artists, subjects, and the circumstances surrounding them.

The thematic direction of *backstories* echoes throughout 15 **Biennial Featured Projects**, including an unprecedented exhibition shedding light on **Ansel Adams**' earliest works at the Cincinnati Art Museum; the first American survey of work by **Barbara Probst** at the Contemporary Arts Center, as part of an international tour; the first comprehensive museum presentation by Nigerian-British photographer **Rotimi Fani-Kayode** at the Wexner Center for the Arts; three exhibitions by Columbus-raised **Ming Smith** at the Columbus Museum of Art and Wexner Center for the Arts; and a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center with a newly-commissioned mural by **Chip Thomas**. Group exhibitions include ***Southern Democratic*** at The Carnegie, a meditation by 15 contemporary artists on William Eggleston's *Election Eve* photographs; and ***Memory Fields*** at the Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery, examining connections between culture, place, and memory.

FotoFocus also introduces a new initiative for this year's Biennial: **Call for Entry Selections**. These six projects, produced by independent, regional creatives in response to the theme of *backstories*, celebrate the emerging and distinct talents of our community. Selections include: ***Digressions*** and ***Another First Impression***, exhibitions highlighting life in the Midwest; ***Humphrey Gets His Flowers*** and ***The Trail of the Dead***, both cathartic explorations of personal histories; an intimate portrayal of refugee families in ***More Than Meets the Eye***; and ***Artist Run***, a photographic archive and tour of Cincinnati's historical artist-run spaces.

"*Backstories* is inspired by hidden histories and reclaimed narratives," said **FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator Kevin Moore**. "As a theme, it's meant to get us to think of the ways stories—personal, historical, political—have contexts that are necessary to look into. Photographs and backstories work on parallel planes."

"FotoFocus is delighted to once again partner with local, regional, and global artists and institutions to bring exceptional programming to Cincinnati and beyond," said **FotoFocus Executive Director Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth**. "We are eager to welcome attendees from all over the world to our biggest biennial yet."

FOTOFOCUS CREATIVE TEAM

- Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth, Executive Director
- Kevin Moore, Artistic Director and Curator
- Carissa Barnard, Director of Curatorial Strategy



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2024 FOTOFOCUS BIENNIAL GUEST CURATORS

- Asa Featherstone IV, Independent Curator and Artist, Cincinnati, OH
- Sso-Rha Kang, Curator at The Carnegie, Cincinnati, OH
- Kelly Kivland, Director and Lead Curator at Michigan Central, Detroit, MI
- Phillip March Jones, Founder and Curator at Large at Institute 193, Lexington, KY
- Brooke A. Minto, Executive Director and CEO at the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
- Mark Sealy, Ph.D., Executive Director at Autograph ABP, London, UK
- Rebecca Senf, Ph.D., Chief Curator at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
- Nathaniel M. Stein, Ph.D., Curator of Photography at the Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH
- Elissa Yancey, Executive and Creative Director at A Picture's Worth, Cincinnati, OH

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2024 FOTOFOCUS BIENNIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Featured Projects

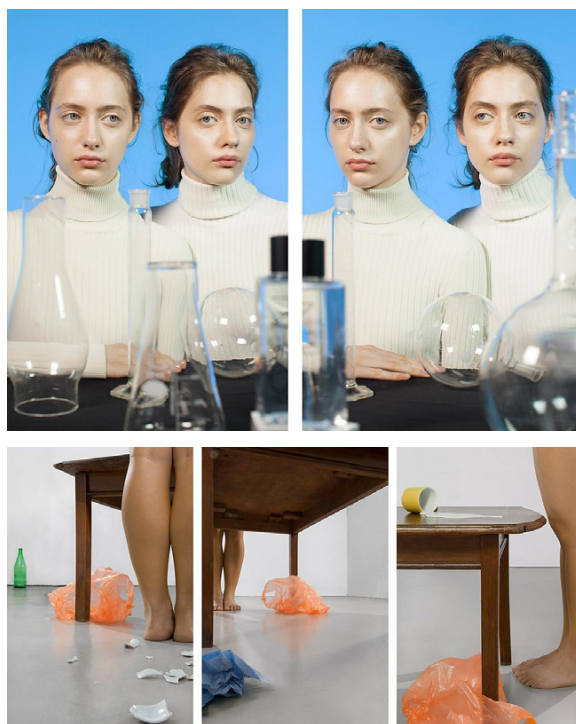
Barbara Probst: Subjective Evidence

September 27, 2024–February 9, 2025

Contemporary Arts Center

Curated by FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator **Kevin Moore**, ***Subjective Evidence*** is the first American survey of German photographer **Barbara Probst**.

Spanning her 25-year career, the retrospective includes Probst's signature *Exposure* series of multiple views of a single scene, shot simultaneously via a radio-controlled system. Probst's quasi-three-dimensional approach elicits the question of visual authority and truth in the face of multiple perspectives.



Top: Barbara Probst, *Exposure #124: Brooklyn, Industria Studios, 39 South 5th St, 04.13.17, 10:39 a.m.*, 2017.

Courtesy of the artist | Bottom: Barbara Probst, *Exposure #147: Munich, Niederlingerstrasse 68, 09.29.19, 4:14 p.m.*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist

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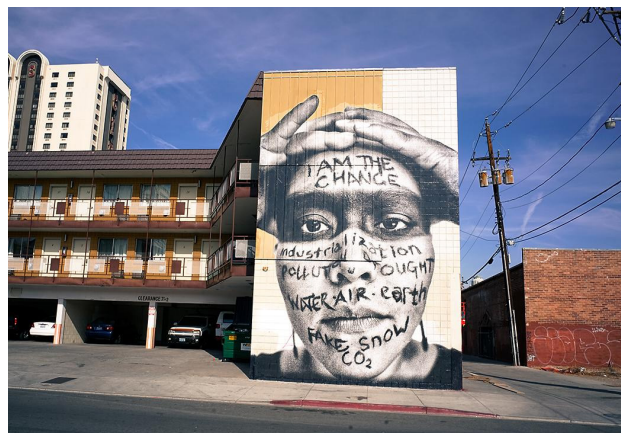
Chip Thomas and the Painted Desert Project

September 6, 2024–January 5, 2025

Contemporary Arts Center

Living among the Navajo people (Diné) in Northern Arizona since the late-1980s, photographer, activist, and physician **Chip Thomas**, a.k.a **jetsonorama**, has elaborated on his photographic practice in the years since. Combining photography and traditions of street art, Thomas both celebrates the enduring spirit and cultural traditions of the Navajo and calls out the rapacious effects of capitalism on landscapes and marginalized communities.

In 2012, Thomas developed the Painted Desert Project, a residency program in which he invited street artists from around the world to explore—and paint—in the desert landscape. Curated by **Kevin Moore**, FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator, the exhibition culminates in a public mural in Cincinnati. The exhibition also features examples of Thomas' original documentary-style photographs and their application as elements in public art, installation, film, and graphic media.



Top: Chip Thomas, *Step During the Day*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist | Bottom: Chip Thomas, *Rayshaun at Cow Springs 1*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist

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Discovering Ansel Adams

September 27, 2024–January 19, 2025

Cincinnati Art Museum

Consisting of over 100 artworks and objects from the collection of the **Center for Creative Photography** (CCP) in Tucson, Arizona, ***Discovering Ansel Adams*** provides unprecedented insight into the early career of **Ansel Adams** (1902–1984). Tracing Adams' journey from a 14-year-old tourist with a camera to America's most celebrated photographer, the exhibition brings together approximately 80 virtuosic photographs with unique archival objects, including the artist's handwritten correspondence, snapshots, personal possessions, and photographic working materials.



This exhibition is organized by Chief Curator at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona **Rebecca Senf, Ph.D.**, and presented in Cincinnati by Curator of Photography at the Cincinnati Art Museum **Nathaniel M. Stein, Ph.D.**, offering a unique opportunity for visitors outside of Arizona, where CCP houses a vast Ansel Adams collection, to encounter his archive.

Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984), *The Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming*, 1942. Gelatin silver print, image: 39¹⁵/₁₆ x 51¹/₄ inches (101.4 x 130.1 cm). Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona: Ansel Adams Archive, 76.562.2. © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

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Memory Fields

September 20–November 3, 2024

Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery

Curated by **Sso-Rha Kang** of The Carnegie, ***Memory Fields*** explores the nuances of memory and its uncanny ability to transport culture, traditions, rituals, and feelings through space and time. Oscillating between place and placelessness, seven artists of diverse cultural backgrounds, **Jesse Ly, Emily Hanako Momohara, Yoshi Nakamura, Migiwa Orimo, Kanthy Peng, Nayeon Yang, and Xia Zhang**, present a series of actions, systems, and moments that are influenced by regional, national, and transnational experiences.

Memories have the potential to conjure joy, grief, and nostalgia, with their residue carrying through time. Memories are private, yet their preservation is contingent on being shared, creating an intimate exchange of moments lost in time and resulting in a transition from private to collective experiences. The intimacy of this form of storytelling can highlight the intricacies of how artists navigate histories that are grounded in personal, familial, and cultural narratives.



Top: Emily Hanako Momohara, *Bamboo Wall*, 2024. Archival wallpaper, 72 x 108 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Bottom: Xia Zhang, *Safe In Unsafe*, 2016. Archival pigment print, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

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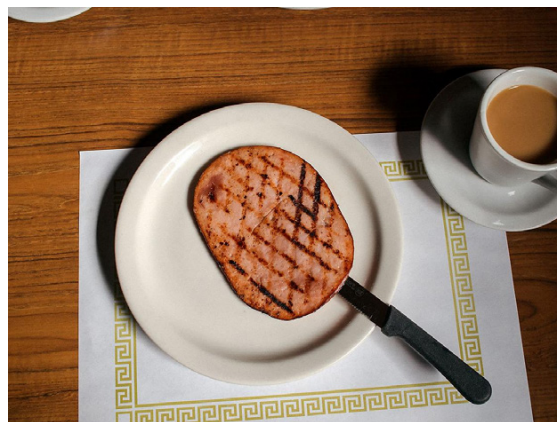
Southern Democratic

September 26, 2024–February 15, 2025

The Carnegie

Curated by **Phillip March Jones**, Founder and Curator at Large at Institute 193, ***Southern Democratic*** features 15 meditative vignettes, each comprised of the works of different artists actively examining the changing world. At the heart of the exhibition is a silent conversation with photographer **William Eggleston's** *Election Eve*, a 1976 collection of 100 original prints in two leather-bound volumes, housed in a linen box and limited to five copies.

Originally conceived as an assignment for *Rolling Stone* documenting the birthplace of Jimmy Carter, the Democratic candidate for President, Eggleston's photo series documents a South that is decidedly devoid of people and nevertheless brimming with signs of life. As the South continues to shift and change in ways that would have been unimaginable in 1976, the works of **Louis Zoellar Bickett**, **John Hee Taek Chae**, **Tag Christof**, **Rose Marie Cromwell**, **Dawn DeDeaux**, **Claudia Keep**, **Coulter Fussell**, **Y. Malik Jalal**, **Casey Joiner**, **Albert Moser**, **Amy Pleasant**, and **Polo Silk** offer additional perspective to the ever-changing region.



Top: Polo Silk, *Mardi Gras, Orleans and Claiborne*, 1999. The New Orleans Museum of Art: Museum Purchase, Tina Freeman Fund, 2021.73 | Bottom: Tag Christof, *Colonial Kitchen #6*, 2019. Archival inkjet print, 17 x 22 inches. Courtesy of the artist

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Rotimi Fani-Kayode: Traces of Ecstasy

September 20, 2024–January 5, 2025

Wexner Center for the Arts

Traces of Ecstasy marks the first comprehensive museum presentation of Nigerian-British photographer **Rotimi Fani-Kayode** (1955–1989). The late artist, born scion of a prominent Nigerian family and living in exile, balanced his heritage and queer sexuality through his photography. His work, embracing the camera as a means for reconciling the disparate facets of his identity, has received belated recognition in the years since his passing.

Curated by **Mark Sealy**, Ph.D., Executive Director at Autograph ABP, *Traces of Ecstasy* examines the full breadth of Fani-Kayode's career, confirming his status as a major contributor to his field and revealing him in a new light. The exhibition features key series of color and black-and-white photographs along with never-before-seen archival works, including selections representing Fani-Kayode's student years in the United States.



Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *Every Moment Counts*, from *Ecstatic Antibodies*, 1989. Digital chromogenic print, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy of Autograph, ABP London

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Ming Smith

September 20, 2024–January 5, 2025

Wexner Center for the Arts

The eponymous solo exhibition pairs artist **Ming Smith**'s first photographic series with new work. The exhibition, curated by **Kelly Kivland**, Director and Lead Curator at Michigan Central, illuminates Smith's introspection on spirituality, movement, and feminism. The centerpiece is a multimedia commission that animates a series of photographs, integrating film and dance while marking an entirely new direction in her practice. Also on view are recent collages and color photographs—all set within an ambient soundscape by her son, **Mingus Murray**—that continue her interest in Black transcendence.

In an adjacent gallery is an installation of Smith's *Africa* series, which premieres nearly 30 black-and-white photographs taken during her travels to Senegal, Ethiopia, the Ivory Coast, and Egypt over three decades, beginning in 1972 when Smith traveled to Dakar on a modeling assignment, her first visit to the African continent.

This exhibition is part of a simultaneous presentation of work by Ming Smith, also at the Columbus Museum of Art and The Gund at Kenyon College.



Ming Smith, *Masque*, 1992. Archival pigment print, 36 x 24 inches. Courtesy of Ming Smith Studio

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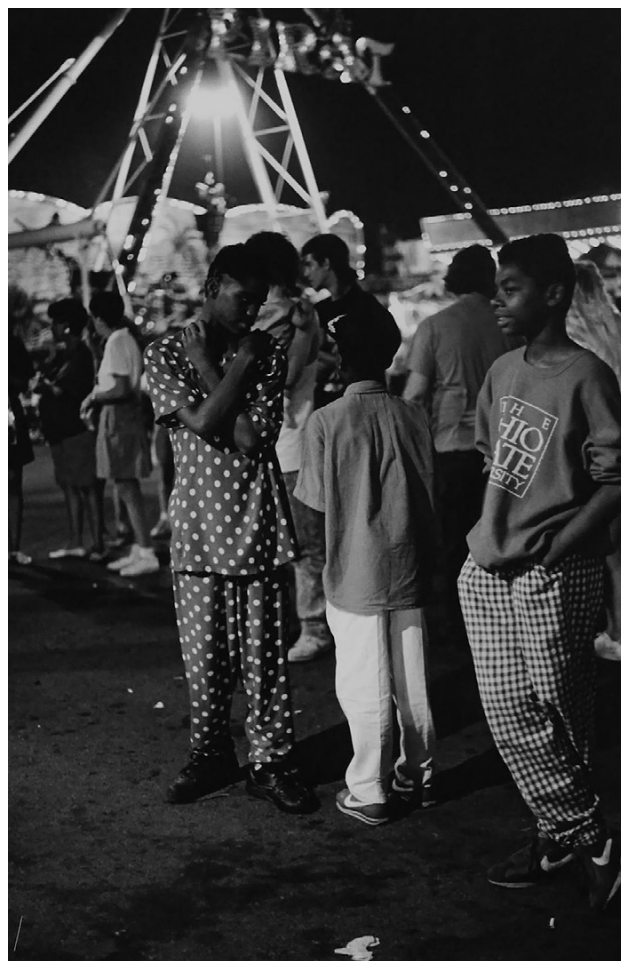
Ming Smith: Transcendence

September 19, 2024–January 26, 2025

Columbus Museum of Art

Transcendence, curated by **Brooke A. Minto**, Executive Director and CEO at the Columbus Museum of Art, will be the first viewing of **Ming Smith's** series of photographs through her hometown of Columbus, OH, in its entirety. The series showcases the influences of luminaries such as Nancy Wilson, Aminah Robinson, Toyce Anderson, Toni Morrison, and Linda Goode Bryant. Her narrative unfolds against familiar backdrops, from Mt. Vernon Avenue to Dr. Tyler's drugstore on the east side, resonating with personal memories of her father's pharmacy. The halls of The Ohio State University reflect familial achievements, while S. Wheatland Avenue bears witness to pivotal moments in the Hilltop's history.

Beyond documentary, *Transcendence* reflects the artist's reconciliation with a racially divided upbringing. Smith's works solicit discourse and a journey of rediscovery, blending the past and present. Inspired by Alice Coltrane's transformative music, this series confronts the nuances of Smith's youth with compassion and invaluable insight.



Ming Smith, *Untitled*, 1990. Archival pigment print, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

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Ming Smith: August Moon

September 19, 2024–January 26, 2025

Columbus Museum of Art

In ***Ming Smith: August Moon***, the essence of everyday Black life unfolds with breathtaking honesty and reverence. Smith embarks on a poignant journey through the streets of Pittsburgh's Hill District, intimately familiarizing herself with the landscape that inspired playwright August Wilson's iconic *Century Cycle* plays. Smith captures the spirit of Wilson's characters, immortalizing their struggles, triumphs, and the quiet resilience that defines their existence. With her deliberate use of blurred imagery and obscured details, Smith creates a visual language that reflects the complexities of Black life in America, inviting viewers to see beyond the surface. Through her photographs, Smith documents the fortitude and fragility of Black communities, built amidst the challenges of Jim Crow laws, redlining, and everyday racism.

Through Smith's lens, viewers are invited to immerse themselves in the beauty, complexity, and resilience of ordinary Black existence. Curated by **Brooke A. Minto**, Executive Director and CEO at the Columbus Museum of Art.



Ming Smith, *Greyhound Bus, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*, from *August Wilson Series*, 1991. Archival pigment print, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

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Call For Entry Selections

Projects produced by independent, regional creatives in response to the theme of backstories

Digressions

September 27–November 1, 2024

Art Academy of Cincinnati: SITE1212

Digressions, an exhibition and corresponding book, weaves through an unspecified space and unfolds through experiences, relationships, and histories of growing up and living in the Midwest. Anchored in the liminal, the exhibition is structured around written correspondence and recorded conversations between artists **Mark Albain** and **Joshua Berg**, as well as their friends, family, and colleagues. The conversations are unscripted and undirected to allow freedom, authenticity, and chance, resulting in a loose framework that highlights the elusive sensation of immediacy.

Change threads the narrative, exploring the boundaries of experience in the Midwest. Interconnectedness forms the fabric of ***Digressions***, revealing the intricate and interwoven nature of relationships, histories, and daily domestic life. These voices contribute to a broader understanding of the region, encapsulating the essence of the unspecific, but deeply personal space that shapes the lives of those who call the Midwest home.



Top: Mark Albain, *Cage's Night Blooming Cereus*, 2021. Archival inkjet print, 50 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Bottom: Joshua Berg, *Cleves, OH*, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist

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Humphrey Gets His Flowers

September 27–November 1, 2024

Art Academy of Cincinnati: SITE1212

In *Humphrey Gets His Flowers*, a combination of archival video, large-scale projection, mixed media collages, and photography, artist **Michael Coppage** revisits Humphrey Humpkick, the character he created nearly 20 years ago. The multi-media revival pays homage to the original character and his pivotal role in the artist's own backstory.

Originally conceived in Coppage's participation in the Mute-N-Heard public performance collective, Humphrey exists as an anchor for the artist, and his first narrative creation. Coppage presents the exhibition in collaboration with digital media artist, **Wendy Yu**, as an exploration of how, regardless of the passage of time, original ideas persist.



Michael Coppage, *Portrait of Humphrey with Paintbrush*, 2023. Digital print, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Whitney Dixon

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Another First Impression

September 27–November 1, 2024

Art Academy of Cincinnati: SITE1212

Organized by independent curator and artist **Asa Featherstone IV**, *Another First Impression* explores the nuance within communities of color across the Midwest. This group exhibition brings together six artists to present a collection of original photographs, essays, and interviews that invite the viewer to embrace the complexity of the Midwest's diverse tapestry.

Featured artists **Elijah Barnes**, **Asa Featherstone IV**, **Da'Shaunae Marisa**, **Njameh Njie**, **Andrea Sabugo**, and **Yasmin Yassin** represent BIPOC communities of Cincinnati, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh that have long been marginalized or overlooked. Their works capture the essence of the region's people, landscapes, and cultures with honesty and reverence. Inviting viewers to see the world through new eyes, *Another First Impression* is the first public project presented by **MIDTONES**, a creative print and digital platform led by Featherstone IV that supports Black and Brown visual artists in the Midwest.



Elijah Barnes, *Generational Strength*, 2023. Photograph from 120 film, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

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More than Meets the Eye: An Immersive Display of Narrative Power through Photos

September 13–November 3, 2024

Purple People Bridge

A collaborative exhibition and immersive experience, ***More than Meets the Eye: An Immersive Display of Narrative Power through Photos*** amplifies the stories and cultural strengths of local immigrants and refugees. Curated by **Elissa Yancey**, Executive and Creative Director at **A Picture's Worth**, the exhibition consists of photographs of, and provided by, local immigrants and refugees, as well as companion audio stories.

The **Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra** adds a layer of music written by immigrants and refugees to enhance the exhibition's narrative power, expanding opportunities for the public to connect with a wide-range of seldom-heard backstories of their neighbors.



Family Photograph. Courtesy of Shakila Ahmad

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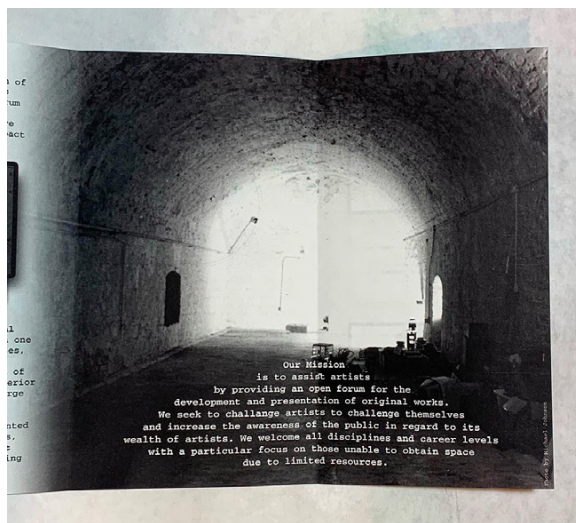
Artist Run: The Continuing Legacy of Cincinnati's Artist-Run Spaces

October 1–October 31, 2024

Various Locations

Artist Run: The Continuing Legacy of Cincinnati's Artist-Run Spaces presents an audiovisual history tour of underground art spaces in Cincinnati, including a physical bus tour, with a live host and interview clips from artists and curators during October.

This project, both an archive as well as an artwork and performance unto itself, is spearheaded by artists **Britni Bicknaver** and **Calcagno Cullen**, channeling the spirit of the DIY spaces being recognized with this project. The bus tour will visit a small selection of pivotal, formerly active spaces, with many more recognized via an accompanying digital publication.



Top: [SSNOVA Mission with background image by Michael Johnson], 2002. Courtesy of Emily Buddendeck | Bottom: [Performance by Andy Marko at Semantics], 1999. Photo by Maureen France

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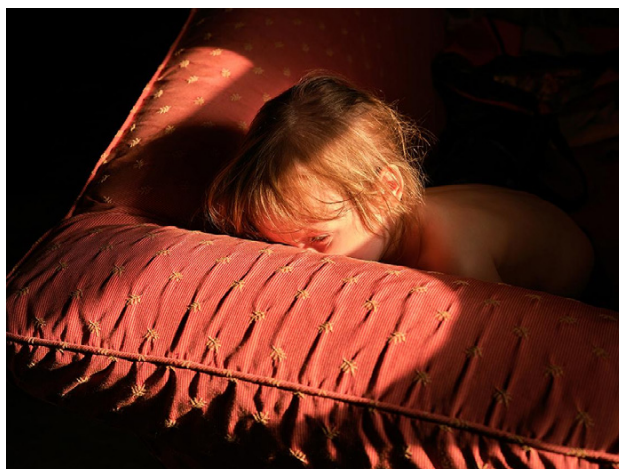
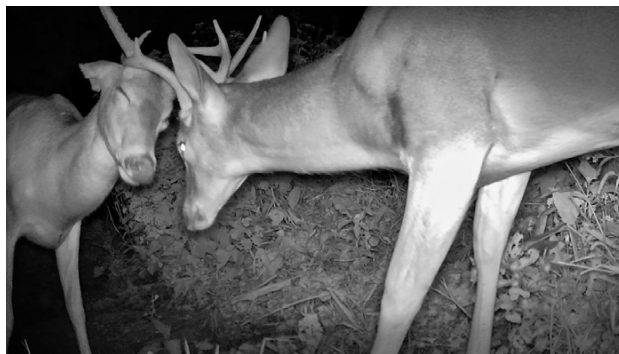
Rachael Banks: The Trail of the Dead

September 20–November 3, 2024

Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery

The Trail of the Dead is a visual anthology of the central region of Kentucky by artist **Rachael Banks**. Through photographic imagery, surveillance footage, and archived media, the works weave a story involving Banks' family and white-tailed deer, revealing shared experiences of trauma and the landscape understood as home.

Rooted in the death of Banks' second cousin in an alcohol-related automobile collision, the story reflects the artist's perception of inherited family trauma and Kentucky's high mortality rates for drugs, alcohol, and suicide. Banks observes themes of innocence, epigenetics, and nature, inviting viewers to ponder their familial history, the meaning of "home", and the impact of those who came before them on who they are today.



Top: Rachael Banks, *The Trail 9.19.22.3:07.am*, 2022. Archival pigment print, 17 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist
Bottom: Rachael Banks, *Bev*, 2022. Archival pigment print, 24 x 32 inches. Courtesy of the artist

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ABOUT FOTOFOCUS

FotoFocus is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art through exhibitions and public programming. Since 2010, the organization has engaged art and educational institutions throughout the region to support and expand the cultural dialogue around the medium that has come to define our time. With an emphasis on intellectually and academically rigorous programs, the organization provides uniquely enriching access to lens-based art, film, and practices inspired by photography. FotoFocus has collaborated with organizations, curators, academics, and more than 2600 artists and participants, to present over 750 exhibitions and programs.

Signature FotoFocus programming includes the **FotoFocus Biennial**, most recently held in 2022 with the theme *World Record* and will return later this year. Past editions have presented work across the Cincinnati region by historic and contemporary artists, including Berenice Abbott, Eugène Atget, Roe Ethridge, Zanele Muholi, Karl Blossfeldt, Francis Bruguière, Thomas Ruff, and Akram Zaatari. Other landmark events include the **FotoFocus Symposium**, which has contributed significant dialogue and insight to culturally relevant topics including the controversial Mapplethorpe exhibition, and the **FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series**, which has brought globally renowned artists such as Zoe Leonard and William Wegman to Cincinnati.

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