

June 16, 2021

Media Contact:
Tami Wroath, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Harn Museum of Art
352.392.7067
twroath@harn.ufl.edu

**Harn Museum of Art Examines Black Life in
Shadow to Substance Exhibition**
Features Sixteen New Contemporary Photography Acquisitions

GAINESVILLE, FL, June 16, 2021—The Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida collaborated with UF College of the Arts, Museum Studies Professor and UF Graduate Student in the Department of English to organize and present its newest exhibition *Shadow to Substance* on view from July 27, 2021 to February 27, 2022. The exhibition represents a chronological arc from the past to the present, and into the future by displaying historical photographs of Black lives and new work by Black photographers. Sixteen photographs by eleven photographic artists were recently purchased for the Harn Museum’s permanent collection and are the heart of *Shadow to Substance*.



Sheila Pree Bright, *The Rebirth of Us*, 2020, archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist, © Sheila Pree Bright

The exhibition is co-curated by Dr. Porchia Moore, University of Florida College of the Arts Department Head and Assistant Professor of Museum Studies; Kimberly Williams, University of Florida Graduate Student, Department of English, and Harn Criser Intern; and Dr. Carol McCusker, Harn Curator of Photography.

Shadow to Substance gives visual substance to Black lives through fifty-eight photographs. These include new acquisitions by Jonathan Bachman, Endia Beal, Sheila Pree Bright, Teju Cole, Omar Victor Diop, Earlie Hudnall, Ayana V. Jackson, Michael McCoy, Benji Reid, Brittanny Taylor and Charlotte Watts. Each of the new acquisitions illustrates a renewed aim of Black portraiture to express 21st century aspects of Black lives now and illustrates the

Harn’s commitment to collect and exhibit works by underrepresented artists. Additional photographs from the Harn Museum’s collection and University of Florida Smathers Library archives examine Jim Crow Florida, the Great Migration, and the Civil Rights Movement with works by Michna Bales, Bruce Davidson and Steve Schapiro, among others.

“Through beauty, strength and new narratives, the new acquisitions in the exhibition are thresholds for all of us to re-imagine Black lives. And to reflect on and expand our understanding of the past and present, and a new vision of the future,” said Harn Curator of Photography and co-curator of the exhibition, Dr. Carol McCusker. “I’m fortunate

to have curated this exhibition with University of Florida colleagues, Dr. Porchia Moore and Kimberly Williams. They shaped artistic choices, formed provocative themes, and designed unique educational programs for *Shadow to Substance*, a multidimensional view of history and of the Black Lives Matter movement that everyone needs right now.”



Ayana V. Jackson, *Sighting in the Abyss II*, from the series *Take Me to the Water*, 2019

Contemporary works in *Shadow to Substance* include Black scholarship that addresses new mythos in the form of Afrofuturism, a combination of techno-contemporary imagery with African diaspora histories. Spiritual rest through stillness is espoused by author Kevin Quashie in his book, “The Sovereignty of Quiet.” This takes visual form in the collaborative images of Charlotte Watts and Tricia Hersey’s *Nap Ministry*, which promotes self-care. There is affinity between photographs of north Florida farming during Jim Crow and the reparations, land reclamation, activist Black farming movement of 2020.

“The photographs in this exhibition are at once provocation and inquiry, joy and inspection, reverie and pain, expansion into infinite,” said exhibition co-curator

Dr. Porchia Moore, University of Florida College of the Arts Department Head and Assistant Professor of Museum Studies. “*Shadow to Substance* asks audiences to commit to the wisdom that there is abundance in Blackness.”

Shadow to Substance captures documentary moments such as Ieshia Evans’ 2016 protest where she offers her wrists for SWAT police to handcuff her during a peaceful demonstration, an image that went viral. The Moral Movement of Dr. William Barber encourages civil disobedience; he is represented in Endia Beal’s celebrated (winner of a 2020 “TIME” magazine award) portrait of the Reverend. And Ericka Hart’s iconic portrait by Brittany Taylor is a celebration of post-cancer strength and body positivity not as dictated by mass/social media but as is.

“The show encompasses an expansive breath of Black life that includes the quiet, tender ancestral recall of love and kinship that reverberates through the generations, but also the devastation of anti-Blackness tethered to America’s consciousness,” said exhibition co-curator Kimberly Williams, University of Florida Graduate Student, Department of English. “We evoke Toni Morrison’s discourse on love when she said, ‘Love is divine only, and difficult always.’”

The exhibition’s title, *Shadow to Substance*, comes from 19th century activist Sojourner Truth (1797-1883). Truth sold her portraits during cross-country campaigns against slavery and wrote on the border of her photographs, “I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance.” The purpose being: to have the ‘shadow’ (photograph) give substantive complexity to Black lives.

“As an academic partner with our colleagues across the University of Florida, the Harn is fortunate to have such strong relationships across many departments,” said Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield, Harn Museum of Art Director. “The



Brittanny Taylor, *Ericka in Soho*, 2016;
print 2021, archival pigment print

collaboration between Harn Curator Dr. Carol McCusker; Museum Studies Professor Dr. Porchia Moore and Graduate Student Kimberly Williams will allow the museum to better understand a greater variety of viewpoints and perspectives that we otherwise would be missing. The Harn believes that diversity of thought and opinion is critical to learning. As an educational institution, we are committed to acting as a platform for open dialogue, debate and discussion. *Shadow to Substance* and the programs we are offering will provide that platform.”

This exhibition is made possible by generous support from Dr. R. James Toussaint and Mrs. Sara Toussaint.

“When we learned that the Harn was developing a photography exhibition inspired by Sojourner Truth to illustrate the history of Black people in the U.S., we didn’t hesitate to offer our support,” said Dr. R. James Toussaint, presenting sponsor of the exhibition. “This display of photographs will elicit a wide range of emotions: anger and frustration, but also joy and pride. We hope our gift will enhance the viewer’s experience as they learn about each moment reflected in these remarkable images.”

Admission to the Harn Museum of Art is free.
For more information visit harn.ufl.edu.

About the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

Founded in 1990, the Harn Museum of Art is an integral part of the University of Florida. The Harn contributes to an interconnected, international community by integrating the arts and culture into curricula throughout the university’s system of colleges and centers. Its holdings include more than 13,000 works in five main collecting areas: Asian art, African art, photography, modern art of the Americas and Europe, and international contemporary art. The museum also has noteworthy collections of Oceanic, Ancient American Art and works on paper. In addition to rotating installations drawn from its permanent collection, the Harn organizes traveling exhibitions and virtual educational programs for adults, students, and children.

The Harn Museum of Art, at 3259 Hull Road in Gainesville, Florida, is part of the University of Florida’s Cultural Plaza, which is also home to the Florida Museum of Natural History and the Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Admission is free. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. For more information visit harn.ufl.edu.

###