

Art Museum
University of Toronto
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Justina M. Barnicke Gallery
University of Toronto Art Centre

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artmuseum.utoronto.ca

Art Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic* featuring selections from the Wedge Collection opens at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto

Art Museum at the University of Toronto
Opening: Wednesday, September 7, 6pm–8pm
Exhibition continues through to November 19, 2022

Toronto, Ontario (August 9, 2022)—The Art Museum is pleased to announce the presentation of *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic*, an international touring exhibition curated by Elliott Ramsey, curator at The Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver. It is dedicated entirely to the Wedge Collection as featured in Aperture’s recently published book of more than one hundred photographs from African diasporic culture.

The Art Museum at the University of Toronto will be the first venue to host the exhibition, from September 7 through November 19, 2022. Organized by Aperture, the exhibition will then tour to The Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver (February 24–May 21, 2023), and will begin its US tour at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, in June 2023.

The ethos of community is at the heart of the collection from which this exhibition is drawn. Established by Dr. Kenneth Montague in 1997, the Wedge Collection is Canada’s largest privately owned collection committed to championing Black

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artists. The title *As We Rise* is borrowed from a phrase that Dr. Montague's father would often invoke: "Lifting as we rise." By this, he emphasized the importance of parlaying one's personal success into communal good. He believed in investing back in the Black community to which he and his family belonged. As an ethic, "lifting as we rise" suggests an expanded sense of family, one that reaches beyond close relatives. As an exhibition, *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic* embraces this expansive sensibility, centering the familial alongside the familiar.

Familiarity resides not just in the exhibition collectively, but in the photographs unto themselves. Black subjects are depicted by Black photographers, presented as they wish to be seen. Largely, these subjects are aware of the camera, and yet they never seem rigid or unnatural. The gaze is mutual and consensual. But the imagery produced is far from uniform. It is as varied, surprising, and heterogeneous as the Black Atlantic itself. Like a family album, it is idiosyncratic.

The concepts of community, identity, and power intersect and merge, discernable in many of the photographs not as features to be singled out but rather as a recognizable essence; a recognition of the complex strength, beauty, vulnerability, and irreducibility of Black life.

As Liz Ikiriko writes: "The pictures here forefront the experience of Black life, in all its myriad forms: a marker of the histories and spaces (real and ephemeral) that transcend geographic boundaries . . . The collection extends out to a global diaspora and proclaims, 'We are home.'"

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The texts in this exhibition are adapted from the book *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic* (Aperture, 2021).

The exhibition includes works by: Raphael Albert, Henry Clay Anderson, Tayo Yannick Anton, Liz Johnson Artur, James Barnor, Dawoud Bey, Arielle Bobb-Willis, Deanna Bowen, Jody Brand, Kwame Brathwaite, Sandra Brewster, Elliott Jerome Brown Jr., Vanley Burke, Mohamed Camara, Kennedy Carter, Jorian Charlton, June Clark, Renee Cox, Erika DeFreitas, Jabulani Dhlamini, Stan Douglas, Louis Draper, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Samuel Fosso, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Courtney D. Garvin, Jérôme Havre, Barkley L. Hendricks, Leslie Hewitt, Ayana V. Jackson, Rashid Johnson, Aaron Jones, Anique Jordan, Seydou Keïta, Lebohang Kganye, Luther Konadu, Deana Lawson, Zun Lee, Oumar Ly, João Mendes, Jalani Morgan, Dennis Morris, Aïda Muluneh, Eustáquio Neves, Jamal Nxedlana, Lakin Ogunbanwo, J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, Bidemi Oloyede, Horace Ové, Gordon Parks, Michèle Pearson Clarke, Dawit L. Petros, Charlie Phillips, Afonso Pimenta, Ruddy Roye, Athi-Patra Ruga, Abdourahmane Sakaly, Jamel Shabazz, Abdo Shanan, Malick Sidibé, Xaviera Simmons, Ming Smith, Paul Anthony Smith, Sanlé Sory, Eve Tagny, Texas Isaiah, Hank Willis Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, James Van Der Zee, Nontsikelelo Veleko, Ruby Washington, Ricky Weaver, Carrie Mae Weems, Kehinde Wiley

Exhibition organized by Aperture, New York. Curator: Elliott Ramsey (curator, The Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver)

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Opening Reception

Wednesday, September 7, 6pm–8pm

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More information: artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/as-we-rise-photography-from-the-black-atlantic/

About the Wedge Collection

The Wedge Collection was started in 1997 by Dr. Kenneth Montague to acquire and exhibit art that explores Black identity. In addition to the Wedge Collection, Montague founded Wedge Curatorial Projects, a non-profit arts organization that helps support emerging Black artists. A Toronto-based art collector, Montague has been a member of the Art Gallery of Ontario's board of trustees since 2015 and has served on the African acquisitions committee at Tate Modern, London, as well as on the photography curatorial committee of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

About the Art Museum at the University of Toronto

The Art Museum is one of the largest gallery spaces for contemporary visual art exhibitions and programming in Toronto. The Art Museum organizes and presents an intensive year-round program of exhibitions and events that foster—at a local, regional, and international level—innovative research, interdisciplinary scholarship, and knowledge of art and its histories befitting Canada's leading university and the country's largest city.

About Aperture

Aperture, a not-for-profit, connects the photo community and its audiences with the most inspiring work, the sharpest ideas, and with each other—in print, in person, and online. Created in 1952 by photographers and writers as “common ground for the advancement of photography,” Aperture today is a multi-platform publisher and centre for the photo community. From our base in New York, we produce, publish, and present a program of photography projects, locally and internationally.

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Our Supporters

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