

DAWOUD BEY

Street Portraits

Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 23, 5-8pm

Remarks: Wednesday, September 23, 6:30pm

Exhibition Dates: September 12 – October 17, 2026

Stephen Bulger Gallery is pleased to present *Street Portraits*, our second solo exhibition of work by Dawoud Bey (b. 1953, New York).

Bey is an American photographer and educator renowned for his large-scale colour portraits of adolescents and other often marginalized subjects. In the late 1980s, Bey began making portraits in his communities in Brooklyn, Rochester, and Washington, D.C. This series marked the first time Bey transitioned from a 35mm small-format camera to the more perceptible 4 x 5 inch format. Using Type 55 Polaroid film, Bey created a reciprocal experience with his subjects: after posing for the photograph, each person received an instant 4 x 5 inch print. Bey retained the large negative, which allowed him to produce enlarged prints later in the darkroom. These magnified prints vividly describe his sitters, their style, and their presence, creating an emblematic record of the time at a scale that replicates the intimacy of a personal encounter between sitter and viewer.

In his essay for the book *Street Portraits* (MACK, London, 2021), Greg Tate writes:

These portraits attest to the power of “the Black gaze” – how Black folk’s eye-to-eye *looking-back* game can meet any righteous or even *reckless eyeballing* judgment the world might bring with an equal and opposing optical Super-Kryptonian heat-visioned (and *haute-visioned*) force – a stare, a glare, an inquiring dare, a wry comeback, an introspective indifference, a casual summation, an audacious insouciance, an Amazonian, eye-rolling snapback. And that’s exactly what you get in *Street Portraits*, a very real moment between photographer and subject, fully embracing of culture, time, and place.

Bey is the recipient of a 2017 “Genius Grant” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, as well as fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University. Beginning in 1998, he taught at Columbia College Chicago, where he eventually became Professor Emeritus upon his retirement. He is currently Critic at Yale School of Art.

Since 1979, Bey’s work has been exhibited and collected by many prestigious museums around the world, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Toronto Metropolitan University; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC; National Portrait Gallery, London; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; among many others.

Bey is represented by Stephen Daiter Gallery in Chicago, Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco, and Sean Kelly in New York.

