

50  
1974 - 2024  
the Gantt  
Golden Year

SEPTEMBER 6 – OCTOBER 3, 2024

# GALLERY GUIDE

VOLUME 4

HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS + CULTURE

Exhibitions Featured In This Volume:

*Pop-Up Exhibition*

**Forget Me Not**

SEPTEMBER 2024 - JANUARY 2025

---

**Qualeasha Wood:**

**code\_anima**

MAY 24 - SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

---

**Becoming The Sea:**

**Black Rock Senegal x Harvey B. Gantt Center**

AUGUST 9, 2024 - JANUARY 20, 2025

---

**From The Heart:**

**The John and Vivian Hewitt Collection  
of African-American Art**

SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 - JANUARY 20, 2025

# Forget Me Not

Archival photographs of everyday Black Americans  
from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

CURATED BY KIMBERLY ANNECE HENDERSON

SEPTEMBER 2024 - JANUARY 2025



Unidentified Photographer, *Portrait of Richard and Mary Wilson*, c. 1905, Photograph, The Photographs of William Bullard

**M**odeled after the popular Instagram project [@emalineandthem](#), these digitized photographs immerse the viewer in the visual histories of everyday Black Americans. The original photographs - some over one hundred years old - are preserved at collecting institutions across America, and beautifully illustrate the breadth of the Black experience that transcends time.

The inspiration for this work is revealed in a note from the curator, Kimberly Annece Henderson:

*"On my mother's side, I gasped when I found an American Revolutionary War pension record for one of many great grandfathers way back when. On my father's side, my stomach sank at the sight of an 1866 Freedmen's Bureau contract for the guaranteed servitude of another. In piecing together different narratives for their lives, perhaps my existence is the poetic device here."*

# qualeasha wood

## {code\_anima}

CURATED BY LEANDRA-JULIET KELLEY

MAY 24 - SEPTEMBER 22, 2024



*qualeasha Wood: code\_anima* explores identity, physical and digital boundaries, and the process of individuation through analysis of complex and socially accepted paradoxes. Defined as “an individual’s true inner self,” *anima* serves as a leitmotif in Wood’s introspective work, which examines the archetypes found within physical and digital societies.

Wood’s technical skills are evident in the digital collages of her tapestries as well as the colorful scenes of her hand-made tuftings. The materiality of these textiles (the warp and weft) are embedded with a “code,” serving as a symbol for the inner workings of the dual experiences felt by Black people, particularly Black women, as well as the multifaceted online identities that mirror or oppose our physical existence.

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE ARTIST

In *code\_anima*, my exploration delves into the complexities of identity, expectation, and erasure through the prisms of race, gender, and sexuality. This exhibition is a critical examination of the roles historically ascribed to Black women, which demand both a resolution to systemic issues and the simultaneous stripping of personal autonomy and agency.

This body of work draws inspiration from the concept of *\*deus ex machina\** – a narrative device that introduces an unexpected, external force to resolve a complex situation. This device allows us to highlight the paradoxical position of Black women in society – cast simultaneously as both saviors and scapegoats within a white supremacist framework.

The tapestry work in *code\_anima* prominently features selfies taken in mirrors – a choice that subverts the traditional modes of professional photography. These self-captured images reflect



Qualeasha Wood, *It's All For U (If U Rilly Want It)*, 2024, woven jacquard, glass seed beads and machine embroidery, 59 x 85.5 inches.  
© Qualeasha Wood. Courtesy of the artist, Gallery Kendra Jayne Patrick, Bern and New York, and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London



Qualeasha Wood, *come outside, (we finna jump u)*, 2024, © Qualeasha Wood. Courtesy of the artist, Gallery Kendra Jayne Patrick, Bern and New York, and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London

a more intimate, unmediated form of self-representation, challenging the polished, curated perfect image. By using the mirror as both a literal and metaphorical tool, these works question the nature of self-perception and external validation, emphasizing the fractured and often contradictory identities that Black women navigate. Embroidered embellishments, including the “Close Friends” icon from Instagram and the “For You” text from TikTok, offer the viewer an unfiltered peek “behind-the-scenes.”

In addition to social media, the work references erotic and fetish websites, such as Pornhub, to further discuss themes of desirability and consumption. This inclusion is crucial in order to confront the prevalent objectification within

***“These self-captured images reflect a more intimate, unmediated form of self-representation, challenging the polished, curated perfect image.”***

such spaces while reclaiming autonomy over the portrayal of Black femme bodies. These references serve to critique how societal values are projected onto bodies deemed “other” and explore the tension between visibility and exploitation. Other digital motifs include the use of memes, personal text messages, and designer bags, which punctuate the exhibition with both humor and poignancy.

The tufted works in *code\_anima* explore Queer self-expression and the impact of racism in early childhood through tufted scenes of Barbie dolls. Stemming from my disappointment in the lack of LGBTQ+ representation in the 2023 film *Barbie*, the work examines how ongoing failures of inclusivity have psychological repercussions. The

tuftings examine my own childhood relationship to innocence, whiteness, and sexuality by referencing my childhood memories spent playing with Barbie dolls. The work also references the Doll Test, a psychological study conducted by Dr. Kenneth and Mamie Clark

(circa 1940s), which revealed the internalized racism and self-hatred that segregation and societal racism ingrained in young African-American children, who overwhelmingly choose white dolls over black dolls.

- QUALEASHA WOOD

---

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### QUALEASHA WOOD

Qualeasha Wood (b. 1996 Long Branch, New Jersey) is a textile artist whose work contemplates realities around Black female embodiment that do and might exist. Inspired by a familial relationship to textiles, queer craft, Microsoft Paint, and internet avatars, Wood's tufted and tapestry pieces mesh traditional craft and contemporary technological materials. Thus, Qualeasha navigates both an internet environment saturated in Black Femme figures and culture, and a political and economic environment holding that embodiment at the margins.



While Wood's tapestries blend images from social media with religious, specifically Catholic, iconography, her 'tuftings' represent cartoon-like figures that recall the racist caricatures widespread in popular family programs of the early-mid-20th century and beyond. In these tuftings, Wood adopts a naïve aesthetic that calls on the nostalgia of cartoon animations and their association with racial stereotyping to unpack notions of Black girlhood. Despite their formal simplicity, the tuftings reveal a lurking tension drawn from the artist's own experiences of consuming media rife with anti-Black prejudice throughout her life. Where the tapestries are absorbed in consumption and cyber culture, the tuftings speak to inherited trauma and necessarily implicate accountability in the viewer.

Wood has exhibited at The Art Institute of Chicago; The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York); Hauser and Wirth (New York, Los Angeles, and Somerset, UK); Kendra Jayne Patrick (New York); Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, (London); and more. Her work is held in institutional collections, such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as international private collections. Wood lives and works in Brooklyn and Philadelphia, and is represented by Gallery Kendra Jayne Patrick and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery.

# BECOMING THE SEA

BLACK ROCK SENEGAL x HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER

CURATED BY DEXTER WIMBERLY

AUGUST 9, 2024 - JANUARY 20, 2025

## ARTISTS FEATURED

Tunji Adeniyi-Jones

Grace Lynne Haynes

Katherina Olschbaur

Sonya Clark

Devin B. Johnson

Tajh Rust

Nona Faustine

Heather Jones

Darryl Deangelo Terrell

Moses Hamborg

Chelsea Odufu

Ytasha Womack

**N**amed for the volcanic rocks that blanket the Dakar shoreline, Black Rock Senegal is a multidisciplinary artist-in-residence program founded by renowned artist Kehinde Wiley in 2019. The residency brings together international artists to live and work in Dakar.

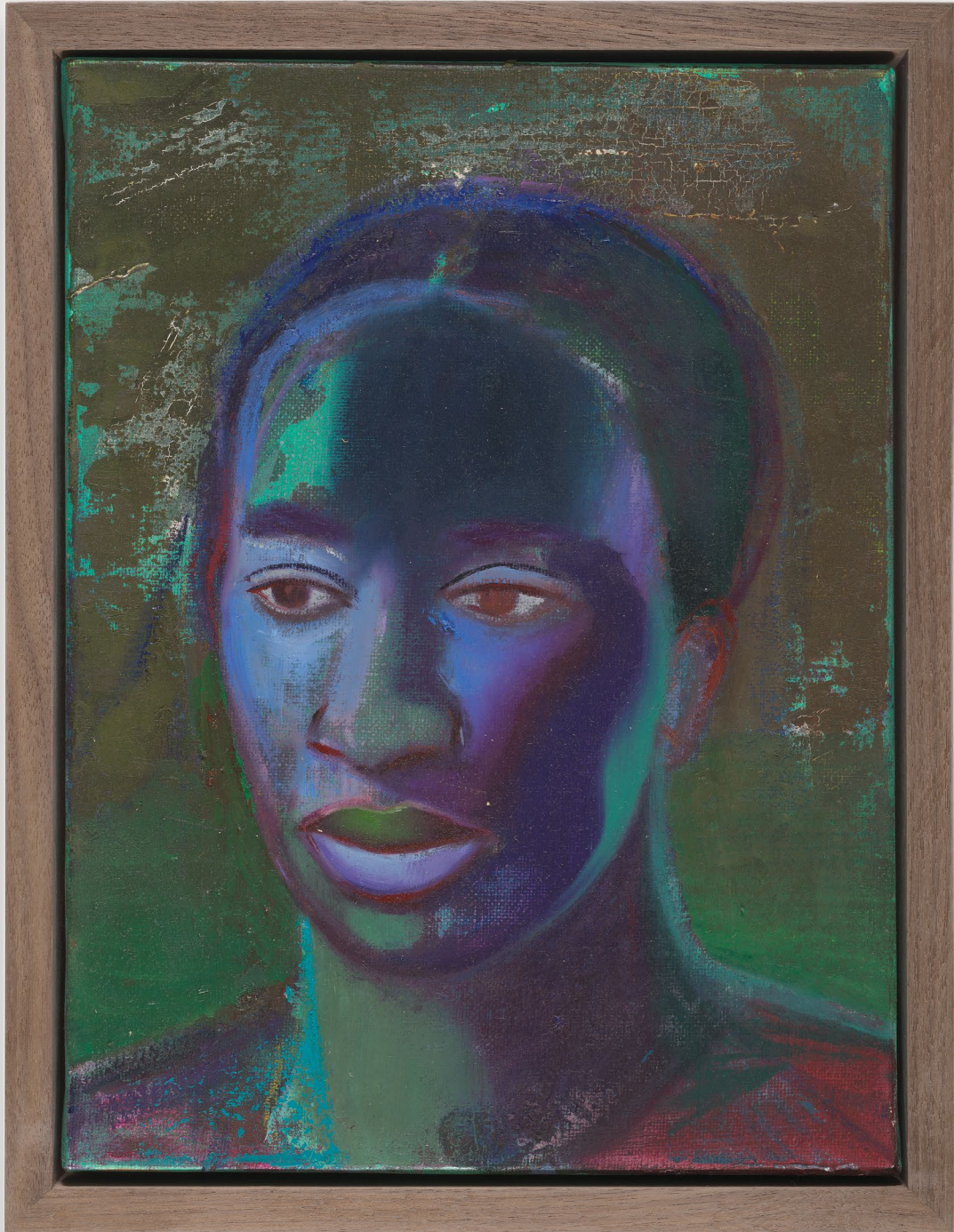
Inspired by Black Rock's proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, *Becoming The Sea* highlights 12 artists who participated in the first two years of the residency. The exhibition includes painting, photography, video, sculpture, writing, and installation. *Becoming The Sea* reflects the unique perspectives, techniques, culture, and traditions experienced by the artists during their time at Black Rock.

International artist residencies epitomize the essence of cultural exchange in the arts. They not only expand the horizons of the artists involved, but also strengthen the ties of a more inclusive





Devin B. Johnson, *The Rocks Took Ahold of My Soul*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Nicodim. © Devin B. Johnson. Photo by Lee Tyler Thompson.



and interconnected global arts scene. By living and working in a context that is often quite different from their own, artists are exposed to new ideas.

Dakar, the vibrant capital of Senegal, boasts a dynamic and thriving art scene that reflects the country's rich cultural heritage and contemporary creativity. As a melting pot of traditional and modern influences, Dakar has emerged as a significant hub for African art, attracting artists, curators, and collectors from around the world.



Tajh Rust, *Not Without Laughter*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

---

## ABOUT BLACK ROCK SENEGAL

### ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM



Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
Photo by Tricia Zigmund.

Named for the volcanic rocks that blanket its shoreline, Black Rock Senegal is a multidisciplinary artist-in-residence program founded by artist Kehinde Wiley in 2019. To support new artistic creation through collaborative exchange, and to incite change in the global discourse about what Africa means today, the residency brings together international artists to live and work in Dakar, Senegal for 1-3 month stays. The residency spaces were conceived by Senegalese architect Abib Djenne with interior design collaboration between Wiley, Fatiya Djenne, and

Aissa Dione. The residency is an invitation for artists to engage with Senegal's artists, history, traditions, and creativity. To date, Black Rock Senegal has welcomed more than 60 artists, from more than 15 countries.

f r o m  
t h e  
h e a r t

The John and Vivian Hewitt  
Collection of African-American Art

ORGANIZED BY HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER FOR  
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS + CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 – JANUARY 20, 2025

**F**rom the Heart celebrates the John and Vivian Hewitt Collection of African-American Art, an assemblage of fifty-eight two-dimensional works exploring the expression and passion of twenty artists.

The Hewitts' stewardship culminated in a collection of artwork by 19th and 20th century masters including Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, and Henry Ossawa Tanner. Through their 50 years of collecting, the Hewitts became close friends with many artists, and by the 1970s, they were hosting visitors in their home to showcase works by Hale Woodruff, Ernest Crichlow, Alvin Hollingsworth, and J. Eugene Grigsby, a cousin of Mrs. Hewitt.

In 1998, Bank of America acquired the collection from the Hewitts and pledged it to the then-named Afro-American Cultural Center. For 10 years, the Hewitt collection toured the United States before showing at the newly opened Harvey B. Gantt Center in 2009. *From the Heart* serves as the first time the Hewitt Collection will be exhibited in its entirety since 2015.

In 2004, Mrs. Hewitt stated in the Baltimore Sun, "We bought from the heart, the things that moved us and that we liked." As the Gantt celebrates its 50th anniversary, we reflect on the Hewitts' legacy - one that continues to move and inspire us. For the Gantt Golden Year, we present the Hewitts' priceless and timeless gift, from our heart to yours.

- WRITTEN BY LEANDRA-JULIET KELLEY, BA, MA, MSC  
DIRECTOR, COLLECTIONS + CURATORIAL AFFAIRS



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT J. Eugene Grigsby, Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn (partially concealed), Hale Woodruff and Ernest Crichtlow at the Vivian Hewitt reception for Grigsby's book *Art & Ethnicity: Background for Teaching Youth in a Pluralistic Society*.

## REFLECTIONS FROM RICHARD J. POWELL, PH.D.

As I celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, I also mark the transformative gift that Bank of America made in 1998 to the Center: fifty-eight paintings, drawings, and fine-art prints by African American artists from the collection of John and Vivian Hewitt. There's a snapshot from J. Eugene Grigsby - one of the painters represented in the Hewitt Collection - that encapsulates so much about this assembly and its assorted artists. Taken on the occasion of a party at the Hewitt's home to celebrate the publication of Grigsby's book *Art & Ethnicity: Background for Teaching Youth in a Pluralistic Society* (1977), the photograph shows a jovial gathering of the following artists: Grigsby, Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn, Ernest Crichtlow, and Hale Woodruff. All represented in the Hewitts' art collection and/or part of their

New York community, the most noteworthy among the laughing and embracing group is Hale Woodruff, shown bear-hugging a bemused Ernest Crichtlow and clearly the object of everyone's attention.

I reflect on this historic photograph not only because it records the faces of some of the artists whom the Hewitts admired and collected. In its own and, perhaps, unintentional way, the scene's fulcrum - the then seventy-seven-year-old Hale Woodruff (1900-1980) - provides a key for understanding *Sentinel Gate*: a painting by Woodruff in the Hewitt Collection that, because of its abstract format and puzzling title, has confounded me for some time.



Ernest Crichtlow, *Woman in a Blue Coat*, ca. 1948, Permanent Collection of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. Generously donated by Bank of America Corporation.

Hale Woodruff stands out among twentieth-century painters for a number of reasons. A product of the John Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, Woodruff was a recipient of the prestigious William E. Harmon Award for Distinguished Achievements by African Americans in the Fine Arts, which helped fund four crucial years in Paris, the art world's capital in the interwar years. Upon his return to the U.S., he spearheaded art education at Atlanta University and founded the Atlanta University Annual Exhibitions of Paintings, Sculpture, and Prints by Negro Artists. But Woodruff's other claims to artistic recognition were surely his championing of abstraction among African American artists, and his advocacy of a racially integrated art world. From his New York University base of operation between 1947 and 1968 to his latter-day spokesperson role on artistic matters, Hale Woodruff consistently voiced the desires of his fellow Black painters and sculptors to not be aesthetically constrained in their creative imaginations and to fully participate in the mid-twentieth century art scene on equal footings with other artists.

Hale Woodruff's reputation in the 1960s and 1970s as an esteemed elder - intimated in the photograph of him and the others at John and Vivian Hewitt's home - not only gives the painting *Sentinel Gate* a historical context. Woodruff's status in those years makes abstractions like *Sentinel Gate* paradoxically representational, subliminally referencing a stalwart figure whose engagements with an imagistic world visually translate into

ideograph-infused, totemic forms. The seeming contradiction in the painting's cryptic, 2-word title - one word describing something upright and keeps watch, and the other designating a point of entry to, or from, a discreet realm - articulated Hale Woodruff's real-life position: a time-tested guardian, or warrior, on the art world's proverbial battlefront, and a symbolic, flesh-and-blood portal/exemplar through which African American artists might emulate and/or enter the contemporary art scene.



Hale A. Woodruff, *Sentinel Gate*, 1977, Permanent Collection of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. Generously donated by Bank of America Corporation.



Ann Tanksley, *Canal Builders II*, 1989, Permanent Collection of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. Generously donated by Bank of America Corporation.

One of a group of paintings created on the heels of Hale Woodruff's travels throughout West Africa in the mid-1960s (under the auspices of the Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs), *Sentinel Gate* subtly pays homage to the abrupt forms and planar surfaces of the ritual carvings he saw in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. But rather than copying Igbo *ikenga* or Bamana *gwandansu*, Woodruff worked with oil paints in high-key colors to suggest something saturated and animated under a high noon sun. An outlier in John and Vivian Hewitt's largely figurative art collection, *Sentinel Gate* transcended art's narrational capacities and, instead, invited viewers to ponder abstraction's unfathomability. And yet the painting's back story - specifically, Hale Woodruff's looming presence in African American art and among the Hewitts' circle of artists and intellectuals - offers the Gantt Center's public a valuable history lesson in circumspect stewardship and a colorful, all-embracing reception.

---

## ABOUT RICHARD J. POWELL, PH.D.

### JOHN SPENCER BASSETT DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ART AND ART HISTORY, DUKE UNIVERSITY

Powell has taught at Duke University since 1989. He studied at Morehouse College and Howard University before earning his doctorate in art history at Yale University. Along with teaching courses in American art, the arts of the African Diaspora, and contemporary visual studies, he has written extensively on topics ranging from primitivism to postmodernism, including such titles as *Black Art: A Cultural History* (1997 and 2002) and *Cutting a Figure: Fashioning Black Portraiture* (2008).

THE GANTT GOLDEN YEAR • 1974-2024

# Celebrating 50 Years

Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture marks its 50th anniversary in 2024 with the Gantt Golden Year, a yearlong celebration of Black joy, genius, and excellence. This celebration trumpets the Gantt's fifty-year evolution from an idea of two University of North Carolina at Charlotte professors in 1974, Dr. Bertha Maxwell-Roddey and Dr. Mary Harper, to the luminous institution at Levine Center for the Arts in Uptown Charlotte.

Powerful works by exceptional Black artists from the region and around the globe will be on view at the Gantt during 2024. Art exhibitions will include celebratory opening and closing events; artist visits and talks; student tours; and panel discussions with national and local artists, curators, and art enthusiasts.

In the spirit of the Gantt's mission and vision, celebrating this landmark year will ignite community engagement, while exhibiting the contributions of the Gantt to the arts and cultural landscape of the Charlotte region.

The Gantt Golden Year will feature a series of premier performances and events, exceptional exhibitions, and outstanding programs across five arts and cultural pillars including Dance, Afro-Culinary Foodways, Literary Talks and Community Forums, Art Exhibitions, and Music.



Harvey B. Gantt Center  
for African-American Arts+Culture

AT LEVINE CENTER FOR THE ARTS  
551 S. TRYON ST • CHARLOTTE, NC 28202  
704.547.3700 • GANTTCENTER.ORG

   @HBGANTTCENTER

WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM



GANTT GOLDEN YEAR  
DIGITAL NEWS SPONSOR



GANTT GOLDEN YEAR  
TELEVISION MEDIA SPONSOR



Harvey B. Gantt Center is supported, in part,  
by the Infusion Fund and its generous donors.