

Exhibition: *Family Album: Dannielle Bowman, Janna Ireland, and Contemporary Works from LACMA*

Dates: November 27, 2021–June 4, 2022

Location: Charles White Elementary School Gallery



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(Los Angeles—September 8, 2021) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Family Album: Dannielle Bowman, Janna Ireland, and Contemporary Works from LACMA*. The exhibition features the work of artists of color who examine themselves and history through the visual language of family photographs. Drawn primarily from LACMA's permanent collection, *Family Album* presents more than 50 works by 26 artists, many of whom are from Los Angeles. The exhibition presents new work by Dannielle Bowman and Janna Ireland among contemporaries including Germane Barnes, Mark Bradford, Micaiah Carter, Tony Cokes, Genevieve Gaignard, Sandra de la Loza, Leslie Hewitt, Star Montana, and Zora Murff.

Featured artists confront the physical, political, and emotional aspects of home. Some artists mine their personal archives, while others challenge the aesthetic conventions of snapshots. Installation, design, and video works materialize the physical aspects of home, and examine the impact of segregation laws in American neighborhoods today.

“Family photographs are a primary way we encounter photography. We take family pictures, pose for them, share, and return to them. Yet, we may overlook their potential to reveal our interior and social worlds,” said Dhyandra Lawson, Assistant Curator of the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department. “Photographs create so much more than visual experiences. They stir our memories and elicit histories that

tell us who we are. Statements by artists of color on the topic of family are urgent at a moment when American society faces a pandemic and ongoing police violence.”

Background

The invention of photography in 1839 presented an opportunity for Black Americans to take control of their own image. The medium was invented two decades before nearly four million Black Americans were freed from slavery. Throughout the 20th century, advancements in technology led to a boom in snapshot photography. The introduction of compact, portable cameras to commercial markets in the 1930s freed photographers from the encumbrance of stationary large-format cameras, enabling them to be more agile and mobile. The invention of Kodacolor film by Eastman Kodak in 1942 made color photography available to everyone, not just artists and advertisers. Taking photographs became a customary part of birthdays, weddings, and holidays. For people of color, these intimate portrayals of domestic life resisted dehumanizing images pervasive in popular culture.

A suite of works by Mark Bradford, Tony Cokes, and Janna Ireland, included in the exhibition, considers the legacy of racial segregation. Between 1940 and 1965 the Black population in Los Angeles County rose from 75,000 to 650,000. Throughout the United States, including Los Angeles, neighborhoods adopted racially restrictive covenants to prohibit the selling and renting of homes to people of color, in response to the Great Migration—the mass movement of African Americans out of Southern states.

Ireland and Cokes examine the legacy of architect Paul Revere Williams, the first Black architect certified to practice in the Western United States in 1921. Over five decades, he designed more than 3,000 structures in Southern California. He was the first Black architect to win the American Institute of Architects Gold Medal (awarded posthumously), one of the highest honors in his profession. Due to racially restrictive covenants, however, Williams often designed homes in Los Angeles suburbs, where he, as an African American, was prohibited from living.

In Dancing in the Street by Bradford (b. 1961), the Los Angeles–based artist recasts the history of the 1965 Watts uprising through Motown music. While driving through the neighborhood, he projects footage of Martha and the Vandellas performing their 1964 hit. Martin Luther King Jr. visited Watts after the uprising. He told reporters about its residents’ discontent with social isolation, inadequate housing, and economic deprivation. As Bradford drives, ghostlike images of Martha and the Vandellas dance on walls, sidewalks, fences, and alleys.

About the Exhibition

The exhibition begins with an in-focus presentation of works by Janna Ireland (b. 1985) and Dannielle Bowman (b. 1989), two artists who have distinct and meaningful relationships to Los Angeles.

Bowman and Ireland revel in the beauty of everyday life through depictions of their communities. The artists' work straddles staged and candid moments. Bowman describes historically Black neighborhoods, such as Inglewood and Baldwin Hills, where she was raised, and Brooklyn, where she resides now. Her work destabilizes visual experience by creating a tension between specificity and abstraction—her subjects' faces are obscured, yet objects are sharp. Her use of black and white confounds time. Bowman prompts viewers to identify with people and places they do not know by leading them to details they can relate to. Ireland's photographs blur distinctions between confession and fiction, documentation and performance. In series spanning the 2010s to the present, she photographs her family living in an apparent California wonderland. Posing as mother and wife, she interrogates how familial roles are performed for the camera.

Following this lead section viewers will move through galleries organized thematically: vernacular and snapshot photography, the neighborhood and community environment, and the material aspects of home.

Presented at the LACMA Charles White Elementary School Gallery, *Family Album* will spark conversations with students about themselves and their family histories.

About Charles White Elementary School

Family Album is open Saturdays, 1–4 pm, from November 27, 2021, through June 4, 2022, at Charles White Elementary School (2401 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90057). Admission is free and available on a first come, first served basis.

Visitors may enter the gallery at the corner of Park View and Wilshire Boulevard. Complimentary parking is available in the lot at 611 South Carondelet Street, between Wilshire and 6th Street. Street parking is also available in the neighborhood.

[Learn more](#) about visitation requirements and enhanced health and safety measures at Charles White Elementary School Gallery.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Support for this exhibition was provided by the 2021 Collectors Committee.

Exhibitions and education programs at the Charles White Elementary School Gallery are made possible through the Anna H. Bing Children's Art Endowment Fund.

About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 142,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural

heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: Left: Dannielle Bowman, *Vision (Garage)*, 2021, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LENS: Photography Council, 2021, copyright Dannielle Bowman, image courtesy of the artist and Sasha Wolf Projects. Right: Janna Ireland, *The Black Suit*, 2012, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Ralph M. Parsons Fund, copyright Janna Ireland, image courtesy of the artist

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