



INTERVIEW ([HTTPS://BOMBMAGAZINE.ORG/FORMAT/INTERVIEW/](https://bombmagazine.org/format/interview/))

Charisse Pearlina Weston by Zoë Hopkins

Using glass sculptures to represent precarity.

JULY 29, 2024



(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/Charisse-Pearlina-Weston-to-lift-the-flesh-of-its-flesh-1.jpg)

Charisse Pearlina Weston, *to lift the flesh of its flesh, the bone of its bone* (Brockton Trial Court, June 3, 2020); after collapse, 2022, slumped and enfolded glass, photographic decal, etched text, lead. Photo by Charisse Pearlina Weston. Courtesy of the artist.

One must move carefully around Charisse Pearlina Weston's work. Made of glass, concrete, and lead, her sculptures require a certain caution and engender an uncomfortable awareness of their instability. For Weston, the fragility of the materials with which she works is a metaphor for the danger of being in the world while Black. Like the constant ruptures and arrests that structure Black life, the sculptures evoke the possibility of a break, of tearing and terror at any moment. These realities are also literally embedded in Weston's work through photographs and textual inscriptions. Archival images and ones from her own life burrow into the folds of her sculptures alongside lines of her poetry. Weston was recently an Artist in Residence (AIR) at the Studio Museum in Harlem and was featured in the 2022–23 Studio Museum AIR show at MoMA PS1 in New York City. Her work *un- (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [un]moor)* (2024) is currently on view at the [Whitney Biennial \(https://whitney.org/exhibitions/2024-biennial\)](https://whitney.org/exhibitions/2024-biennial).

Zoë Hopkins

First of all, massive congratulations on your recent bevy of awards, the announcement of your gallery representation with Jack Shainman, and of course the Whitney Biennial. There's a whole world of things to celebrate and congratulate you on.

Charisse Pearlina Weston

Thanks. It's been a whirlwind, but more like a quiet whirlwind.

ZH

To get started, I want to ask a question about your Queens Museum exhibition in 2022. You once told me a story about a glass sculpture in that exhibition shattering halfway through the run of the show. That state change feels indicative of the way your work is bound up with unpredictability and risk. What kind of questions do working with glass allow you to express?

CPW

Glass has been an interesting and generative material for me because of its fragility and the danger inherent to its breaking; I'm intrigued by the omnipresence of collapse implicit within its materiality. Even a sculpture with the most stable foundation can falter. The piece you're referring to, *to lift the flesh of its flesh, the bone of its bone (Brockton Trial Court, June 3, 2020); after collapse*, shattered because of an atmospheric shift in the gallery that caused its lead base—which supported a hot-folded pane of glass flanked by another slumped panel with a photograph from one of the 2020 BLM protests affixed to it—to soften and shift under the weight of the glass it held. As a result, the balancing pane fell and shattered. I then reconstructed that component and incorporated the new iteration back into the sculpture alongside the shards of the original pane that had not been disturbed. So, the meaning of the piece—a balancing of a formed, delicate body atop an already compromised foundation against the backdrop of protest—expanded to include not just the possibility of collapse but the actual instance of it through the presence of the shards.

One of the things that attracts me to glass is that its state change can represent the instability of meaning as well as the possibility for a new formation. I think about it in terms of making a way out of no way or conjuring an otherwise, through and in spite of the event of breaking. And then, of

course, I think of the ways that working with these types of materials—lead, glass, and concrete—and contending with their instability and fragility runs counter to the ways we think about artwork as a finished commodity. I like to imagine leaning into these attributes as a quiet resistance to some of the parameters of the art market and to the overarching societal insistence on an irreversible completion that fixes things, people, and meaning in place. It's much harder to own something that shifts form because it risks slipping through your fingers.



(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/Charisse-Pearlina-Weston-to-lift-the-flesh-of-its-flesh-2.jpg)

Charisse Pearlina Weston, *to lift the flesh of its flesh, the bone of its bone* (Brockton Trial Court, June 3, 2020); after collapse, 2022, slumped and enfolded glass, photographic decal, etched text, lead. Photo by Charisse Pearlina Weston. Courtesy of the artist.

ZH

Glass is of course also transparent. Yet in many of your writings and in the conversations I've had with you, words like *opacity* and *withholding* have come up, which is an interesting counterpoint to the material transparency of glass. What does that tension between opacity and transparency yield for your work?

CPW

I've spent the last few years researching the symbolic and material registers of glass in modern and contemporary society. Historically, transparency has been imagined as an aspirational ideal: it is supposedly capable of transforming our world into one without secrets. Transparency renders us, the whole of our interiors, open and legible. At the turn of the twentieth century, in a world still reeling from the aftermath of a world war as it was on the cusp of another, there was this prevalent fantasy that glass, as a new architectural material, could make manifest transparency in the built environment. The hope being that this new architecture would engender a different kind of understanding of each other that would ultimately lead to less war and conflict. Now, we see this is not the case at all; in fact, glass is one of the most important materials in surveillance technologies. This archaic interpretation of transparency benefits only a certain group of people. A lot of the work that I do with glass is about inverting transparency. So, I layer and reuse material and withhold visual access to certain components of the work, creating an architecture of interior life. Édouard Glissant writes about the Western obsession with transparency and unmitigated access that only essentializes the Other. It's a kind of access that masquerades as an intimacy with those around us, but this knowing ultimately functions as a justification for violence that's enacted on other people, as if to say, Because I know you, your desires, your sins, you deserve what I'm giving to you.

"I am thinking of the fold as the instance of the body turning back into itself to repeat itself or an unarticulated part of itself."

— Charisse Pearlina Weston

ZH

Precisely. Glissant also writes about how transparency and globalization occasion a flattening of difference or a universalizing reduction of cultural complexity to smooth, uniform invariability. It's interesting, to that end, that your sculpture so often involves curvature. The glass snakes, twists, and turns. What brought you to that vocabulary of curvilinearity?

CPW

Initially with these curves, I was really interested in enfoldment as a way of creating another kind of interior and a space for concealment. I was contextualizing the fold as a kind of heterotopia, in a way. But recently, I've been thinking of the fold more as a form of repetition, which is already an element of my work. I am thinking of the fold as the instance of the body turning back into itself to repeat itself or an unarticulated part of itself.



(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/Charisse-Pearlina-Weston-of-the-immaterial-black-salt-translucence-3.jpg)

Installation view of Charisse Pearlina Weston, *of the. (immaterial. black salt. translucence)*, 2022, text on vellum, photographic decals on slumped glass, handmade wooden benches from *Black Metropolis*, produced by Robert Weston Sr., dimensions variable. Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Photo by Olympia Shannon. Courtesy of the artist.

ZH

Your practice is research-based and archival. I'm curious to know where your research begins?

CPW

I begin my research with a specific question or topic in mind, which inevitably opens out into something else. It's like a spreading vine. For instance, looking at the material history of glass is what led me to looking at surveillance technologies, which led me to the broken windows theory,

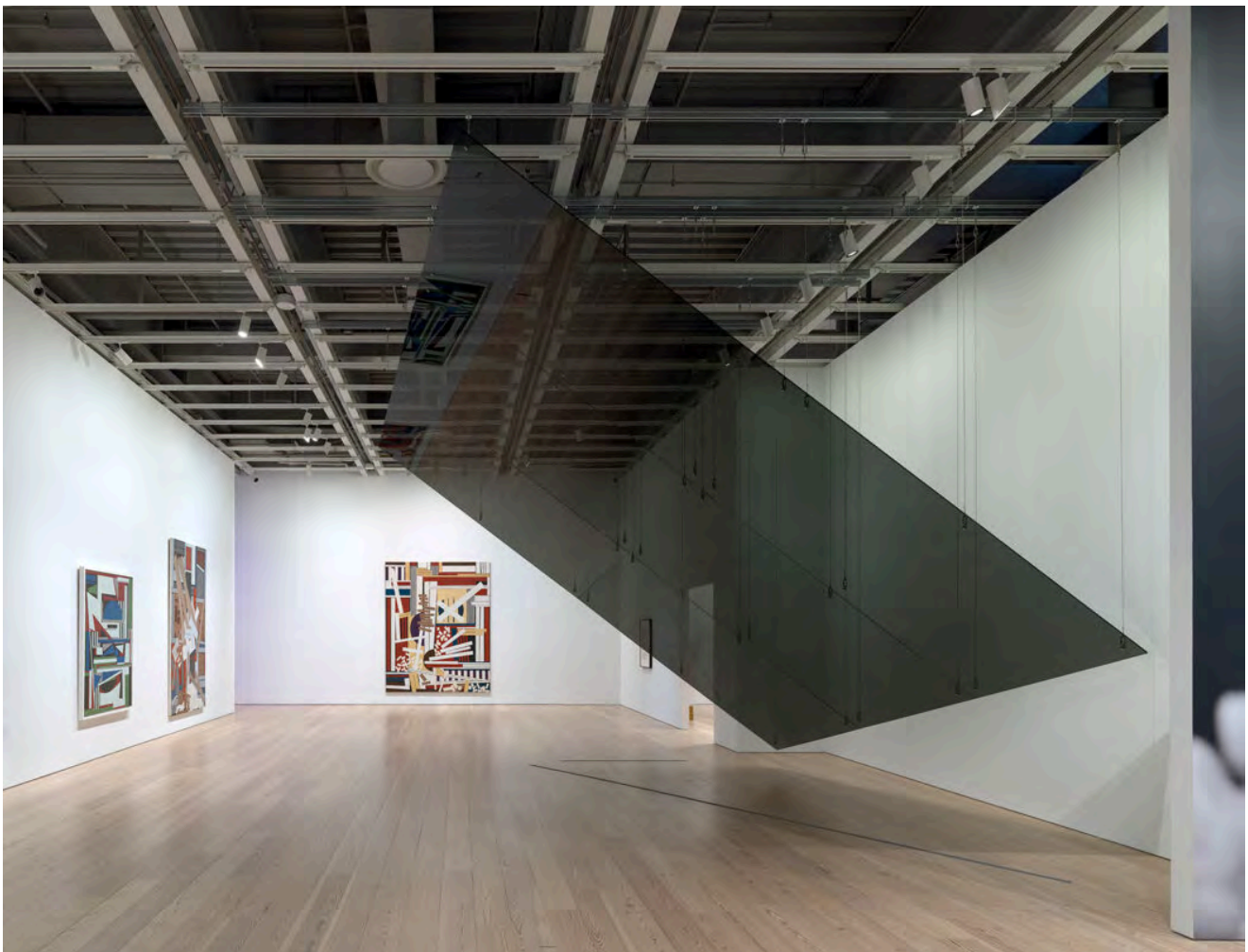
which led me to make work about Occupied Look, a 1980s initiative led by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development that involved installing decorative window decals on abandoned buildings in the Bronx. It all unfolds slowly in this way.

ZH

I really appreciate how your practice manages to be so entrenched in research and dense with history, while also being suffused with poetics. We've talked about the conceptual poetics of your work, but there are also literal lines of poetry subtly inscribed or etched in your sculptures, particularly in the glass. Can you share a bit about your relationship to poetry and how you came to involve text in your art?

CPW

I've always been really interested in writing, but it took me a while to see how it could manifest itself in my work. It started with two installations I did at Project Row Houses in Houston in 2014 and 2015. Both were entirely driven by a poetic text, which really opened my eyes to poetry and how I could use it to reinsert Black experience into my work, especially insofar as the visual lexicon of my work was and still is rooted in conceptualism and abstraction. From there I started doing a photographic series where I layered photos with semi-autobiographical text fragments printed on vellum. Later, I began incorporating sheets of glass into that work, with the most recent example of that series being the installation *of the. (immaterial. black salt. translucence)* (2022) that I did for the exhibition *Black Melancholia*, curated by Nana Adusei-Poku at Bard College in 2022.



(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/Charisse-Pearlina-Weston-un-anterior-ellipses-as-mangled-container-4.jpg)

Installation view of Charisse Pearlina Weston, *un- (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [un]moor)*, 2024, laminated tempered glass sheets from the air, whiskey, dust of [a] tomorrow, and stainless-steel hardware. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City. Photo by Ron Amstutz. Courtesy of the artist.

ZH

Finally, I want to ask you about your work in the Whitney Biennial. The piece strikes the eye—and the body—quite forcefully and almost immediately as visitors step off the elevator. We've talked about your floor-based sculpture, but this work hangs overhead. It's also flat and emptied of many of the elements that we've discussed, like photography, curves, and poetry. Can you talk a bit about these dynamics of form and display?

CPW

The piece at the Whitney is very much about an impending threat. I have been thinking of it as the pause before the moment of collapse. Like the breath one takes in just before something life-altering happens—a kind of bracing. It's suspended in the air but hung quite low, so you experience a specific kind of tension, and pressure, and anxiety in spite of the fact that its infrastructure—a series of aircraft cables and stainless-steel hardware—is visible.

ZH

I was just about to use the word *pressure*. There's an inevitable sense of tension in the feeling or awareness of the sculpture looming over your head, particularly since it's made of glass. It also returns us to our earlier discussion around the atmospheric dimension of your practice: because the glass is tinted, the atmosphere of the gallery becomes shadowy, darker.

CPW

Yes, exactly. To address the second part of your question around the difference in form and material, this piece is an evolution of a series of installations that I was doing—I guess, that I continue to do—alongside the smaller sculptures. Those were balanced glass installations consisting of rectangular sheets of glass situated in space with the intention of shifting the architecture and volume, at a much smaller scale, of the space. To me, those pieces were important because they were a way for me to really engage with this idea of risk and precarity, the possibility of collapse, and the fragility of the material. The Whitney piece is a large-scale version of that, but the challenge for me was to try to figure out how to keep all of those elements intact while one is aware that it is suspended in a very particular way.

Charisse Pearlina Weston's work can be seen in the [Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing](https://whitney.org/exhibitions/2024-biennial) (<https://whitney.org/exhibitions/2024-biennial>) at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City until August 11.

Zoë Hopkins is a writer and critic based in New York City. She is currently working on her MA in modern and contemporary art at Columbia University, where she researches conceptual art of the Black diaspora. Her writing has been published in outlets including the *New York Times*, *Frieze*, *Artforum*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *ArtReview*, and *Hyperallergic*, as well as in several exhibition catalogues.

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in March



By **Holland Cotter**

Published Feb. 28, 2024 Updated Feb. 29, 2024

This week in Newly Reviewed, Holland Cotter covers the Studio Museum in Harlem’s residency results at MoMA PS1, Sarah Grilo’s little-seen paintings at Galerie Lelong and Mary Lucier’s heartfelt video art at Cristin Tierney Gallery.

‘And Ever an Edge: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2022—23’

Through April 8. MoMA PS1, 22-25 Jackson Avenue, Queens; (718) 784-2086, momaps1.org.



Installation view of Jeffrey Meris's work in "And Ever an Edge," which includes the sculpture, "To the Rising Sun," right, made from dozens of crutches held together with C-clamps. Via MoMA PS1; Photo by Kris Graves



In Charisse Pearlina Weston's gallery, the primary medium is clear blown glass, often slumped, collapsed or broken, and, in some cases etched with images and words. Via MoMA PS1; Photo by Kris Graves

In 1968, the Studio Museum in Harlem initiated a yearly residency program that provided a stipend and studio space for making new art, with, as the museum's website notes, "priority given to artists working in nontraditional materials." This year's cohort of three young participants handily meets that formal criterion, as seen in their lively topping-off show, hosted by MoMA PS1 while the Studio Museum's new building is under construction.

Two of the artists create imaginative worlds from found materials. The first thing you see in a gallery of work by the Haitian-born Jeffrey Meris is a large suspended sculpture, "To the Rising Sun," made from dozens of outward-bristling crutches held together with C-clamps. The solar reference makes descriptive sense, though

the piece also suggests a giant coronavirus. Apocalyptic, trending Afrofuturist, is the vibe here, in the presence of two silicone-cast human bodies that seem to be melting, and a monumental collage called “Imperial Strike” that catches a terrestrial Big Bang in progress.

A second alternative universe, this one a kind of magical garden of paintings and sculptures assembled by Devin N. Morris, is more recognizably earthly, with its images of landscapes and people. But it’s formally even more unorthodox, combining standard art materials (watercolor, pastel, oil paint) with scraps salvaged from Harlem’s streets: dice, mirror shards, electrical cords’ wires, bamboo reeds, silk flowers, nail polish bottles and fentanyl test strips. Morris turns all of this into a kind of walk-through urban Eden of grit and delicacy.

The installation by Charisse Pearlina Weston feels more like a straightforward sculpture display, but this work too has its twists and contortions. Weston’s primary medium is clear blown glass, often slumped, collapsed or broken, and, in some cases etched with barely readable images and words. While staying abstract it clearly alludes to authoritarian tactics including “broken-window policing.” And the work here — organized by Yelena Keller, an assistant curator at the Studio Museum, and Jody Graf, an assistant curator at MoMA PS1 — along with her 2022 solo at the Queens Museum, establishes her a remarkable talent, and one fully arrived.

Charisse Pearlina Weston: A Drama of Materials by Pujan Karambeigi

In Charisse Pearlina Weston's art, Baroque aesthetics make a comeback. But her work replaces the seventeenth-century preference for marble with glass, lead, and concrete, resulting in a drama of materials presented in three acts: order gives way to dynamism; substance is replaced by appearance; and, finally, the sculpture embodies an anguish of the soul.

Weston's *of an intimacy who leaps and whirls within the warring of itself* (2023), included in the Studio Museum's artists-in-residence group exhibition *And ever an edge* at MoMA PS1, New York (2023), consists of a fused pane of glass stuck into a bent sheet of lead. Drama results from materials shaped in a way that amplifies tensions: glass versus lead, precarity versus durability, transparency versus opacity, slumped versus bent, verticality versus horizontality, standing up versus lying down, figure versus base. Weston purposefully creates a seemingly endless list of tensions, substantiating conflicts rather than dissolving them. This is not simply to expose the process of making, but to enlist these tensions in creating the illusion of movement, in articulating a pathos of spatial dynamism. Everything is, but could also be otherwise.

Weston, Texas-born and Brooklyn-based, received her MFA from the University of California at Irvine in 2019, followed by the Whitney Independent Study Program and fellowships at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts and elsewhere. Her creative process usually begins with rough drawings, followed by folding or slumping glass planes, or forming them in custom-made molds (usually executed at UrbanGlass in Brooklyn), with the final results often deviating more or less drastically from the initial drawing. In the aforementioned piece presented at MoMA PS1, the base is made of lead and bent in response to the shape of the glass. In more recent works, Weston also has fabricated her pedestals, with the ambition to create a sense of continuity between the disparate sculptural elements.

Sometimes the glass is etched, fired, or fused with archival prints taken from popular culture or protests (one example being the 1965 Watts Rebellion) that Weston finds while sifting through online databases or institutional collections. The actual content of these prints, however, is largely subsumed, their imagery rendered illegible through their exposure to the kiln. Indeed, the only person who can identify the print is usually the artist, who may or may not extend her knowledge to the gallerist, curator, critic, or collector. Likewise, her acutely poetic titles might carry references but remain cloaked in their idiosyncrasy; they are there for the artist to grip to, rather than for her audience to grasp. Weston's sculptures, one could say, reference history as a general idea: it is there, but not to be consumed. The sculptures do not aim to uncover historical truths—at least, not to the viewer.

So how are we supposed to grasp Weston's work? Or, how is it grasping us? Consider *yolanda* (2023), a work in her canvas series in which Weston creates the illusion of depth through layering and texturing, a play with opacity and transparency. An inkjet print on a canvas is scratched with glass shards from a pane that broke by accident, she tells me during a recent studio visit; the scribble interrupts the print's straight lines and triangular shapes, with differently colored frit added to emphasize texture. Reductive and additive procedures transfigure the flat canvas into a deep space.

In an editorial introduction Weston wrote in 2018 during her stint as editor in chief of *HAUNT*, a graduate-student-run journal produced out of the Department of Art at UC Irvine, she called for using poetry to create nonlinear narratives and "embrace the discomfort from which we've been trained to pull away."¹ Discomfort, then, but of a kind that remains invested in contemplation. Not the

188 Charisse Pearlina Weston, *and rust flows down, glistening (...to neon, to rolled sleeves, to arms, to pause)* (detail), 2022. Courtesy: the artist; PATRON Gallery, Chicago; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Hai Zhang

191 Charisse Pearlina Weston, *of an intimacy who leaps and whirls within the warring of itself*, 2023, *And ever an edge: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2022–23* installation view at MoMA PS1, New York, 2023. Courtesy: MoMA PS1, New York. Photo: Kris Graves

192 Charisse Pearlina Weston, *of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust*, 2022, *of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust* installation view at Queens Museum, New York, 2022. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Hai Zhang

193 Charisse Pearlina Weston, *of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust* installation view at Queens Museum, New York, 2022. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Hai Zhang

194–195 Charisse Pearlina Weston, *and rust flows down, glistening (...to neon, to rolled sleeves, to arms, to pause)* (detail), 2022. Courtesy: the artist; PATRON Gallery, Chicago; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Hai Zhang

discomfort of pathologizing the viewer's perception, of telling them that their life is a lie. In fact, perceiving irresolvable tensions in her sculptures is true, not false, just as the depth in Weston's canvases is not an optical illusion, but materially real. The tactility of the frit's texture and the imagining of the sound of the glass scratching against the concrete base are not here to subvert the reality of the visual, but to bolster it. Weston's work captures the discomfort of looking into a cloudless sky, realizing that infinity exists as both a potentiality and an abyss. In Baroque aesthetics, this pathos of infinity had an ambiguous function. Art historians, mostly preferring Renaissance order over Baroque theatricality, understood it as a symptom of decadence, an aesthetic reflex of an impending societal collapse. For others, it represented "that anguish in the depths of the soul, that conquest of the imaginary world as a substitute for control of the real world," as Fernand Braudel recounts in his anti-art historical art history *Out of Italy: 1450–1650* (1991).² That is to say, the Baroque contends with the simultaneity of being pulled up or pushed down—Heaven or Hell—never quite knowing which direction the journey will take. The danger of being pushed down is most acute in the way Weston handles gravity. In her sculptures, the threat of collapse ensures the precarity of the glass (will it hold?) and thus maintains the Baroque harmony of forces. *of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust* (2022) dramatizes gravity to transfer physical discomfort onto the viewer. The sculpture consists of six panels of tempered glass arranged in a grid and hanging from the ceiling at a slight tilt, overall measuring twenty by fifteen feet. When installed at the Queens Museum in New York for Weston's eponymous 2022 institutional solo debut, it obstructed the passage between the two galleries featuring her work. This was the first time her sculpture forged a genuine architectural experience. The neat outlines of a pedestal were dispensed with in favor of an all-encompassing environment where the space of the work and the space of viewing mingled. As an architectural intervention, the work's immaculate grid and tidy angularity exert a different kind of compositional tension than the ones animating Weston's stand-alone sculptures. The drama lies less in testing perception by having materials rub off against each other, and more in establishing an antagonism between work and viewer, with the looming threat of the glass ceiling positioning us in the here and now. The instructions are explicit: walk around, duck down if you dare, do not contemplate. No more losing yourself in the sheer infinity of tensions playing out in front of your eyes. No more pretensions of pulling you up. The direction of the journey is clear now.

- 1 Charisse Pearlina Weston, "COMFORT | COVERAGE," *HAUNT 5* (2018): 9.
- 2 Fernand Braudel, *Out of Italy: 1450–1650* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 198.

CHARISSE PEARLINA WESTON
 (b. 1988, Houston) lives and works in Brooklyn. She received an MFA in Studio Art with Critical Theory emphasis, from the University of California, Irvine, a Masters of Science in Modern Art History, Curating and Criticism from the University of Edinburgh's Edinburgh College of Art, and a BA in Art History at the University of North Texas. She is also an alumna of the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program. Solo exhibitions include PATRON Gallery, Chicago (forthcoming); Queens Museum, New York (2022); Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston (2021); Recess, New York (2021); Abrons Art Center, New York (2020); UC Irvine Art Galleries, Irvine (2019); Elsewhere Museum, Greensboro (2016); Project Row Houses, Houston (2015, 2014).

PUJAN KARAMBEIGI
 is a PhD candidate in art history at Columbia University and the 2024–25 Mello-Marron Research Consortium fellow at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His dissertation focuses on how art history became a tool for nation building in the context of the postwar wave of decolonization, and specifically explores the reforming of museum pedagogy, artist training, and cultural festivals. He regularly writes art criticism and is the editor of downtowncritic.net







REMI 4010, 1110

RE
M



MEAN
ED
EVER
A REAL MEN
HERO!

CRACK KNOCK
COMM. CENTER
C-200

Frieze New York 2024

Collecting

Artist Charisse Pearlina Weston: ‘This is a kind of violence that’s been naturalised, but it’s not natural’

Her glass sculptures allude to the threats Black people face but also the possibility of a better world

Maegan Dolan APRIL 27 2024

Charisse Pearlina Weston grew up in Houston, Texas, near the birthplace of rhythm and blues label Duke/Peacock Records, and it was while listening to its artists that she developed a deep appreciation for the blues cover. She loves how it can feel like a radically different song depending on who’s singing it.



“I think maybe [blues covers are] one of the things that got me really interested in repetition, in the way that a return to something is not a recuperation, but it’s actually an opening out into another space . . . It opens up sonic possibilities,” she says when we meet at her studio in Harlem, a five-storey red-brick building that housed breweries until Prohibition shut them down.

These volatile possibilities are visible in Weston’s work, which often uses glass in precarious ways. In the current Whitney Biennial, panes of glass are strapped together to form one large panel hanging from the ceiling at a steep angle, disrupting movement through the gallery space, while in a group show at MoMA PS1 Weston’s smaller-scale sculptures counterpoised slumped (heated then moulded) glass, lead, concrete, etched text and photographic stickers. Her work will also be at Frieze New York with Patron Gallery.



'of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whisky, cheaper than dust' (2022) by Charisse Pearlina Weston © Courtesy the artist/Queens Museum.
Photo: Hai Zhang

In her work, Weston returns to historical images and text, but the way she replays these references is more like a blues cover than a plain rendition. She morphs and distorts archival images and text, enfolding, layering and deconstructing them into urgent, emerging forms. Her intent is not to replay the past but rather an act of awareness that the past is being replayed in the present: “I’m using the fact that this keeps happening over and over again to remind us that this is a kind of violence that’s been naturalised, but it’s not natural.”

Weston studied painting and art history as an undergraduate before shifting to conceptually focused work. She had returned to Houston and fell in with a group of supportive artists who were interested in installation and social practice. “I never thought of myself as a sculptor until I got to grad school and realised that I was really interested in the way that sculpture can transform and manipulate the spaces that we’re in.”

In her Harlem studio, she is working on a new series of sculptures that use two-way mirror glass, the sort in interrogation rooms so a witness or suspect can be spied on. When she heats the glass in the kiln to collapse and mould it, the glass becomes opaque and the new shape has an iridescence, appearing oceanic and fluid. Weston has been interested in playing with transparency and opacity since she began working in glass in 2016. Perhaps making the glass opaque is a poetic gesture: opacity is a form of resistance.



'of an intimacy who leaps and whirls within the warring of itself' (2023) by Charisse Pearlina Weston © Courtesy MoMA PS1/The Studio Museum in Harlem. Photo: Kris Graves



'breach (a notion of freedom)' (2019) by Charisse Pearlina Weston © Photo: Paul Salveson

Weston was already using sheets of glass in her work when the Black Lives Matter movement was dominating the news; she had started thinking about how you might represent the constant risk of violence and the omnipresence of anti-Blackness after the death of Sandra Bland in a jail cell in 2015, a woman close to her age who grew up near Houston. “There was something about glass . . . with so many contradictions embedded in this material’s structure, that made it feel like it could represent both the risk of anti-Black violence and also this capacity for shape-shifting and moving beyond, in-between it.” She began moulding the glass and hot-folding by hand, a process that “imbues a risk of precarity, which mirrors the anxiety of the Black experience in the US”.

Some of Weston’s sculptures evoke the loose organic forms of architect Frank Gehry’s maquettes — the way the eye is led along a shape’s edge, like a path drawn in space. When I suggest this, she smiles as she remembers her studio in Irvine, California, where a small gap ran in the floor from wall to wall. One day, she balanced sheet glass in the deep divot, installing a translucent wall across the room. The glass edges caught the sunlight and drew long, linear shadows on the floor, which she photographed, printed and began to work on again, carving with broken glass and affixing crushed glass in geometric shapes, further abstracting the refractions into something expressionistic, which refuses legibility.



Detail of 'An Appeal, but, in Particular, Very Expressly, To (i sink)' (2019) by Charisse Pearlina Weston © Courtesy the artist. Photo: Paul Salvesson

And so we return to music: these two-dimensional works are named after blues songs. Weston says: “I feel like [the blues] is so important in terms of being an expression of a certain kind of Black intimacy, Black interior life.” Without hesitation, she says her favourite blues singer is Bobby “Blue” Bland, a 1950s Duke recording artist (more recently sampled on Jay-Z’s 2001 album *The Blueprint*).

Weston describes some of her works as “analogous to a blues moan that can’t be held back”. The historical weight and political concepts reverberating around her during the creation process contain an urgency that she must voice. “We as artists are not here to give people answers. We’re here to help people ask questions — questions they might have never asked.”

patrongallery.com

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2024. All rights reserved.



Five voices from the Whitney Biennial

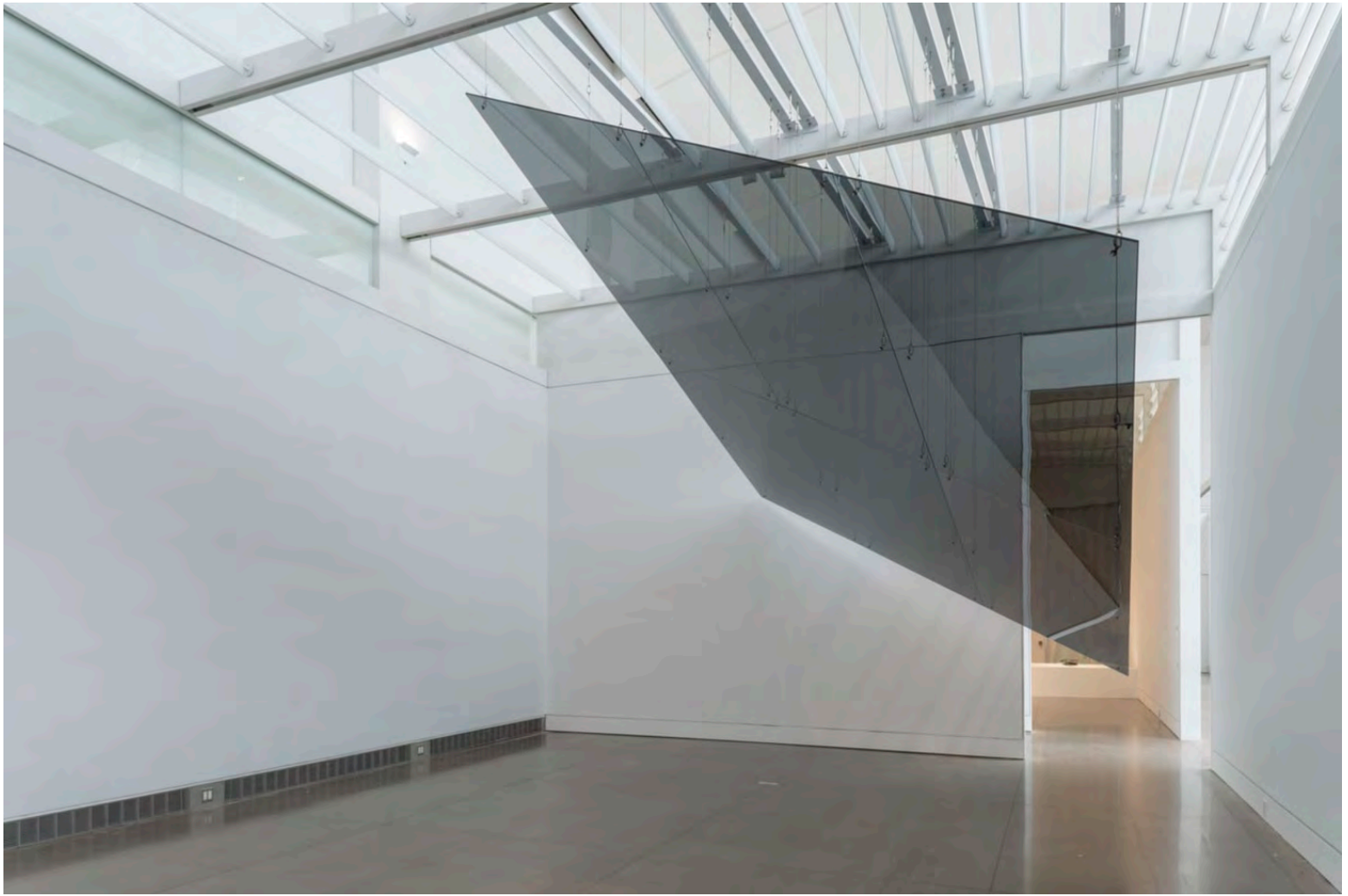
Urgent questions of minority identity propel this edition

By Sarah P. Hanson | 22/03/2024 09:00 | 5 min read

‘Curating is about listening,’ says Chrissie Iles, the Anne and Joel Ehrenkrantz Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. ‘We’re like antennae.’

The Whitney’s 81st biennial exhibition, which opened to the public on March 20, features a notable number of suspended sculptures that cannot help but feel like metaphors for the historical moment. Climate change, racism, trans rights, bodily autonomy, war, artificial intelligence – ‘we’re at a precipice in so many ways,’ notes Iles, who co-curated the show with the museum’s curator-at-large, Meg Onli. The works ask visitors to navigate around them, and consider multiple vantages, subtly reinforcing the exhibition’s theme, ‘Even Better Than the Real Thing,’ in which notions of authenticity and subjectivity hang in the balance.

Thirty years on from the 1993 biennial, which famously thrust marginalized voices to the fore, the 71 artists and collectives in this edition seem bent on eluding categorization. ‘Something that became clear early on in our conversations with artists was their desire to challenge ideas of fixed identity,’ Onli observes in the catalog. ‘These artists want to destabilize the ways that identity gets flattened within the art world.’ Below, we highlight five works in the show that embody this mission.



Charisse Pearlina Weston, *un- (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [un]moor)*, 2024. Collection of the artist. Courtesy PATRON gallery and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Charisse Pearlina Weston

un- (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [un]moor) (2024)

In one corner of a fifth-floor gallery, a monumental, canted shelf of glass slices diagonally overhead. Made of panels of smoked glass hung from spindly cables, the installation, by the conceptual artist Charisse Pearlina Weston (b. 1988), casts a literal shadow over the proceedings, undercutting the transparency afforded by the museum's floor-to-ceiling windows. It is an iteration of a work, which, when it was shown in a 2022-23 solo show at the Queens Museum, functioned as an obstruction that invoked the nonviolent 1960s civil rights protests near that site. Although simple in form, the installation is hardly inert; it is emblematic of how the artist meets 'the materiality of surveillance' with what she calls 'tactics of Black refusal'.

In recent sculptures that fold or stack sheets of transparent glass, Weston (who is also a writer) uses the medium's reflectivity, malleability, and fragility to poetic and metaphoric ends. Newly represented by **Jack Shainman Gallery** in New York and **Patron** in Chicago, Weston (a native of Houston) will take part in The Chinati Foundation's artist residency in Marfa, Texas, later this year.

home • artnews • reviews

A Blazing, Brilliant Whitney Biennial Heralds a New Kind of Body Art

BY **ALEX GREENBERGER**

March 13, 2024 9:30am



Paintings by Suzanne Jackson at the 2024 Whitney Biennial.
CHRISTOPHER GARCIA VALLE FOR ARTNEWS

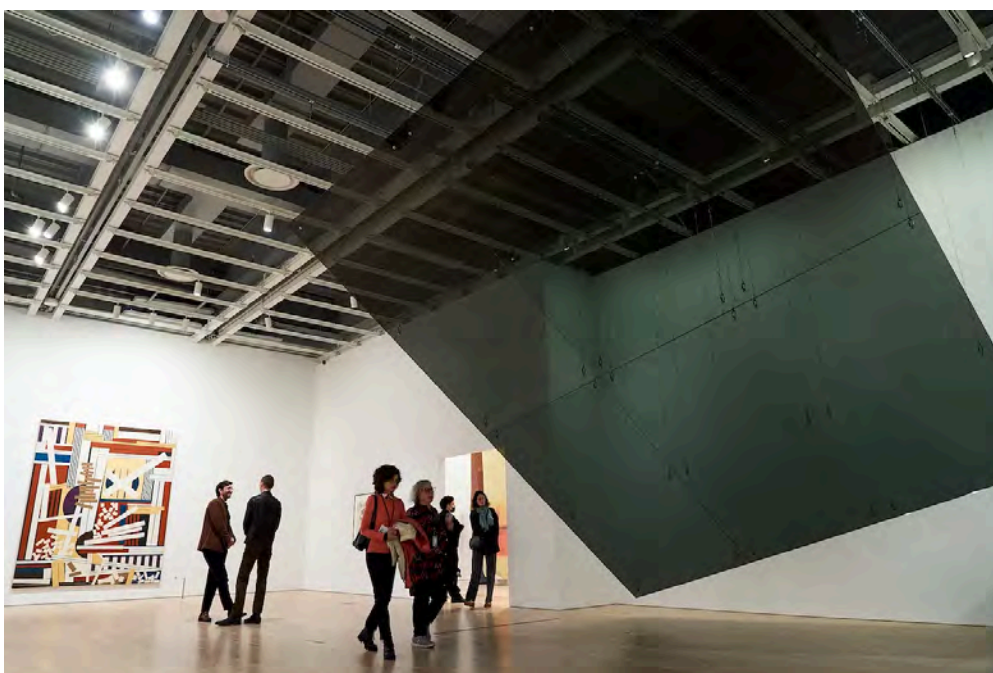
If the Whitney Biennial really must reflect the United States as it stands right now, this year it had a particularly tall order.

The show had to deal with growing discontent surrounding war abroad, particularly in Gaza, and it also had to portray mounting anger at home, where conservative-led legislatures and the pandemic have threatened the lives of many Americans. And that's not to mention that the country is at a crucial inflection point, with a presidential election coming in November.

But rather than taking up any of that, curators **Chrissie Iles** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/chrissie-iles/>) and Meg Onli have veered in a different direction. Their exhibition, which opens to the public on March 20, is light on loud, explicit political statements and heavy on conceptual art about bodies in flux. It's the most challenging Whitney Biennial in several editions, and also the best since 2017.

Iles and Onli's show, titled "Even Better Than the Real Thing," marks a turn away from the opulence of the **past** (<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/whitney-biennial-review-12555/>) couple **Whitney Biennials** (<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/whitney-biennial-2022-review-1234623262/>), which privileged lush art, sometimes to a fault. A number of works here even revisit Minimalism, a movement that rejected visual pleasure in favor of flinty industrial forms arranged neatly into rows and grids.

Charisse Pearlina Weston is showing a sculpture formed from semi-translucent smoked glass sheets that tilt downward and hang above viewers' heads. The sculpture, with a lengthy title that is just about as inscrutable as the object itself, contains a secret: its elements were borrowed from Weston's 2022 show at the Queens Museum, where a bigger version of these glass plates obstructed the entryway to a gallery. Here, this new work—called *un-* (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [*un*]moor), and styled in that way, with irregular italicization and spacing—blocks a wall, much the same way Minimalists cut off parts of white cubes with their spare objects.



Charisse Pearlina Weston, *un-* (anterior ellipse[s] as mangled container; or where edges meet to wedge and [*un*]moor), 2024.

CHRISTOPHER GARCIA VALLE FOR ARTNEWS

Houston-Born Artist Charisse Pearlina Weston Included in 2024 Whitney Biennial

by [Jessica Fuentes](#) | February 3, 2024



The Whitney Museum of American Art has announced the 71 artists and collectives participating in its 2024 Biennial this spring, including Houston-born artist Charisse Pearlina Weston.

The biennial was launched in 1932 by the museum's founder, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. In 1937 the exhibition switched to an annual format, which it maintained until 1973 when it became a biennial again. Over the past 92 years, more than 3,600 artists have participated in the invitational exhibition. In 2022, Houston's [Rick Lowe](#) was among the 63 artists invited to participate in the biennial.

This year's biennial, titled *Even Better Than The Real Thing*, is organized by Whitney staffers Chrissie Iles, the Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, and Meg Onli, Curator at Large, with support from Min Sun Jeon and Beatriz Cifuentes. On the Whitney Biennial webpage, the curators noted, "After finalizing the list of artists last summer, we have built a thematic Biennial that focuses on the ideas of 'the real.' Society is at an inflection point around this notion, in part brought on by artificial intelligence challenging what we consider to be real, as well as critical discussions about identity."

Though currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Charisse Pearlina Weston is a Houston native and maintains strong connections to the city. Last summer, [the City of Houston unveiled a public art monument](#) created by Ms. Weston and Jamal Cyrus. Ms. Weston holds an MFA in Studio Art with Critical Theory Emphasis from the University of California in Irvine, an MS in Modern Art: History, Curating, and Criticism from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and a BA in Art History from the University of North Texas in Denton.



Charisse Pearlina Weston. Photo courtesy of the artist.

In addition to being included in the 2024 Biennial, this year Ms. Weston has several significant opportunities on the horizon. She has been awarded a \$50,000 Wild Futures grant from Creative Capital, and was named as a [Chinati Foundation Artist-in-Residence](#).

Even Better Than The Real Thing will open on Wednesday, March 20. Learn more about the 2024 Whitney Biennial and see a full list of participating artists on the Whitney's [website](#).

Art in America

[Home](#) | [Art in America](#) | [Columns](#)

Charisse Pearlina Weston's Glass Sculptures Challenge Beliefs About Transparency

By Chris Murtha

November 16, 2022 10:11am



Charisse Pearlina Weston: *held, I invert, I lift...*, 2021, etched glass, three stacks, each 3 by 11 by 16 inches.

COURTESY CHARISSE PEARLINA WESTON

Though typically a material that disappears before the viewer, glass takes on a commanding presence in Charisse Pearlina Weston's sculptures. Layered, warped, tinted, and folded, her sculptural panels distort and obfuscate far more than they clarify, turning glass into a surface to look *at* more than *through*. The artist amalgamates texts and images derived from popular culture, archives, and her own practice, etching and firing them onto glass, or

sandwiching them between layered sheets. Yet she never allows for unmediated access, preferring instead to manipulate, fragment, and recombine her source material.

Weston frequently incorporates imagery and elements from earlier projects into new work, rooting her practice in repetition. For an ongoing series of photographic abstractions, the artist printed installation images on large canvases. Using glass shards repurposed from studio accidents, she roughly etches into the printed surface, redacting imagery and transforming the original photographs into constructivist compositions. By returning to earlier works, Weston hopes to rearticulate questions the initial pieces addressed. She returns again and again to one question in particular, which she posed during our recent conversation: “How do Black people forge, retain, and protect spaces of intimacy and interiority in the context of the environment that we’re living in?”



Charisse Pearlina Weston: *an appeal, but, in particular, very expressly, to (i sink)*, 2019, glass, vinyl records, record player, and sound installation, dimensions variable.
PHOTO PAUL SALVESON; COURTESY CHARISSE PEARLINA WESTON

Weston associates glass with “the atmosphere of risk and violence that Black people face.” Employing various strategies to manipulate the fragile, transparent material into something more opaque and resistant, she evokes a tension between the desire to share a story and to secrete it away from probing eyes. In early works, the artist used readymade glass panes, but in 2018 she began to experiment with the material’s fleeting malleability in its liquid state. To create the draped, bell-like forms in *an appeal, but, in particular, very expressly, to (i sink)* (2019), Weston slumped molten glass over upturned flowerpots, referencing the planters and washbasins enslaved Black people used to muffle their voices during clandestine meetings. For other sculptures, the artist bends, curls, and crumples heated glass, generating crevices that obscure the imprinted images and writings.

Weston's current exhibition at the Queens Museum also contends with the symbolic links between glass and anti-Blackness. A new body of sculptures, and the pictures and poems seared into their glass surfaces, allude to "broken windows" policing, surveillance, and the loaded, pervasive media images of shattered and boarded-up shop windows during recent BLM protests. Several works draw on the historical record of an unrealized nonviolent direct action that the Brooklyn chapter of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) proposed for the opening of the 1964–65 World's Fair. Demanding action on job discrimination, housing conditions, school segregation, and police brutality, the organizers called for motorists to stall their vehicles intentionally on the roadways leading to the fairgrounds. In the first of two galleries, Weston adopts a similar tactic of obstruction with her largest sculpture to date, suspending a 15-by-20-foot grid of smoky glass panes over viewers. Ominously hovering and dramatically pitched toward the passageway between galleries, it bars access and forces visitors to detour.



Charisse Pearlina Weston: *an archive of feeling*, 2021, etched glass, three stacks, each 3 by 11 by 16 inches.

COURTESY CHARISSE PEARLINA WESTON

This tension between presentation and refusal is central to Weston's practice, especially in her use of language. Circling around her most recent concrete- and lead-mounted sculptures—arranged at the Queens Museum on a multilevel plinth that keeps viewers at bay—we are aware of the inscribed texts but unable to fully absorb them. Intimate phrases faintly etched in her cursive stipple appear and recede from view; we catch only elusive fragments, like "a chromium-plated draw-near to neon plastic" or "such a jettison," and strain to discern more. Weston's multifaceted sculptures undermine the logic of a material

associated with transparency to embrace the poetry of opacity, the power of resistance, and the value of withholding.



ARTnews is a part of Penske Media Corporation. © 2024 Art Media, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
Powered by WordPress.com VIP

2023 YOUNG ARTISTS LIST

Being an artist is no ordinary occupation. It demands a way of seeing, a kind of relentless attention that can't be turned off. In recent years, creatives have been forced to contend with the increasing commercialization of the cultural ecosystem, a stormy political landscape, and a wobbling economy. Between the MFA-to-solo-show pipeline and an emphasis on relentless social media self-promotion, our culture has never been more focused on the question of how to “make it” professionally as an artist. How to make a life as one isn't as simple of a calculation.

CULTURED's eighth annual Young Artists list arrives amid this existential maelstrom. The 27 makers featured in these pages, all 35 or younger, are a testament to the resourcefulness and optimism required to choose not only the work, but also the life of an artist. They represent a wide range of geographies, mindsets, and mediums. Some have shown their work in august institutions; others operate entirely outside of the traditional gallery system. Some practice in a vacuum, while others would never dream of working alone. Some compare their work to committing a crime, others to creating an avatar. While the Hong Kong- and Brooklyn-based Jes Fan works at the molecular level, New York native mosie romney uses eBay hauls and dreams as raw material. LA-based Jasper Marsalis sees his practice as a “suite of questions” to answer each day, while Houston-born Charisse Pearlina Weston regards hers as a way to interrogate systems of oppression. What unites them all is a commitment to their unique visions and an urge to follow their own compasses, no matter the weather.



CHARISSE PEARLINA WESTON

35, NEW YORK

BY CAMILLE OKHIO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENZEL GOLATT

In its raw form, glass embodies conflicting states of existence: hard, soft, sharp, smooth. It can be stiff and unyielding, yet delicate enough to interact with the most sensitive sites: the mouth, the eye, the hand. Shattered, it slices and severs. For Charisse Pearlina Weston, the material is a tool of resistance. Though synonymous with fragility and transparency, in her hands it becomes a means by which to obfuscate and protect. She molds it into a medium of refusal, a poem in physical form.

The New York-based artist first discovered glass in 2016, while searching for a way to layer text and photography. Her approach is straightforward: She relies mostly on slumping or hot-folding the material

“MY INTEREST IN GLASS IS AS A CONCEPTUAL VEHICLE.”

while it is in the kiln. “I have been painted as a glass artist, though I am not formally trained,” says Weston. “My interest in glass is as a conceptual vehicle.”

Glass is one of several mediums within the lexicons of sculpture and writing that the 35-year-old uses to explore Black intimacy, mourning, memory, and interiority. When she injects it with images and words (often poems or found quotes), it serves to highlight the manifold ways in which Black safety and belonging are consciously degraded. More specifically, Weston confronts police brutality, unsolicited interpersonal intervention, and the ways the Black body has been seized, used, and perceived nonconsensually.

In “of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust,” a solo exhibition at the Queens Museum last winter, Weston suspended a large artwork, of the same name as the show, from the ceiling of a central gallery. Its installation was foreboding, intentionally confusing the movement and bodily autonomy of visitors, forcing them to change course. The work built on the gesture of defiance embodied by an unrealized resistance act proposed by the Brooklyn and Bronx chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality at the beginning of the 1964–65 World’s Fair, which was held where the museum now stands.

As she excavates the past through her work, Weston also sustains her momentum as a rising star in the conceptual art arena. With sculptural works included in an upcoming show at Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany, and new work unveiling this fall at MoMA PS1, she is turning to other materials, like canvas, to interrogate and dismantle strategies of oppression, while maintaining her connection to glass.

[HOME](#) / [NEWS](#)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM WELCOMES THREE NEW ARTISTS-IN- RESIDENCE

By News Desk

October 17, 2022 2:51 pm



Devin N. Morris, Charisse Pearlina Weston, and Jeffrey Meris. Photos: Campbell Addy/Charisse Weston/Marc Tatti.

New York's Studio Museum in Harlem on October 14 revealed that it had chosen Jeffrey Meris, Devin N. Morris, and Charisse Pearlina Weston as its 2022–23 artists in residence. Each will receive a \$25,000 stipend as well as studio space and access to mentors, and the three will present their work in a group exhibition at the institution as the residency nears its end.

Meris, born in Haiti and raised in Nassau, Bahamas, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic investigated the Black experience through a social lens. In recent months, he has paired mundane processes and objects using sculptural, metalwork, and casting methods in order to express his own healing and as a way of healing society's broader historical wounds.

Meris's practice to date has additionally incorporated drawing, performance, and installation.

The Baltimore-born Morris addresses racial and sexual identity through a practice that encompasses painting, photography, writing, and video, frequently placed in the service of what the artist describes as environments of personal innocence. Morris is especially interested in how individuals are affected by their habitats, and in the webs formed by various kinds of relationships—romantic, platonic, and familial.

Weston, a Brooklyn-based conceptual artist, and writer, cites her childhood in the primarily Black, working-class neighborhood of Hiram Clark in southwest Houston, as a major influence. Her oeuvre—which embraces glass sculpture, sound, text, video, and photography—is concerned with Black interior life as a site of Black resistance, which she examines through folding, concealment, and repetition.

“We’re excited to welcome Jeffrey Meris, Devin N. Morris, and Charisse Pearlina Weston to the distinguished roster of our artist-in-residence program, which has defined the Studio Museum almost since our inception and redefined the culture through our alumni’s achievements,” said Thelma Golden, the Studio Museum’s director and chief curator.

The prestigious residency is known for elevating the careers of its participants, who have included Jordan Casteel, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Lauren Halsey, David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Titus Kaphar, Simone Leigh, Kerry James Marshall, Julie Mehretu, Wangechi Mutu, Mickalene Thomas, and Kehinde Wiley. The program this year received an endowment gift from the Potomac, Maryland–based Glenstone Foundation, which will provide it with a base of funding in perpetuity.

Artforum Inbox

Register to receive our full menu of newsletters—*From the Archive*, *Must See*, *Video*, *In Print*, *Dispatch*, and *ArtforumEDU*—as well as special offers from *Artforum*.

Words and Actions: Queens Museum Shows About Seeking Racial Justice

Two exhibitions at the Queens Museum address efforts to create a more equitable society.

By Alina Tugend

Oct. 22, 2022

This article is part of our Fine Arts & Exhibits special section on how museums, galleries and auction houses are embracing new artists, new concepts and new traditions.

Thousands of handwritten capital letters march neatly on the walls of the 40-foot-long wooden shedlike structure with phrases gradually coming into focus: “unlearning and undoing,” “white-structured disasters,” “commitment to transformation.”

The structure — titled “Align” (2022) and stands 16 feet high and 15 feet deep — is the centerpiece of the exhibition “Crisis Makes a Book Club” at the Queens Museum until March 5.

The artist, Xaviera Simmons, calls it a text sculpture or an architectural intervention; it begins with the sentence “crisis makes a book club,” which is repeated sporadically throughout the writings. For Ms. Simmons — who has had group and solo shows in numerous museums nationally and internationally and has been lauded as “one of the most talented artists of her generation” — it is both humorous and wholly serious.

The written text was prompted by her familiarity with “a group of very wealthy, very influential and very seasoned white women in the arts, philanthropy and academia” who started a book club during the pandemic and amid the protests against the murder of George Floyd and other police brutality against Black people, Ms. Simmons said.

She spoke to a portion of the book group when they were meeting with a variety of artists and academics, and women in the group who she knew “would share the reading lists and tell me what they were talking about,” Ms. Simmons said.

“They never said or announced the depth of language that needed to be said as they engaged in their readings and communing. So, I painted the language for them and for all white women, including white queer, white feminists, who proclaim to desire for substantial change and find themselves starting or joining book clubs and listening sessions when state violence is enacted upon Black people, Indigenous people, trans people and brown communities who do not have the substantial power and resources to push against that power.”



Xaviera Simmons at the Queens Museum. Jasmine Clarke for The New York Times

Ms. Simmons certainly doesn't want people to stop reading; as part of the exhibition, the museum is distributing contemporary and historical books on, among other topics, a history of Indigenous people in the United States. The aim is to give away 4,000 books over the five-month show.

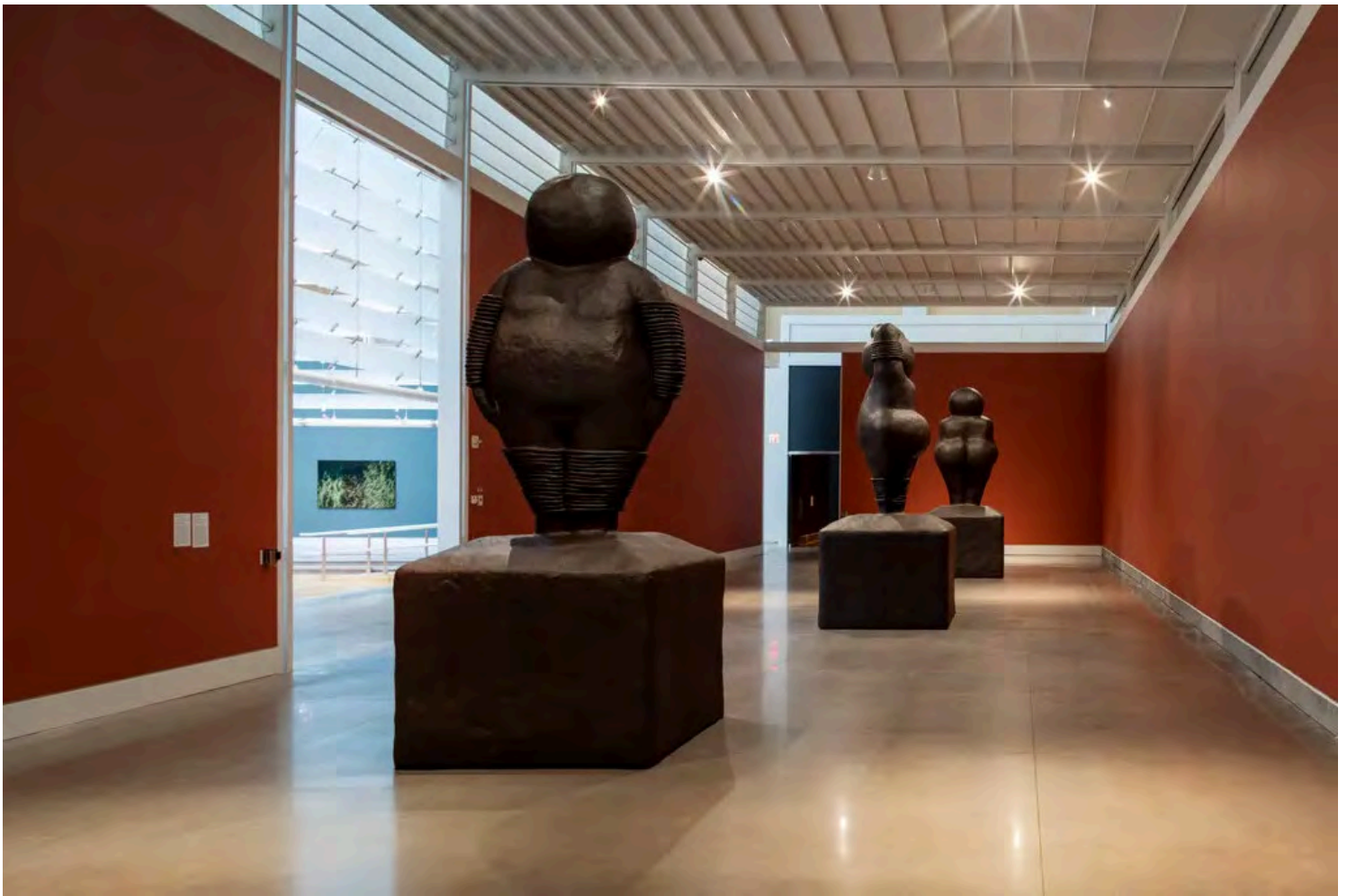
But it's not enough. "Everybody loves a Toni Morrison, an Audre Lorde, a James Baldwin," she added. "Books are fabulous, but you can't stay in a book club or a reading circle or a listening stance and expect things to miraculously change."

In addition to Ms. Simmons' own words, she has also written out most of the James Baldwin essay "On Being White ... and Other Lies," published in *Essence* magazine in 1984.

In the back of the structure is an entry that welcomes visitors inside, with a bench and videos of landscapes and weather, a contrast to the gut-punching narrative.

"This is more of a pause inside of my work," she said, "I want to make sure, especially with this amount of content, there's a space to contemplate, to reflect."

The text sculpture is just one part of the exhibition; less noticeable at first are the large framed photos on the walls surrounding the structure, close-ups of a variety of carefully arranged flowers, the bright reds popping, the simple yellow, white and pink flowers more subdued.



“Gallery 6 Figures, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3” (2022) by Xaviera Simmons. David Castillo Gallery

In another space stand dark gray giant papier-mâché and clay figures on pedestals, influenced by European prehistoric figures. They are faceless and genderless, but the bangles they wear on their arms and legs, their casual stances (one with arms folded behind its head), along with round heads and voluptuous buttocks, give them both a friendly and luscious feel.

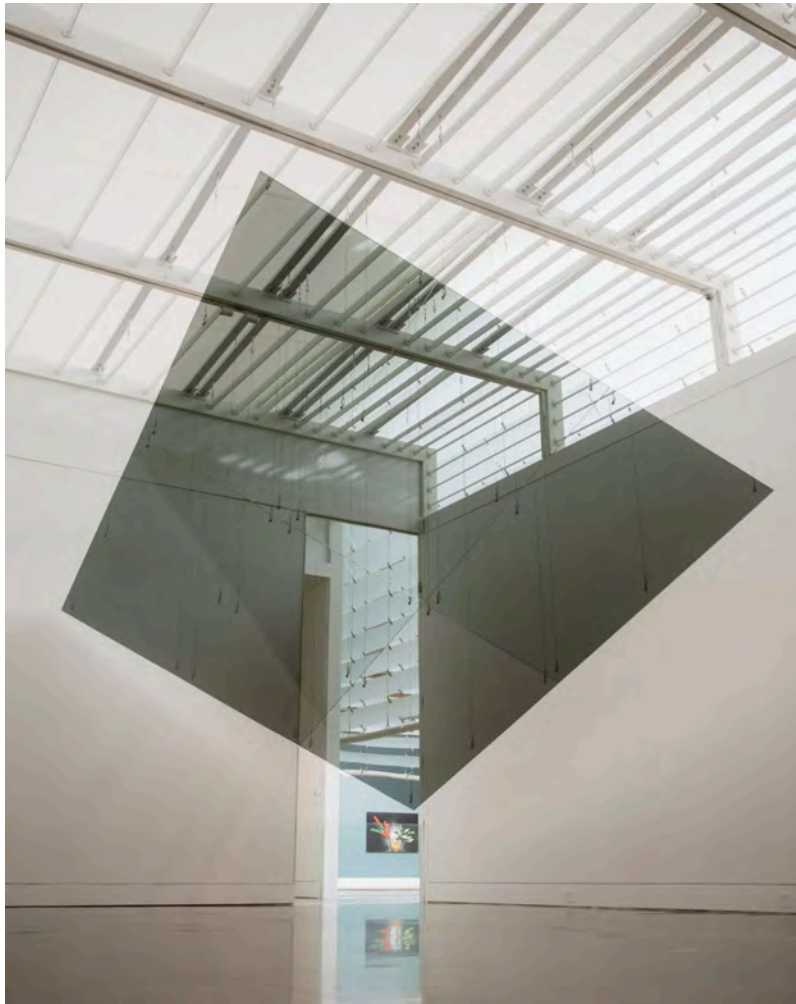
The floral and other photographs in the exhibition, as well as figure sculptures, Ms. Simmons, 48, said, add “a sensual element to it all.”

In two rooms next to Ms. Simmons’ exhibition is the first solo museum show by Charisse Pearlina Weston, a Houston-born artist who now lives in Brooklyn. Part of her exhibition, “of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust,” focuses on the 1964 World’s Fair, which was held in Queens. The exhibition also closes March 5.

The Brooklyn branch of the civil rights group the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), tried to hold a civil rights “stall-in” — blocking highways and roads leading to the World’s Fair. The national CORE and many others opposed the concept as too extreme and staged a milder protest to subsume it.

Ms. Weston, 33, uses the idea of the stall-in and, in particular, the concept of a pause or withholding passage in her work.

A 20-by-15-foot glass sculpture, composed of six panels of tempered glass, hangs from the ceiling with one side tilting down toward the floor.



Charisse Pearlina Weston's "of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust" (2022). Jasmine Clarke for The New York Times

The glass plays off one of the highlights of the World's Fair, the Tent of Tomorrow designed by the architect Philip Johnson. One of its standout features was the floor: a meticulous map of New York State using 567 mosaic panels, each weighing 400 pounds, at the cost of \$1 million.

The title of Ms. Weston's exhibition, she said, was a sales slogan used to sell barbed wire back in the 1800s.

"Barbed wire marked out private property in the rural American landscape in a way that couldn't be done before — it was a violent act of delineating space," she said. "I'm using tactics of Black resistance, one of these being CORE's stall-in, as a way to disrupt these violent protocols inherent to architecture."

The hanging glass is often used in large-scale architecture work, and her piece "is subverting its typical use within architecture," she added. "Its risk and fragility are also at play."

In the other room are glass sculptures with images of Black protest movements melted onto the surface. They include the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles, the CORE stall-in and 2020 Black Lives Matters protests, combined with often barely legible text about those protests.



Ms. Weston's "and rust flows down, glistening (...to neon, to rolled sleeves, to arms, to pause)" (2022). Hai Zhang

Making the words difficult to read reflects that language is often used as concealment, Ms. Weston said.

"I want my work to force people to pose questions about what we assume are neutral things or materials in society, things that feel neutral but are part of a broader system of oppression," she said.

Ryan N. Dennis, who worked with Ms. Weston on public art projects in Houston, said Ms. Weston "does a phenomenal job contending with multiple histories."

"Her research process is fascinating — the way she deals with archives and literature and how it shows up in her work is really brilliant. Her work can be rigorous and playful and return back to rigor." Ms. Dennis is now chief curator and artistic director at the Mississippi Museum of Art's Center for Art and Public Exchange.



Ms. Weston is having her first solo museum show at the Queens Museum. Jasmine Clarke for The New York Times

Although Ms. Weston's and Ms. Simmons' exhibitions are separate, they contrast and complement each other.

"Part of our remit is to present artists at a kind of critical point in their development and their career. And both of these artists are at very different stages in their career," said Sally Tallant, president and executive director of the Queens Museum. "This is a wonderful time to bring their work into focus."

Both artists also draw on a deep well of art history.

"I am founded in an art historical context," said Ms. Simmons, who has taught at Harvard and Columbia. "I have been looking at paintings and sculptures and figurative works and gold plating and collage my whole life."

The Queens Museum, which stopped charging visitors during the pandemic and has remained free, hopes the shows will draw the highly diverse community of the borough. But Ms. Simmons notes at the conclusion of the wall text that her exhibition is not "a surrogate for the vital life changing work that museums, trustees and both individual and government entities have to do to radically shift philanthropic, labor and civic systems."



Welcome to Culture Type®

An essential resource focused on visual art from a Black perspective, Culture Type explores the intersection of art, history, and culture

BOOKS & CATALOGS

MAGAZINES

EXHIBITIONS

AUCTIONS

BEST ART BOOKS

YEAR IN BLACK ART

NEWS

CULTURE TALKS

Latest News in Black Art: Charisse Pearlina Weston Joined Patron Gallery, Danielle A. Jackson Co-Curating Carnegie International, New CEO at Brooklyn Children's Museum, Wangechi Mutu, Christopher Myers & More

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Dec 4, 2023 • 10:58 am



Charisse Pearlina Weston, a 2022-23 Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, is now represented by Patron Gallery. | Courtesy Patron Gallery

Representation

Charisse Pearlina Weston has joined Patron Gallery in Chicago. Weston is a conceptual artist and writer whose work “examines Black interior life, resistance, and technologies of surveillance. Encompassing both physical and ideological apparatuses, these technologies work to reify anti-blackness,” the announcement said. “Working across sculpture, writing, and photography, she examines how practices of repetition, enfoldment, concealment, and delay can re-articulate intimacy and Black interiors as sites of resistance.” Born and raised in Houston, Texas, Weston lives and works in Brooklyn, N.Y. Her formidable academic background includes an MFA in studio art, with an emphasis on critical theory, from the University of California at Irvine; a masters of science degree in modern art history, curating and criticism from the University of Edinburgh’s Edinburgh College of Art; and an undergraduate degree in art history earned at the University of North Texas. Weston participated in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art and is a 2022-23 Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Her work is currently featured in “And ever an edge: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2022–23,” at MoMA PS1 through April 8, 2024. Patron will present Weston’s first solo exhibition with the gallery in fall 2024. (12/4) | [More](#)

The City of Houston Unveils New Public Art Monument by Jamal Cyrus and Charisse Pearlina Weston

by [Jessica Fuentes](#) | July 30, 2023



Earlier this week the City of Houston unveiled a new public art monument created by local artists Charisse Pearlina Weston and [Jamal Cyrus](#).

The commemorative monument, *The Meditative Space*, honors Barbara C. Jordan (1936 – 1996), who was the first African American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Ms. Jordan was a Houston native and part of the inaugural class at Texas Southern University, a historically Black university located in the city's downtown.

In a 2021 press release [announcing the planned commission](#), Mayor Sylvester Turner remarked, “Barbara Jordan is a Houston legend and the artwork created by these artists brings present the impact she had in defending the United States Constitution and representing the people of this City... Jordan was a pioneer – a woman of many firsts and seeing her image and her writing will keep her legacy alive to new generations.”



Charisse Pearlina Weston and Jamal Cyrus, “*The Meditative Space*.”

The monument is composed of two pieces of curved glass with images of Ms. Jordan as well as her handwritten speeches etched into the surface. The design of the piece brings together the aesthetic styles of Ms. Weston, who often

works in glass, and Mr. Cyrus, who is known for his patchwork approach to textiles.

At the unveiling, which took place on Thursday, July 27, Necole Irvin, Director of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, said, "The artists that have made this happen, Jamal Cyrus and Weston, are also Houston-based [and] dug into [the archive](#) and have produced a magnificent artwork for the city's civic art collection."

Mayor Turner also explained that as a native Houstonian himself, Ms. Jordan inspired him when, in 1976, she was the first African-American and first woman to serve as [a keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention](#). He noted that he hopes that the monument will inspire and encourage future generations.

The Meditative Space is located at the African American History Research Center at the Gregory School (1300 Victor Street).

Studio Museum in Harlem Announces Artists in Residence

Devin N. Morris, Charisse Pearlina Weston and Jeffrey Meris have been selected for the residency, which comes with a \$25,000 stipend, studio space, developmental guidance and an exhibition.



By Kalia Richardson

Published Oct. 14, 2022 Updated Oct. 16, 2022

The Studio Museum in Harlem, renowned for shepherding artists of African descent, has announced its latest artists in residence, in a program that has fostered creative greats like David Hammons, Kerry James Marshall and Njideka Akunyili Crosby.

They are Devin N. Morris, Charisse Pearlina Weston and Jeffrey Meris. The residency comes with a \$25,000 stipend, studio space, developmental guidance and a group exhibition at the end of the program.

The three artists will work from a temporary space, Studio Museum 127, as the new building is undergoing construction designed by David Adjaye, one of the architects behind the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. This year, the foundation of the Glenstone Museum has endowed \$10 million toward the program, the Studio Museum said.

Thelma Golden, the museum's maestro and chief curator, said that every year, she's exhilarated to welcome the new artists, and she encourages residents to pursue self-exploration and uncover how their work speaks to viewers.

"The selection of a new cohort of artists is not only exciting because it brings the possibility of engaging these new artists but it also brings them into this institutional history," Golden said.

The museum, founded in 1968, earned its "studio" name from the residency program. Many artists have sought inspiration and found community in Harlem, Golden said.

Morris, who was born in Baltimore and spent the past eight months exploring Brazil and Northeastern cities in the United States, said his work draws inspirations from the spaces he inhabits and the everyday experiences of Black and queer people. He incorporates painting, photography, writing, video and found objects to create what he calls environments of personal innocence, kinship and even humor.



From left, Devin N. Morris, Charisse Pearlina Weston and Jeffrey Meris, the Studio Museum in Harlem's new artists in residence. Credit... From left: Campbell Addy; Charisse Weston; Marc Tatti

"I'm really interested in what it would be like to live in Harlem as an actual place, a physicality, and what that would mean to me as a Black American person," said Morris, 36, who moved to the neighborhood this week.

Weston, 33, a Houston-born Brooklynite, is a conceptual artist who uses glass sculptures, sound, text, video and photography to communicate themes of Black representation that differ from the norm. With layering, repetition and enfolding, she said, her work creates moments of concealment as a form of Black resistance.

All of Weston's work returns to her interest in poetics along with the gaps and opaqueness found in Black intimate spaces, she said.

"We live in a time where everything is about consumption, everything is about hyper visibility, but that visibility is not neutral," said Weston, "and has had a violent impact on certain people and Black people in particular."

As Meris, 31, navigates his identity as a person of African descent, he said the residency program will be a turning point in his career.

"I'm interested in what this means in terms of joining this really rich legacy of being in conversation with artists who I look to, artists who I've modeled my career after in a lot of ways or artists who helped me find my own path and my own voice," Meris said.

Born in Haiti, but raised in Nassau, Bahamas, Meris said that before the pandemic, his work gave a social lens to the Black experience. But he has craved a more complex approach. Through sculptural, metalwork and casting techniques, Meris said, he marries everyday processes and objects as an expression of his own healing. In his work, he hopes to touch those who need it most.

"I'm making the art that I want to see in the world, for people that look like me," he said.

Kalia Richardson is a culture reporter and member of the 2022-2023 New York Times fellowship class. More about Kalia Richardson

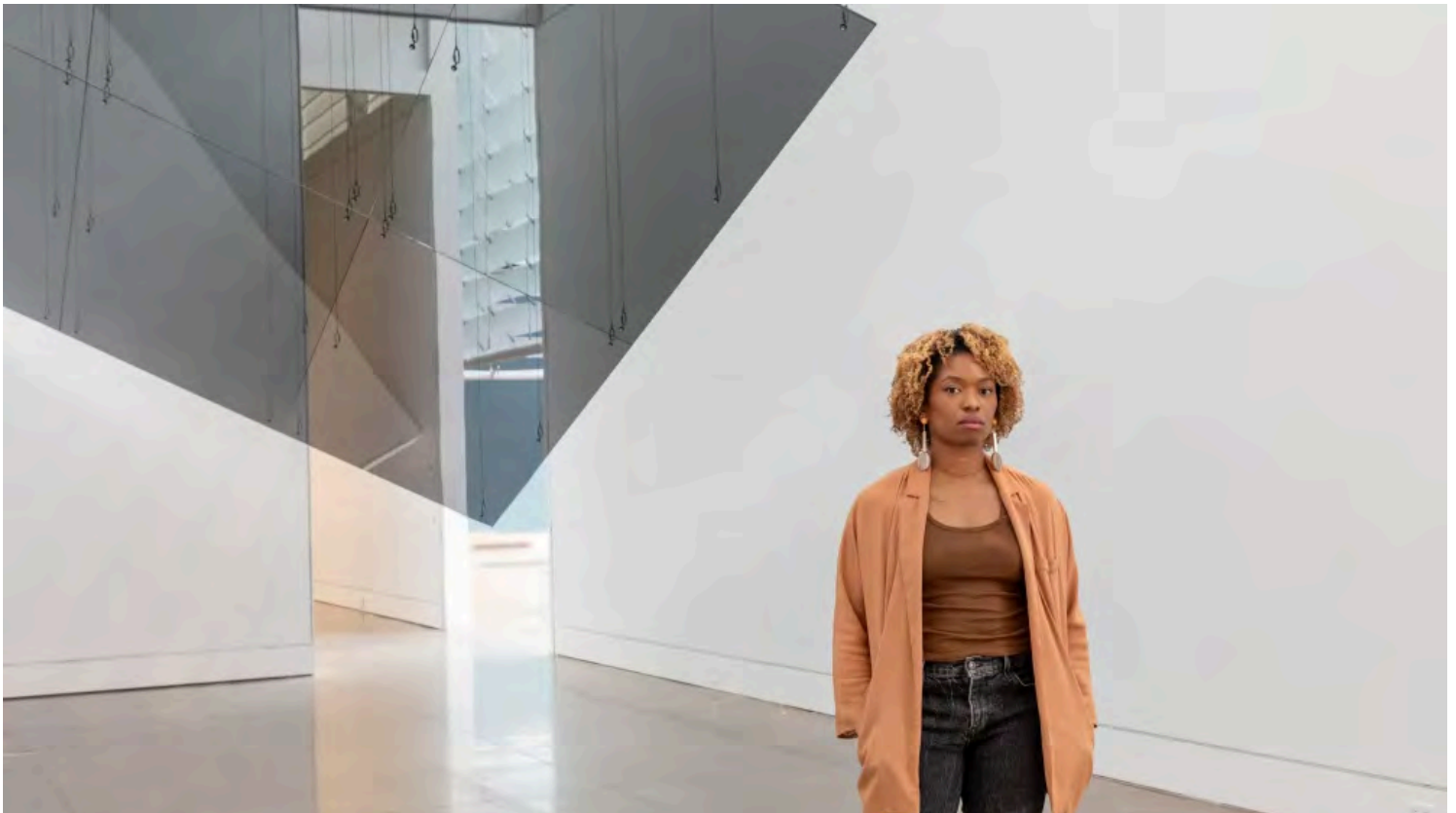
EYE / PEOPLE

Burke Prize Winner Charisse Pearlina Weston Debuts First Solo Museum Show

The emerging artist's exhibition "of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust" is on view at the Queens Museum.

By **KRISTEN TAUER**

OCTOBER 6, 2022, 11:08PM



COURTESY THE QUEENS MUSEUM. PHOTO: HAI ZHANG.

On an early afternoon in late August, getting to the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadow Park was a challenge. The U.S. Open had just kicked off, bringing waves of traffic and visitors to the area; cars pulling into the park's Meridian from Grand Central Parkway were backed up.

The Queens Museum, located steps from the National Tennis Center, was closed for the day and in the early stages of installation for artist Charisse Pearlina Weston's solo show, "of [a] tomorrow: lighter than air, stronger than whiskey, cheaper than dust."

When Weston was approached about mounting an exhibition at the museum in the spring, she found herself drawn to the history of the park, which is littered with architectural ephemera from the 1964 World's Fair. "All of my work is tied in by my interest in thinking about ideas of Black intimacy and interiors and architecture," she says.

The Unisphere is visible from the museum, as is the steel-and-concrete fair pavilion designed by Philip Johnson. The fair was orchestrated by urban planner Robert Moses,



COURTESY THE QUEENS MUSEUM. PHOTO: HAI ZHANG.

whose influence on the city is particularly visible in the museum's central exhibit, The Panorama of the City of New York. Moses' design choices have had lasting impacts on different neighborhoods and communities; discourse around his work often highlights racial biases in his infrastructure and green space choices.

Weston's Queens Museum exhibition was inspired in part by a civil rights protest that was planned in response to the World's Fair. "The idea was to stall cars around the motorways to prevent people from coming. And it was supposed to represent the ways in which anti-Blackness was and still is hindering the ways that Black people can be in the world," she says. "And I was interested in the way that the entire city and the nation responded to this idea of stalling access."

The protest ultimately didn't happen; there was so much pushback against the plans to block the roads around the fair that the city passed a law making it illegal to run out of gas on the throughway; participants could be arrested and fined.

"I have been interested in ideas of stall and delays as tactics of resistance," says Weston. "So when I found out about this history, it tied in perfectly with my work. I've also been thinking a lot about architecture and how certain aspects of architecture reinforce protocols like movement, modifies the way that we experience space. This location worked perfectly because it has histories that connect to those things in different ways," she adds. "This is the first time that I've had the opportunity to make this kind work at scale, and then have it really be in conversation with the space that it's in."

The show stretches across two exhibition rooms. One room contains a large glass installation work suspended from the ceiling; the other, smaller mixed-media glass sculptures that incorporate photography, some found within the Queens Museum archive. Weston incorporated photography of historical instances of Black resistance, drawn to imagery that recurs within the media. In addition to the 1964 protest, she pulled from the Watts riots and more recent 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. All of the photos have been distorted and skewed.

"I don't necessarily like showing images of violence, especially on Black bodies," she says. "So I always try to distort the image in some way to complicate the consumption of the image."

The large-scale glass installation physically blocks the entrance leading to the second gallery, another commentary on stall and delay. Weston was inspired by Richard Serra's "Delineator" installation, which included two metal plates, one on the ground and the other suspended above.

"The idea was he's creating a space within [the plates] that modifies the outer space of the gallery," she says. "There's also this element of risk, like, will you step under it? So I was thinking about that and this idea of modifying space, the role of architecture. Glass makes the illusion of what it takes to hold the piece completely transparent."

Weston, originally from Texas, moved to New York in late 2019 after completing her master of fine arts to participate in the Whitney Museum's Independent studio program. She's since completed residencies with UrbanGlass in Brooklyn and the Museum of **Art** and Design, which awarded her its Burke Prize in 2021. The award, which includes a \$50,000 gift, allowed Weston to quit her day job to fully focus on **art**. This fall, Weston began a research fellowship at the Bard Graduate Center.

Her fine art practice spans sculpture, installation, video, photography, painting and the written word. Her approach to poetry and architecture is also apparent in her titling — for example, "and rust flows down, glistening (...to neon, to rolled sleeves, to arms, to pause)" — which includes its linguistic scaffolding through brackets and parentheticals.

"When I started off in painting I felt I was romanticizing the field of painting too much to actually push its boundaries," says Weston, adding that broadening her practice to incorporate other forms unlocked new opportunities for creation. Exposure to Houston's art scene, heavy on installation work and social practice, was foundational.

"It opened me up to realizing that I can intermingle materials in really interesting ways," she says.

Jamal Cyrus and Charisse Pearlina Weston to Collaborate on Barbara Jordan Monument in Houston

by [Glasstire](#) | November 10, 2021



A rendering of Meditative Space in Reflection of the Life and Work of the late Barbara Jordan by Jamal Cyrus and Charisse Pearlina Weston. Image: City of Houston

The City of Houston Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA) has announced the commissioning of a monument dedicated to Congresswoman Barbara Jordan. The monument will adorn the grounds of the Houston Public Library’s (HPL) African American Library at the Gregory School. Housed in the former building of the first Black public school in Houston, the African American Library is the city’s first library dedicated to the history and culture of the region’s African Americans residents. In a statement to the press, HPL Director Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson said of the project:

“The Houston Public Library is pleased through our partnership with MOCA to elevate civic art in the city in such a powerful way through this commission of the iconic Barbara Jordan. This project underscores The African American Library at the Gregory School’s founding charge to preserve, promote and celebrate the rich

history and culture of African Americans in Houston and we are honored to host this dynamic work of art for the community to enjoy and experience.”

Houston-based artists Jamal Cyrus and Charisse Pearlina Weston will collaborate on the monument, titled *Meditative Space in Reflection of the Life and Work of the late Barbara Jordan*. The artists have worked together in the past: notably, Weston contributed the text for Cyrus’s 2018 exhibition with Jamire Williams at Lawndale Art Center, *Boogaloo & The Midnite Hours* (read our review of that show [here](#)). Cyrus and Weston were also both featured in the Contemporary Art Museum Houston’s 2020 exhibit *Slowed and Thrown*, which was influenced by the life and work of famed Houston hip-hop artist DJ Screw. That exhibit is currently on view at Artpace in San Antonio through November 21st.

Cyrus recently [talked about his work](#) with Glasstire contributor Peter Lucas. His exhibition *The End of My Beginning*, which closed at the Blaffer Art Museum on September 26th, will travel to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 2022. Cyrus was the 2020 recipient of The High Museum of Art’s David C. Driskell Prize, awarded annually for contributions to the field of African American art.

Weston is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York and holds an MFA in Fine Art with Critical Theory Emphasis from The University of California-Irvine. She is a 2021 recipient of the Burke Prize from the Museum of Arts and Design in New York.



A rendering of Meditative Space in Reflection of the Life and Work of the late Barbara Jordan by Jamal Cyrus and Charisse Pearlina Weston. Image: City of Houston

The artists’ monument to Congresswoman Jordan is slated to debut in the summer of 2022. The result of a nationwide search by HPL, MOCA, and the Houston Arts Alliance, *Meditative Space in Reflection of the Life and Work of the late Barbara Jordan*, is, according to a press release from the Mayor’s Office:

“A dynamic, commemorative space wherein free-standing glass panels situated within a tranquil structure function as vehicles to represent, through an intricate photographic and text-based collage of materials, the life and work of Barbara C. Jordan. Transforming the lawn to the right of the Gregory School Library’s entrance, the Meditative Space invites visitors to enter a place of reflection to consider Jordan’s dedication to public service, racial justice, and the fulfillment of American ideals. The footprint of the commission is informed by the Adinkra symbol sepow, which represents justice and authority.”

“The artwork created by these artists brings present the impact [Jordan] had in defending the United States Constitution and representing the people of this City,” said Mayor Sylvester Turner in the press release. He continued: “the City of Houston is proud to honor Congresswoman Barbara Jordan in such a creative way.”

In 1972, Houston native Barbara Jordan became the first African American woman from the South to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives and, according to the U.S. National Archives, the first LGBTQ+ woman in Congress. She retired from politics in 1979 and accepted a position in the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. Her many honors include the 1992 Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the 1994 Presidential Medal of Freedom. She died in 1996. While there are statues of Jordan at the University of Texas at Austin and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, *Meditative Space in Reflection of the Life and Work of the late Barbara Jordan* will be Houston’s first public artwork to honor the Congresswoman.



Welcome to Culture Type®

An essential resource focused on visual art from a Black perspective, Culture Type explores the intersection of art, history, and culture

[BOOKS & CATALOGS](#)[MAGAZINES](#)[EXHIBITIONS](#)[AUCTIONS](#)[BEST ART BOOKS](#)[YEAR IN BLACK ART](#)[NEWS](#)[CULTURE TALKS](#)

Latest News in Black Art: Huey P. Newton Sculpture Unveiled, Charisse Pearlina Weston Wins 2021 Burke Prize, DuSable Museum Names Danny Dunson Chief Curator & More

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Oct 24, 2021 • 11:58 pm



CHARISSE PEARLINA WATSON, "I Am Moored Along the Soft Shored Unity of Impatient Ruin," 2021 (enfolded glass etched with text, 30 x 20 x 10 inches . 76.2 x 50.8 x 25.4 cm. | © Charisse Pearlina Weston. Courtesy the artist

Awards & Honors

Charisse Pearlina Weston [won the 2021 Burke Prize](#) from the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD in New York). The \$50,000 prize recognizes an artist age 45 or under for work with glass, fiber, clay, metal, or wood. In her [artist statement](#), Houston, Texas-born, Brooklyn, N.Y.-based Weston said: "I utilize glass to conceptually embody both the everyday risk of anti-black violence and the precocity and malleability of blackness in the face of this violence. My formal explorations of glass theorize the delicate enfoldments and layerings of the material as a terrain constitutive of interiors and exteriors which articulate the complexities of black intimacies and their refusal, at times, to be revealed." Showcasing works by the 16 finalists, the exhibition "[Story Makers: Burke Prize 2021](#)" is on view at MAD through March 20, 2022.

The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery announced 42 finalists for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition, including seven shortlisted artists, from which the first place winner will be selected on April 29, 2022. **Stuart Robertson** made the shortlist. The finalists include **Holly Bass**, **Adama Delphine Fawundu**, and **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**. Works by all of the finalists will be featured in "The Outwin 2022: American Portraiture Today," a major exhibition at the Washington, D.C., museum, on view from April 30, 2022 to Feb. 26, 2023. | [See Full List of Finalists](#)