



# my Presence is Present

interpretations of afrosurrealism  
from the American South

**AUGUST 4, 2023 -  
JANUARY 15, 2024**

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■ **BY CARLA AARON-LOPEZ**

*m*y *Presence is Present* is an exhibition that navigates through surreal African-American experiences as told by 21 emerging and established contemporary artists in and around the Carolinas. Each participating artist purposefully creates work in response to inherent memories and identities of growing up and living in the American South.

As curator of this exhibition, I asked local Charlotte artist DaRemen J. about the state of his current video works. His response, “everything right now is about me being Black and just existing.” A rather surreal perspective when you think about it in a present-day context. Are we simply existing or continuing to create new spaces where we can still exist? If so, what do those brave new worlds look like and at what point do they become surreal, leading us on a journey to new visual interpretations of how we live and view our Black lives?

If we define blackness as a living term constantly evolving and taking on new meanings across our various lived Black experiences, our present is now more surreal than ever. Since artists of color are constantly reacting to the socio-cultural politics of a post-colonial world, then it is time to look at how we interpret our present states of being. In certain cases, this could be interpreted as restoring cultures of the past, uncovering invisible worlds still struggling to exist and/or highlighting aspects of the mystical and metaphorical as it applies to blackness.





## Featuring Works By

Carla Aaron-Lopez

Ariel Dannielle

Kalin Renee Devone

William Downs

Shanequa Gay

Garrison Gist

Roscoe Hall

Clarence Heyward

DaRemen J.

Asa Jackson

Will Jenkins

Jamea Naje' Marlowe

Nadia Meadows

Michi Meko

Kevin "Surf" Mitchell

Rashaun Rucker

Gustavo Soto

J. Stacy Utley

Dammit Wesley

Bryan Wilson

## About the Curator

### ■ CARLA AARON-LOPEZ



Carla Aaron-Lopez is a photographer, printmaker, and collagist. Ever defying expectation, Aaron-Lopez has also expanded her practice to include murals and painting. She has pioneered platforms for underground artists and built spaces that encourage experimentation in both Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina.

Aaron-Lopez considers herself a "professional student of life" who believes we all have the ability to learn and create anything. She is also a member of the Black arts collective and event space, BLKMRKTCLT.

Shanequa Gay, *Daughters of Metropolitan Installation* (diptych), 2022, Courtesy of the artist.





Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts+Culture is a multidisciplinary arts institution located in the heart of Charlotte, North Carolina. Founded in 1974, the Gantt's mission is to present, preserve, and celebrate excellence in the art, history, and culture of African-Americans and those of African descent.



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

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**ARTWORK CREDIT:** Roscoe Hall, *Try Not Too*, 2022,  
Courtesy of the artist and SOCO Gallery, Charlotte, NC.