

Fellowship 24
Rachael Banks
William Camargo
Anthony Francis
Vikesh Kapoor
Xavier Scott Marshall
Anna Rotty

About the Artists

Rachael Banks lives in Northern Kentucky. She is an artist and educator. Her research interests include folklore, ecology, and epigenetics. Rachael's work addresses trauma and nature as central to relationships and experiences with her community. In 2024, she received a Fellowship honorable mention in Silver Eye's annual photography competition.

William Camargo is a California-based artist and educator, and is the founder and curator of Latinx Diaspora Archives. His work has been shown at the Chicago Cultural Center, The Cooper Gallery of African and African American Arts at Harvard, and Filter Photo, among others. In 2024, he received a Fellowship award in Silver Eye's annual photography competition.

Anthony Francis is a multifaceted visual artist, filmmaker, educator, and writer based in San Antonio, Texas. His work and research interests are concerned with opacity, love, and portraiture's politics connected to the photographic apparatus. In 2024, he received a Fellowship award in Silver Eye's annual photography competition.

Vikesh Kapoor is a multidisciplinary artist whose work examines race, class, and identity as a first-generation American. Kapoor is currently a fellow in the inaugural Google Image Equity Fellowship. In 2024, he received the Keystone Award in Silver Eye's annual photography competition, which recognizes an artist making exceptional work in Pennsylvania.

Xavier Scott Marshall is a first-generation Trinidadian-American artist. Xavier's large format black and white images reflect the colonial history of religious image-making to question and draw parallels between visual history and the black condition. In 2024, he received a Keystone Award honorable mention in Silver Eye's annual photography competition.

Anna Rotty investigates water, light, and infrastructure, informing her understanding of orientation and place. She is currently an MFA candidate and instructor of record in photography at the University of New Mexico on Tiwa land known as Albuquerque. In 2024, she received a Fellowship honorable mention in Silver Eye's annual photography competition.

I. Introduction

Fellowship 24

**Rachael Banks, William Camargo, Anthony Francis, Vikesh Kapoor,
Xavier Scott Marshall, Anna Rotty**

Silver Eye has supported vital new voices in contemporary photography through Fellowship, our annual international juried photography competition, for over twenty years. Taking the Fellowship 24 competition as a point of departure, this exhibition reflects the unique perspectives of this year's artists. Works in this exhibition speak to the power of devotion in many forms, place as an intersection of personal, social, and political concerns, and visual language as a means to new narratives.

Fellowship 24 reflects Silver Eye's mission to support contemporary photography that addresses contemporary artistic and social concerns, often in dialogue with the medium's past. We are grateful to our jurors Zora J Murff, Aline Smithson, and Jeremiah William McCarthy, and to the artists for the opportunity to collaborate to realize their visions.



II. Devotion

Devotion is a term often associated with religious contexts. Yet, many artists in *Fellowship 24* invite us to consider more expansive understandings of this term. For example, Rachael Banks' decade-long care and commitment to photographing her family in the Knobs and Bluegrass regions of Central Kentucky expresses intertwined cycles of familial life and nature. Vikesh Kapoor expresses the unwavering devotion of his mother, Sarla Kapoor, in her service to her community as an OBGYN. His layered approaches to storytelling reflect her enduring impact on individual lives and her community. Other artists further illustrate how care is central to devotion. For example, Anthony Francis' work is founded upon an expansive sense of what support can look and feel like, and shared experiences.

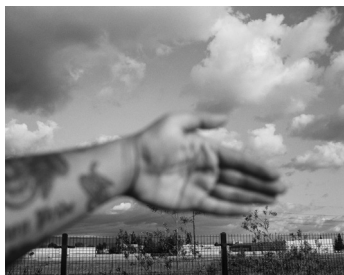
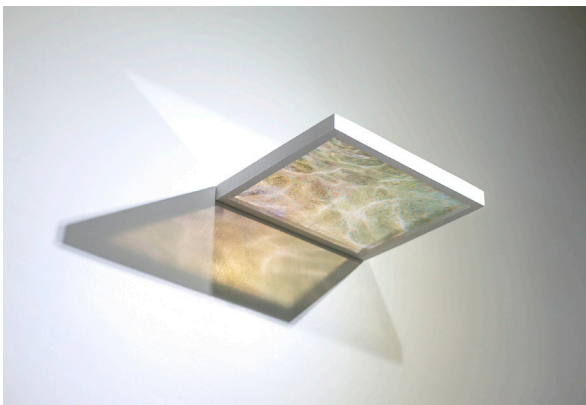
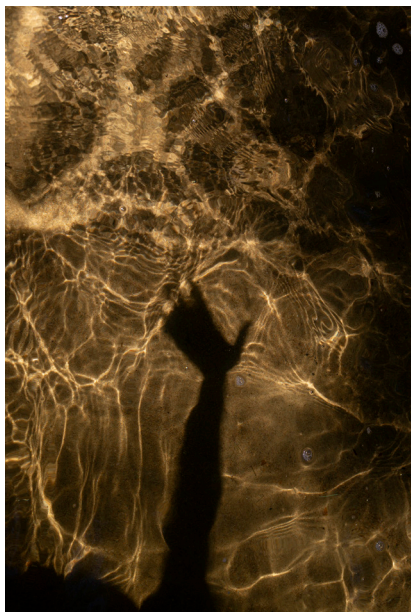
Questions for Looking:

→ Consider Rachael Banks' photograph *Cecilia and King*, 2023. How does this image make you feel? What might this image suggest about intertwined cycles of nature and life?

→ How does Vikesh Kapoor express his mother's impact on her community individually and collectively through different approaches to making or experimenting with portraiture?

→ Several of Anthony Francis' works consider acts of looking, such as *Asia, Ash and Kahlil, Together, against and beside and/or Looking into Opacity*, Houston, 2023. How does this work express Black experience and love? How does this photograph relate to shared experiences?

Left column, top to bottom: Vikesh Kapoor, *Leslie Smith*, 2021; Chase Bottorf, 2021.
Right column, top to bottom: Vikesh Kapoor, *Office Corkboard (Reimagined)*, 2024;
Rachael Banks, *Cecilia and King*, 2023; Anthony Francis, *Asia, Ash and Kahlil, Together, against and beside and/or Looking into Opacity*, Houston, 2023



III. The politics and poetics of place

Several *Fellowship 24* artists invite us to consider the relationship between photography and place. For example, Rachael Banks' decade-long storytelling challenges narrow representations of the Knobs and Bluegrass regions of Central Kentucky. The political and poetic qualities of place are examined by William Camargo and Anna Rotty. Both artists use photography to encourage dialogue on urgent social concerns. Camargo examines issues of **gentrification** in his hometown of Anaheim, California, frequently elevating Chicana/Latina histories in this city. Anna Rotty examines her relationship with water and its shifting social significance by creating unique installations and photographs. These connect her personal history with concerns around climate change and **civic infrastructures**.

Questions for Looking

- Consider Anna Rotty's works in this exhibition. How does she use materials and light to invite feelings of movement through space?
- William Camargo and Anna Rotty incorporate elements of gesture in their works. How does this encourage us to disrupt assumptions of the landscape being a subject of fixed representation and understand it instead as an active ever-changing space?
- William Camargo frequently uses signs, photography, and elements of performance, to draw attention to contemporary political issues or tell alternative histories of his home town of Anaheim. Consider the photograph *A Colonist Is A Colonist Is A Colonist*, 2022. How does this photograph blend the past and present day? What new histories would you want to write about your own community?

Top row: Anna Rotty, *Touch*, 2023; Detail from *Nothing Without Each Other*, 2023.
Middle row: Anna Rotty, *Pirachi (Glades)*, 2022; William Camargo, *A Colonist Is A Colonist Is A Colonist*, 2022. Bottom row: William Camargo, *A Little Brown Interference*, 2022-Present



IV. Reimagining visual traditions

Several of the artists of *Fellowship 24* ask how photography can be a powerful tool to claim space figuratively and conceptually. This necessitates dismantling art history and photography's presumed authority.

Xavier Scott Marshall reimagines centuries of Christian **iconography** to create large-format black-and-white photographs that center Black experience. Anthony Francis transforms foundational assumptions about photography, such as pose and gesture, to elevate individual agency and create potent spaces for imagination. William Camargo directly responds to esteemed Californian photographers who shaped the medium before him, asking us to see the history of photography as incomplete and biased in its representation.

Questions for Looking

→ In *Madonna and Child*, Pittsburgh, 2021, Xavier Scott Marshall reimagines one of the oldest subjects in religious painting. By decontextualizing religion and focusing on the Black experience in contemporary environments, what new perspectives is the artist expressing? How do the material blemishes or marks of the original film negative add to your response?

→ In many of Anthony Francis' photographs the assumed subject of the photograph often refuses the viewer's gaze. In *Brandon, Blessings on Blessings and/or Burdens to Lay Down*, 2022, the figure's body language invites us to think about what he may be carrying but essential visual description is denied. What becomes possible when representation is not the direct purpose?

→ Consider William Camargo's direct response to John Divola's earlier work. How do Camargo's own concerns and experiences as a person of color inform the appropriation of this work? What questions about art history might Camargo be posing through this contemporary rethinking?

Top row: Xavier Scott Marshall, *Madonna and Child*, Pittsburgh, 2021. Middle row: Anthony Francis, *Ro and Jackie, Loving Brace, and/or Together and around*, San Antonio, 2023; *Brandon, Blessings on Blessings and/or Burdens to Lay Down*, San Antonio, 2022. Bottom row: John Divola, *As Far As I Could Get (10 Seconds)*, 1996-7, Copyright reserved

V. Community Perspectives

Community Perspectives is an ongoing series where people from diverse disciplines and backgrounds respond freely to images in our exhibitions.

Erika Howsare reflects on Rachael Banks' photograph, *Untitled*, 2023

Drops of blood mean hurt, gore, violence, death; they also stand for vitality, essence, the most vivid of hues and stuffs. Because they are roughly the same size as humans, deer carry inside them, as do we, several liters of blood. Their blood has entered our bodies along with their meat for the millennia they've acted as crucial sources of human food—life-giving through death. Now, the blood of deer regularly washes our roads.

Our relationship with them encompasses this keen knife's edge between living and dying, the beating heart of being and the nothingness of breakdown. I've been deeply moved to read old stories that explain how humans can revive deer they've hunted, so that the species may persist and continue to keep us alive. It's as though we and deer have been passing a glowing orb of life back and forth over all the years we've been together.

This image is so exact in its grayscale allowance for every drop of blood along with every perfect hair, every scallop of eyelash and bone. It is the perfect companion to Rachael's other image of a deer, who like the humans and other animals in her work, is tenderly alive, existing in a habitat of light and air.

Erika Howsare's first nonfiction book, The Age of Deer, was published in January 2024. She has also published two books of poetry and numerous essays and reviews, and worked in local journalism for more than twenty years. She's also the host of the podcast If You See a Deer. Originally from Washington County, PA, she now lives in Central Virginia, where she teaches writing privately and often takes photos of the ground.



Dominique Chestand reflects on William Camargo's group of photographs, *A Little Brown Interference*, 2022-present

The world is an ever-changing thing. A place of constant destruction and reconstruction. This is the nature of everything we know. But what is unnatural is who the world changes for and who gets left behind in the process. William Camargo's work reminds me of how depraved change can be when erasure is disguised as progress.

To live in a Brown or Black body is to live in a state of perpetual erasure. So much so, that the mere presence of a Brown body can be what Camargo accurately calls *A Little Brown Interference*. Camargo's expertise takes that which has been erased and makes it the focus of the eye trained to forget.

We are trained to forget.

This series of photographs forces me to remember all the Brown bodies and all the land stolen by state violence in the name of expansion.

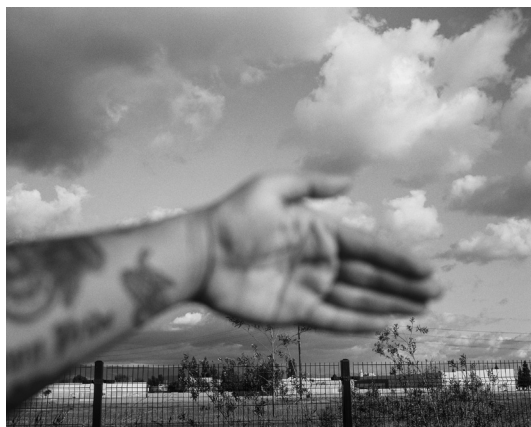
Remember that this is theft.

Remember that this is ruin.

Remember that there are people who changed the world so that the thieves can steal entire nations without consequence. So that some of us will always be seen as disposable, as temporary things meant for destruction. Remember that the world can be changed again.

With a little interference.

Dominique Chestand is a multimedia artist and arts administrator whose work explores the experiences of marginalized identities during the cost-of-living crisis. She is a recipient of the Pittsburgh Foundation's 2023 Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh Award. Chestand has been an artist-in-residence with Young Chicago Authors, AMFM Gallery and the Danish Arts Council. She currently works as the Operations Manager for Shiftworks Community + Public Arts, formerly known as the Office for Public Art.



Becky Gaugler reflects on Xavier Scott Marshall's photograph *Doubting Thomas*, 2021

For any artwork, I ask myself a lot of questions — about the subject, the artist, the medium, and especially the context. That's part of being an art educator.

What do I notice first? Four young Black men gathered on a cobblestone street; casually dressed; intense concentration at a focal point – a hole in the far-left figure's shirt.

The work is titled “Doubting Thomas,” leading me to think of the often-depicted story of the apostle Thomas who needed to touch Christ's wounds before he would believe in his resurrection. This contemporary, urban environment is a very different context from that traditional Catholic imagery.

It's hard to study and teach Western art history without encountering Christian stories and symbolism. This photograph (and Marshall's own statements) points directly to the 17th century Italian master Caravaggio's painting of the same composition, including the dramatic lighting.

Here in Pittsburgh, Croatian artist Maxo Vanka depicted himself as doubting Thomas among eleven apostles (sorry, Judas) in his stunning cycle of murals in St. Nicholas Church. While Vanka was raised Catholic, he married a Jewish woman and was mostly agnostic by the time he painted the murals, a nod to the “doubting” part of the story.

These painters, and Marshall, bring ancient religious stories into the present through dress, style, and expression. They make them relevant again.

There's so much more to this photograph that I wonder about. The best art leaves us wanting more.

Becky Gaugler is a native Pittsburgher who returned to her hometown 15 years ago. She is currently the Director of Education and Interpretation for the Maxo Vanka Murals, located inside the historic St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale. She holds an MA in Art History from Case Western Reserve University and a BA in History of Art from the University of Michigan. Her previous roles have included work as an educator at Carnegie Museum of Art, Heinz History Center, Rubin Museum of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art.



Glossary

Civic Infrastructure	Relates to the frameworks that supports civil society. These frameworks include rail corridors, bridges, communication, irrigation, and wastewater management. This term also refers to the research, policies, and practices that government, citizens, businesses, and non-profit organizations implement towards its effective functioning.
Gentrification	A process of neighborhood change in which a historically disinvested neighborhood is impacted by real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in, as well as demographic change. This frequently results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier long-term residents.
Iconography	Refers to the use of images and symbols to represent ideas, especially conventional meanings associated with religious subjects.

Reading List

Rachael Banks, *The Trail of the Dead* (Ghost of Ozymandias Press |
Newport, KY | Self-Published, 2023)

Sheona Beaumont, *The Bible in Photography: Index, Icon, Tableau, Vision*
(Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024)

John Berger and Jean Moir, *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country
Doctor* (Vintage; 1st edition, March 25, 1997)

Lauren Camp, *Worn Smooth Between Devourings* (NYQ Books, 2023)

William Camargo, *We Been Here* (Seaton Street Press, 2022)

Greg Foster-Rice and John Rohrbach, editors, *Reframing the New
Topographics* (Center for American Places, 2011)

Anna Rotty, *How We Hold The Sun* (Self-Published, 2024)

Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight, Photography and the
Unseen* (Duke University Press, 2013)

Rebecca Solnit, Mark Klett, & Byron Wolfe, *Drowned River: The Death
& Rebirth of Glen Canyon on the Colorado*
(Radius Books, 2018)

Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, (Penguin Books, 2010)

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This guide serves as an education supplement to our exhibition and contains information about the works on view, questions for looking and discussion as well as room for student responses. To schedule a tour of this exhibition for students, go to: silvereye.org

Silver Eye Center for Photography is generously supported by our individual donors and lab members and by The Allegheny Regional Asset District, Arts, Equity, & Education Fund™, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Concept Art Gallery, The Fine Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Irving and Aaronel deRoy Gruber Charitable Foundation, The Joy of Giving Something, Inc., The Leonian Foundation, The McCune Foundation, Opportunity Fund, The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and other foundations and organizations.



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