

After That Blue **July 7–August 13, 2023**

In contemporary art history, the color blue has often been as important as black and white. It has a long-standing relationship with HIV+ artists and the general history of the HIV/AIDS crisis. For many of those artists, the color blue has served as a symbol for one more day being alive—a new day with a promising blue sky above them.

Not only can blue be seen as limitless as the sky but also the endless water of the open ocean. Yet, blue has both positive and negative connotations and has other meanings apart from the color. We all know blue as a synonym for sorrow and depression. And somehow it carries—especially as it relates to the HIV+ status—a complicated range of emotions: horror, rage, fear, and grief. There is not so much optimism in many shades of blue, and they also can conjure senses of social isolation and loneliness. However, as the color of the PrEP pill, nowadays blue can also be perceived as a color of hope. But not only.

There are a myriad of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's works that employ this color. As he said in an interview with Tim Rollins in 1993 "if a beautiful memory could have a color, that would be light blue." That color would be a washed-out Giotto blue, or blue saturated with bright sunlights in the Caribbean, or simply light blue. He added, too, that there is "a lot of positive dialectic" in blues. In a separate interview, he notes that blue "evokes water and the sky. Sometimes, in New York, when it's a beautiful day out, it's exactly like that." Between 1987 and 1992, Felix Gonzalez-Torres created approximately fifty-five jigsaw puzzles, most of them in monochrome, wrapped in plastic and installed directly onto the wall. They explore the fluid boundary between the public and private domains, as well as the intricate interplay among memory, fragmentation, history, absence, presence, and photography. Several of the works' editions were printed with a blue tint—"Untitled" (Waldheim to The Pope), 1989, depicting the Pope giving communion to Kurt Waldheim—is presented in the show.

Derek Jarman's last video work before he died of AIDS was called "Blue" (1993). It begins with vivid flashes of blue light interrupting his vision—a result of lesions discovered on his eyes caused by AIDS-related infection. A space filled with blue light from a projector playing his video was a response to his HIV diagnosis, his confrontation with mortality, and the epitome of the void. Without a doubt, this work has inspired many generations of artists.

The diversity of works presented at this exhibition is not limited to only the color blue, nor its associations with just water and sky. By showcasing the versatility of the many meanings of blue, it aims to not only show the progress that has been made but also serve as a reminder that the HIV crisis is not over—it's still happening now. Most importantly, it's a reminder that we all live under the same (blue) sky, and we must resolve HIV-related stigma.

Artists: **Dumb Type, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Joe Houston, Jaewon Kim, Clifford Prince King, Reverend Joyce McDonald, Carlos Motta, Richard Porter, Hunter Reynolds, LJ Roberts, Joey Terrill, Frederick Weston**

About artists

Founded in 1984 by fifteen art students working in Kyoto, **Dumb Type's** experimental theater projects combine dance and performance with ambitious multimedia installations. **Teiji Furuhashi** (1960-1995), a central figure in the group, came out as HIV positive to his collaborators in 1992, prompting the collective to produce a major performance piece responding to the AIDS crisis. The resulting work, *S/N*, used the notion of a "signal to noise" ratio as a structuring metaphor, challenging Japan's silence about AIDS with explicit discussion of gay identity, stigma, sex work, and border politics. Incorporating a two-level set, elaborate choreography, live video, and projection, the performance was critically acclaimed and toured to more than twenty cities around the world. Though Dumb Type hoped to perform *S/N* in New York, only one venue in Seattle was willing to present the piece in the United States back at the time.

Joe Houston (b. 1962) has translated relevant environmental and social issues into modestly scaled paintings featuring everyday objects and gestures. Executed with exacting detail and nuance, his evocative works also serve as a meditation on the precarious endeavour of painting in our time. Houston's work is in numerous public collections including the Allen Memorial Arts Museum, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Progressive Collection, RISD Museum, Vehbi Koç Foundation, and Yale University Art Gallery.

Jaewon Kim (b. 1991). Jaewon Kim is a Korean artist currently based in Seoul, South Korea. Kim primarily works with video, photography, and installation to discuss the lives of queer people and people living with HIV/AIDS. Working from his personal experiences, Kim devises narratives that trace moments from the past and the future. Much of his work considers how the force of disease affects personal relationships.

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Clifford Prince King (b. 1993) is an artist living and working in New York and Los Angeles. King documents his intimate relationships in traditional, everyday settings that speak on his experiences as a queer black man. In these instances, communion begins to morph into an offering of memory; it is how he honors and celebrates the reality of layered personhood. Within King's images are nods to the beyond. Shared offerings to the past manifest in codes hidden in plain sight, known only to those who sit within a shared place of knowledge. Public collections holding his work include the Hammer Museum, Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Arts, ICA Miami, Minneapolis Institute of Art and Studio Museum in Harlem.

Reverend Joyce McDonald (b. 1951) lives and works in New York. A self-taught, visionary multidisciplinary artist, activist, and minister, McDonald fuses experience with strength, hope, and power. In her tender sculptural works, she enshrines her own life stories and wider cultural experiences of family, love, loss, illness, healing, transformation, and transcendence. As a teenager, she performed at the Apollo Theater in the girl group The Primettes. After her HIV diagnosis in 1985—the result of a long battle with addiction—McDonald was ordained as a minister at the Church of the Open Door in Brooklyn in 2009. She uses her own struggles to drive her work as an artist, activist, advocate, and self-identified “spiritual nurse.” Through her art and ministry, McDonald shares her contagious joy and love and inspires women to get in touch with their inner beauty and dignity.

Carlos Motta's (b. 1978) multi-disciplinary art practice documents the social conditions and political struggles of sexual, gender, and ethnic minority communities to challenge normative discourses through visibility and representation. As a historian of untold narratives and an archivist of repressed histories, Motta is committed to in-depth research on the struggles of post-colonial subjects and societies. His work manifests in a variety of mediums including video, installation, sculpture, drawing, web-based projects, performance, and symposia.

Richard Porter is a British artist working with sculpture, painting, moving image and performance. His work explores issues around queer identity, myth, memory and time. The struggle for light against the pull of darkness is a recurring theme for Richard Porter and the artists, poets and thinkers that have influenced him. Underpinning everything is the artist's queer identity. The sense of fragility and decay within the work echoes the legacy of HIV/AIDS and the destruction wrought against an entire generation of LGBTQI people. Through the images of different domestic objects, Porter manifests his allegiance with the things of the world that are most vulnerable and prone to disappearance.

For over 30 years, **Hunter Reynolds** (1959-2022) explored issues of gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, politics, mortality, and rebirth through performance, photography, installations, and his alter ego, Patina du Prey. Profound, beautiful, and ferociously honest, Reynolds' work was directly influenced by his lived experiences as an HIV-positive gay man living in the age of AIDS. As a member of ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) and a co-founder of Art Positive, an affinity group fighting homophobia and censorship in the arts, Reynolds used his visual and performance art practice to spread a message of survival, hope, and healing, and to reify queer histories so often marginalized, sterilized, and forgotten.

LJ Roberts (b.1980 Royal Oak, Michigan, USA) creates large-scale textile installations, embroi-deries, artist books, and collages. Their work investigates overlaps of queer and trans politics, activism, protest, and craft. Roberts lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. LJ Roberts will premiere a work dedicated to their long-time friend Frederick Weston based on the photo and the video made two days before he passed away in 2020. The video shows his hand holding his phone playing a video of Louis Armstrong singing "Black and Blue," and Fred singing along. It's shown in a dialog with one of Fred's collages from "Blue Bathroom Blues" series.

Joey Terrill (b. 1955) lives and works in Los Angeles, California, where he is Director of Global Advocacy & Partnerships for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. As a high school volunteer for “La Huelga”—the farmworkers' unionization movement, led by Cesar Chavez—Terrill learned the grassroots activism and skills he used a decade later as AIDS ravaged Los Angeles. The “Still-Life” series came out of the artist's desire to make art about ambivalent feelings regarding living in this era of the HIV cocktail and the industry that has flourished around the disease. Twenty years ago, art that dealt with AIDS was about the governmental inaction, homophobia, AIDSphobia, and the wave of death decimating the artist population. Art tended to be political, angry (righteously so) and emotional. Explorations of the body, commemorative odes to fallen comrades and/or agit-prop of tremendous power, Collectively the body of work from that era has become a memento mori, a reminder of human mortality and political failure.

Frederick Weston (1946–2020) was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and raised in Detroit, Michigan where he participated in the club scene before moving to New York City in the mid-1970s. He was a graduate of Ferris State University, Big Rapids, Michigan, where he was instrumental in founding the Zeta Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha—the university's first African American fraternity. He went on to study menswear design and marketing at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. A self-taught, interdisciplinary artist, he worked in a variety of media, including collage, drawing, sculpture, photography, performance, and creative writing. Over the course of his time in New York, he developed a vast encyclopedic archive of images and ephemera related to fashion, the body, advertising, AIDS, race, and queer subjects. Weston was a longstanding artist-member of Visual AIDS.