

UPCOMING EXHIBITION *BLACK BEING IS A TESTAMENT TO BLACK EXISTENCE*, OPENING NOVEMBER 10, 2023



(Left) Brian Ellison, *Barbershop Series*, Inkjet print, 24 x 26 inches, 2020 (image courtesy of the artist)

(Right) William Toney, *Sagging (Akademiks)*, Inkjet print (1 of 10), 37 x 30 inches, 2017 (image courtesy of the artist)

KANSAS CITY, MO, OCTOBER 10, 2023: Opening on **Friday, November 10, 2023 from 6:00-9:00 PM** at Charlotte Street (3333 Wyoming St.), ***Black Being*** is a multimedia exhibition and in-gallery performance that explores the beauty of normalcy in Black existence. From getting hair washed in the kitchen sink to slamming dominoes down on a card table, *Black Being* declares that the seemingly ordinary occurrences of Black life are just as remarkable as accomplishments defined as #BlackExcellence.

Curated by **Kaitlyn B. Jones**, *Black Being* ignites conversations about the dangers of Black exceptionalism and cautions against the phrase “Black Excellence” as an ideal that disregards the inherent value of Black life. The selected works of **fifteen Black artists** illustrate Blackness without direct references to anti-Black histories or resilience as a descriptive Black character trait. Rather, *Black Being* purposely excludes struggle and oppression as a glorified subject in Black-created artworks in favor of an exhibition where Black people can just be.

On view until January 6, 2024, the exhibition features **Abby Oyesam, Amani Lewis, Andre Ramos Woodard, Basil Kincaid, Brian Ellison, Dawn Okoro, Derrick Adams, glyneisha, Kevin Hopkins, London Pierre Williams, Nehemiah Cisneros, rae atakpa, Ronald Jackson, Tokie Rome Taylor, and William Toney.**

CHARLOTTE STREET

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kevin Hopkins, *Gossip Girls*, Oil and oil pastel on canvas, 33 x 35 inches, 2022 (image courtesy of the artist)

Artists featured in the exhibition celebrate the extensive ethnography of Black culture. From the faceless portrait in **William Toney's** *Sagging (Akademiks)* to the painted "kiki" in **Kevin Hopkins' Gossip Girls**, each artist has a visual poetry that beckons the viewers to gaze up on the humanity of Black bodies. **Andre Ramos Woodard** explores communal and personal identity through the lens of Black queer experience, while **Nehemiah Cisneros' larger-than-life painting** serves as a visual metaphor for the space Blackness deserves to take up in historically white-dominated institutions. Whether artists are exploring Black feminist futures in the works of **Amani Lewis, Dawn Okoro, glyneisha, and rae atakpa**, or searching for metaphor through memory in Basil Kincaid's non-adhesive collages, *Black Being* is a testament to the multifacetedness of Black existence.

PROGRAMMING

Opening Reception | Friday, November 10, 6:00-9:00 PM, Charlotte Street Gallery

Artist Talk with Brian Ellison | Friday, December 8, 6:30-7:30 PM, Charlotte Street Kemper Library

***Journey to Softness (The Barbershop Series)*, facilitated by Brian Ellison** | Saturday, December 9, 11:00 AM-2:00 PM, Charlotte Street Gallery

Journey to Softness (The Barbershop Series) is a performance facilitated by Brian Ellison that begins with the artist receiving a haircut by a local barber in the middle of the gallery space. Brian models the platonic intimacy between Black men that is organically cultivated in the barber shops of his childhood. Following Brian's haircut, members of the community are invited to sit in the barber chair and receive the same service, free of charge. "In the barber shop, Black men are handled with care," Brian explains, "In this sacred space, Black men get to be delicate."

Journey to Softness is a living testament of how the seemingly mundane tasks of Black culture are actually foundational ritualistic practices that—when placed in a traditional "white cube" gallery space—offer an alternative idea of what an artistic practice looks like.

To schedule an interview or for other press inquiries, contact Hope-Lian Vinson, Charlotte Street Marketing + Communications Manager, at hope@charlottestreet.org.

ABOUT CHARLOTTE STREET

Charlotte Street centers Kansas City's most forward-thinking visual artists, writers, and performers—acting as the primary incubator, provocateur, and connector for the region's contemporary arts community, and its leading advocate on the national stage. Since 1997, Charlotte Street has distributed over \$2 million in awards and grants to artists and their innovative projects, and connected individual artists to each other and to the greater Kansas City community. For more information about Charlotte Street, its awards, programs, and initiatives, visit www.charlottestreet.org.