



Press Contact:

Mariclare Hulbert, Visual Studies Workshop Publicist

mariclare.hulbert@gmail.com

585.278.2302

MEDIA ALERT

CITY OF ROCHESTER TO HONOR DAWOUD BEY WITH SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Artist Dawoud Bey Celebrated at Visual Studies Workshop Gala, October 3



Dawoud Bey; photo by Frank Ishman

EVENT:

On Saturday, October 3, 7pm, **Deputy Mayor Michael Burns** will attend the **Visual Studies Workshop (VSW)** gala to present a City of Rochester proclamation to acclaimed visual artist **Dawoud Bey**, in recognition of his distinguished career and the occasion. Members of the media are welcome to attend, film, and photograph.

VSW honors visionary photographer, educator, and MacArthur Genius Fellow [Dawoud Bey](#) and welcomes him back to Western NY where he began his iconic street photography series over 40 years ago. Today, Bey is known for his groundbreaking artworks that examine Black experience past and present.

For more than 50 years, Visual Studies Workshop has nurtured experimental and expansive approaches to photography and media arts, and builds community among artists and the public through exhibitions, publications and residencies.

DATE: Saturday, October 3
Celebrating Dawoud Bey at Visual Studies Workshop: Gala Event
6pm Event Begins
7pm **Remarks & Proclamation Presentation**
Speakers include VSW Executive Director Jessica Johnston; City of Rochester Deputy Mayor Michael Burns; and Dawoud Bey

LOCATION: Visual Studies Workshop, 36 King Street, Rochester NY 14608

BACKGROUND INFO:

About Visual Studies Workshop: Visual Studies Workshop nurtures experimental and expansive approaches to photography and media arts, and builds community among artists and the public through exhibitions, publications and residencies. We envision a society that values the human need to create and share ideas. VSW was founded in 1969 in Rochester, NY by photographer, educator and curator Nathan Lyons (1930–2016), and became one of the earliest independent, not-for-profit, artist-run spaces in the country. More than 50 years later, the organization's mission is reflected in its core programs: VSW public programs and exhibitions, Project Space artist residencies, and VSW publications and workshops. In support of VSW programs, the organization holds substantial photography and moving image research collections and an art library for artists, critics and the general public to explore, research and reuse. vsw.org

About Dawoud Bey: Groundbreaking American artist and MacArthur Fellow Dawoud Bey examines the Black past and present. His photographs and film installations engage the often disappeared histories of the Black presence in America. Bey began his career as a photographer in 1975 with a series of photographs, *Harlem, U.S.A.*, that were exhibited to critical acclaim in his first one-person exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1979. His work has since been the subject of numerous major museum and gallery exhibitions throughout the United States and Europe, with works held in numerous public collections.

Recent solo museum exhibitions include *Elegy*, an exhibition of history-based photographs and films that debuted at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (2023–2024) and traveled to the New Orleans Museum of Art (2025–2026); *Street Portraits*—the first standalone museum show to explore the iconic series—at the Denver Art Museum (2024–2025); and *An American Project*, an exhibition organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2020) and the Whitney Museum of American Art (2021) that traveled to the High Museum of Art (2020–2021) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2022). His work was also the subject of the two-person exhibition *Dawoud Bey and Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue* that was organized by the Grand Rapids Museum of Art (2022) and traveled to the Tampa Museum of Art (2022), the Seattle Art Museum (2022–2023), and the Getty Center (2023). His upcoming projects include an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario (2026) and participation in the Triennial of Photography Hamburg (2026). In honor of the twentieth anniversary of the passing of photographer Gordon Parks, Bey curated the 2026 exhibition *Gordon Parks: The South in Color* at Jackson Fine Art, Atlanta.

Bey's work has been the subject of several monographs, including *Elegy* (Aperture/VMFA, 2023), a major publication documenting his landscape retrospective at VMFA; *Street Portraits* (MACK Books, 2021); and *Seeing Deeply* (University of Texas Press, 2017), a forty-year

retrospective monograph. His critical writings on contemporary art and photography have appeared in a range of publications, including recent monograph essays on artists Jordan Casteel and Deborah Roberts.

In addition to his MacArthur Fellowship (2017), Bey is the recipient of many awards and distinctions. Most recently, he has been recognized by the American Academy in Berlin with the Berlin Prize Fellowship (2026), the American Academy of Arts and Letters with an Arts Award (2025), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2024), and the College Art Association with an Artist Award for a Distinguished Body of Work (2023). Bey is the recipient of the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award (2019), a Lifetime Achievement Award from Howard University (2017), a United States Artists Fellowship (2015), a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2002), and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (1991). Among these accolades and many others, he has received four honorary doctorate degrees.

Dawoud Bey lives and works in Chicago and New York. He is a Critic and alumnus at Yale University and is Professor Emeritus at Columbia College Chicago. He is represented by Sean Kelly Gallery, New York and Los Angeles; Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago; and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco.

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