

| **THINGS TO DO** |

Black Bodies, White Spaces **Exhibition Tackles White Gatekeeping in Art and Other Issues**

KIAN HERVEY | **JANUARY 19, 2022** | **4:00AM**



Green Family Art Foundation Those familiar with former first lady Michelle Obama's national portrait will recognize artist Amy Sherald's work.

Black Bodies, White Spaces: Invisibility & Hypervisibility opened at the new Green Family Art Foundation gallery last October, and as the exhibition nears its Jan. 27 close, members of the local art community have rushed to see the show.

"It's personal for me as a Black body in traditional white spaces, whether that's art or fashion, it's something that speaks to me personally," says attendee Marlena English, 33, a local DJ and Dallas

Museum of Art junior associates co-chair.

Black Bodies, White Spaces sparks a conversation about Black artists in the contemporary art scene typically dominated by white artists and gatekeepers. As Green Family Art Foundation curator Clare Milliken explains, the exhibition portrays Black bodies in ways not seen in mainstream media.

“Blackness is not a monolith,” she says. “We’re very familiar with the tired stereotypes we see in the media, in the news, and there are intentional pieces in this show that do that, that show different sides of the coin in many ways.”

The exhibition, curated by London-based art historian Aindrea Emelife, includes more than 20 pieces that make statements about the Black American experience, past and present.

Those familiar with former first lady Michelle Obama’s national portrait will recognize artist Amy Sherald’s work, “High Yella Masterpiece: We Ain’t No Cotton Pickin’ Negroes.”

Over five feet in scale, Sherald’s piece is marked by a vibrant yellow background imposed by two Black men painted in grayscale, dressed in their “Sunday best” and eating bright pink cotton candy.



Ludovic Nkoth's "Holding on to Hope" is one painting on display at the Green Family Art Foundation gallery. **Kian Harvey**

“I was absolutely blown away by the artwork,” attendee Bridgette Williams, a 35-year-old attorney says. “The featured art gave life to some of the major feelings of Black individuals living out their day-to-day lives in current society.”

While the Green family formally founded the art foundation in 2021, they've been collecting contemporary art for decades. Deborah and Eric Green, along with their son Adam, make up the foundation along with curators Milliken and Bailey Summers.

Summers says most of the pieces in the exhibition come directly from the Green's personal collection, with only a few artworks on loan from artists and galleries.

One of those works is “Lip-Biting through Grace,” a 2018 charcoal and pastel painting loaned from a New York gallery depicting a Black royal waiting to be served a fine meal.

“[Artist Odutola] is creating a world where Blackness is the norm,” Summers says, adding that Odutola's work comes with a backstory about two families being united through a marriage.

Summers and Millken's next exhibition, *Women of Now: Dialogues of Identity, Memory, and Place*, opens Feb. 12 at the gallery.

The Green Family Art Foundation, 150 Manufacturing St., Suite 214, in the Design District, is free to the public and open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday through Sunday.

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