

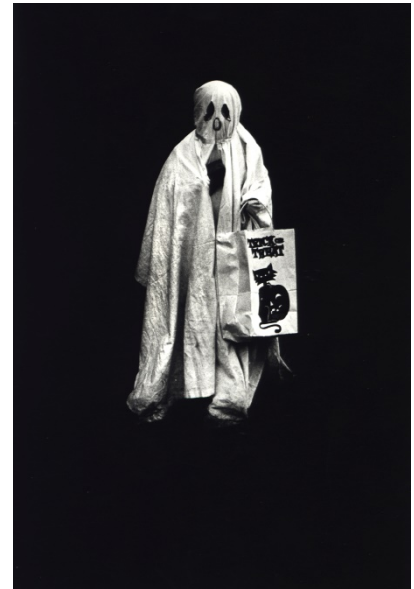
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shawn Walker

Exhibition: January 11th – February 24th, 2018

Opening Reception: January 11th, 2018, 6 – 8 PM

Steven Kasher Gallery is proud to present the first ever solo exhibition of founding Kamoinge Workshop member Shawn Walker (b. 1940). The exhibition surveys Walker's evolving and wide-ranging work from the 1960s through the 1990s and proposes his importance to the photography and art of our time. Embracing and melding abstraction, surrealism, social documentary and street photography, Walker's work challenges the myth of a singular African-American aesthetic. Each body of work marries transcendental spiritual philosophies with contemporary urban representations of African heritage. From his 30-year study of parades to his on-going series on shadows and reflections, Walker's work is connected to profound rituals, ceremonies and masking found in African culture.



Shawn Walker is an integral part of the rich history and continuing legacy of the Kamoinge Workshop, the seminal black photography collective finally having its moment in the spotlight. As a founding member of Kamoinge, Walker studied photography with Roy de Carava, Herbert Randall, Adger Cowans and Louis Draper. Walker also considers Charles White, Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence to be his artistic forbears. Walker was the Picture Editor of the Black Photographer's Annual from 1973 – 1980, the first annual dedicated to the work of these artists.

Historian Deborah Willis says of Walker's work and Kamoinge, "The photographs are a rich contrast to the 'headline' images that have circulated worldwide about black communities known only as the roughest and toughest neighborhoods to live in...I consider these photographs to be a mosaic of the black experience; they expand our consciousness and challenge what we think we know about black life." As the art historian Erina Duganne observed in an article on the diversity of the group's imagery, "rather than speak for African Americans as a group or act as a corrective lens, the Kamoinge members used their photographs to explore how the particularities of their individual circumstances — including their collective experience of racial difference — informed and complicated their art."

In a 2000 interview Walker wrote, "I happen to think the Black aesthetic is a vast aesthetic. It's working out of the community where you produce work that's supposed to serve your community, reflect your community and honor your God. The Black aesthetic starts from a culture, a race. It should be important to the community it comes out of. It should be empowering. It should be of use to this community. It is extremely important for me to work from the Black aesthetic. It is a tradition."

In a 2012 Artist's Statement Walker described his photographic explorations of walls, sidewalks and streets: "The magic of photography allows the photographer to give voice to his alchemist self. This series uses light to give rise to the painter within the photographer. Consistent with my previous work, however, all of these images are 'found images'. They pull through the multi-layering within the existing reality to reveal the significance within the commonplace. The viewers must interact with these shapes and colors to find their own interpretations of what exists to find, if you wish, their own spirits."

Shawn Walker was born and raised in Harlem where he continues to live. His work has been exhibited internationally at institutions including the Smithsonian Institute, Schomburg Center, Brooklyn Museum, MoMA PS 1, Whitney Museum, International Center of Photography, Museum of Modern Art, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, Harvard University School of Art and Design and Vassar College.

Walker's work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture, New York Public Library, Museum of Natural History and Studio Museum in Harlem. His work has been published in *The Self in Black and White: Race and Subjectivity in Postwar American Photography* (Dartmouth, 2010), *Committed to the Image: Contemporary Black Photographers* (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2001), *Nueva Luz: A Photographic Journal Volumes 5-8* (En Foco, 1997), *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers* (W.W. Norton, 2000) and *An Illustrated Bio-Bibliography of Black Photographers, 1940-1988* (Garland, 1989). He is a Soros' Fellowship recipient in conjunction with Kamoinge and has been awarded grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Light Work, CAPS, and Columbia University Film Board. In addition to his lifelong involvement with Kamoinge, Walker has taught photography for almost forty years, dedicating his life to inspiring the next generation of artists.

Shawn Walker will be on view January 11th – February 24th, 2018 at Steven Kasher Gallery, located at 515 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM to 6 PM. For more information about the exhibition and all other general inquiries, please contact Cassandra Johnson, 212 966 3978, cassandra@stevenkasher.com.