Souls Grown Diaspora, curated by Sam Gordon, is an exhibition celebrating a group of powerful artists with personal narratives from a particular point and time in American history, the migration of African Americans from southern states to the North. (2) From 1917 to 1970, the Great Migration (2) The artists who emerged during this time worked in various mediums, with a variety of art practices used, and each work seems to emit its own unique tone. The works, once living in the same space, curated together create a beautiful and poetic symphony of art. (of course, the exhibition soundtracks, songs by the artists specially selected for the show, playing in the gallery space also helped to set this mood).

Souls Grown Diaspora was selected from one of the two international curatorial open calls that apexart, the well-known Lower Manhattan based art non-profit, holds every year. (2) Before going the exhibition, or after, whenever at your leisure, you have the opportunity to read borrows winning proposal, which states in a clear and precise way, that the ten artists he has selected, while each being a part of "The Great Migration," took their own and unique path. It is because of these various "routes," at times overlapping but uniquely their own, that makes this exhibition so colorful and refreshingly different.

In the middle of the gallery space is a long row of drinks, giving us a glimpse in the overwhelm of busy, colorful, exciting vibes of each of the artists. The contents are layered, yet still legible, making what usually is seen as dry and academic display case, quickly glanced at before your eyes move back to the wall, an exciting part that you end up arranging to sit and sit. And when you do, you get some from the lawn of these artists while viewing the photography Albin Balzopt, who, during the 1970s photographed in and around the West Side Pier, capturing a more intimate gay cruising scene that took place there.

On the wall of fabric remnants and items of clothing by Sara Peri, a small echo of her Tribeca store "Knollery," one of the first stores of its kind to sell elaborate textiles from around the world and reimagined the latest fashion trends with them.

But I don’t have time to imagine when looking at the friendship and artwork of Frederick Weston and Stephanie Crawford. Frederick, who was also known in the 1970s for fantastic jazz performances, now enjoys teaching music and painting and drawing the various types of tokens of affection she would receive from her adoring fans (Chocolates, 1/17, Watercolor on paper).

Adjoin to Crawford's work is a textile by one of those fans, Frederick Weston. His collages of Crawford appropriately titled, Presenting, Stephanie Crawford (2) Each collage a tribute to a New York underground performing legend.

Moving my gaze to look at Weston's other collages, my eyes quickly scan up and down the silhouette of figure that is comprised of muscular good looking male bodies and faces, almost a map of the body, one might desire to have or possess in a more intimate setting.

All the works on view are refined yet casual, showing multiple levels and degrees of skill, that can only be gained through years of practice. Thoughtfulness, An awareness of materials and self that many artists today do not have the life experience, or self-awareness, to bring.

It is this self-awareness that makes this possible for these 10 artists to project the same sentiment. It doesn’t matter if anyone is watching, it doesn’t matter if anyone cares. This artwork, any and all performances were and is for them. To satisfy that nagging feeling that drives every artist to first create.

They also all seem to possess that southern charm of making trouble out of what others may discard; an old shoe, a broken necklace, and repurposing it to make something spectacularly new. Looking at the back gallery wall of female figures created painted, assembled together from broken items and random scraps, into toots of purpose, objects to be admired, an artwork to be hung on a wall.

Women, in history and society, are like the objects that Reverend John McDonald has used in her works, broken and discarded, but she in her feminist wisdom realizes these objects still have a purpose and deserve to be loved and admired. Like in her piece Precious Air: A Pear (Pearl Gift Collection), 2005, created with an old dry clay, wood, and poodle costume peads, and her mother’s broken pear necklace.
Seeing these wide-ranging types of works, some that are active during performance, the strongest feeling one has when leaving the show is confidence. The artists performed wherever they wanted to perform. Don’t have a space? No problem, there is an empty sidewalk. Want to create an outdoor installation for your neighborhood to enjoy? Whose stopping you? Go out and do it. Want to create? You do not need to go to Bik Art Alabama and buy the most expensive tools to create a masterpiece, sometimes all you need glue, paper, a few old magazines, and your imagination.

While to some this may seem like obvious artistic ingenuity, but for me it reminds of the habits and tricks I gained from my southern mother and living my ten years in Georgia, using every part of anything and everything, waste nothing, and being completely unabashed about it.

Sam Gordon is a New York-based artist and curator. In 2017 he and Jacob Feldchau founded Gordon Feldchau, a gallery and curatorial agency in New York City’s Union Square. Recent curatorial projects include The Print Library: Volume One, Print, New York, 2016, and Contemporary Doug, NASA, New York 2017. Gordon’s own painting, drawing, photography, and video work was regularly presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions at Feature Inc. from 2007-2015. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), and the Tang Museum (Saratoga Springs, NY). In addition to his curatorial and artistic practice, Gordon has taught at the California Institute for the Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Soul Grown Diaporia, curated by Sam Gordon on view at apexart through March 7

Gordon Feldchau will present Matt Haweski and Frederick Weston at the upcoming fall independent New York (March 6-8)

Upcoming Events: SOUND & VISION, OTIS HOUSTON JR., DEAN SPUNT, FREDERICK WESTON, Saturday, March 7, 2020, 6:30 pm, in conjunction with Soul Grown Diaporia

[1] The Great Migration, the movement of six million African-Americans out of the rural Southern United States to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West that occurred between 1915 and 1937,> Sam Gordon,


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