

Artist Resources – Derek Fordjour (American, b. 1974)

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

[Fordjour at Petzel Gallery](#)

[Fordjour at David Kordansky Gallery](#)

[Fordjour on Instagram](#)

In 2017, Fordjour had an artist residency at [Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling](#), where he created a carnival-inspired dreamworld. Read an [interview](#) about the project in Artnet.

[Derek Fordjour: Half Mast](#) was at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2018. The public art installation was installed in vinyl on the building across the street from the museum, at the intersection of Gansevoort and Washington streets.

Fordjour’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles was [Derek Fordjour: JRRNNYS](#) at Night Gallery in 2019.

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis installed [Derek Fordjour: Shelter](#) in 2020, his first major solo museum exhibition. Watch a [video](#) about the making of the immersive, site-specific installation on YouTube.

Fordjour’s solo exhibition [SELF MUST DIE](#) was on display at Petzel Gallery in 2020. A number of articles were published about the exhibition, including “Best Practices: Derek Fordjour’s Art Stares Down Shared Fears and Vulnerabilities” in [ARTnews](#) and “Derek Fordjour, from Anguish to Transcendence” in the [New York Times](#). Art Asia Pacific also published an [interview](#) with the artist coinciding with the exhibition, his first with Petzel Gallery.



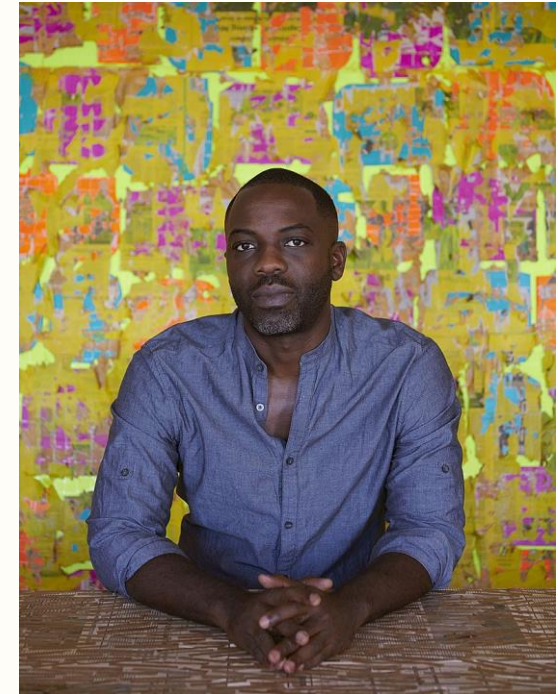
Fordjour in his Studio, 2020
Photograph: Ike Edeani

Read an [interview](#) with Ana DuVernay discussing Fordjour’s painting *Bookmaker’s Dozen* (2021).

Watch a short [interview](#) with the artist produced by Phoenix Art Museum for its Lenhardt Lecture Series. The full [artist talk](#) is also available on YouTube.

In 2022, Fordjour installed [Sonic Boom](#) on the exterior of the MOCA Grand Avenue building. Watch a [video](#) about the project and read articles in the [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Hyperallergic](#).

[Derek Fordjour: Magic, Mystery & Legerdemain](#) was on display at David Kordansky Gallery in 2022. Read a review in [Cultured Magazine](#) and an interview with Charles Moore for [Juxtapoz Magazine](#) in anticipation of the solo exhibition. The artist said: “I am working on an entire body of new paintings drawing linkages to magic. I am thinking about magic in all its many forms: voodoo, white magic, black magic, black girl magic, magical negroes, Magic Johnson, and orishas. I am interested in who has the power to deceive in plain sight, for whom we are willing to suspend disbelief.”



Photograph: Jason Schmidt

Derek Fordjour (American, b. 1974)

Checkpoint, 2026

Acrylic, charcoal, cardboard, oil pastel, and foil on newspaper mounted on canvas

Collection of Lizzy and Ramtin Naimi; L2026:46.1

Derek Fordjour was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee by parents who immigrated to the United States from Ghana. His paintings are produced with a collage-like process of layering cardboard, newspaper, and other materials to create complex, textured compositions. With an interest in ritual and rites-of-passage, Fordjour's paintings often feature athletes and performers participating in cultural life. **Checkpoint** presents a new perspective, depicting the militarization and surveillance that is increasingly present in civic life. The surrounding phrase is "quis custodiet ipsos custodes," which is Latin for "who watches the watchers." First written by the Roman poet Juvenal, the phrase embodies the paradox of oversight: how to hold those who enforce the rule of law accountable for their own actions.

On view July 15 – October 18, 2026





Derek Fordjour (American, b. 1974)

Double Pivot Turn, 2023

Acrylic, charcoal, cardboard, oil pastel, and foil on newspaper mounted on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:31.2

Raised in Memphis, Tennessee by Ghanaian immigrants, Derek Fordjour creates multilayered compositions inspired by the intersections of race, sports, and entertainment. His two-dimensional works begin with a foundation of cardboard, foil, and *The Financial Times* newspaper before he layers with paint and bores into the surface. **Double Pivot Turn** explores the cultural and social significance of brass bands in the American South. Led by drum majors spinning batons and dancing, the high-step marching bands create an electric energy in community events from parades to football games. To Fordjour, entertainment has been deeply tied to Black success. The artist once said that such subcultures in America “become direct responses to racism and systemic oppression, then become co-opted as vehicles for widely accessible entertainment.”

On view October 4, 2023 – January 7, 2024