Derek Fordjour (American, b. 1974)

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.

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.”
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**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*