

And I'm Feeling Good

Relaxation and Resistance



HOOD MUSEUM OF ART, DARTMOUTH



The exhibition title *And I'm Feeling Good: Relaxation and Resistance* is taken from the Nina Simone song celebrating simple, beautiful moments in the natural world that capture her positivity and joy. Simone released the song in 1965 during the height of the African American civil rights movement, which she staunchly and actively supported. With unabashed candor and emotion, she sings of a new life envisioned by tens of thousands of Black people across the United States—one based on freedom and on feeling good.

Some of us at Dartmouth College experienced that particular good feeling in 2023 when Nikole Hannah-Jones visited Dartmouth College to present a lecture. At the reception beforehand, it was announced that she had just celebrated a birthday, and we were going to sing to her. After we completed the traditional version of “Happy Birthday to You,” someone launched into the version written and performed by Stevie Wonder. Black people throughout the room, recognizing the colloquially known “Black birthday song,” took it up for a verse or two. It became a moment of spontaneous Black joy.

In recent years there has been a general renewed call to celebrate Black joy in the face of a returning tide of anti-Black violence ranging from state-sanctioned brutality to the police being called on people picnicking in the park or bird watching. Social media has entered the hashtags #Blackgirlmagic and #Blackboyjoy into common parlance to embrace and recognize the ways joy manifests itself in the African American community. Posts with these hashtags feature individuals who are unashamedly taking hold of the things in life that make them feel good, creating a virtual place of communal celebration.

Black people in the United States have long found ways and created places to feel enjoyment and gratification despite efforts to control and suppress their ability to live a pleasant and positive life. In New Orleans, a historical marker commemorates one such place, known as Congo Square. This area was used by both free and enslaved Blacks to come together on Sundays to dance, play music, sell food, and otherwise take pleasure in each other's company. The square provided a site for participation in activities of delight and comfort away from spaces where those behaviors would lead to punishment, arrest, or even death.

Even the simplest acts of seeking joy in the United States have often been highly contentious for African Americans. For example, attempts by Black people to use public pools have long been met with violence. One incident caught in a famous photograph involved a group of Black and White integrationists jumping into the pool at the Monson Motor Lodge in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1964. In response, the hotel's manager poured acid into the pool while it was still occupied by the activists. Think, as well, of the childhood game of cops and robbers—this playful act of imagination, meant to teach right from wrong in a safe manner through mimicry, led to the murder

of twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in 2014. And then, in the summer of 2023, a group of men took offense at an impromptu expression of queer Black joy by dancer O’Shae Sibley and killed him for it. During a summer outing, Sibley and a group of friends stopped for gas. Upon hearing a Beyoncé song at the station, Sibley began to use his skills and dance. A recording of the perpetrators hurling their epithets made it clear that it was Sibley’s race, sexuality, and willingness to publicly move his body in bliss that incited the violence in these young men.

This fraught history makes all the more inspiring the commitment of this exhibition’s artists to finding, celebrating, and generating joy in the face of violence, degradation, and animosity across time and space.

Gordon Parks created a series of photographs in Alabama in 1956 about Southern segregation for *Life* magazine. He chose to look at life for African Americans in the area but did not focus solely on signifiers of segregation. Instead, Parks captured the daily lives of the Black residents of this Southern state. The preciousness and vulnerability of two little girls collecting water from a puddle in toy teacups illustrates the simple pleasures of childhood despite the economically depressed environment surrounding them (right).

In Kwame Brathwaite’s urban playground image (left), children enjoy a swing set next to their building, indulging in shared play in a space that is safe. That safety is in part provided by the building standing behind it—a building occupied by people who recognize the children below and are likely from the same or similar backgrounds. From this vantage point, the children’s families or caring neighbors can watch them and provide help or guidance if needed. This sense of community allows the children a certain freedom in their play.

While inhabiting their alter ego, Dion, Darryl DeAngelo Terrell finds a space in

which they can be joyful, feel sexy, and be confident in their physical self (cover). Additionally, this image celebrates an especially bold queerness that is too often distanced from Blackness, as masculine of center queer men support Dion’s femme presence. Harkening back to ethnographic images of sub-Saharan African royalty and mediated through the Black power movement and Terrell’s Detroit upbringing, this work brings together experienced Blackness and queerness as a site in which pleasure and self-worth can flourish.

There is synchronicity between Black joy and Black liberation. The insistent pursuit of joy is an act of resistance and a path to freedom. This exhibition presents pursuing and experiencing childlike wonder, building strong familial relationships, enjoying communal spaces, and reveling in Black beauty as but a few of the ways and means of feeling good.

Alisa Swindell
Associate Curator of Photography



CHECKLIST

Artist once known, American. Untitled (woman and three men in living room), 1950s or 1960s, gelatin silver print. Gift of Peter J. Cohen; 2017.62.55

Kwame Brathwaite, American, 1938–2023. Untitled (Denizulu dancer and Grandassa models during Garvey Day Parade), 1967, printed 2022, archival pigment print. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund and the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation Fund; 2023.1.1

Untitled (children on swing set, Harlem, NY), 1971, printed 2022, archival pigment print. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund and the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation Fund; 2023.1.2

Changing Times, 1973, printed 2021, archival pigment print. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund and the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation Fund; 2023.1.3

Jess T. Dugan, American, b. 1986. *Collin at Sunset*, from the portfolio *every breath we drew*, 2020, printed 2022, color photograph. Purchased through the Miriam H. and S. Sidney Stoneman Acquisition Fund; 2022.20.2

Irene Fertik, American, b. 1943. *Step by Step (Judith Jamison conducting a workshop at the University of Vermont)*, 1980s, gelatin silver print. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth; 2018.10.4

Ken Heyman, American, 1930–2019. *Dressed in their Sunday best to have their picture taken, Two Sisters in Harlem, New York*, 1956, gelatin silver print. Gift of Marina and Andrew E. Lewin, Class of 1981; 2016.49.5

Chester Higgins, American, b. 1946. *Father Swings Son in Sunset, Tuskegee, Alabama*, 1973, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund; 2023.2.2

Susan Landgraf, American, b. 1948. *Jessica*, 1975, gelatin silver print. Gift of the artist in memory of Willard Van Dyke, PH.988.8

Gordon Parks, American, 1912–2006. Untitled, negative 1956; print 2022, archival pigment print. Purchased through the Mrs. Harvey P. Hood W'18 Fund; 2022.27.4

Untitled, Alabama, negative 1956; print 2022, archival pigment print. Purchased through the Mrs. Harvey P. Hood W'18 Fund; 2022.27.6

Jamel Shabazz and Ether and Earth by Anders Jones. *Back in the Days*, 2022, sapphire blue textured fabric wallpaper. Courtesy of the artists

Darryl DeAngelo Terrell, American, b. 1991. *Dion Untitled #1 or Sitting Pretty*, 2016, digital archival print. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2023.19.5

Hivyo Tété (DeAndre), 2016, archival inkjet print. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2023.19.1

James Van Der Zee, American, 1886–1983. *At Home (Woman with Flower Baskets)*, 1934, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Harry Shafer Fisher 1966 Memorial Fund; PH.986.47

Garry Winogrand, American, 1928–1984. *Mother and Child*, number 6 from the portfolio *Garry Winogrand*, about 1975, gelatin silver print. Gift of Dr. Stanley Kogan, Class of 1952; PH.986.75.1.6

Mother and Daughter at Restaurant, 1979 (*Beverly Hills, CA*), number 4 from the portfolio *Women Are Beautiful*, 1979, gelatin silver print. Gift of Rudolph Demasi; PH.982.65.4

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Cover image: Darryl DeAngelo Terrell, *Dion Untitled #1 or Sitting Pretty*, 2016. © Darryl DeAngelo Terrell. Image courtesy of the artist.

Inside left: Kwame Brathwaite, untitled (children on swing set, Harlem, NY), 1971, printed 2022. © Kwame Brathwaite. Image courtesy of Philip Martin Gallery and the Kwame Brathwaite Archive

Inside right: Gordon Parks, untitled, Alabama, negative 1956, print 2022. Courtesy of and copyright The Gordon Parks Foundation.