

eric firestone gallery

For Immediate Release:

Collage / Assemblage

Eric Firestone Gallery

4 Newtown Lane | East Hampton, NY

July 2 – August 6, 2022

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 2 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Eric Firestone Gallery presents a cross-generational examination of collage and assemblage, juxtaposing historic and contemporary works across two and three dimensions. Featuring works by:

Mary Abbott, Derrick Adams, Ellsworth Ausby, Romare Bearden, Judy Bowman, Willie Cole, Kim Dacres, John DeFazio, Martha Edelheit, Sanaa Gateja, Varnette Honeywood, Gerald Jackson, Jamillah Jennings, Charlotte Ka, Emmanuel Massillon, Sana Musasama, Joe Overstreet, James Phillips, Jeanne Reynal, Shinique Smith, Agathe Snow, Nari Ward, Paul Waters, David “Mr. StarCity” White, Taylor White, Peter Williams

Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton is pleased to announce *Collage / Assemblage*, opening July 2 at 4 Newtown Lane. The exhibition reflects the gallery’s mission to illuminate creative through lines from postwar to present-day art practices. This presentation opens concurrently with *Holy Water*, a major survey of established and emerging artists exploring the concept of water at Eric Firestone Gallery’s The Garage.



Willie Cole | *Special Delivery* | 2013
acrylic, gesso and modelling paste on masonite and wood
96h x 76w in.

Spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, the practitioners in *Collage / Assemblage* have employed collage and assemblage as vehicles for combining disparate elements, forms, and concerns. They are united by a commitment to technical experimentation—harnessing diverse processes such as cut-and-pasting, layering, or incorporating found objects. Such daring modes of art-making are exemplified by the practices of Shinique Smith (b. 1971) and Emmanuel Massillon (b. 1998), both African American artists who create assemblage sculptures to probe issues of identity and hybridity, indeterminate and missing histories. Willie Cole (b. 1955) ruminates on the memories that household objects hold, transforming personal items such as Yamaha guitars into sculptures that celebrate his African American heritage while interrogating the record of slavery in America.

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David “Mr. StarCity” White | *My Mouth is Loud with Prayers*
2022 | mixed media on paper
59h x 51 1/4w in.

For Sana Musasama (b. 1957), stacked towers or temples with mixed-media ceramic shapes have eclectic and multicultural sources, each containing a multitude of references.

Belonging to Musasama’s *House* series from the 1980s, these sculptures are inspired by dwellings and shelters that she encountered through her travels to West Africa, Asia, and the Western United States.

Kim Dacres (b. 1986) and Gerald Jackson (b. 1936) embrace recycled materials in their practices. Dacres crafts totemic sculptures with tires, rubber, and found materials that honor ideas, music, and individuals in her life. Jackson will be represented in the exhibition by a *Skid Painting* from the 1980s. This body of work encompasses wooden pallets that the artist salvaged from the streets around his Bowery studio in New York City. Jackson initially burned such pallets in his furnace to keep warm during winter months, but later used them as supports for abstract paintings

that include knotted strips of fabric, shredded paper, and his own earlier canvases nailed onto the wood.

Jackson has described a community of Black artists in downtown New York City including Joe Overstreet (1933–2018) and Ellsworth Ausby (1942–2011), who were focused on “the basics”—meaning, how their works fit into ancient aesthetic traditions. Ausby, for instance, looked to the geometries of Egyptian art. In the 1980s, Ausby added three-dimensional triangular elements to his canvases to extend into and occupy space. Overstreet—who also made paintings that intervene in surrounding spaces—was a technical innovator. In the 1980s, Overstreet stretched canvases over wooden dowels, often in triangular configurations, and then collaged strips of acrylic paint (which he had previously poured onto plastic) on these surfaces.

Elemental forms and geometries inform the work of James Phillips (b. 1945), who interweaves them into dense and lively compositions that reflect his association with AfriCOBRA. Paul Waters (b. 1936) refers to prehistoric cave paintings with his cut and collaged canvases that depict primordial forms: dancers, birds, female warriors. Artists Varnette Honeywood (1950–2010), Judy Bowman (b. 1952), and Derrick Adams (b. 1970) have each turned to collage to celebrate Black culture and joy.

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Judy Bowman | *Detroit Swagger* | 2022
mixed media collage on canvas
48h x 60w in.

Peter Williams (1952–2021)—whose estate is now represented by Eric Firestone Gallery, and whose work the gallery is showing for the first time—collaged pieces onto a shaped support to present a vast array of iconographic referents in *World Trade* (1999–2007). Made over an eight-year period, *World Trade* suggests that any reparations for slavery have been mere “band-aids” (a material that appears repeatedly in the composition itself). Disney references abound, as do suggestions of capitalist greed. Ladders lead to nowhere, only to be toppled by white men. Black bodies are only represented at the bottom of the painting as incomplete body parts—a

reference to the artist’s own personal injury from a car accident that led to the amputation of his leg.

John DeFazio (b. 1959), the San Francisco-based ceramic artist, also blends popular culture references in his collaged works on paper. His idiosyncratic and playful amalgamations of Pop icons and 1970s kitsch produce a stream-of-consciousness narrative in which original or intended meanings are subverted by these juxtapositions of motifs. The Brooklyn-born self-taught artist David “Mr. StarCity” White (b. 1979) also engages with experimental storytelling, crafting abstract portraits of real and imagined subjects with any materials on hand. While exploring themes of personal identity, generational trauma, and mental illness, his highly textured and layered works are optimistic—offering up visions of healing and hope.

The exhibition additionally highlights female practitioners of Abstract Expressionism, such as Mary Abbott (1921–2019) and Jeanne Reynal (1903–1983), who adopted collage techniques and alternative media. Reynal dedicated herself to creating a new and contemporary look for the ancient art of mosaics, working improvisationally with stones, tesserae, and pieces of shell collected on world travels. With her early “anti-art” constructions, Martha Edelheit (b. 1931) responded to formalist New York School painting—utilizing found and discarded objects to create alternative visions of self-portraiture.

With this exhibition, Eric Firestone Gallery highlights breakthrough approaches to collage and assemblage across the postwar and contemporary oeuvres of these artists.

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About Eric Firestone Gallery

Charting its own course since 2010, Eric Firestone Gallery reexamines significant yet underrecognized artists from the 20th and 21st centuries. Defined by its scholarly approach, the organization is recognized for taking a fresh look at historic work with a contemporary eye—reintroducing postwar artists to the discourse and the field at large. The gallery supports rigorous scholarship and archival research exploring the entirety of an artist's creative vision and life, in close collaboration with institutions, academics, and collectors.

Eric Firestone Gallery established its first location in 2010 at 4 Newtown Lane in East Hampton, New York. In 2015, the gallery expanded with an additional loft space in a historic artist live/work building at 4 Great Jones Street in New York City. In 2020, the gallery opened its third location, only a block away from its first New York site, at 40 Great Jones Street. Summer 2022 marks the inauguration of the gallery's fourth space, and second in the Hamptons, called The Garage at 62 Newtown Lane. Each of these four spaces is situated in an area of art historical importance, from the East End of Long Island to the heart of New York City—aligning with Eric Firestone Gallery's mission to promote past modes of expression that remain ever present.



Shinique Smith | *Cocoon (Ode to Lelanya)*
2016 | clothing, fabric, ribbon, rope, pillows,
acrylic, copper wire and bamboo
52h x 14w x 13d in

COLLAGE / ASSEMBLAGE

will be on view through August 6, 2022

Eric Firestone Gallery | 4 Newtown Lane, New York, NY 11937

For further information and images, contact: press@ericfirestonegallery.com