

NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Nona Faustine, *Ye Are My Witness*

Dates: November 3 – December 8, 2018

Higher Pictures presents new photographs and sculptures by Nona Faustine. This is the artist's first exhibition with the gallery.

Expanding on her *White Shoes* series, Faustine continues to document, occupy, and reclaim sites across New York City that are linked to its 200-year history of slavery, while responding with redoubled urgency to the echoes of that history in America today. In an extended, iterative performance for the camera, Faustine—nude, in her signature white pumps—is both unflinching and vulnerable. The artist uses her body and presence to confront our country's past, compelling us to find a different way forward.

In her piece *Ye Are My Witness*—whose title is taken from an 1820 diary entry by Brooklyn slave owner Adriance Van Brunt—Faustine stands in an empty lot, atop what historians believe was a slave cemetery on Van Brunt's farm. In a long, white skirt, her torso partially exposed, Faustine appears as a descendant of slaves, kin of abused women, and inheritor of America's violent past. With her top billowing in the wind, she also conjures the classical figure of Victory—goddess and symbol of triumph in battle.

In the main gallery, *Slaves in the Attic No More, Van Cortlandt House (2018)* depicts the artist frozen in a dance-like pose, her arms outstretched like the tree branches behind her. The ten-by-seven foot image is accompanied by two new sculptures, modified portrait busts of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson's face is covered with nails, while Washington's is slathered in dirt. Their disfigurement reflects the slave labor they profited from. Starting in 1794, Jefferson had his young male slaves (some as young as ten years old) spend their days forging nails in his blacksmith shop; Washington employed several hundred slaves to harvest tobacco and wheat on his family plantation.

In the artist's own words, *Ye Are My Witness* not only to America's past, but also to its present—Faustine asks us to testify now, or risk our future.

Nona Faustine was born and raised in Brooklyn, where she lives and works. She earned her MFA from the International Center of Photography-Bard in 2013 and holds a BFA from the School of Visual Arts. Recent exhibitions include *Half The Picture: A Feminist Look At The Collection* (2018) at the Brooklyn Museum; *Historos afro-Atlanticas* (2018) at Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo; and *Regarding the Figure* (2017) at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

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