

HIGHER PICTURES GENERATION

NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Nona Faustine, *Mitochondria*

Dates: May 15 – July 3, 2021

Opening: Saturday, May 15, 2021 (noon – 6pm)

Address: 16 Main Street, Ground Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Higher Pictures Generation presents the work of Nona Faustine. This is the artist's second solo show with the gallery and the first comprehensive exhibition of her ongoing photographic series *Mitochondria* (2008–).

Mitochondria honors three generations of women—Faustine and her sister Channon, their late mother Queen Elizabeth Simmons, and the artist's daughter Queen Ming—living under one roof and caring for one another. The deeply personal series is named for the mitochondrial DNA in human cells that is inherited solely from the female parent.

In Faustine's photographs we see those moments in life that straddle the quotidian and the profound: a portrait of the artist's pregnant belly, Faustine cradling her daughter in bed, and grandmother and granddaughter in a tender embrace. Across the series these candid family photographs appear alongside staged portraits that anticipate Faustine's celebrated series *White Shoes* (2012–21), in which, wearing only a pair of white high heels, she stands on former slave trading sites as defiant counter-monument.

Faustine's references for *Mitochondria* are wide-ranging. She pays homage to her father's love of photography and the family albums he made when she was a child and also points to the infamous 1965 Moynihan Report that stereotyped and politicized Black American family dynamics. As art historian and cultural critic Maurice Berger has written, the work is informed by "[. . .] photographer Marilyn Nance's explorations of spirituality and faith in the African-American community, Sally Mann's controversial photographs of her children, Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes's epochal 1955 photo essay about Harlem, 'The Sweet Flypaper of Life,' and Rita Dove's poems about motherhood and family."¹

Set against the backdrop of our impossible year the work's stirring intimacy testifies to the primacy of family, the enormity of our quiet lives, and the generational resilience of Black mothers.

Nona Faustine was born and raised in Brooklyn, where she lives and works. Faustine earned her MFA from Bard College in 2013 and holds a BFA from the School of Visual Arts. Recent group exhibitions include *Fantasy America* (2021) at the Andy Warhol Museum; *MONUMENTS NOW* (2020) at Socrates Sculpture Park and *Half The Picture: A Feminist Look At The Collection* (2018) at the Brooklyn Museum.

¹ Maurice Berger, "Three Generations of Black Women in Family Photos," *New York Times*, July 11, 2017, <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/in-brooklyn-three-generations-in-family-photos-nona-faustine>