

MIGHTY REAL QUEER DETROIT



Alanna Fields

Come to My Garden, 2021, Pigment print mounted on museum board, encaustic on panel

***In the Life:
Black Queerness—Looking Back, Moving Forward***



***In the Life:
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Back, Moving Forward***

On view:
September 5 –
October 11, 2025

Detroit, MI – This fall, **Mighty Real / Queer Detroit (MR/QD)** presents a major survey of Black Queer art: **In the Life: Black Queerness—Looking Back, Moving Forward**, a rigorously curated exhibition by Patrick Burton and Wayne Northcross. On view from September 5 through October 11, 2025, at the Carr Center in Detroit, the exhibition features the work of April Bey, John Edmonds, Alanna Fields, LeRoy Foster, Clifford Prince King, Richard Lewis, Felicita Felli Maynard, Zanele Muholi, Vernando Reuben, Tylonn J. Sawyer, Pamela Sneed, Bre'Ann White, and Anthony Peyton Young.

Spanning photography, painting, drawing, and multimedia, *In the Life: Black Queerness—Looking Back, Moving Forward* highlights the mirroring power of art and the complexity of Black Queerness through archival interventions and reimagined histories. Challenging conventional narratives of community, *In the Life* proposes alternatives shaped by chosen kinship, Queer intimacy, and familial memory.

The phrase 'in the life' is an expression of coded self-recognition first popularized by Black Queers living in New York City's Harlem neighborhood during the 1920s. At the time, Queer cabarets, rent parties, and drag balls created environments where desire, artistry, and self-fashioning could flourish beyond the gaze of mainstream respectability. Within this network of performance, music, and private celebration, many LGBTQ+ artists found the freedom to explore and affirm their sexuality through their work. *In the Life* draws on this lineage, presenting contemporary artists who similarly transform their creative practices into sites of visibility, intimacy, and self-determination.

The exhibition is a defiant protest against a contemporary legislative agenda of over 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills, as well as continued anti-Queer discrimination and violence, all evidence that the full recognition of political rights and social acceptance is still a work in progress. The exhibition challenges the suppressiveness of the current political climate through intimate, historically grounded, and formally inventive works, inviting viewers to reflect on the relationship between the struggles of the past and the present, and the hope for the future.

In the Life: Black Queerness—Looking Back, Moving Forward is a satellite exhibition of the Detroit Queer Biennial, returning for its third iteration in June 2026. The co-curators emphasize that the purpose of the exhibition is to foster a sense of belonging through the reflective power of art and to inspire the LGBTQ+ community. In doing so, artists and viewers from diverse backgrounds can find both personal affirmation and common ground.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of public programs, including artist talks, community dialogues, and an evening of Black Queer cinema, curated by artist and filmmaker Billy Gérard Frank. The programming is designed to foster engagement with the intellectual, spiritual, and political dimensions of the exhibited artworks.



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Accompanying Public Programs:

Public Opening Ceremony

the Carr Center
Friday, September 5 | 6 pm

Meet the Artists & Curators

the Carr Center
Saturday, September 6, 2025 | 2 pm

Join the exhibition's curators and participating artists for a conversation exploring the themes of *In the Life: Black Queerness—Looking Back, Moving Forward*. This program offers an in-depth look at the curatorial vision behind the exhibition and the creative practices that bring its ideas to life.

Queer Horizons - A Film Program Curated by Billy Gérard Frank
Co-founder of Nova Frontier Film Festival & Lab

the Carr Center
Saturday, September 20, 2025 | 7 pm

This curated selection of Queer short films, by artist and filmmaker Billy Gérard Frank, explores urgent themes of belonging, exile, and migration. Through poetic, intimate, and politically charged narratives, the program highlights diasporic voices across the Global South and its diasporas—unfolding personal and collective stories of displacement, Queer becoming, and the search for home. Each film challenges borders—geographic, cultural, and emotional—while centering the resilience and fluidity of Queer identity in motion. Q&A following with film curator Billy Gérard Frank and exhibition curators Wayne Northcross and patrick burton.

About Mighty Real / Queer Detroit

Founded in 2022, MR/QD promotes diverse and affirming representations of LGBTQ+ identity through contemporary art and cultural programming. Its exhibitions, biennials, and education initiatives spotlight the depth of Queer creative practices historically underrepresented in mainstream institutions.

About the Carr Center

The Carr Center, a cornerstone of Detroit's cultural landscape for over 30 years, is committed to presenting African-American arts, nurturing new work, and cultivating future generations of artists and audiences.

Generous support by the HOPE Fund from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

the Carr Center
15 E. Kirby Street, Detroit, MI 48202



Media Contacts
Luke P. Brown / lpb@vidoun.com



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Zanele Muholi

Triple III, Only Half the Picture, 2005, Silver gelatin print

the Carr Center
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MRQD

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April Bey *I Wouldn't Call it Schizophrenia, but I'll be At Least Two People Today*, 2022, Jacquard woven textiles, glitter, resin, metallic thread, on panel

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Tylonn J. Sawyer

Strata Drawing 4: Cake Walk, 2023, Lavender pencil on paper

the Carr Center
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[@TheDetroitQueerBiennial](https://twitter.com/TheDetroitQueerBiennial)

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Alanna Fields

Kiss Me, Make My World Fade Away, 2023, Pigment print and encaustic on Dibond

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April Bey

I'm Something Like Stormy Weather, But I'm Also the Sunlight that Shines Shortly After, 2022, Jacquard woven textiles, glitter, resin, metallic thread, on panel

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LeRoy Foster

Martini Marti (self-portrait), 1945, Archival print

the Carr Center

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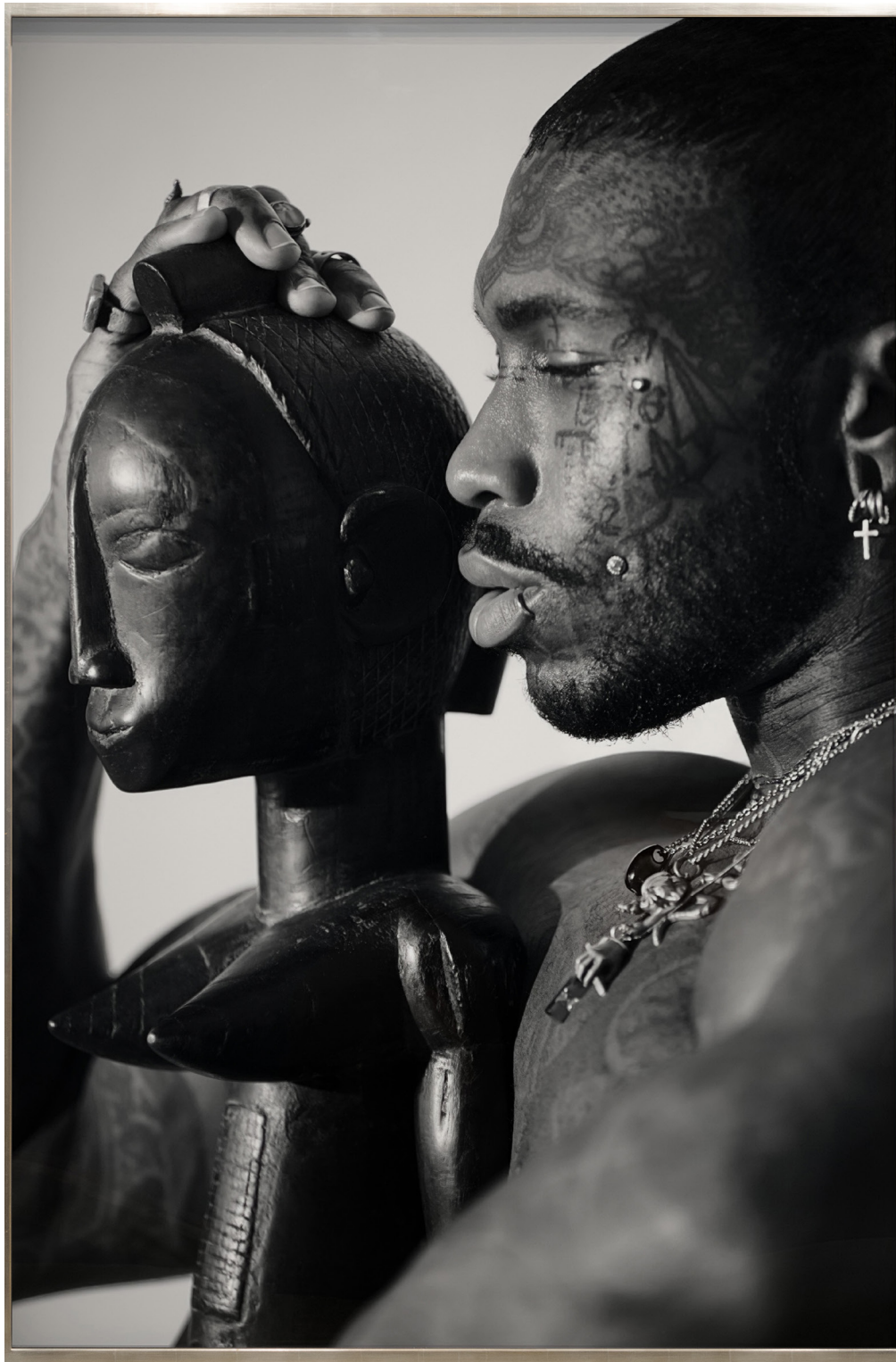
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John Edmonds

Caress, 2022, Digital silver gelatin photograph

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Felicitá Felli Maynard

Vueltaio, 2017, Archival print

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Vernando Reuben *Shantytown Gym Club*, 2023. Vinyl acrylic, printed paper, cyanotype, screen printed paper, vectored drawing, soft pastel, colored paper, watercolor on cotton gauze, and ephemera on paper.

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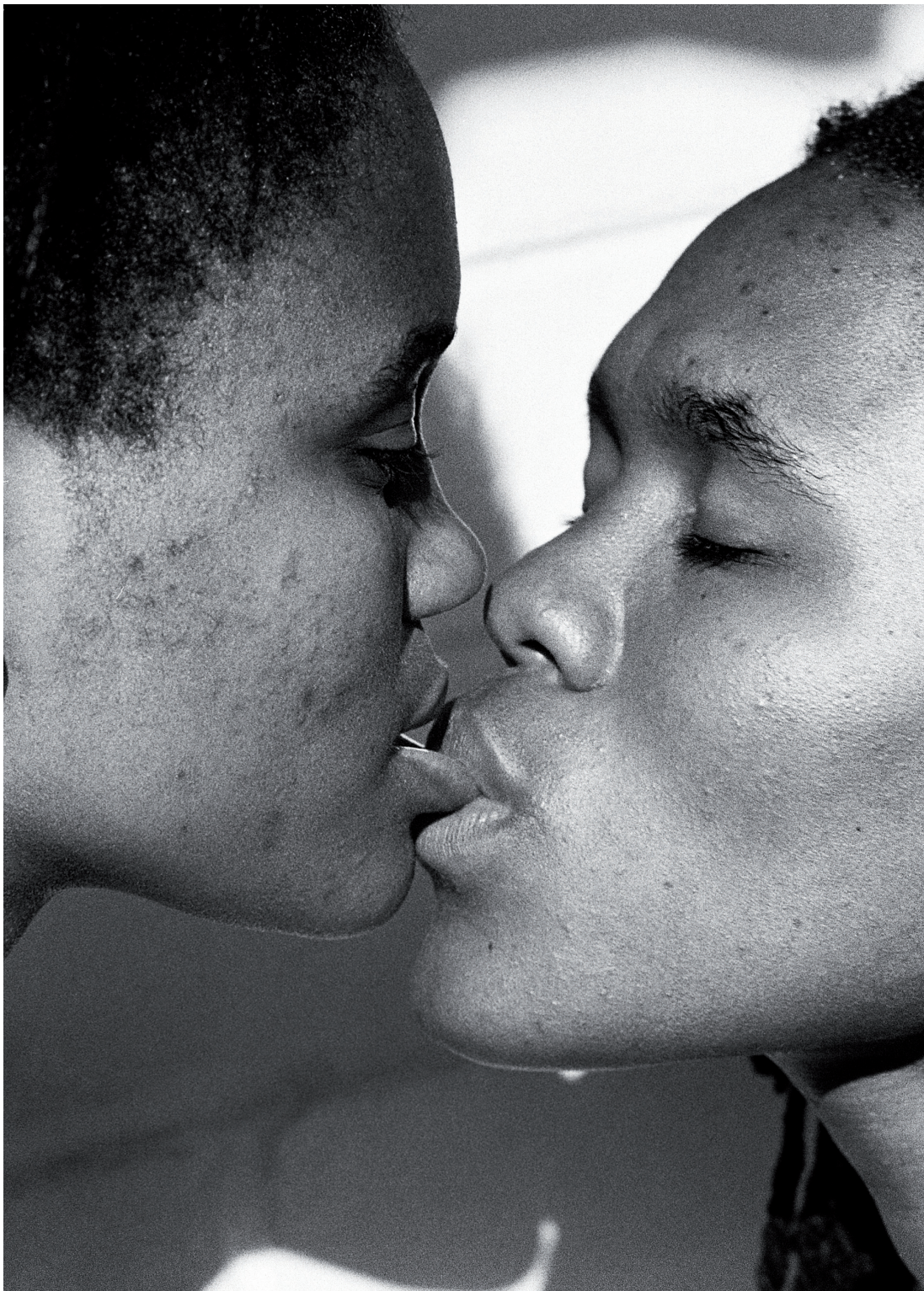
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Zanele Muholi

Kiss, 2003, Silver gelatin print

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Zanele Muholi *Miss Lesbian I, Amsterdam*, from the series *Miss Lesbian*, 2009, Archival pigment print

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Pamela Sneed

Other Countries, 2025, Watercolor

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