

*I'm young, and I'm old
I'm rich, and I'm poor
I feel like I've been on this earth many times before
Once, I was a white Gazelle
On horseback riding free
Searching in the darkness for a piece of me*

*...I can feel it
I can feel it, ooh
In my heart I feel it
- Teena Marie, *Deja Vu*, 1979*

Sibyl is pleased to present ***I've been here before...***, a group exhibition curated by multidisciplinary artist and scholar **Shabez Jamal** (b. 1992, St. Louis, MO). *I've been here before...* is a group exhibition that explores the recursive nature of photography through the lenses of ten emerging Black artists in the United States. The exhibition explores the relationship between the Black community and the photograph and how, through interactions with the medium, Black people have been able to create and recognize language and symbols that are vital to the continued formation of an ever-changing Black artistic canon.

Though many of the artists engage with different media including video, installation, painting, ceramic, sound, and sculpture, all ground their practice in the photographic image. Each artist recognizes the inherent ability of the photographic image to conjure simultaneous feelings of loss and restoration. The memorial nature of the photograph allows space for the artist to look back with a knowing eye, and to generate new futures from the images and ideas of the past.

Curator Shabez Jamal directly cites Teena Marie's song "Deja Vu" for its descriptions of many cosmic returns to both physical and emotional spaces. The photograph has a unique capacity to transport its viewer backwards and forwards through time, as Shawn Michelle Smith notes in her book *Photographic Returns*. Its potent connection to memory and capacity to freeze and capture time makes photography a crucial source for those concerned with engaging the past in service of a better future.

SIBYL

I've been here before... features work by **John Alleyne, Justin Carney, Mark Anthony Brown Jr., Sean G. Clark, Jen Everett, Felicita "Felli" Maynard, Ambrose Rhapsody Murray, Lola Ayisha Ogbara, Kristina Kay Robinson, and Darryl Deangelo Terrel**

About Shabez Jamal

Donny Bradfield (b. 1992, St. Louis) better known as Shabez Jamal, is an interdisciplinary artist based in New Orleans, LA. His work, rooted in still portraiture, experimental video, and performance, interrogates physical, political, and social-economical space by using queerness, not as a means of speaking about sexuality, but as a catalyst to challenge varying power relations. Often turning the lens on himself, Jamal utilizes self-portraiture as a means of radically redefining the parameters of racial and sexual identity. Jamal received his BIS from the University of Missouri - St. Louis in 2019 and received his MFA from Tulane University in the spring of 2022 where he was also awarded a Mellon Community-Engaged Research Fellowship. In 2020 Jamal was also an inaugural member of Harvard Universities Commonwealth: In the city Fellowship.

About Sibyl Gallery

Founded by Katherine Lauricella Ainsley in 2022, Sibyl is a contemporary art space in New Orleans dedicated to promoting emerging artists and art practices. Collaborating with artists, patrons, and institutions alike, the gallery aims to continue to diversify and strengthen the New Orleans art community and connect it with the broader international art world.

SIBYL