

# ARTFORUM

## CRITICS' PICK



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## Selwhyn Sthaddeus “Polo Silk” Terrell

Sibyl | 8630 Zimple Street

January 31, 2025 - March 16, 2025

By Lauren Stroh ☒

February 12, 2025 12:42 pm

There's a photograph that captures a fifteen-year-old Lil Wayne emerging from an open window at the House of Blues in New Orleans. Save for the chrome-and-gold watch he's wearing—along with a toothy, ebullient grin—the rapper is unembellished, without the tattoos and dreadlocks that have long defined his look. The picture itself, with its military-camouflage palette, is similarly subdued but masterfully composed: The rectangular window frame aids in emphasizing the budding star's shining face. And Wayne's megawatt smile must've short-circuited the string of dead Christmas lights on the ledge below him.

Part of Selwhyn Sthaddeus “Polo Silk” Terrell's photo series “Cash Money Records from the '99-2000,” *Lil Wayne 03*, ca. 1999, was taken on the occasion of the Hot Boys' *Get It How U Live!!* album release party in 1997. It is on display at the artist's exhibition at Sibyl gallery, hung alongside other images that document the New Orleans-based music label, Cash Money Records, in early hometown performances prior to achieving fame.

It is no small miracle that these works survived. Two months before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August of 2005, Terrell relocated his archive to an upstairs unit at a storage facility he rented, saving the prints from ruin. Many of these images, including those of Lil Derrick and Magnolia Shorty, who were lost in the early 2000s to gun violence, have been gifted to their families in consolation.

Terrell's images depict multiple generations of New Orleanians in the company of loved ones and friends. Terrell likens his record's purpose to providence, referencing Jeremiah 29:11, a Bible verse favored by his mother Carole “Deary” Charles: “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”