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**Review: UTA Artist Space brings human touch to the fore
Genevieve Gagnard curates a large exhibit exploring connection, intimacy in
our post-pandemic world**



Credit: Photo by Mike Jensen

Installation view of "Stop & Stare," a 17-artist group exhibit on view at UTA Artist Space through May 4.

By Deanna Sirlin – ArtsATL

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Genevieve Gagnard's artist's billboard, "[Look At Them Look At Us](#)" (2022) is installed permanently on the side of a parking structure at 79 Marietta St. in downtown Atlanta. The title is in pink neon, and the text sits on a flowered background of a reproduction of vintage wallpaper. Above this a screen temporarily displayed photos of the artist wearing different wigs in front of different vintage wallpapers in a [Cindy Sherman-esque](#) exploration of the construction of identity. In the spirit of collectivity, eight Atlanta artists were invited to present their work on the screen above her wallpaper and neon text to be in conversation with her work.

“Stop & Stare,” at [UTA Artist Space](#) through May 4, shares in this concept of curating the works of others in relation to Gaignard’s own artistic ideology, albeit this time without including her own work. For “Stop & Stare,” she invited 17 artists to show their work. Gaignard selected artists with whom she has personal relationships and connections, and who inspired Gaignard in her own work. Her curation is thus an extension of her own artistic practice. These artists include Derek Fordjour, Kenny Rivero, Anina Major, Liat Yossifor, Tommy Kha and a dozen others.



Credit: Photo by Mike Jensen

Liat Yossifor, “The Tender Among Us (detail),” 2024.

The exhibition at UTA Artist Space features work in multiple media that include sculpture, painting, glazed stoneware, video, photography and mixed media with yarn. Central to each artwork is the sense of human touch in the physicality of the making and presence of the object, a kind of connection that was so missed during the last four pandemic years. Liat Yossifor’s “The Tender Among Us” (2024), an acrylic painting on canvas, is a vertical work made with the thickest black paint with touches of burnt sienna and yellow ochre. Yossifor applied the paint with her hands; her fingers have touched and moved the paint on the surface to create an all over activity that is sumptuous and lush. The darkness of the palette invites the viewer to look closely for textural nuances, for the eye to become one with the surface. “The Tender Among Us” creates intimacy through the sheer physicality of paint. It is a triumph.



Credit: Photo by Mike Jensen

Derek Fordjour, “Couplet 75,” 2020.

One also wants to make eye contact with Derek Fordjour’s “Couplet 75” (2020), in mixed media of acrylic, charcoal and oil pastel on newspaper mounted on two canvases as a portrait diptych, the format of a traditional cameo. Each has a single male figure in three-quarter view wearing a patterned sleeveless shirt. The bodies are created by collaging charcoal drawings on tinted newsprint torn and tiled to create their physical form. One young man’s face is turned away from the viewer so that its features can barely be seen. The portraits’ mosaic-like structure built in layers of laid paper embraces pattern and decoration with brightly patterned diamond forms. Each sitter’s shirt is like a small abstract painting in itself. Aqua and blue leaf motifs cascade behind the figures like free-flowing laurel wreaths.

The exhibition includes two small works by Anina Major. “Gathering Moss Beneath Nightsky” (2023) is a glazed stoneware sculpture that sits on a pedestal and feels very much like a braided body in its chunky and bulbous form. Its patina is reminiscent of how bronze takes on a greenish-brown tinge as it ages. Major’s “Soft Hearted” (2022) is a small work also made by weaving the clay. Glazed with a rose and cream patina, it has a bodily presence akin to the “[Venus of Willendorf](#),” the form round and sensual.

Kenny Rivero’s “Kids Playing” (2014–2024), in paint and mixed media, is a collaged canvas whose composition is made up of objects that float around as if in free association, be it a boot,

the letter E, real sunflower seeds or record fragments flattened into a hand-built composition. Rivero collects found symbols that activate the viewer's imagination, calling up our own perceptions and memories.



Credit: Photo by Mike Jensen

Tommy Kha, "Prince, Midtown Memphis," 2018.

[Tommy Kha](#)'s "Prince, Midtown Memphis" (2018) a pigment print on vinyl, and his video "S.W.A.K. (Sealed With a Kick)" (2019/2022–2023) are both of two men kissing tenderly. The video is presented in the kind of intimate digital frame that is often used for family photos. Evan

Whale's, "In My Room (Blue Echoes)" (2021) is a large photographic work mounted on wood in which the artist carved a decorative element, an ornate fence in front of an eerie blue tableau. The carving is a barrier to this indigo interior that keeps the viewer at the surface of the work. Genevieve Gagnard presents a cornucopia of ideas having to do with touch and intimacy in this post-pandemic world. "Stop & Stare" refers to the need to spend time with and look closely at the artwork, to really see and feel the presence of the artist. By looking and perceiving the artists' imagery, choices of materials, scale and presentation, the viewer participates with this group of artists in their multiple forms. But it is the human presence expressed through the tactility and physicality of their art that is celebrated in "Stop & Stare."

ART REVIEW

"Stop & Stare"

Through May 4 at UTA Artist Space. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays–Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays. Free. 1401 Peachtree St. N.E., Atlanta, utaartistspace.com

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[Deanna Sirlin](#) is an artist and writer. She is known internationally for large-scale installations that have covered the sides of buildings from Atlanta to Venice, Italy. Her book, "She's Got What It Takes: American Women Artists in Dialogue" (2013), is a critical yet intimate look at the lives and work of nine noted American women artists who have been personally important to Sirlin, based on conversations with each one.