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Kris Graves exhibition opens at the Berman Museum

Exhibition includes 80 portraits awash in color that reflect on Black experience.

COLLEGEVILLE, Pa. (April 14, 2021) — A new exhibition on view [online](#) at the Berman Museum features photographer Kris Graves' homage to contemporary Black experience. Eighty portraits and video images of Black subjects reveal uniqueness through brilliant, richly hued color.

The exhibition includes [a projected image](#) of George Floyd on a graffiti-covered monument of Robert E. Lee taken at the height of Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. Graves' instantly iconic image was displayed on the January 2021 cover of *National Geographic* magazine. Graves's image poignantly captures the commanding graphic potency of Floyd's visage—rendered solely in light—visually overtaking the material substantiality of bronze and stone.

Graves' image captures projected images on the Lee statue created by artists Alex Criqui and Dustin Klein.

“In *Testaments*, Kris Graves variously gives voice to the subjects in his portraits. Through strategies of collaboration or installation, Graves's subjects bear witness,” said Deborah Barkun, creative director of the Berman Museum. “They return the gaze, resist it, refuse it entirely, or direct their attention elsewhere, reminding viewers that images are not neutral. We are honored to have this exhibition of his work at the Berman.”

The portraits that comprise the majority of the exhibition were made between 2014-19 and comprise *The Testament Project*, an exploration and re-conception of contemporary black experience in America.

“More often than not,” Graves says, “Black people are portrayed in the extreme—either as very rich or very poor, they are demonized, infantilized, ridiculed, idolized or hyper-sexualized; and within the art canon there is a noticeable scarcity of black representation.”

“In these glowing portraits, control of the colored lighting is given to my subjects, in order to create a space that is participatory and empowered” Graves continues. “By including subjects in the creation of the scene and the altering of color, I seek to create photographs that portray individuality in addition to their blackness.”

Graves will visit the Ursinus College campus this spring to take portraits of students as part of the exhibition.

Although the museum is currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual gallery and 3D exhibition may be viewed online at ursinus.edu/berman.

About the Berman Museum and Ursinus College

The Berman Museum is one of only 10 percent of museums nationwide to earn accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. For more information, including current virtual exhibitions on view, visit ursinus.edu/berman.

One of the nation’s “Colleges that Change Lives,” Ursinus College is a selective, residential college with 1,500 students that is widely recognized for its Common Intellectual Experience and its Quest: Open Questions Open Minds inquiry-based core curriculum. The tree-lined, 170-acre campus is located 25 miles northwest of Philadelphia in Collegeville, Pa.

