

**THE UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM PRESENTS
NOEL W ANDERSON: BLACK EXCELLENCE, FEATURING NEWLY
COMMISSIONED LARGE-SCALE TAPESTRIES AND VIDEO WORK**



Noel W Anderson
We Give 'Em Reverend Brown, 2023
Discharge and dye on distressed stretched
cotton tapestry
110 x 75 inches
Courtesy the artist

Noel W Anderson: *Black Excellence*, the artist's largest solo museum exhibition to date, features tapestries, video, and works on paper exploring themes of Black success, labor, and performance.

On view August 25, 2025 – April 3, 2026. Free admission.
Artist Walkthrough and Reception: Thursday, September 4, 2025, 5 – 7pm

ALBANY, NY (June 24, 2025) — The University Art Museum (UAM) at the University at Albany presents **Noel W Anderson: Black Excellence** in its main galleries. This will be Noel W Anderson's largest and most comprehensive solo museum exhibition to date and will feature over 35 works. Newly commissioned work—most notably stretched and suspended Jacquard tapestries depicting digitally altered archival and media images centered on Black identity, labor, and performance—will be exhibited alongside earlier works and archival materials that demonstrate the arc of Anderson's career. Other newly commissioned work includes the 30-minute video project *Echoes of the New World* (2025).

Underscoring Anderson's exploration of performance, the two-story open floor plan of the UAM's Edward Durell Stone building will create an arena-like space for the exhibition to unfold, offering vantage points to experience his work from above and below, compelling the viewer to reflect on their role as participant, observer, or witness. Two large-scale tapestries will be suspended in the center of the museum from its 30-foot-high ceilings. These tapestries will hover over viewers on the first floor and will be seen in their entirety by looking down from the second-floor mezzanine.

Anderson's suspended tapestries pay homage to the canvases of American painter Sam Gilliam (1933–2022), while other tapestries are stretched like paintings. In both modes of presentation, “The tapestry is an open and expansive (cotton)field of possibility” for Anderson, who draws on the medium’s rich history from its privileged status as a Medieval art form to its 19th-century mechanical production by Joseph Marie Jacquard (1752–1834).

Anderson develops his tapestries through several stages of research, appropriation, and digital and physical manipulation. First, Anderson gathers images related to themes of Black identity, labor, performance, and success from various archives and media outlets. These images often include public figures of Black male exceptionalism (e.g., Paul Robeson, James Brown, LeBron James), and at times humorous images (e.g., drawings from Harlem Globetrotters coloring books). Anderson also appropriates police photographs from the Civil Rights-era through the 1970s. He digitally manipulates these found images through mirroring, inverting, cropping, or other forms of distortion before having them reproduced as cotton Jacquard tapestries, often mural-sized in scale.

Anderson further alters the image on the resulting tapestry through several physical processes: dyeing and staining with pools of acidic colors or blanching portions of the images; distressing the surface with steel brushes to create a fur-like texture; and picking the textiles apart thread by thread—a technique Anderson calls “opening the image.” Anderson’s process of manipulation disrupts the conventional historical narratives the images contain and begins to tell a parallel history related to themes of Black excellence, exhaustion, and erasure.



Noel W Anderson, *But Where?*, 2022–23, picked, distressed, and stretched cotton tapestry, 105 x 156 inches, courtesy the artist

UAM

The tapestries will work in concert with the new video work in the exhibition, *Echoes of the New World* (2025), a collaboration with filmmaker and sound designer Solomon Bennett, presented in the Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery on the UAM's second floor. Anderson writes:

The use of cotton and its attendant vocabulary once woven is an intricate exchange with American history. Loose threads and the natural warp of the material represent a glitch that invites viewers to revisit their memories and notions. The Jacquard weave recalls analog media while accompanying sound and video further develop dialogue with how technological developments have changed our seeing.

Expanding on ideas from Anderson and Bennett's recent work for the 15th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2024), curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, this new video features appropriated and manipulated cinema and archival footage that includes audio of conductor Dean Dixon speaking on music theory, music of Duke Ellington, singer and actor Paul Robeson in his film portrayal of Emperor Jones, and news footage of OJ Simpson's 1994 car chase, among other images. With the moving image, Anderson continues his strategy of appropriation seen in his tapestries and introduces a sonic dimension. For Anderson, "Sound breaks the surface of the image" in a way analogous to his physical disruptions of his tapestries' surfaces.



Noel W. Anderson
sly wink, 2010
Altered *Ebony* magazine page
13 x 10 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Additional works in the exhibition demonstrate the development of Anderson's ideas over the arc of his career. These include a series of prints on handmade blue paper (2018), completed during his Dieu Donne residency, and his *Ebony* erasure works (2012-18). For the latter, he chemically lifted the ink from vintage pages of the iconic magazine in order to selectively erase and manipulate portions of their images. These pieces represent early explorations on themes of race and erasure still salient in Anderson's work today.

The exhibition reflects on Black excellence—a term whose current usage grew out of the Civil Rights movement but whose concepts have been debated in Black thought and education since Reconstruction—and asks in what ways it is intertwined with themes of exhaustion and erasure. *Noel W. Anderson: Black Excellence* is the third in a trilogy of solo exhibition projects by the artist, preceded by *Erasure's Edge* (KMAC, Louisville, Kentucky, 2022-23) and *Black Exhaustion* (Shirley Fiterman Art Center, CUNY, New York, New York, 2023).

The exhibition will be on view for both the fall and spring semesters, with a brief pause during the campus's winter break.



Noel W Anderson, *(Hor)Rorschach (Downward Dog)* (diptych), 2019-23, discharge and dye on picked and distressed stretched cotton tapestries, 101 x 92 inches each, 101 x 184 inches overall, courtesy the artist

About the artist

Noel W Anderson (born in 1981, Louisville, Kentucky) lives and works in New York, New York. Anderson's solo exhibitions include *Black Exhaustion in Extension*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria (2024); *Black Exhaustion*, Shirley Fiterman Art Center, BMCC, CUNY, New York, New York (2023); *Erasure's Edge*, KMAC, Louisville, Kentucky (2022-23); *Heavy is the Crown*, Telfair Museum, Savannah, Georgia (2021); *It's Magic*, The Mudima Foundation, Milan, Italy (2021); *Blak Origin Moment*, Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee (2019); *Blak Origin Moment*, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2017).

Notable group exhibitions include: *PANSORI: A Soundscape of the 21st Century*, 15th Gwangju Biennale, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, Gwangju Biennale Hall, Gwangju, South Korea (2024); and *Promise, Witness, Remembrance*, curated by Allison Glenn, Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky (2021).

Anderson's awards, fellowships, and residencies include: Hermitage Artist Residency, Sarasota County, Florida (2020); Paper Variable Artist, Dieu Donné, New York, New York (2019); Tamarind Press Visiting Artist Edition, Tamarind Press, Albuquerque, New Mexico (2019); Jerome Camargo Residency, Cassis, France (2019); Dieu Donné Workspace Artist in Residence, Dieu Donné, New York, New York (2018); New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (2018); and Jerome Travel Grant (2017).

Anderson received an M.F.A. in Sculpture from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut in 2010; an M.F.A. in Printmaking from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana in 2007; and a B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio in 2003.

Catalogue

A fully illustrated, scholarly catalogue to accompany *Noel W Anderson: Black Excellence* will be released in spring 2026.

Free Public Programs

Artist Walkthrough and Reception: Thursday, September 4, 2025, 5 – 7pm

Please check the museum's website for additional programming dates: albany.edu/museum/public-programs

Exhibition Support

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Press Contact

For press materials please visit [UAM Fall 2025 Exhibitions Press Kit](#) or contact Christine Snyder, Operations and Finance Manager, cbatson@albany.edu.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Museum Hours August 25, 2025 – April 3, 2026

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Open Select Saturdays, 11am – 4pm

Closed Nov 26 – 28, Dec 22 – Jan 2, and all state holidays

Please check the museum's website for Select Saturdays and additional programming dates

Location

University Art Museum

University at Albany

Fine Arts Building

1400 Washington Ave, Albany, NY 12222

Free Admission

Collections Study Space Hours

Tuesday and Thursday, 11am – 2pm

Or by appointment: dabbatiello@albany.edu

UAlbany Campus Land Acknowledgement

The University at Albany sits at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers on the traditional lands of the Kanien'keháka and Muh-he-con-neok people, who stewarded this land for generations before the arrival of European colonists. The Kanien'keháka (People of the Flint) and Muh-he-con-neok (People of the Waters that are Never Still) are more commonly known today as the Mohawk Haudenosaunee and Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans. Despite the similarity of their westernized names, the Mohawk and Mohican were culturally and linguistically distinct.

The UAlbany community recognizes that we live and work on the homelands of sovereign Indigenous nations with rich histories and cultures that continue today – both within New York and beyond.

As an institution devoted to teaching, scholarship, and service, we strive to understand and learn from our history and to affirm Indigenous rights and issues. To this end, we are committed to cultivating reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities focused on equity, social justice, and sustainability – and dismantling legacies of colonization.

About the University at Albany

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