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THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

Announcing the 2023 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship Recipients

Jammie Holmes
José Parlá
Melanee C. Harvey



Left to right: Jammie Holmes, José Parlá and Melanee C. Harvey

January 18, 2023 – PLEASANTVILLE, NY –The Gordon Parks Foundation has announced its 2023 fellowship recipients: Artists **Jammie Holmes** and **José Parlá** are **Fellows in Art**, and art historian and scholar **Melanee C. Harvey** as the **Genevieve Young Fellow in Writing**. Since 2017, the fellowship program has championed individuals who share the foundation’s dedication to advancing Parks’s vision for social change through the arts and humanities. Each recipient receives \$25,000 to support new or ongoing projects that explore themes of representation and social justice. The **2023 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellows** will be celebrated at the annual **Gordon Parks Foundation Awards Dinner** on May 23, 2023 in New York City. More info can be found at: <https://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/support/gala>. “This year’s art fellows are both painters whose work moves Gordon Parks’s legacy forward in important ways, while Melanee’s writing fellowship project at Howard University brings forth an important new historical context to his work,” said **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.**, Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation. “We are proud to support the thought-provoking, innovative work of Jammie, José, and Melanee.”

The Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship programs were established to grant the same vital support that Parks received early in his career to contemporary artists and writers who are continuing his legacy of using art to enact social change. In 1942, Parks was awarded the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, a grant which allowed him to move to Washington D.C. and apprentice under Roy Stryker at the Farm Security Administration (FSA). This opportunity set the course for Parks's 60-year career documenting American life through powerful photographs and iconic films, becoming one of the most important photographers of the twentieth century. The annual fellowships support the development of new or ongoing projects that explore themes of representation and social justice, and are in historical dialogue with Gordon Parks's work. Fellows participate in a wide range of Foundation initiatives and programs throughout the year, culminating in a solo exhibition at the Gordon Parks Foundation.

The Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship in Art

The Gordon Parks Foundation awards two \$25,000 fellowships in art annually to support artists working in a variety of fields and mediums in the development of new or ongoing projects that explore themes of representation and social justice, and are in historical dialogue with Gordon Parks's work.

2023 Art fellow Jammie Holmes creates intimate, complex paintings that foreground themes and experiences of Black life. Originally from Thibodaux, Louisiana and now based in Dallas, Texas, Holmes is a self-taught artist. His paintings incorporate portraiture, symbols, text, and objects that depict the celebrations and struggles of everyday life, particularly the contemporary American South.

"I'm honored to join the family of Gordon Parks Fellows," said Holmes. "Gordon Parks's courage in capturing moments of everyday life has been a long-time inspiration to me as an artist and individual. I am excited to explore Parks's legacy and bridge the gap between his work and contemporary perspectives."

Holmes is joined by José Parlá, who has been working for more than twenty-five years to establish a style of painting that transforms the language of the street into a hybrid form of abstraction and urban realism. Born in Miami, Florida to Cuban parents, Parlá has sought to interpret his experience of cities that have served as crossroads in his life, by engaging with the rich history of abstraction in painting.

"Gordon Parks's unique approach and message have paved the way for many to clearly see the issues of civil rights, race relations, poverty, and urban life," said Parlá "His work continues to inspire me, and I am honored and privileged to receive the Gordon Parks Foundation Art Fellowship."

The Gordon Parks Foundation has awarded 12 fellowships in art since 2017. Previous fellows include Bisa Butler and Andre D. Wagner (2022), Nina Chanel Abney and Tyler Mitchell (2020), Guadalupe Rosales and Hank Willis Thomas (2019), Derrick Adams and Deana Lawson (2018), and Devin Allen and Harriet Dedman (2017).

Genevieve Young Fellowship in Writing

Launched in 2022, The Gordon Parks Foundation's Genevieve Young Fellowship in Writing awards one annual \$25,000 fellowship to a writer working in a variety of fields including art history, journalism, and literature. This year, the Fellowship in Writing is awarded in partnership with Howard University, celebrating the acquisition of a collection of photographs by Gordon Parks that represent the arc of his career over five decades. The Fellowship will support research and writing by a Howard University professor and act as the foundation for a series of programs that will celebrate this historic acquisition.

Writing fellow Melanee C. Harvey is an associate professor of art history at Howard University. She will embark on a project that investigates the social structures and sites of religious practice documented across Gordon Parks's photographs from the 1930s to the last quarter of the twentieth century. An exhibition mounted at both the Gordon Parks Foundation Gallery and Howard University will be enhanced by collaborative programming hosted by the University.

"Receiving the support of the Gordon Parks Foundation marks a significant milestone in my study of the visual culture of Black religion and spirituality but also in the practice of photo history at Howard University," said Harvey. "Across this year-long fellowship, I am excited about the opportunity to study Parks's photographic practice through The Gordon Parks Legacy Collection as well as the rich collection of historic African American photography at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. This support from the Gordon Parks Foundation helps to extend and augment the legacy of photo history at Howard University."

The Genevieve Young Fellowship was established last year in honor of the legendary book editor, who was also Gordon Parks's creative partner and estate executor. Young was also instrumental in the creation and development of the Gordon Parks Foundation beginning in 2006, and served on the Foundation's board from 2006–20. Writing in particular was central to Parks's work, a means of expression that broadened the reach and impact of his perspective.

2022 Fellow Bisa Butler Exhibition to Open at Gordon Parks Foundation Gallery

Next month, the Gordon Parks Foundation is pleased to present *Materfamilias*, an exhibition by **2022 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow Bisa Butler**, a textile artist. The exhibition will run February 1–April 14, 2023 at the Gordon Parks Foundation Gallery, located at 48 Wheeler Ave in Pleasantville, NY.

Butler creates quilted works inspired by photographs – portraits composed entirely of fabrics and textiles in vibrant colors and patterns that reimagine and celebrate Black life. For this

exhibition, the culmination of her 2022 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship, she has created quilts inspired by, among others, photographs by Gordon Parks. More information can be found at: <https://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/exhibitions/gordon-parks-foundation-gallery>.

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ABOUT JAMMIE HOLMES

Jammie Holmes is a self-taught painter from Thibodaux, Louisiana, whose work tells the story of contemporary life for many Black families in America. Through portraiture and tableaux, Holmes depicts stories of the celebrations and struggles of everyday life, with particular attention paid to a profound sense of place. Growing up 20 minutes from the Mississippi River, Holmes was surrounded by the social and economic consequences of America's dark past, situated within a deep pocket of the Sun Belt, where reminders of slavery exist alongside labor union conflicts that have fluctuated in intensity since the Thibodaux Massacre of 1887. His work is a counterpoint to the romantic mythology of Louisiana as a hub of charming hospitality, an idea that has been perpetuated in order to hide the deep scars of poverty and racism that have structured life in the state for centuries. Holmes relocated to Dallas in 2016. His work has most recently been presented in exhibitions at Library Street Collective, Detroit; Deitch Projects, Los Angeles; Marianne Boesky, New York; Nassima-Landau Projects, Tel Aviv; Dallas Museum of Art; and Dallas Contemporary, among others. His work is also included in the permanent collections of the Aishti Foundation, Brooklyn Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Hammer Museum, ICA Miami, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, New Orleans Museum of Art, Perez Museum of Art, X Museum, and The Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art. Holmes lives and works in Dallas, Texas.

ABOUT JOSÉ PARLÁ

From the outset, José Parlá has sought to interpret his experience of cities that have served as crossroads in his life, from Miami to Brooklyn, San Juan to Havana, London to Tokyo, Istanbul to Hong Kong as a central theme in his work, while purposefully engaging with the rich history of painting since the rise of abstraction in the 1950s. His work provides markers of time, and is about the accumulation of information that settles like accretions upon the surfaces of walls and streets, like the lines on the hands and faces of the people who inhabit them. Parlá is known for his permanent installations of large-scale paintings and community engagement as a co-founder of Wide Awakes. In 2015 he painted the monumental mural *ONE: Union of the Senses* in the lobby of One World Trade Center. Other notable mural projects include *Nature of Language* at the James B. Hunt Jr. Library at North Carolina State University, and the mural *Diary of Brooklyn* at the Barclays Center, and *Amistad América* at The University of Texas at Austin. Solo institutional exhibitions of Parlá's work have been organized at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2020); Istanbul74' a project of the Istanbul Biennial (2019); HOCA Foundation, Hong Kong (2019); Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. (2018); Neuberger Museum of Art, New York (2018); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2017); National YoungArts Foundation, Miami (2016); and The High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2015). Parlá's work is in several public collections

including Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM); The British Museum, London; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; POLA Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan; The Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York; El Espacio, Miami; and The National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba. Parlá studied at Miami Dade Community College, New World School of the Arts, and Savannah College of Art & Design. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

ABOUT MELANEE C. HARVEY

Melanee C. Harvey is associate professor of art history in the Department of Art in the Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts at Howard University. She earned a B.A. from Spelman College and an M.A. and Ph.D. in American Art and Architectural History from Boston University. In addition to serving as coordinator for the art history area of study, she has served as programming chair for the James A. Porter Colloquium on African American Art and Art of the African Diaspora at Howard University since 2016. She has published on architectural iconography in African American art, Black Arts Movement artists, religious art of Black liberation theology and ecowomanist art practices. Her recent publications include a thematic introduction on motion for *Movements, Motions, Moments: Photographs of Religion and Spirituality from the National Museum of African American History and Culture (Double Exposure Series)* and an entry on the artistic activism of Benny Andrews in *The Unforgettables: Expanding the History of American Art* (University of California Press, 2022). During the 2020-2021 academic year, Melanee was in residence as the Paul Mellon Guest Scholar at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art. She is currently writing her first book entitled, *Patterns of Permanence: African Methodist Episcopal Architecture and Visual Culture*.

ABOUT THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

The Gordon Parks Foundation supports and produces artistic and educational initiatives that advance the legacy and vision of Gordon Parks—recognized as the most significant American photographer of the 20th century, as well as a writer, musician, and filmmaker, who used the arts to further “the common search for a better life and a better world.” Through exhibitions, publications, and public programs organized in collaboration with national and international institutions at its exhibition space in Pleasantville, New York, the Foundation provides access to, and supports understanding of, the work and contributions of Gordon Parks for artists, scholars, students, and the public. Through its year-round educational programming and annual grant-making initiatives, the Foundation champions current and future generations of artists and humanitarians whose work carries on Parks’s legacy. <https://www.gordonparksfoundation.org>

ABOUT GORDON PARKS

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, photographer, filmmaker, musician, and author Gordon Parks created an iconic body of work that made him one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1940s, he documented American life and culture with a focus on social justice, race relations, the civil rights movement, and the Black American experience. Born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, Parks was drawn to

photography as a young man. Despite his lack of professional training, he won a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in 1942; this led to a position with the photography section of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in Washington, D.C., and later, the Office of War Information (OWI). By the mid-1940s, he was working as a freelance photographer for publications such as Vogue, Glamour, and Ebony. Parks was hired in 1948 as a staff photographer for Life magazine, where he spent more than two decades creating some of his most groundbreaking work. In 1969, he became the first Black American to write and direct a major feature film, The Learning Tree, based on his semi-autobiographical novel. His next directorial endeavor, Shaft (1971), helped define a genre known as Blaxploitation films. Parks continued photographing, publishing, and composing until his death in 2006.

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