

Hannah Price  
Still Standing

Zeal Eva  
Gentle Landing

# About the Artists

**Hannah Price** is a photographic artist and filmmaker primarily interested in documenting relationships, race politics, and social perception and misperception. Price is internationally known for her project *City of Brotherly Love* (2009-2012), a series of photographs of the men who catcalled her on the streets of Philadelphia. In 2014, Price graduated from the Yale School of Art MFA Photography program, receiving the Richard Benson Prize for excellence in photography. Over the past eight years, Price's photos have been displayed in several cities across the United States, with a few residing in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**Zeal Eva** is a visual storyteller who celebrates Black experience through her artworks that bring to life a nostalgic feeling of home. Originally from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Zeal Eva's work is deeply rooted in personal history and the histories of the communities in which she navigates. Through photography, painting, illustration, sculpture, and curation, she explores the intersections of the natural world and the built environment to highlight shared experiences, document the present, and look towards the future.

# I. Introduction

## **Hannah Price: Still Standing**

Photography and historical preservation are interventions that appear to interrupt and stop the action of time. By drawing attention to a particular moment—often before a transformation takes place—these interventions ask us to consider our relationships with the past. How does the legacy of the past inspire the future? How have time and history shaped how we understand ourselves?

*Still Standing* shows photographs by Hannah Price made while an African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund Fellow with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Price documented the restoration of historic buildings in the Hill District and Homewood neighborhoods of Pittsburgh. These included the August Wilson House, the National Negro Opera Company House, and the New Granada Theater. Whether honoring Black cultural figures or supporting Black centers of creativity, the Trust brings attention to the importance of historical memory and cultural continuity.

This exhibition includes Price's portraits of people living in the communities around these landmarks today. Where history is honored by the preservation of these buildings, individual and collective memory is shaped by connection to place. These portraits reflect that these structures exist in thriving communities whose heritage inspires the creative life of the Hill District and Homewood now and in the future.

## **Zeal Eva: Gentle Landing**

*Gentle Landing* is a small step in the journey towards self-actualization for the artist Zeal Eva, who has found herself these past five years in a search for home while actively finding moments of pause, peace, and humanity in the everyday and the “what’s next?”

The artist writes: "A gentle transition of moments experienced, a celebration of ones passed and those left to come. The unexpected turn of an important relation, backs turned toward you as you set off, yet again, into the sunset, into spaces both familiar and unknown. To the journey of uncovering small pieces of yourself while kneading in new threads to make you whole. It is an ongoing practice to create what is imagined into the tangible. While landing, gently into this present time."



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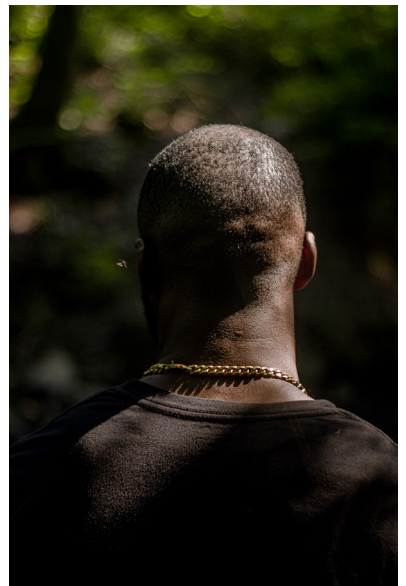
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## II. Portraiture

Picturing the lived physical and emotional experiences of place is fundamental to forming identity and the construction and sustaining of **collective memory**. Through formal photographs made in the exterior landscape or more intimate ones made inside the home, the creation and sharing of photographic portraits contribute to forming personal and cultural identities. For over a century, photographic images have provided a vital record while speaking to more human desires to understand ourselves and each other.

### Questions for Looking

- Consider the photograph *Sandra* by Hannah Price. What does the composition, perspective, and body language here suggest to you?
- How we perceive a portrait is also shaped by how it is physically produced and presented. In this Silver Eye exhibition, what does the large-scale nature of Hannah Price's photographs imply? What does the smaller scale and physical layout of Zeal Eva's photographs evoke?
- Portrait photography is a genre with a long tradition of using sets and fabric backdrops to stage portraits. Consider Zeal Eva's portrait of Jameelah. What do you think Zeal Eva's intentions are in referencing and reinterpreting these historical conventions?



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### III. Metaphor and Symbolism

Literary tools such as **metaphor** and **symbolism** may also be used in photography to speak to a significant concept or theme. As shown in *August Wilson's House* and *Cellar, August Wilson's House*, Hannah Price drew inspiration from carefully observed light conditions. When photographing in Pittsburgh during August 2021, Price often chose to show the weather before a storm. She felt this climate was symbolic of the oppression that follows Black people in their daily lives. Zeal Eva's observation of light is more personal to her individual experience. It is part of her artistic practice that frequently searches for spaces of pause or joy in everyday life.

#### Questions for Looking

- Consider *Cellar, August Wilson's House*. What does the use of light in this photograph suggest to you?
- In Zeal Eva's portrait *Gold Chain (Isaiah)*, the human body seems to emerge from shadow, while sunlight highlights the edge of the individual's neck, especially glistening on the links of the gold chain he is wearing. How does this use of light make you feel?
- Every iteration of a sunset is unique, and can never be replicated by nature in the same way. Similarly Zeal Eva's photograph *September Sunset (Hill District)* was made at a place and time that is individually significant to the artist. How might this image also speak to collective experience?



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## IV. Representing Preservation

Photographs play an important role in constructing shared understandings of history or foreseeing imagined futures. Contemporary artists sometimes suggest or represent disruptions in time in their work to highlight the unfinished work of racial justice. By challenging the idea of fixed history, these artists remind us that while documentary photographs may appear objective and **evidential**, they actually offer unfinished **narratives**. Neither creating nor experiencing a documentary photograph is a neutral act. Artists and viewers bring their own experiences, which shape the reading of a photograph and the possibilities that it suggests.

### Questions for Looking

- Hannah Price's photograph of the National Negro Opera Company House shows the building being temporarily reclaimed by nature. This implied relationship between nature and culture is open to interpretation—what do you draw from this visual juxtaposition?
- The interiors of *The New Granada Theater* and *Kitchen, August Wilson's House* represent multiple possible timelines—simultaneously addressing past deterioration while anticipating future preservation and re-use. What do these photographs suggest about how history is often represented? How does this implied disruption of time make you feel?
- Consider parts of your own neighborhood that you find visually arresting or that are personally meaningful to you. How have parts of your neighborhood changed since you have lived there and what parts have remained the same?

# V. Community Perspectives on photographs by Hannah Price

Community Perspectives is an ongoing series where people from diverse disciplines and backgrounds respond freely to images in our exhibitions.



## ***Ms. Denise, August 2021***

My name is Ms. Denise. I am the youngest of nine children; also, I'm a twin to my sibling Darrell. I was born and raised in this historic Hill District in the uptown section. It really was a community-oriented area with lots of different ethnic people.

At that time in the early 70s, the City of Pittsburgh held the parades right outside my front door. The parade event lineup was at Reed St and Colwell. I even had an older brother who marched and played the triple drum set. It was so exciting cause everyone wanted to see the Kayettes marching band performance, especially my Mom.

My Mom was a highly respected lady. Family, friends, neighbors, and staff members from my elementary school (Miller) and Fifth Ave High School admired Ms. Audrey.

The day I met Ms. Hannah back in August 2021, I was returning home from visiting my 37 years young daughter at a nursing home facility where she currently is a resident. My child suffered a severe stroke in the month of June 2021, and at the time was an employee of the government.

Well, as Hannah was setting up her camera, I drove by and asked her to "take a picture of me, please" and she agreed. We chose a spot next to the Crawford Grill building, and as she set up, I started speaking on my personal pain.

Another daughter, a 35-year young woman developed a serious illness and tried all the treatments that modern medicine had to offer, along with acupuncture, herbal, and a last-ditch effort to fly to Louisiana for a urologist to tell her “if only she were a male” ...

My beautiful, bright young child then decided she no longer wanted to endure how she described as being ‘failed by the medical profession community’. With her loss of total independence, she took it upon herself to end the pain and suffering that became unbearable.

But Hannah listened to me, a total stranger standing in front of her camera. I felt relaxed and calm, letting her know how and what life had tossed my way; unexpected is an understatement. Still Standing is a perfect way to describe my moments then and now. I realize that the challenges we as a community have and continue to endure are a sign of our resilience to major opposition in one's lifetime. It will give each one of us the opportunity to look deeply inside or not but to try to give back to the best of one's ability and show kindness, patience, and peace. Wherever we find ourselves, a helping hand in even a small gesture is a great start. Remember, the spirit of the universe is ours to claim if only one seeks it unconditionally.

*- Ms. Denise*

## ***National Negro Opera Company House, August 2021***

Revealing the story of this hidden treasure whose truth longs to be known, unveils the strength and courage that only manifests through love.

*– Jonnet Solomon*

When “Woogie” Harris (brother of famed photographer Charles “Teenie” Harris) purchased this property in 1931 it became a residential home and much more. It was also a haven for Black travelers to stay when Pittsburgh’s segregated hotels weren’t an option, a destination for celebrity and “society” parties and leisure, and a haven for Black arts, culture, and business in Pittsburgh.

Mary Caldwell Dawson operated the National Negro Opera Company from the house as well. Their performances were renowned, and the quality of the training was evident in the impact her students went on to make on generations of musicians in Pittsburgh and beyond. The boldness of a Black woman taking on this work in the mid-20th century isn’t lost on me.

The house has largely been reclaimed by nature, but Hannah’s framing here is still reverent. I can imagine approaching the house in its heyday and seeing it like a mountain rising up, or maybe like an oasis in the desert. A safe haven for Black folks to build and to just be. With the restoration beginning after decades of fundraising efforts led by Jonnet Solomon, I’m excited to see it return to all its glory.

*- Njaimah Njie*





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## ***Crawford Grill, August 2021***

Can you hear the wanes of John Coltrane's saxophone on a cool  
Summer's night?

Do you smell the aroma of fried chicken smothered in gravy  
waiting to be devoured?

Sometimes I wish that I could have experienced this little slice of  
Harlem in Pittsburgh.

Lived to see this Black excellence that permeates the pages of  
history books unopened & yet seen.

The spirit of Gus Greenlee resides in the heart of each hustler who  
strives to make a dollar on these blocks.

I long to remember my people, the sights, the sounds, the  
moments that made the Crawford Grill so legendary.

*– Corey Carrington*

## ***August Wilson's house, August 2021***

Here we see the narrow width of the two-room apartment where the Kittels lived, August Wilson's childhood home until he was 13. Here restoration of the building is well underway, the structure rebuilt and bricks re-pointed. Here also is the bulkhead that leads to the basement. This very site – the back of the house and the yard where August Wilson (then Freddy Kittel) and siblings played and his mother held parties for friends – is the site the playwright used for *Seven Guitars*, his play set in 1948. What had in reality been his family's apartment became the home of the character Vera, with Louise living above (where there had been a real Louise in the Kittels' time). I have a vivid memory of seeing the world premiere of the play at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, and when I walked in, there it was: August Wilson's house and Bedford Avenue, right there on stage.

– *Chris Rawson*

A friend once told me that buildings house stories and to lose buildings means to also lose their stories.

I'm glad we were able to keep the Wilson House. It's an incredible, historic story. When it opened, it became only the third home of a Black American male writer given such a unique distinction.

The first was Dayton, Ohio, home of the great poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. The Ohio Legislature declared it a state memorial in 1936, and it was opened to the public in 1938. The second is the Harlem brownstone of poet Langston Hughes. The poet lived there the final 20 years of his life in New York before he passed in 1967. It was opened as a writing and public arts center around 2016 before closing a few years later.

And now, there is the birthplace of Wilson.

The house is a story, and in keeping with Wilson's mission, it will be used to tell not only Wilson's story, but the story of the Hill District and the families who live there. In a broader sense, their stories are the stories of Black America. To restore and recognize the house is like restoring and recognizing the ancestors, symbolic of paying tribute to one's cultural home.

– *Ervin Dyer*





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## ***Kitchen, August Wilson's house, August 2021***

This is the unrestored central space — the kitchen— in August Wilson's childhood home in the Hill District, a two-room apartment where the Kittel family (six children and parents) lived until they moved to Hazelwood when he was 13. It has now been restored to what it looked like when they lived there in the 1950s. Either in this condition, empty after other tenants had moved out later in the 19th century, or as it is now, with its mid-century kitchen furniture restored, you can feel it as a center of family life. "Daisy's Kitchen," we call it, named after Daisy Wilson, August Wilson's mother, from whom he took his invented last name and to whom he gave much credit for what he became.

– *Chris Rawson*

Like in many African American families, economics could be a challenge. It was no different for Wilson's family. Society was segregated as were opportunities to earn a decent living. These limitations controlled where and how families lived. But because Black families were challenged by a scarcity of material goods, doesn't mean their homes were not sacred places, full of cultural and spiritual wealth. In fact, Wilson fondly recalls sitting at his mother's knee and absorbing the stories that gave souls to Black folk.

"I am not a historian," he once said. "But I happen to think that the content of my mother's life—her myths, her superstitions, her prayers, the contents of her pantry, the smell of her kitchen, the song that escaped from her sometimes parched lips, her thoughtful repose and pregnant laughter—are all worthy of art." Freddy Kittel was young, but what he learned at his mother's knee stayed with him as he became a writer. He saw Black struggle and triumph and learned to appreciate Black culture and spirit.

– *Ervin Dyer*

## **Cellar, August Wilson's house, August 2021**

Underneath the kitchen in August Wilson's two-room childhood apartment is a cramped space reached through an outdoor bulkhead. Containing a toilet and bathtub, it wasn't initially considered part of their living space – they used the backyard outhouse and heated bathwater in the kitchen. But when August was about eight, their apartment added two more rooms on the floor above, and with them the use of this basement. The space is better known in August Wilson's plays from its outside view in *Seven Guitars*, where the bulkhead sits center stage as the home of Hedley, a Caribbean with entrepreneurial, revolutionary energy.

– *Chris Rawson*

This image reminds of the song by the musician and rapper, Drake: "Started at the Bottom." Two lines in particular stand out to me.

*Started from the bottom, now we're here*

*Started from the bottom, now my whole team here...*

One philosophy and cultural practice that survived the middle passage is the idea of collective good. Wilson's journey and playwriting reconnects us to this philosophy. His 10-play American Century Cycle is not just the story of individuals or one family or one city. The beauty of his work is that it speaks to a people's experience. A people who survived being placed at the bottom of slave dungeons, the bottom of slave ships, the bottom of society, the bottom of the world. In this image, there are also stairs, leading to the light. In Wilson's work, he shows the experience of Black families to continue to move toward this light—a way forward, a hope against the odds.

– *Ervin Dyer*



**Corey Carrington** is an accomplished poet, collagist, and curator from the Northside of Pittsburgh. Carrington's work in performance and visual art have been seen at the August Wilson Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, Wood Street Galleries, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, The Children's Museum, and The University Gallery/Frick Fine Arts Building.

**Ms. Denise Kinsel-El** was born and raised in Pittsburgh. She is the youngest of nine children, and a mother to six children (4 daughters, 2 sons).

**Dr. Ervin Dyer Ph.D.** is a prominent Pittsburgh-based writer, editor and sociologist whose writing has focused on the African diaspora and African-American life and culture. His writing has appeared in a number of regional and national publications, and he has worked to further the missions of various organizations and universities in southwestern Pennsylvania. He serves on the Board of Directors of August Wilson House.

**Njaimh Njie** is a photographer, filmmaker, and multimedia artist. She explores contemporary Black experiences with a focus on how the past shapes the present, and her work has been exhibited in venues including the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Mattress Factory. Njie is currently a Silver Eye board member.

**Chris Rawson** is senior theater critic of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, where he chronicled August Wilson's career and became his friend. He serves on the Board of Directors of August Wilson House.

**Jonnet Solomon** is the Founder and Executive Director of the non-profit organization 'The National Opera House.' Since 2000, Jonnet Solomon has worked tirelessly to restore this house and renew its purpose as a gathering place for the community and a center for creative excellence that nurtures talent and widens access to opportunities.



# Glossary

<b>Collective Memory</b>	Collective memory refers to how a group of people share memories, knowledge, and information—which informs and influences this group’s shared social identity.
<b>Evidential</b>	Relating to or serving as evidence, often in order to show one or more reasons for believing something is or is not true.
<b>Metaphor</b>	An element of visual representation that compares to or suggests something else in order to further enrich the meaning of the work of art.
<b>Narrative</b>	Refers to how an image or a series of images can be used to tell a story. Narratives are constructed by artists, participants, and viewers, and as such are open to interpretation.
<b>Symbolism</b>	In the context of photography, a visual cue that references a specific idea or thing in order to shape the viewer’s understanding of the photograph.

# Reading List

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story* (TedX, 2009), transcript available at Facing History & Ourselves, [facinghistory.org](http://facinghistory.org).

K.M. Bryan, “Radiating a Hope: Mary Cardwell Dawson as Educator and Activist”, *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 25, no.1 (October 2003): 20–35.

Brent Leggs, Kerri Rubman, Byrd Wood, *Preserving African American Historic Places* (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2013)

Sarah Lewis (guest editor), *Aperture 223: Vision & Justice*. (Aperture Foundation, 2016)

Njaimah Njie, *This is Where We Find Ourselves* (Silver Eye Center for Photography, 2021)

August Wilson, *How I Learned What I Learned* (Samuel French, 2018)

August Wilson, *Seven Guitars* (Plume, Reprint edition, 1997)

This play written in 1995 is part of August Wilson’s 10-play American Century Cycle, which charts the African American experience throughout the twentieth century.

Alisha Wormsley, *The People Are The Light*, (Silver Eye Center for Photography, 2019)



**Silver Eye Center for Photography  
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This guide serves as an education supplement to our exhibitions and contains information about the works on view, questions for looking and discussion as well as room for student responses. To schedule a tour of this exhibition for students, go to: [silvereye.org](http://silvereye.org)

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