

Gallery Guide
Sep 6–Nov 17, 2018

Silver Eye



Family Systems Theory
Andre Bradley

About the Artist

Andre Bradley, American (b. 1987) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. Bradley is a graduate of Hampshire College where he was selected in 2008 as a James Baldwin Scholar and in 2012, was a recipient of the first annual Elaine Mayes Award for Photography. Bradley received a Master's of Fine Art from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2015 was selected as a president's scholar and was recipient of the T.C. Colley Award for Photographic Excellence. Bradley has been a fellow at Image Text Ithaca, Hampshire College's Creative Media Institute, the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center and has work in the permanent collection of the RISD Museum of Art. Bradley's book *Dark Archives* has been shortlisted for the 2016 Photo-Text Book Award at Les Recontres De La Photographie, and the 2016 Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation First PhotoBook Award.

Family Systems Theory

David Oresick
Executive Director,
Silver Eye Center
for Photography

Andre Bradley wants you understand him in the context of family, and he wants you to understand that there are many kinds of families. Some families you are born into and others you choose. All families are a kind of system, a complex set of individual parts, which interdependently form a distinct whole. Actions have reactions that flow throughout that system. The exhibition takes its title from the work psychiatrist Dr. Murray Bowen and his idea that the family is an emotional unit, functioning as one single system. Bradley's *Family Systems Theory* is a provocative exploration of various families and systems he has belonged to.

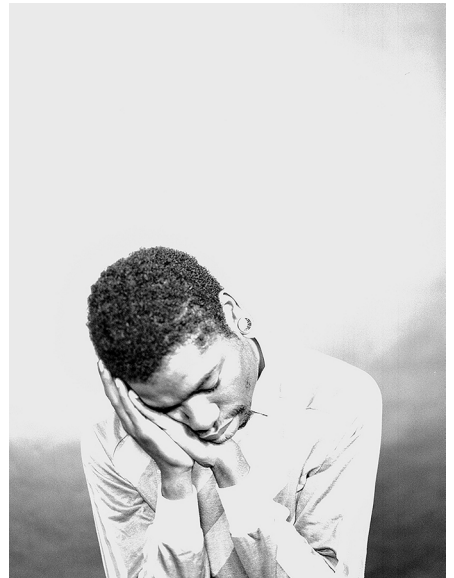
A poem in the gallery, also titled *Family Systems Theory* most directly addresses Dr. Bowen's work. Bradley riffs on Bowen's clinical text, words and phrases often seem out of place, "Some mothers and fathers have a faded ability to parent... the family system is unsympathetic, insistent." This text is a haunting and beautiful assessment of a dysfunctional family state. The exhibition *Family Systems Theory* can be seen as series of self-portraits through the lens of three systems that have shaped Bradley, from different periods in his life. First the high school he attended as a teenager, then the art college he attended as a young man, and finally the family that raised him as a child.

A grid of enlarged pages from the artist's high school yearbook titled, *Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown)* shows Bradley's senior class portraits. This strikingly stark arrangement shows some students in everyday clothing, not smiling, almost like mug shots. These are the non-graduating seniors of the high school. We see Bradley among them, looking younger than his age, eyes closed head tilted downward. The graduates are wearing gowns and caps with tassel falling over their shoulders, smiling brightly. The school's shaming of the non-graduates and dropouts is not subtle. Picturing them as a gallery of failures, a foil to their show the graduates' success. However, Bradley asks not to be seen as an individual failure, but as a young man in a system that has failed him. In his book *The Dark Archives* Bradley writes of this experience, "fighting in the ring of education became a box. Subsequently, I dropped out of school. I left to learn."

This gesture of public humiliation by the high school is contrasted with a series of photographic studies based on materials that Bradley rejected from his paintings and collages in art school. *Debris from Collage and Trash from My Studio* is a grid of uniform photographs that fills half of the gallery. Made on the floor of his Rhode Island School of Design studio, Bradley placed dozens of his studio scraps and trash in the center of his frame. The items are ordinary yet fascinating: balled up receipts, an empty envelope with the college's letterhead, a picture of a chapel, a photograph of a baby, magazine ads for cameras, picture of basketball players, and so much more.

This piece represents a second kind of system for Bradley, the family of the arts institution. *Debris from Collage* nods to long histories of artists using the studio as the source and site of their creativity. It is a piece made from, and for, the institutional art world: it is a smart, visually arresting, and critical self-exploration.

Debris from Collage asks us, yet again, not to see Bradley on his own but as a part of this new family, this institution, and this creative lineage. What Bradley brings to this family is unlike the majority of its other members: he brings the experience of creating artwork as a young black man, illuminating the historic and dominate whiteness of the the rest of its members.



The final system Bradley looks to is his literal family during his childhood. It is composed of a series of photographs called *The Dark Archives*. Challenging what an archive can be and how it is formed is an important theme in Bradley's work. He notes that the archival process, "can happen without you realizing it has taken place." He is focused on collections of mementos and memories, organized intuitively, a haphazard sorting of our daily life.









A traumatic childhood, a largely absent father, and his fascination with the symbolic and literal portrayal of black men and families in America shaped Bradley's early years. The images are deeply moving, love and joy are palpable in some moments, and isolation and sadness in others. Many of the photographs are marred by light leaks and fingerprints, yet they are tenderly arranged and cared for by the artist. This family system asks us to understand Bradley as a lonely and curious child in the context of broken family and a culture that resented and romanticized his skin color.

Some of these photographs were rescued from family albums, some made by Bradley long after childhood. Bradley is not specific about who is pictured: a woman dressed in all white posing elegantly by the front door of her house could be a mother or an aunt, a man sitting on a couch with shades on looking powerful and careless could be a father, brother, or uncle. A mural of a basketball players is a pastime, a stereotype. The viewer must draw their own conclusions from a family on a blanket in the grass, a shadow of a man and a tripod, the artist's hands clasped and eyes closed.



Images from left to right, *Uncle 1981*, 2014, Archival inkjet print, *My Portrait as an Artist as a Young Man*, 2010, Archival inkjet print, *Debris from Collage and Trash from My Studio*, 2014-2018. Cover image, *Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality...In Cap and Gown)*, 2015-2018. All images by Andre Bradley, courtesy of the artist.

	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (1)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (2)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (3)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (4)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (5)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (6)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Class of 2005 (A Vision Becomes a Reality... In Cap and Gown) (7)</i>	2015–2018 Archival inkjet print 24×32 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	Individual panel \$800 Full grid \$5,300
	Andre Bradley	<i>Debris from Collage and Trash from My Studio</i>	2014–2018 Archival inkjet print 14×21 inches Edition of 5, 1 AP	\$650
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	Andre Bradley	<i>Aunt 1981</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×4 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Uncle 1981</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 4×6 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Children on Easter Sunday 1994</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 4×6 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Negro League Mural</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×4 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Basketball Player</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×4 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Boys Playing Polo</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×6 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>Shadow</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×4 inches	\$650
	Andre Bradley	<i>My Portrait as an Artist as a Young Man</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 6×4 inches	\$650

**Silver Eye Center for Photography
Gallery Two
4808 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15224**

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Silver Eye Center for Photography is generously supported by our members and individual donors and by the Allegheny Regional Asset District, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Fine Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Hillman Foundation, the Henry John Simonds Foundation, the Irving and Aaronel deRoy Gruber Charitable Foundation, The Jack Buncher Foundation, The Laurel Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the PNC Charitable Trust, and the William Talbott Hillman Foundation.