

Thin Spaces
“The Invisible Work of Black Women”



Alexis Chinery



Shaun Champion

The James E. Lewis Museum of Art
Morgan State University

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The Invisible Work of Black Women

February 15 - March 28, 2020
The James E. Lewis Museum of Art
Morgan State University

Foreward

Gabriel Tenabe - Director

Women have been a part of photography since its beginning. They were in the background assisting their husbands, maybe printing and caring for equipment, but non-the-less taking photographs themselves whose accomplishments were not acknowledged. Beginning with family photography, women followed the paths and began to shape the craft according to their needs. Early on, they resisted tradition and became photojournalists covering events important to society such as coronations, suffragist marches, domestic struggles and even war.

Women bring to photography the human experience at times that men cannot see. They have the power of inspiration and power of creative energy, a unique perspective and creative eye that turns moments into stories.

Where female photographers are still under-represented in the art world, black women are even less. We are seeing globally that women are shaping photography for themselves. Women will always be the record keepers of our lives by photographing families, important milestones, exposing social injustices.

The soul bearing images of these two young artists, Shaun Champion and Alexis Chinery, reflect a sample of black perspective where it is otherwise obscure in the mainstream through “other” eyes. These ladies are writing the stories of black women for historical and artistic purposes. With passion and excitement, they are developing a visual language for most difficult emotions, creating a legacy and small piece of the larger picture of our lives.

Congratulations to the both of you for showing your work here at the James E. Lewis Museum of Art.

We welcome you all to our museum.

“Even when I’m a mess I still put on a vest with an S on my chest, oh yes,
I’m a Superwoman” Alicia Keys

Robin C. Howard - Curatorial Statement

Black women confront life head-on. It's inherent, it's a given, it comes with the territory. Are black women invisible as they struggle to be seen, appreciated, employed and recognized, while everyone depends on her? She is the provider, mother, wife, girlfriend and ultimate support and cheerleader. The people who depend on her are not just her family. They are co-workers and her community.

It is taken for granted that she can and will handle it all no matter the load, no matter how physically or emotionally draining the circumstances. Women navigate and sacrifice health and wellness, yet work through the pressure. She will dismiss her feelings because that's what is expected. She has been socialized to accept that everything in her path is her responsibility.

It is culture that trains daughters to be caregivers no matter how exhausted and overwhelmed. At her limits, she feels compelled to carry on as if nothing is wrong. She wears the badge of Strong Black Women with honor. She controls what you see and do not see, because as she refuses to let you see her break.

Often times, she is not tougher than the world around her, yet, she manages to make beauty and miracles from what is in front of her.

Negotiating between her identities, she learns to do the dance.

Schaun Champion (schaunchampion.com)

Schaun is a Baltimore based natural light photographer, filmmaker and instructor who specializes in portraiture, fine art and cultural documentary and archival work. Using both analog and digital cameras, she's inspired by film, music and all things vintage. She creates intentionally cinematic and honest imagery that illustrates the drama within the familiar while exploring themes of diversity and nostalgia.

Schaun's portfolio contains a wide range of clients, from Oscar nominated cinematographer, Bradford Young, fashion designer, Bishme Cromartie, public figures including D.Watkins, reality tv stars, grammy winning musicians, strangers on the streets around the world. Yet, her most important clients are still her family and friends.



Alexis Chinery (sixpointpictures.com)

Alexis Chinery is a cinematographer and photographer native to Maryland. Her early admiration for capturing intimate moments of others was passed down by her grandfather and father. Two men who always held onto a camera and could effortlessly capture the most joyous times. Alexis started her career as a producer and then found herself most comfortable composing shots directly behind the camera, falling into the role of Director of Photography.

She is a partner at Six Point Pictures, one of Baltimore's most recognized film production companies. In her 7+ years as an independent filmmaker and photographer, she has lent her creative eye to many brands including BET, Revolt TV, HBO & PBS. She continues to produce imagery that sparks change, inspiration and that reveals truth and light for those of marginalized cultures.



Schaun Champion - Artist Statement

This series is about Black women's movement in the world. Seeing black women as earth-bound deities living out their lives helping each other, themselves, their loved ones, and all those around them with little to no desire for reward, but for the benefit of all. As Ama Yawson put it, "If you have the privilege of being born a black woman, it is my belief, that It is a part of your divine mission to liberate yourself from all external and internalized oppression and thereby liberate the world."

As a chaser of light, my work is centered around observing the dance between shadow and light. Shadow adds depth. A deeper story. In this series, the veil represents the space between those worlds (light and shadow). Within the images the shadows represent the unknown stories of the black woman. The dance women, black women in particular, gracefully perform to survive and the work that often goes unnoticed and taken for granted.



Dance of Light
2019

Alexis Chinery - Artist Statement

There is a delicate space that women occupy where we personify the “thin place” between heaven and earth. In this space I believe many sacred things are revealed and our awareness of ourselves - spiritually, emotionally, and physically is at its peak. Truth abides here and we are recognized and celebrated for our rawness and our majestic gracefulness. Here we find ourselves in the divine stage of REBIRTH.

Within this series you will experience many iterations of seraphic energy. The contrast of darkness and light have a huge influence on my work. In this regard it represents the union of the sacred Masculine and Sacred Feminine, where the light and passion of the Sacred Masculine lovingly merges with the dark, stillness of the Sacred Feminine.

As human beings we embody both. This is my interpretation of such exuberance through the vessel of a woman.



***From the Ashes
2019***



**Reflective Lakes
2019**



Estella
Cuba, 2018



*Bar None
Cuba, 2018*



A Stretch of Breath
2018

Schaun Champion



**Release
2019**



Pompeii
2019

But what of black women?...I most sincerely doubt if any other race of women could have brought its fineness up through so devilish a fire.

W.E.B. Du Bois

“Women have a unique power of being able to look at the worlds problems and discover solutions that transform lives and make the world a better place”

Dr. Ayanna Howard

“Sometimes I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It’s beyond me.”

Zora Neale Hurston

You never realize how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have.

Unknown

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Notes



JAMES E. LEWIS MUSEUM OF ART

WHERE ART, HISTORIES & CULTURES MEET