

Glen Wilson
Slim Margins

October 30 - December 19, 2020

Glen Wilson is determined to excavate the margins, to investigate and focus his attention toward what resonates there. His discovery, evidence as a reflection of cellular memory comprising the sometimes slim connections of our instincts, spiritual remembrance and our comfort, weave together forming a visual poetics. His vocabulary embodies and emboldens a will to reclaim, map and negotiate tension and to survive gracefully, creatively, proudly.

Exploring the broad movement of African Diasporic cultural heritage from the vantage point of his Oakwood Neighborhood in Venice and from global travels, Wilson's richly textured, forceful language gives voice to these narratives and aesthetics that would appear to lie outside the mainstream. Yet, they make up a central fabric, around which the American experience is woven. His interest in exercising the photographic medium to its full potential - beyond an authoritative gaze - is an aspect of the call and response he has with history and his subjects, visible in the relationship of the works to each other, as well as to the larger arc of cultural significance.

Slim Margins holds a synergy of content and meaning. A fisherman's perspective in *Mpanjono Fishermen á Morondova*, imagery on a Madagascar beach calls and responds to *Ebeji (Racing Pharoah's Light)* and *Other Suns*, similarly bringing us to the ocean's edge, a conduit for memory and possibility. These stories are part of a continuum of experience and aesthetics that fuse Wilson's cultural production with his formal training, first at Yale then UC San Diego, and his belief in the value of standing and stretching at the tense intersections of public and private, presence and absence, privilege and hunger.

It is in these contested locations, in these slim margins where Glen and I connect. In this space where we create and reimagine community, emphasize visual fluency and a radical vision of collaboration as public practice, our work intersects and harmonizes, finding transformative dimensions of working with and producing art to exceed its materiality and amplify our intersectional identities. "There is an edge to living on the edge," he says of living in the interstitial space of an urban beach community. Literally, the American continental frontier between a vast elemental power and the press of humanity, well-marked by history, yet liberated in its aesthetic sensibility reaching forward and back to speak to it all. "On the hottest weekend of the summer," Wilson says, "Venice Beach is the most democratized space in LA, maybe the whole nation, and yet" he continues "the moment you wade out into the water, you cross an invisible line and leave it all, and become fully present."

The language of Wilson's work draws on patterns and rhythms of life to reclaim material and metaphor. His transformative use of chain link, historically a tool to simultaneously demarcate and share, as warp to photographic imagery's weft creates tapestries that weave in and out of time and place. Wilson extends this pliability of matter and perspective to his large three-dimensional works that create multiple modes of mapping the empirical, the textures essence of eclectic experience and

existential records of deeply layered lives. *Immaculate (Sundial)* and *Covenant* are potent intersections of syntax and loci, offering reminders, challenges and promises all at once.

In drawing inspiration from a slim margin between past and present, knowing and belief, Wilson recognizes the echoes and influence of his forebears, both communal and artistic. Important to his understanding of opportunity are Gordon Parks and Roy DeCarava. Parks, a photographer and filmmaker, deftly used the camera as his intermediary to straddle the margin between narrative and documentation, and DeCarava did the same within the rich shadows of his Harlem neighborhood. Wilson cites fellow UCSD alumna Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson for interrogating, and expanding the reach of photography as a medium to explore often ignored and marginalized subject matter, as well as his teacher Faith Ringgold for reminding him of the power of identity. George Lewis mentored Glen's sharp, intellectual, multidisciplinary approach and LA Rebellion's Charles Barnett exemplified an unapologetic, provocative and sublime negotiation of masculinity and beauty. Wilson also references Robert Frank as foundational to his roots in street photography and he has a theoretical kinship with Ed Ruscha, whose deployment of photographic and graphic visual language reflects a similarly cartographic impulse in his work.

I am drawn to the eclectic symbols Glen signals in pursuit of something beyond image and more than documentation. For several decades, he has contended with juxtaposition, and illuminated the discursive practices that shape and share knowledges from diverse locations. I consider him part of my community and a fellow pilgrim who is willing to work in concert for his rapture. His effort is embodied in his collaboration, whether momentary or sustained, with his subjects, and his impulse to validate shared experience with an unwavering willingness to see transcendence in the ordinary. It is Wilson's fearless embrace of the slim margins where alchemy converts multiple senses into collective memory with folkloric tapestries of color and form, hope and resilience, light and dark that illuminates us all.

- *jill moniz, 2020*

Glen Wilson (b.1969, Columbus, OH, lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) received a B.A. from Yale University, New Haven, CT and an M.F.A. from the University of California San Diego. Recent group exhibitions include the California African-American Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Honor Fraser, Los Angeles, CA; Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Quotidian, Los Angeles, CA; Torrance Art Museum, CA; Eastside International Los Angeles, CA; and the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, CA. Wilson received a Schomburg Research Fellowship from the New York Public Library Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Harlem, NY.

jill moniz (b. 1969, Ankara, TR) builds understanding, creativity and inclusivity through the arts. She is an independent curator and advisor on visual literacy and community engagement to museums and galleries, and she creates large-scale exhibitions worldwide. Her curatorial investigations support local artists in sites around the world to create engaging, narrative visual language for the greater good. moniz received a doctoral degree in cultural anthropology from Indiana University.