

Willie Cole: *No Strings*

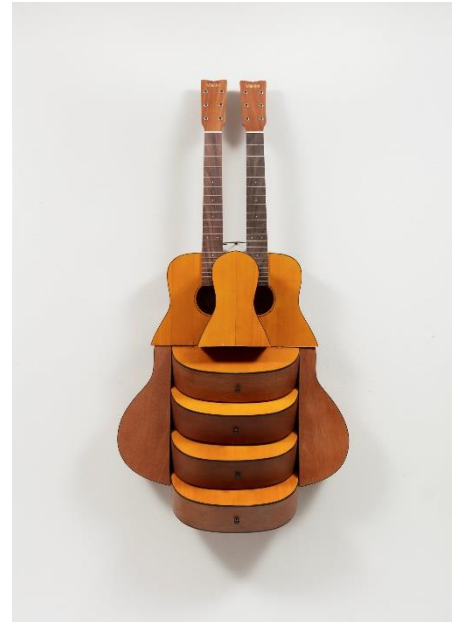
April 1 – May 27, 2022

Opening Friday, April 1, 5-7pm

Alexander and Bonin
59 Wooster Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10012

Alexander and Bonin is pleased to announce *No Strings*, an exhibition of new work by Willie Cole which will open in our space at 59 Wooster Street on April 1.

Central to the exhibition are sculptures made from parts of musical instruments, in particular guitars, saxophones, and pianos. Yamaha invited Willie Cole to participate in the music company's recycling program in order to raise money for music education. The music department at the artist's alma mater, Arts High in Newark, will benefit from the proceeds of the sales of works made for this exhibition.



Joy 2021



fig. 1. wood yokes used in coffles, Senegal, ca. 1789

Willie Cole is well-known for his inventive transformations of found materials into sculptures that depict everything from domestic objects and animals to African artifacts and antebellum imagery. Cole expands on this idea: "The objects that I use I see as them finding me, more so than me finding them...I see an object and suddenly I recognize what I can do with the object. So in that sense, there is an energy or spirit connection to the object. I am exploring the possibilities of these objects."¹

Although music has played an important role in Willie Cole's life, the artist still approaches musical instruments as he approaches all of the materials he works with: as a means to address larger ideas. This is exemplified by *The Birth of The Blues* (2022), a sculpture the artist created after seeing a 18th century illustration (fig. 1) of a slave yoke and recognized that the shape of the yoke was echoed in the shape of the guitar. As Cole describes his process: "I venture to synchronize shapes in an effort to compress time."²

Included in the exhibition are self-portraits in watercolor of Cole wearing headpieces made of high heel shoes, inspired by the artist's collaboration with Comme des Garçons in 2021, and *Finger and Toes*, three works on paper from 2015.

Willie Cole was born in Somerville, NJ and studied at the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League in New York. He lives and works in New Jersey. His work has been the subject of several one-person museum exhibitions: The Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University (2019), David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland (2016), Montclair Art Museum (2006), Tampa Museum of Art (2004), Miami Art Museum (2001), Bronx Museum of the Arts (2001) and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1998).

In 2021, Cole collaborated with Tod's to create a series of sculptures for the Salone del Mobile, Milan. Using saxophones, the artist is currently working on a large-scale sculpture commissioned by the Kansas City International Airport. Willie Cole's work is currently on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, included in the exhibition [Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room](#). His work is also on view in the museum's Mezzanine Gallery.

¹ Souleo, "Upcycled: A Conversation with Willie Cole." Hyperallergic, May 1, 2013.

² Cole, Willie, personal communication, March 2, 2022.



Fingers and Toes (shoes on) 2015

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