

## JOHN EDMONDS

*One*

Exhibition Dates: 7 March – 4 May 2024

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Maximillian William is pleased to present John Edmonds' first solo exhibition in London. Titled *One*, the exhibition unites Edmonds' work in Black and white from several bodies of work made between 2016–2022.

In Edmonds' work, photography's relationship to truth is repeatedly questioned. Describing his images as 'quasi-documents', the artist works almost obsessively with a number of models. These figures and friends – who become close to muses – hold, caress, and measure themselves against African sculptures in a search for subjectivity that is humanising, vulnerable and tender. The human body's relationship with sculpture in Edmonds' images can at times be erotic, other times playful. His subjects' ambivalent expressions seem to consider the value of these objects and, in doing so, raise questions over the roles that individuals, institutions and photography play in assigning meaning and authenticity.

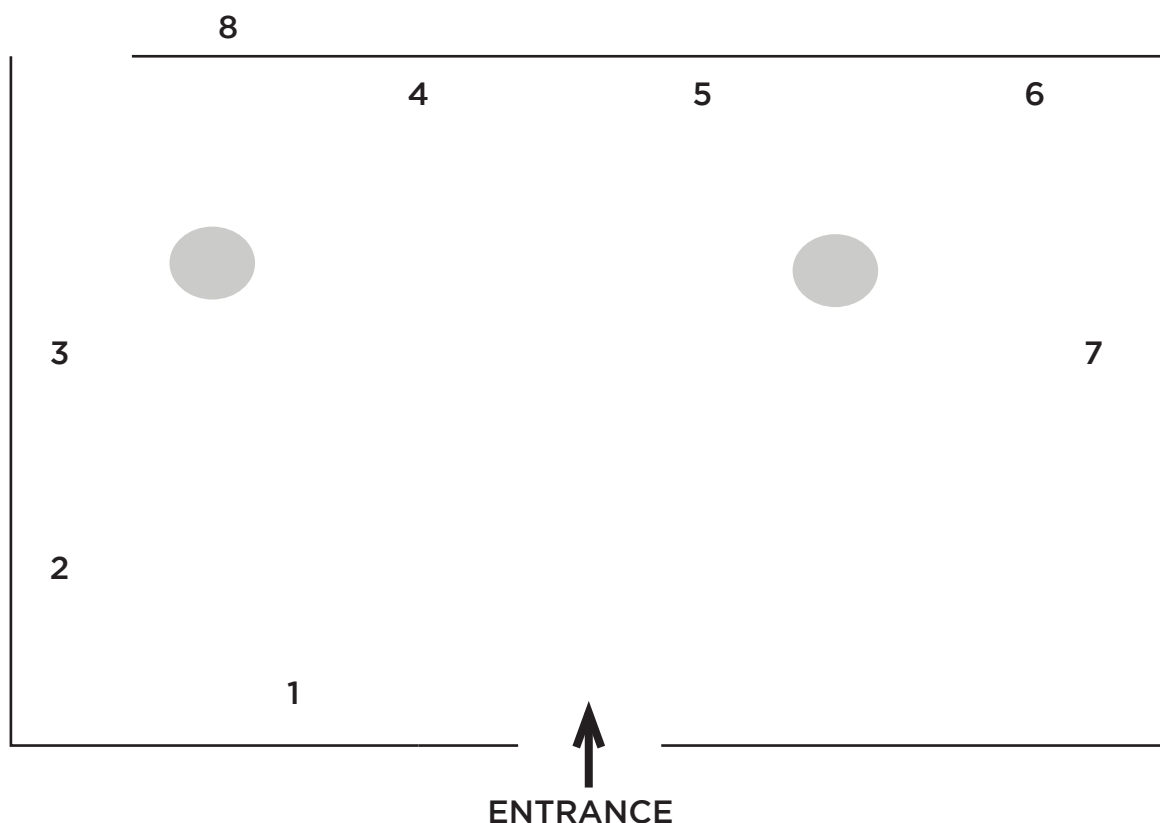
While Edmonds has worked extensively in large-format colour photography, this exhibition gathers work made in monochrome. *Back with Scales and Shadows* acts as a genesis point for the artist's examination of Black and white photography specifically as its own medium, where the artist works with Black as both form and content. In Edmonds' hands, African sculpture signifies both traditional cultural heritage and diasporic memory, and thus becomes a way to explore displacement and dispossession.

The exhibition's title, *One*, affirms Edmonds' photography practice as an evolving continuum. Collected here, the multiplicity of his subjects and ways of working – across formats, scales, colour and medium – nurtures a throughline tensioned between still life and portraiture. In merging the eternal beauty of African art with the vitality of the human body, *One* acknowledges the infinite interdependency between a single figure and a community. Edmonds' sustained commitment to transatlantic dialogues reveals the potential of an image to stretch life cycles across space and time, and to point towards visions of possibility.

For Edmonds, the photograph captures an act of transmission, where the image becomes a threshold between narrative and reality. He is endlessly interested in what he terms 'photography's ability to assign life', and in its ability therefore to move beyond representation towards animating visions of the gaze. Edmonds' iconic *Du-Rags* series, one of which is on view here, concentrates on headpieces as symbols of self-constitution, and frames them and their wearers as otherworldly. Echoed by the silk of their surfaces, these works counter often-repeated stereotypes of Black masculinity, and signal towards new images of beauty and power.

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John Edmonds (b. 1989) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He has been the subject of solo and two-person exhibitions at Cincinnati Art Museum (2022); Foam, Amsterdam (2022); and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2020–2021). Recent group exhibitions include *Going Dark: The Contemporary Figure at the Edge of Visibility*, curated by Ashley James, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York (2023); *The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, Baltimore Museum of Art (2023); *Black Modernism – Africa and the Avantgarde*, Kunstmuseum Pablo Picasso Münster (2022); *The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2021); *Ex-Africa: African Presences in Contemporary Art*, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (2021); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019); and *God Made My Face: A Collective Portrait of James Baldwin*, curated by Hilton Als, David Zwirner, New York (2019). His work is included in public collections including MoMA, Whitney Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Guggenheim, all New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Edmonds is the recipient of the Foam Paul Huf Award 2021, the UOVO Prize 2021, and is a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grantee for 2023-2024.



**1** *Young Man Wearing a Maternity Bust*, 2019  
Digital silver gelatin print  
101.6 x 101.6 cm  
40 x 40 in

**2** *Bull Mask from the Ivory Coast*, 2019  
Digital silver gelatin print  
76.2 x 76.2 cm  
30 x 30 in

**3** *Caress*, 2022  
Digital silver gelatin print  
180.3 x 121.9 cm  
71 x 48 in

**4** *Collapse*, 2019  
Digital silver gelatin print  
50.8 x 50.8 cm  
20 x 20 in

**5** *Asante & Memorial Head*, 2021  
Digital silver gelatin print  
101.6 x 81.28 cm  
40 x 32 in

**6** *Back with Scales and Shadows*, 2016  
Digital silver gelatin print  
80.04 x 101.6 cm  
31.513 x 40 in

**7** *A Guard for the Gods*, 2020  
Digital silver gelatin print  
101.6 x 152.4 cm  
40 x 60 in

**8** *Untitled (Du-Rag 4)*, 2017  
Inkjet print on silk  
146 x 107 cm  
57.5 x 42 in