

*Curtis Cuffie's New York City*

Curtis Cuffie

06/04 - 01/06/2024, opening 05/04, 18:00

*Curtis Cuffie's New York City* is an exhibition of photographs on the public art of Curtis Cuffie.

Curtis Cuffie was a public figure in the East Village until his death, in 2002, at the age of forty-seven. By the time of his passing, Cuffie had published hundreds, perhaps thousands, of mysterious, improbable artworks on the streets of New York. To do so, he would fish the city's leftovers and dress it in riotous assemblages made of discarded objects, fabrics, and ordinary things that speak of what we are. Such works had little by way of finish: things came and went, materials were adjusted and altered, and pieces were regularly destroyed by the Department of Sanitation and the police. Little of it survived.

Consequently, viewing Cuffie's sculpture today typically involves a second-hand encounter, filtered through the perspectives of those who photographed it, be they friends or lovers, fellow artists, or unknown passersby.

*Curtis Cuffie's New York City* presents the art of Curtis Cuffie as it was photographed by Katy Abel, Tom Warren, and Cuffie himself. Comprising some seven hundred photographs from the 1990s, the exhibition is brought to life through a number of analogue slide projectors, presenting three distinct registers of imagery: Abel's use of vibrant colors, Warren's stark, almost reportorial black and white pictures, and Cuffie's own dynamic, abstract, and sometimes shattered photographic compositions. These pictures, emerging and fading from view, generate a palpable sense of movement and transience in keeping with the nature of Cuffie's art and the city it found itself in.

*Curtis Cuffie's New York City* is accompanied by a publication of the same name, featuring a selection of Cuffie's color and black and white photographs, edited by Tom Engels and designed by Julie Peeters.

*Curtis Cuffie's New York City* is curated by Tom Engels in collaboration with Robert Snowden. The exhibition is realized through the invaluable support of Carol Thompson, who maintains the Curtis Cuffie archive, alongside the generous contributions of Katy Abel and Tom Warren.

CURTIS CUFFIE (1955–2002) was an artist based in New York City's East Village. Originally from Hartsville, South Carolina, he moved to Brooklyn at the age of fifteen and eventually settled in Manhattan, first near Bryant Park and later around the Bowery where he lived unhoused for long stretches of his life. *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, and *The Village Voice* all profiled and reviewed his work and he held solo exhibitions at Flamingo East, Tribes, and 4th Street Photo Gallery, all in New York. During his lifetime, Cuffie was featured in nearly a dozen group shows across the US at various venues including Exit Art, American Primitive, and the Jamaica Art Center in New York, as well as the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore. Cuffie was integral to a dynamic circle of artists and intellectuals, marking his place within New York's black avant-garde. Recently, his work has been presented in exhibitions across New York City, including *Souls Grown Diaspora* (2020) at Apexart, curated by Sam Gordon; *Greater New York* (2021) at MoMA PS1, curated by Ruba Katrib; and *Curtis Cuffie* (2023) at Galerie Buchholz, curated by Scott Portnoy. *Curtis Cuffie*, a book edited by Scott Portnoy, Robert Snowden, and Ciarán Finlayson, and designed by Julie Peeters, was published by Blank Forms in 2023.