

# KAJE

NOV 2–DEC 15, 2024

*LORE and SENTIMENT*

WESLEY CHAVIS and ELLIOTT JEROME BROWN JR.

Curated by GEE WESLEY and SARAH COOTE

How do we hold onto the traces of Black life that transpire in intimate, even spiritual, realms of experience? For writer Toni Morrison, the answer lies in looking to forms of knowledge and culture often denigrated by Western society. She writes: "If my work is to confront a reality unlike that received reality of the West, it must centralize and animate information discredited by the West—discredited not because it is not true or useful or even of some racial value, but because it is information held by discredited people, information dismissed as 'lore' or 'gossip' or 'magic' or 'sentiment.'"

*Lore and Sentiment* is a two-person exhibition of recent photography, sculpture, and writing by artists Elliott Jerome Brown Jr. and Wesley Chavis. In this exhibition, Chavis and Brown Jr. weave stories that honor and embrace the lore and sentiment invoked in Morrison's words. This exhibition is the culmination of a five-year creative dialogue that began in 2019, when Chavis and Brown Jr. traveled to Jamestown, Texas, to visit the Chavis family's ancestral homestead. *Lore and Sentiment* emerges from the influence of that trip on the artists' friendship and recent practice.

In Chavis's work a sensation of touch resonates through new experimental writing published in his first poetry collection, *Big Wrap, Forearm*. His poems and spiritual appeals delve into intersecting themes of religious devotion, queer longing, and physical intimacy. Audio recordings of passages read by people who inspired the collection are presented in the gallery along with vinyl prints excerpted from the publication. During the opening reception for *Lore and Sentiment*, Chavis will read passages from *Big Wrap, Forearm* and a book release will take place during the closing weekend.

Brown Jr. presents a selection of photographs and a new UV-printed embossed resin sculpture. The photographs were made in a private booth at a gay adult theater in East Elmhurst, Queens, a McDonald's restroom and in the door window pane at the artist's apartment building. Much of Elliott's work, especially when narrative, has dealt with occlusive compositions in relation to privacy and intimate care for their subjects. On KAJE's second floor, Brown Jr. presents a digitized archive of pornographic videos from the private collection of Alan Bell, an artist and publisher who in 1986 founded Black Jack, a Black gay men's safer sex club based in Los Angeles amid the AIDS crisis in the United States.

# KAJE

## ARTIST BIOS

**ELLIOTT JEROME BROWN JR. (b. 1993)** is a conceptual photographer working on ideas related to intimacy, interiority, and the poetics of marginality. He has had solo exhibitions at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2022, 2019); Staple Goods, New Orleans (2019) and Baxter St. at the Camera Club of New York (2019). Recent group exhibitions include Swiss Institute, New York (2021); RISD Museum of Art, Providence (2021); The Arts Club of Chicago (2020); New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans (2020); Public Art Fund, New York (2020); The MAC, Belfast (2019); PPOW, New York (2019); Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2018); Yossi Milo Gallery, New York (2018); Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York (2018); We Buy Gold, New York (2018), among others. He received his BFA in Photography from the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, and has taught at New York University and The New School. He lives and works in New York.

**WESLEY CHAVIS (b.1992)** is an interdisciplinary artist and vocalist from Beaumont, Texas and based in New Orleans, Louisiana. His work contemplates the form and feeling of love through a queer religious lens. Chavis has been featured in exhibitions at Present Company (Brooklyn, NY), NXTHVN (New Haven, CT), Wexner Center (Columbus, OH), and has performed at venues including The Gibney (New York, NY), Socrates Sculpture Park (Queens, NY), The Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh, PA), & The Contemporary Art Center of New Orleans. Also, Chavis has been reviewed in publications such as Art in America and the New Yorker. He received his BA from Yale University, his MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2017.

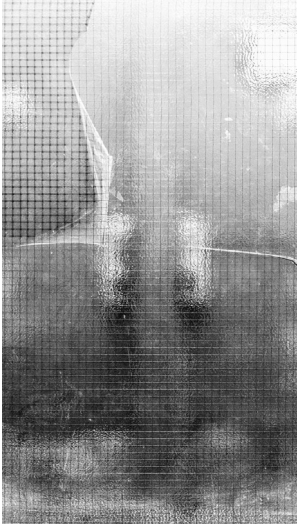
# KAJE

## CURATOR BIOS

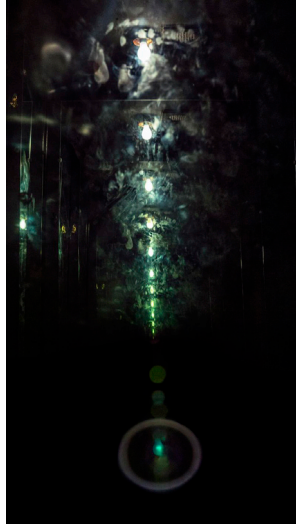
**SARAH COOTE** is an artist and curator born in Philadelphia and based in Brooklyn, New York. Coote has been featured in exhibitions at galleries including 5-50 Gallery (Long Island City, NY), Flux Factory (Governor's Island, NY), Tomato Mouse (Brooklyn, NY), IK Projects (Lima, Peru), Present Company (Brooklyn, NY), Page Bond Gallery (Richmond, VA), FJORD (Philadelphia, PA) and Vox Populi (Philadelphia, PA). Her work has been published in *New American Paintings*, *Floorr*, *Maake Magazine*, *WOPOZI*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In 2016 Coote co-directed Bruce Martin Gallery (Richmond, VA) with Gee Wesley and Nilas Anderson and has previously curated exhibitions at FJORD (Philadelphia, PA) and Public Pool Gallery (Los Angeles, CA). She received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 2013 and MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2017, where she studied painting.

**GEE WESLEY** is an arts organizer born in Monrovia, Liberia, and based in New York where he works as a Curatorial Associate in the Department of Media and Performance at the Museum of Modern Art. Before joining MoMA, Wesley held roles as Program Director at Recess (Brooklyn, NY), Curatorial Fellow at SculptureCenter (Queens, NY), and Curatorial Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, PA). Wesley has been adjunct faculty at the Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore, MD), the Yale School of Art (New Haven, CT), and Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY). He is a co-founder of *Ulises*, a nonprofit art bookshop based in Philadelphia, and the founder of *Afrophon'* a project dedicated to contemporary African artists' books, art books, and independent art publishing. Wesley received his M.A. from the Center for Curatorial Studies, at Bard College.

# KAJE



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2022  
Inkjet print on adhesive vinyl (printed 2024)  
112 x 63 inches (284.48 x 160.02 cm)



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2022  
UV-laminated archival inkjet print mounted on  
Dibond 32 x 18 inches (81.3 x 45.7 cm)  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2022  
UV-laminated archival inkjet print mounted on  
Dibond 64 x 36 in (162.56 x 91.44 cm)  
Edition 1 of 3



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2024  
*Embossed Sculpture 1*  
UV printed photograph on 3D printed white  
resin 5 x 5 x 0.85 inches (12.7 x 12.7 x 2.15 cm)



Black Jack film archive  
1980–90s  
Video  
Dimensions variable  
Film checklist



Wesley Chavis  
2024  
Selections from *Big Wrap, Forearm*, read by  
Arwonder Chavis, Christina Chavis, Cyril Chavis,  
Hunter King, Malcolm Peacock, Patrick Steptore  
and Luke Stringer  
Single-channel audio



# KAJE



# KAJE





# KAJE



Installation view, *Lore & Sentiment*, KAJE, November–December 15, 2024.

# KAJE



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2024

*Embossed Sculpture 1*

UV printed photograph on 3D printed white resin 5 x 5 x 0.85 inches (12.7 x 12.7 x 2.15 cm)



# KAJE





# KAJE



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.  
2022

Inkjet print on adhesive vinyl (printed 2024)  
112 x 63 inches (284.48 x 160.02 cm)

# KAJE





# KAJE

