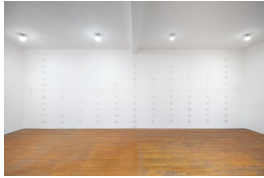


American Artist

April 4–May 16, 2026



Power Grid I, 2026
Spray paint on wall
120 x 348 in (305 x 884 cm)
Edition 1 of 3, 1AP
AA2026.1.1



Occupied, 2026
1939 New York World's Fair bench, cardboard boxes, pillows, twine
Approx. 34.5 x 96 x 27.5 in (88 x 245 x 70 cm)
AA2026.2



Crisis Collector (Louise), 2026
Tempered Artforum magazines, food rations, emergency drinking water, new American standard bible, ibuprofen, flashlight, fire striker, whistle, fishing knife, emergency blanket
Approx. 5 x 10.5 x 10.5 in (13 x 27 x 27 cm)
AA2026.4



Elite Capture, 2026
Autographed Kamala Harris photograph, Combahee River Collective Statement book, artist's frame
12.5 x 16.5 x 2.5 in (32 x 42 x 6 cm)
AA2026.5

In American Artist's second exhibition with Commonwealth and Council, imagination willfully defies hostile environments. Comprising wall-based and sculptural media, this new body of work affirms the ingenuity of survival and the art of improvising in adverse circumstances regardless of class division and social advantage.

To be sure, how comfortably we endure political and economic breakdown depends on our relation to a spectrum of "freedom" and "capture"—or subjection to the mercy of the few who control social benefits intended for the broader denizenry. For African-descended people, captivity is further linked to the state of enslavement and legacies of slavery that continue to hold social mobility at bay. The large-scale wall diagram *Power Grid* investigates the variable outcomes of these relations. Both in its title and its silvery spraypainted gleam, the work cannily puns on the electrical grid as the invisible network that charges a world structured by racial capitalism and resource extraction. Not unlike the conceptual wall-based charts and murals of Sol Lewitt or Lawrence Weiner, *Power Grid* imposes a cool, logical approach to forces that often feel out of our control. At the same time, the grid, a mainstay of twentieth-century modernist abstraction, here becomes stretched and recharted into new formations, destabilizing the viewer's perceptual experience beyond the wall. We negotiate our own placement and complicity amid the coordinates, conceived by the artist as variable, ever-changing, and subjective. In this sense, *Power Grid* lays bare the dynamics of racialization and reclamation that lurk behind the wall-based iconographic silhouettes of Kara Walker, or David Hammons's wall "drawings" of textured Black hair.

The wicked humor of American Artist's assemblages echoes that of Hammons, who also rebukes the various workings of capture. Both artists find brilliance in ordinary solutions to spatial and architectural constraint, especially when forged by people confined to the intersection of "poverty" and "capture," as *Power Grid* relays. Society may recognize the subtle stacking and baling of flattened cardboard boxes as a scourge rather than an invention, but *Occupied* pays homage to this necessary ingenuity. Like Hammons, American Artist emphasizes slight gestures of self-preservation that have traditionally had no legitimacy as forms of social life, but re-emerge as new forms of agency.

And yet, financial catastrophe is not the only impending form of present and future dystopia. *Crisis Collector (Louise)* comprises a stack of glossy Artforum magazines, decommissioned from the purpose of critical thought and repurposed as a leftist doomsday prepper's hidden go-bag. *Elite Capture* allegorizes the trap of representation when mobilized toward an agenda that continues to underdevelop communities marginalized by class, race, ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality, among other factors. Peering out from behind a signed, framed photograph of one-time Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris is the recognizable red cover of The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977), containing the first written documentation of the phrase "identity politics." Here identity politics' radical feminist woman-of-color origins are immobilized by the false promises of the first Black and Asian woman president, whose ascendancy ignited debates about structures of classism and racism that continue to be replicated in positions of power.

These artworks negotiate the shifting patterns of distribution, access, and resources as they crisscross aesthetic and political horizons. Is capture a state of ultimate dehumanization, or ultimate freedom? Where do these states of being end and begin, and who decides?

—Abbe Schriber

American Artist (b. 1989, Altadena; lives and works in New York) received an MFA from The New School (2015), and a BFA from California Polytechnic University, Pomona (2011). Selected solo exhibitions have been held at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2025); Kunsthall Trondheim (2025); California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2025); Pioneer Works, Brooklyn (2025); REDCAT, Los Angeles (2022); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2020); Queens Museum (2019); and Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco (2019). Selected group exhibitions have been held at Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2025); Centre d'art Contemporain Genève (2024); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2023); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2023); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2023); The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2023); Kunsthalle Basel (2021); San Jose Museum of Art (2020); Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin (2020); MoMA PS1, Queens (2020); LC Queisser, Tbilisi (2019); The Studio Museum in Harlem (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2019); Performance Space New York (2018); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2018); and Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York (2017). American Artist is a recipient of Trellis Art Fund Milestone Grant (2024), Creative Capital Grant for Visual Artists (2022), LACMA Art + Technology Lab Grant (2021), and Queens Museum Jerome Foundation Fellowship (2019). American Artist has participated in residencies at Smack Mellon, Brooklyn (2021); Red Bull Arts, Detroit (2020); ASSEMBLY, Brooklyn (2019); Abrons Art Center, New York (2019); Pioneer Works, Brooklyn (2018); Denniston Hill, Glen Wild (2018), and Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, New York (2017).

American Artist's work is in the collections of California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Kadist Art Foundation; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Marieluise Hessel Collection, Annandale-on-Hudson; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.