

Every human body carries the memories and marks of its origin story. But bodies are also like vessels that contain all of the knowledge, love, and culture needed to imagine themselves beyond the boundaries of earthly acres, and oceans. Vessels can take many forms: mothers, fathers, brothers, daughters, lovers, kings and queens. Our magnificent bodies can assemble as stars, and also nations. One vessel emerged in Rochester, NY. Her mother worked for over 30 years at Eastman Kodak, the historic photographic film company. Her father was the family documentarian. His photographs inspired her to use the medium for exploring, and imagining, the world.

Her meticulously staged photographs and installations became gathering places for radiant vessels everywhere. Her images proving the beauty and brilliance of their existence. Many of her subjects were strangers she encountered on the street. She put them in familiar domestic spaces, and surrounded them with sentimental artifacts, some of which she collected throughout her own travels, and some that belonged to the vessels themselves. She hoped viewers could see that beyond the surface of her photographs were multi-dimensional planes that connected time and space. Diasporic planes with instructions on how to get to the future.

In 2009, Noah Davis served as a juror for a prestigious art prize. One notable submission was by a photographer named Deana Lawson. Noah told everyone he knew about Lawson's singular vision—which combined a painter's sense for spatial composition with an ethnographer's curiosity of the human condition—and the two artists soon became close friends. When Noah founded The Underground Museum, one of the earliest projects he envisioned for the space was a solo exhibition of Lawson's worlds. This is us building from his blueprint.

Love,
The UM

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