

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of recent photographs by Elliott Jerome Brown Jr. titled *Arms to pray with*. In his debut exhibition with the gallery, Brown uses photography to visualize and articulate intimacy, communion, mourning, and joy.

Brown's portraits are rarely straightforward, most often figures appear with their backs to the camera or their faces are partially obscured. Many of the pictures are set in the domestic sphere—Brown's subjects are found, seemingly unposed, in living rooms, backyards, bedrooms, and kitchens. This allows the artist to avoid the spectacle of photography while privileging the interior lives of his subjects instead. In *Inherent Distance*, 2018, two figures appear on opposite sides of the picture, both partially hidden from full view, while a bolted door becomes the image's central character. This obfuscation is a primary tool used throughout Brown's work, allowing his subjects to create their own space within the frame, rather than being presented clearly to the viewer.

In *A well commanded army tucked at the corners of his lips*, 2019, a closely cropped figure appears partially submerged in a kiddie pool. Two hands appear at the base of the composition, one curled into a fist and the other extended, while a gold necklace and earring appear at the top of the frame. The ambiguity found in this photograph, and in Brown's other images, exemplifies the tensions found between openness and self-possession with resistance and imposed identity.

In *Arms to pray with*, Brown explores the possibilities of photography to create a multiplicity of narratives. His photographs become an act of witnessing or receiving testimony, while continuously making space for serendipitous discovery.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*