

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Jason Farago, "What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2018

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

FEB. 14, 2018



LaToya Ruby Frazier's "Shea doing crochet braids in her cousin Andrea's hair for Andrea's daughter's wedding" from the series "Flint is Family".

LaToya Ruby Frazier, via Gavin Brown's Enterprise

LaToya Ruby Frazier

Through Feb. 25. Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 439 West 127th Street, Manhattan; gavinbrown.biz.

GLADSTONE GALLERY



May 4th 2016 Flint MI 2016” from the series “Flint is Family.”

LaToya Ruby Frazier, via Gavin Brown’s Enterprise

Photographer, activist, MacArthur genius, and still just 36, LaToya Ruby Frazier has established herself as an exceptional narrator of deindustrialization, environmental harm and the affections and misfortunes of black America — and she has done so in a medium, the black-and-white photo essay, that never feels timeworn in her hands. Her most substantial show yet in New York presents three series of photographs on three floors of this Harlem gallery. Together, they form a commanding statement from an artist who has combined documentary scrupulousness with manifest compassion.

“A mother and her son speaking to a news-reporter outside Northwestern High School (est. 1964) awaiting the arrival of President Barack Obama.

Her long-running, intimate series “The Notion of Family” pictures her mother, grandmother and other relatives in Braddock, Pa., outside Pittsburgh. New photos on the gallery’s top floor recount an excursion to the Joshua Tree Outdoor Museum in California, where the African-American artist Noah Purifoy built large-scale assemblages of scrap metal and wood. The California photos are rare cases when Ms. Frazier’s use of black and white feels less than meticulous (the desert and cloudless sky often seem to fuse), yet the Joshua Tree pictures and “The Notion of Family” both delve into themes of dying industry, racial exclusion and the will to create.

GLADSTONE GALLERY



Ms. Frazier's "Pat Brunty, the caretaker standing behind No Contest 1994, Noah Purifoy Outdoor Desert Art Museum, Joshua Tree, CA" from the series "A Pilgrimage to Noah Purifoy's Desert Art Museum"

"Flint Is Family," the latest and by far the most powerful of the three series here, began as a commission for Elle magazine. Ms. Frazier spent five months with Shea Cobb, a school-bus driver, and her extended family in Flint, Mich., a city where black residents are a majority, and where drinkable water is only just being restored after years of civic protests and class-action lawsuits. These indelible pictures, as urgent as an alarm bell, intermix political activism (young black students, one carrying a sign reading "We Have Been Poisoned," demonstrate as Barack Obama's motorcade passes) with grim daily routines: We see Ms. Cobb's daughter, Zion, with her mouth wide open as her mother pours bottled water to brush her teeth. Here as elsewhere, Ms. Frazier makes use of extra-long captions, detailing the state and local government's inept handling of the crisis, but amid the images of protest and deprivation are ones of love: Ms. Cobb braids her cousin's hair, or sits with her daughter at a restaurant, her expression caught between devotion and anxiety.

JASON FARAGO