

Crimmins, Peter, "'Artists need to be seen' A private collection of works by young Black artists goes public," NPR's WHYY, 1 February 2022.



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Left: Untitled Kara Walker, 'Untitled 1', 1995; Right: Wilmer Wilson IV. 'Pres' (2017).
Courtesy of The Lumpkin-Bocuzzi Family Collection

An exhibition of work by contemporary Black artists is opening at Lehigh University today. The 50 works in the traveling show called ["Young, Gifted and Black"](#) all come from a single private collection — a collection on a mission.

"A collection should be a story. It should be an argument. There should be a thesis to your collection," said Bernard Lumpkin, who with his husband Carmine Bocuzzi has collected almost 500 works of art by mostly emerging Black artists of the last 25 years. "For me, that thesis has to do with telling the stories of young artists of African descent, whose work has not been shown, whose careers have not been promoted, and whose vision has not reached wide enough audiences."

The Lumpkin-Bocuzzi Family Collection was the subject of a book published in 2020, and now is an exhibition that has already been in New York and Chicago. The exhibition at the [Lehigh University Art Galleries](#), which runs through the end of May, includes work by high-profile artists, such as Kara Walker, Derrick Adams, and Rashid Johnson.

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Lumpkin is attracted to artists who he believes are reinventing their medium, shifting the parameters of photography, painting, collage, and sculpture to tease new meanings out of them.

Another artist in the show, Wilmer Wilson of West Philadelphia, makes paintings out of staples. A single work on a panel can contain tens of thousands of tiny metal staples arranged in nuanced patterns that form into figures.

"I think what’s so exciting about emerging artists is that they are literally in the process of redefining art practice today as we know it, regardless of race, regardless of gender," said Lumpkin. "They’re showing us what a painting can be, showing us what we thought a photograph could do and showing us something new that a photograph can do. They are simultaneously working within a tradition, but they are also redefining that tradition."