

PRESS KIT

# I USED TO LIVE IN CHICAGO

NORMAN TEAGUE | MAX SANSING | STEVE BRAVO | SURA DUPART | SLANG | PATRIC McCOY

**CURATED BY ANEFERTITI BOWMAN**

Blanc Gallery | 4445 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Chicago, IL 60653

On View: April 10 – May 24, 2026

Opening Reception: April 10, 2026 | 5–9pm | EXPO Chicago Week

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***I Used to Live in Chicago***

*A Multidisciplinary Exhibition Exploring Memory, Displacement, and Cultural Resilience*

**On View:** April 10 – May 24, 2026

**Opening Reception:** April 10, 2026 (EXPO Chicago Week), 5–9pm

**Location:** Blanc Gallery, 4445 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Chicago, IL 60653

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**CHICAGO, IL - April 2026** - Opening during one of the city’s most celebrated moments for contemporary art, EXPO Chicago week, *I Used to Live in Chicago* is a multidisciplinary exhibition exploring memory, displacement, and cultural resilience across Chicago’s historically Black neighborhoods.

Curated by Anefertiti Bowman, the exhibition brings together leading contemporary artists Norman Teague, Max Sansing, and Steve Bravo, alongside elder Chicago artists Sura Dupart, Tyree “Slang” Jones, and Patric McCoy. Together, their work forms a layered, intergenerational dialogue rooted in lived experience, cultural memory, and the evolving realities of the city.

Through furniture and object-based design, mural-scale painting, sculptural forms, and graphic storytelling, the exhibition examines what it means to belong to a city in constant transformation, and who retains access to space, identity, and legacy amid redevelopment and erasure.

At its core, *I Used to Live in Chicago* is both a love letter and a retrospective. It holds the emotional weight of change while honoring the communities that have long defined the city’s cultural fabric. We invite viewers into a space of reminiscence and nostalgia, of pickles and peppermint, of front porch conversations that felt like ceremony, of a time when ease lived more readily in our bodies and belonging felt less fragile. It gestures toward a Chicago many remember not as perfect, but as deeply alive, rooted in connection, creativity, and possibility. A city where basslines from passing cars became a shared soundtrack, and community existed not just in proximity, but in practice, embodied and lived in real time.

## A COLLECTIVE ARCHIVE

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Positioned at the intersection of art, design, and cultural storytelling, the exhibition highlights the richness of Black creativity that lives across the 77 community areas and over 200 neighborhoods, from the Plaza to the Brickyard, an epicenter of life, migration, and creative production.

The inclusion of elder artists serves as a critical anchor, grounding the exhibition in lived testimony and ensuring that histories shaped across generations remain present within contemporary discourse.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMMING + CULTURAL ACTIVATION

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Expanding beyond the gallery, *I Used to Live in Chicago* is accompanied by a series of public programs designed to deepen engagement and activate dialogue across the city:

### PAST PROGRAMMING

#### **April 10, 5-9pm, Opening Reception:**

The exhibition opened with a vibrant and deeply felt gathering, bringing together over 300 artists, community members, and cultural leaders in a shared moment of reflection and celebration. The evening set the tone for the full run of the exhibition, built around storytelling, intergenerational exchange, and a collective sense of homecoming.

#### **April 12, 12-3pm, South Side Community Art Center - *Women in Arts***

##### ***Convening:***

In partnership with the South Side Community Art Center, this convening centered the voices and experiences of women in the arts. Bringing together artists, cultural workers, and community leaders, the program created space for dialogue around practice, sustainability, and legacy, while situated within the broader lineage of Black cultural production on the South Side.

#### **May 3, 12:00pm, Court Theatre's Agora Series - *We Are Still Becoming:***

For the second installment of the Agora Series, in partnership with the LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project, photographers Diana Solis and Patric McCoy discussed their decades-long work documenting Chicago's queer history.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMMING

### **May 9, 1:30pm, Sonorous Somatics 010 (curated by BSA Gold):**

An immersive, body-centered series exploring sound, memory, and spatial awareness through performance and collective gathering. Featuring a live performance by Ernest Dawkins, an elder musician deeply immersed in Chicago's cultural landscape, further shaped through a live ensemble reflecting the evolving soundscape of the city.

### **May 19, 6-9pm, Artist Talk - *In Conversation with the Work*:**

A non-traditional, community-led conversation moving away from a formal panel into a more intimate and responsive exchange. Using a fishbowl or cypher-style format, the dialogue will move between artists and audience, creating space for real-time engagement and shared reflection. All artists are expected to be present.

### **May 21, 6-9pm, Film Screening & Community Forum - *What We Built*:**

A two-part event pairing an accessible, intimate film screening experience with a facilitated forum on Black solidarity structures in Chicago. The screening provides thematic framing and the forum creates space for honest dialogue about community organizing, protection, and what it looks like to rebuild today.

### **May 23, 11am-3pm, Closing Reception and Community Celebration**

The exhibition closes with a joyful, inclusive gathering envisioned as a block party-style send-off, including live music, games and food from South Side vendors.

## **ABOUT BLANC GALLERY**

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Blanc Gallery, founded in 2010, is an artist-led space dedicated to supporting Black creatives and preserving the cultural legacy of Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. Rooted in community, Blanc champions both emerging and established artists, prioritizing collaboration, curiosity, and resource sharing over commerce. Through a dynamic program of exhibitions, performances, and events, the gallery has become a vital platform for showcasing the depth and diversity of Black creative expression.

## **ABOUT FUTUREGROW**

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Futuregrow is a cultural media program and mentorship platform dedicated to equipping the next generation of storytellers with the tools, access, and skills to explore careers within the arts

industry. Co-founded by Doug Kenney, the program operates at the intersection of culture, technology, and work-based learning, providing young people from underrepresented communities with hands-on training from professionals in design, video journalism, photography, event production, and more.

## **PRESS + MEDIA CONTACT**

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### **Anefertiti Bowman**

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### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

[@blancgallerychicago](#) | [@audacity\\_creative](#) | [@simplynef](#) | [@kenneydoug](#)

[@normanteaguedesignstudio](#) | [@maxsansing](#) | [@steve\\_bravo](#) | [@mccoypatric](#) | [@slangism](#)  
| [@suradupart](#)

## **ABOUT THE CURATOR**

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## **Bio**

Anefertiti Bowman is a curator, art administrator, and cultural strategist whose work centers community, memory, and Black cultural production. With over a decade of experience across nonprofit, corporate, and institutional sectors, she has collaborated with artists and institutions including Kara Walker, Calida Rawles, Fred Moten, Shirin Neshat, The Getty, California African American Museum, and Otis College of Art and Design. As the founder of an independent arts nonprofit that intersects art, wellness, social justice, and identity, her practice is rooted in cultural stewardship, public programming, and collective care. Grounded in human-centered engagement, her work challenges traditional frameworks while cultivating environments where we all have the support and confidence to define success on our own terms, and where artists and community feel seen, held, and affirmed.

## **CURATORIAL STATEMENT**

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## **I Used to Live in Chicago**

*"Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition."- James Baldwin*

I didn't fully understand this until I was still enough to truly receive it.

Finding my way back to Chicago after a decade away has been both grounding and disorienting, an emotional unpacking of memory, change, and the quiet grief of what no longer exists the way I once knew. The streets are familiar, but they do not hold me the same. The energy is still here, but it moves differently. And in that tension between recognition and estrangement, I found the center of this exhibition.

*I Used to Live in Chicago* is not just about place, it's about what place carries. It's about the memories embedded in our bodies, the stories held in objects, and the cultural ecosystems that shape us long before we have language for their significance. It asks what happens when those ecosystems shift, disappear, or are reimagined without the people who built them.

These artists have been sitting with this emotion long before this exhibition. Their practices hold Chicago in distinct and layered ways, through design, image-making, sculpture, and visual language, alongside elder voices whose lived experiences ground this work in truth, continuity, and care. Together, they form a living archive, one that resists erasure and insists on remembering.

*I Used to Live in Chicago* functions as a call to action. It invites audiences to consider the deeper implications of place, belonging, and cultural stewardship.

This is a love letter to Chicago.  
A meditation on what remains.  
A refusal to let memory be erased.

This homecoming has required me to sit with what has changed and what remains. To consider not only what has been lost, but what is still possible.

Chicago has always been a city shaped by imagination, innovation, and Black cultural production. That legacy does not disappear. It shifts. It evolves. It reconfigures itself over time.

The question is not whether change will happen, but who it holds, and who it leaves behind.

*~Anfertiti Bowman*

**FEATURED ARTISTS**

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## **NORMAN TEAGUE**

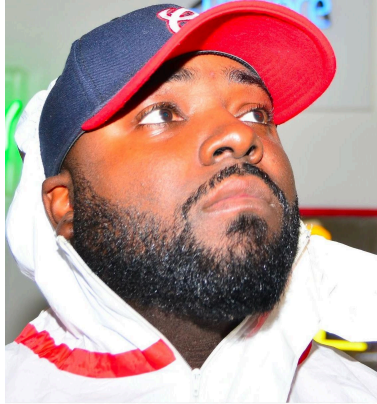
### **Bio**

Norman Teague is a Chicago-based designer, artist, and educator whose practice centers Black cultural narratives within contemporary design discourse. His work interrogates gaps in design history while foregrounding craftsmanship, material intelligence, and community authorship. As co-founder of blkHaUS studios and Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois Chicago's School of Design, Teague holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BA from Columbia College Chicago.

Teague curated Designer's Choice: Jam Sessions at the Museum of Modern Art (2024–25), reimagining iconic objects through generative AI, Black craft, and cultural memory. He also participated in Everlasting Plastics, the 2023 U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

### **Artist Statement**

My practice operates at the intersection of industrial design, craft, and social engagement. Through furniture, installation, and public-facing design, I position making as both a formal inquiry and a socially embedded act. I draw from traditions of African and African diasporic craft, improvisational structures found in Black music, and community-based knowledge systems to inform a design language that prioritizes relationality over singular authorship.



## **MAX SANSING**

### **Bio**

Max Sansing is a Chicago-based fine artist and one of the city's most prolific muralists, with a career spanning over 25 years. Known for his signature aesthetic, Sansing seamlessly fuses the vivid, color-saturated energy of street art with the precision and discipline of photorealism. Born and raised on Chicago's South Side by two artist parents, he developed his visual language through graffiti culture and self-taught oil painting before formal training at the American Academy of Art. His work has been commissioned across the United States and internationally, with murals in Chicago, New York, Miami, Sweden, and Dubai.

### **Artist Statement**

My work explores form, composition, and aesthetic, deeply informed by my background in graphic design and graffiti. Portraiture is the foundation of my work. I primarily focus on people of color, using the figure as a starting point to build layered visual stories. Often rendered in monochrome, my subjects are activated through color used intentionally to express emotion, energy, and presence beyond traditional representations of skin tone.



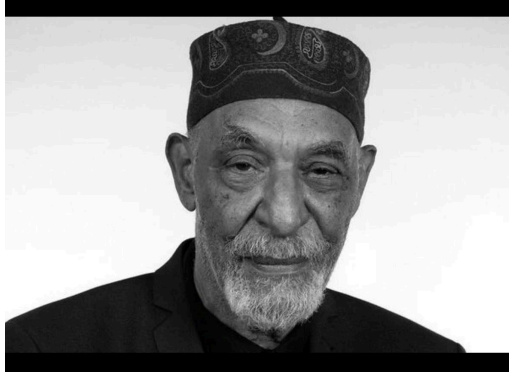
## **STEVE BRAVO**

### **Bio**

Steve Bravo is a Chicago-based artist and designer whose practice bridges commercial image-making and contemporary sculpture. With over fifteen years of experience in art direction, advertising, and the toy industry, he has developed visual systems and environments for clients including Pokémon, Disney, Nintendo, Nike, Coca-Cola, EA Games, and the City of Chicago. In his studio practice, Bravo creates POPJECTS, character-driven sculptures rendered through ZBrush and Cinema 4D, then cast in resin, hydrostone, gypsum, and metallic cold-cast finishes.

### **Artist Statement**

I am a Chicago-based artist and designer creating what I call POPJECTS, power objects, character-driven sculptures cast in resin, hydrostone, gypsum, and metallic cold-cast finishes. This exhibition debuts Sore Winners, a character-driven universe I have been building under the framework of Project | Champions. Its flagship figure, Hey Bobby, is a designer and obsessive creative who is brilliant, productive, and incapable of resting inside his own achievements. He is not a mascot. He is a condition, one I recognize in myself and in every creative person I admire.



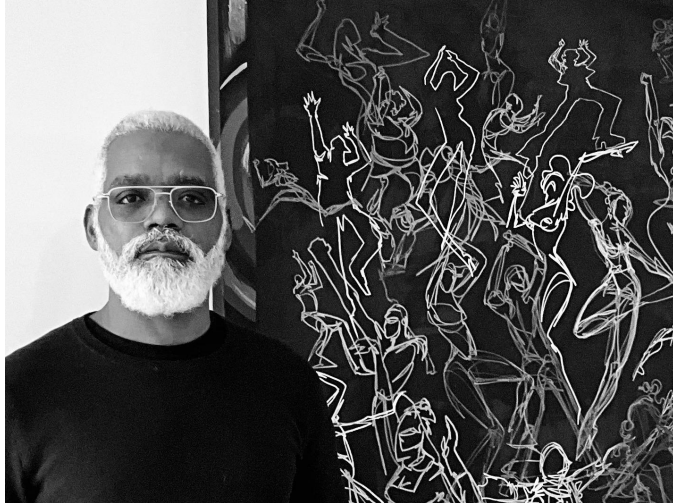
## **SURA DUPART**

### **Bio**

Sura Dupart is a Chicago-based sculptor, muralist, and musician whose practice spans over six decades of making rooted in the spiritual, cultural, and communal life of Black Chicago. A native of Bronzeville, Dupart's work lives at the intersection of visual art and sound, shaped by a deep commitment to ancestral history, community memory, and creative discipline. His sculptural and mural works have left a lasting institutional presence across the city, with permanent pieces held at the DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center and Chicago State University.

### **Artist Statement**

This was a spiritual journey that affected the Black community, in which we had a greater sense of pride and self-consciousness of ourselves relative to our ancestral history and culture. For over six decades, that journey has been the foundation of everything I make, objects, murals, and music that carry the memory and spirit of Black Chicago forward.



## **TYRUE "SLANG" JONES**

### **Bio**

Tyrue "Slang" Jones is a Chicago-based artist whose work spans over four decades, rooted in the foundations of Midwest graffiti and evolving into a multidisciplinary contemporary practice shaped by animation, design, and visual storytelling. He has developed a signature approach he defines as "figurative graffiti," where fluid, rhythmic forms intersect with representational imagery. His work is held in private collections internationally and includes public installations in Chicago, notably at the United Center. He has exhibited at the DuSable Museum of African American History and contributed to the inaugural Hip Hop exhibition at the Museum of Science and Industry.

### **Artist Statement**

My work spans over four decades, rooted in the foundations of Midwest graffiti and evolving into a multidisciplinary contemporary practice shaped by animation, design, and visual storytelling. I have developed a signature approach I define as "figurative graffiti," where fluid, rhythmic forms intersect with representational imagery, bridging graffiti, fine art, and design through a distinct and enduring visual language.



## **PATRIC MCCOY**

### **Bio**

Patric McCoy is a retired environmental scientist who spent his career at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Regional Office in Chicago, where he became a National Expert and received numerous awards for his work. He holds a BA in Chemistry from the University of Chicago (1969) and an MA in Environmental Science from Governors State University (1979).

Beyond his scientific career, McCoy has collected contemporary African American art for over 50 years, amassing a collection of more than 1,300 pieces, 90% of which were created by Chicago artists. In 2003, he co-founded Diasporal Rhythms, a 501(c)(3) arts organization dedicated to promoting the collection of works by living artists of African descent. In the 1980s, McCoy worked as an amateur photojournalist, commuting through the Loop and its surrounding neighborhoods by bicycle with a 35mm camera, capturing thousands of images documenting Chicago's Black LGBTQ+ social scene. He is currently working with John Neff on a book of his photographs.

### **Artist Statement**

In the 1980s, I strapped a 35mm camera to my back and rode through the Loop and its hot spots on a bicycle, documenting a world that most people never saw or chose not to look at. I was capturing Chicago's Black LGBTQ+ social scene, its gathering places, its energy, its people, at a moment when that community was both thriving and vulnerable. These were not images made for archives or institutions. They were made out of presence and attention, a record of lives being lived fully in spaces that the city rarely acknowledged.

Decades later, those thousands of images are finding their way into the world through a book I am developing with John Neff. What I used to live inside, I now hold in my hands as a visual record. This exhibition is part of that process, of looking back clearly, of honoring what existed, and of insisting that Black LGBTQ+ life in Chicago has always been worth remembering.