Lonnie Holley and Tau Lewis: you can always find me

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15 January – 25 March 2027

Opening reception | Thursday 14 January 2027, 6 – 8pm



When I met Tau, it was like I had met a new sister that had made her way to freedom.

– Lonnie Holley

Every interaction I have had with Lonnie has been coloured by the sense of a divine moment.

– Tau Lewis

Edel Assanti is pleased to announce *you can always find me*, an exhibition of new and collaborative work by Lonnie Holley and Tau Lewis opening in January 2027 at its Fitzrovia gallery. This unprecedented exhibition features new paintings and sculptures made in parallel by Holley and Lewis during a shared residency in Suffolk, UK. Following the London presentation, in September 2027 a selection of their work will travel to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC) in Sheboygan, Wisconsin for *To Get the Gold of It*: Lonnie Holley and Tau Lewis, an expanded joint exhibition including early works by Lewis and pieces by Holley held in the JMKAC collection.

In 2018, Tau Lewis and Lonnie Holley met for the first time. From the beginning of their friendship, Lewis recognised in Holley a living embodiment of the Southern American Black art-making tradition of developing narrative, spiritually charged sculpture from found objects and materials. Her own early practice had been engaging with this lineage, which includes artists Thornton Dial, Joe Minter and the Gee's Bend quilters, for whom political and spiritual meaning was encoded through vernacular traditions that elude formal institutions: yard shows, patchwork quilts, the gospel church.

Over the period of their residency – which marked the return of an astrological transition that last occurred in 2018, at their first meeting – Lewis and Holley's close proximity and profound mutual respect allowed new throughlines and connections to be forged: themes of freedom, longing for ancestors and an abiding sense of the spiritual afterlives of the objects that surround us. In *you can always find me*, these themes reverberate across the gallery's four rooms, diverging and converging as Holley and Lewis ostensibly call and respond to each other in real time.

The exhibition opens with *Vanishing Thrones: Kings and Queens in the Jungle, Slaves in the Field* (2026), a monumental sculpture by Holley; two partially denuded armchairs, their fabric and stuffing worn away by time, wrapped in an enormous length of heavy chain, and secured with a rusted, locked padlock. A wall-based textile piece by Lewis is hung on an adjacent wall. Its surface glitters with small, ornate keys and intricate seashells, fastened to strips and patches of overdyed, reclaimed denim and linen. As you move through the exhibition, visual and symbolic connections between works recur: the startling, cosmic blue of Lewis's textile pieces permeates Holley's sprayed silhouette paintings, and a suite of sculptures that play with the physical qualities of balancing and counterweights by Holley nod to the antigravity of Lewis's cosmic planetary circles.

Painted a serene twilight blue, the exhibition's penultimate room hosts Lewis's marionette sculptures, arranged in a broken procession. Placed carefully on antique chairs, their childlike proportions belie their ambiguous expressions, dressed in ornate, robe-like garments. Hung above them in a celestial cloud of metal, scraps of cloth, rope and feathers, are a constellation of Holley's wire sculptures, their expressions inclined gently towards the puppets, as though listening attentively. For Holley and Lewis, the room is a space for dreaming, a stageset in which the works, reaching yearningly towards one another, acquire personified agency.

The exhibition concludes in the lower ground floor gallery, with the display of a collaboratively made single work by both Holley and Lewis. A monumental textile hanging, its strips are composed of dyed and overdyed denim and linen, sprayed and painted by Holley with iconographic eyes and faces. Around it are small works on paper by Lewis, like alchemical diagrams, and small sculptures carved from sandstone by Holley. Acting as the exhibition's secret heart, this room distils the winding, entangled threads of works in the rooms above and presents them as one shimmering piece, composed of undulating strips of purples and blue, watched, here and there, by an unblinking eye.

In their respective practices, both Holley and Lewis pay careful attention to the embodied meaning and afterlives of objects, dedicated to the act of bearing testimony. Materials are approached as vessels of memory, turning improvisation and labour-intensive handwork into a shared language of survival, spirituality, and Black diasporic storytelling.

Throughout the process of creating *you can always find me*, Lewis and Holley returned to notions of lineage, freedom, ancestorship and the spiritual world. In bringing together two artists working to understand fundamental questions from such different generational perspectives, *you can always find me* becomes a conversation across time, revealing freedom not as a fixed condition but as a practice, continually made, remade and passed between hands.

ABOUT LONNIE HOLLEY

Lonnie Holley (b.1950, Birmingham, Alabama) has been making art since 1979, devoted to a practice of improvisational creativity that spans painting, sculpture, filmmaking and music, often using found materials to relay histories that are both autobiographical and collective. His work addresses universal themes such as humanity's fraught relationship with nature and technology, while also confronting specifically American histories – from the legacies of Jim Crow and the victories of the Civil Rights movement to ongoing struggles with racial and class-based narratives.

Holley's work has been exhibited in international museums and institutions including Camden Art Centre, London, UK; Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; de Young Museum, San Francisco, USA; The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, USA; Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland; Labanque, Bethune, France; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA; Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, NL and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA. Holley's work is represented in international public collections of the Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap); LACMA; Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Gallery of Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. Holley lives and works in Atlanta, GA, USA.

ABOUT TAU LEWIS

Tau Lewis (b. 1993, Toronto) transforms found textiles and objects into monumental artworks and theatrical installations; each sculpture is conceived as a character in part of the artist's ongoing world-building project, taking narrative inspiration from myth, literature, poetry, music and spirituality. Lewis begins the process of creating work by collecting materials from her surroundings and housing them in her studio — items such as worn clothes and fabrics, leather, photographs, and elemental forms including driftwood and shells — studying their animistic qualities and histories to develop a relationship with them over time before she utilises them in her work. By hand-stitching, hand-dying, carving and embroidering, she transforms these simple materials into elaborate soft sculptures, masks, assemblages and tapestries.

Lewis's work has been exhibited in international museums and institutions including the Barbican, London, UK; Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield, UK; ICA Boston, Boston, USA; MoMA PS1, New York, USA; La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; New Museum, New York, USA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, NL; Tate Modern, London, UK and the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada. Lewis's work is represented in institutional collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, National Gallery of Canada, Institute of Contemporary Art Miami and The Hammer Museum, among others. Lewis lives and works in London, UK.

ABOUT EDEL ASSANTI

Edel Assanti was founded in 2010 in London by Jeremy Epstein and Charlie Fellowes. The gallery programme focuses on narrative-driven work by international contemporary artists whose practices engage with the complex realities of the moment in which they live. Having been located in London's Fitzrovia since 2014, in 2022 the gallery opened its 4,000 square foot flagship space in a renovated Grade II listed building on Little Titchfield Street. In June 2026, Edel Assanti opened a second London location at 11 Bury Street, St James's, in the heart of one of the city's most historic gallery neighbourhoods, broadening the scope of programming for its artists and their multifaceted practices. The Little Titchfield Street gallery stages four to five ambitious solo exhibitions per year – tending towards interdisciplinary, research-led work – with biannual expansive group exhibitions providing a platform to bring together non-represented artists in explorations of emerging themes of artistic interest. Bury Street offers an intimate, salon-style environment for focused presentations by both represented artists and those new to the programme, highlighting individual works, significant periods and definitive themes.

Since founding London Gallery Weekend (LGW) in 2021, Edel Assanti's Jeremy Epstein has been at the helm of the annual celebration of London's diverse gallery community, which brings together 130 contemporary commercial galleries each spring. 2027 will mark the event's seventh edition.

IMAGE

L-R: Lonnie Holley, *Working In the Technical Age*, 2026. Courtesy the artist and Edel Assanti; Tau Lewis, *Tansy*, 2026. Armature wire, plaster bandage, plaster, acrylic paint, stones, fabric, wooden chair; 104 x 44 x 43 cm. Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London.

CONTACT US

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