

VANITY FAIR

PHOTOGRAPHY

Introducing the Inaugural Silver List, Featuring 47 Exciting Contemporary Photographers Whose Work You Just Have to See

The Silver List aims to do for photography what the Black List did for screenwriters, bringing broader recognition to the most exciting up-and-coming talents in their field.

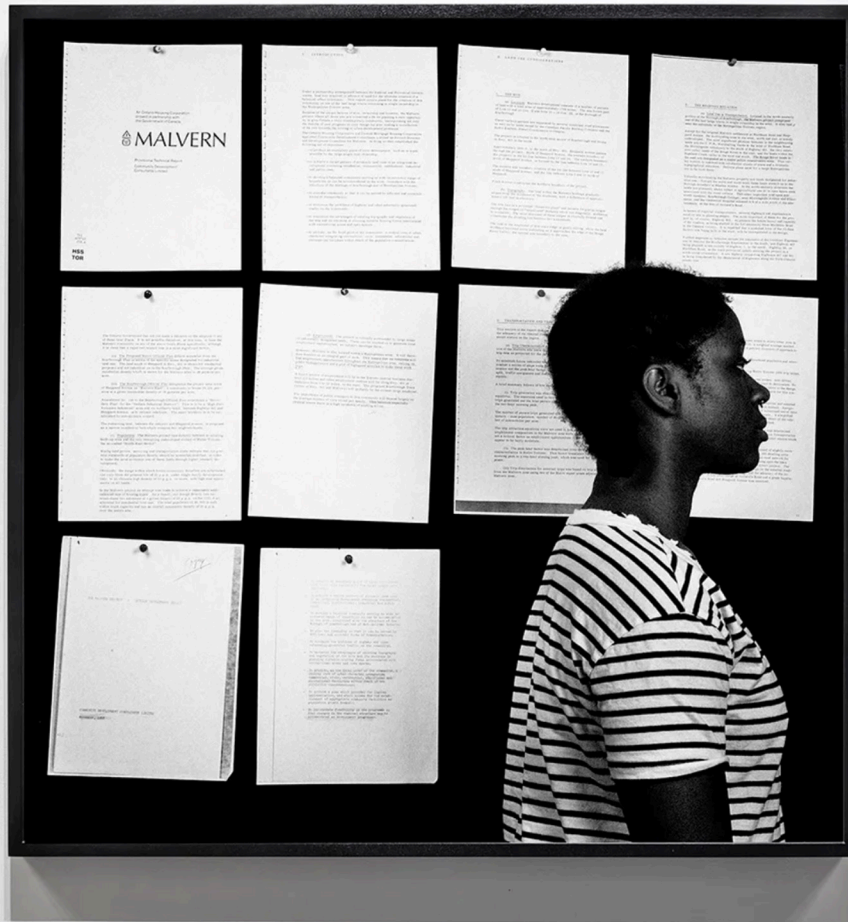
BY KATEY RICH
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Aaron Turner, *Fredrick & Jules*, 2019

For more than 15 years the Black List, founded by *Vanity Fair* contributor **Franklin Leonard**, has featured the most-loved unproduced screenplays in Hollywood, and put spotlights on future hits like *The King's Speech*, *Juno*, *Looper*, and many more. But can the Black List model of encouraging up-and-coming talent be recreated outside of Hollywood?

The inaugural Silver List is ready to find out. Launched this year by the Silver Eye Center for Photography, in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University and the Black List, the Silver List features 47 extraordinary photographers, selected by 500 nonprofit photography curators, educators, scholars, publishers, and critics. The criteria were simple, but deeply personal for each respondent: who is a living, early-career photographer whose work deserves to be seen by more people?



Anique Jordan, *Malvern*, 2019

“We thought it would be, if nothing else, interesting to see how people approached the question,” said **David Oresick**, Silver Eye’s executive director. “It wasn’t until I started to see how people were completing their surveys that I understood that this project was really meaningful for people. People are dealing with an endless feeling pandemic, reckoning with systemic racial injustice, struggling with reduced budgets, layoffs, and furloughs, and really thinking about what all this means for our field. I think many of the artists on the Silver List reflect how curators and scholars are processing this moment.”

According to Oresick, art institutions can take a lot of time to respond to current events, but “the Silver List is different. People can just point to the artists they love, and the work they believe in.” Many of the selected artists are people of color who deal explicitly with race and identity in the work. Oresick points to **Zora J. Murff**, whose work “looks at the Black experience in America, redlining and systemic racism, the power and terror of images, and so much more.” On his website the Silver List photographer **Shikeith** writes that his work “investigates the experiences of black men within and around concepts of psychic space.”



Shiketh, Kris, 2019



Eke Pérez, Wilding and Charles, 2019

Though the Silver List has made its debut in the wake of both the pandemic and 2020's global protests for racial justice, Oresick emphasized that all of the selected artists have been dealing with these larger ideas in their work for years. "This is work that critiques white supremacy, celebrates marginalized voices, and tells stories from perspectives that most people never get to hear," he said.

Find the full inaugural [Silver List](#) here.

The Silver List

2021



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The Silver List was compiled from the suggestions of over 125 nonprofit photography curators, educators, scholars, and critics. We asked them to list up to ten artists who fit the following criteria:

- They love the artist's work and feel it should be seen more widely
- The artist uses the medium of photography (however they define it)
- The artist is early in their career (however they define it)
- The artist is living

The Silver List contains the artists who were suggested the most times, and it is organized randomly. Our hope is that this methodology will spotlight outstanding, diverse, and sometimes overlooked artists for a broad new audience.

This is not Silver Eye's "best of" list. It is a snapshot, taken in the winter of 2020/2021, that shows the thoughts of a professional community who cares deeply about contemporary photography.

The idea for this survey was adapted from The Black List, which has applied this methodology to screenplays since 2005.

The Silver List is a partnership between Silver Eye Center for Photography, The Black List, and Carnegie Mellon University.



Mark McKnight

is a Los Angeles based artist whose work has been featured in publications such as Aperture, Art in America, and The New Yorker. He has recently completed artist residencies at Storm King Art Center and Light Work and he holds an MFA from UC Riverside.

Markmcknight.xyz





The idea for the Silver List came from James T. Wang, a senior studying Statistics & Machine Learning, and Photography at Carnegie Mellon University.

The Silver List was organized by James T. Wang, Kate Kelley, Silver Eye's Assistant Curator, and David Oresick, Silver Eye's Executive Director.

Generous guidance and assistance for this project came from Franklin Leonard, the founder of The Black List and Joseph B. Kadane, the Leonard J. Savage University Professor of Statistics and Social Sciences Emeritus at Carnegie Mellon University.

This Silver List PDF was designed by Serina Liu.