

KEITH DE LELLIS
GALLERY

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

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OZIER MUHAMMAD: EVENTS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

SEPTEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 4, 2021

Keith de Lellis Gallery is honored to present the photography of Ozier Muhammad in the artist's first one man exhibition in New York. Ozier Muhammad (b. 1950) is a Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist from Chicago who has documented the cultural events of black citizens across the world for over four decades. Our exhibition showcases Muhammad's dedication to utilizing photography as a truth telling medium that explores racial issues throughout society and sheds light on the daily joys and strife of the African and African American communities.

Muhammad is the grandson of Nation of Islam Founder Elijah Muhammad who mentored popular figures of the civil rights movement including Malcom X and Muhammad Ali. During Muhammad's childhood he was surrounded by other influential figures such as Gordon Parks and Roy DeCarava. Parks was the first African American photographer for Life magazine and DeCarava is one of the most celebrated photographers of the 20th century. Seeing photographs by Parks and DeCarava peaked Muhammad's interest and inspired him to pursue a career in photojournalism.

Muhammad began his career in Chicago in the early 1970's as a staff photographer at Jet and Ebony magazines. Both publications were devoted to telling the intricate stories of African Americans that were not covered in white-owned magazines. He began traveling to Africa in 1974 to report on the end of colonialism. In 1984 while working for Newsday, his involvement in a report "Africa, The Desperate Continent" earned him a joint Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. Muhammad's work has won other prestigious awards and fellowships. In 1994 he documented Nelson Mandela's historic presidential win to become the first non-white president of South Africa. In 1992 Muhammad became a staff photographer for The New York Times where he went on to cover President Obama's revolutionary journey of becoming the first African American president of the United States in 2008. Muhammad's work captures the incredibly empowering moments in black history and serves as an influential voice for his community.

Muhammad's body of work, from Harlem to Kenya, is not too dissimilar from that of a cultural anthropologist. Throughout his career Muhammad has taken an honest look at the world around him while recording moments in history. His work has brought awareness to the hardships and triumphs that have been, and continue to be, experienced by Africans and African Americans alike. A photograph taken during his travels to Ethiopia captures an exhausted mother waiting outside a dislocation camp in central Ethiopia ran by Doctors Without Borders. In another photograph from the same camp we see a severely malnourished Ethiopian girl whose fragile limbs dangle from a weighing scale while under the care of doctors. Muhammad's work documents both the difficult and poignant experiences that represent what life is like for many black citizens around the world. Included in the exhibition is a photograph of a young boy as he joyfully plays his broken trombone in the streets of Harlem while another photograph shows a formidable line of Nation of Islam men as they gather in a public housing project in Chicago to assist the residents in stopping gang violence. Whether documenting global events or everyday moments in Harlem, Muhammad is dedicated to photographing his community with honesty and compassion.

Muhammad's work is in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago, Bank of America, Haverford College and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. This exhibition will be on view at the Keith de Lellis Gallery through December 4, 2021.

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