

# TILTON

GALLERY



## *Texas Isaiah* Opening May 21st, 2021

Tilton Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of photographs by Texas Isaiah, opening Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, noon to 8:00pm.

Texas Isaiah is a visual narrator whose photographs, primarily of Black people, especially those of queer, trans, non-binary and gender expansive experiences, create arresting and poignant portraits that are significant both for the subject matter and for their remarkable visual beauty, rich color and soft natural light. Working in black and white and, more often since his move to Los Angeles a few years ago, in color photography, Texas Isaiah captures the essential humanness of his sitters.

Texas Isaiah has stated that he “acts as a conduit, as a vessel for [Black trans and gender-expansive people] to tell their own stories.” In doing so, he feels it is important to create “joyous images...images that are sensual or calm or that express moments of freedom and sensitivity.” He has stated that, “Along with other Black photographers who are exploring gender in an innovative way, I don’t want to perpetuate this narrative of trauma because I don’t feel that being Black or queer is an awful thing. I think it is a beautiful thing.” Nevertheless, Texas Isaiah emphasizes that his practice is “more humanistic than anything else” and he doesn’t want his work to be trapped or boxed into a narrow interpretation.

Texas Isaiah’s photographs emit an aura of kindness, a combination of strength and gentleness. Within a medium with roots immersed in historical violence, Texas Isaiah’s more intentional practice prioritizes the possibility of care. As a result, the sitters in his photographs appear completely present, in the moment, even if not looking out at the camera. The result is a sense of intimacy very specific to Texas Isaiah’s portraits. The viewer not only sees his sitters, but feels them and one can sense that the artist came to the image because of the time he took to question his sitters and to himself understand them. One also senses that the sitters trust the photographer, letting their guards down to allow him to portray both their inner strengths and vulnerabilities. Each photograph, though a still image, seems to hold the moment; they feel time-based, reflecting his process. Both mysterious and incredibly direct, set up and spontaneous, the photographs tell stories without any need for details.

Although Texas Isaiah clearly separates his art from his editorial work, he has a magic ability to portray the inner person of his sitters even in editorial images, often of celebrities, becoming more than simply cover shots. In 2020, he was one of the first trans photographers to shoot a British Vogue edition cover and his photographs have also been featured on the covers of Entertainment Weekly, Grazia, TIME, Cultured Magazine, as well as in The New York Times and L.A. Times, among others.

Texas Isaiah was born in Brooklyn, NY and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. Previous solo exhibitions include *BLACKNESS* at the Kimmel Galleries at New York University in 2014. His work has been featured in group exhibitions including *FICTIONS* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and *Julius Eastman: That Which is Fundamental* at The Kitchen, New York in 2017; *The New Contemporaries, Volume I* at Residency Art Gallery, Inglewood, CA and *Made in L.A.* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles in 2018; *The New Black Vanguard: Photography Between Art and Fashion* at the Aperture Foundation, New York in 2019; and *New Visions* at Fotografiska, New York in 2020. He is one of the 2018 grant recipients of Art Matters and the 2019 recipient of the Getty Images: Where We Stand Creative Bursary grant. He is currently a 2020-2021 Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. His work is included in the collections of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. He is represented by Residency Art Gallery, Inglewood, CA.