

THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

Guadalupe Rosales and Hank Willis Thomas Named 2019 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellows



Rosales and Thomas to Present Solo Exhibitions at The Gordon Parks Foundation in 2019

February 12, 2019 – Pleasantville, NY – The Gordon Parks Foundation today announced the artists named as 2019 fellows: **Guadalupe Rosales** and **Hank Willis Thomas**. The artists have each been awarded \$20,000 to support new or ongoing projects that reflect and draw inspiration from the themes of representation and social justice in Parks’ creative work. Each project will culminate in exhibitions at the Gordon Parks Foundation exhibition space in Pleasantville, NY in 2019. Awarded annually, the fellowships demonstrate the Foundation’s commitment to advancing Parks’ extraordinary vision and legacy of social change through the arts and humanities.

“Championing artists whose work advances the legacy of Gordon Parks is pivotal to the mission of the Foundation,” said **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation**. “Both Guadalupe and Hank will engage the visual life of their communities through their work as artists, archivists, and photographers, and will explore completely distinct and individual narratives. Through our fellowship program, we are proud to support them in undertaking critical explorations within their practices, guided by the vision and inspiration of Gordon Parks.”

The Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship program draws inspiration from the significant role of a fellowship he received early in his career. In 1941, Gordon Parks was the first photographer to be named a fellow of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which was founded in 1917 to support African American artists and focused on social issues and education. The fellowship allowed Parks to move to Washington, D.C., and apprentice for one year under Roy Stryker at the Farm Security Administration—launching his six-decade career as photographer, filmmaker, writer, and humanitarian.

Now recognized as the most important African-American photographer of the 20th century, Parks showed the face of American poverty with empathy and dignity, using the arts to champion social change. Rosales and Thomas have taken up a similar responsibility in their practices, and their fellowship projects reflect distinct approaches to documenting and interpreting individual and collective histories through photography.

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With a participatory approach to her practice, **Guadalupe Rosales** aims to celebrate the voices of others through their archives and memories. During the fellowship period, she will continue her collaborations with Latinx and LGBTQ communities, particularly in Los Angeles, to examine how people of color use photography to document and create their individual and collective histories. As part of her fellowship, an exhibition formed around the interplay between photography and community will be on view July 19 through October 11, 2019, at the Gordon Parks Foundation.

“I see myself continuing Gordon Parks’ charge through my work, which is participatory and collective, collecting and broadcasting the voices of my community,” said Rosales.

Like Rosales, **Hank Willis Thomas** has an ongoing vested interest in photography as a documentation of history and a means for people of color represent their stories. During the fellowship, Thomas will examine the Gordon Parks Foundation archives and the historical moments that Parks captured in order to acknowledge the people who have used their creativity, courage, and community to inspire change. The artist will present his visual and archival research on Gordon Parks in an exhibition on view October 18 through December 20, 2019, at the Gordon Parks Foundation.

“Very few people have shaped my understanding of how multifaceted a life can be lived like Gordon Parks,” said Thomas. “Mr. Parks was a mentor and friend of my mother’s, and sometimes we would pay him a visit when I was young. His life’s work as a writer, photographer, activist, and musician is unparalleled and largely untold. He is one of my largest influences and I am thrilled and honored to serve as a Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow in his name.”

Since 2017, the Foundation has granted two Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowships each year to support photographers, artists, filmmakers, and musicians in the development and exhibition of new and ongoing projects. Applications are reviewed on the merit of their quality, creativity, and the project’s potential to contribute to the legacy of Gordon Parks—through its exploration of themes of representation and social justice, or its engagement with the role of Parks in the artistic, social, historical, or cultural events of his time. During the fellowship period, fellows serve as ambassadors on behalf of the Foundation and promote the legacy of Gordon Parks, including participation in a wide range of Foundation initiatives and programs throughout the year, and contribution of an artwork to the Foundation’s permanent collection.

2019 marks the third year of the fellowship program and the cumulative support of six fellows, including [Derrick Adams](#) and [Deana Lawson](#) in 2018, and [Devin Allen](#) and [Harriet Dedman](#) in 2017. Adams and Lawson will participate in the **Gordon Parks Dialogues** on April 13, 2019, presented at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. As part of the Foundation’s year-round educational initiatives, the annual symposium invites students, including recipients of Gordon Parks Foundation Scholarships over the past decade, to explore social justice themes and the world around them through an artistic lens.

The Foundation’s educational initiatives, including fellowship and scholarship programs, are made possible through the support of individuals, corporations, and grantmaking organizations.

ABOUT THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

The Gordon Parks Foundation’s mission is to permanently preserve the work of Gordon Parks; make it available to the public through exhibitions, books, and electronic media; and support artistic and educational activities that advance what Parks described as “the common search for a better life and a

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better world." The primary purpose of The Gordon Parks Foundation's exhibition space is to present focused exhibits of Parks' photography, as part of the Foundation's commitment to educating the public and preserving his work.

ABOUT GORDON PARKS

Gordon Parks was a seminal figure of 20th-century photography. A humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, he left behind a body of work that documents many of the most important aspects of American culture from the early 1940s up until his death in 2006, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. In addition, Parks was also a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the most prominent people of his era—from politicians and artists to celebrities and athletes.

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