

DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

NATE LEWIS

NATE LEWIS

Nate Lewis explores history through patterns, textures, and rhythm, creating meditations on celebration and lamentation. In his own words, notes that he is “interested in the unseen. My work is driven by empathy, and the desire to understand nuanced points of view. By altering photographs, I aim to challenge people’s perspectives on race and history through distortion and illusion. Treating the paper like an organism itself, I sculpt patterns akin to cellular tissue and anatomical elements, allowing hidden histories and patterns to be uncovered from the photographs. I approach subjects and imagery from a diagnostic place with the idea of utilizing diagnostic lenses and contrast dyes. By virtue of my medical training, I am interested in the tensions that exist within and without us. Ultimately, the work embraces humanistic ideas of human connection and understanding.”

Nate Lewis (b. Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at venues that include Fridman Gallery, New York (2020); Pennsylvania College of Art and Design (2019); and Loyola University, Baltimore (2016). Group exhibitions include Hide and Seek: Portraying, Projecting, and Playing, 21C Museum, Kansas City, Missouri (2020); Men of Change, Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibition Services, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati (2019); Plumb Line: Charles White and the Contemporary, California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2019); William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut (2019); Shifting Gaze: A Reconstruction of The Black & Hispanic Body In Contemporary Art, Mennello Museum of American Art, Orlando, Florida (2018); Legacy of The Cool: A Tribute To Barkley Hendricks, Bakalar & Paine Galleries, Massachusetts College of Art & Design, Boston (2018); and Harlem Postcards: Wish You Were Here, Studio Museum in Harlem, Studio Museum 127, New York (2018). Lewis’ work is in the public collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Grinnell College

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Museum of Art, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Austin at Texas, and 21C Museum Hotels. He has lectured at Yale University as part of Claudia Rankine's The Racial Imaginary Institute, Yale Center for British Art, and Paris Photo.

Lewis earned a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Virginia Commonwealth University and practiced critical-care nursing in DC-area hospitals for nine years. He now lives and works in New York.

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

NATE LEWIS

born Beaver Falls, PA
lives and works in New York, NY and Washington, D.C.

EDUCATION

2009 BSN, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

SELECTED SOLO / TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

(* Indicates a publication)

- 2020 **Latent Tapestries*, Fridman Gallery, New York, NY
- 2017 *Mosaic Project*, Pennsylvania College of Art And Design, Lancaster, PA
Tensions in Tapestries, Morton Fine Art, Washington DC
- 2016 *Cheryl Derricotte and Nate Lewis: Fragile Vessels*, Loyola University,
Baltimore, MD
Biological Tapestries 1st Movement, Morton Fine Art, Washington DC

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

(* Indicates a publication)

- 2020 *Hide and Seek: Portraying, Projecting, and Playing*, 21 C Museum, Kansas
City, MO
Translating Valence, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, MI
- 2019 *Dress Up, Speak Up: Regalia and Resistance*, organized by Alice Stites, 21 C
Museum, Cincinnati, OH
Men of Change, Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibition Services, National
Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH
Plumb Line: Charles White and the Contemporary, curated by Essence Harden
and Leigh Raiford, California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA
**William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum*, Yale Center for
British Art, Yale, New Haven

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

- 2018 *Shifting Gaze: A Reconstruction of The Black & Hispanic Body In Contemporary Art*, organized by Shannon Fitzgerald, Mennello Museum of American Art, Orlando, FL
Strange Beach, Fridman Gallery, New York, NY
Legacy of The Cool: A Tribute To Barkely Hendricks, Bakalar & Paine Galleries, Mass College of Art & Design, Boston, MA
- 2017 *Art on the Vine*, Martha's Vineyard, MA
Terrestrial Resonance, curated by Stan Squirewell, Art in Flux, Harlem, NY
Handmade: Made by Hand, Morton Fine Art, Washington, D.C.
- 2016 *Art on the Vine*, Martha's Vineyard, MA
SELECT WPA Art Auction Exhibition, Washington DC
Alchemical Vessels, Joan Hisoka Gallery, Washington DC
The First, Cordesa Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
Selfish, curated by Akeem K. Duncan, Brilliant Champions Gallery, Brooklyn NY
Transformer Auction, Washington D.C.
WPA Art Night, Hickok Cole Architects, Washington D.C.
We may be through with the past, GalleryNine5, New York, NY
- 2015 *SELECT WPA Art Auction Exhibition*, Artisphere, Rosslyn, VA
DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities Visual Artist Grant Recipients Exhibition, Washington DC
Grant Recipients Exhibition, Washington D.C.
- 2015 *Alchemical Vessels*, Joan Hisoka Gallery, Washington DC
- 2014 *Bombay Sapphire Artisan Series Regional Final*, Washington DC
WPA Art Night, Hickok Cole Architects, Washington DC
Call + Response IV, Hole In The Sky, Washington DC
Timeless Remnants, Morton Fine Arts, Washington DC
Over the Edge: Paper works unbound Part 1 and Part 2, curated by Claire Gilman, Williamsburg Art & Historical Center, Brooklyn NY
Art Show_05, Pizza Factory, Hole In The Sky, Washington DC
- 2013 *Art Show_02, A Room Full of Murals*, Hole In The Sky, Washington DC
Art Show_01, A DC Showcase, Hole In The Sky, Washington DC
Decon/Recon, Union Arts, Washington DC
Cardiac Arrest, The Dunes, Washington DC

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

2012 *Artomatic, Crystal City, VA*

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND RESIDENCIES

- 2018 Dieu Donne: Artist Workspace Residency, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 Pioneer Works: Artist in Residence, Brooklyn, NY 2017
Agora Culture, Art on the Vine Artist In Residence, Martha's Vineyard, MA
Recipient, DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities Visual Artist Fellowship
Grant
- 2016 Recipient, DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities Visual Artist Fellowship
Grant
- 2015 Recipient, DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities Visual Artist Fellowship
Grant
- 2014 Bombay Sapphire Artisan Series Regional Winner,
Washington DC

SPEAKING

- 2019 Yale Center for British Art
- 2017 Created and designed Paperhaus Single Cover, Silent

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

- 2017 Created and designed Paperhaus Album Cover
- 2016 Yale University, Imaginary Racial Institute with Claudia Rankine
Pennsylvania College of Art & Design

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(* Indicates non-periodical book, catalog, or other publication)

- 2020 **Latent Tapestries*, New York: Fridman Gallery, 2020

DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

- Packard, Cassie, "Nate Lewis," *Artforum.com*, March 2020
Mitter, Siddhartha, "This Artist Got His Start as an I.C.U. Nurse,"
NYTimes.com, March 19, 2020
- 2018 **Fired Up! Ready to Go!: Finding Beauty, Demanding Equity: An African American Life in Art*, The Collections of Peggy Cooper Cafritz with texts by Peggy Cooper Cafritz, Thelma Golden, Kerry James Marshall, Simone Leigh and Uri McMillan, New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2018
- 2017 Rodney, Seph, "The Body as a Field for Graphic Experiments,"
hyperallergic.com, May 9, 2017
Holahan, Jane "Mosaic Project artist Nate Lewis uses his experience as a nurse in his art," *Lancasteronline.com*, November 1, 2017
Jenkins, Mark, "In the galleries: At annual benefit show, the world goes round,"
WashingtonPost.com, April 20, 2017
- 2016 Glentzer, Molly, "Fall art fair fever," *HoustonChronicle.com*, September 14, 2016
Duncan, Akeem, "Nate Lewis: Cut To The Chase," *Quiet Lunch Magazine No. 3*, May 24, 2016, p. 22
Carrigan, Margaret, "'Biological Tapestries' at Morton Fine Art, Reviewed,"
WashingtonCityPaper.com, April 15, 2016
Lieberman, Mark, "From Operating Table to Canvas, Nate Lewis Finds intricate Art," *dcist.com*, April 7, 2016
- 2012 "A Body of Work," *Scrubs Magazine*, Spring 2012, p. 48

ARTFORUM



Nate Lewis, *Probing the Land VI*, 2020, hand-sculpted ink-jet print, ink, graphite, frottage, 44 x 60". From the series "Probing the Land," 2019–20.

NEW YORK

Nate Lewis

FRIDMAN GALLERY
169 Bowery
March 1–May 31, 2020

Over the nine years that he spent working as a critical care nurse, Nate Lewis grew intimately familiar with medical imaging via X-rays, ultrasounds, electrocardiograms, and other diagnostic tools. He watched bodies externalize their internal forms and rhythms, demanding they be seen, scrutinized, and cared for—with the caveat that clarity was a possibility

but never a promise. It is a preoccupation with these vital images that inspired and informed Lewis's turn to artmaking. "Latent Tapestries," his first solo show in New York City, opened at Fridman Gallery in March but has since migrated online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Scrolling through pictures, video, and text, the viewer encounters the artist's first sonic installation: a jagged, collaged composition of musical contributions by five experimental jazz players. The exhibition has an audible heartbeat, albeit an irregular one.

The show's core is easily located in Lewis's staggeringly detailed hand-sculpted ink-jet prints. After transferring his photographs to thick sheets of paper, the artist proceeded to carve into them with surgical precision. He then applied graphite and ink to the sliced and perforated areas, and even ad-libbed here and there with frottage. The portraits of bodies that emerged have surfaces so variegated that they initially appear collaged. The "Signaling" print series, 2019–20, depicts black bodies in motion: frame-filling figures—stippled, hatched, gouged—that expand, contract, and contort. Another series, "Probing the Land," 2019–20, portrays the less motile bodies of the Confederate equestrian statues along Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. Partially consumed by swaths of toothlike patterns, white men and their horses unravel into a patchwork of stripped bronze, bone, and entrails—a reminder that conversations around these violent memorials and the racialized abuses that they chart are still very much alive.

— Cassie Packard

The New York Times

This Artist Got His Start as an I.C.U. Nurse

Nate Lewis developed a visual language in the rhythms of EKGs. Now, his intricate works on paper take the scalpel to society.



Nate Lewis at his studio in the Bronx. Credit Ike Edeani for The New York Times

The artist Nate Lewis left his job as a nurse three years ago, but life on the neurocritical intensive care unit produces memories that don't readily fade.

The patients battling strokes, seizures, and head injuries. The specialists debating treatment based on test numbers and images. The anxious families keeping watch, looking to the nurse for explanation and reassurance.

"I would show up and these families are giving me everything, telling me their life stories," Mr. Lewis, 34, recalled of his years at a hospital near Washington, D.C. "I realized what an honor it was to take care of them at this time in their lives."

One high-stakes drill became familiar: When a patient's brain, heart or lung functions exceeded the safe range, an alarm would sound, and the monitor would start printing out the relevant graph until the situation was addressed.

The discarded printouts, Mr. Lewis realized, were a visual distillation of the experience. "I was really invested in care for these people," he said. "It was really dense. So I started to make work with the rhythms of patients. Like, let me try this."



Nate Lewis, "this is your heart on a prelude," 2013. The collage includes patients' electrocardiogram readings backed onto sheet music. Nate Lewis and Fridman Gallery

A mixed-media piece from 2013, titled "this is your heart on a prelude," greets visitors entering Mr. Lewis's first New York solo exhibition, at Fridman Gallery. (The gallery is open by appointment and has posted images and video from the show online.) The small collage includes four strips of patients' electrocardiogram readings carefully cut and backed onto sheet music.

Mr. Lewis recalled that he wanted to use the original printouts, despite their low-grade paper, until a friend convinced him to scan them onto more resilient archival stock. "I wanted the real thing," he said. "But he was like, 'It's contemporary art, it's cool.'"

Before then, Mr. Lewis's creative work consisted mainly of T-shirt designs. He hung out with a Washington crowd of artists and musicians, but knew little about art history or formal practice. Admission to the residency program at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, in 2017, prompted him to quit his nursing career, move to New York City, and commit to art full-time.

He has come far since then. Mr. Lewis now makes and digitally alters photographs, then transfers them onto large sheets of paper, which he sculpts by means of cuts, perforations, rubs, and applications of graphite and ink. The base images in one series, "Signaling," are portraits — bodies in motion, dancing or mid-exercise. Another series, "Probing the Land," works off photographs of the statues of Confederate generals in Richmond, Va.

Black-and-white with sparse flashes of color, the pieces resemble collages but are in fact single sheets, exactly detailed, with a deconstructed energy. The kinetic charge extends to a two-channel video of a man shadowboxing. The show has a soundtrack, too: Five experimental jazz musicians supplied loops that Mr. Lewis produced into a single work. It plays continuously in the gallery like a sonic sculpture.



From "Nate Lewis: Latent Tapestries," a hand-sculpted inkjet print titled "Probing the Land IV" (2020). It digitally altered photographs of the statues of Confederate generals, then hand-worked cuts and applications of ink. Nate Lewis and Fridman Gallery

From his emphasis on the body to his attraction to working with paper, which he likens to an organism, Mr. Lewis carries into his art concerns with diagnosis and care forged in the I.C.U. "My whole practice is about an assessment of something," he said. "The slightest detail matters."

He arrived in New York with a beginner's mind. He read his first art history book. He keyed in on influences — Hank Willis Thomas, Titus Kaphar, Rashaad Newsome, Jacolby Satterwhite. He merged into the artist community, at once keen for input and to develop his own voice.

The curator Regine Basha, who directed the residency at Pioneer Works when Mr. Lewis took part, said he stood out for his seriousness and motivation from his medical experience.

"He was doing a lot of soul-searching work, as someone who was developing a visual language for empathy," she said. "Not just person-to-person, but physical, bodily empathy."

"And when he got into the studio," she added, "he was the hardest worker there."

Mr. Lewis credits the residency for breakthroughs in technique, notably the addition of color and, crucially, working with ink. Another inspiration came on a visit to the Prado, in Madrid, where he saw a video installation by the Iranian artist Fari-deh Lashai that, in turn, built on altered reproductions of etchings from Goya's "Disasters of War," set to Chopin nocturnes. Mr. Lewis uses the same music in his boxer video.

A self-described jock, Mr. Lewis grew up obsessed with basketball, boxed a little and practices capoeira. He implicates his own body in his work, making self-portraits by the same method as portraits of his friends.

They are black, as is he — he grew up in Pennsylvania, the son of a mixed-race couple — and he fielded some criticism at



The artist at work in his studio. Ike Edeani for The New York Times



The artist at work in his studio. Ike Edeani for The New York Times

first, he said, for seeming to mutilate black bodies. The accusations of “trauma porn” took him aback. “At that time, I was still thinking in the hospital sense,” he said.

But he has also read Harriet A. Washington’s “Medical Apartheid,” on medical experimentation on African-Americans — a theme explored by contemporary artists such as Doreen Garner. He recalls realizing, while still working in hospitals, that the medical system was subtly biased toward white patients.

“Was I influenced by that culture? I certainly was, and I’m so ashamed,” he said. “Because I knew that I’ve been taught to give less to black people, to this day I try to give more.”

His series on the Richmond monuments scrambles the image of Robert E. Lee and other Confederate leaders, dissecting the smooth statuary into phantom horsemen with many patterns and textures. It alludes to current debates about representation, less as a call to replace the statues than an inspection of how they operate. “The city orbits around them,” he said. “I understand why people are so intent on them not coming down.”

Mr. Lewis’s work with music, too, connects to the I.C.U., and to the subtle shifts in a patient’s functions he overheard. “I was already into music, but there was something extra in the listening,” he said. He pulled up a short video of an echocardiogram on his phone, to demonstrate. “You have to listen for diminished sounds, or absent sounds. It’s hard.”

When one of his musical collaborators, the drummer and producer Kassa Overall, held a residency at the Jazz Gallery last year, Mr. Lewis photographed each concert, then used a composite image as the basis of a work on paper that was shown at the final performance.

Mr. Overall and four others — Melanie Charles, Ben Lamar Gay, Matana Roberts and Luke Stewart — have provided the



Nate Lewis, "Signaling XXII," 2020, from his portrait series of bodies in motion, dancing or mid-exercise. Digitally altered and hand-sculpted inkjet print with ink, graphite. Nate Lewis and Fridman Gallery

tracks that Mr. Lewis melded into the sound work in his show (you can hear them on the gallery's website), but left Mr. Lewis to shape it, an act of trust.

"I do a lot of improvisation but then I meticulously edit everything, and he does that with his visual choices," Mr. Overall said.

In jazz, Mr. Lewis said, he felt a transmutation of black spirit and resilience that he expressed in physiological terms.

"These people, that cognitive space, what they went through, what was happening in their cells, their hormones, their heart — because of all those things they came out with the beginning of black sound in this country, which led to so many different musical forms," he said.

He was back in diagnostic mode.

"I really try to bring my worlds together," he said.

Holahan, Jane, "Mosaic Project artist Nate Lewis uses his experience as a nurse in his art," *LancasterOnline.com*, November 1, 2017

LNP | LancasterOnline

Mosaic Project artist Nate Lewis uses his experience as a nurse in his art



Most artists know from the time they are little kids that they will become artists.

Nate Lewis, one of this year's mosaic artists at Pennsylvania College of Art & Design, knew from the time he was a child that he wanted to be a nurse, like his dad.

He had no idea that his nursing career would become the foundation of his art career.

"I was planning to be a nurse since sixth grade," says Lewis, who grew up in Beaver Falls in western Pennsylvania. "I got good grades, and I played lots of basketball. I didn't grow up making art at all."

Lewis will talk about his nontraditional journey as an artist Friday at 2 p.m. And from 6 to 7 p.m., the public can meet Lewis during a First Friday event.

Holahan, Jane, "Mosaic Project artist Nate Lewis uses his experience as a nurse in his art," *LancasterOnline.com*, November 1, 2017



And his exhibit will be on display through Dec. 8, along with one by fellow mosaic artist Amber Robles Gordon. Music was the first foray into art for Lewis.

"Coming out of college and into my mid-20s was a time where I listened to everything," he says. "The music spoke to me so much in so many different ways."

He started playing violin, taking about 8 or 9 lessons and then teaching himself.

"I played two or three hours a day," Lewis says. "The way I am, when I really like something, I dive in."

He moved to Virginia and started working in the intensive care unit of a hospital. Required to take some classes, he started doodling when class got too dull.

This wasn't actually a breakthrough for him. It was just doodling.

But then his sister, who is a visual artist, saw something in those doodles and for Christmas 2010, she bought him some art supplies and a book about drawing.

"My sister told me to draw what was in front of me, but I found it boring. I knew that I wanted to draw organs and instruments, red blood cells, images from an electronic microscope. That was my world."

He drew lungs coming out of a trumpet, red blood cells coming out of a pipe.

"I loved it. This is exactly what I wanted to draw."

His sister loved the images, too, and suggested they make T-shirts.

While he spent his spare time working on the T-shirts, he missed drawing his unique images. So he quit the T-shirt business and began working on his drawings. Two cross-sections of brains that looked like headphones. A bagpipe sitting on top of a stomach.

Holahan, Jane, "Mosaic Project artist Nate Lewis uses his experience as a nurse in his art," *LancasterOnline.com*, November 1, 2017



He was still working in the hospital, where he moved from neuroscience-surgical intensive care to medical-surgical intensive care and to a stroke unit, where he was involved in rehab.

And his work evolved from the basics of anatomy to a deeper, more intense kind of work.

He began exploring and working with layers of paper, specifically paper from MRIs and CAT scans.

"I was thinking of the rhythms and records of people's lives. I thought about vulnerability, empathy and care. You've got such an intimate relationship with patients and family members. I don't think I will have a more intimate relationship. These are vulnerable and tragic times for people."

As art took over his life, Lewis stopped working as a nurse and now devotes himself to exploring new ideas and expanding on older ideas.

"I wanted to add life to my work, not just the hospital," Lewis says, noting that he has been influenced by his brother-in-law, who is also a visual artist.

Lewis is now thinking about history and African-American figures and narratives.

"I've started using African-American figures and thinking about empathy and what is empathy outside of the hospital. Empathy is not a passive thing. It is very active. So I am educating myself on unknown histories, with things I have been unaware of.

"I'm adding life to movement and then I am thinking about textures in bodies. Tensions past, present and future."

He will keep evolving.

"As time goes on, I try to understand more and more by using empathy, understanding and caring," Lewis says. "My work was physically taking care of people, and I see everybody with this lens."

The Washington Post

In the galleries: At annual benefit show, the world goes round



Nate Lewis's "Signals II," hand-sculpted paper photo print, at Morton Fine Art. (Nate Lewis/Courtesy of Morton Fine Art)

Natalie Cheung & Nate Lewis

To judge by their titles, change must be the subject of Natalie Cheung's cyanotypes. Each picture in her Morton Fine Art show, "Increments in Time," is named after a period of as little as one and as many as 76 hours. This is how long it took water to evaporate from the photographic paper, yielding studies in blue, black and white.

The D.C. artist has turned the process, once used for architectural blueprints, into something abstract and unpredictable. Her pictures may resemble Rorschach tests and microscopic views, but all they truly illustrate is the process by which they were made. Their poetry is an accident of chemicals and duration.

To Nate Lewis, whose "Tensions in Tapestries" also is at Morton, the African American body is a landscape to be transformed. He cuts and scrapes black-and-white photographic portraits, removing pigment while adding patterns and flocked textures. The effect recalls African weaving and skin embellishment, but also reflects the influence of the D.C. artist's job as an intensive-care nurse, seeking to heal the most damaged. In pieces such as "Funk and Spine," the surface of a woman's body is almost entirely remade, yet sinew, bone and essence endure.