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Beach Museum conversation on Sept. 4 features Dawoud Bey and Hamza Walker in All Faith's Chapel

MANHATTAN — Photographer Dawoud Bey and University of Chicago associate curator and director of education Hamza Walker will discuss the power of art, its potential as a means of social engagement, and special aspects of the aesthetic research carried out by artists in a conversation at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 4, in All Faith's Chapel at Kansas State University.

A reception will precede the event at 5:30 p.m. at the university's Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art. Both events are free and open to the public

If a picture speaks a thousand words, Bey's portraiture has been providing a conversation on society and how we view ourselves for nearly 40 years. A collection of Bey's thought-provoking photographs are featured in the Beach Museum exhibition, "Dawoud Bey: Picturing People," which runs through Oct. 5 in the museum's Marion Pelton Gallery.

The Bey exhibition is organized by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and made possible through support from the David C. and Sarajeon Ruttenberg Arts Foundation and the Harper Court Arts Council. Walker is associate curator and director of education at The Renaissance Society.

Since 1975, Bey, who is an artist, essayist and professor at Columbia College Chicago, has developed a body of work distinguished for its commitment to portraiture as a means of reflecting social circumstances. Ranging from street encounters to studio portraits, Bey's photographic methods are aimed at increasing engagement with his subjects.

"'Picturing People' is a comprehensive look at Bey's work, providing an opportunity to explore subjects such as the presentation of self, race, site and the relationship between artist and subject," said Theresa Bembnister, associate curator at the Beach Museum.

The exhibition includes selections from Bey's work spanning from 1982 to the present. Seven bodies of work comprise the exhibition and include: small camera street photographs, taken from 1981-1988; large format black-and-white street photographs, 1988-1992; Polaroid 20 x 24 works, 1991-1998; color street portraits, 2000-2002; and selections from the series titled "Class Pictures," 2002-2006, "Character Project," 2008, and "Strangers/Community," 2010-present.

Bey's small camera pictures focus on the spontaneous choreography of human interactions within specific locations, and the fleeting social tensions embedded in them. His street portraits explore moments of consensual collaboration between the artist and the subjects, and speak to the possibility of formal portraits

made in public spaces. Bey's first Polaroid works mark the introduction of young people as the central subject, which is further developed in his "Class Pictures" and "Character Project" series.

Bey's most recent project, "Strangers/Community," returns to a concerns with neighborhood and community. Bey pairs people who live in the same neighborhood but who have never previously met — and whose lives are unlikely to bring them into contact.

This conversation is funded by the Richard Coleman Beach Museum of Art Lecture Series, the K-State Libraries Dow Center for Multicultural and Community Studies, School of Leadership Studies and the university's art department, with additional support from the university's Student Governing Association's fine arts fee.

The Beach Museum of Art is on the southeast corner of the Kansas State University campus at 701 Beach Lane. Admission is free and the museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. The museum is closed Mondays and holidays. Free parking is available adjacent to the building. For more information, call 785-532-7718 or visit <http://beach.k-state.edu>.