

# CANDICE MADEY | HANNAH HOFFMAN

## DARREL ELLIS

ART BASEL PARIS  
October 16–20, 2024



For Art Basel Paris 2024, CANDICE MADEY and Hannah Hoffman are pleased to present historic works from the 1980s by Darrel Ellis (American, b. 1958–d. 1992), including photographs, paintings, and works on paper that exemplify Ellis’s radical approach to portraiture, photography, and unique iterative processes. Part of an ‘80s art movement in the Bronx where he grew up, Ellis also figured prominently in the downtown New York scene.

Between 2022 and 2024, a major retrospective of 160 art works traveled throughout the United States to the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and the Columbia Museum of Art. The exhibition of Ellis’s work in Paris offers an introduction of his seminal oeuvre to a European audience, featuring select works from the museum survey on the heels of its closing.

Most of Ellis’s work includes his friends, family, and self-portraiture, sometimes made through direct observation, and other times filtered through the perspective of other photographers, including, importantly, his father. Ellis never met his father, Thomas Ellis, a studio photographer who captured a lively social scene in Harlem and the South Bronx in the 1950s. The elder Ellis, a postal worker at the time of his death, was unjustly killed by police two months before his son Darrel was born. The elder Ellis left behind an extensive archive of family photographs, which were discovered by Ellis in his early twenties. Over the next decade, Ellis would allow his father’s work to inform his own.

Early portraits – in multi-media materials on paper, or acrylic on canvas – present intimate, confident, and lively depictions of people Ellis knew well, while later work is increasingly experimental and elegiac, and more often employs photography. Ellis’s approach was consistently empathetic; he often attempted to see his subjects through the eyes of others, exploring the psychological interaction that occurs between subject and viewer.

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Late works included self-portraits based on photographs taken by other artists, such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Hujar, or Allen Frame. He also staged pictures of himself enacting reductive stereotypes of a Black man: security guard, beggar, Black Panther. He made observational portraits of his family and continued to work conceptually from his father's photographs.

In 1989, Ellis was featured prominently in Nan Goldin's significant group exhibition about the AIDS crisis, "Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing", at Artists Space in New York. Ellis's "Self-Portrait after Photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe" was reproduced in The New York Times's coverage of the show. Two versions of this self-portrait are now represented in institutions: the Whitney Museum of American Art, which acquired the work on paper, and the Glenstone Museum, which acquired the painting.

Ellis was born in 1958, in the Bronx, NY. His life was cut short by AIDS at age 33. Shortly after Ellis's death in 1992, a series of his photographs was featured in *New Photography 8* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and in 1996, his friend Allen Frame organized a large-scale retrospective at Art in General, New York, that traveled to numerous institutions nationally. He participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program and was a resident in the PS1 studio residency program.

Ellis's work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art; Bronx Museum of the Arts; Brooklyn Museum; Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, MA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Princeton University Art Museum, NJ; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

**For more information, please contact:**

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*Image: Darrel Ellis, Untitled (Self-Portrait with Mother and Aunt Harriet), ca. 1980–1990, Black ink, wash, graphite on paper adhered to canvas, 32 x 24 inches (81.3 x 61 cm). Photo: Kunning Huang.*