

T.J. Dedeaux-Norris: Second Line

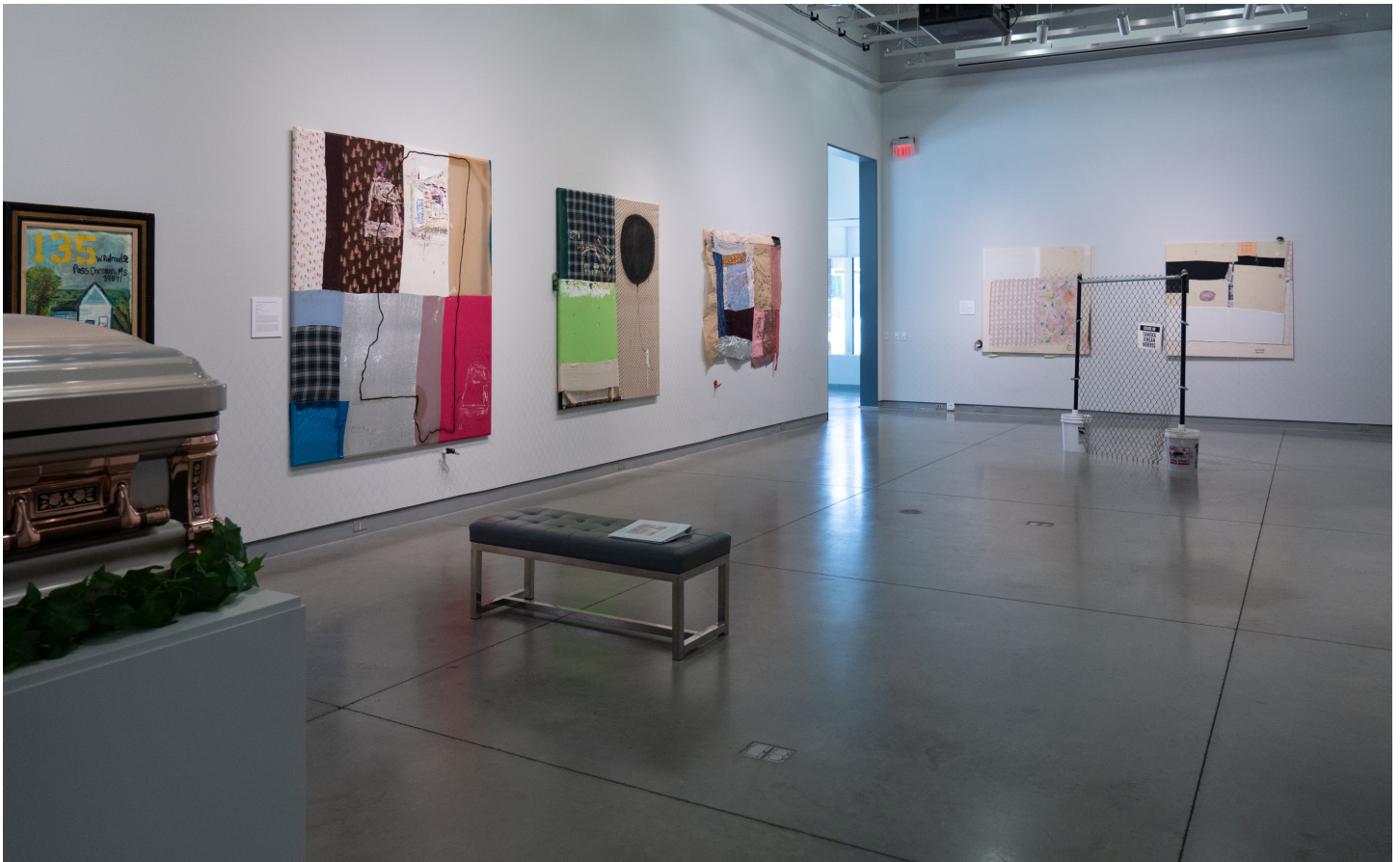
Two-part exhibition on view at University Galleries of Illinois State University from August 4 through December 12, 2021. The exhibition is sponsored in part by grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Alice and Fannie Fell Trust, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund.

Part I Checklist

On view from August 4 through October 3, 2021

All works courtesy of T.J. Dedeaux-Norris and The Tameka Jenean Norris Estate

Curated by Jessica Bingham



Installation view of *T.J. Dedeaux-Norris: Second Line* on view at University Galleries.

In recognition of the artist's past and present personas, the following artist-approved names, pronouns, and descriptions are included throughout the checklist.

Tameka Jenean Norris (she/her): Politicized Black American artist

Meka Jean (she/her): Rapper, vocalist, and performer

T.J. Dedeaux-Norris (they/them): Art professor, estate executor, and **embodiment of all three**



Chain-link Fence

Graphite drawing on wall
ongoing, 2015–present

The chain-link fence drawing and inclusion of both physical and painted chain-link fencing throughout the exhibition represent the artist's pursuit to find distinctions between the fluidity of their multiple personas. Sections of the drawn fence are intact, providing the illusion of a barrier, while other areas are mangled with tattered ends, suggesting access to that which is guarded.



A Eulogy | By(e) Tameka!

2021

Single-channel video with sound
13:35 minutes

This video was created for *T.J. Dedeaux-Norris Presents the Estate of Tameka Jenean Norris*, the artist's 2020 solo exhibition at the Figge Art Museum. Processing grief following the death of their grandmother—who passed away during that exhibition—and during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, T.J. created this video performance to memorialize and honor Tameka Jenean Norris, the artist's former academic persona. Christopher-Rasheem McMillan, a colleague and friend of the artist, wrote and performed the eulogy for Tameka, while a portion of Tamela Mann's song "Take Me to The King" references second line celebrations in New Orleans.



Coffin

2020

Rose gold coffin and faux ivy vines

Untitled (self-portrait)

2012–2021

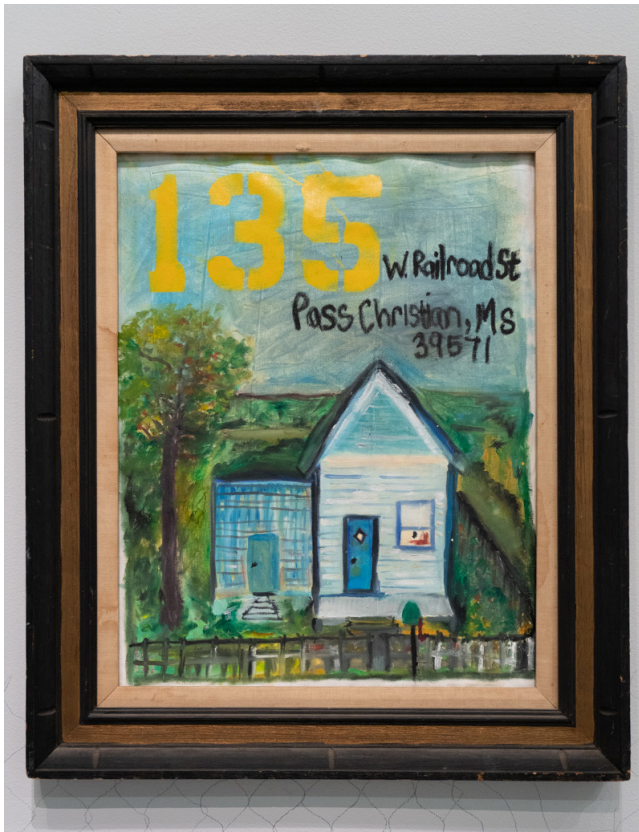
Back-lit film print on light box

Fabric of Our Lives #3

ongoing, 2017–present

Quilt

Untitled (self-portrait) is a photograph of Tameka Jenean Norris, the artist's academically trained and politicized alter ego, which serves as a funerary photo in relation to the rose gold coffin. Her poignant expression is meant to capture a past life of the artist, part of herself that she has emotionally and conceptually laid to rest. Created in 2012, near the end of her graduate studies at Yale University, the self-portrait is one of the last photographs Tameka took of herself. The artist wanted to both document her completion of the program and acknowledge the significance of this transitory period in her life. The glassy-eyed expression illustrates the fatigue, dissociation, and academic-related trauma Tameka faced as a Black, Queer student during the two-year program.



Dun Floated Away

2005

Oil on canvas

Tameka was pursuing a rap career, under the persona Meka Jean, in Los Angeles during Hurricane Katrina. After days of not being able to reach her Gulf Coast-based family, Tameka finally contacted someone. While on the phone call, a family member shared that her grandparents' former home—which Tameka frequented as a child and had been passed on to other family members—was swept away by the storm. This painting's title comes from that conversation as she was informed that the one-room shotgun-style house had "dun floated away." Tameka painted this portrait of the home—including text of its address in Pass Christian, a city in Harrison County, Mississippi, that was almost entirely destroyed—from memory while the storm was taking place.



left to right

Post-Katrina Painting #9

2012

Found fabrics, thread, and oil paint

Post-Katrina Painting #10

2013

Found fabrics, lace, oil paint, thread, yarn, tape, and ink

Ms. Rosie

2014

Oil and acrylic on fabric

Although not physically present during Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Tameka explores secondhand trauma through the series *Post-Katrina Paintings*. Her family survived the natural disaster, which spurred the artist to reflect on her connection to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, time with her grandparents in New Orleans, and ways to reveal the lack of infrastructure in cities hit by the storm. Following the hurricane, the artist visited New Orleans, Biloxi, and Gulfport to document the damage and salvage fabrics from destroyed neighborhoods. Through found fabric collage and painting, this series, which the artist began in 2010, five years after the Category 5 hurricane reached the Gulf, references both the wrecked landscape and women in her family who passed prior to the storm. The three works on view relate visually to the wreckage and conceptually to the critical infrastructure failures—like public health and hospitals, roads, electricity, emergency services, and basic food and water—both before and after the hurricane.



left and right

Jesus be a fence between me and these YT people

2016

Fabric, canvas, acrylic paint, and thread

Cut From the Same Cloth

2016

Fabric, canvas, acrylic paint, and thread

These two paintings from the *Cut From the Same Cloth* series were the first works Tameka completed in her new studio in Iowa City. After living in Louisiana and California following graduate school, the artist moved to Iowa City after receiving a Grant Wood Fellowship through the University of Iowa, where they are now a tenure-track assistant professor in painting and drawing. Made shortly after the 2016 election, and within a new city without any familial connections, Tameka sought to focus solely on her family while navigating an ever-divisive political climate without a support system.



Tameka, I thought you were bougie

2016

Fabric, canvas, acrylic paint, and thread

Having lived in many locations, including Guam, Mississippi, Louisiana, California, New York, Berlin, and now Iowa, the artist often feels estranged from Tameka's family. Tameka attended different schools from her cousins, grew up on a military base with access to a variety of resources and cultures, and left home at a fairly young age to pursue a career as a rapper, and eventually, her education in art. This time and physical distance away from home led to an emotional distance between Tameka and family. The title of this piece, *Tameka, I thought you were bougie*, comes from an interaction the artist had with a cousin during a return visit to the Mississippi coast. This comment revealed that she was not so dissimilar from her family after all.



left and right

Butterfly McQueen

2014

Acrylic and oil on fabric and wallpaper

The Loneliest Girl in the Room

2014

Acrylic and oil on fabric and wallpaper

Made in response to the passing of artist Terry Adkins (1953-2014), a close friend and collaborator of Tameka, these works speak to the history of artists paying respect to one another through their art practices. Unsure of how to process the grief of Adkins's death, Tameka decided to pay homage through her artwork. *Butterfly McQueen* and *The Loneliest Girl in the Room* reference inside jokes between the two artists. Additional works from this period were signed with both of their initials, MJ and TA, referencing Adkins's influence on Tameka's life.



Waffle House

2014

Acrylic and oil on fabric

Tameka reflects on her relationship to people and places within these sewn and painted fabric collages. *Waffle House* portrays the iconic Southern restaurant and alludes to Tameka's memories of being at the diner while traveling with her family.



Untitled, Installation

ongoing, 2020-present

Framed prints, door, chainlink fence, cement in buckets, cabinet, trinkets, painting, and soft sculpture

This installation contains paintings by Tameka and objects and artwork collected by the artist's mother. Each piece was selected by the artist after becoming her mother's estate executor and moving her to Iowa City—a relocation that required her to also become her mother's primary caretaker.



Dear Mother, Dear Daughter(s)

2019

Fabric, canvas, acrylic paint, and thread

Dear Mother, Dear Daughter(s) is based on the first page of a two-page letter that was written for either T.J. or their younger sister by their mother. This letter was never given; rather, T.J. found it when cleaning out their mother's home shortly after becoming her power of attorney. Written in an accusatory manner to her teenager for being disrespectful, the letter shows their mother's need to assert dominance. Through a call-and-response process, T.J. scanned the letter onto fabric and corrected their mother's grammatical errors.



Untitled, Door

2013

Acrylic on wooden screen door

Made by Tameka for an art fair, this door was used to enter the pop-up art gallery. The screen, which caught Tameka's attention for the raw quality of its materials, was purchased at a thrift store. Hanging on the wall and accentuated with acrylic paint and glitter, the door functions as a painting. A secondary painting on paper loosely hangs within the upper frame of the door.



Uranus (Soft Sculpture #7)

2014

Fabric paint, oil paint, canvas, fabric, recycled stuffing, and bag filler

This soft sculpture was made for *Meka Jean: How She Got Good*, included in the *Prospect.3* biennial in New Orleans. Knowing that her family would visit the exhibition, Tameka wanted to offer them a place to sit. The utilitarian purpose of the painterly beanbag chairs has since expired, as threads have loosened over time.



Mother's Day Performance

2020

Single-channel video with sound, 60:00 minutes

Filmed in the artist's bathroom on Mother's Day 2020, during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, *Mother's Day Performance* shows T.J. shaving their head for a performance that was streamed live on Zoom, Instagram, and Facebook. Although not visible in the final video, viewers left comments in the chats to which T.J. responded vocally. These statements came with an implied ownership of the artist's body by the viewer, an issue T.J. has previously navigated in their former personas.