

SF CAMERAWORK

SF CAMERAWORK TO PRESENT “KIJA LUCAS: A TAXONOMY OF BELONGING”



San Francisco, CA - SF Camerawork is pleased to present the inaugural exhibition in its new space, KIJA LUCAS, *A Taxonomy of Belonging*, opening September 17. The solo exhibition by the Bay Area-based artist brings together a selection of work from Lucas' nine-year project *In Search of Home*, a series that explores the emigration patterns of her family using photographs of plant clippings, rocks, and other objects.

A Taxonomy of Belonging features a collection of photographs that Lucas created as part of a photographic exploration of her family's history. Traveling through thirteen states, Lucas gathered cultivated plants, weeds, rocks, and other found natural objects that relate to her family's history and emigration pattern, and created photographic scans. Lucas grounds this project in direct opposition to Carl Linnaeus' racial taxonomy. Questioning how we choose what is considered "natural," "beautiful," and "useful," Lucas treated the cultivated plants, weeds, native, and non-native species she gathered equally, challenging the scientific framework society has inherited from Linnaeus. Extrapolating from her work with the natural world, Lucas interrogates the way that the taxonomy passed down by Linnaeus misrepresents Othered communities and continues to perpetuate damaging racist stereotypes. In doing so, she works to situate her family's personal history in the United States.

"*In Search of Home* has brought me closer to my ancestors through research and retracing their steps," said Lucas. "It has helped me to understand that I am part of a greater story. To understand that I am from within nature. That I am part of and profoundly impacted by history through cultural and social impact and through my DNA. I am thankful for the vast community of people who have surrounded me and helped light the way."

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Lucas' father was a gardener, and his devotion to the plant world cultivated Lucas' interest in exploring the roots of her family through the lens of natural world. In 2013 she began a project to map her family's history, and to explore the way in which different branches of her family experienced this country in profoundly different ways – but all of which contributed to her worldview.

Lucas' process was inspired by Anna Atkins, a photographer who is considered the first person to create a book illustrated with photos. To Lucas, the process of creating photographic scans felt like a nod to Atkins' work and a contemporary take on her practice, while at the same time allowing her to bring together a visual vocabulary with a scientific trope. The resulting works, are serene and beautiful photographs that simultaneously offer a deep exploration of Lucas's personal history.

The works included in the exhibition depict plants and natural objects that Lucas found at sites essential to her family's history. Among them are a scan of a clump of dirt that Lucas gathered at a plantation in Bristol, Virginia, where her ancestors had been enslaved. This particular work marks the first time Lucas created a scan of an object rather than a plant, a habit that has since become a regular part of her practice. Also on view will be a large-scale mural titled *Underneath the Resting Tree*, which depicts a piece of wood taken from beneath a large, gnarled Oak tree in Bristol, where people enslaved on the plantation were allegedly able to take a break by sitting in the shade of the tree. The work at once captures a piece of Lucas' history, while also questioning the historical markers in places like Bristol, which offer a potentially revisionist history. In New Orleans, Lucas created a series of works that for the first time included multiple objects. Like an archeological site, the scans present a story that is not a linear timeline, but a layered experience that reflects building and rebuilding. Through her travels across the US, Lucas has created a body of work that offers an unusual and thought-provoking look at a family's deep and varied roots, while also drawing on an unconventional and stunning use of the photographic medium.

This exhibition is generously supported by individual donors Michelle Branch & Dale Cook and Dave Elfving, as well as the [San Francisco Arts Commission](#).

General Information:

KIJA LUCAS, *A Taxonomy of Belonging*

September 17 - December 17, 2022

Opening Reception with the artist: Saturday October 1, 2022 3-7pm

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[Fort Mason Center](#)

2 Marina Boulevard, Building A

San Francisco, CA 94123

415-487-1011

Hours: Tuesday - Thursday 12 - 6pm | Friday 12 - 8pm | Saturday 10am - 6pm

SF Camerawork is free and open to the public.

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About Kija Lucas

Kija Lucas is an artist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She uses photography to explore ideas of home, heritage and inheritance. She is interested in how ideas are passed down and seemingly inconsequential moments create changes that last generations.

Her work has been exhibited at Oakland Museum of California, Anglim Gilbert Gallery, Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco Arts Commission Galleries, California Institute of Integral Studies, Palo Alto Arts Center, Intersection for the Arts, Mission Cultural Center, and Root Division, as well as Venice Arts in Los Angeles, CA, La Sala d'Ercole/Hercules Hall in Bologna Italy, and Casa Escorsa in Guadalajara, Mexico. Lucas has been an Artist in Residence at Montalvo Center for the Arts, Grin City Collective, and The Wassaic Artist Residency. Lucas received her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and her MFA from Mills College.

About SF Camerawork

SF Camerawork is a long-standing leader in the San Francisco arts milieu, committed to provoking discovery, experimentation, and exchange through exhibitions and experiences for all who value new ideas in photography. The organization was founded in 1974 by a collective of artists who welcomed experimental photography, unconventional techniques, and sociopolitical themes and who fostered a range of alternative styles and approaches. The essence of the founders' vision remains at the core of SF Camerawork even as the organization has adapted to the changing scope of photography and surrounding cultural landscape.

For more than 45 years, SF Camerawork has provided a launching pad for many artists' careers, supplying invaluable financial support, exhibition space, curation, and patronage. In its early years, SF Camerawork was the first organization in the Bay Area to host exhibitions and lectures by controversial but ultimately highly influential artists such as Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Susan Meiselas, and Joel-Peter Witkin. More recently, the organization has presented the first West Coast exhibitions for artists including John Chiara, Binh Danh, Erica Deeman, Jennifer Karady, Jason Lazurus, Chris McCaw, Wang Ning De, and Meghann Riepenhoff—artists who have emerged as leaders of a new generation gaining international prominence.