

# SF CAMERAWORK

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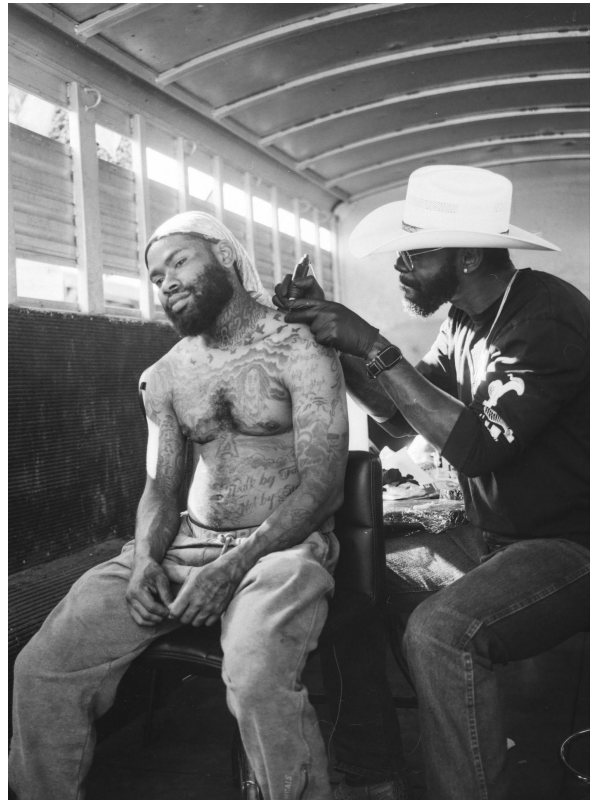
***sweat + dirt***  
**CHARLES LEE**

**November 7, 2023 — February 3, 2024**

Opening Reception  
Friday, November 10, 6-8pm

SF Camerawork  
2 Marina Boulevard, Building A  
San Francisco, CA, 94123

SF Camerawork is pleased to announce the presentation of Bay Area artist Charles Lee's first solo exhibition, *sweat + dirt*, on view at our Fort Mason location from November 7, 2023, through February 3, 2024. A public opening reception will be held on Friday, November 10, from 6-8pm, with additional programs to be announced during the run of the exhibition, via our email list and at [sfcamerawork.org](http://sfcamerawork.org).



*sweat + dirt* is a document and investigation of contemporary Black rodeo culture and cowfolk in the United States. The show consists of traditional black-and-white photographs, larger-than-life mural prints, and two photo-based installations, one of which further explores the forms and ideas presented in Lee's installation *Been Here* at the City of Berkeley's Cube Space earlier this year.

The works and images in *sweat + dirt* were made in Louisiana, California's Southern and Central Valley, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Through Lee's project, we are presented with contemporary evidence by which we can trace the multi-racial history and widespread geographic reach of country life, and the role of Black people in the development of U.S. western culture. Lee's images of Black ranchers, trail riders, ropers, equestrians, and animal trainers, in moments of joy and hard at work, help disrupt both the image of the rugged, white male cowboy as an icon of westward expansion and manifest destiny, and today's reductive stereotypes of white rurality and black urbanness. According to Lee, "All of this is with the intention to further the discussion about what it truly means to be 'American.' In effect, this work shows that we've been here.... We are American."

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*sweat + dirt*: A solo exhibition presenting work by Charles Lee, November 7, 2023 — February 3, 2024. On view at SF Camerawork, 2 Marina Blvd, Building A, San Francisco, CA 94123. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone at (415) 487-1011 or email Joanna Knutsen, Gallery Manager, at [joanna@sfcamerawork.org](mailto:joanna@sfcamerawork.org).

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Charles Lee (b. 1983, Honolulu) is an interdisciplinary artist “committed to fostering a deeper understanding of what constitutes American iconography, and more importantly, the fallacy that often surrounds such cultural representations.” Using video, photography, sculpture and installation, Lee unearths and amplifies hushed and nuanced conversations around race and caste, and connects them to contemporary representation. His work aims to “empower the viewer with more accurate depictions of their past, providing a means of embracing the complexities of our shared history.” [CL]

Lee is a graduate of the California College of the Arts (MFA '23), where he received the 2022 Edwin Anthony & Adelaine Boudreaux Cadogan Scholarship and Contemporary Art Award, All College Honors, and the Graduate Merit Scholarship. He is also a recipient of the 2021 Pabst Open Door Grant and was a 2022 Recology Artist in Residence. *sweat + dirt* is Lee's first professional solo exhibition.

## 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.

Image Credit: Charles Lee, *Tattoos and Horsetrainers*, 2023, 44 x 56 inches, Unique Silver Gelatin Print. Image courtesy of the artist.