



FROM KARYN OLIVIER

**"Tetherball" is one of Brooklyn artist Karyn Olivier's contributions to the exhibition at Contemporary Wing.**



JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY/FROM CHERYL POPE

**Sculptor Nick Cave recommended installation artist Cheryl Pope, who is represented by "Ball and Chain."**

## Exhibit aims to show future stars

New gallery displays artists nominated by famed '30'

BY LAVANYA RAMANATHAN

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WYATT GALLERY

**"Elderly Woman Waiting for Water, Cite Soleil" is among 22 photos by Wyatt Gallery that explore the tent cities erected in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.**

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All Lauren Gentile wanted was a few leads.

For the inaugural D.C. show of her new gallery, Contemporary Wing, she planned to feature artists who might be the next big things. She just needed their names.

Gentile, who until last summer was the gallery director of Irvine Contemporary, perhaps had an outsize ambition for "Next Generation," the show that opens Saturday. She wanted to show artists whom the art world would be buzzing about in a few years, and she wanted them selected by the "30 Americans," renowned African American artists whose work is part of a major exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

"I was thinking, 'Wouldn't it be awesome if I knew who *they* thought were going to be the next '30 Americans?'" she recalls. That simple question led to a nine-month odyssey that involved pleading e-mails, calling in favors — and spreadsheets.

To reach as many of the artists in the "30 Americans" show as she could, she says, "I started with a spreadsheet. Who's alive? Who do I know who knows them? Who represents them?"

She began by writing the galleries that represent the "30 Americans" artists, including Gary Simmons, whose "Duck, Duck, Noose," an installation with Ku Klux

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With a new gallery far outside the New York market, Gentile, 32, hit a wall. "It's very difficult to get people to respond to you," she says. She turned to Plan B, writing to the "30 Americans" directly and asking colleagues and collectors to reach out to any of them whom they knew.

"Oh, I went down to the Facebook level," Gentile recalls, "trust me."

Slowly, the names of artists for "Next Generation" began to roll in.

"This is a hard decision for me to select only one artist that I feel is doing very interesting and smart work," wrote Cave, who instead recommended two: Chicago installation artist Cheryl Pope and fiber artist Sonya Clark of Richmond. "I hope these artists will add another dimension to the amazing exhibition you are curating."

"I look forward to seeing the grouping of artists," wrote Simmons, who nominated the Oakland, Calif.-based abstractionist painter David Huffman.

In all, Contemporary Wing homed in on 12 artists suggested by members of the "30 Americans" group; only one of the 12, Wyatt Gallery, has shown work in Washing-

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That is the allure of "Next Generation," says Blake Kimbrough, an adviser to Contemporary Wing and vice chair of Brooklyn's Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art: It will give Washingtonians a look at emerging artists with national significance without a road trip to New York. And the selections of the "30 Americans," he adds, reflect that the established artists "are also being influenced by a wide range of people. The community is not as insular as it once was."

Much of the work is as large and ambitious as Gentile's vision for the show. So the gallery, located at the old Irvine Contemporary space at 1412 14th St. NW, has gone off-site, to a drafty, raw, brick-walled warehouse space at 1250 Ninth St. NW.

The nearly 5,000-square-foot space has given the artists room to play: Documentary photographer Gallery (nominated by conceptual photo artist Hank Willis Thomas) will get an entire wall for his 22 photos exploring the tent cities erected in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Installations will come from multimedia artist Kira Lynn Harris (nominated by installation

artist Rodney McMillian), and a darkened area will be dedicated to Gary Pennock's light, sound and video work.

"People would assume Washington likes safe works," Gentile says. "But Washington likes difficult works. So I picked a lot of difficult work."

A piece from Brooklyn artist Karyn Olivier was perhaps too difficult. The double slide, reminiscent of something you'd find on a playground, was 23 feet across — not just a challenge to ship, but hard just to get in the door. It didn't make the show. "I was hell-bent on bringing this piece to Washington. Then I looked in the mirror one day, and I said, 'You're not Mary Boone,'" Gentile says with a laugh, referring to the famed New York gallerist who showed the likes of Jean-Michel Basquiat in the '80s. "You're a bootleg Mary Boone."

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#### **NEXT GENERATION: SELECTIONS BY ARTISTS FROM THE 30 AMERICANS COLLECTION**

Saturday through March 10 at Contemporary Wing pop-up gallery, 1250 Ninth St. NW. 202-730-5037. [www.contemporarywing.com](http://www.contemporarywing.com).