

HANNAH HOFFMAN | CANDICE MADEY

DARREL ELLIS
ART BASEL PARIS 2024

GRAND PALAIS - BOOTH G08
3 AVENUE DU GENERAL EISENHOWER, 75008, PARIS





DARREL ELLIS

b. 1958, Bronx – d. 1992, New York

For Art Basel Paris 2024, Hannah Hoffman and Candice Madey 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 museum exhibition of 160 art works traveled throughout the United States to The Baltimore Museum, The Bronx Museum for the Arts, The Milwaukee Art Museum, and The Columbia Museum of Art.

Darrel Ellis was born in 1958 in the Bronx, NY. His life was cut short by AIDS in 1992 at age 33. In 1992, a series of his photographs was featured in *New Photography 8* at the Museum of Modern Art; and in 1996, a large-scale retrospective was shown at *Art in General* in New York and numerous institutions nationally. He participated in The Whitney Independent Study Program and was a resident in the PSI studio residency program.

Ellis’s work is in the collections of The Art Institute of Art, Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore; Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; The Glenstone Museum, Potomac; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Milwaukee Museum of Art, Milwaukee; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton; Studio Museum of Harlem, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Darrel Ellis is currently included in *What It Becomes* on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art.





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Self-Portrait with Mother and Aunt Harriet)*,
1980–90
Black ink, wash, and graphite on paper adhered to canvas
32 x 24 inches (81.3 x 61 cm)
(DELo069) (ELL917)
Price: \$36,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Seated Woman)*, 1980–89

Acrylic on canvas

22 ¾ x 22 ¾ inches (57.8 x 57.8 cm)

(DELo063) (ELL737)

Price: \$35,000







Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother, Laure, and Grandfather)*, 1981–85
Gouache on paper
37 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 50 inches (95.9 x 127 cm)
(DELO059) (ELL465)
Price: \$38,000







Darrel Ellis, *Soldier*, 1989
Black ink, wash, graphite on paper adhered to canvas
19 x 24 inches (48.3 x 61 cm)
(DELO049) (ELL107)
Price: \$28,000



Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother's Bedroom)*, 1987

Acrylic on canvas

27 x 47 ¾ inches (68.6 x 121.3 cm)

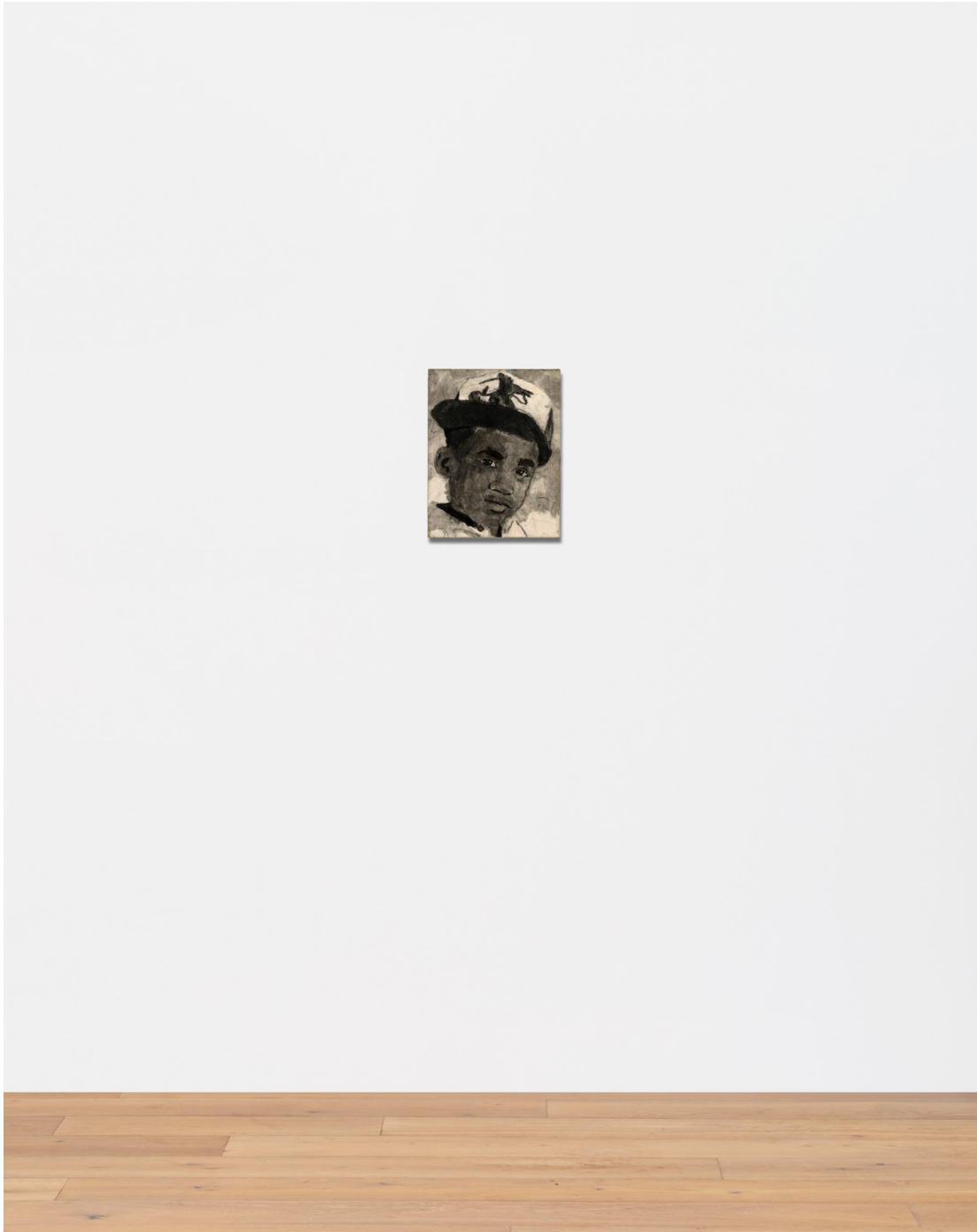
(DELo64) (ELL744)

Price: \$42,000









Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Portrait of Thomas Ellis III)*, 1986–89
Ink wash and charcoal on paper, mounted on canvas with varnish
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)
(DELO070) (ELL886)
Price: \$16,000



It's a contradiction, being a Black artist with very European sensibilities, and given the subjects I'm using, I think my photos of my family – they're very subversive.

Darrel Ellis





Installation view: *Darrel Ellis: Regeneration*, The Bronx Museum. 05.24.23 - 09.10.23





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Grandfather Thomas and Cousin Irving)*, 1987-91
Acrylic on paper
37 x 31 inches (94 x 78.7 cm)
(DELo066) (ELL800)
Price: \$28,000



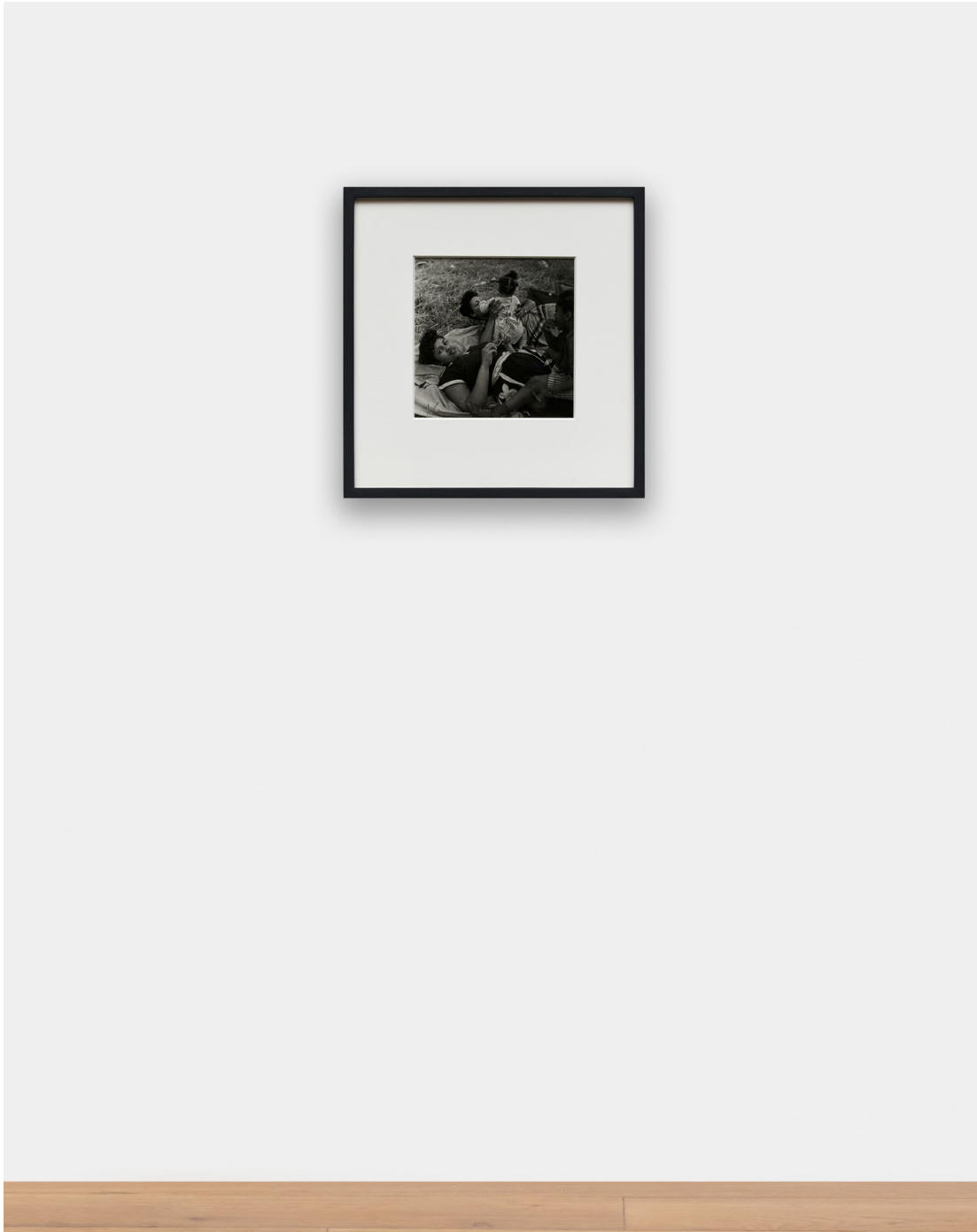


Darrel Ellis, *Grandmother Lillian*, 1990
Ink and gouache media on paper
29 x 24 inches (73.7 x 61 cm)
(DELO053) (ELL246)
Price: \$19,500



Installation view: *Darrel Ellis: Regeneration*, The Bronx Museum. 05.24.23 - 09.10.23





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Laure and Mother in the Grass)*, 1988–91
Gelatin silver print
14 ½ x 14 inches (36.8 x 35.6 cm)
(DELO054) (ELL273)
Price: \$9,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Laure and Mother in the Grass)*, 1988–91
Gelatin silver print
23 ½ x 26 inches (59.7 x 66 cm)
(DELo052) (ELL194)
Price: \$21,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Laure and Mother in Grass)*, 1988–91
Ink on vellum
22 x 26 inches (55.9 x 66 cm)
(DELo062) (ELL713)
Price: \$18,000

The forms I use to project upon are all different, and the negative, when it interacts with the form that I'm projecting upon, causes certain kinds of distortions. Some of the forms I use are round, some are rectangular, some are biomorphic... They're all different, the photos; they're like regeneration, regenerated. From one you get many. And that works as a metaphor for the family.

Darrel Ellis

DARREL ELLIS

DARREL ELLIS
New Photography 8
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
10.29.92 - 01.12.93



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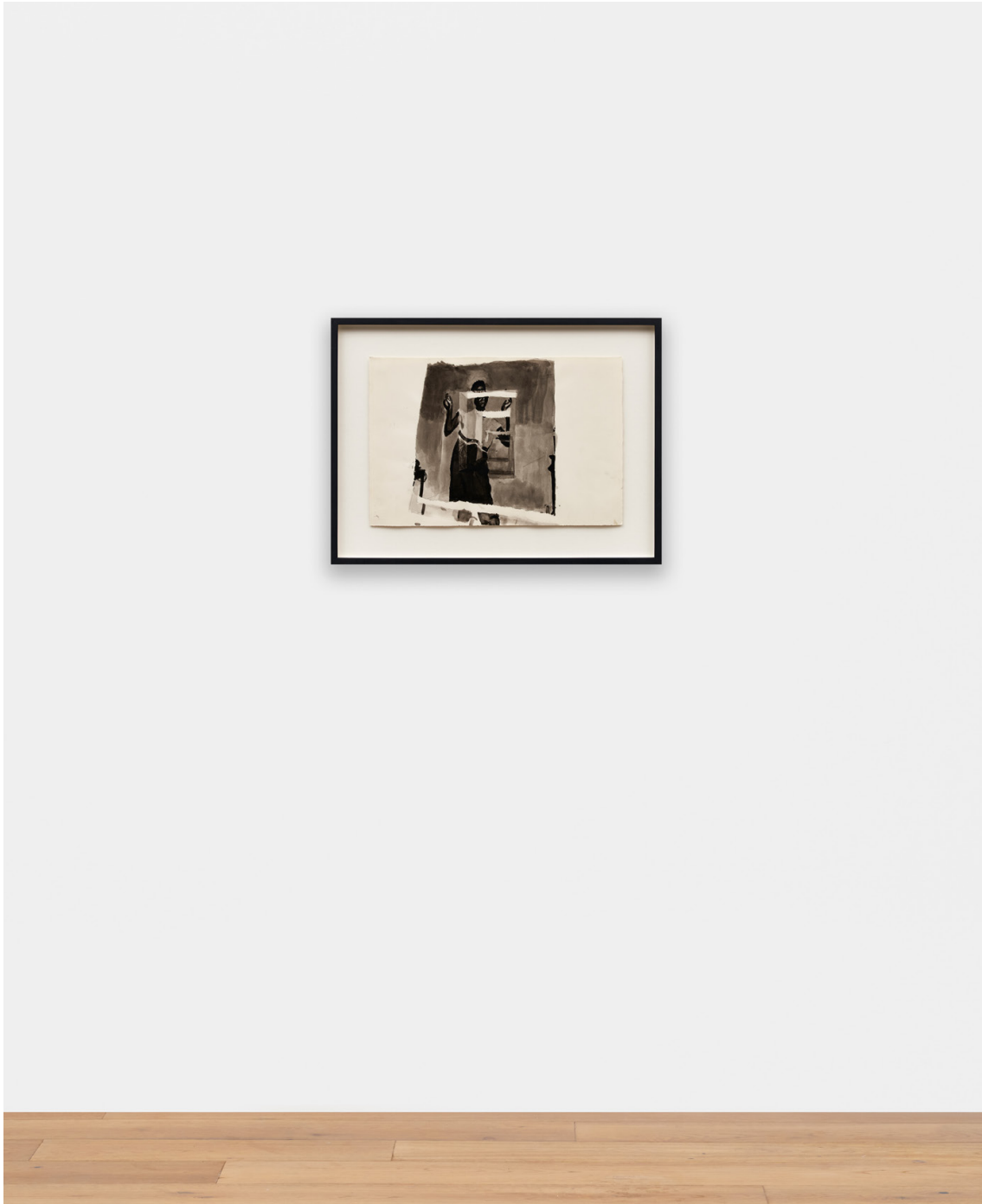




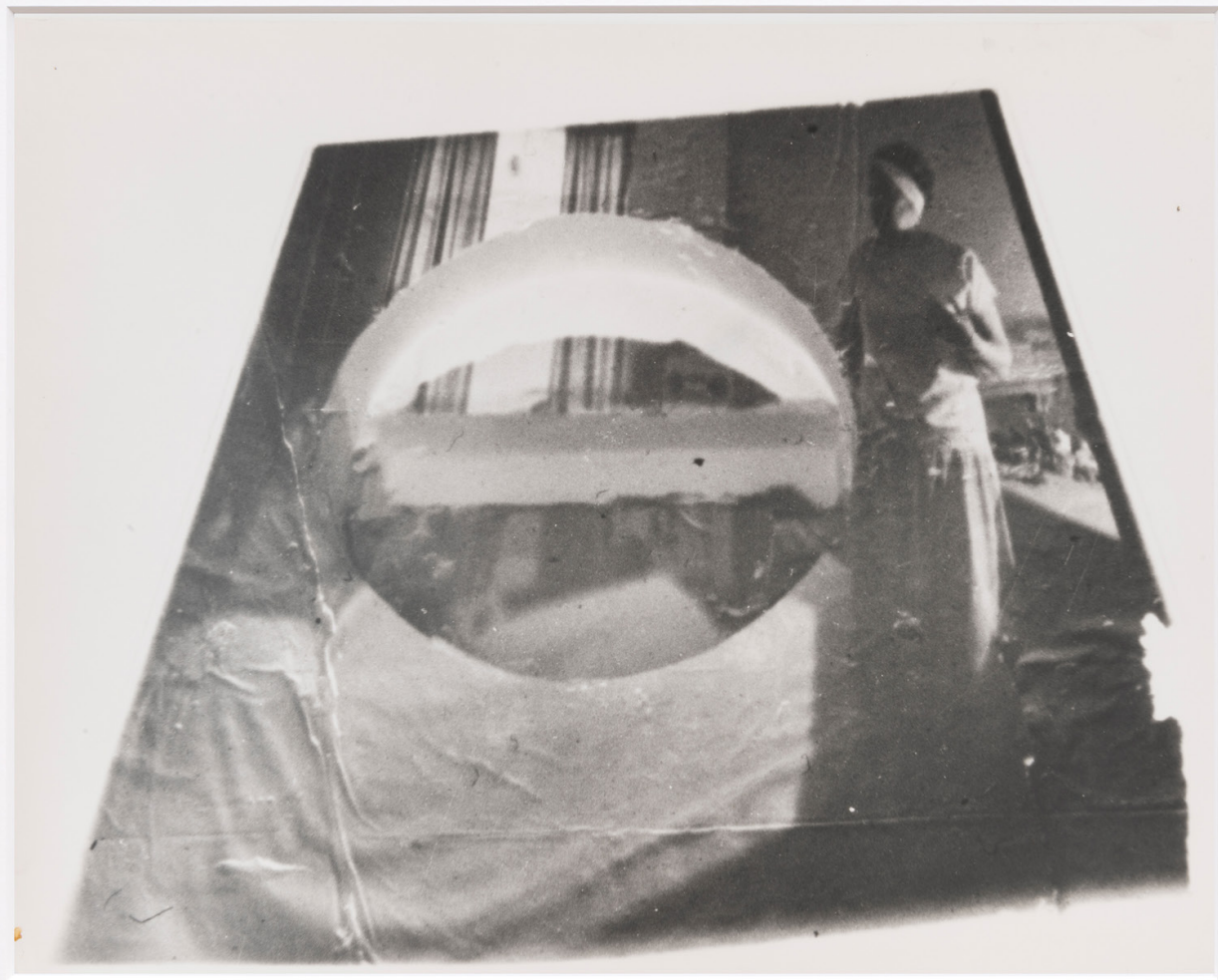
Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Woman Dancing)*, 1989–91 / 2024
Gelatin silver print
23½ x 26 inches (59.7 x 66 cm)
Edition 2 of 7 + 2 AP (DELo067.2) (ELL836)
Price: \$7,500



THE NICHOLSON
SERIES



Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Woman Dancing)*, 1989–91
Graphite and ink on paper
22 x 29 inches (55.9 x 73.7 cm)
(DELo050) (ELL130)
Price: \$20,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother's Bedroom)*, 1987–91

Gelatin silver print

23 ½ x 26 inches (59.7 x 66 cm)

(DELo051) (ELL193)

Price: \$21,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother's Bedroom)*, 1985–88

Ink and ink wash on paper

27 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 33 inches (70.5 x 83.8 cm)

(DELo056) (ELL386)

Price: \$24,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Laure and Mother)*, 1989–91
Gelatin silver print
17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches (45.1 x 51.4 cm)
(DELo046) (ELLo35)
Price: \$14,000





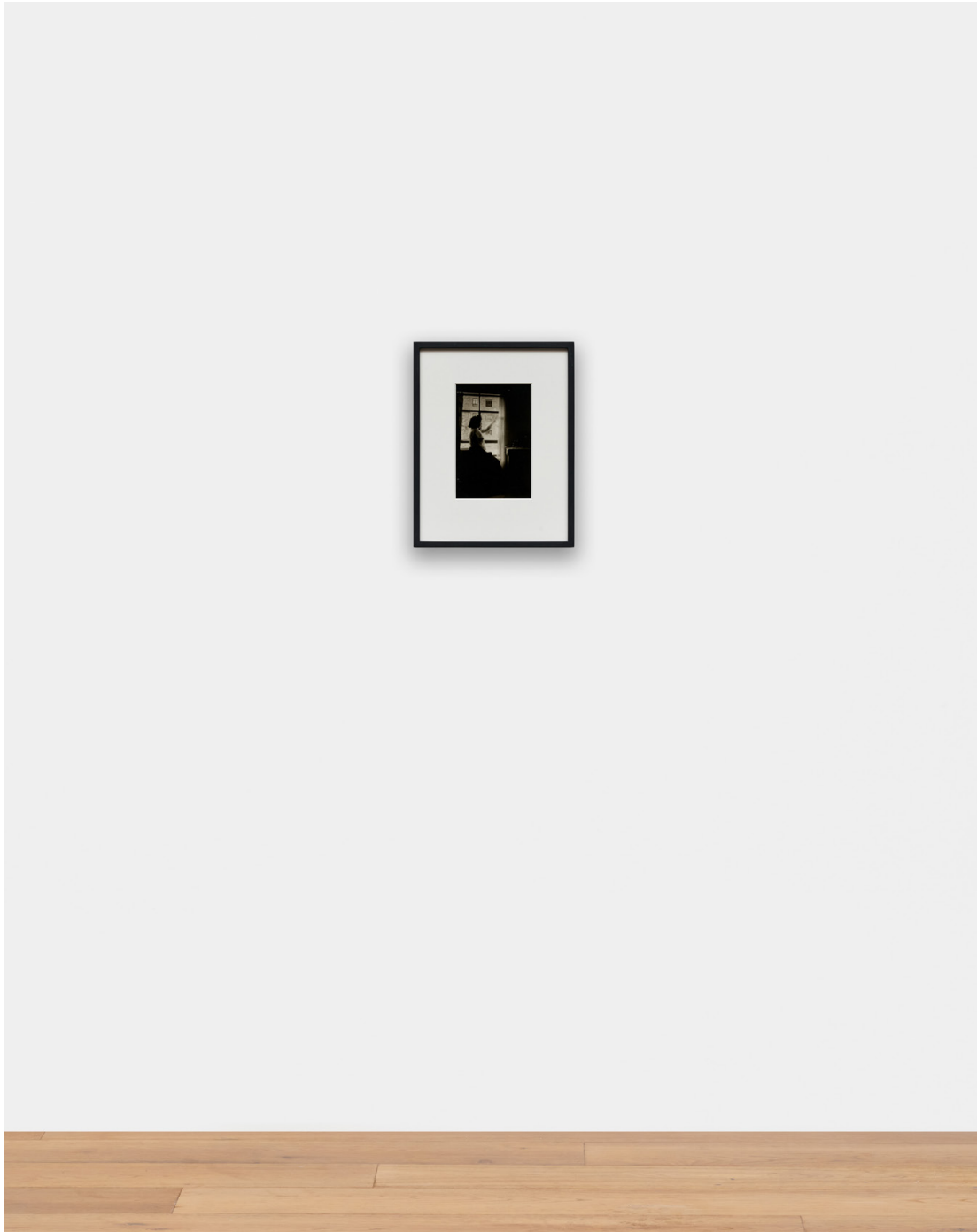
Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother and Laure)*, 1989–91
Graphite, ink, and ink wash on paper
15 ½ x 18 ½ inches (39.4 x 47 cm)
(DELo061) (ELL683)
Price: \$11,500

With the Pictures Generation coming into its own during the 1970s, many artists looked to the external world to question and subvert the tired tropes that dominated visual culture, both high and low. Ellis, however, understood the truth lay closer to home. In 1981, Ellis was bequeathed his father's photography archive, an inheritance that would transform both his practice and his notions of self. Here, in Thomas Ellis' pictures lay a lost world: a father he never knew, driven to elevate his community through photography.

Miss Rosen, Darrel Ellis' Intimate Exploration of Black Identity and Selfhood in AnOther Magazine







Thomas Ellis Sr., printed by Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother in Window)*, 1950–55
Gelatin silver print
16 x 13 inches (40.6 x 33 cm)
(TELO001)(TELO10)
Price: \$9,000



Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother in Window)*, 1983
Graphite, ink, and wash on paper
36 x 28 inches (91.4 x 71.1 cm)
(DELo065) (ELL787)
Price: \$28,000







Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Mother)*, 1980–85
Ink and graphite on paper
21 x 16 ½ inches (53.3 x 41.9 cm)
(DELo048) (ELLo78)
Price: \$14,500





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Self-Portrait as Museum Guard)*, 1989–91 / 2024
Gelatin silver print
23½ x 26 inches (59.7 x 66 cm)
Edition 1 of 7 + 2 AP (DELo071.1) (ELL823)
Price: \$7,500

I grew up loving the European history of art. It's my true love, my education, my background, and that's where so much of my feeling about art and being an artist came from. Bonnard can paint his wife at the kitchen table. This is natural to me to do because I always felt that was the subject matter: the people I was around, my family.

Darrel Ellis







Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Woman in Street)*, 1980–85

Ink and ink wash on paper

20 ½ x 20 ½ inches (52.1 x 52.1 cm)

(DELo055) (ELL352)

Price: \$15,000







Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*, 1980–85
Gouache and graphite on paper
24 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 inches (62.9 x 48.3 cm)
(DELo057) (ELL432)
Price: \$16,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Seated Figures)*, 1980–85
Graphite, watercolor, and acrylic on paper
16 ¼ x 20 ¾ inches (41.3 x 52.7 cm)
(DELo058) (ELL449)
Price: \$13,500





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (1830 Crotona Ave)*, 1981–85

Watercolor and pen on paper

21 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (55.2 x 45.1 cm)

(DELo047) (ELLo077)

Price: \$14,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Laure and Mother in Grass)*, 1988–91
Acrylic, pen, ink, and ink wash on paper
15 ½ x 17 inches (39.8 x 43.2 cm)
(DELo060) (ELL590)
Price: \$8,000





Darrel Ellis, *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*, 1990
Ink on paper
15 ½ x 12 ¼ inches (39.4 x 31.1 cm)
(DELo068) (ELL258)
Price: \$12,000



SELECTED PRESS

THE
NEW YORKER

PHOTO BOOTH

AN ARTIST LOST TO
AIDS FINALLY GETS HIS
DUE

Darrel Ellis made a wrenchingly heartfelt body of work based on his late father's photographs. They've remained obscure until now.

By Chris Wiley

December 14, 2021



“Untitled (Self-Portrait after Museum Guard Photograph),” circa 1990. Gelatin-silver print.

Photograph by Darrel Ellis Courtesy of Visual AIDS and Candice Madey, New York. Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody.

Darrel Ellis was possessed by the past. This was true when he strolled the halls of the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a budding artist, visiting paintings by the European masters that stung his heart. It was true, later, when he immersed himself in the teachings of traditional Eastern religions. But the past gripped him hardest when he made his own drawings and photographs, which reinterpreted pictures that had been taken by his father.



"Untitled (Grandfather James A. Harrison)," 1990. Gelatin-silver print.
Photograph by Darrel Ellis, Courtesy Visual AIDS. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

His father, Thomas, was an amateur shutterbug who'd briefly run a professional portrait studio. But before Ellis was born Thomas was beaten to death by drunken plainclothes policemen on the streets of the family's South Bronx neighborhood; according to Ellis's sister, an argument had ensued after Thomas asked that the cops move their double-parked car. (In a bitter irony, Thomas had been training to join the police force. A few weeks after his death, the academy called to inform him that he had fulfilled the requirements.) Born in 1958, Ellis made it his life's work to explore the world in which his father had lived. Working from prints of Thomas's

pictures, and later from a cache of negatives that his mother gave him, he used that recovered history both as a catchment for his nostalgic fantasies and as a sounding board for his present-day existence. L. P. Hartley's famous adage casts the past as a foreign country; Ellis was less a tourist than an expat. He died, of AIDS, in 1992, at just thirty-three years old, the same age his father had been when he was killed.



"Self-Portrait after Photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe," 1989. Ink and wash on paper. Darrel Ellis Estate, Courtesy Candice Madey, New York and Visual AIDS. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

It is only with the publication of a [new monograph of Ellis's work](#), by the arts organization Visual AIDS, that Ellis is beginning to earn the recognition that he deserves. (A travelling exhibition will have its first stop at the Baltimore Museum of Art, next fall.) As a young artist, Ellis took classes at Cooper Union and attended the prestigious Whitney Independent Study Program. He circulated in the vibrant downtown scene among fellow-artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Peter Hujar, both of whom took his photograph. But unlike some of his

peers, who found recognition during their lifetimes or after their deaths, Ellis's work remained relatively obscure. Money was always tight, and to make ends meet he held down a job as a security guard at MoMA, which he resented having to do. During his brief career he mounted just a handful of exhibitions, and he gained his only glimpse of wider notoriety as a participant in Nan Goldin's scandal-causing group exhibition about the AIDS crisis, "Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing," in 1989. Tellingly, however, he chose to reimagine both Hujar's and Mapplethorpe's photographs of him—neither of which he liked—as powerful self-portraits, thereby staking a creative claim to his own image.

The only known recording of Ellis is an interview, conducted for the gay biweekly newspaper *New York Native*, less than a year before he died. He told the interviewer, David Hirsh, that he was never one to harp on the subject of his Blackness. “There’s so much racism naturally in the art world,” he said. “And people don’t know how to react to you a lot of times, as a Black artist, they don’t know how to react to your work. It’s a big issue, and it’s one that I guess I don’t really think about often—Black, the race thing—even though I know it’s there. But it’s very naïve of me to be that way because it’s affected my whole life.” Still, the subject inevitably made its way into his work. In one series of photographic self-portraits he depicted stereotypes of Black men—security guard, beggar, Black Panther. He never exhibited those images, but he used them as the basis for several later works, including an uncharacteristically goofy distorted photograph, “Untitled (Self-Portrait after Museum Guard Photograph),” and a drawing, “Untitled (Self Portrait),” in which a rumpled Ellis appears with his hands outstretched, entreating the viewer for assistance, or perhaps mercy.

In a somewhat superficial sense, Ellis could have fit in well among the artists of the so-called Pictures Generation. This cohort, which included figures such as Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman, was besotted with voguish postmodern theory and cheeky acts of appropriation. But while Ellis was certainly swimming in the same intellectual pond—in his notebooks, you can find dashed-off self-admonishments to “read Hegel” and “read Derrida”—his appropriative work had little in common with their hipster remove and pointy-headed philosophical posturing. His work instead was wrenchingly heartfelt and personally revealing.

In his interview with Hirsh, Ellis recalled being a solitary, unhappy kid. He was always scratching away at his sketchbook, which didn’t exactly ingratiate him with his family or his peers. His mother remarried after his father’s death, and his stepfather made his home life less than welcoming. The outside world was not much better. Owing to a combination of racist housing policies, city mismanagement, economic upheaval, and the lingering

damage wrought by the construction of Robert Moses's Cross Bronx Expressway, Ellis's South Bronx neighborhood was spiralling out of control by the time he reached his early teens.



"Untitled (Car on the Street)," circa 1988–92. Gelatin-silver print.
Darrel Ellis Estate, Courtesy Candice Madey, New York and Visual AIDS.

Little wonder, then, that he became enthralled with his father's old pictures, which were taken in the Bronx but seemed beamed in from another world entirely. "I don't know any life from the forties and fifties, with their picnics and their beautiful clothes and everything is so nice and perfect and wholesome," he told Hirsh. "The subjects in my father's photos are my mother and sister, and my grandparents, who I knew very well. When I look at pictures of them I see that life changed them so much, I can't help but have some reaction."

Ellis's first works based on his father's photos, from the early eighties, are drawings that have the feeling of transcriptions. It's as if Ellis believed that faithfully re-creating the originals would somehow summon the lost scenes back into existence. Quickly, though, he developed a distinct style that

combined impressionistic washes of ink with sharp, tremulous lines, evoking both Édouard Vuillard's hazy romanticism and Alberto Giacometti's jagged angst. His works also bear an unmistakable relation to those of the contemporary masters Marlene Dumas and Luc Tuymans, whose paintings are similarly engaged with photography and memory. Ellis's images are aptly ambivalent, by turns haunting and deeply sentimental, evoking his struggle to reconcile himself with the archive his father left behind. He told Hirsh, "I always tried through my art, because I could never do it in real life, to make the family to my liking."

Ellis said that he didn't consider himself a serious photographer, but he devised an ingenious method to create altered versions of his father's images without tampering with the original prints or negatives. First, he would construct three-dimensional cardboard, foam, and plaster sculptures roughly resembling topographic relief maps. Then he would project his dad's images on the plaster landscapes and photograph the transformation. The results were disconcerting, even to Ellis.

They show placid family scenes ruptured and effaced as if by a vandal, treasured memories warped incomprehensibly. "When I look at those photographs sometimes all I see are holes," he told Hirsh. "It bothers me. I say 'God, there are so many holes in these pictures'—that's what I told the gallery—'God, I can't take this.' I guess because it reflects a truth or reality, that search for wholeness and completeness, but it doesn't exist."



"Untitled (Mother)," circa 1989–91. Ink and wash on paper.
Darrel Ellis Estate. Courtesy Candice Madey, New York and Visual AIDS.

Perhaps it was this feeling of incompleteness, as well as a looming sense of his own mortality, that led Ellis to immerse himself in Eastern religion. In one undated entry from his journal, the hexagrams from an I Ching reading are jotted beneath the question “Do I have AIDS?” “Even though we live in a physical world and are made of flesh and blood and everything, deeper down the reality of human beings is that we are spiritual beings,” Ellis told Hirsh. “We’re embodied souls. We are connected to some infinite intangible source of life, of creation.” This understanding of existence as both concrete and numinous jibed with Ellis’s photographic practice. Like all photos, his father’s were freighted with a paradox: though they were indelible records of moments in time, the memories associated with those moments could all too easily be lost, swallowed up in the slipstream of a life’s passage. There is something about the Buddhist valorization of the present that Ellis understood, perhaps before he ever cracked open a sutra. At his memorial service, in June of 1992, there was a quote from him printed on the back of the program. Echoing Faulkner, it stated, “Even the past is still in the making.”



“Untitled (Uncle Joseph Tansle);” circa 1989–91. Gelatin-silver print. Darrel Ellis Estate, Courtesy Candice Madey, New York. Collection Marcos Chaves.

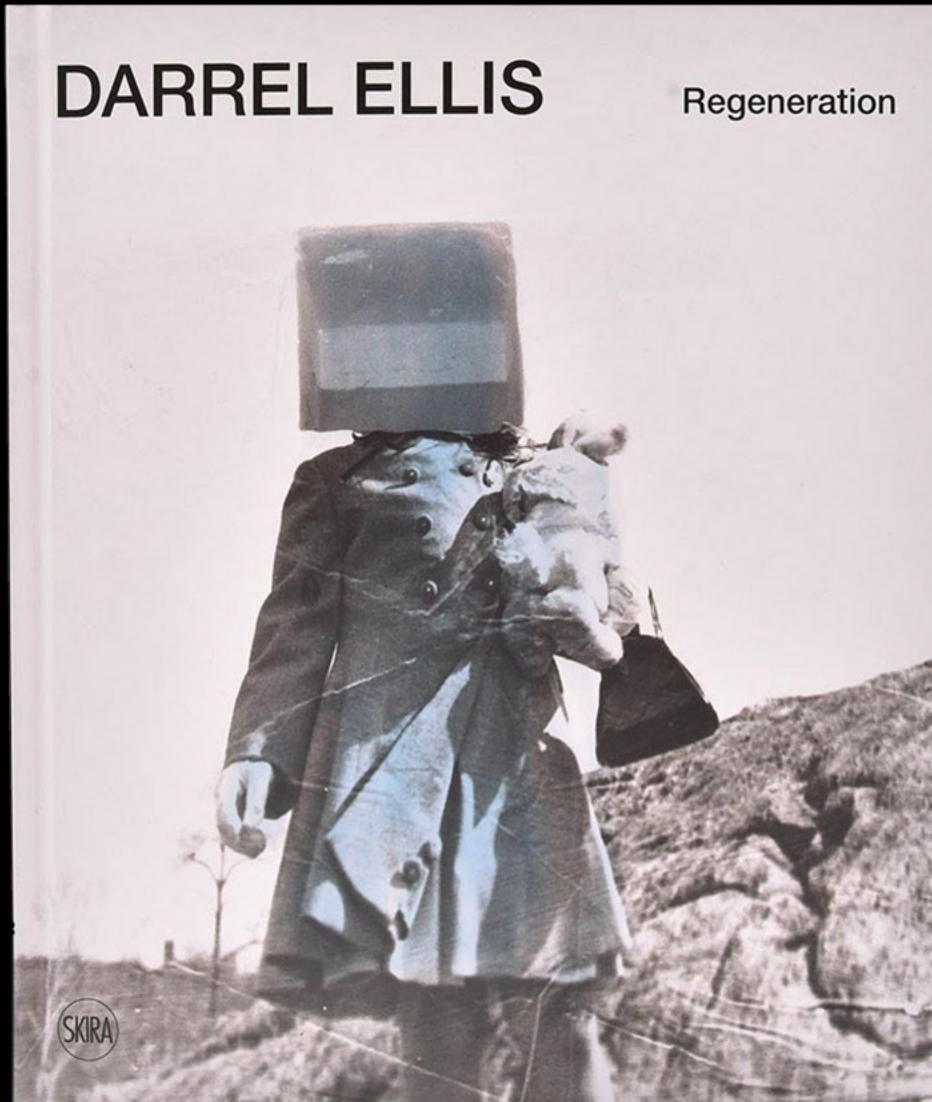
KEY PUBLICATIONS



Darrel Ellis, Edited by Lara Mimosa Montes and Kyle Croft
Published by Visual AIDS, 2021.

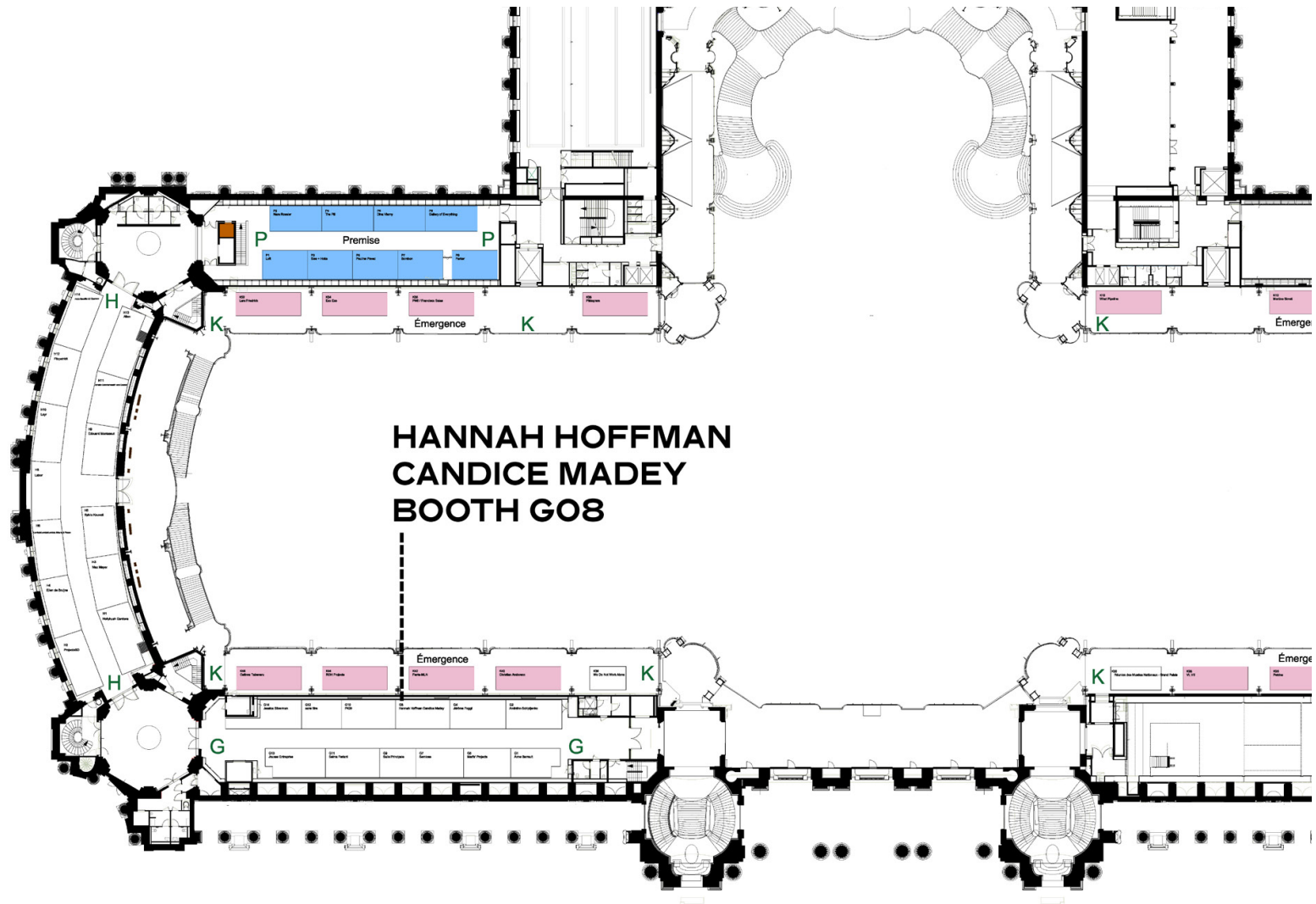
DARREL ELLIS

Regeneration



Darrel Ellis: Regeneration, Edited by Antonio Sergio Bessa and Leslie Cozzi
Published by SKIRA, 2022.

ART BASEL PARIS MAP



**HANNAH HOFFMAN
CANDICE MADEY
BOOTH G08**