



CPW Announces 2026 Vision Awards Honorees



Danny Lyon, *Working Girl*, Cartagena, Colombia, 1965

Kingston, NY, March 2026—CPW is proud to announce the recipients of its 2026 CPW Vision Awards. Each of the honorees has had a significant impact on the field of photography, and will be celebrated in person at a dinner event on May 16, 2026, at CPW's headquarters at 25 Dederick Street in Kingston. These are the honorees:

Lifetime Achievement: **Danny Lyon**

Photographer of the Year: **Mickalene Thomas**

Saltzman Prize for Emerging Photographer: **Sridhar Balasubramaniyam**

Photobook of the Year: ***Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination*, edited by Oluremi C. Onabanjo**

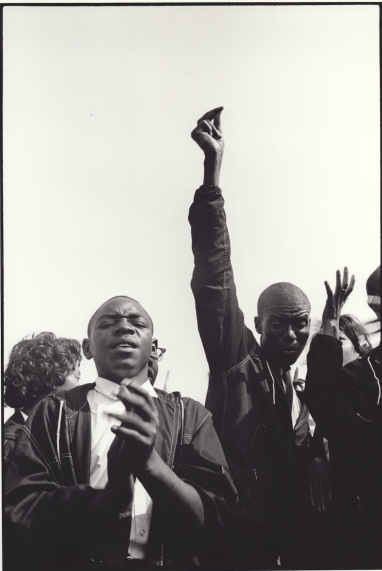
Danny Lyon is a photographer and filmmaker whose work has elevated the struggles and social challenges of civil rights activists, incarcerated people, and American subcultures. **Mickalene Thomas** is a mixed media visual artist whose photographs emphasize themes of Black femininity and celebrity. **Sridhar Balasubramaniyam's** extraordinary visual stories bridge the lyrical and realistic attributes of Dravidian and other Indian cultures. And the groundbreaking book ***Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination*, edited by Oluremi C. Onabanjo**, personifies how self-agency and self-assertion powered Africa's immense struggle in the 20th century to affirm its myriad identities and cast off European colonizers.

"We are especially proud this year to celebrate an exceptional and diverse group of honorees for the 2026 CPW Vision Awards," said Brian Wallis, CPW Executive Director. "Each remarkable recipient has re-drawn the boundaries of global image making, inviting us to see afresh the history of photography and

to consider how the medium shapes our sense of beauty, personal identity, politics, and social transformation.”

For twenty-two years, CPW’s Vision Awards have been a mainstay of the nonprofit’s programming. Initiated in 2004, the awards first honored CPW Executive Director Colleen Kenyon and her sister Kathleen Kenyon (whose self-portraits and collages were on view at CPW in the exhibition *My Sister, My Self: Photographs by Colleen Kenyon and Kathleen Kenyon*), and artist John Dugdale. Among the recent recipients are photographers Nan Goldin, An-My Lê, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Dawoud Bey, Sally Mann, and Carrie Mae Weems. This year’s ceremony will be the fourth the organization has staged in its newly renovated headquarters, a 40,000-square-foot historic cigar factory in Midtown Kingston.

Proceeds from the 2026 Vision Awards gala will support Woodstock AIR, CPW’s renowned artist residency, now in its 27th year. Woodstock AIR supports artists of color working with photography and expanding the critical dialogue around diversity, race, and identity in the context of social justice.



Danny Lyon (American, b. 1942)

Danny Lyon is a legendary American photographer known for his intimate and extended documentary series depicting social outsiders and dissident subcultures. Covering the Civil Rights movement in the Deep South in the 1960s, Lyon adopted a fervently political, antiracist position. He became the official photographer of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and marched with John Lewis and Julian Bond, documenting protests and flagrant discrimination. Lyon later photographed motorcycle gangs in the Midwest, inmates in the Texas penal system, and workers dismantling historic buildings in Lower Manhattan. These photographic series became immensely influential photobooks, including *The Movement* (1964), *The Bikeriders* (1968), *The Destruction of Lower Manhattan* (1969), and *Conversations with the Dead* (1971). Lyon is also a prolific writer and filmmaker who has received two Guggenheim Fellowships. Major retrospectives of Lyons’s work have been

presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Caption: Danny Lyon, *The March on Washington, Aug 28th, 1963*



Mickalene Thomas (American, b. 1971)

Mickalene Thomas’s photographic images mirror the themes she explores in her painting, printmaking, collage, video, sculpture, and installation work. Often positioning beautiful Black women in repose amidst lush domestic settings, Thomas blurs the distinction between private and public, object and subject, concrete and abstract, real and imaginary. *All About Love*, her elaborate traveling retrospective was one of

the key cultural events of 2025 and demonstrated the full range of Thomas’s art, from photography to film to installation. Her 2024 exhibition, *Portrait of an Unlikely Space* at the Yale University Art Gallery featured early American portraits of Black women, men, and children hanging on walls, standing within cases, and resting atop furniture. Her work is held in numerous collections including the Whitney Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Her prizes include a MoCADA Artistic Advocacy Award (2015), and an Anonymous Was A Woman Grant (2013).

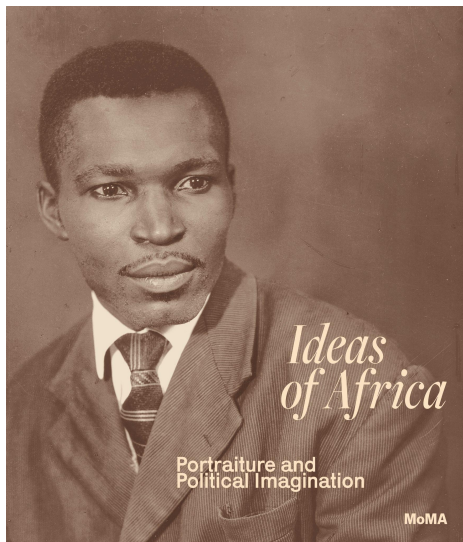
© Mickalene Thomas, *Portrait of Lili in Color*, 2008.



Sridhar Balasubramaniyam (Indian, b. 1989)

Sridhar Balasubramaniyam is a visual artist based in Chennai, whose work in photography and video explores the intricate relationship between body and land. His project *Body and Land*, documenting theater artists’ interactions with landscape, reflects his deep engagement with the folk performances, tribal weddings, and theatrical productions of southern India’s Dravidian communities. In his series *Manarsuzhal* (“sand whirl”), Balasubramaniyam wandered across Tamil Nadu for several years, recording moments on the edges of daily life—from a farming family’s damp clothes drying before a quarry-fractured mountain to bees nesting inside electric bulbs. The images meditate on impermanence, belonging, and the quiet endurance of the land, bearing witness to a layered and contradictory Indian landscape shaped by resilience and change. His work has been shown at the Alkazi Theatre Archives, at the National Portrait Gallery in London and more recently at India Art Fair.

Sridhar Balasubramaniyam, *Manarsuzhal*, 2019-2025



Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination
(Museum of Modern Art, 2026), edited by **Oluremi C. Onabanjo**

This landmark publication accompanies an exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art. It documents the myriad ways in which individual photographers and commercial photo studios captured portraits of African citizens at a moment of historic pivotal change—when they were building the civil rights movements that undertook the messy, often deadly work of decolonization. Featuring more than 100 photographs by renowned artists of the time, such as Seydou Keïta, Malick Sidibé and Jean Depara, and by contemporary artists of African descent, such as Samuel Fosso, Silvia Rosi and Njideka Akunyili-Crosby, this richly illustrated publication manifests the construction of Africa as a political idea. With an introduction by curator Oluremi C. Onabanjo, excerpts from landmark texts by V.Y.

Mudimbe and Brent Hayes Edwards, and a conversation between Yasmina Price and Momtaza Mehri,

Ideas of Africa highlights the potential of the photographic portrait as both a creative endeavor and political mechanism.

About CPW

Founded in 1977 as the Center for Photography at Woodstock, [CPW](#) is a not-for-profit arts organization with a dual mission: to support artists working in photography and related media, and to engage audiences through creation, discovery, and learning. At the heart of CPW's mission is programming that is community-based, artist-centered, and collaborative. To foster public conversation around critical issues in photography, CPW offers exhibitions, workshops, artists' residencies, and access to its Digital Media Lab. Having relocated from Woodstock to Kingston, NY, CPW now operates from its 40,000-square-foot headquarters which houses a photography museum, educational spaces, library, and community center.

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CPW

25 Dederick St, Kingston, NY 12401

Gallery Hours: Thursday to Sunday 11am – 5pm

Free admission

For more information about CPW Kingston programs, visit [cpw.org](#)

Press contacts

To request high-resolution images for press reproduction and interviews, please contact:

Myrtille Beauvert, +1 347- 295-7694

Meryl Cooper, +1 917-974-0022

press@cpw.org