

Works for the Now, by Queer Artists of Color

Pride Month may be coming to a close, but the wide-ranging pieces shown here have staying power.

June 29, 2020, 3:00 p.m. ET

As the country wraps up [Pride Month](#) and continues to contend with ongoing violence against queer and BIPOC communities, it's paramount that voices from those communities are heard. Not all artists are activists, of course, but they are all keen observers, ones who invite the viewer to consider their way of seeing things, whether their chosen subject is as expansive as prison reform or as singular as their own sense of self. Each work tells a story, and here, we've asked 15 queer artists of color to elaborate on theirs. (Look for a coming compilation of works by queer Indigenous artists in the weeks ahead.)

These interviews have been edited and condensed.

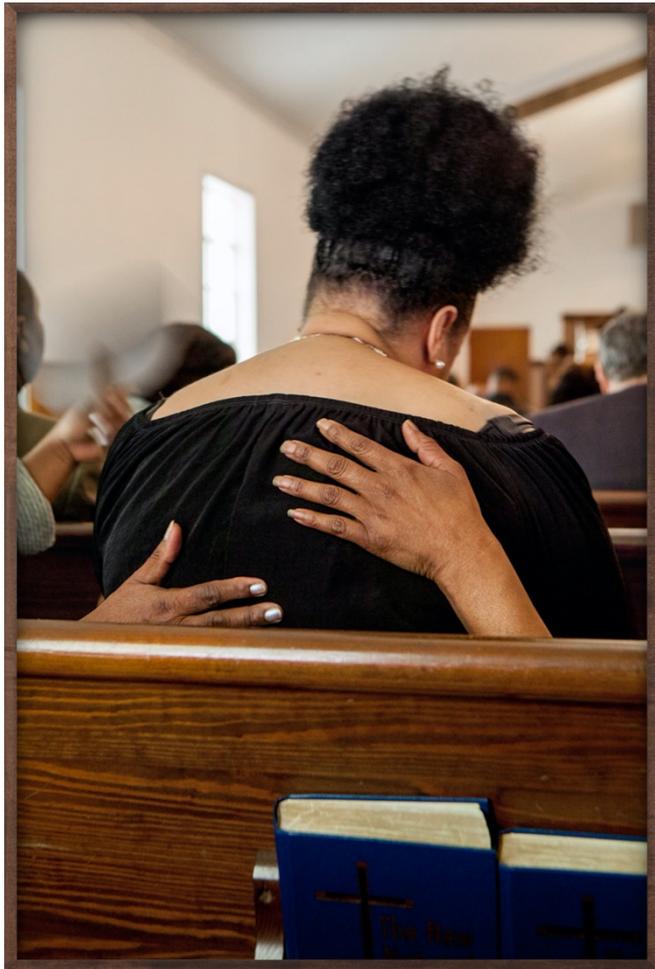


Brown's "Prune and grout" (2019). Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York

**By Elliott Jerome Brown Jr., 26,
based in New York**

“Prune and grout” (2019) I took last year at a New Orleans bar. There’s a companion piece to this that shows a woman with her head down on the bar, as though she’s mourning someone’s absence. This image shows the logistical setup — the person pictured here was just helping me with the other shot, but there was such concern in his eyes. His hand, which is just outside the frame here, was holding that of the woman.

The image [at right] is from one of the rare occasions when I was invited to make photographs in a documentary context. I attended the funeral of a person who had a storied life, despite having suffered an incredibly traumatic racial violence early on. This was the only image I felt comfortable sharing with a wider audience; the guests’ identities aren’t disclosed, and yet it communicates why I was there and serves as a way of paying my respects. I noticed that those who had been closest to this person moved through the day with ease — mostly they seemed proud and at peace — and it made me think about the power the deceased had and whether forgiveness was a tool for cultivating that power. A lot of my work involves interiority, both of physical spaces and of individuals — I’m interested in what constitutes their foundation and enables them to act. Your attacker might not repent and the state might assist in perpetuating violence, so, in that lack, what tools do you have to fortify yourself?



Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.’s “Oftentimes, justice for black people takes the form of forgiveness, allowing them space to reclaim their bodies from wrongs made against them.” (2018). Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York