

## ***STREET LIFE***

WORKS BY LISBETH FIRMIN, COBY KENNEDY AND RYAN SARAH MURPHY

Friday, July 23 – Saturday, September 25, 2021



Lisbeth Firmin, *Man in a Hoodie*, 2017, Oil on wood panel, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

In ***Street Life***, C24 Gallery Director and Curator David C. Terry has assembled a collection of paintings and sculpture that explores multiple facets of New York City through the history, inhabitants and byproducts found in its streets. The resulting dialog between the city's legacy of racial disparities, the assortment of lone souls who comprise its citizenry, and the physical detritus of its endless activity offers viewers a variety of visceral takes on this most fascinating and intricately layered metropolis. The works by **Lisbeth Firmin**, **Coby Kennedy** and **Ryan Sarah Murphy** will be on view at C24 Gallery from July 23rd through September 25th, 2021, with an opening reception on Friday, July 23rd from 6-8pm.

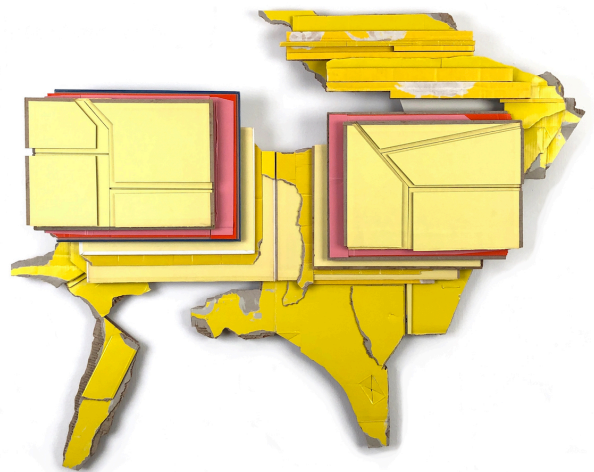
**Lisbeth Firmin** works in a subdued palette, using blocks of color to recreate moments of lone figures and couples lost in thought, walking through shadows or lit by the unearthly glow of a city sunset. Her figurative paintings allude to portraiture, though she avoids the direct gaze of her subjects, focusing instead on their backs, their distraction, their movements through scaffolded sidewalks and neighborhood side streets. Building the shapes of her figures with thick brushes in gradual layers, sometimes as many as 20, her paintings come into being slowly, much like the slow development of a photograph. Her process embodies the quiet, introspective energy of her look back at the city she made her home for over 30 years. As a counterpoint to her richly colorful oil paintings, her black and white monoprints are stripped down versions of these urban scenarios, their negative space etched out from the black ink-covered plates she uses to press them into being. In both her paintings as well as her lithographs, Firmin delivers an outside insider's view of some of the most intimate moments happening every day on the streets of New York City.

**Coby Kennedy** is known for his powerful depictions of the realities of Black life in racist United States of America, filtered through multiple lenses of media and cinema tropes and a hearty upending of bold stereotypes and archetypal imagery. Born and raised in Washington, DC to an arts and academia family, he has transformed an unflinching confrontation with history into a set of fantastical scenarios and characters that elevate these most challenging narratives to the level of mythology. With a background in industrial auto design, he embraces multiple materials that graphically embody the content of his works, including metal and bullet proof kevlar. Acknowledging the reality that, "...we're really good at finding reasons to kill each other," his works explore everything from gentrification to racist violence to dark & light skin colorism within the Black community. For the resulting fictional civil war he depicts in Brooklyn, he has created a series of machetes hewn from recovered street signs, some of which feature the names of Black leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Combining these street sign machetes into oversized mandalas, Kennedy has repurposed these weaponized symbols of placation into powerful points of focus, drawing our attention to the common misdirection tactics used by oppressive forces to distract people from their true source of power.

**Ryan Sarah Murphy's** three-dimensional pieces also have their roots in a sculptural practice that incorporates found objects. In these works made entirely of repurposed cardboard that she finds in dumpsters, alleyways and curbside stacks throughout New York City, Murphy embodies a kind of optimistic alchemy that perceives beauty where others see only trash. Starting with the colors that initially draw her to the materials she gathers, she simultaneously builds out multiple pieces at a time, tearing out any logos and printed characters to work with only the raw, colored cardboard shapes. Although some of her sculptures do lead to architectural or landscape references in their titles, these ideas emerge organically from the process of stacking and juxtaposing the layered elements. At their heart, these works are an abstract expression of the energy of the city that produced them, an homage to the notion that there is value to be found in the most common elements in our midst, if only we take the time to envision them differently.

Collectively, the works of these three artists encourage us to pay attention to the subtler realms of knowledge and grace to be discovered in the moments and materials around us when we least expect them, in a city whose streets provide endless moments of fascination and illumination.

For more information about **Street Life**, C24 Gallery or the artists in the exhibition, contact: [info@c24gallery.com](mailto:info@c24gallery.com).



Left: Coby Kennedy, *Blowout Combs And The Battle Of The Brownstones*, 2021, Repurposed DOT street signs, Bad Brains t-shirts, steel, 90 x 76 in. (228.6 x 193 cm)  
Right: Ryan Sarah Murphy, *En route*, 2019, Found (unpainted) cardboard, cut book covers, foamcore, 26.5 x 34 x 2.5 in. (67.3 x 86.4 x 6.4 cm)