

# MASS MoCA



**Zora J Murff's *RACE/HUSTLE* illuminates difficult truths in the pursuit of raising consciousness using photographs, collages and for the first time, installation works**

**On view December 6, 2025 - Winter 2026  
The Robert W. Wilson Building (B6)**

[Press Images](#)

**North Adams, MA, August 25, 2025** – MASS MoCA is pleased to present Zora J Murff: *RACE/HUSTLE*, curated by Terence Washington and the next exhibition to premiere as part of MASS MoCA's Curatorial Exchange Initiative. *RACE/HUSTLE* aims to demonstrate, through photographs, collages, and, for the first time, installation works, that the pursuit of liberation is, in part, a struggle against a desire for what merely mimics it.

Murff makes photographs, assemblages, videos, and text works that examine physical, psychic, and political violence, the rhythms and resonances of oppression throughout history and into the present, and the harmful desires that our visual culture cultivates. Murff is particularly attentive to the structures of state violence. His project for MASS MoCA invites viewers to examine how systems of domination interlock and how their injurious effects are normalized and made invisible in everyday life.

“Zora specializes in photo-based works that confront viewers with sometimes difficult truths about Black life in the United States,” says CEI fellow and guest curator Terence Washington. “Increasingly, he assembles found imagery and text in knotty, associative collages, and *RACE/HUSTLE* will feature these hallmarks as well as sculpture and the artist’s first foray into participatory art. The confrontation remains.”

*The Perfect Slave (after Jared Sexton)* (2022) is a glitchy collage of President Barack Obama’s official headshot that makes him look like a masked bandit. In *Gas Money (Affirmation #1)* (2019), Andrew Jackson peeks out from a folded \$20 bill being passed from one Black hand to another. One of two participatory works, *Master’s Tools/Master’s House (Exclusion and Extraction)* (2025), bluntly signifies how the art museum itself is part of the cultural arm of white supremacy and state power. *RACE/HUSTLE* reminds us that race, capital, and imperialism shape much of our relationships to one another and ourselves. At the same time, they are not absolutely powerful. What does it take to resist? What does it take to *desire* to resist?

“Zora is not interested in embracing the flag to secure the bag,” continues Washington. “*RACE/HUSTLE* brings together photographs, sculpture, participatory work, and didactic installation to argue that Black people have been given a limited — and limiting — set of proposals for finally getting free. At the same time, we ask a question that implicates us all: if you knew you had the tools and the information to get free, would you really want to do it?”

### **About the Artist:**

Zora J Murff (b. 1987) is an Oregon-based artist and educator interested in liberation from anti-Blackness. He uses his creative practice to explore the politics of racialization using provocative imagery and practices photography expansively, stretching it across disciplines to create associative or implied images. He strives to speak plainly about visual culture and its entanglement with race, capitalism, and other forms of hierarchical oppression.

Murff has created multiple books of his work including his latest monograph, *True Colors (or, Affirmations in a Crisis)* published by Aperture Foundation. His work has been exhibited and collected widely by institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, LACMA, Studio Museum in Harlem, and the V&A Museum. In 2023, Murff was named an International Center for Photography Infinity Award Winner.

**About the Curatorial Exchange Initiative (CEI):**

Zora J Murff: *RACE/HUSTLE*, curated by Terence Washington, is part of MASS MoCA's Curatorial Exchange Initiative (CEI), an exploratory pilot for how contemporary museums work collaboratively with curators and artists, whose diverse practices and knowledge can be exchanged, supported, and deepened. CEI invites six fellows, including independent and institutionally-based curators working in the United States and Puerto Rico, to realize curatorial projects at MASS MoCA the first of which, Steve Locke: *the fire next time*, opened in 2024. As part of the program, CEI fellows receive the support of MASS MoCA's curators, art fabrication and public programs teams, and with other key staff to realize exhibitions that will be mounted at, and supported through, MASS MoCA over the next five years. Among the defining features of the fellowship is its emphasis on curatorial exchange — intellectual, experiential, cultural, interpersonal, and institutional. MASS MoCA provides direct support for research, travel, residency, and commission/studio time for the artists each fellow is working with, and an annual stipend for the fellows that spans a two to three year period. The six fellows are Ryan N. Dennis, Marissa Del Toro, Evan Garza, Michy Marxuach, Risa Puleo, and Terence Washington.

Terence Washington is a writer and curator living in Philadelphia and studying at Princeton University. He completed his master's degree in art history at Williams College before working with the National Gallery of Art, the NXTHVN residency, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Free Library of Philadelphia.

**About MASS MoCA**

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art, and is an indispensable home for artists who stretch toward what has yet to be created. From its beginnings as the major textile mill Arnold Print Works in the mid-19th century, to its days as the Sprague Electric Company in the mid-20th century, to its current iteration as a globally renowned contemporary art museum and fabrication center, the 24-acre MASS MoCA campus has a rich history of serving as an economic engine of the city of North Adams and the surrounding region. With vast galleries and a stunning variety of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace art in all forms. For more information visit [massmoca.org](https://massmoca.org) or follow on Instagram at @massmoca.

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