

Shaunté Gates

The Night Before: Poppies & Parachutes

January 9 - February 28, 2026



Shaunté Gates

Between Columns and The Landing, 2026

Acrylic paint, photo, pulled paper, collage, thread, guinea fowl feather on wood panel
48 x 72 in (121.92 x 182.88 cm)

Marc Straus is pleased to present Shaunté Gates' inaugural solo exhibition at the gallery, *The Night Before: Poppies & Parachutes*. The show opens at 57 Walker Street with an artist reception on Friday, January 9 from 5pm to 8pm, and will be on view through February 28, 2026.

Gates' first exposure to the power of visual storytelling began as a child, at his Uncle Homer's home. The owner of a continually growing video archive of VHS and Betamax that overflowed across multiple bookshelves, Homer recorded movies from television broadcasts and borrowed tapes, creating a library that spanned the history of cinema from classics to new releases. The aesthetic of commercial Hollywood films that inspired Gates the most — and which continues to influence his artistic practice — are the expansive panoramas that in spite of their grand surroundings reveal intimate knowledge of the onscreen characters.

Opening Reception:
Friday, January 9 from 5-8 pm.

Gates' compositions are filmic, an orchestrated moment in a larger story. A plank of wood, painted canvas, shards of leather, photographs — each seems to have specific purpose, reminiscent of Kurt Schwitters' multimedia Dada collages. Gates mostly favors muted grayscale tones, recalling the ambiance of previous series. However, for this latest body of work, pops of technicolor red abound, with glaciers, speckled night skies, and expanses of open water.

Everyone is in a great hurry, Black figures, not running from but running to. Gates' world is about competition, about succeeding and overcoming. His rich world-building cannot be fully grasped, but his protagonists are undeniably heroic.

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Between Columns and The Landing transforms two characters from the 1975 coming-of-age film, a classic of African American cinema. Cochise and Johnny Mae are in many ways the archetypal pair of high school lovers. Through Gates's lens, we see them amidst a grand spectacle of pharaonic charioteers and a sky full of parachutes where their tenderness shines through.

Shaunté Gates was born in 1979 in Washington, D.C., where he continues to live. In 2025, he was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. In 2022, he received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award and in 2019 he was an artist in residence at the Kennedy Center, Washington, DC. His work has been highlighted in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Hyperallergic*, *Town & Country*, and the *Washington Post*, among other publications and he has exhibited at the 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville; American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC; and California African American Museum, Los Angeles among others. His pieces are included in the collections of the Howard University School of Law, Washington, DC and Studio Museum of Harlem, a bequest of Peggy Cooper Cafritz, among other institutions.



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