

MEDIA RELEASE

Black Alchemy: Resolve (attempt #1)

Aaron R. Turner

On View: Thursday, July 6–September 30, 2023, 2–6pm

Closing Reception with the Artist: Thursday, September 28, 6–8pm

NEW YORK, NY (July 6th, 2023) — Penumbra Foundation is pleased to present *Black Alchemy: Resolve (attempt #1)*, the first solo exhibition in New York City by Arkansas based photographer Aaron R. Turner.

Resolve (attempt #1) explores the linear movement of light, desire, and time. In the pursuit of abstraction to create speculative narratives, Turner uses various photographic techniques and processes, including reflective and archival materials, and in-camera and darkroom manipulation. This exhibition combines works from multiple series within and outside of *Black Alchemy*, and is a non-representational response to and visual analysis of objective and subjective ideas in photography as it relates to the individual lived experience of everyday life and internal contemplations.

“*Black Alchemy* provides a lens through which I see the world while simultaneously considering the past, present, and future,” said Aaron Turner in a recent lecture at Penumbra Foundation. “I use light in combination with influences of geometric abstract painting to shift questions of identity within an established, often monolithic historical narrative.”

Turner’s project started in 2013. During the past ten years, different iterations have been presented as exhibitions and publications. Most recently, *Black Alchemy: if this one thing is true* was published by TIS (2021), and exhibited, in part, at the Houston Center for Photography (2022). *Black Alchemy: there may be still time left*, was exhibited at Visual Studies Workshop (2021), and published by VSW Press (2022).

For this exhibition, many photographs were reprinted in new sizes and surfaces. Vandyke and inkjet prints as well as a daguerreotype are displayed together along with gelatin silver prints. *Black Alchemy* addresses Turner's thoughts on modern-day conversations around identity, marginality, abstraction, aesthetics, and ontology. As he claims, "I take direct inspiration from fellow artists' words, historical events, and my family archive to create this body of work. [...] My goal is to explore what 'black art' is and what a black artist is, concerning the black experience's representation."

In Turner's most recent monograph, *Moves From the Archive* (published by Sleeper Studio in May 2023) educator and writer Terence Washington notes: "If something new comes out of Turner's synthesis of cultural and artistic influences, then this is what *Black Alchemy* is. New ways of making—and seeing—for artists and others. Light out of darkness. A future from forgotten pasts."

The visiting hours for this exhibition are Monday through Friday, 2–6 PM. Admission is free.

Penumbra's Exhibition Space is supported, in part, by the **Joy of Giving Something**.

Black Alchemy: Resolve (attempt #1) was organized by Aaron Turner and Leandro Villaro. Exhibition Production: [Prepress Express](#), [LTI-Lightside](#), and [Ashmun Workshop](#).

Publication: *Untitled (self, extended)*, 2020. Photogravure. Edition 10. For inquiries and order details, write to info@penumbrafoundation.org

Related Programming: penumbrafoundation.org/exhibition-space

About the artist

Aaron Turner is an artist and educator currently based in Arkansas. He uses photography as a transformative process to understand the ideas of home and resilience in two main areas of the U.S., the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas. Turner creates still-life studies on

identity, history, blackness as material, and abstraction. Turner received his M.A. from Ohio University and an M.F.A from Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. He was a 2018 Light Work Artists-in-Residence at Syracuse University, 2019 EnFoco Photography Fellow, 2020 Visual Studies Workshop Project Space Artists-in-Residence, 2020 Artist 360 Mid-America Arts Alliance Grant Recipient, 2021 Houston Center for Photography Fellowship Recipient, 2021 Creators Lab Photo Fund recipient from Google's Creator Labs & the Aperture Foundation, and 2022 Darryl Chappell Foundation photographer-in-residence at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

About Penumbra Exhibition Space

Penumbra's Exhibition Space is a new gallery dedicated to presenting work that advances historic and alternative photographic processes in ways that are as conceptually and socially relevant as they are materially driven. The goal of this space is to foster conversations about the role of photography in contemporary society through curated exhibitions and collaborations.

About Penumbra Foundation

Penumbra Foundation is a non-profit organization that brings together the Art and Science of Photography through education, research, outreach, public and residency programs. Its goal is to be a comprehensive resource for photographers at any level, artists, students, professionals, historians, researchers, conservators and curators. Penumbra specializes in advancing the use of historic and alternative photographic technologies for contemporary image-making.

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