

Changing the view of the world, one photo at a time

Native Endia Beal uses photography to challenge stereotypes

BY TEVIN STINSON
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Internationally known artist Endia Beal, has always had a passion for art but she never imagined that passion would one day help reimagine the way we view the world and the people in it. But, that is



exactly what she is doing. most known for her photographic narratives and video

testimonies that document the lives of the invisible. The invisible are those whose voices are drowned by society's attempt to maintain normalcy through figurative castration of marginalized groups. Beal has been featured in a number of editorials including; BET, National Geographic, NBC and Slate Magazine.

Her latest work, "Am I What You're Looking For?" published in Vice Magazine explores what it's like for young educated black women as they prepare to enter the workforce for the first time. The series N., who are transforming from the academic setting to the professional setting space, earned her a spot on The Huffington's Post list of 10 Women Photographers Who Are Changing The Way We See The World.

When she got the word



This photo of Deanna is part of Endia Beal's latest photo series, "Am I What You're Looking For?"

she made the list, the city native was at a loss for words.

"It was a little breathtaking. I didn't even know it was published. A friend posted it on Facebook, and I was shocked," she laughed.

Beal said although she was excited about making the list, she is even more thrilled that she has the opportunity to look into stories that haven't been told within the fine arts. She said each woman in the series not only got pictures taken but they also got a chance to discuss

some of their personal issues, fears, and uncertainties. During an interview with *The Chronicle* recently, Beal mentioned she is also proud that the series shines a light on her hometown and the entire state of North Carolina.

While changing the way people view the world one photo at a time, Beal still finds time to serve as the director of Diggs Gallery and assistant professor of art at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). According to Beal, more than 75 percent of the photos in the series are of students who attend WSSU.

She mentioned her summer was spent traveling to different cities and towns across the state meeting with students in their homes.

"I had a chance to visit their homes and meet their parents. I think that was the most important aspect," she continued. "I wanted people to know where they were from and what they are trying to achieve."

While art has always held a special place in her heart, Beal said she didn't consider it as a full-time career choice until a close friend was shot and killed here in the city. She said the death of the 17-year-old black male was unfairly marked in a negative light by local media outlets.

"Although he was a poet, a lover of art and music, he was considered a thug, when really he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Beal said that she realized art provided the vehicle to change the mindset and stereotypes that plague communities of color. She said, "It's our responsibili-

ty to change the narrative.

"Just because they are women or just because they wear their natural style or just because they are black does not mean they will not strive for greatness, be professional, and excel." Beal said.

While sitting behind her desk inside the South's leading showcases dedicated to African and African American Art, Beal noted her mother and father also played an important role in her becoming the internationally known artist and activist she is today.

She said, "My parents instilled in me a certain form of leadership, and confidence that was needed to navigate the world. My mother would say they put their pants on just like you, one leg at a time. So there is no reason for you to feel intimidated or afraid because they're just like you."

Beal mentioned having that kind confidence allows you to navigate the world and not fall victim to an idea or following certain trends that are not at the core of your foundation.

When asked how she will continue to change the way people view the world with her art, Beal said she will continue to unveil the untold stories of the disenfranchised. She said, although there are a number of female photographers like Dr. Debra Willis, Latoya Ruby Frazier, Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson who are challenging the rules that decide what is considered acceptable in society today, there still aren't enough, and more has to be done.

"I want to be in the company of these amazing



Photos by Endia Beal

This photo of Kyandra and Shakiya is part of Endia Beal's latest photo series, "Am I What You're Looking For?"

women who are already setting the foundation," Beal said.

"Art has a way of making the uncomfortable, comfortable. One of the issues we have globally comes from the fear of the other," she continued. "Without even getting to know that person we judge people by their appearance every day. I will continue to focus on challenging that narrative and give people the confidence to say, 'No. This is who I am.'"

The Magnum Foundation's Emergency Fund Grant funded Beal's "Am I What You're Looking For?". The Magnum Foundation is a

/nonprofit photographic foundation located in New York that encourages, and funds independent photo-journalism efforts. The Emergency Fund program and grant supports independent photographers to produce in-depth and creative stories on underreported issues. "Am I What You're Looking For?" can be seen on the Magnum Foundation's website, www.magnumfoundation.org.

The posting of Beal's honor is at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/women-photographers-vice-magazine_us_57ae06e9e4b0718404112128.

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