

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW ORLEANS, JANUARY 2025 - **Sibyl Gallery** is honored to host **POLO SILK PRESENTS: Cash Money Records from the '99 - 2000**, an exhibition of photographs by **Selwhyn Sthaddeus "Polo Silk" Terrell (b. 1964, New Orleans)** capturing the Rap, Hip-Hop, and Bounce scenes of New Orleans as fostered and popularized by the legendary **Cash Money Records**. Founded in 1991 by brothers **Ronald "Slim" Williams** and **Bryan "Baby" Williams**, Cash Money gained initial notoriety for signing New Orleans-based artists and found success signing would-be superstars such as Drake, Nicki Minaj, and Tyga early on in their careers. This selection of Terrell's images features icons of the New Orleans music scene such as **Lil Wayne, Juvenile, B.G., Birdman, Magnolia Shorty, Mannie Fresh**, and more.

Inspired by family photographs as well as images in *Jet* and *ESSENCE* magazines, Terrell first picked up a camera in his teens as part of a Boys Club photography class. He has spent the ensuing decades photographing Black New Orleans culture at historic bars and nightclubs, Cash Money Records concerts and events, and Super Sunday with the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians. Terrell, nicknamed Polo Silk for his commitment to only wearing Polo Ralph Lauren branded clothing, collaborates with his cousin Otis Spears, an artist in his own right, on custom airbrushed backdrops, to bring all the history and significance of the portrait studio to the urban streets. Terrell saw the benefit in bringing multiple backdrops featuring different motifs on a single evening out, catering to a fashionable night club set and a desire to project one's personal style and success.

Terrell kept a strong handle on the evolution of Black cultural trends, incorporating iconography of the latest brands, sports teams, artists, and songs to ground each image in a definitive inimitable cross section of space and time—here specifically New Orleans in the 1990s and 2000s. His sense for the zeitgeist gave Terrell a greater connection to the subjects of his images, friends and neighbors, community members whose likenesses and families Terrell returns to over his decades-long career. What began as a lucrative hustle grew organically into a living archive of Black style and joy in New Orleans.

Today, Terrell's practice has expanded into labor around community memory. He keeps tabs on which portrait subjects have grown older, and which never had the opportunity, those who stayed in New Orleans and those who left it behind. For many people that lost everything in Hurricane Katrina—every photograph, every family album—Terrell's archive remains the only evidence of lives lived and loved. He gifts local mothers with photographs of their late sons, demonstrating an overarching dedication to demonstrating the strength of familial bonds.

Terrell's archive traces the index of years passed within a legendary subculture. Looking at photographs of a child and teenaged Lil Wayne before any of the *Carter* albums, one wonders what inspired Terrell to document a group of talented youths in a time before even the earliest iterations of social media. Ever humble and modest, Terrell credits the magic in his photos to the beauty of Black community and culture. The Cash Money Records photographs are a testament to perhaps Terrell's true artistry, a finger firmly on the pulse and an early understanding that the art consumed by New Orleans' Black communities had the capacity to outgrow the city and cement a place within the larger modern canon.

ABOUT POLO SILK

Selwhyn Sthaddeus "Polo Silk" Terrell has been documenting Black culture around New Orleans since the 1980s. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Antenna in 2017, the New Orleans Jazz Museum in 2022, and the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2022. His photos have been featured in group exhibitions such as *Called to the Camera: Black American Studio Photographers* at the New Orleans Museum of Art, *Gestures of Refusal: Black Photography and Visual Culture* at the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans and *Southern Democratic*, curated by Philip March Jones at the Carnegie Museum of Art for the 2024 FotoFocus Biennial in Cincinnati.

ABOUT SIBYL GALLERY

Founded by **Katherine Lauricella Ainsley** in 2022, **Sibyl Gallery** is a contemporary art space in New Orleans dedicated to promoting emerging artists and art practices. Collaborating with artists, patrons, and institutions alike, the gallery aims to continue to diversify and strengthen the New Orleans art community and connect it with the broader international art world.

SIBYL

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