

TRAVELING
EXHIBITION

BLACK MYSTERY MONTH



Black Mystery Month – *Black Mystery Month* is a groundbreaking photography exhibition by Bill Gaskins that goes beyond a visual experience. It is a call to participate, reflect, and connect.

Through striking black-and-white portraits that require viewers to actively decode names and identities, the exhibition transforms audiences from passive observers into engaged collaborators. This interactive approach opens the door for meaningful dialogue about history, representation, and what it truly means to “know” our shared cultural past.

The exhibition features a suite of 30 large-scale black-and-white photographic prints derived from archival images of historically significant Black Americans and, in some instances, white civil rights allies.

Each work, titled *Blackboard*, presents a blurred photographic portrait overlaid with scrambled, backward-facing text spelling the subject’s name. Viewers can unscramble the text using a reflective surface—such as a mirror or smartphone camera—transforming them into active participants. Referencing the “Scramble Board” game from the groundbreaking 1970s musical variety television show *Soul Train*, this strategy requires viewers to “insert themselves” to reveal identity, disrupting traditional portraiture and prompting reflection on visibility, memory, and cultural knowledge.

A companion video titled *Mystery Lessons* further interrogates the tensions surrounding Black History Month and cultural recognition. Blending satire and critical inquiry, the video deepens the project’s conceptual reach.

Designed with community engagement at its core, *Black Mystery Month* offers rich opportunities for public and educational programs, including guided gallery conversations, intergenerational workshops, educator-led discussions, and student-centered learning activities. The exhibition’s accessible yet thought-provoking format encourages visitors of all ages and backgrounds to bring their own perspectives into the space, fostering collective inquiry rather than a singular interpretation.

For more information, visit:

www.eusa.org/exhibition/black-mystery-month

Left Images: Bill Gaskins, (American, b. 1953), *Blackboard #25*, 2022; digital photograph, 44 x 36 inches; Courtesy of the artist. Bill Gaskins, (American, b. 1953), *Blackboard #24*, 2022; digital photograph, 44 x 36 inches; Courtesy of the artist. Bill Gaskins, (American, b. 1953), *Blackboard #14*, 2022; digital photograph, 44 x 36 inches; Courtesy of the artist.

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ExhibitsUSA®





THE EXHIBITION IN YOUR GALLERY

Exhibits USA® allows venues to work with our team of interpretive specialists to customize the exhibition based on spatial limitations. If your institution plans to augment or edit the exhibition you are hosting, please notify us of your plans so we can work together on bringing the best exhibition to your venue.

SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES

When you host an Exhibits USA® exhibition, you will receive a range of support to present the exhibition to—and engage with—your community, all developed by our team of museum specialists in collaboration with the project's curatorial partners.

THESE INCLUDE:

- A marketing and publicity kit with digital images and cutlines, logos, and a sample press release.
- A programming guide with extensive educational resources and program/activity planning ideas for host venue staff and teachers.
- Custom-designed interpretive panels, object labels, gallery guides, and/or other interactive engagement tools.
- A registrar's packet with instructions and documents for condition reporting, and installing and de-installing the exhibition.
- Custom-built crates for easy handling and maximum protection, along with instructions for proper packing.
- On-call logistical support.

Above: Installation view of *Black Mystery Month* at the Sheila & Richard Riggs Gallery at Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore Maryland, August 22, 2024–September 29, 2024; image courtesy of Bill Gaskins.

Curator: Exhibits USA®

Organized by: Exhibits USA®

Content: 31 photographs and 1 A/V, with interpretive QR codes

Duration: 7-week display

Out-of-Region Rental Fee: \$8,725

In-Region Rental Fee: \$5,235
(In-region states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas)

Shipping expense: Exhibitor is responsible for payment of outgoing shipping.

Security: Limited

Run. ft.: 185

Number of Crates: 4

Total Weight: TBD

Insurance: The exhibition is fully insured by Exhibits USA® at no additional expense to you, both while installed and during transit.

DATES AVAILABLE:

Black Mystery Month is touring April 2028 through March 2033. The dates below reflect 7-week exhibition periods. Dates are subject to change; please contact MoreArt@maaa.org or (816) 800-0925 for current availability.

January 28–March 16

April 6–May 25

June 16–August 11

September 1–October 20

November 20–January 7