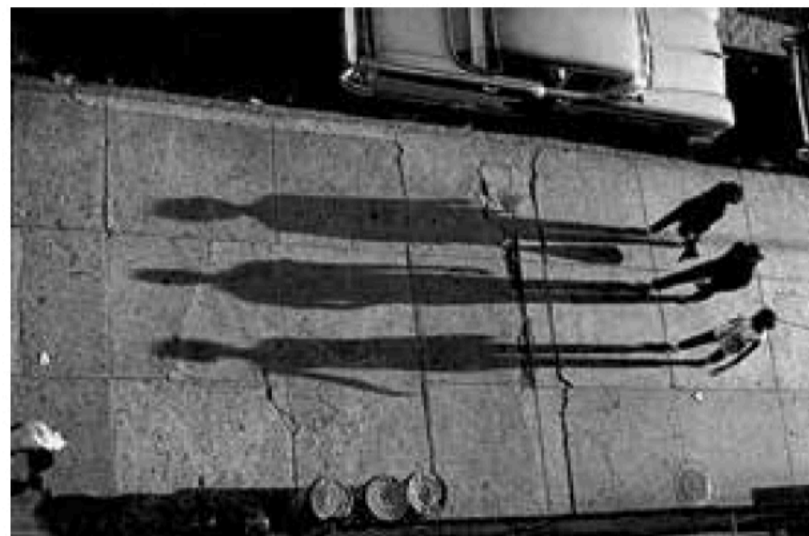


# Casting a Long Shadow

THROUGH JUNE 18, the Fairfield University Art Museum in Fairfield, Conn., will present “Adger Cowans: Sense and Sensibility.” Cowans, a photographer and abstract painter, was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1936 and studied photography at Ohio University with Clarence H. White, Jr. and Minor White. He graduated in 1958 as one of the first Black students to get a degree in photography there. Gordon Parks, with whom Cowans worked at *Life* magazine, referred to him as “one of the most significant art-

ists of our time.” For the Fairfield show, guest curator Halima Taha has selected more than 50 photographs from Cowans’ prolific career, during which he documented the Civil Rights movement, jazz musicians, Hollywood celebrities (everyone from Diahann Carroll to Henry Fonda to Duke Ellington), motion pictures (he worked on the stills of over 30 movies), and the streets of Harlem, among other subjects.



As Taha notes in the exhibition’s catalogue, Cowans pioneered the use of the sound blimp, formerly used to photograph animals, to reduce the noise of his camera’s shutter while photographing on movie sets. His technological innovation mirrored his artistic concern for his subjects. His photographs, such as *Justine* (1968) featuring a small child peering up at the camera in front of a window overlooking a fire escape, attest to his delicacy in understanding and capturing his subjects in their natural state. He is able to crystallize the magic of a moment and the dignity of the subjects. *The Cat* (circa 1960s) juxtaposes a woman, her back facing the camera while she crouches and applies her makeup in front of a low mirror, with a black



cat facing the camera head on. Cowans’ work also depicts the strength of the Black community. In *Black Umbrellas, Harlem* (1961) we see three women crossing the street in the midst of a snowstorm, their umbrellas raised to keep the snow off their heavy dark coats. *Bronx Three Shadows* (1968) shows the stretched shadows of three people on a New York City sidewalk, shot from above. Their lengthy figures are testaments to their strength and endurance.



## Keeping It Realist

“THE WYETHS: Three Generations | Works from the Bank of America Collection,” on view in the Asheville Art Museum in Asheville, N.C., is a deep dive into the creative worlds of one of the great families of American art. Founder N. C. Wyeth was a book illustrator known for his exciting maritime depictions; his son, Andrew, won fame for making realism relevant in contemporary art; Andrew’s sister Henriette was also a realist painter, and Andrew’s son, Jamie, is well known today for his portraits. Through more than 60 paintings, drawings, and illustrations, “The Wyeths” explores the family’s tradition of realism, which they pursued from their home bases of Chadds Ford, Pa., and Cushing, Maine. “The Wyeths” will be on view through May 30.

