



Above: Carmen Winant, *Clinic Pictures*, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Patron Gallery.  
 Front: cameron clayborn, *homegrown #5*, 2022 (detail). Courtesy the artist and Simone Subal Gallery, New York. Photo by Olympia Shannon.

**Related Programs**

**The Mask of Prosperity  
 Opening Reception**  
 Friday, May 10  
 5–7 p.m.  
 Gallery 400

**The Mask of Prosperity  
 Virtual Tour with the UIC  
 Disability Cultural Center**  
 Friday, June 7  
 3–4 p.m. CT  
 Virtual via Zoom

**Carmen Winant in  
 conversation with Natalie  
 Bennett**  
 Co-presented with the UIC  
 Women's Leadership and Resource  
 Center

Thursday, June 20  
 5-6:30 p.m.  
 Location TBD

**The Mask of Prosperity Artist  
 Roundtable**  
 Tuesday, July 2  
 5–6:30 p.m.  
 Virtual via Zoom

**The Mask of Prosperity  
 Curatorial Walkthrough**  
 Thursday, July 25  
 Gallery 400

For updated program details,  
 visit [go.uic.edu/g400events](https://go.uic.edu/g400events).

**Hours**

Tuesday–Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.  
 Saturday 12–5 p.m.

University of Illinois Chicago  
 400 South Peoria Street  
 Chicago, IL 60607  
 312-996-6114

UIC Gallery 400 is wheelchair accessible. Audio descriptions  
 are available in the exhibition. If you have specific access  
 questions or needs, please call 312-996-6114 or email  
[gallery400@uic.edu](mailto:gallery400@uic.edu).

[gallery400.uic.edu](mailto:gallery400.uic.edu)  
[@gallery400](https://www.instagram.com/gallery400)



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 Arts Council Agency and the School of Art & Art History,  
 College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, University  
 of Illinois Chicago.

May 10–August 3, 2024

**The Mask of Prosperity**





This exhibition's title points to how prosperity is mediated in our lives through morals, dreams, visions, capital, property, and other intangible things that determine what a flourishing life can be for us and those who will come after us. Exhibiting artists Eli Greene and Katherine Simone Reynolds deeply motivated me to pursue this project when we were all dealing with loss. This interview delves into ideas circulating in *The Mask of Prosperity*. –Denny Mwaura

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**DM: We discussed inheritance extensively during our first meeting two years ago. Since then, so much has changed in your life: you've changed your birth name, your practice has evolved tremendously, and your father's recent death had you questioning your relationship with him and the objects he left behind. You asked me, "What legacies do we choose not to inherit?" How do you answer this question today?**

**Eli Greene:** I'm still trying to figure out what the things that I've inherited are. Because of that, the question of legacy is something I'm always asking and is evolving for me. Changing my name has been hard. People make lots of assumptions about why I've made the change. Some assume it's a stage or artist name, that it's about gender and/or sexuality or other untrue assumptions. The reasons for the change are many and deeply personal. I share with those I wish to share with, but I have become much more

comfortable sharing the change without explaining or defending myself. It's a process; I'm learning a lot from it.

I've been trying to take daily walks in the sun to center myself as the work feels scattered all over various parts of the United States. I've really enjoyed working in this way because I am learning how to let go, how to ask for what I need, and how to trust others. I'm also leaning into believing in myself as a sculptor and learning more processes—it's helped me fall back in love with photography. Sound is very new for me, and I'm trying to use it ethically, not as an afterthought or add-on, but integral to an understanding of the work.

**DM: The work you created for this show revolves around family property. There is a question of marital vs. separate property (marital property is the assets acquired during the marriage, thus jointly owned, while the latter recognizes property owned before marriage as a non-marital estate) in the concealed images from your parents' wedding. By reproducing an Inheritfast letter you expose a predatory industry that exploits estate heirs at a time when they are vulnerable and grieving. How do property ownership and the dilemma it poses after separation and even the death of a parent appear in your work?**

**Katherine Simone Reynolds:** My practice

deals with residue a lot and how things remain even if we don't want to witness/receive them. Relationships end, flowers wilt, people pass away, and what remains is the residue of a "potential." When receiving the Inheritfast "offer," it was startling, intriguing, and then just sad. Because there was nowhere, I could place the weight within this piece of paper and not feel so detached from such a predatory practice. To have my father's name next to my name was a lot to look at in that moment, just months after his passing. And I couldn't stop thinking about what someone's "value" is in this world and how everything is capital, even the things left unsaid.

**DM: Your featured work *homegrown #5*, comes from your solo exhibition *mothership in malvern*, which honored the memory of your late grandmother and the life she built in Malvern, Arkansas. Tell me about the memories you retained in this house and how they've shaped you today. Is the house still standing?**

**cameron clayborn:** The house is still standing, but my family recently let go of ownership this past year due to financial and maintenance concerns. My memories there are the most rooted I can think of. It's the place where I first felt communion. I have taken this feeling with me everywhere I've been since. Sculpture is, first and foremost, about space; I essentially learned the basics of sculpture at my granny's house.

**DM: Inheritance can impede what a flourishing, desirable life is or can be. Your poem mediates your fraught relationship with pawn shops, strange places that hold memories and surrendered precious things. You view pawn shops as a consequence of systemic theft. Tell me more about this.**

**Gabrielle Octavia Rucker:** While *Plait (Heritance)* acts as a reflection of material loss, it's equally a reflection of what I have lost both physically and ritualistically through the theft, murder, and displacement of my ancestors. Pawn shops, much like museums, benefit from the suffering of others and hold property hostage, often with little respect or consideration of the meaning attached to the objects they hold. Family heirlooms often come with a story and are meant to be gifts that travel down the family line, keeping the story alive. When these heirlooms are seized or when one is forced to abandon them as a means toward survival, not only is an object lost, but so is the story behind it and the potential for a more concrete or grounded relationship with one's ancestors. As a poet, I can reanimate objects and relations I no longer have direct access to through language, facilitating an intuitive relationship with both. The poem becomes a stand-in for the original heirloom(s) lost, reanimating the cycle the pawnshop, the museum, and most other capitalist systems serve.