

***FAMILY TIES* | Curated by Ebitenyefa Baralaye**

Family Ties touches on the multi-layered bonds that connect our given and adopted family members, friends, and community. These bonds are manifested in traditions, shared history, common spaces, and elements of identity encompassing everything from the rituals and patterns of styling hair, the particulars of gathering places for meals, and the textures and shades that mark bodies. Being connected to family is essential for unity, health and well-being, especially during a time when those connections have been obstructed by world and life circumstances. Family does also include those we live in tension with. Ties can draw things in but also prevent them from drifting too far apart. In spite of distance, pain, conflict, and other differences, family ties are a reminder of commitment and the persistence of connection even in hard times and through complicated realities.

The four artists whose work is featured in this exhibition add their voice to the complexity and experience of *Family Ties*. Shea Burke's vessels and sculptures explore the sensitivity of touch, becoming metaphors for the both the diversity and strength of black bodies. Patrice Renee Washington's ceramic forms blend ritual and domestic structures with braided hair patterns, centering ideas of home and care in traditions that invite and celebrate how loved ones come together and work together. Patrick Quarm's brilliantly hued paintings are a record of time and identity, capturing near and distant family subjects. His vibrantly abstract layering of color into African fabric patterns underscore the intricate mutability of memory. Ebitenyefa Baralaye's ceramic portraits portray the living legacy of the matrilineal line of his family. Using shapes reminiscent of vessels and clay coils as marks, he sculpts the eyes, hair, and skin that bear their ancestral and existential encoding.

Even in its unity, family keeps and does not apologize for its mysteries to those outside and within. In the text of his 2007 painting, *Gold Nobody Knew Me #1*, the artist Glenn Ligon paraphrased a Richard Pryor joke: "*I Went to the Motherland to find my roots! Right? Seven hundred million black people! Not one of those motherfuckers knew me*". Being and knowing are not simple or homogeneously held/shared realities in the fabric of family. Still, this intrinsic connection is what makes each family unique and the bonds of connection so necessary. *Family Ties* offers us the understanding that we are critically and meaningfully defined as much by the ancestors, people, and beings we navigate in intentional relationships with as we are by how we understand ourselves.

- Ebitenyefa Baralaye, June 2022