

# JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

## Press Release:

Paula Henderson, *Structure and Stricture*

On view July 18, 2025 – September 13, 2025

**Opening Reception:** Friday, July 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

**Atlanta, Georgia — Johnson Lowe Gallery** is pleased to present *Structure and Stricture*, our first solo exhibition of works by Paula Henderson, a Massachusetts-born, Atlanta-based artist. Opening Friday, July 18, the exhibition focuses on a breadth of works by Henderson spanning the past two decades, including recent works never seen before.

Paula Henderson doesn't paint answers. She probes and renders conditions—structures in collapse, memory held in delay, identity rendered as a process constantly unfolding. Her debut at Johnson Lowe Gallery, opening July 18th, revisits a period shaped by proximity and lived experience. From 1998 to 2002, she taught in Chicago's public schools, working with students living in the shadows of the Robert Taylor Homes. These buildings—monuments to mid-century social planning and its slow unraveling—echoed through her students' lives, informing Henderson's early realist paintings. These were acts of witness: precise, emotionally charged studies of architecture at its limits, rendered with forensic tenderness, each structure carrying the imprint of a social wound.

In the classroom and the neighborhood, Henderson closely observed how identity is assigned and reinforced. Boys were framed through force; girls through the expectations of grace, beauty, and comportment. The body, in her work, holds both surface and story. From these early encounters, she developed a kind of practiced attention—focused on how people construct inner frameworks when the world around them proves unstable. Her abstraction gathers these elements—gesture, memory, structure—into a visual rhythm that holds presence. Space becomes an active trace of those who once moved through it.

Henderson's schematic paintings explore mapping as an embodied practice. Her diagrams and systems hold tension in their lines, each mark registering lived experience. The work leans toward elegy—fragile, deliberate, grounded in the physical world. In her later paintings, the basketball court appears frequently, reimagined as both a spatial system and a stage. Each composition unfolds as choreography, where repetition and regulation intersect with aspiration, over and over again. These works carry formal precision and emotional charge, using a sacred modular geometry to translate movement shaped by constraint.

In her most recent paintings, Henderson composes through rhythm and variation. Bodies emerge through motion—silhouettes that drift, collide, repeat—abstractions rooted in movement, memory, and edge. Earlier works sought pattern in the world; these create their own, shaped by internal logic, intuition, and architectural memory. The body exists as structure—embedded in each interval and curve. Coherence accumulates through layering, restraint, and design.

Throughout, Henderson traces hidden diagrams—emotional, architectural, cultural—allowing each work to become a kind of map: not of land, but of experience. Sensitive to the whispers beneath demolition, beneath movement, beneath the gloss of image, her work asks us to attune ourselves to what structures us—and what, too quietly, we inherit.

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## About Paula Henderson

Paula Henderson received her MFA from the University of Chicago in 2004. Alongside her studio practice, she spent over a decade teaching Critical Inquiry Seminars in Art History at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a focus on social context. Her work has been widely exhibited and is held in private and institutional collections, including the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where she held a solo exhibition in 2008. Henderson has received numerous awards, including a NEA Fellowship, project grants from the Illinois Arts Council, and residencies at Catwalk (New York) and in Munich, Germany. She has completed public commissions for the Chicago Transit System and was represented in Chicago for many years by Linda Warren Projects. Her work has been reviewed in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Art LTD*, *New City Chicago*, *Time Out*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Reader*. Henderson is currently based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Paula Henderson applies bilateral symmetry by tracing the contours of models drawn from commercial photo shoots and transforming them into mirrored abstractions. These works on paper evoke the beauty and symbolic power of Eastern female deity figures, aligning them with contemporary media goddesses—manufactured icons that shape ideals of womanhood and female identity.

Through these tracings and their deliberate distortions, Henderson explores the consequences of identities constructed through visual perfection and artifice. Her 'deified' forms acknowledge the unattainable nature of such archetypes and the relentless self-comparison they provoke, ultimately challenging the limitations they impose on human potential.

## About Johnson Lowe Gallery

Johnson Lowe Gallery champions emerging, mid-career, and established artists from our region and beyond. Our program reveres the transformative power of artistic expression, honoring the profound nature of visual language and its ability to drive personal and societal paradigm shifts.

Founded in 1989 by Bill Lowe, the gallery's extensive exhibition history includes renowned artists such as Thornton Dial, Michael David, Ida Applebroog, Markus Lupertz and Leiko Ikemura. In 2023, the gallery was re-established as Johnson Lowe Gallery under the Direction of Donovan Johnson with *The Alchemists*, a historic exhibition co-curated by Seph Rodney. This exhibition featured works by Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Ebony G. Patterson, Thornton Dial, William Downs, Shanequa Gay, Trenton Doyle Hancock, and many others.

## Notes to Editors

Artist: Paula Henderson

Title: *Structure and Stricture*

Dates: July 18, 2025 – September 13, 2025

Address:

764 Miami Cir NE #210, Atlanta, GA 30324

Hours:

Tuesday – Friday | 10:00 am – 5:30 pm

Saturday | 11:00 am – 5:30 pm

Sunday, Monday, and Evenings by appointment

[Instagram](#)

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