

JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

Press Release:

Todd Murphy: *Voyager*

On view September 26 – November 29, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, September 26, 7–10 pm

Atlanta, Georgia — Johnson Lowe Gallery is pleased to present *Voyager*, its second solo exhibition of works by the late American artist Todd Murphy (1962–2022). On view from September 26 through November 29, 2025, this exhibition proposes an encounter between image and environment, memory and myth, object and invocation. The exhibition draws from Murphy's deep engagement with the natural world as an animated force: stage, initiator, and oracle. It offers an experience of nature as sacred and unknowable—sublime, austere, and glistening with memory—where materials speak, and images function as maps of survival.

Murphy's practice unfolds across photography, sculpture, textile, installation, and assemblage. Each material choice emerges from its capacity to reveal meaning and carry memory. While photography recurs throughout the exhibition, it operates as one tool among many thus extending rather than defining the artist's practice. The artist's hand gathers, arranges, and recombines. The camera captures atmosphere and surface while drawing from a lineage of composite image-making that reaches from the dada-ists who gave birth to photomontage. Through this process, Murphy constructs visual systems in which histories converge and new forms of seeing emerge.

Recurring motifs of boats, garments, birds and botanical structures, though a syntax of poetics, remain grounded in the physical world. The boat emerges as a structure of passage; the garment, as a container for memory; the bird, as an emissary of movement and return. At the center of the exhibition is *Indigo Voyage* (2016), a suspended kayak sheathed in indigo-dyed Japanese boro cloth. This convergence of Arctic vessel and layered textile form evokes shared technologies of endurance, charted through parallel histories.

Murphy's work is a devotion to curiosity—an artist's impulse that mirrors the fundamental human drive to understand, to gather, to piece together what remains. His interest in history honors collective memory and individual inheritance. The past appears as residue and fragment; woven into every surface, embedded in every form. Murphy approached this material with humility and precision, building visual systems that illuminate our evolving relationship with the unknown.

Voyager presents a world in which nature speaks, and where image making becomes an act of listening. The exhibition affirms Murphy's belief in the simultaneous vastness and intimacy of existence. We are reminded that to mythologize nature is not to fabricate it—but to perceive it with unequivocal truth.

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About Todd Murphy

For more than three decades, Todd Murphy synthesized a wide range of mediums including sculpture, painting, film, drawing and photography in mystifying combinations. Existing between anthropology and avant-garde aesthetics, the artist's inventive mixed media works draw from revisionist histories, literary archetypes, and philosophy as a means to explore the complexities of human identity.

With the inquisitiveness of a 19th-century naturalist, Murphy has traveled to the far reaches of the world, collecting, photographing, and fastidiously cataloging everything from melting glaciers, to aviary species, to exotic fruit. His photographic studies of curiosities become sources for complex narratives based on philosophy, mythology, and the supernatural. In his work, Murphy often goes beyond these classical prototypes to include subtexts of bigotry, Southern history, and fantastic literary stories. In the end, his recurring protagonists — horses, birds, dresses, and boats — are poetic vehicles for a humanistic discourse.

Murphy was born in Chicago, later living and working in New York. After studying art at the University of Georgia, he inaugurated his artistic career in Atlanta and continued to show in Atlanta, in addition to New York, San Francisco, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, Virginia, Seoul, South Korea and elsewhere. His work is in many prestigious international private and museum collections including The High Museum of Art, The New Orleans Museum, and The Tampa Museum of Art. Beginning in the late eighties, Murphy's enigmatic work was distinguished by an Abstract Expressionist scale and gesture applied to figurative images. These iconic figures came to heroically dominate his canvases and Plexiglas paintings - many colossal in scale and immersive in nature.

His earliest works were birthed from experimentations with 35mm slides - placing one atop or overlapping another - resulting in an illusionary, prismatic technique. This method would later characterize his approach to both his fictional, historical, and biogeographical subjects encompassing Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett, Homer's Ulysses, anthropologist Margaret Mead, and various species of exotic wildlife.

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.

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Notes to Editors

Artist: Todd Murphy

Title: *Voyager*

Dates: September 26, 2025 – November 29, 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

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