

BARRY JOHNSON:

*never leave without saying goodbye*



# Barry Johnson

## *never leave without saying goodbye*

In perhaps the single most important body of studio work I've produced in the past 11-years, I present to you "*never leave without saying goodbye*," a visual documentation of processing grief. This large collection follows me throughout the year as I move through a wave of emotions due to the untimely loss of multiple close family members to addiction. Having never learned how to fully process my emotions, I approached this series slowly, waiting for each change in mood to push me to create a work reflective of how I felt.

The series began last February after I lost my older brother. His untimely passing sent waves through my immediate family and broke me down. A day after he died, I began working on a portrait of him. I cried, got angry, and chuckled about things we once laughed at, but would no longer be able to, during the process of painting his portrait.

I found that while painting, it allowed me to experience my emotions more closely than sitting and pondering on where and what went wrong. During the flight back from his funeral, I decided I would take the year to process my feelings through my artwork.

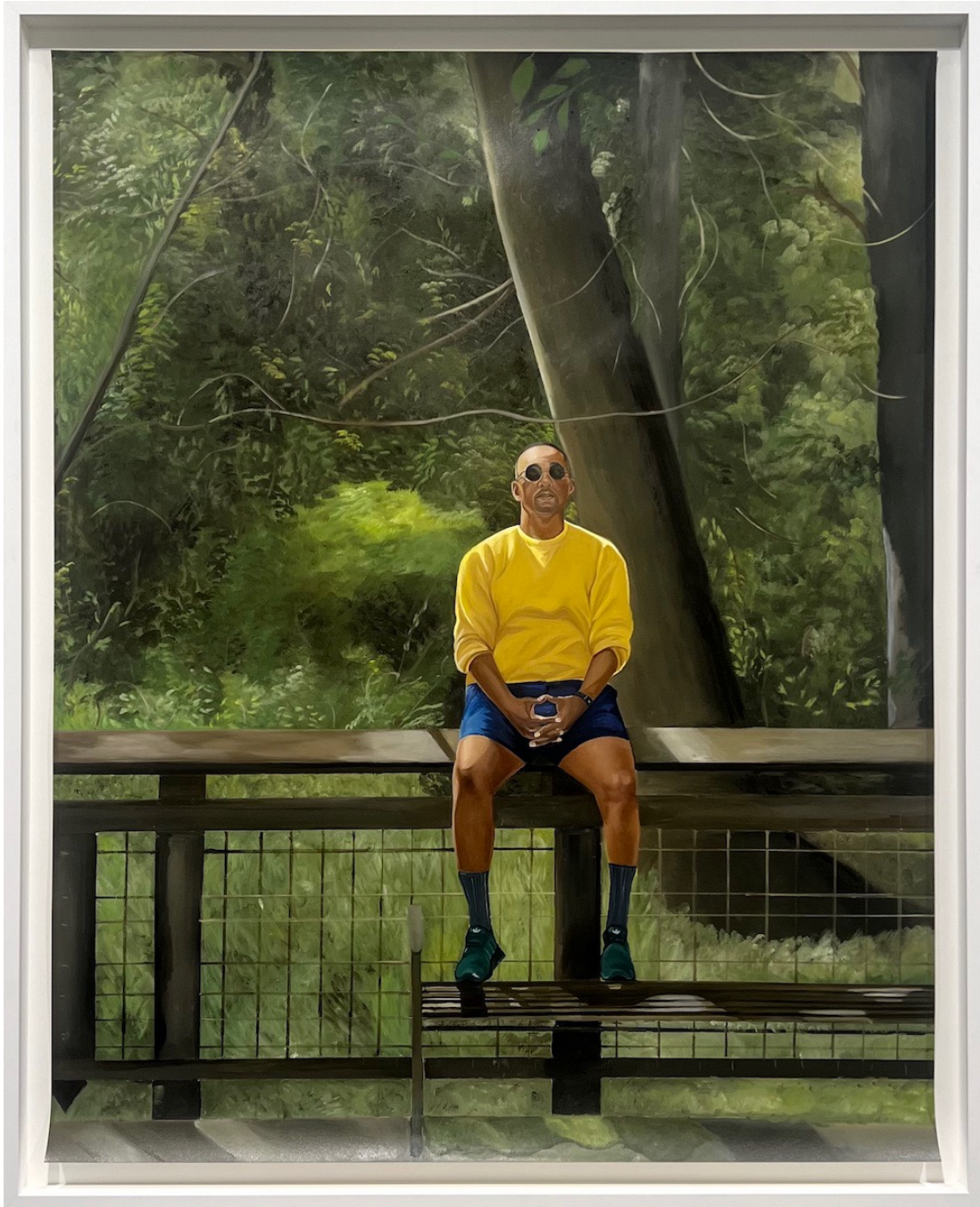
Rather than locking myself away in my studio, I chose to grieve privately in very public places. So, I began going to different public parks throughout Washington that I've visited over the years with my family, places that have brought me great joy. At these locations, I would spend time alone reflecting, and when the feeling arose, I would capture the moment. I chose to make none of the works site-specific because grief can take over you at any point, in any place.

I always chose to create this series outside in the elements because I believe landscape paintings to be some of the most challenging works of art an artist can create. Creating natural light, colors, and compositions requires a high level of attention.

This collection of work spans the year, following each season. Some works are ultra-bright and green, while others are shot at night. No work in the collection has me looking directly at the viewer. I deliberately avert my gaze to make the viewer take note of the environment surrounding me.

Having finished this collection, I admit that it was the most challenging body of work I've ever produced in any format, and it broke me down emotionally time and time again while painting. I've never cried this much in my life, and I feel that I somehow needed this to happen in order for me to become a better human.





Artist: Barry Johnson

Title: Son Of Ira

Year: 2023

Medium: Oil on paper

Size: 61.5 x 49 x 2 inches

Display size: 66 x 53.5 x 2.25 inches

Price: \$16,000

## **Son Of Ira**

This is the first image in the series. During my walk, I found myself drawn to a weathered park bench nestled beneath a canopy of trees. The weight of recent deaths pressed down on me, a suffocating cloak of grief. I sank onto the cool wood and allowed myself a brief moment to feel it all. Tears welled up in my eyes, blurring the world around me. The rustling of leaves seemed to amplify the silence, broken only by the distant sounds of approaching voices. Instinctively, I reached for my sunglasses, a shield to hide the vulnerability etched on my face. Something deep within whispered that it wasn't okay for a Black man to cry in a public place, a societal burden that added another layer of pain to the heavy weight I already carried.



Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: Tears Before Fire  
Year: 2023  
Medium: Oil on wood panel  
Size: 48 x 48 x 2 inches  
Price: \$10,500

## **Tears Before Fire**

Going through the stages of grief, anger surged through me tonight. As I sat beside the crackling fire, the flames seemed to mirror the intensity of my emotions. Thoughts of the many people heartbroken by my brother's death swirled in my mind. There were so many things left unsaid, unresolved feelings that would forever linger, a heavy weight denying everyone closure. The anger was a storm brewing inside me, fueled by the unfairness of it all.





Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: Wondering Why  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Size: 60 x 60 x 2 inches  
Price: \$15,500

## **Wondering Why**

I sat beneath the sprawling branches of one of my favorite trees, seeking solace in its familiar presence. It brought back memories of my Kansas childhood, a time spent beneath the shade of a giant oak tree in our front yard. Many afternoons were whiled away in its cool embrace, a sketchbook clutched in my hand. A bittersweet smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I sat for this photo. Pushing back a well of tears, I tried to capture a fragment of that carefree time, a time that now felt worlds away.





Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: We Laughed On Our Last Call  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on panel  
Size: 48 x 48 x 1 inches  
Price: \$9,000

## **We Laughed on Our Last Call**

On the last call with my brother, we laughed together talking about the same things we always did, music, family and competing. Things actually seemed like they were getting better. We began to all worry about you less, until your final two weeks. I visited Kansas and on the way to the airport I called to see you before I left. No answer, but I left a voicemail. I sat on the tree swing rocking thinking about if anything would be different if you had answered my call.





Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: I Walk Alone  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Size: 48 x 48 x 2 inches  
Price: \$10,500



## **I Walk Alone**

I was walking along a trail contemplating the fragility of life and there was a moment where the sun began to peak through the clouds behind all of the trees. I stopped, watched it and reflected on space for the moment before grabbing a photo.



Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: More Than A Tree  
Year: 2023  
Medium: Oil on paper  
Size: 61.5 x 49 x 2 inches  
Display size: 66 x 53.5 x 2.25 inches  
Price: \$16,000

## **More Than A Tree**

This image was the second in the series. I leaned against the rough bark of the tree, the weight of Black history heavy on my mind, particularly the horrific legacy of lynchings. Despite that burden, I placed my hands behind my back and looked up slightly, my gaze hopeful. It was a stance of resilience, a declaration that I refused to be defined by fear or worry about the future.





Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: Embrace The Loss  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on panel  
Size: 48 x 48 x 1 inches  
Price: \$9,000

## **Embrace the Loss**

Dash Point is one of my favorite places to visit. The place is secluded and serene. After my brother died, I took some of the flowers from his funeral and brought them to Dash Point. I put them in the water and let it carry them away. Shortly before he passed, we talked about him coming up to Washington to visit for the first time. I laid out on a piece of timber that I've been photographing for over a decade. Embracing it made things feel safe for the moment.



Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: First Cry in 20 Years  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on wood panel  
Size: 60 x 60 x 2 inches  
Price: \$15,500



## **First Cry in 20 Years**

It's true, I haven't cried in over twenty years. This particular tree, my favorite in the world, is located at Five Mile Drive in Tacoma. I've been photographing my family in it for years. Anytime someone visits from another state, I always take them to this park. Coming here alone and sitting in the tree, I found myself lost in thought. Before I knew it, tears were streaming down my face. It felt liberating, even slightly odd given so much time had passed. This image is the centerpiece for the series.



Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: Suspended  
Year: 2024  
Medium: Oil on panel  
Size: 48 x 36 x 2 inches  
Price: \$8,500

## **Suspended**

One of my favorite things to do on sunny days while painting in the studio is to go outside and lie on the grass in my yard, gazing at the sky. The sun and the infinite expanse of the sky always felt sheltering. The image I took with my drone on a walk high above the ground captures a similar feeling. The crisp fall air brushed against my skin as I cradled by the soft grass and colorful leaves, lost in thought about loss. This day marked a turning point; a weight that had burdened me for a year finally lifted, like a heavy stone rolling away. It was the day I accepted everything that had happened.





Artist: Barry Johnson  
Title: Lost In Place  
Year: 2023  
Medium: Oil on panel  
Size: 48 x 48 x 2 inches  
SOLD

## **Lost In Place**

Night walks are one of my favorite things to do. I like walking a path in daylight and doing the same path at night to feel the change in environment and space. This particular light is heavily shrouded by three trees and one of the only ones in the area that still has the old cognac color to the lamp. While taking in the light and realizing how small we all truly are, my Black presence startled the neighborhood so much that I was told from a distance that the police were called.





Artist: Barry Johnson

Title: One Last Time

Year: 2023

Medium: Oil on panel

Size: 48 x 36 x 2 inches

SOLD



## **One Last Time**

On my quiet walk, I came upon a spot where the vegetation grew so dense it formed a tangled wall of leaves and branches. It was a green tunnel that blocked out the world, except for a sliver of light creeping through at the very highest point. This sliver, thin as a thread, pierced the darkness and cast long, dancing shadows on the leaves below. It felt like a beacon, a tiny spark of hope that filled me with a sense of peace and the belief that better days lay ahead.





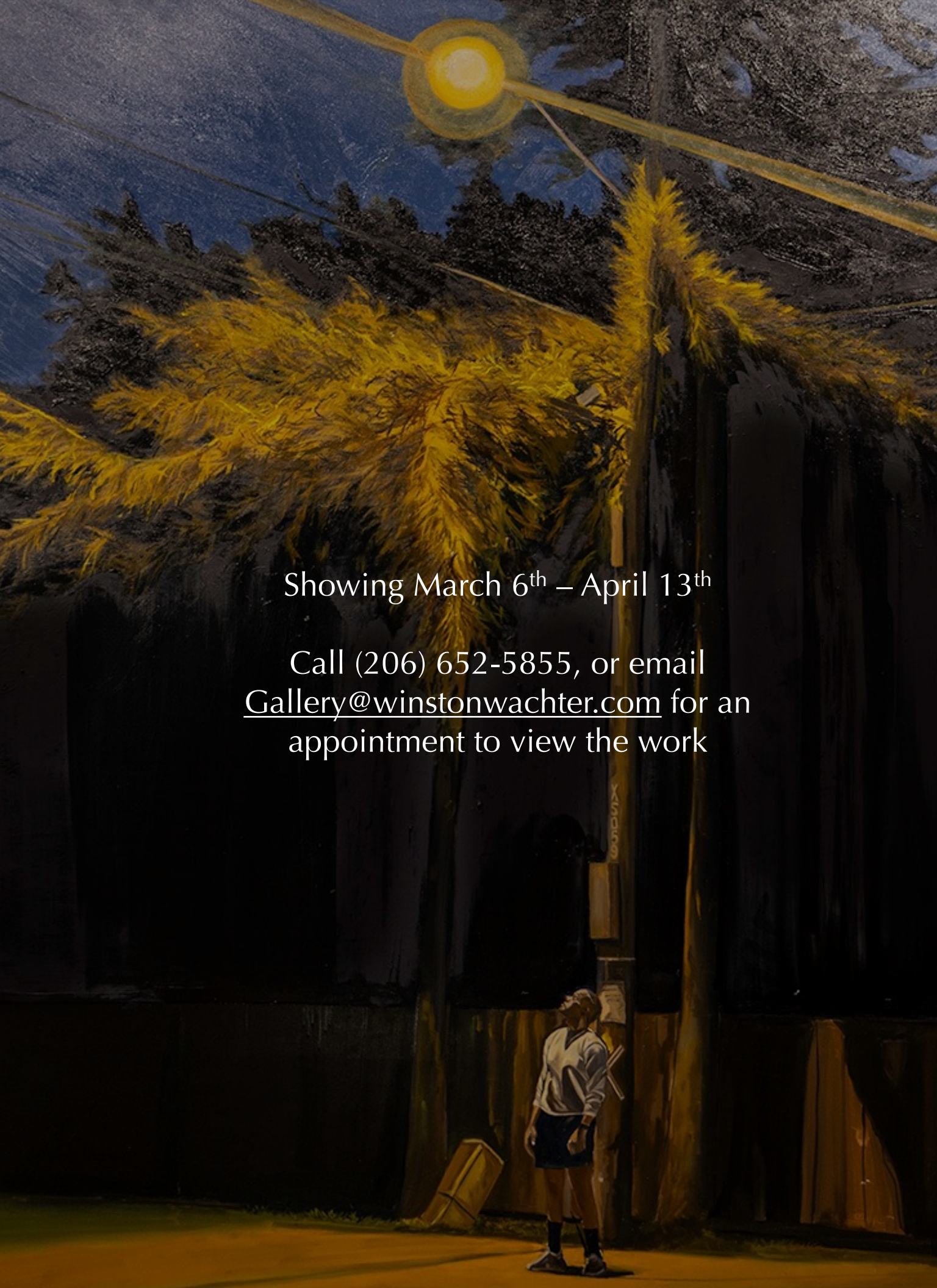






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Showing March 6<sup>th</sup> – April 13<sup>th</sup>

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