

## Fred Wilson

### Chandeliers

September 14 – October 12, 2019

540 West 25th Street

Seventh Floor

New York

Fred Wilson, *No Way But This*, 2013, Murano glass and light bulbs, 70-1/16" x 68-1/2" x 68-1/2" (178 cm x 174 cm x 174 cm), © Fred Wilson, courtesy Pace Gallery



New York — Pace Gallery is pleased to inaugurate its new global headquarters in New York with a monographic exhibition showcasing five of Fred Wilson’s Murano glass chandeliers. Installed hanging from the 7th floor gallery’s 19-foot ceiling, these works span fifteen years and are being shown as a group for the first time.

*Speak of Me as I Am: Chandelier Mori*, Wilson’s first chandelier, was made in 2003 when he represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale. Since then, Wilson has continued to experiment with Murano glass design elements as his chandeliers have evolved over the years as vehicles for the artist’s meditations on blackness, beauty, and death. A catalogue illustrating all of Wilson’s chandeliers to date will be published in conjunction with the exhibition. An essay by American novelist, playwright, and essayist Darryl Pinckney will be included in the publication.

“As juxtaposition is central to my practice, it’s thrilling to see this many of my chandeliers together for the first time since I created and exhibited them, as it’s something I truly never expected to see. These are heavy, fragile, and complex beings that have taken their own shape and meaning over the years. Seeing them from a new perspective, I hope to discover much more about the nuances of the works, all the subtleties and differences. This exhibition provides a rare opportunity for me as an artist to reflect upon the journey thus far while inspiring me to think about what’s next.” – Fred Wilson

For Wilson’s exhibition, *Speak of Me as I Am* at the Venice Biennale, he investigated the history of Venice’s African population, fully immersing himself in the study of how Africans were depicted in 17th and 18th century Venetian paintings and decorative arts. Using phrases from Shakespeare’s *Othello* to title his first as well as most subsequent chandeliers, Wilson created *Speak of Me as I Am: Chandelier Mori* in Murano in the traditional

Rezzonico style. Made in black glass, it is the first black chandelier ever to be created in the history of Venetian glassmaking. Wilson's chandeliers utilize the seductive beauty of Venetian craftsmanship while simultaneously subverting assumptions of a homogenous European culture.

Continuing to expand on this body of work, Wilson made *The Way the Moon's in Love with the Dark* for his installation *Afro Kismet*, which was exhibited at the Pera Museum in the Istanbul Biennial in 2017. Combining black Murano glass with traditional metal and glass elements of Ottoman chandeliers, this work underscores the centuries long and complicated relationship between Venice and Istanbul, two cultural crossroads whose expansive empires grew based on their strong and beneficial trading partnership. The title of the piece is a quote from the work of Alexander Pushkin, whose great grandfather was African and is believed to have passed through Istanbul before becoming part of the Imperial Household in Moscow and a general in the Russian Army.

Throughout his career, Wilson has challenged assumptions about race and museum display by masterfully juxtaposing and reframing artworks in opposition to simple objects. His work melds cultural symbols and unconventional materials, raising questions about erasure and exclusion in society. With the creation of these ornate sculptures, Wilson highlights the long-ignored presence of communities of African descent in Western culture. The chandeliers exemplify his practice—making something new while shedding light on a history that has been underrepresented.

*Fred Wilson: Chandeliers* will be on view from September 14 through October 12, 2019 at 540 West 25th Street. Next year, *Afro Kismet* will be exhibited at the Gibbes Museum of Art opening May 5, 2020 in conjunction with the Spoleto Festival USA. Wilson has been invited to participate in Dak'Art, the biennial in Dakar, Senegal, also opening May 2020.

**Fred Wilson** (b. 1954, Bronx, New York) challenges assumptions of history, culture, race, and conventions of display with his work. By reframing objects and cultural symbols, he alters traditional interpretations, encouraging viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives.

Since his groundbreaking and historically significant exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992) at the Maryland Historical Society, Wilson has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including the retrospective *Objects and Installations 1979–2000*, which was organized by the Center for Art and Visual Culture at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and traveled to Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York; Berkeley Art Museum, University of California; Blaffer Art Gallery, University of Houston; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; Santa Monica Museum of Art; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and Chicago Cultural Center (2001–04). Other solo exhibitions include *So Much Trouble in the World—Believe It or Not!* at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College (2005); *Works 2001–2011* at the Cleveland Museum of Art (2012); *Local Color* at The Studio Museum in Harlem (2013); *Black to the Powers of Ten* and *Wildfire Test Pit* at the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College (2016–17); and *Fred Wilson* at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, New York (2017).

In 2003, Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Speak of Me as I Am*. His many accolades include the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's "Genius" Grant (1999); the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (2006); the Alain Locke Award from The Friends of African and African American Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts (2013); a Lifetime Achievement Award, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (2017); and an Art of Change fellowship from the Ford Foundation (2017). He was honored by The Black Alumni of Pratt Institute during their 2017 Celebration of the Creative Spirit. In 2019, Wilson received Brandeis University's Creative Arts Award that included an on-campus residency during which the artist engaged with the Brandeis University community.


In 2018, Wilson's work was on view at Pace in London with *Afro Kismet*, an exhibition featuring the artist's most recent body of work originally produced for the 15th Istanbul Biennial in the fall of 2017. In conjunction with the exhibition, Pace published a catalogue that includes an introduction by artist duo and Istanbul Biennial curators Elmgreen & Dragset, an essay by the Biennial's Director Bige Örer, and an interview with the artist conducted by American novelist, playwright, and essayist Darryl Pinckney.


**Pace** is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has seven locations worldwide: two galleries in New York, including its newly opened global headquarters at 540 West 25th Street; one in London; one in Geneva; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul.

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