

Sanford Sawyer

Photographer



photograph by Sanford Sawyer

- Born in 1936 or 1937 in Nassau, The Bahamas
- He was interested in photography at a young age
- He attended St. Augustine's High School
- He worked as a photographer in the studios and darkrooms of the Montagu Beach Hotel and in Maxwell's Studio with Maxwell Stubbs
- He opened his business, Sawyer's Studio, on Ludlow and East Streets between 1963 and 1964

Excerpt from “Developing Blackness” catalogue

“The photographs in the exhibition date to the late 1970s and early 1980s and offer insight into black Bahamian society approximately one decade after independence. The influence of black American culture is clear in many photos, from the afros, bell bottoms and platform shoes, to the pin-stripe suits. Sawyer notably made use of a rounded-back wicker chair in his studio, which the Black Panther Huey Newton made famous in a well-known photograph. Sawyer's images, however, reveal that black Bahamians drew on diverse sources, from Christianity and Freemasonry, to Blaxploitation to Kung Fu movies, to realize their ideal photographic selves. Sawyer passed away on December 27, 1984. His son, Freddie Sawyer, continues to run Sawyer's Studios.”

—Dr. Krista D. Thompson, 2008

Timelines: Developing Blackness

July 8, 2019

by Blake Fox

At the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB), our Permanent Exhibition (PE) is up for approximately one year, after which the theme is changed. The upcoming PE will open under the title “Timelines,” and primarily draws on work from the National Collection and is supplemented by work from the collections of The D’Aguiar Art Foundation and the Dawn Davies Collection. “Timelines” will survey significant milestones in Bahamian art history and culture from 1973 to 2007.

Included in the exhibition are photographs that were once a part of “Developing Blackness,” an exhibition held at the NAGB in 2008, curated by Dr. Krista A. Thompson. It featured studio photographs by Bahamian photographers Maxwell Stubbs, Antoine Ferrier, Sanford Sawyer and local historian, activist, and dentist, Cleveland Eneas,



Untitled (1978), Sanford Sawyer, fiber print from original negative. Part of the National Collection.

taken in the Black communities of Bain and Grant’s Town, commonly referred to as “Over-the-Hill.” Aptly named, these photographs show us a period in our history where Bahamians were pointedly claiming and embracing their Blackness. This sense of pride was born out of, but not limited to America’s expressions of Black power during the Civil Rights Movement, the road to Majority Rule in 1967, and The Bahamas’ independence in 1973.

[Click here to read more: Timelines: Developing Blackness](#)



Untitled (It's Better in The Bahamas) (1978), Sanford Sawyer, fibre print from original negative, 14" x 11". Part of the National Collection.

