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[Images and logos]
Letter from the Director

With each issue of Studio magazine, I have the opportunity to reflect on the past half-year at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and I am always astonished by how much can happen in six months. This issue is a perfect example. As always, the Studio Museum team has created exciting exhibitions, programs and initiatives, and our diverse visitors have had profound, meaningful and enjoyable experiences with art and artists.

But this issue marks an extra-special milestone. In early July, I had the great pleasure to announce that we are embarking on the next chapter in our institution’s history—a radical reinvention of The Studio Museum in Harlem. In the coming years, the Studio Museum will replace our current facility with a building designed expressly for us by architect David Adjaye of Adjaye Associates, in collaboration with executive architect Cooper Robertson. With construction undertaken as a public-private initiative with support from the City of New York, the new building will be located right here on our current site at 144 West 125th Street, and will replace the office building renovated in 1982 by renowned architect J. Max Bond Jr. that has served us so well for over thirty years.

For the first time in our nearly fifty-year history, the Studio Museum will have state-of-the-art facilities designed specifically to support our exhibitions and programs. This will truly allow us to realize our incredible potential and better serve our growing and diverse audiences.

I look forward to sharing more information about the project with you in the coming months and years. But in the meantime, I look forward to seeing you uptown, as we continue to celebrate the amazing legacy of this institution and the generations of artists, supporters, visitors, staff, leaders, neighbors and friends who have made us who we are today.

Thelma Golden
Director and Chief Curator
The Studio Museum in Harlem is at the forefront of black contemporary art and culture, and we want you to join us!

Follow us on online, share your experience and be a part of the conversation!

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Museum

What's Up: Exhibition Schedule  5
Harlem Postcards:  6
Spring and Summer 2015
Everything, Everyday:  10
Artists in Residence 2014–15
In Conversation: Stanley Whitney and Lowery Stokes Sims
Art Is...: Interview with Lorraine O’Grady

Beyond

Afripedia Collective Highlights  26
Creatives in Africa
Elsewhere  28
Malaika Likes: Film Picks  34

Features

Faustin Linyekula × Christine Y. Kim  37
Venice: 10 Perspectives  43
The Barbershop, the Beauty Shop and the Bookstore  54

Studio Jr.

Partnership Highlight:  58
Museum Cultural Ambassadors
Art Work, Two Ways:  60
Stanley Whitney
In the Developer:  63
Expanding the Walls 2015
Mini Curator!:  66
Maya Evans × Kevin Beasley
DIY: Design a Float  68
Middle School Mondays  70
Coloring Page: Lauren Halsey  74

Friends

Spring Luncheon 2015  77
Members  82
Member Spotlight: Angela Jackson  86
Supporters  88
The Studio Museum in Venice  92
Membership Info and Form  94
Visitor Information  96
Museum
What’s Up

Exhibition Schedule
Summer/Fall 2015

Check studiomuseum.org for the latest on our exhibitions and programs.

July 16–October 25, 2015
Stanley Whitney: Dance the Orange
Everything, Everyday: Artists in Residence 2014–15
Lorraine O’Grady: Art Is...
One Stop Down: Expanding the Walls 2015

November 12, 2015–March 6, 2016
Highlights from the Permanent Collection
And More!

Always on View
Harlem Postcards
Glenn Ligon: Give Us a Poem
Adam Pendleton: Collected (Flamingo George)
Sierra Odessa  
Born 1990, St. Louis, MO  
Lives and works in New York, NY, and Chicago, IL  

Faceless People & Fleeting Subjects, 2015

Miniature miracles and overlooked catastrophes: These are what I find when I stroll the upper island. For a neighborhood whose historical significance comes in such great abundance, there could be more emphasis put on restoring or preserving the buildings that tell the intricate stories of Harlem's legacy. For many urban developers and city planners, the rebirth, transformation and progression of Harlem mean tearing down the old and replacing with the new. For others, however, each “CLOSED” storefront sign represents yet another blow to Harlem’s unique identity.

Awol Erizku  
Born 1988, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA  

Hand Holding Grapes, 2014

Working seamlessly across a wide range of media, including photography, sculpture and video installation, Awol Erizku references and remixes disparate artistic movements and traditions, from the photorealist still lifes of Dutch Masters to spare, minimalist constructions—giving them all distinctly twenty-first-century updates. Throughout his work, the New York-born, Los Angeles-based artist strives to correct what he perceives as a marked absence of people of color throughout the canon of art history. He integrates contemporary fabrics, styles and symbols with a provocatively allusive sensibility and aesthetic. Inspired by a shirt the artist purchased on 125th Street, depicting a golden statue of an Egyptian queen, the artist envisions the luxury of being fed grapes, a seemingly common practice among Egyptian royalty.
Elaine Reichek
Born 1943, New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

Harlem Arcadia, 2015
Digital embroidery on linen, mounted to paper

I live and work in Harlem, and my windows face Striver’s Row, two blocks of historically important brownstones. My subject matter often deals with the classics, and many of the buildings close by have beautiful neoclassical ornamentation. One of my great pleasures is to take walks in my neighborhood. This embroidery is derived from a photograph taken on 137th Street on one of those walks.

Kameelah Janan Rasheed
Born 1985, East Palo Alto, CA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Nun on Lenox, 2015

From traditional monotheistic faiths established thousands of years ago to new syncretic communities and new religious communities, Harlem has it all. One day, while documenting the Hebrew Israelites proselytizing on the corner of Lenox and 125th, a black nun crossed my path. I immediately turned my camera toward her. It was a reminder that while one may be fascinated by the newness of emerging spiritual communities here in Harlem, there is still much to discover about how black people make sense of traditional faiths established thousands of years ago.
I’ve always been impressed by who gravitates toward you when you step into the world. My process in the past consisted of documenting people with whom I’ve had a close connection. Since I began shooting on /f.shortilm, I’ve been having a lot more brief encounters with people. It’s an unfamiliar feeling at /f.shortirst, but I always remind myself that I am being reacquainted with people. I don’t believe anyone is truly a stranger. I am invested in the connections one has with others within portraiture to create a blueprint of the sitter. Portraiture is extremely powerful and I am inspired by the people with whom I come in contact, and the environments they occupy. I am inspired by what it means to be seen and loved when you have your photo taken.

Narcissister, my character, employs humor and spectacle as her primary tools in explorations of gender, race and sexuality. Opening “fixed and closed” stereotypical representations and turning them against themselves, I expose, in live performance, video and photography, the practice of representation itself.

This image is part of an ongoing project that explores women’s protected legal right to bare their breasts in public spaces in New York. How does a woman baring her breasts in public begin to challenge the deep-seated notion that female topless-ness is different from male topless-ness? The intention of this project is to investigate the conceptions that are embedded in the collective cultural psyche around female breasts, which might support or prohibit a woman’s freedom. Women exercising their right to legally bare their breasts in the streets is a symbolic act of physical freedom intended to inspire others to exercise freedom in all forms.
Ellen Lesperance
Born 1971, Minneapolis, MN
Lives and works in Portland, OR

November 5, 2010: Harlem Celebrates
Faith Ringgold’s 80th Birthday, 2015

My artwork is often inspired by sweaters worn by women at protests, sit-ins, demonstrations and other acts of civil disobedience. These women’s handmade articles of clothing—like other forms of Creative Direct Action, such as banners and street theater—offer narratives and invite issue-based personal interactions. I make this work to memorialize effective resistance, in an effort to ensure these moments do not vanish from popular memory.

In this piece for the Harlem Postcards, I recreated a sweater worn by artist and activist Faith Ringgold in photographs taken on multiple occasions, including the recent occasion of her eightieth birthday. Ringgold is inspirational to me on many fronts, and I was moved by the gloriousness of her chosen garment. It presents her in the world in the same way that I relate to her visual art: heraldic.

Demettrius Wright
Born 1997, Brooklyn, NY
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Code Pink, 2015

This photograph was taken on 124th Street and Lenox Avenue, where James VanDerZee’s historic Harlem studio, Guarantee Photo Studio, still stands. James VanDerZee produced some of his best and most iconic photographic work at this location. He liked to play with lighting and colors, which make his work fairly unique. This historical site in Harlem captures the energy of the neighborhood. It also shows the soul within each of us as we make our marks on history. This is why I used a slightly low vantage point with a pop of color to bring out the raw energy that is Guarantee Photo Studio.

This photograph means a lot to me because the history and energy it carries is unlike anything you can research in a book. This image teaches about the present as well as the past, and how to use the present to achieve a better future—just as VanDerZee hoped for.
The Artist-in-Residence program is at the core of the Studio Museum’s mission, and gives the institution its name. Since the Museum’s founding in 1968, more than a hundred artists in residence have created and shown work in the Museum’s studios and galleries. In 2014, the Studio Museum welcomed artists Sadie Barnette, Lauren Halsey and Eric Mack into the Artist-in-Residence program and in July 2015 they will have their exhibition at the Museum. Below is an excerpt from an interview that will be included in the exhibition’s accompanying brochure. Discussing everything from their processes to the impact of working in Harlem, these artists are bold, innovative and fresh.

NAIMA KEITH: How would you individually describe your practices?

SADIE BARNETTE: I make everything from photographs to drawings to books. I also work with found objects or old family photographs. What ties everything together is my interest in the everyday elements of where I am from, my family history and the personal as political—past, present and future.

ERIC MACK: I like thinking about processing materiality through gestures of paint, understanding or thinking about understanding the world through touch, kinds of experiments, activating surface and working with artifice to think about how things can be meaningful or reoriented as emotionally relevant.

LAUREN HALSEY: I build environments—fantasy habitats about working-class neighborhoods I’m from in Los Angeles, and where I have lived in recently in Harlem. Each iteration is moved by my visions for the community and promoting agency and empowerment there spatially.

NK: At the Studio Museum, the artist studios are located right next to each other. How has working in such close quarters affected your practices?

LH: I’ve watched Eric explore the potential for his pegboard surfaces spatially, and his many ways of moving and presenting paint. I’m also interested in architecture and intrigued by the ways Eric comes up with new archetypes for serious but informal structures that are still paintings. He makes a painting and hangs it as a wall. I see similarities to my reliefs.

EM: I think a lot about indexing and collecting things from everyday life. Lauren, the images in your carvings end up being accumulations of present space. The physicality and the time it takes to think about text, collective memory and humor that’s understood, but also somehow singular. These are the everyday poetics that I think a lot about in relation to Lauren’s work, but I also think they relate to Sadie’s thinking about family history and her specificity using text and form through typeface.
SB: Since we’re so involved with each other’s practices and ways of seeing, often when I am walking around Harlem I see something, like the way a street vendor has rigged some tapestries, and think, “that looks like an Eric Mack moment.” Or I’ll see objects in a store window that seem to belong in Lauren’s kingdom.

NK: Speaking of Harlem, how do you think being in the neighborhood has affected your work?

LH: I think it has affected everything. In Los Angeles, car culture is huge. In New York, specifically Harlem, you’re in proximity to everyone and everything at the same time. Walking the 125th strip daily has made me think about how I represent space, or work toward representing and populating space. How I can control the pace and the rhythm and the mood of the sequences. I’ll always archive the neighborhoods I live in, but now I represent signage, ephemera and the essence of the neighborhood I live and work in quite differently than ever before.

EM: Some of the historical points of the city indicate an existing space. I’m specifically thinking about the old Lenox Lounge or the Apollo and things that, right before they’re renovated and changed, have been occupied for years. Some of the same cultural ideas and norms—the Harlem Renaissance and all of these spaces—it’s just a real wealth not only of content, but also of everyday energy. There is something about how people walk down the street in Harlem that is different than anywhere else. There is a 125th swag that is articulated in the way
people dress, obviously, but also the kind of pace. There are also tons of people who get you to stop and acknowledge them, and that I think is super important. But it’s also about a self-preservation at the same time.

**LH:** It’s constant affirmation for me, from the guy who sits in the same spot all day with pamphlets on achieving higher frequencies and essays on “the origin of black gods,” to the mix-CD DJs with classic Willie Hutch, to the black nationalist chitchat everywhere, to people with their libraries on display, to all the knickknacks, to the dude who seeks me out, points and calls me a god. There’s someone trying to represent and break something down to me all day. I think that’s really beautiful.

**SB:** I always think that every black child in America should go to Harlem for a week. It’s like a homecoming. One thing I love about Harlem is the way people demand and claim their visibility. It is in the way that folks present/style/carry themselves—there is a certain “black pride.” But it is not limited to just one way of being black or proud. There are so many different, sometimes conflicting, ideas and presentations of blackness in Harlem.
Stanley Whitney

_james brown sacrifice to apollo_, 2008

Courtesy the artist and team (gallery, inc.), New York
In Conversation Stanley Whitney and Lowery Stokes Sims

Organized by Lauren Haynes, Associate Curator, Permanent Collection

The first solo museum exhibition in New York devoted to Stanley Whitney’s work, Stanley Whitney: Dance the Orange presents works created in the last ten years by the abstract painter acclaimed for his masterful use of color. Whitney’s paintings on canvas and paper range in size, and are created in his signature style that features blocks of color arranged in grid-like structures on primarily square backdrops. Through his use of color as subject and material, Whitney explores and expands notions of abstract painting. The following is an excerpt from a conversation between the artist and the curator, former Studio Museum Executive Director Lowery Stokes Sims, that took place in April 2015. The full conversation can be found in the exhibition catalogue, available now in our Museum Store and online.

Stanley Whitney: There is something about my work in terms of the rhythm it has—a kind of polyrhythm. I realized that when I first came to New York. I didn’t use color like Kenneth Noland or even Frank Stella. I think there is something about the music or the color that could be called African-American. As I said, we grew up associating color with sound. The question is how cultural references are mixed in or what they are mixed in with. Can you really put your finger on it to say why something is specifically from West Africa?

Lowery Stokes Sims: Are you talking about Cézanne’s work in terms of his brushstrokes and the way that he created form?

SW: The way he patterns it. In Philadelphia, where I grew up, everybody talked about music, and music has its patterns. We all practiced our dance steps before we did our homework. Those kinds of things were always there. But then, when I went to art school, I got involved with what they said painting is or what art is. Then I became involved in learning the craft, and it took me a while to put together all the pieces of what that craft is, and then, what I’m bringing to that craft.

LSS: When exactly did you introduce the format that uses four horizontal bands to organize your compositions?

SW: Probably this happened over time. I’d say it was around 1990, when I really decided to make color more prominent than gesture in my drawing. When I came to New York, Color Field painting was prevalent. I could identify with it because of the color, but I was very critical of the artists doing it because I didn’t think they drew very well or that they were tough enough. Since it was clear these artists didn’t draw at all, I went back and did a lot of black-and-white drawings.

LSS: So what is the relationship of drawing to the paintings? Is this about the hand, or gesture?

SW: For me, drawing is a way to understand where things are in space. I felt that I needed to work on space because I didn’t want my color to be decorative. I wanted color to have a real intellect. When I got into graduate school, I knew what drawing was in a figurative sense, but I didn’t know what drawing meant in terms of abstraction. The first thing I thought about was Van Gogh’s drawings and just how rich they were. I thought, I’m going to do black-and-white drawings that are as rich as color, and yet not rely on color. I did these drawings that were more like landscapes, and I thought more in terms of space because I wanted everything really open. In my paintings, I wanted a lot of space as you see in Jackson Pollock’s work and the depth of color of Mark Rothko.

I started to create works with color fields that eventually got more baroque as I painted forms that floated in the compositions. I really wanted to keep them very gestural, so that they were more like mark making. I slowly realized I could make the space within the color. By 1993, when I went to Egypt, I had found the last piece of the puzzle for my work. I realized I could put forms, colors and marks together and still have a lot of air. The space was still there. This was important because I thought previously that if I put colors or forms next to each other that I would lose the space. Then I realized that the space is in the color, not around the color.
In Conversation

Stanley Whitney and Lowery Stokes Sims

**LSS:** Couldn’t color also suggest an exterior space?

**SW:** Well, color could suggest space, but I thought people generally used color against white to have that space. As my paintings became much more gestural, I realized I wanted to quiet them down. I didn’t want to go graffiti. I wanted to get rid of some of the Abstract Expressionist–type type of mark making.

**LSS:** So you were trying to reduce the movement, the gesture in that sense?

**SW:** Yes I tried to figure out another idea of what gesture is. I didn’t want my gesture to be an Abstract-Expressionist gesture. By that time I was living in Rome. There I got more into an architectural kind of space, and was looking at Giorgio Morandi’s paintings. He lived in Bologna, so I’d go there to see his work all the time. I liked how quiet they were. I thought about using more color and less Ab-Ex gesture. It’s kind of like the work started to evolve that way. In fact, at one point when the painting started getting more and more like solid colors I tried to stop it.

**LSS:** But aren’t you introducing a lot of gesture just in the way that you allow the brushstrokes to be evident? I mean, in each of those squares you can actually see evidence of the strokes. They may be within the boundaries of the color area but it does give those areas a certain character.

**SW:** That’s true. I’m going back now and rethinking what gesture is. The system I use allows me to go with any color, anytime I want. I paint a lot of color very quickly and directly now. But this is what you can do with oil painting, as opposed to acrylic, because with oil painting you get a lot more of the hand, a lot more of the touch. I wanted to bring all of those European notions into the painting. So now instead of having the gesture of a quick line, the gesture is in the paint itself, like laying the paint down—whether it’s thick or thin. The color changes because of the touch.

**LSS:** Yes, and also as one area of painting flows into the other that effectively creates another color.

**SW:** Even within one color. Depending on how you mix and lay down the paint, sometimes it’s thinner, thicker, or it’s more dense.
Sometimes you see the hand more, sometimes you don’t see the hand at all. So there are all kinds of variations in terms of what color really is.

**LSS:** I wanted to go back to how you saw your work in the context of the 1960s and 70s when you were in school and emerging as an artist. It was clear in some of your statements that in the midst of the politics, the Black Panthers, civil rights, etc., the act of painting was where you felt most secure, where you felt you could actually do something.

**SW:** I talked about that a little bit in a conversation I had with Trent Doyle Hancock at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Those were hard times because I really wanted to paint, but I couldn’t identify why I wanted to paint. I remember being in Kansas City and the Black Panthers would say, what are you doing, brother? But I felt compelled to paint. I felt like that was really my calling, to paint, but I couldn’t say what that was or what the need for it was. In that same conversation with Trent, we talked a lot about painting in terms of mental health.

So I focused on the need for art: what art does to inspire and what art gives people. If you think about Matisse, he painted in Nice when the Nazis were there. Picasso painted *Guernica* (1937)—which I see when I go to Madrid—and that it is just such a great painting against war. We have to consider what these painters put out there for people and remember that being a painter is just a calling anyway. That’s why I tell young artists who come to see me and ask me what are the rules, I tell them there are none.

**LSS:** Getting back to the 1960s and 70s—at that time there was such a dichotomy between abstraction and figuration in the black community. The assumption was that if you were doing abstraction, you were copping out, doing mainstream art, and that you couldn’t possibly be relevant or committed. So I wondered how you came out on that issue? I couldn’t find that many black exhibitions on your resume.

**SW:** They probably didn’t ask me. At that point I wasn’t doing many shows. With all the stuff that was going on then, it was a difficult time to figure out where you were headed, or what you were doing, or what was happening. When I came to New York in the late 1960s, I saw
there was a lot going on with black artists, Sam Gilliam, Al Loving, Howardena Pindell—all them were showing. But McArthur Binion, myself, James Little, kind of got lost in that. We were another generation. As for abstraction versus figuration, I think the black community felt a need for black images because they weren’t getting them anywhere else. I think they wanted things on their walls that could be quickly identified as work by black artists. I don’t know if that’s all they needed, though. It’s very complicated.

I guess one way I dealt with it can be seen in my painting My Name Is Peaches (2015), which I painted recently. This painting is very large, a ninety-six-by-ninety-six-inch canvas. The colors are primarily orange, pinks, blues and greens. When I looked at the finished work, I saw a beautiful painting with a real toughness to it. The key element in this painting is the color and the kind of beauty it conveys, but I also wanted to indicate that toughness. The title refers to the Nina Simone song “Four Women.” In the song, the last woman is Peaches. Almost every black community has a woman named Peaches, who is very sumptuous. So I wanted to suggest this real crazy mixture. In the book we are working on about my work, I have this old photo of Malcolm X, and I have an old photo of a self-portrait by Cézanne that I’ve been carrying around since the 70s. I am going to illustrate them side by side. I love that the photo I have of Malcolm X says, “I’m the man you think you are.”

LSS: I guess in their own way they were revolutionary.

SW: Yeah, I want to bring all those kinds of things together in terms of indicating what painting is for me, because all of that is important.
In April 2015, Assistant Curator Amanda Hunt sat down with conceptual artist Lorraine O’Grady to discuss her 1983 performance *Art Is...*, the subject of this summer’s exhibition of photographs at the Studio Museum. For the performance, O’Grady and a group of fifteen men and women dressed in white rode up Seventh Avenue in Harlem on a float in the African-American Day Parade decorated with the words “Art Is...” O’Grady and her collaborators jumped on and off the float at different points during the procession, and held up gold picture frames of various sizes to onlookers of the parade. The performance, in effect, made portraits of the people and landscapes of Harlem. *Art Is...* raised a number of questions about representation and framing as it joyfully declared its local subjects “art.” More than three decades later, the Studio Museum presents the full series of photos documenting the performance to bring the work back to its local origins.
Art Is...

Interview with Lorraine O’Grady

Amanda Hunt: Lorraine, we began talking about the photographic documentation of your performance Art Is..., and about the potential configuration of images we would present at the Studio Museum, and we came to something really interesting. You touched on the idea of the “greatest hits”—the images that people have been most drawn to in this series—and how over the course of more than thirty years, there are some more anomalous moments that have stuck with you for other reasons.

Lorraine O’Grady: I think that what I’m really talking about is the issue of ambiguity—a question of “What is it?”

I mentioned to you that in one of the images there is a large apartment building caught in the large frame on the float that didn’t have any distinguishing aspects to it. People weren’t sitting out on the steps of the building the way they had been in other parts of the parade. There was a blankness to its architecture, so it was impossible to get a mental or emotional grip on it. There was something about not being able to imagine the life behind the blank windows, or even beyond the strange fluorescent lights in the long entrance leading to an inner courtyard—not being able to see anything, really. Whenever I look at that building, it still has this impenetrable mystery that fascinates me. And then there is the only vertical image in the series, the one I call Girl Pointing. It’s of a young girl, but now I find it’s hard to say exactly how old she was. As the frame approaches her, she points at it—she has this sort of smile on her face—and you can’t tell whether she is smiling at you or with you. You don’t know what she’s actually feeling. I can never settle on a feeling for her.

AH: Was there a feeling that she was being confrontational?

LO: I had the feeling that it was not so much confrontational as conversational, a level of equality that you don’t always get from the subject of a photograph.

AH: How did you collect these images?

LO: I’d hired a couple of friends to help me document. They each gave me two rolls, I think, which I had developed. And whenever I saw people taking photos, I got their phone numbers. Later, when I met them, they gave me slides that they didn’t want, that didn’t have their friends in them. I got a lot of that. A couple of people gave me slide rolls that I processed. One woman sent me black-and-white prints, but I couldn’t use them.

AH: As background and context to this moment, there was also the issue of the impending crack epidemic in Harlem.

LO: Yes, 1983 was really one of the last moments that these photographs could have been taken, with a whole population so open to the camera. The business of framing is really problematic now, as you know. I don’t think this piece could have worked now, in 2015. Just this past fall, we did a shoot at the Brooklyn Parade for a video I was doing on Carnival. Before and during the parade—just talking to people and trying to take their pictures with a still camera, or interview them on video—they wouldn’t cooperate. Nobody would talk to you!

AH: So what brought you to Harlem? How did you get into this idea of participating in something as spectacular as a parade?

LO: Parades were big entertainment for us as kids, perhaps because my family is from the West Indies. We never missed a single one! The parade idea came from wanting to expose the avant-garde to the largest number of black people I could find at one time—that was it. My first thought was to just put artworks on the float and let people LOOK at art. A woman had recently said to me that avant-garde art doesn’t have anything to do with black people. That was so infuriating to me. It’s where the whole idea for the piece came from—to do something that would prove this woman wrong, a piece about art in front of a million people. Of course it didn’t end up with them looking at art. They were more making the art themselves.

I didn’t live in Harlem, so I was going to an alien territory. I did not know how this piece was going to work. I mean, the only instructions I could give people on the parade
route were the words on the sides of the float—“Art Is...”—right? I didn’t know what would happen. Would they get it? Would they do anything? It could have been something or it could have been nothing, and I had no idea which, so it was scary for me. But then when I heard people calling the photographers over to them, it was like “Wow!” They wanted to be on camera! Everybody wanted to be on camera, you know. I guess I didn’t realize how much people wanted to be on camera.

AH: Who were your performers? How did you assemble them?

LO: I advertised in the back pages of some dailies or weeklies. I can’t remember, but I think they were called Stage Door and Billboard. They had ads for actresses and dancers, that sort of thing. I got a mix of people, of dancers and actors. They were beautiful and they were up for it—really, really up for it. You can see how the people on the parade route liked being in photographs, and you can see how these performers liked framing them for the photos. It was wonderful, just wonderful.

What I learned in the process of the parade is that a parade is not a continuous motion. In a parade there are moments when you are just standing still and not getting anywhere, and then there are moments you are rushing to catch up. To me, a film was going on behind that big frame, like a moving proscenium on the float. But as if it were in an old Moviola editing machine . . . it started and stopped . . . started and stopped . . .
Beyond
Afripedia Collective Highlights Creatives in Africa

by Hallie Ringle,
Senior Curatorial Assistant

The Who: Afripedia was borne out of Stocktown Films, a collective dedicated to showcasing creativity and street culture through documentaries, television and exhibitions. The creators are Teddy Goitom, Senay Berhe and Benjamin Taft. Goitom is a Swedish-Ethiopian/Eritrean founder of Stocktown who was drawn to create the Afripedia documentary series to highlight creative individuals living in Africa. The three partners have traveled around the continent together, looking for and talking to artists working in different media.

The What: Afripedia describes itself as "A platform and a visual guide to art, film, photography, fashion, design, music and contemporary culture from African creatives worldwide." Taking on the aesthetic of a dictionary—with pronunciation and parts of speech next to titles—Afripedia is a series of short documentaries featuring artists, dancers, fashion designers and musicians. To date there are five parts focusing on Angola, Senegal and the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa.

One of the many strengths of Afripedia is the creators’ dedication to artists working in a variety of media, and to providing consistent information on each subject. And the rich, expert videography could be art in its own right. Each artist section, about seven minutes long, functions like a studio visit. For example, the Senegal and Ivory Coast episode begins with fashion designer Sally Raby Kane, who opens the segment by discussing her childhood dreams of becoming a designer. It then moves on to a tour of her atelier and introduction to her staff of three, plus an electrician who helps with the more elaborate, light-up outfits. Kane talks about her design aesthetic and futurist vision while video and pictures of her previous works flash on the screen, and then she finishes with a short discussion of her plans for expanding her designs into an international brand. In addition to showing images and videos of the artist and her work, Afripedia strengthens its role as a documentary by contextualizing the atelier within the neighborhood and city. In choosing to include this information consistently, Afripedia offers audiences a peek of the local community and environment—an opportunity generally unavailable in typical exhibitions.

The When: The episodes premiered in September on Swedish television and will be available on Afripedia.com in the coming months. The Afripedia team is also working on expanding their scope to North Africa next year, and creating a feature-length documentary. They hope to create a forum that connects artists, curators, scholars and organizations, and that showcases residencies and opportunities. They also hope to connect people globally by making Afripedia a place where people can find out about creative happenings all over the African continent. Eventually they hope to expand into a physical space and create events, exhibitions and spaces where those featured and interested in Afripedia’s content can meet and share ideas.
Elsewhere

by Thelma Golden,
Director and Chief Curator

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye: Verses After Dusk
June 2–September 13, 2015
Serpentine Galleries
London, United Kingdom
serpentinegalleries.org

If you find yourself across the pond this summer, be sure to check out Lynette Yiadom-Boakye: Verses After Dusk at Serpentine Galleries. Representing the wide range of techniques employed by the celebrated figurative painter, who received her first solo museum exhibition at the Studio Museum in 2010, Verses After Dusk consists of recent and newly produced paintings alongside a series of ten new etchings created specifically for the exhibition. At the heart of Yiadom-Boakye’s work is an exploration of the process of painting and an invitation for viewers to consider the subjects as suggestions rather than explicit narratives or portraits. With her depiction of black figures, Yiadom-Boakye raises timeless questions of identity and representation in art.

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Sam Jerez de la Frontera, 2010
Collection of Noel Kirnon and Michael Paley
Courtesy Corvi-Mora, London, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
Elsewhere

Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada
June 7–September 27, 2015
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, California
lacma.org

I am thrilled that our colleagues at LACMA will host the first monographic exhibition dedicated to the late Noah Purifoy, a seminal American artist whose work was recently on view at the Studio Museum in When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South (2014). Co-curated by Franklin Sirmans, Terri and Michael Smooke Department Head and Curator of Contemporary Art, and independent curator Yael Lipschutz, Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada examines the distinct stylistic periods of Purifoy’s career, beginning with nearly a dozen works from his landmark 1966 exhibition 66 Signs of Neon, and continuing through his lifetime. Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada is accompanied by a major catalogue with essays by Yael Lipschutz, Lowery Stokes Sims and Kristine McKenna, with a preface by Franklin Sirmans.

Hale Woodruff
The Mutiny on the Amistad, 1939
Collection of Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama

Rising Up: Hale Woodruff’s Murals at Talladega College
June 13–September 6, 2015
Birmingham Museum of Art
Birmingham, Alabama
artsbma.org

Organized by our friends at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, in collaboration with Talladega College in Alabama, Rising Up: Hale Woodruff’s Murals at Talladega College features six large-scale murals depicting landmark events in the rise of blacks from slavery to freedom. The vibrant murals, commissioned in 1938, commemorate the 1867 founding of Talladega College, one of the nation’s pioneering all-black colleges. Additionally, Rising Up explores Woodruff’s impact on the arts and includes twenty-four supplemental works, including research, paintings and linocut prints.
Elsewhere

Mark Bradford: Scorched Earth
June 20–September 27, 2015
Hammer Museum
Los Angeles, California
hammer.ucla.edu

Mark Bradford: Scorched Earth is a must-see this season! Comprised of twelve new paintings and a multimedia installation, Scorched Earth bears the deep cultural fears that misconceive of black identity and gender as one-dimensional concepts. Bradford uses his characteristic painting style of excavating through layers of paint and drywall to explore and critique social activism, the AIDS crisis and his hometown of Los Angeles. Organized by Chief Curator Connie Butler and Assistant Curator (and Studio Museum alumna) Jamillah James, this is Bradford’s first solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles.

Glenn Ligon: Encounters and Collisions
June 30–October 18, 2015
Tate Liverpool
Liverpool, United Kingdom
tate.org.uk

This summer, Tate Liverpool and Nottingham Contemporary will present Encounters and Collisions, curated by my dear friend Glenn Ligon. For this exhibition, Ligon has brought together the work of forty-five extraordinary artists—who have influenced him or with whom he feels an affinity—from the late 1940s to the present. Together they position postwar American artistic endeavors within wider political and cultural contexts, and provide a new framework with which we can view the American canon. Several of Ligon’s own works anchor this wide-ranging exhibition, including Stranger 23 (2006) and Untitled (I Lost My Voice I Found My Voice) (1991).
I am so excited that Making Place: The Architecture of David Adjaye has traveled to the states! Organized by Haus der Kunst, Munich, and the Art Institute of Chicago, the exhibition offers an in-depth overview of the architect’s distinct approach and visual language, will span projects from furniture and housing to public buildings and master plans, and features drawings, sketches, models and building mock-ups. Adjaye is rapidly emerging as a major international figure in architecture and design, and Making Place definitely captures this significant moment in his career!
Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis
November 13, 2015–April 3, 2016
Pennsylvania Academy
of the Fine Arts
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
pafa.org

Opening this fall at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis is the first comprehensive overview of the artist’s influential and extraordinary work that spans several decades of the twentieth century. Lewis was a pivotal figure in American art, a participant in the Harlem art community, an innovative contributor to Abstract Expressionism and a politically conscious activist. The exhibition will include approximately ninety paintings and works on paper dating from the early 1930s through the late 1970s, and will examine Lewis’s complex exploration of representation and abstraction.
Jennie C. Jones: Compilation
December 11, 2015–March 27, 2016
Contemporary Arts Museum
Houston
Houston, Texas
camh.org

Organized by Valerie Cassel Oliver (who also curated the recent hit exhibitions Radical Presence and Trenton Doyle Hancock: Skin and Bones, 20 Years of Drawing), Jennie C. Jones: Compilation is a mid-career survey that chronicles the 2012 Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize winner’s practice over a fifteen-year period, and includes her iconic acoustic paintings, works on paper and sculpture, as well as sound and installation work. What I am drawn to most about Jones’s work is her ability to bring to light the unlikely alliances that emerge between the visual arts and the imprint of jazz. Compilation will also debut a suite of new acoustic paintings, along with a site-specific installation.
by Malaika Langa, Finance Manager

My first experience seeing a black experimental film was Charles Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep* (1981). I saw it at the IFC Center in 2007, its first theatrical release, almost thirty years after it was made. The film was a departure from many of the prevailing images and stories about black people that I’d ever seen at the movies.

I started thinking about retro experimental films and the many voices that may or may not have been heard over the years. Sometimes described as “cinematic poems,” these films share a quality and impact on perception that, years after production, still resonate.

*Killer of Sheep* (1977)
*Director: Charles Burnett*

Charles Burnett’s 1977 thesis film is a neorealist meditation on life in 1970s Watts in Los Angeles. Centered on Stan, a slaughterhouse worker, the film sees Burnett use the camera as witness to the dull despair of the inner city—lives lived with integrity but few opportunities. The film was unseen for thirty years due to music licensing issues, but the soundtrack is one of its defining features, and provides a second voice to the characters’ emotions. *Killer of Sheep* was one of the first fifty films to be selected by the Library of Congress for the National Film Registry.

*Looking for Langston* (1989)
*Director: Isaac Julien*

*Looking for Langston* is a “meditation on Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance,” as its full title suggests. This impressionistic film intertwines a love story with archival photographs by James VanDerZee and Robert Mapplethorpe, and captures the energy of 1920s Harlem and the expression of black male queer identity. Through the writing of Langston Hughes, James Baldwin and Bruce Nugent, director Isaac Julien also explores the faddish attention paid to, and fall from favor of, black artists and men—“history as the smiling with the knife,” in the words of cultural theorist Stuart Hall.

*Touki Bouki* (1973)
*Director: Djibril Diop Mambéty*

The first six minutes of *Touki Bouki* open without dialogue, as a young boy rides a long-horned cow to the slaughterhouse. The opening scene creates a contrast between the country and the city, and sets up the story of Mory and Anta’s aspirations to leave Senegal for France. Director Djibril Diop Mambéty had no formal training in film when he made *Touki Bouki*, but he redefined the film’s language through this seminal work by using landscape as a shortcut to his characters’ mindscapes, and nonlinear editing to depict temporal shifts and reflections on colonialism.
Beyond God’s Step Children (1938)
Director: Oscar Micheaux

A child of former slaves, Oscar Micheaux was the first African American to produce a feature-length film, The Homesteader (1919). He produced and directed more than forty films. In the 1920s, he wrote and directed Within Our Gates as a response to D.W. Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation (1915). With God’s Step Children, Micheaux uses the story of doomed heroine Naomi to explore the controversial issues of colorism, suicide and the state of the race. Micheaux was also the first African-American filmmaker to create full-length sound feature and the first to produce a film that opened to white audiences.

Illusions (1982)
Director: Julie Dash

A glittering Oscar statuette is juxtaposed with images of World War II to symbolize the many battles yet to be won in depicting African Americans on-screen. In Julie Dash’s fictionalized Hollywood studio, actress Lonette McKee passes, in a 1940s movie world that features a black songstress singing the soundtracks to white lives. Double reflections visually highlight the conflict inherent in these characters and in an industry that can embellish or obliterate history.

She’s Gotta Have It (1986)
Director: Spike Lee

She’s Gotta Have It portrayed the sexual empowerment of black women with its heroine, Nola Darling, choosing between three suitors while maintaining her own identity. Spike Lee’s breakout debut feature introduced a new visual aesthetic and the sharp dialogue we would come to expect from all his joints.

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One (1968)
Director: William Greaves

William Greaves’s masterpiece is a cinéma vérité allegory for the political and social movements of the 1960s. Applying social theory, Greaves created a film within a film, in which actors and crew are engaged in and can alter the overall process. Thirty-five years after the original, Greaves created Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2 1/2 (2003). The process of the filmmaker is one of the more subtle but profound things revealed by Greaves’s work.
Faustin Linyekula (b. 1974, Ubundu, Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire) is a renowned choreographer, director and performer living in Paris, France, and Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo. Growing out of the tradition of ndombolo music and dance, his performances address the decades of war, terror, corruption and poverty in Congo, but his work is also associated with a celebration of resistance. His performances fuse storytelling and dance with resistance, possibility and poetry, and incorporate elements such as digital media and a variety of programmed sounds and lights, as well as topics such as the need for clean water in his hometown of Kisangani. In 2005, Linyekula was one of twenty-seven dancers and choreographers from Africa invited by the Centre National de la Danse in Paris to create a new work. “With all these voices in my luggage,” he explains, he wanted to create an art installation and performance with a very critical discourse on postcolonial ideas, with a soundtrack of movement and many voices, including that of Achille Mbembe. It was there and then that he created Le Cargo.

I was in Sharjah in March 2015 for the opening of Sharjah Biennial 12: The past, the present, the possible (SB12), organized by Eungie Joo with Associate Curator Ryan Inouye. Among the dozens of projects by more than fifty artists and cultural practitioners from more than twenty-five countries, the biennial brought together a myriad of discussions around geopolitics and memory, among many others. Linyekula’s performance of Le Cargo on March 6 began with him sitting on a carved stool alone on stage in a darkened theater. It was a more intimate version of his original Le Cargo from Paris, and I sat mesmerized for fifty-five minutes as he told stories of his childhood, hometown, dance rituals, life and death through language, movement, song, light, rhythm and dance.

—Christine Y. Kim, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Christine Y. Kim: The name of your dance company is Studios Kabako, based in Kisangani. You start your performance of Le Cargo with, “I am Kabako, Kabako is me, again Kabako, and it is when there is Kabako that Kabako becomes Kabako.” Who is Kabako? Or, should I ask, where and what is Kabako?

Faustin Linyekula: Kabako is a character from a theater play, Mhoi-Ceul, written by Ivorian author Bernard Dadié. This play was made at the end of the 1960s and in it there is a character named Kabako. Kabako works as a superintendent in a building, and he is someone who sees inside, and who sees outside. He is just like a soldier, a guard in front of the building, in the office or at a desk. In any case, it is a position that speaks to me as an artist, as a citizen. It is rather interesting to be in this position. We are at the threshold of experience, at the threshold of traveling . . .

So there is this situation, and then there is a personal story in relation to Kabako, with this play. I had a friend who played the character of Kabako in this play in the late 1980s. We were very young. Everybody started to call him Kabako, because his character introduces himself as such. “My name is Kabako, I am Kabako, again Kabako, always Kabako, and it’s when there is Kabako that Kabako becomes Kabako.” This friend died twenty-one years ago. Thus, when we started a dance company we called it Studios Kabako Inc. It was a way to pay homage to this friend.

CYK: And this was the original studio in Kinshasa?

FL: Yes, exactly, in the beginning, it was just Studios Kabako. In 2006 we moved to Kisangani.

FL: 2011 marked the ten-year anniversary of Studios Kabako, and I started to think about those past ten years of working with the team: Creativity is about being with people, spending time with other artists, to imagine things together, to fear, to doubt. Creativity for me has always been about this. But for the anniversary of the company, I felt the need to think, to come back a bit toward myself, which led me to another observation. I speak about this in my performances. When I look back, all these creations were attempts to narrate the Congo of the past and the Congo of today, and I was trying to find ways to talk about the Congo, and maybe I was just trying to narrate the Congo to myself. After ten years, I started to ask myself: Am I going to continue like this, with this? Does talking about Congo of the past and Congo of today only and constantly mean to narrate stories of violence, and is it telling stories about people who constantly resist death, people who invent strategies to resist death, to be stronger than death itself? This is Congo and, at once, it exhausts me. So, I said, “Okay, if I want to pursue this, maybe I need to stop just telling stories, and I need to learn to dance. But how do I find my dance? Maybe if I go back to my earliest memories of dance, which were in Obido, I can find a clue.” And that’s how the show came to be.

CYK: Can we talk about your return to Obido?

FL: Well, I think that every art form really is like some way of summoning life out of death. In every art form there is always a moment when you shrink some deity into your own self—symbolically you go through a moment of death. How do you find the energy to spring out of that and back to life and recreate yourself? The creative process is a journey from darkness to light, from life to death and so on. When you look at the world, the ultimate objective is to make some poetry with what you’ve got. I chose geographically to work from that part of the world called Congo, and when you take stories from the Congo, again it’s about death or the energy of death, but how do you then transform that into life? A few years ago I made a piece that I called more more more . . . future (2009). It was like my punk piece,
but unlike the punk of the late 1970s, the slogan of which was “No Future,” as a way of being subversive in the society that they were living in and reflecting on, my slogan, my way to be subversive in this society is actually to be constructive, hence, more more more . . . future. So work becomes a way of resisting that energy that’s pulling you down, resisting gravity, trying to find ways of standing upright. Maybe it’s a question of responsibility, responsibility toward myself and to those who are around me. Another way of putting it would be: How can I talk about these issues that we’re faced with without taking away or stripping myself and the people who are around me of all dignity? So if in that process of resistance I think about the dignity of the people that I’m talking about, then maybe it’s another way of making dents that fall more on the side of life even though it’s fused with the energy, you know, of temptation, of death. But you choose because you—maybe because I—care. I think the moment you start approaching things like that, without cynicism, maybe you can pull it onto the side of life when the initial impulse is this dealing with death.

**CYK:** Yes.

**FL:** And maybe that’s where the research on the form becomes very important, because I believe that maybe one way of resisting this energy of death is to propose what I think is beautiful. And you put that in the middle of a place like Kisangani, in a neighborhood where people are not used to this art form. But put it there in plain sight so that the form exists there. I believe that the most beautiful pieces of art belong in such places. They need to be in the middle of our communities. They should not be locked in some exclusive space or be exclusively for the enjoyment of the few. Because if the world is falling apart, we need spaces where we can reimagine ourselves, where we can rethink, where we can re-dream ourselves. I think art can give that.

**CYK:** It propels us toward possibility. This is an essential element in your work. What are you working on now and what are your upcoming projects?

**FL:** Right now I’m not in the process of making any work that will tour. The work that will keep us busy for the coming years cannot tour; it’s work that can only be experienced in Kisangani because the physical shape that it will take will be that of a water treatment plant that is also a neighborhood art center. We started it almost two years ago. In the south, in Kisangani, you have the Congo River going right across the city. On the south bank, there are around 200,000 people living there. I grew up in a part of Kisangani where there is basically no running water, and yet there is so much water in Kisangani because we’re in the tropics. It’s not an arid land, it’s very humid. But the problem is the access to clean drinking water. So as an organization, as an artist, as a citizen, I started thinking about what we could do with the people there to come up with the beginning of a solution. Maybe we can propose something that could inspire others. The most expensive part of this is not producing clean water, it’s the water distribution system, the network for distribution. Today people move from point A to point B to go and fetch water from wells and a couple of fountains, and this water is not clean. If we could begin by replacing this contaminated water at these collection points with clean drinking water—water that I can put in my childrens’ milk bottles—maybe that’s the beginning of a solution. People will still have to go and get the water, but at least they’ll get clean drinking water. So that’s how the project started and we hope that by the middle of next year we will be able to inaugurate a pilot treatment plant.

But we didn’t want to stop at just the plant. We decided that using the metaphor of water, water as a source, a source for life and more. This plant could be also a place where you could come and watch a movie or see a performance or concert, but also a place where young people could come and learn how to play an instrument or record a mix or film. So to make that right in the middle of the community, it’s really about putting art in the middle of the community.

**CYK:** It’s another sort of geo-choreography of essential elements, activities, community, creativity and growth.

**FL:** That’s our main project for the coming years, but I’ll also be doing something next year in Philadelphia where I was invited by Painted Bride Art Center. It’s a project we are calling Replacing Philadelphia. I’m one of three artists to come to Philadelphia.
to meet people, artists and activists, and to reflect on Philadelphia as it is today, Philadelphia’s place in U.S. history and what kind of project you can come up with that could point to a possibility of a journey for the future.

**CYK:** Thank you, Faustin. I am so pleased and honored to have learned more about your work. It’s important work at the intersection of a few critical parts of life, art, community, poetry and the future. I hope to make it to Kisangani for the water project.

**LF:** Yes, please do! Thank you.

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Portions of this interview have been edited and translated from French.
The Studio Museum celebrated Okwui Enwezor’s historic appointment as Artistic Director of the Venice Biennale, as well as *All the World’s Futures*, the 56th International Art Exhibition that Enwezor curated, by attending the Biennale in early May. The exhibition—on view through November 22, 2015—features an unprecedented thirty-five-plus artists of African descent. Together with work in other national pavilions, many of the participating artists in this year’s Biennale share a connection to the Studio Museum as alumni of our *Artist-in-Residence* program or participants in Studio Museum exhibitions and programming. Given the Museum’s commitment to nurturing the next generation of contemporary art curators of color, and thanks to support from the Ford Foundation, the Studio Museum curators traveled to Venice with a group of seven emerging curators. We are thrilled to present their perspectives on this landmark exhibition here in *Studio*. 

Organized by Dana Liss, Communications Coordinator
I can’t think of a better way to have opened the Central Pavilion at Okwui Enwezor’s sprawling Venice Biennale exhibition *All the World’s Futures* than with Glenn Ligon’s *A Small Band* (2015). Complex, urgent and provocative, the large-scale neon replaces the longstanding “la Biennale” sign that typically adorns the Central Pavilion, and acts as a call to action for visitors to consider some of our countries’ most pressing matters, such as the violence of warfare or the police shootings of black men in the United States. Ligon’s neon references *Come Out*, a 1966 piece by composer Steve Reich, which, in turn, sampled part of the testimony of Daniel Hamm, a man wrongly accused of murder in the 1964 Harlem riots. (“I had to open the bruise up and let some of the blues . . . blood come out to show them,” said Hamm, stumbling over his words.) Reading Ligon’s neon now, in the wake of the Baltimore riots, Eric Garner’s tragic death in New York and the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s shooter in Florida, it could not feel more urgent. Gorgeous, sublime and harrowing, it’s one of the most memorable works from this year’s Biennale.
As I entered the Giardini on the afternoon of May 5, I immediately encountered Oscar Murillo and Glenn Ligon’s duet on the facade of the Central Pavilion, a staged proposition of autonomous yet interdependent works. Murillo’s twenty or so un-stretched, fraying, patchwork, monochromatic black paintings—some with flourishes of indigo—dance on their diagonal lines just beneath Ligon’s neon text piece, which read: “blues blood bruise.” It is an astonishing curatorial gesture. Two black men from different generations and parts of the African diaspora opened the show in a way akin to Muhammad Ali’s trash-talking provocation: “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. The hands can’t hit what the eyes can’t see.”

The installation’s undeniable beauty gives levity to an otherwise pointed proposition that brings to mind cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s reflection on the immigration crisis in 1970s Britain:

Blacks become the bearers, the signifiers . . . This is not a crisis of race. But race punctuates and periodizes the crisis. Race is the lens through which people come to perceive that a crisis is developing.1

How uncanny, then, to have the overwhelming visibility (Murillo) and the affective annunciation (Ligon) of blackness veil and envelope the pavilion—in a country whose shores are confronted daily with flows of Africans in flight, and during a time of prominent extra-judicial killings of black men in the United States. Murillo’s canvases, precariously tilted and dangling, are like masts holding out hope for wind; as we wade through them the zephyrs we stir proffer some sense of mutual complicity.

Okwui Enwezor’s placement of these two artists on the facade, as one can say of his choices throughout the exhibition, harkens back to a comment he made as artistic director of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale in 1997: “we . . . have other priorities.” Murillo’s sails visibly signify such priorities, and the fact that they are necessary and tough—not in the sense of being difficult—but rather because those commitments are strong enough to withstand adversity and careless interpretations.

For me, Ellen Gallagher’s presentation in the Central Pavilion of this year’s Venice Biennale was a definite highlight. The four ink, graphite and paper on canvas works on view, including *Dr. Blowfins* (2014) and the diptych *Dew Breaker* (2015) (which also includes pigment and oil in its materials), meld her interest in and explorations of Drexciya, a mythical black Atlantis at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, with her use of materials related to writing and literature (i.e., ruled penmanship paper, pages from magazines). These incredible detailed and layered works are on view in a room with sculptures by Huma Bhabha and a painting by the late Australian artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye, which makes for a lovely overall viewing experience. This room contributes to the international feel and reach of *All the World’s Futures* as envisioned by curator Okwui Enwezor.

Although Gallagher tackles different ideas and themes in these works, many of the materials and techniques are similar to those she used in her 2004–5 work in the Studio Museum’s collection, *Deluxe*, and her other works that were on view in *Speaking of People: Ebony, Jet and Contemporary Art* last fall at the Museum. I can’t wait to see how Gallagher’s work continues to evolve.
Rapture is a stunning, holistic project conceived by Camille Norment, an American-born artist who has lived and worked in Norway for the last decade, and was included in Freestyle (2001) at the Studio Museum. A site-specific, multimedia installation, Rapture encompasses sound and sculpture within the austere, clean lines of the Nordic Pavilion. Built by Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Sverre Fehn in 1962, the pavilion is a striking, horizontal structure made in the International Style. In the center three trees split the space and reach out into the sky via subtle openings in the ceiling, collapsing inside and out.

Norment’s installation makes a strong visual and aural impact. From the exterior, large, framed panes of shattered glass mimic the scale and design of the structure’s floor-to-ceiling windows. Upon entering the pavilion, a loose, nonlinear soundtrack becomes audible—a chorus of female voices, sounds of water, an occasional crunch of glass underfoot. The sounds emanate from the rear of the pavilion, where eight long, elegant shotgun microphones hang from the ceiling in a perfect circle. At certain times, one can hear resonances of the glass armonica, an instrument Norment has long performed with, and at others, the voices of a chorus emulating the instrument, synthesizing the two.

Benjamin Franklin invented the armonica in the eighteenth century. Played by Mozart and in Marie Antoinette’s court, it uses glass and water to create an ethereal sound. Initially celebrated for its curative powers and calming effects, it was quickly condemned for allegedly creating hysteria in women. Norment performed a new composition on the armonica in the pavilion several times throughout the opening of the Biennale. It was a powerful contrast to the instrument’s history—a woman was in control, a postcolonial black female body, no less.

Drawing together these ideas of harmony and dissonance, Norment’s work demonstrates how sound has been used and experienced historically as something transcendent or, alternately, as technologies have progressed, as a weapon. Norment’s installation weaves together the complexities of these very contemporary issues of control and policing of the body as they relate to the expression of sound and art.
In Adrian Piper’s *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1–3* (2013–15), three circular desks are each occupied by a young woman wielding an iPad and tending to a laser printer. The desks, in a corner of the vast space of the Arsenale, evoke the generic setting of institutional information desks, such as those at a bank or a museum. Behind each desk a muted gray wall bears one of three declarations in capitalized golden lettering:

- I WILL ALWAYS DO WHAT I SAY I AM GOING TO DO.
- I WILL ALWAYS MEAN WHAT I SAY.
- I WILL ALWAYS BE TOO EXPENSIVE TO BUY.

Belying the work’s visual simplicity—a kind of corporate minimalism—Piper has constructed a complex ethical and emotional situation. In a moment when audiences have become accustomed to easily—even gleefully—performing in artists’ participatory works, for this work Piper asks participants to make a serious public commitment, one that all but the most virtuous of us are unlikely to be able to keep. Tempted to explore the “rules of the game,” I did some mental acrobatics to justify making any of these promises, convincing/reminding myself that the meanings of the words “I” and “always” are open to interpretation. These words point to questions about singular subjectivity and eternity as a unit of time, questions that have long occupied philosophers. Indeed, Piper trained and is active as a philosopher.

I chose to try the station bearing the statement, “I WILL ALWAYS MEAN WHAT I SAY.” I signed the claim via an iPad’s touchscreen and the attendant handed me the signed declaration, on a piece of paper with the heading, “Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin.” Walking away from the installation as a new signatory to *The Probable Trust Registry*, I felt a sense of the precariousness of language, and both responsibility for and ambivalence toward the commitment I had just made.

Piper was awarded the prestigious Golden Lion award for best artist in Okwui Enwezor’s *All the World’s Futures*, the main exhibition of the Biennale, in recognition of *The Probable Trust Registry*. For the ways in which it asks us to consider difficult questions, it easy to see why the jury selected Piper—who has been making provocative, profound and deeply influential work about identity since the late 1960s—for the prize.
Since 2012, emerging Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama has daringly occupied civic spaces in his home country with large-scale draped works constructed from used jute sacks. In this context, Mahama’s interventions are stark interjections into the fabric of everyday life that elevate this ordinary yet remarkably resilient material from an overlooked player in Ghana’s markets to an object of contemplation. For Mahama, the jute sack carries with it both the literal and figurative residue of a life cycle that typically starts in the cocoa trade and ends in the charcoal industry—with many stops in between and after as it traverses Ghana’s micro-economies.

For his installation at the Venice Biennale, Mahama intervenes in the 650-foot-long corridor adjacent to the Arsenale, and has filled this otherwise overlooked space with art for the first time in the Biennale’s history. Mahama succeeds in creating a space apart from yet integrated with the wider exhibiting space, and he echoes the rhythm of rigor and liveliness that marks Enwezor’s exhibition. Scaling the vast walls of the former industrial site that, too, has connection to global trade routes, Out of Bounds (2015) oscillates between sheer monumentality and intricate surface detail. The work is full of formal play expressed through the varied techniques used to sew it together, and the array of textures that animate its rough, hessian surface. Across its length we find clusters of tufted fabric, assortments of shiny buttons, ropes and gaping holes, and even groupings of sacks that bear the names of previous owners in heavy black script. Mahama’s work stands as a metaphor for the complex processes of the exchange of goods and accumulation of capital that mark our contemporary moment. In paying attention to the unsung hero that is the jute sack, the artist gives an astute nod to the many hands and lives—of laborers, traders and many more—that are indispensable to flow of capital.
Gareth Nyandoro’s series of subtly colored collages, prints and installations embody the Zimbabwe Pavilion’s theme of *Ubantu/Unhu*: “I am because we are.” The artist’s work is a representation of the marketplaces found in the capital city of Harare. By depicting the vendors and masses that make up those spaces, Nyandoro is making visible the disenfranchised communities that make up his hometown. In the 2014 installation *Mushikashika Wevanhu (market objects)*, the artist recreates a vendor’s stall by combining a print of a seated woman with an actual rug full of items for sale. The vendors use the rugs to grab their wares quickly if the police come to arrest them for selling illegally. In a mixed-media painting *Ihohoho namadzibaba Ishimairi* (2015), Nyandoro presents a large group of silhouetted bodies—the masses of the street. The artist is not concerned with details, but rather what the whole group in the public spaces represents. Here is the street, the urban center where people pass each other every day, sometimes with visual acknowledgement, and other times just passively. But Nyandoro sees the importance in recognizing the population as a whole. This painting, along with the rest of his series, is a way of saying, “I recognize you, and therefore I recognize myself as a part of the whole.”
A week in Venice is one of wandering—sometimes pleasurable, sometimes confounding—balanced with moments of fortuitous magic. I found this to be true both within the Biennale and further afield. Within, nowhere is this truer than in the Giardino delle Vergini, a peaceful area tucked away behind the Arsenale.

There, I was drawn along a gravel path by the rousing sound of voices raised in song. The choir beckoned from within a darkened room in a tower at water’s edge. Through an arched doorway I entered an austere hexagonal space, the plain plywood walls dotted with speakers. At its center was a bench, equally plain, upon which sat a book titled *The Song of the Germans*. I sat on the bench and was enveloped by a stirring crescendo of voices, which rang and echoed throughout the small space. Opening the book, I learned that I was in the midst of an aural experience created by Nigerian artist Emeka Ogboh in collaboration with Bona Deus, an Afro-Gospel choir based in Berlin, titled *The Song of the Germans (Deutschlandlied)* (2015).

The song, vaguely familiar, is “Deutschlandlied,” Germany’s national anthem. However, the ten choir members, refugees from ten African countries, perform the anthem in translation: each sings in his or her own language. Ogboh recorded them individually and in unison, and his arrangement incorporates both approaches, melding the individual into the collective and vice versa. Heard in succession, the two versions—the same but different—have a cumulative effect that is visceral and moving. At some moments, the song feels celebratory and hopeful, in the way of national anthems; at others, it feels acrid and barbed, as if asking, “Whose anthem? Whose nation?”

In an exhibition permeated by questions of nationhood, politics and economy, in a Europe struggling visibly with African immigration and humanitarian crises on its shores, Ogboh’s poetic installation rings out. It is contemplative but also pointed, magical but also unsettling. It is timely, resonant, beautiful and utterly unforgettable.
A somewhat unexpected sight—a flag emblazoned with the words “Black Lives Matter,” a now-familiar rallying cry in the United States—greets visitors to the Belgian Pavilion. Created by black American artist Adam Pendleton, the flag seems an apt starting place for the exhibition Personne et les autres, organized by Belgian artist Vincent Meessen. Personne et les autres is unusual in its conviction to reckon with the specter of Belgium’s brutal colonial engagement in central Africa, which few artists have opted to do before. The Belgian Pavilion gives Meessen the opportunity to abdicate single authorship and present a number of international voices—including those of Maryam Jafri, Mathieu K. Abonnenc and Pendleton, among others—that go right to the country’s heart of darkness.

Pendleton’s contribution, in addition to the facade’s flag, is an installation, set in an alcove wallpapered in his signature oversized black-and-white photo-collaged prints, and including objects from his ongoing series “System of Display” (2009–present). The dominant images include a young Congolese couple dancing shortly after the end of Belgian rule, a scene from a film by Ethiopian filmmaker Haile Gerima and a towering wall-sized text that repeats “Black Lives Matter,” rendered in spray paint over a xeroxed image of an African mask. Pendleton and Meessen are kindred spirits in their interest in revisiting modernist radicality, and re-inscribing it with the presence of those left out of its history. Pendleton has been working with his conception of “Black Dada”—what Dada would look like through the eyes of black artists—for a number of years. In a similar spirit, Meessen incorporates in his work a song written by Joseph M’Belolo, a Congolese participant in the Situationist International and Lettrism, the international avant-garde literary movements. Meessen produced a multichannel video installation, One.Two.Three (2015), using M’Belolo’s lyrics, written in traditional language Kikongo in defiance to the Belgian government; invited local musicians to play a rumba accompaniment; and intercut the footage with an interview with M’Belolo and other cultural figures. Considering this particular moment in history, when racial tensions and civil rights struggles resemble those of the 1960s, it seems only appropriate for Belgium to use the Biennale as a critical platform to highlight the liberation movements that challenged their history of oppression, rather than present a spectacle of blind nationalism and self-congratulation.
A recurring durational work, forty minutes long and performed four times per week, WORK SONGS, composed by Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran, is grounded by the former’s masterful track, which maps the percussive, repetitive, driving rhythms of laying steel tracks by hand, swinging an axe or plowing the fields alongside a mule. Moving from the austere and singular ring of a hammer on cold steel to a tumultuous layering of tempos (from 57 to 190 beats per minute) and field recordings of the voices of inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, the track twists linear time to make each live solo vocalist (including Hall Moran, myself and an amazing group performing through November) uneasy at the onset. As the singer finds her internal clock, her center—sometimes in time with the track’s layers of vocals from prisons, fields and houses, but more often out of time—the uneasiness becomes a marker for the emotional landscape of hard, durational, dawn-to-dusk labor these songs were created to ease the burden of. The live voice in each performance maps this landscape and resonates across the whole body of the track to become a thick connective tissue across time and space. As the song “John Henry” emerges from the song cycle we are faced with the metaphor of his tale, and the emotional and social consequences of generations of black workers who have literally worked themselves to death and, in turn, have had to be intentional masters of their own time. Moran and Hall Moran’s score instructs the performer and track to repeat “Life, Live, Time,” meaning “You ain’t got but one life to live, you better take your time.”

1. Seabell Kennedy, vocal performance of “You ain’t got but one life to live, you better take your time,” recorded July 1941, Gee’s Bend, Alabama, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, compact disc.
The Freedwomen’s Bureau has been busy this past year, teaching the black radical tradition to the youth; peddling old, new and weird books throughout Harlem; hosting tea time and zine night at the Studio Museum; staging readings in secret gardens; and rehabilitating the vacant home of Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity. The Bureau is a one-woman project by author (and, she would add, mother and neighbor) Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts. This fictitious nineteenth-century black women’s uplift organization was the vehicle for Rhodes-Pitts’s two most recent projects: the transitory bookstore Blacknuss: books and other relics and the recently closed educational space Take This X.

Both projects are forward-looking evocations of the past, fitting for Rhodes-Pitts’s role as an activist historian. They invoke a certain historical moment of black political engagement in the 1970s that has been identified by cultural theorist Frank Wilderson as one in which radical politics, leftist scholarship, and socially engaged creative practices retained the ability to pose questions of blackness and its radical traditions in a manner that has since become illegible.¹

The first phase of Blacknuss took the form of site-specific street vending in which Rhodes-Pitts set up a table and sold her wares across from a tapas bar that was formerly the site of one of Harlem’s historical black bookstores, Una Mulzac’s Liberation Books. Rhodes-Pitts’s fugitive bookstand functioned to intervene against the erasure of cultural memory upon which gentrification depends for its success in re-mapping an area. “Serving Street Vendor Realness,” as this iteration of Blacknuss was titled, paid homage to Mulzac’s moment of black political culture by both calling attention to the loss of such crucial sites of cultural memory as black bookstores were, and by creating a new, albeit temporary, social space in which the memory could once again be sustained.

That the project’s goal is to create these types of spaces is perhaps the reason that Blacknuss has thus far attracted more attention from the art world than from literary organizations or publishing organs, despite the fact that Rhodes-Pitts is known first and foremost as an author. As art, the bookstore’s mobility renders it a series of “site-specific interventions,” and her hauling boxes of diasporic artifacts across Harlem—with her son strapped to her back all the while—might be understood in a tongue-in-cheek manner as a kind of “durational performance.” But outside of art, Blacknuss reads as a contiguous part of the cultural landscape of Harlem’s characteristic street vendors; it is an entrepreneurial project that will soon have a permanent storefront. The varying frames of reference through which it may be understood speak to its extreme adaptability and responsibility its publics. It is as at home at the Studio Museum (making zines with the young artists who comprise Vulgar Culture, Pop’Africana, 3 Dot Zine and the BDGRMMR collective) as it is on Malcolm X Boulevard between 130th and 131st streets.

The bookstore portion of the project has gained much of its energy from the enthusiasm and assistance of

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¹ By Ciarán Finlayson

Opposite Top:
Take This X
Photo: Ciarán Finlayson

Opposite Bottom:
Blacknuss: books and other relics
pop-up shop at the Studio Museum
Photo: Alani Bass
contemporary artists. Nontsikelelo Mutiti designed buttons for the store that proclaim “Blacknuss Is Beautiful.” Zachary Fabri has made a video to digitally document the store’s first publication, a zine called Diaspora Panic. Indeed, the project has drawn as much influence from publication-based art projects, such as Steffani Jemison and Jamai Cyrus’s reading room and discussion space at the New Museum, Alpha’s Bet Is Not Over Yet (2011), as it has from the historical bookstores of the artist’s childhood, such as Houston’s Amistad Bookplace. Despite the proclaimed deaths of print media and independent bookstores, there has been a resurgence of interest in printed matter and DIY publishing in the realm of contemporary art. This is reflected in Blacknuss’s selection of works by artists such as Jayson Musson, The Otolith Group and Martine Syms. Rhodes-Pitts observes: “There are bookstores that are thriving, there are publishers that are thriving and they’re doing so because they are speaking really directly to people that love the same things that they love. That is the strength on which I can continue to build with this project. It’s very specific.”

Despite its “fugitive” itinerancy, Blacknuss will eventually find a brick-and-mortar home in Harlem. A pop-up version at the Studio Museum demonstrated that the act of gathering is crucial to both community-building and creative production. Elsewhere, Rhodes-Pitts has quoted Malcolm X, “Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality.” The sentiment speaks to the main thrust of the project thus far, the need for a place to gather, even if only under the auspices of selling books. Creating this kind of open-ended gathering space was the goal of the Bureau’s other project this year, Take This X, a space for structured cultural events that also functioned throughout the day as a “conversation piece.”

Launched exactly fifty years to the day after Malcolm X’s assassination, Take This X ran from February through April 2015 and was located on 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. Its atmosphere was structured by Nathaniel Donnett’s sound installation, Now that He’s Left the Building (2015), which used low frequencies to emphasize the cavernous quality of the plain room. It filled the space with the forceful, relentless, driving energy of Malcolm X’s speeches mixed with (or submerged in) jazz moaning its lower registers, and thereby gave the space a kind of calm urgency. In the center, Kameelah Janan Rasheed installed a reading room that contained a small library of some fifteen books about Malcolm X, accompanied by a selection of reproduced documents, all arranged around wooden blocks. At the center sat a vessel of frankincense and myrrh from Somaliland.

Take This X was not overdetermined as a classroom or a venue for contemporary art, and what it became as time progressed was very much an adaptation to the needs of its visitors. The white organdy wall-coverings became shrouds and Togolese floor mats became prayer rugs. People came to pray, read and speak to anyone present about Malcolm, Harlem and the situation of black peoples the world over. This open-endedness characterizes the improvisatory nature of the Bureau’s projects and this serious work of improvisation is reflected in each work’s title, Blacknuss coming from a Rashaan Roland Kirk album from 1972 and Take This X from Archie Shepp’s 1969 recording, “Poem for Malcolm.”

Rhodes-Pitts turns to these jazz greats in part because they come from a historical moment in which racial and cultural concerns could be spoken of forthrightly. Of Blacknuss, she says the name presents “a way to be very clear about what you’re talking about.” These recent projects of the Freedwomen’s Bureau return to a moment coincident with the Black Arts Movement, when questions of blackness were posed and explored with a depth and directness that seems elusive today. Within the frameworks of post-blackness and ardent academic “anti-essentialism,” Rhodes-Pitts argues, “black people are not allowed to speak really clearly about themselves.”

The innumerable differences internal to the word “black,” as a designation of a people or a culture, are now frequently used call the term’s usefulness into question. As one book on sale at Blacknuss poetically puts it, “The techniques of black performance—in their manifest difference from one another . . . are understood to constitute the ‘proof’ that blackness is not or is lost or is loss.” Blacknuss is a response to this situation. It picks up where the tradition of the activist black bookstores as public gathering spaces prematurely ended, joins with the impulse of a generation of contemporary artists working in print media and brings both to bear on a kind of community organizing dedicated to fostering what artist Martine Syms has called “this radical, black tradition of hyperliteracy.” These influences are essential to the understanding of the museum, “contemporary black academic discourse” and, as cultural theorists Stefano Harney and Fred Moten remind us, of those key public spaces, “the barbershop, the beauty shop and the bookstore.” Reinvigorating this crucial space of social life, Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts invites us to revisit and to think anew the acts of buying, reading and thinking black.

Partnership Highlight

Museum Cultural Ambassadors

by Erin Hylton,
School Programs Coordinator

Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School (TMALS) is the site of a parent engagement program created in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and The Studio Museum in Harlem. The program, Museum Cultural Ambassadors, is a way to connect parents with the work being done in their children’s classrooms and their experiences in museums. With years of collaboration in the classrooms of TMALS and on field trips to both institutions, the goal of Museum Cultural Ambassadors is to encourage parents to visit cultural institutions on their own, outside of existing facilitated museum activities.

The Museum Cultural Ambassadors program provides workshops at the Studio Museum and MoMA for parents and guardians who are interested in finding new approaches to education and the arts for their children. The program models strategies for developing literacy skills, allows parents to make connections with what their children are learning in the classroom, and provides examples of how parents can lead fun, engaging arts-based activities in museums that complement school-based projects. Museum Cultural Ambassadors in the program serve as leaders in their school communities with respect to arts education and its relevance in their children’s education, and as advocates to encourage families to attend museum family programs.

Starting as a group of “parent coordinators,” approximately twenty family members volunteered to take part in this yearlong initiative. Each family was given a journal with prompts to guide their looking once inside cultural institutions. Through hands-on workshops, meetings with museum education staff and guided tours, Museum Cultural Ambassadors are provided opportunities to develop a comfort level within a cultural institution, tools to come to a museum to self-guide with their children, and practice through prompts on how to use art in connection to their children’s in-school curricula. In the upcoming academic year, the Museum Cultural Ambassadors program will welcome a new cohort of families and offer additional opportunities for the original group.

Opposite Top:
Parents engaged in looking at the Charles Gaines exhibition during the TMALS October Parent Workshop at the Studio Museum
Photo: Carol Brown

Opposite Bottom:
Children and staff engaged in a hands-on activity creating their own stories inspired by Jacob Lawrence’s “Migration Series”
Photo: Jasmine Law
With his signature approach to abstract painting, Stanley Whitney demonstrates a mastery of color and form in his works. Whitney’s large-scale oil paintings are immediately recognizable by the bold squares of color organized by a grid. Whitney developed his formula in the early 1990s, expanded on the use of the Modernist grid and asserted color as the true subject of his work. Citing influences in classical architecture, textiles, Color Field painters such as Barnett Newman and Minimalist sculpture, Whitney employs a painting strategy that reflects his interest in the rhythm of painting and the relationships between colors.

Each of Whitney’s canvases are divided into four unevenly sized horizontal bands, with the smallest section on the bottom. He then fills in the bands with rectangles of different colors that also vary in saturation. The colors are weighty and dimensional, almost as if they are building blocks and the painting is a building facade. Color is at the forefront of each of Whitney’s works and carries great emotion. In using this formula, Whitney arranges colors intuitively. Like in music, the colors have a call-and-response structure and rhythms that set the tone of each work. Whitney borrows further cues from music by titling his works after songs that have had great impacts on him. For example, *My Name Is Peaches* (2015), one of the artist’s newest and biggest works, refers to Nina Simone’s song “Four Women” (1966)—the last woman being Peaches. Composed primarily of oranges, pinks, blues and greens, the painting is activated by the relationship between colors and how they appear to respond to each other. The grid is not used to constrain the colors, but rather to encourage the viewer’s eye to jump from block to block and take notice of the airiness that is present on a seemingly flat canvas. Whitney’s geometric structures are near-equivalent to musical compositions, balances of both structure and improvisation.
Art Work, Two Ways

Stanley Whitney

Stanley Whitney
My Name is Peaches, 2015
Courtesy the artist and team (gallery, inc.), New York
Methods

1. Ask students to consider the essential question.
2. Begin to play jazz music for students to listen to throughout the art-making process.
3. Have students cut construction paper into squares and rectangles of different sizes. Give students time to listen to the music and invite them to respond to what they hear with the shapes and colors. Challenge students to arrange their shapes in grid form.
4. Invite students to emphasize areas of their compositions with colored tape. Remind students to reflect on structure and color within their artworks, and to consider how the placement of materials onto the cardboard impacts the reading of each artwork.

Vocabulary

- **Color** is the visual attribute of an object as the result of light it emits, transmits or reflects.
- **Jazz** is a type of American music with lively rhythms and melodies that are often made up by musicians as they play.
- **Spontaneity** is the act of engaging in unplanned or undetermined action or movement.

Objective

To investigate how patterns of sound may translate to a visual composition

Essential Question

How might you create a color composition that responds to jazz music?

Materials

- Cardboard squares (12” or 14” squares preferable)
- Colored masking tape
- Construction paper, assorted colors
- Glue
- Scissors
- Jazz music selections (suggested artists: Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong)

Preparation

1. Introduce vocabulary words and discuss students’ understanding of each term.
2. Display Stanley Whitney’s *My Name Is Peaches* and lead a visual inquiry. Suggested first question: What grabs your attention first in this image?
3. Place glue, colored masking tape and scissors at the center of the table. Leave space for students’ work to develop.
4. Set construction paper in trays for students, making sure they have a variety of colors from which to choose.
5. Provide each student with a cardboard square.

Closure

1. Display finished artworks around classroom.
2. Ask students to take a gallery walk and view their peers’ designs.
3. Invite students to explain the choices they made in creating their artworks.
4. Discuss how spontaneity and jazz influenced the finished projects.
At first glance, the Expanding the Walls program looks like a straightforward eight-month photography class in which a select group of high school students enter knowing little about photography and depart with skills for capturing and creating images. That is true, but is just a small piece of the puzzle. In fact, Expanding the Walls uses photography as a means for the students to explore the broad topics of history and community, and foster their creativity, visual acuity and critical thinking.

Through discussions and the viewing of artwork, the students express and explore the numerous ideas, views and themes that emerge from art.

The students work closely with the art of James VanDerZee, a prominent photographer known for documenting the Harlem Renaissance and offering beautiful depictions of community and history in Harlem. Upon viewing his work, the students quickly compare and contrast the modern communities in which they live with those in VanDerZee’s photographs. An interesting dialogue grows out of this exercise. One student suggested that community does not exist anymore, and said that to her there seems to be a greater sense of individuality than community. By contrast, another student pointed out that community is all around, in the form of “the vendors on the street, the people who barbecue in the park, all your neighbors that know all your business.” She challenged the prior argument and encouraged a dynamic conversation.

Through engaging classroom conversations, study of the works of VanDerZee and other artists, art-making workshops and field excursions, the students search for and execute their own ideas. Youth Programs and Expanding the Walls Coordinator Gerald Leavell takes the young artists to museum events, film screenings and galleries to expose them to the myriad ways that artists execute their ideas. For example, after visiting the New Museum’s exhibition 2015 Triennial: Surround Audience, which includes a large number of new media works, the students began to reflect on how they can present their own pieces.

As the Youth Programs and Expanding the Walls Intern, I have worked with the students since their program began in January 2015. I remember students passionately articulating concepts for projects that they found interesting, from domestic violence to unnoticed beauty. In the following weeks, after attempting to capture images that reflect and express their themes, one student voiced how difficult it had been to seek out moments that specifically reflect the theme he wanted to express. Another student was disappointed to find that her photos were not communicating what she wanted them to. But after spending a session reviewing each other’s works, she found that her peers’ confusion about her work was, in fact, helpful. She gained a sense of direction as they expressed their bewilderment and encouraged her to clarify meaning in her images by not bombarding the viewer. As an Expanding the Walls alumnus, I can strongly state that the small discussions, journal entries and support and feedback from my fellow artists guided me through the anxious process of generating and executing the ideas I chose to explore. I’m looking forward to seeing the exhibition created by this group of visionary students this summer.

Read more about this year’s Expanding the Walls program on our blog, studiomuseum.org/studio-blog
Happiness can be found in the smallest of things.

It is our job to transform your everyday routines into more meaningful RITUALS.
Mini Curator! Maya Evans × Kevin Beasley

Maya Evans, affectionately known as Mini Curator!, is back and better than ever! For this season’s issue of Studio, the inspired eight-year-old sits down with 2013–14 artist in residence Kevin Beasley and asks him about his process, career and (of course) choice in apples.
— Naima J. Keith, Associate Curator

MAYA EVANS: How does it feel being an artist?

KEVIN BEASLEY: It feels pretty liberating because I’m able to do the things that I find are important, to create things that I can share with other people. It’s like having another language in a way.

ME: Why do you like being an artist, besides making a mess?

KB: I associate what I like about being an artist with the things I find to be challenging and rewarding at the same time. What I like the most is when I’m able to connect with other people through these challenges, and that ends up being pretty rewarding because you can actually engage with the things that are around you in a really fruitful way.

ME: How do you make your artwork?

KB: I make it with care and I always consider the context that the work will be in. Those are usually the ideas that I start off with when I am making an artwork.
**ME:** Do you often take a sculpture that you’ve worked on and incorporate that into another sculpture? Does it eventually become something else?

**KB:** That does happen a lot. I think a lot of the work that I’m doing will be really residual, so these parts came from another part of a sculpture. I think there was a full sock here and I ended up cutting it down and the other half is within another sculpture, and I think this will eventually be in some sculpture—I have a lot of them. Things like this—parts and pieces of things, or even on like a much larger scale—I’m going to pull this out. Like that was part of two—so they’ll probably get separated at some point, they were one, but I think now they’ll end up being multiple pieces and they may not look the same.

**ME:** Where were you born?

**KB:** I was born in Lynchburg, Virginia.

**ME:** What inspires your artwork?

**KEVIN:** I am mostly inspired by an accumulation of all of these things. There are certain artists and works that I’ve seen that have compelled me to continue to make work. David Hammons has been someone—you know, you can’t make work without having some sort of response or considering his influence as an artist. But then other people such as Ralph Lemon have also been inspirational as a person to have a conversation with.

**ME:** Did you go to art school when you were young?

**KB:** I drew a lot and my parents actually supported me and gave me a lot of paper and markers and crayons and things to make things with. It was actually when I was about ten that my mom decided that I should take art classes. My mom got me private lessons and I did those for about a year and a half and that’s when I first started oil painting.

**ME:** What type of college did you go to?

**KB:** I went to an arts school for my Bachelor’s of Fine Arts. Then I went to Yale for my Master’s in Fine Arts.

**ME:** When you were young, did you make any sculptures?

**KB:** I did. I had a lot of action figures and stuffed animals, and I actually used to take the stuffed animals, pillows and clothes and wrap them all up. I would fill a long-sleeve shirt with all of my other clothes and pillows and then put a bear as a head and boots on them, and I would tie them up and make these people. There’s actually a photo that my parents have of one of those in the hallway, just laying out. I used to do that lot. That’s probably the first sculptural thing that I used to make that I think I still do.

**ME:** Do you go to art school when you were young?

**KB:** I like Gala apples a lot and they’re kind of yellowish red. They’re kind of like a mix, but if I had to choose between a red or green apple, I would choose a red apple. They don’t call it delicious for nothing.

**ME:** Do you clean up your mess when you do your work?

**KB:** Very rarely.

**ME:** It’s very messy in here and you need to clean it up so you can move, so you don’t get stuck in one space.

**KB:** For me when projects happen, whenever I complete something, there is a big sort of sweep and all the residue from that gets collected. But I think predominantly I work really well when I’m able to see a lot of things happening because I don’t necessarily plan like this thing, work on this project, then work on this project. They all kind of fold over the top of each other. So having them all visible is really important for me, but I also know that if there’s something that’s completed or done, then I need to have some kind of order. You know, there comes a point where the space around needs to be very clean and really splayed out. But in the creative process, when I’m actually working and putting things together, I need to be able to quickly grab things, so it all is just sort of like splayed out.

**ME:** This is my second time doing an interview, and this is a question I asked in my first one. Do you like green or red apples?

**KB:** I like Gala apples a lot and they’re kind of yellowish red. They’re kind of like a mix, but if I had to choose between a red or green apple, I would choose a red apple. They don’t call it delicious for nothing.
This project is inspired by Lorraine O’Grady’s 1983 performance *Art Is....* In the performance, O’Grady and a group of fifteen dancers took part in the African-American Day Parade in Harlem in September. They rode a majestic gold float decorated with the words, “Art Is...” They all carried empty gold picture frames of various sizes, and then jumped on and off the float periodically to hold the frames in front of onlookers—as a way of making portraits of the people and landscapes of Harlem. If you were in a parade, how would you design your float?

**Supplies**

- Styrofoam tray
- Cardstock in various colors
- Construction paper
- Two stirrers or straws
- Found decorative objects (string, buttons, streamers, etc.)
- Clay
- Scissors
- Colorful tape
- Glue
DIY Design a Float

Step 1
Make wheels for the float by cutting out four 1” x 6” rectangles. Tape the short ends of each one together to make cylinders.

Step 2
Tape a cylinder to each corner of the styrofoam tray, and then flip it over.

Step 3
Make a sign for your float with a piece of cardstock or construction paper. Tape stirrers or straws to the sides of the sign to hold it up.

Step 4
Glue a rectangular piece of cardstock on top of the styrofoam tray, to make the floor of the float.

Step 5
Decorate your float as you like, using decorations and embellishments to make it one of a kind!
Middle School Mondays

by Shanta Lawson, Education Manager

During the 2014–15 school year, more than four hundred sixth, seventh and eighth grade students from across New York enjoyed interactive gallery tours through Middle School Mondays, a new Studio Museum initiative that provides gallery tours at no cost for middle school students on Mondays, when the Museum is closed to the public.

Middle School Mondays tours enlivened the galleries as students engaged in dialogues with one another and Museum educators about the visual information presented in the artworks on view. Open-ended questions, such as, “What strikes you about this work?” and “What are your thoughts about the artist’s choice of materials?” invited students to share their observations, opinions and connections between art and their own experiences. With the galleries all to themselves, the students explored a range of artworks throughout the year, including portraits in Titus Kaphar: The Jerome Project and abstract paintings in Kianja Stobert: Of This Day in Time. Many were especially excited to discuss the photographs featured in Harlem Postcards, and select a favorite to take home.

In February, MS 118 students participated in a tour with a guiding question from their teacher: “How does art influence our daily lives?” Our education team was excited to receive letters from the students with their careful considerations of this vital question, along with general thoughts about their Museum experiences. Here are a few of our favorites.
Dear Studio Museum

Today I learned that art could mean many things. I also learned that it doesn't matter if you are an artist or not everyone understands art. Thank you for letting me see the art and for teaching me stuff about art.

I think Harlem Window Display is based on the type of hair guys have in Harlem. It shows a customer's point of view when getting a hair cut.

From: Tupsi
Dear Studio Museum,

I thank you for the class tour in the museum. During the tour, I've learned that with or without makeup and hair you are still beautiful. This really affects a lot of people in any race to know they're still beautiful. People could change to be pretty, but that person is more beautiful inside. I thank you for showing me something that I just learned about art. Yousef Nabil, this shows that beauty is always there in the person. Being beauty isn't about using products for your skin, hair or anything. I didn't know how lovely art could be in different ways. Thanks for the tour around the museum.

Sincerely,

Anthony
Dear Studio Museum,

Thank you for educating me about all the different kinds of art work. I also thank you for teaching me that Art is an interpretation. I always thought that Art was what the artist made it to be, and everyone thought it was all the same. The post card that stood out to me was Harlem Window Display, 2014 because to me it's the most unique.

From,

Nicole
URGE coloring page

BODY THANG

YEAW

CHOOSE LIFE

da realm
got a get over
the hump?

By:
I, Pharaoh, high-voltage Funkateer, master architect & kingdom planner Lauren Danielle Halsey
Friends
Spring Luncheon 2015

On Friday, April 24, 2015, The Studio Museum in Harlem hosted more than three hundred guests at the eighth annual Spring Luncheon at the Mandarin Oriental, New York. The afternoon was dedicated to “Celebrating Creativity, Community and Culture” and included remarks from current Expanding the Walls student Angelica Calderon, Arts and Minds participant Joan Nicholson and 2011-12 artist in residence Xaviera Simmons. Proceeds from the luncheon are critical to sustaining the Museum’s outstanding exhibitions and public programs, as well as the Museum’s arts education programming. The Studio Museum would like to acknowledge the following businesses and individuals for their generous support and efforts in raising nearly $350,000.
Spring Luncheon 2015

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*Photo by Scott Rudd

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### Spring Luncheon 2015

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Member Spotlight

Angela Jackson

Level: Donor
Member since 2014

What is your connection to Harlem?

I moved to Harlem in 2002. I grew up in Chicago, reading and hearing about Harlem and its place in African-American history. Since I was a little girl, it was always my dream to make my home in Harlem and live in a brownstone. I am living my dream in the Mount Morris Park neighborhood. Also, I run a program called Global Language Project that works with public elementary schools in Harlem to expose students to world language and culture. I like to say we are creating the next generation of global citizens right here in Harlem!

What do you enjoy most about the Harlem community?

I enjoy the diversity and the people. I love that Harlem is a close-knit community. I know my neighbors and can count them as friends. In a big city like New York, I find that this is particularly special and rare.

When did you first visit The Studio Museum in Harlem?

I first visited the Studio Museum in 2001 to attend a panel discussion on minorities in the entertainment industry. I came for the panel but was really swept away by the art and the artists who looked like me and reminded me of my own experiences. It is powerful to see yourself, your culture and your history on the Museum’s walls.

What has been your favorite experience or exhibition at the Museum so far?

I really enjoyed The Bearden Project. Romare Bearden’s history and work are so tied with Harlem, specifically his work in helping to found the Studio Museum. It was a tribute and treat to see the work of contemporary artists who were all inspired by Bearden keeping his legacy alive.

Why do you think it is important to become a Member of the Studio Museum?

I am a patron of the arts. The Studio Museum has been a pillar in the community as the face of Harlem changes rapidly. In my work with Global Language Project we introduce Harlem students to world language and culture. I encourage every parent and student to visit the Studio Museum, as it serves as a door into our community and has become a gateway to the world.
Stanley Whitney
*Untitled*, 2014
Courtesy the artist and team (gallery, inc.), New York
The Board of Trustees and Director of The Studio Museum in Harlem extend deep gratitude to the donors who supported the Museum between July 1, 2014, and April 30, 2015. We look forward to sharing the complete 2014/2015 fiscal year donor roll in the winter issue of Studio magazine, including a complete list of our Spring Matching Gift Challenge supporters.

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Below are the names of those who gave gifts to The Studio Museum in Harlem in memory of their loved ones between July 1, 2014, and April 30, 2015. We are very grateful to the friends and family members who directed this support to the Museum in memory of their loved ones.

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The opening of *All the World’s Futures*, the centerpiece exhibition of the 2015 Venice Biennale, offered a spectacular opportunity to celebrate both curator Okwui Enwezor’s historic appointment as the first African Artistic Director of the Biennale and the unprecedented thirty-five-plus artists of African descent featured in the exhibition. The Studio Museum was privileged to attend the Biennale in early May 2015 with a group of our fabulous Museum Trustees, and members of our Acquisition Committee and Global Council.

During our three-day trip we met with numerous artists whose work is central to the Studio Museum’s mission, including Sonia Boyce, Melvin Edwards, Ellen Gallagher, Theaster Gates, Isaac Julien, Samson Kambalu, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Steve McQueen, Jason Moran, Oscar Murillo, Wangechi Mutu, Chris Ofili and Gary Simmons. Each of these brilliant artists generously agreed to speak with us and provided amazing insights into their
The Studio Museum in Venice

As we viewed the work of so many Studio Museum alumni and friends, we were struck by how much the Museum, our mission and our family of artists have become part of the international conversation about art. The 2015 Venice Biennale truly marked a powerful moment in history, and we are all so thankful to have witnessed it.

Donor trips, such as our excursion to Venice, play an important role in building the Studio Museum’s reputation in an increasingly global contemporary art world. Travel opportunities are open to those at the Global Council level and above. Council members, who gather a few times each year for events with Studio Museum leadership, demonstrate their commitment to the Museum by making gifts of unrestricted support at the level of $5,000 or above annually.

To learn more about Global Council, please call Erin Dooley at 212.864.4500 x265.
Membership
Info

Join today!
Becoming a Member
has never been easier.

Photo: Scott Rudd

**Individual $50 ($25 for Student/Senior)**
(Fully tax-deductible)
— Free admission to the Studio Museum for one
— Personalized membership card
— One-year subscription to Studio
— E-vite to exhibition opening receptions
— 20% discount on exhibition catalogues published by the Studio Museum
— 15% discount on all Museum Store purchases
— Invitations to Member Shopping Days with additional discount offers throughout the year
— Free admission or discounted tickets to all Studio Museum educational and public programs
— Special discounts at select local Harlem businesses
— Annual recognition in Studio

**Family/Partner $75**
(Fully tax-deductible)
— All the preceding benefits, plus:
— Free admission to the Studio Museum for two adults (at the same address) and children under eighteen years of age
— Personalized membership cards for two
— Members-only Wednesday evenings from 5–7 PM

**Supporter $125**
(Fully tax-deductible)
— All the preceding benefits, plus:
— Member privileges of the North American Reciprocal Museum Program, allowing free or member admission and discounts at over 760 museums across the United States
— Free admission for one guest

**Associate $250**
($220 tax-deductible)
— All the preceding benefits plus:
— One complimentary Studio Museum exhibition catalogue

**Donor $500**
($450 tax-deductible)
— All the preceding benefits, plus:
— Invitations to behind-the-scenes tours and talks with art connoisseurs and curators
— Two complimentary guest passes for family and friends
Membership Form

Yes! I want to be a Member of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

☐ 1 Year
☐ Renewal
☐ Gift

MEMBERSHIP
☐ Donor $500
☐ Associate $250
☐ Supporter $125
☐ Family/Partner $75
☐ Individual $50
☐ Student $25*
☐ Senior $25*

STUDIO SOCIETY
☐ Studio Society $1500
☐ Studio Society $2500

*(Student/Senior Membership will not be processed without a copy of a valid ID)

☐ American Express
☐ MasterCard
☐ Visa

☐ I have enclosed my check
(make check payable to
The Studio Museum in Harlem)

☐ Mr. ☐ Ms. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Other

Name of membership holder

Name of additional Member (Family/Partner level members and above)

Address

City                                                              State                             Zip

Work Phone                                                              Home Phone

Email Address

☐ Please do not make my name, address and other information available to third-party providers.

☐ Please list as Anonymous.

Name of cardholder

Address

City                                                              State                             Zip

Work Phone                                                              Home Phone

Card Number                                                          Expiration Date

Signature

» MAIL TO
The Studio Museum in Harlem
144 W. 125th St.
New York, NY 10027
Visitor Information

**Address**
144 W. 125th St. New York, NY 10027
(between Malcolm X and Adam C. Powell Jr. boulevards)

**Admission**
Suggested donation: $7 (adults), $3 (seniors and students).
Free for Members and children (12 and under).

**Follow us on social media!**
[studiomuseum](http://studiomuseum.org)

**General Info**
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pr@studiomuseum.org

**Public Programs Info**
212.864.4500 x264
programs@studiomuseum.org

**Membership Info**
212.864.4500 x221
membership@studiomuseum.org

**Museum Hours**
Thursday and Friday, noon–9 pm;
Saturday, 10 am–6 pm;
Sunday, noon–6 pm.

The Museum is closed to the public on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday but available for school and group tours by appointment on these days. For more information on scheduling a tour, visit studiomuseum.org