“For nearly five decades, the Studio Museum in Harlem has served as a cultural repository, reflecting the ruptures, shifts and spectrum of experiences for artists of African descent.”

So wrote the New York Times in their review of the Studio Museum’s fall/winter 2015–16 exhibitions—and I couldn’t agree more. We are so proud to serve in this role, and to be able to bring artists’ perspectives and experience to a broad and diverse audience. With works in our collection that date to the nineteenth century and a mandate to support today’s up-and-coming artists, the Studio Museum has the wonderful opportunity to juxtapose treasured historical artworks with the newest creations by some of the most innovative artists working today. Our collection, exhibitions and programs are always looking to the future while honoring the past.

2015 marked the fifteenth year of my tenure at the Studio Museum and my tenth year as Director. I was honored to be saluted at the Studio Museum’s Gala in October, and I am thrilled that in this Studio we celebrate many of the artists, educators and supporters who have been amazing partners during this time and beyond. In this issue we look back on fifteen years of our signature teen program, Expanding the Walls, and spotlight Gala 2015, where we awarded the tenth Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize to Njideka Akunyili Crosby, a 2011–12 artist in residence. We also send warm retirement wishes to our long-time Security Supervisor, Mr. Norris Robinson, whose friendly welcome I first experienced as a Studio Museum intern in the 1980s; profile Artist-in-Residence program alumna Lauren Kelley and her exciting work at our new neighbor, the Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling; and explore the parallels between architects J. Max Bond Jr. and David Adjaye as we prepare for the exciting transition from a space lovingly renovated by Bond to one specially envisioned by Adjaye. And, as always, the pages that follow feature lots of fantastic artwork—from longtime favorites to new discoveries.

We are thrilled and honored to have a bright future here at the Studio Museum, but we remain eternally grateful to those who paved the way for us.

I’ll see you uptown!

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

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

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Exhibition Schedule
Winter/Spring 2015–16

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

On view through March 6, 2016
A Constellation
Black: Color, Material, Concept
Lorraine O’Grady: Art Is...
Marc Andre Robinson: Twice Told
Focus: Danielle Dean

March 24–June 26, 2016
Rodney McMillian: Views of Main Street
Ebony G. Patterson: . . . when they grow up . . .
Rashaad Newsome: THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO SEE
Palatable: Food and Contemporary Art
Surface Area: Selections from the Permanent Collection

Always on View
Harlem Postcards
Glenn Ligon: Give Us a Poem
Adam Pendleton: Collected (Flamingo George)
A Sunday night in September, around midnight, the balcony of Eden Roc, one of the six Lenox Terrace apartment buildings, constructed in 1958 and considered the first luxury apartments in Harlem. I look down and see silhouettes walking by, but from the sixteenth floor they are small and don’t notice me. I look up and see the glow from downtown. To my left is the Buckingham, identical to the building I am standing in. Like a grand television, the apartments radiate gradients of red, blue, green and white. Shadows dance in kitchens and bedrooms while other rooms remain empty. I’m sure it must be the same from each of their windows: a view of the switchboard of Harlem life, the endless hum from the streets below.
Museum
This postcard is inspired by the commerce of the landscape of Harlem, from small businesses to large department stores. The photograph comes from a series of images taken on city sidewalks in Harlem, Philadelphia and Chicago against, on top of or next to discarded materials such as paper, cardboard, gum and slabs of concrete. Construction debris, newspapers and sale circulars are the components of these improvised sidewalk compositions, works of material residue that get at what it means to occupy, inhabit and move through multiple urban spaces.

Jessica Vaughn
Born 1983, Chicago, IL
Lives and works in New York, NY

In Search of the Sweet Life //
Kia Labeija on Sugar Hill, 2015

Kia Labeija
Born 1990, New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

In Search of the Sweet Life is a reimagining of the time when migrating from the South to New York meant finding opportunity, when moving uptown symbolized safety and the New Negro was in style. This is the time when Harlem was en vogue, according to Langston Hughes, a time when men and women strutted down the avenues between Amsterdam and Edgecombe in their Sunday best, when the neighbors were Lena Horne, Joe Lewis, Ella Fitzgerald and the Duke, Mr. Ellington, of course. This was the Harlem Renaissance. And this is Sugar Hill today. Since the arrival of brown and black bodies on “American” soil, we have been on an endless quest to understand what our American Dream should look like, a dream in which our brothers and sisters do not swing from the tops of trees and are not gunned down by those who are supposed to keep our neighborhoods safe, in which we are not falsely incarcerated and left to die in solitude, in which our children can grow up, know they have worth and can never be denied access because of the color of their skin, in which we are not pushed out of neighborhoods once called ghettos. This image is dedicated to my great aunts Pauline, Gladys and Flora.

Packed, Pressed and Folded
(Harlem, Chicago, Philadelphia), 2012–present

This postcard is inspired by the commerce of the landscape of Harlem, from small businesses to large department stores. The photograph comes from a series of images taken on city sidewalks in Harlem, Philadelphia and Chicago against, on top of or next to discarded materials such as paper, cardboard, gum and slabs of concrete. Construction debris, newspapers and sale circulars are the components of these improvised sidewalk compositions, works of material residue that get at what it means to occupy, inhabit and move through multiple urban spaces.
Introducing the 2015–16 Artists in Residence

by Alani Bass, Communications Assistant

In October 2015, The Studio Museum in Harlem was thrilled to welcome Jordan Casteel, EJ Hill and Jibade-Khalil Huffman as our 2015–16 artists in residence. During their year-long residencies, these talented emerging artists will cultivate their distinctive visions, immerse themselves in the legacy of Harlem and the Studio Museum, and join a lineage of more than a hundred participants of the Artist-in-Residence program since its inception in 1969. We’ve asked Jordan, EJ and Khalil to introduce us to their creative processes and provide a little insight into the work they will be making in the coming months.

Jordan Casteel

Through figurative painting I bring to light that which is often unseen. For two years my work has been an exploration of black masculinity and my relationship to it as a black woman. Using bold color and thick gestural marks, I interpret and convey my feelings and observations of what it means to be a black man today. To maintain authenticity, the domestic environment is featured. These men, often in repose or relaxed, are surrounded by evidence of themselves: books, clothing, furnishings. They wait to meet the viewer’s eyes. Although the portraits are of “black” subjects, I use the larger chromatic scale to question how the notion of color relates to the black body.

In the wake of ongoing historic and systemic violence against black men, it is more important than ever to contribute a vision of blackness that shows the complexities of black men instead of reducing them. My paintings address the broader scope of the human experience. Whether a solo figure demanding intimate attention or multiple figures leading us to ask who they are in relation to each other, each subject asks to be seen through an empathetic lens.

As a Colorado native, I am excited by the richness of the texture that Harlem’s life and legacy can bring to my work. During my time as an artist in residence at the Studio Museum, I will build upon my practice of telling humanistic stories of black people by using Harlem as a source for those stories.

Jordan Casteel
Crockett Brothers, 2015
Courtesy the artist

Jordan Casteel
Miles and Jojo, 2015
Courtesy the artist
Introducing the 2015–16 Artists In Residence

EJ Hill
Complicit and Tacit
(performance still), 2014
Photo: Honor Fraser Gallery
For as long as I can remember, I have understood, filtered and articulated my experience most naturally through the language of body. Deep beneath my skin and coursing through my veins is a rich, somatic knowledge—a muscle memory of sorts—acquired through firsthand encounters with the echoes of historical narratives, and through inherited social conditions that determine how our bodies navigate and occupy the spheres within which they present.

As a young child, far before I developed the ability to ascribe verbal language to my apprehension for presenting a limp-wristed-hand-on-hip stance, I was able to sense (quite severely) the danger in exhibiting such tendencies. And prior to understanding the many ways in which my darker encasing elicited fear and contempt in some, and evoked intrigue and desire in others, I contended with a maladjusted lean toward respectability.

The locus for all of this is and always has been, quite palpably and perhaps to my detriment, my body. Most often my work takes the form of a physically demanding, endurance-based performance practice in which I utilize my body as both a symbolic and literal site for the presentation of social, political and sexual traumas. I am interested in the ways physical and ideological bodies are constructed, reinforced and marked by trauma, and also in how, paradoxically, through enduring such duress, these bodies are able to cathartically transcend their afflictions. Although performance has proven to be my native tongue and primary fluency, I also employ writing, photography, music, painting and sculpture in my practice to serve as moments of respite, necessary pauses between runs, the punctuative moments that directly precede the deepest of sighs.

EJ Hill
The Fence Mechanisms
(performance still), 2014
Photo: Craig Kirk
Introducing the 2015–16 Artists In Residence

Jibade-Khalil Huffman

(FROM) A GLOSSARY

(AGAINST) ABOUT-NESS: I am wholeheartedly against the idea of describing my work in a few sentences or paragraphs. Part of why I make art (though a small part, to be sure) is to deal with what, essentially, cannot be put into words. Plus, given how installation-based much of my work is, you kind of have to see it in person. But if forced to give an answer to the question of what my work is about, I might say that it is about this very space: the ineffable, or the moment of floating in between moments of speaking, thinking, acting and reacting.

MEDIUM-SPECIFICITY is really great, though only up to a point. Working across a variety of media means, on one hand, never getting too bogged down in the history of a medium, though also inevitably getting into tiffs with people who care very much about these histories. It’s not that I don’t care about these histories. Rather, there is little time, at the end of the day (if you will excuse the cliché), to fit rehashing in with a conversation about what it means to be here now.

ABSTRACTION is kind of a catchall but one that nonetheless has a great deal of meaning in the context of my practice. Though my work is nearly always grounded in the domestic, in so-called real life, everyday, I am interested in abstracting this. My work is never about nostalgia for a particular time or place, but rather a nostalgia for the actions that led up to and followed a particular moment.

VIDEO: I work primarily in and through writing, video and photography as these (currently) offer the most control in negotiating a moment or series of moments into a different moment or series of moments.

EXPECTATION is a dirty word, especially as it relates to video and poetry. Though we look at moving images on a wide variety of screens and in all manner of settings, the expectations set up in the theatrical/home viewing scenario still mean that we demand, or at least hope, that A happens, then B, then that we might learn from or be saddened by or laugh at the irony of whatever happens between the end of B and where things conclude, in C. I make work to counteract these assumptions.

LIMITATION, on the other hand, is a good thing, I believe, mostly because it (usually) translates into rigor, which can, in turn, develop into freedom. Ultimately this is what I care most about: freedom.
As an element of art and design, “black” is both a seemingly basic part of any visual experience and an amazingly rich gradation of tones and depths. As a word, it is one syllable that can fill columns in a dictionary. As a social construction, it is one of the most highly charged and proudly asserted realities around the world, from the Haitian Revolution in the eighteenth century, to the antiapartheid Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa in the mid-1960s, to today’s Black Lives Matter in the United States. Black materials, such as coal, dye or ink, have historically held great economic value, in both visual art and industry. Symbolically, the color black today evokes elegance and style, but is also associated with solemnity.

The color black results from the complete absorption of light and, uniquely, it is entirely without hue. Toyin Ojih Odutola explores identity and the sociopolitical constructs surrounding color through her black-pigment drawings of figures. Her use of a true black, unaltered by other colors, questions the meaning of black and the discrepancies between the color and the racial implications it holds. Her charcoal and pastel drawings point to the varieties of shades and textures in the color.

In some cases, artists in the exhibition use materials that are both black in color and carry associations with blackness. For example, Nari Ward’s *Rolling Calf* (1993) is made partially of tar, a material that historically carries negative racial associations. By combining tar with an ironing board, earth, salt, feathers, cotton, cloth and springs, Ward alludes to a history of American domestic labor. This juxtaposition of materials references enslaved women, whose duties would have included laundry, and subsequent generations who served as housekeepers because of limited professional opportunities. Many artists are interested in blackness as a symbol of personal experience. Though these understandings of blackness vary, artists such as Noah Davis explore histories and memories of American society that are not easily definable. In his 2008 work, *Black Wall Street*, the loosely painted characters are blurry and purposely ambiguous. Like many other artists in this exhibition, Davis empowers each viewer to create a distinct sense of meaning of this moment in time.

*Black: Color, Material, Concept* explores ways that modern and contemporary artists of African descent have considered the multiple and often disparate possibilities of “black” through the choice of media, imagery and ideas. The exhibition includes twenty-five paintings, drawings, sculptures and prints drawn primarily from the Studio Museum’s permanent collection.
Marc Andre Robinson

Twice Told

by Naima J. Keith, Associate Curator,
and Hallie Ringle, Senior Curatorial Assistant

Brooklyn-based artist Marc Andre Robinson is known for sculptures that engage his long-standing interests in the history and culture of African Americans. Composed of the back legs of chairs and suspended from the ceiling, Twice Told forms a winding path of symmetrical lines. Robinson uses traditional carpentry techniques to formally and conceptually explore American history through a contemporary lens. Specifically, Robinson considers the legacy of oppression of African Americans in American society and its contemporary counterpart in ongoing social rights issues.

Robinson has been working with chairs for nearly a decade and sees them as intimately connected to their users. For Robinson, each chair carries traces of people who have used it, either through evidence of physical wear or what he calls the “energies” embedded in the structure. The artist is also interested in chairs for their ability to denote status, such as the authority of a monarch seated on a throne. Robinson arranges the chair legs into a whip-like structure that references social constructs, from slavery to police brutality, that have long perpetuated hierarchies and stereotypes.
The title of the work, *Twice Told*, comes from *The Souls of Black Folk* by writer and civil rights pioneer W.E.B. DuBois. In his 1903 book, DuBois wrote, “One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings . . . .” This quote describes DuBois’s theory of “double consciousness,” the duality of the black American psyche in which black men and women must reconcile understanding of self with the perceptions of a racist society. Through the twinned structure of the work, Robinson both incorporates the theory of double consciousness and challenges it. The parallel lines of the sculpture never meet, much as DuBois argues that African-American psyches remain unreconciled. However, the many chair legs that compose each line challenge the universality of this theory and suggest the possibility of multiple perspectives.

Born in Los Angeles, Robinson earned an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2002. He participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program (2002–03) and was an artist in residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem (2004–05), the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2009) and The Rocktower in Kingston, Jamaica (2008). Robinson has exhibited in the United States and abroad at venues including the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, Galleria d’Arte Moderna in Turin, Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow and Salamatina Gallery in New York. He lives and works in Brooklyn.
Rodney McMillian’s complex and varied practice in painting, sculpture, video and performance reflects his ongoing interest in how the systems of race, class, gender and socioeconomic policies shape the experiences of African Americans. For over a decade, McMillian has maintained a particular interest in the private sphere, including the domain of home and family. Manipulating discarded mattresses, worn and tattered carpets, chairs, couches and other domestic objects, he exposes the history of their human use to masterfully evoke issues of domesticity, politics and race. Rodney McMillian: Views of Main Street, the first solo museum exhibition in New York of the Los Angeles–based artist’s work, explores this interest in depth, and includes sculpture, paintings and videos produced throughout the artist’s career.

Rodney McMillian: Views of Main Street features more than twenty works from 2003 to the present and is a critical presentation of the artist’s use of domestic or postconsumer objects as physical remnants of inclusion and exclusion in the home—literally and metaphorically. Chair (2003), for example, is a found broken lounge chair, with feet askew, cover torn and filling gutted. Lacking a seated body, the chair questions not only notions of absence, but also assumptions about race and class. Physicality is also a recurring theme in McMillian’s work, by allusion and, in his performance videos, directly. The video Untitled (futon) (2009) shows McMillian taking a kitchen knife to a futon mattress that starts out folded up against a wall. The video ends, twenty-five minutes later, with the inner foam removed, rolled up and battened down with tape. There’s genuine violence, even anger, in McMillian’s repeated stabbing motions as he begins the gutting process. McMillian challenges the idea of the domestic sphere as a site of physical or psychological comfort and belonging.

At the core of this exhibition, and what its title alludes specifically to, is the questioning, through the artist’s
Rodney McMillian

**Untitled (The Supreme Court Painting)**, 2004–06

Courtesy the artist and Susanne Vielmetter
Los Angeles Projects
transformations of everyday items, of the universality of the term “Main Street” as a symbol of middle-class domestic life. McMillian positions the home as an institution—a mythic locus of the nuclear family and the ubiquitous “American Dream.” In the context of the onslaught of loan defaults and home foreclosures in the past decade, several of McMillian’s sculptures venture boldly into the minefield of physical, psychological and economic crisis. Views of Main Street gathers significant examples from throughout the artist’s career, including paintings and sculptures from public and private collections across the country, as well as newly commissioned works. Visitors can behold, for the first time, the full trajectory of a major aspect of Rodney McMillian’s artistic career.

Rodney McMillian: Views of Main Street is accompanied by a full-color companion volume, coedited by Naima J. Keith and Anthony Elms, Chief Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. This volume, published on the occasion of both Rodney McMillian: Views of Main Street and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia exhibition Rodney McMillian: The Black Show (February 3–August 14, 2016) contains newly commissioned essays and responses by leading scholars and curators in the field, including Keith; Elms; Charles Gaines, artist; Rita Gonzalez, Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Dave McKenzie, artist; and Steven Nelson, Professor of African and African American Art History, University of California, Los Angeles.

Rodney McMillian received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2002. He is also an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has been featured in past shows at the Studio Museum, including When the Stars Begin to Fall (2014), The Bearden Project (2012), Philosophy of Time Travel (2007) and Frequency (2005). His works are in the collections of The Studio Museum in Harlem; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Orange County Museum of Art; Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.
Ebony G. Patterson  

... when they grow up ...

by Adeze Wilford,  
Curatorial Fellow

I met artist Ebony G. Patterson in October as she was preparing for Dead Treez, a mixed-media and installation-based exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design. Patterson’s installations use bold color palettes and prints to confront gender, violence and cultural shifts. We discussed themes in her work, her artistic process and her upcoming site-specific project here at the Studio Museum, ... when they grow up ..., which opens on March 24, 2016.

Adeze Wilford: How would you describe your work?

Ebony G. Patterson: Well, if someone asks me what kind of artist I am, I tell them I’m a painter. Or a mixed-media artist, just because the truth is my work is informed by the language of painting. Fast-forward to now, even the way I think about things is still very much embedded in that language. So I take great pride in being called a painter.

AW: I’m thinking about some of the things that I see in your work, particularly around ideas of gender fluidity. How do you choose tropes to upend that?

EGP: What I found really interesting is that at some point much of what can be seen in the contemporary sense as being feminine is a masculine thing. Even though the trends in popular culture and fashion continue to change in terms of the broader discussion around gender, the conversations around that within popular cultural understandings haven’t really changed.

AW: So how is this shown through the theme of dancehall?

EGP: Dancehall is very bombastic. It’s always had this kind of camp underpinning, but it has always been kind of centered on the masculine. And I thought it was really interesting to see these very macho, brag-gadocious men using these very, very feminine practices on their surfaces. The manicuring of the surface became something that was certainly a particular kind of trope, one sign of metrosexuality. And then to see that being reimagined within dancehall, using the dancehall lens and mashing that up with whatever was common throughout the trend, suddenly started to shift things.

Ebony G. Patterson  

Untitled Yutez (from the “Doiley Boyz” series), 2009  

 Courtesy the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago
Interview with Ebony G. Patterson
by Adeze Wilford, Curatorial Fellow
AW: Let’s talk about the types of materials you use in your work. What’s your reasoning behind bright colors and florals when you’re addressing instances of death and violence? How do you pick the materials?

EGP: Well, vulgarity’s such a beautiful thing. When I’m picking certain patterns and fabrics, I’m definitely thinking about these things a lot in a formal sense. I may initially go, “Oh, my god, those two things would never go together,” and somehow they do. A lot of it also goes back to understanding color theory and temperature, even though I’m putting together two or three different patterns that may not make sense like that, just thinking about the temperature of each of the values in each, and how that will vibrate so that it does make sense, even though when seeing them separately it would totally not make sense. But also as the work has continued to grow it’s become even more of a sensory overload.

AW: Let’s talk about the new project for the Studio Museum that is centered on ephebiphobia, the fear of youth. Where did that idea come from?

EGP: I’ve been on sabbatical from teaching at the University of Kentucky, and I decided that I was going to use Jamaica as a base. During the time I’ve been home, I’ve been hearing about the United States through the news and seeing what’s going on, especially with the increase in these moments with young black men as victims in circumstances involving police. There are also mirrored incidents happening in Jamaica. It’s happened for a long time, but of course social media has given rise to many instances, or has forced these things into our view. Early last year, between January and April, eighteen children were murdered in Jamaica. And almost half of those were young girls, but they were not seen as children. They’re painted as adults.

AW: Let’s talk a little bit about the new project for the Studio Museum that is centered on ephebiphobia, the fear of youth. Where did that idea come from?

AW: In your earlier work there are themes of self-constructed masquerade, and it seems like the characterization of children you’re depicting is imposed by outside forces. I want to know if this impacts the way you approach this new work.

EGP: Yes, I think maybe what I’m attempting to do is not so much about masquerade, but maybe more a kind of pageantry, in the use of all of these elements that I’m thinking about using. In my head I really want to blow up a whole bunch of balloons, and somehow the playfulness of the environment, and the juxtaposition of these children and childlike elements will somehow, I am hoping, shift the level of engagement. With the project at the Studio Museum, my intent is not only to give a sense of presence to the children, but also to jar the viewer into engaging with the reality that these are children by confronting the idea of innocence.
Elsewhere

by Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator

Nari Ward: Sun Splashed
November 19, 2015–February 21, 2016
Pérez Art Museum Miami
Miami, FL
pamm.org

Sun Splashed features the wildly immersive work of Nari Ward from across more than twenty years, dating back to his Studio Museum residency in 1992–93. This mid-career retrospective is the largest exhibition to date of Ward’s found-object sculptures and installations, as well as lesser-known aspects of his practice such as photography, video and collage. His practice has pushed the boundaries of sculpture and installation, and reshaped their very definitions in contemporary art. Ward's work challenges viewers’ perceptions of familiar objects and experiences, while examining themes of black history and culture, power and political dynamics, and Caribbean diasporic identity.

Nari Ward
Scandal Bag: History Feeds Mistrust (detail), 2015
Courtesy the artist; Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Beijing, Les Moulins and Havana; and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong
Photo: Steven Rose
In her first solo New York museum show, Ebony G. Patterson presents work that merges mixed-media installations with jacquard photo tapestries, facilitating an experience that is complex and tantalizing. In *Dead Treez*, these highly adorned, eye-popping tapestries and a life-size figural tableau of ten male mannequins dressed in floral fabrics explore redefined notions of masculinity and shine light on race and class injustices. And while you’re there, don’t miss the installation *buried again to carry on growing*, curated by Patterson, in the Tiffany Jewelry Gallery.
This exhibition will showcase a collaborative project by Studio Museum Artist-in-Residence program alumna and 2010 Joyce Alexander Wein Prize winner Leslie Hewitt and cinematographer Bradford Young (most recently known for his work on the 2014 film Selma). Untitled (Sculptures) (2012) is a two-channel film installation inspired by the historic civil rights-era photographs from the Menil Collection. Building on this body of work, Hewitt and Young’s project will include projected “film stills” that continue Hewitt’s exploration of the intersection of positive and negative space, illusion and form, and history versus lived experience.
Organized by Studio Museum alumna Sandra Jackson-Dumont, Abstracted Realities presents eight works by 2015 Gwendolyn Knight | Jacob Lawrence Prize winner Brenna Youngblood. Her paintings, which integrate collage, assemblage and sculpture, examine the complexities of abstraction and composition. With humor and satire intuitively interwoven into her critical approach to content, Youngblood addresses issues of identity, ethics and representation. Don’t miss Youngblood’s beautiful “landscapes” as they come alive this winter!

*Brenna Youngblood: Abstracted Realities*
November 13, 2015–April 17, 2016
Seattle Art Museum
Seattle, WA
seattleartmuseum.org

*Brenna Youngblood*
*Democratic Dollar, 2015*
Courtesy the artist and Honor Fraser Gallery
If you find yourself in Europe this winter, be sure to check out 2015 MacArthur Fellow LaToya Ruby Frazier’s debut exhibition in France! Working beyond the bounds of documentary photography, Frazier produces photographs as meditations on social inequality and historical change. *Performing Social Landscapes* examines the dynamics of her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, the people who live there and the economic decay that has continued to impact them all.
Beyond

**Beyond**

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### Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions

February 7–May 3, 2016

Art Institute of Chicago

Chicago, IL

artic.edu

This spring, our colleagues at the Art Institute of Chicago will present a survey of Martin Puryear’s work and progression over the entirety of his career. Puryear’s oeuvre featured in the show ranges from his student days at Catholic University in the early 1960s, through his formative years with the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, up to his works created as recently as 2014. With many never-before-displayed pieces, including more than 120 drawings and prints, alongside his world-renowned sculptures, *Multiple Dimensions* is a rare glimpse into the artist’s process and shows some works through the phases of creation—from conception in his sketchbook to final sculptural form.

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### Kerry James Marshall: Mastry

April 23–September 25, 2016

Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago

Chicago, IL

mcachicago.org

There is no doubt that Kerry James Marshall, a 1985–86 Studio Museum artist in residence, has made a name for himself in the contemporary art world as an inspired and imaginative chronicler of the African-American experience via his paintings, drawings, sculptural installations and photography. *Mastry* is a survey of his paintings made over the last thirty-five years, in which Marshall explores conceptions of blackness, and critiques Western art history and its exclusion of people of color in canonical painting forms such as historical tableau, landscape and portraiture. *Mastry* will definitely be remembered as an artistic tour de force!
Studio Visit

Troy Michie

by Sable Smith,
Education Program Coordinator

I first met Troy Michie in passing, through artist Eric Mack, a mutual friend. There was a gap, a fizzling at the tail of this meeting, and it was fine that we met in passing, because eventually we would share a wall in a studio building appropriately named “Bearden” over the summer, at Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture.

CUT TO: Bearden, June 9, 2015—Madison, Maine. We moved into a building cut-divided by three walls that refuse to meet the ceiling. This was a blessing for the El Paso, Texas, native and myself. It left space—another gap, even—for us to discuss Romare Bearden, collage and what’s at stake in an image. At the forefront of Michie’s mind is the cut. However, there is also the incision, pierce, fissure, disruption, trim, edit and rupture. Michie’s practice is rooted in collage, but it is not fixed there. At times he takes the pages of vintage gay pornography magazines and elegantly manipulates the flesh of their substrates. In La Bicicleta (2015), for example, he substitutes flesh for object—phallus for bicycle—that plays on the viewer’s expectations and withholds. Through overlay, juxtaposition and confrontation, the subject undergoes a poetic re-rendering, a metamorphosis, via a minimalist shifting of position, of orientation. Thus Michie’s work redeﬁnes conventions aligned with black male identity and its representations in photographic imagery.

“Writing, the word itself [literally means] to draw the figure of something by carving it out, to form an outline by cutting into the surface of something, to score or mark through [the] movement of making an incision.”¹ This deﬁnition comes from the Old Saxon, Old Frisian and Old Norse, according to writer Litia Perta. Michie’s practice is literally writing bodies. In his own words, he employs “the discourse of collage/assemblage as a historically political tool of subversion, [to] create works that address the governance of desire and disembodiment of the queer and marginal body.” He takes up the task of writing fore these bodies, of writing forward his own body. In the same way that ﬁlmmaker Trinh T. Min-Ha employs a strategy of “not speaking ‘about’ but speaking from nearby,” Michie creates a nearness, a reorienting of the gaze, an announcement to ourselves of our own gaze and a questioning of it.²

Spatially, his sculptural works create outlines, boundaries and lands that reveal the body’s need to shift, to be shapeless and liquid. This is the geography of the body and it is precisely in an image’s shape, -less and -ness that the fervor of Michie’s voice resounds—shifting, shifting and writing bodies.

Studio Visit

Brendan Fernandes

by Dana Liss,
Communications Coordinator

The first of these works is a performance titled Encomium (2011), inspired by a scene in Plato’s “Symposium” in which interlocutor Phaedrus suggests that love is asymmetrical. Using the physical language of classical ballet, Encomium explores the love between two men. A 2012 performance and photographic project The Working Move at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam furthered Fernandes’s exploration of intersections between avant-garde dance and sculpture. For the performance, a group of five male and female dancers rehearsed a series of ballet strength and endurance exercises using sculptural plinths as both sets and supports. These functional structures, which are used by museums to display art, suggest the status of the human body (as well as its labor) as commodity or object.

In his 2014 performance Standing Leg, Fernandes, now as performer, enacts the bodily and mental struggles experienced by dancers as they strive for ballet’s physical ideals. In the performance, the artist strains to mold his foot on a ballet foot stretcher, a tool used by dancers to manipulate anatomy to achieve perfectly formed arches. It was personally significant for him to perform this work because, as a dancer, he faced criticism about his feet. To witness, Fernandes says in his artist’s statement, “how a dancer will accept and take on pain where they succumb to aesthetic desires defined by dance technique itself,” is, surely, an uncomfortable position for viewers to inhabit. Fernandes performed and recorded Standing Leg alongside sculptures he made for the exhibition The Foot Made at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery in Ontario in 2015. To make these sculptures, Fernandes made foot stretchers in crystal, a material he selected for its aesthetic appeal. Lit dramatically in the gallery space, the sculptures have an erotic quality that plays on both ballet’s foot fetishism and what Walter Benjamin describes as the “aura” of an authentic artwork in his seminal 1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

In his recent works, sculptor and performance artist Brendan Fernandes mines his background in dance to explore complex ideas about beauty, sexuality, labor and identity. Born in Kenya, of Indian descent and raised in Canada from the age of ten, the New York–based artist studied ballet and modern technique for more than a decade, but was forced to retire from dance in 2002 due to an injury—a “painful breakup,” Fernandes calls it. He shifted his focus to visual art and earned an MFA from the University of Western Ontario in 2005. In 2011, Fernandes returned to dance, after a nine-year hiatus, through choreography in performance-art pieces.
Currently, the artist is making and editing sound for a film exploring a collection of African objects bequeathed to the Agnes Etherington Art Center at Queens University in Canada. In this work, Fernandes highlights what he calls the “choreography” of the vault that houses the objects—the ghostly movements of the walls and shelves in museum storage facilities. The film addresses, Fernandes says, “the way these objects all had dance or active ceremonial traditions attached to them, but in the vault they rest motionless.” Parts of the film were shot by a ballet dancer, who guided the camera while walking and dancing throughout the space. Her body is not seen, but it is understood from the wobbly camera shots. The film will be part of the solo exhibition Brendan Fernandes: Lost Bodies at the Agnes Etherington Art Center, on view from January 9 to April 10, 2016.
Artists have taken film out of the theater, and mixed videos with other media and disciplines to take nonconformist approaches to what has traditionally been a passive viewing experience. Through site-specific installations, performance art and interdisciplinary settings, the moving image has evolved into a complex form of viewer engagement. Here are some of my favorite films and videos that incorporate other media.

**Narcissister**

*Bare Breasted Project (Harlem #2), 2015*

*Courtesy the artist*

Narcissister’s multiple performance art videos examine feminist politics, the female body and extreme sexuality. Her videos are raw, boundary-pushing explorations of female identity and objectification, as well as reimaginings of perceptions around the black female body. Narcissister’s work was featured in *Fore* (2012–13) and *Harlem Postcards* (2015) at the Studio Museum.

**Ralph Lemon**

*How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere? (performance view), 2010*

*Photo: Dan Merlo*

Ralph Lemon’s multimedia work places the moving image in an interdisciplinary context, an intricate part of a whole. The static, three-act structure and linearity of film is replaced with multilayered points of reference and cognition for the viewer. Everything relates to something else: dance, theater, personal narration, reality, unreality, the past and current iterations of the viewer’s live experience of the material. With unusual references, such as to former Mississippi Delta sharecropper Walter Carter’s futuristic dream of space travel, *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere?* changes the viewer’s role from passive observer of sequential images to active participant, which allows the artist to take his audience to a wholly different place of unique emotional connections.
Beyond

Howardena Pindell
Free, White And 21 (video still, detail), 1980
Museum purchase
Part of the Studio Museum’s permanent collection, Pindell’s first-person narrative recounts various experiences of racism. In a dual role, Pindell also performs a character who is “free, white and 21,” and who refuses to acknowledge or validate the black experience. Pindell wraps her face in white gauze, which inhibits sight, smell, touch and identity, so the character is essentially cocooned by a stifling worldview that focuses only on white society.

Zachary Fabri
Forget me not, as my tether is clipped (video still), 2012
Museum purchase with funds provided by Isaac Julien and Mark Nash
Part of the Studio Museum’s 2012–13 exhibition Fore, Fabri’s video (transferred from 16 mm film) Forget me not, as my tether is clipped is also part of the Museum’s permanent collection, and incorporates performance and sculpture. In the video, Fabri becomes a human sculpture. He attaches a mass of helium balloons to his dreadlocks to juxtapose the weightlessness of the balloons with the gravity and weight of his body. The balloons are blown by the wind: obviously acted upon by outside forces, an allegory to the experiences of African Americans.

Bradford Young
Bynum Cutler
(installation view), 2014
Photo: Casey Kelbaugh
In collaboration with the Bethel Tabernacle AME Church, this site-specific, three-channel installation resonates with the historical memory of the community of Weeksville, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, which was founded by African-American free men and women in the 1800s. Bynum Cutler is inspired by playwright August Wilson and was created as part of Creative Time’s Funk, God, Jazz, and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn.

Howarden Pindell
Free, White And 21
(video still, detail), 1980
Museum purchase
Part of the Studio Museum’s permanent collection, Pindell's first-person narrative recounts various experiences of racism. In a dual role, Pindell also performs a character who is “free, white and 21,” and who refuses to acknowledge or validate the black experience. Pindell wraps her face in white gauze, which inhibits sight, smell, touch and identity, so the character is essentially cocooned by a stifling worldview that focuses only on white society.
In Memoriam

Noah Davis

by Kayla Coleman, Archive Fellow

Born in Seattle on June 3, 1983, Noah Davis began making art at an early age, and was a prolific painter by age seventeen. He received his BFA from Cooper Union in 2003 and in 2004 moved to Los Angeles, where he began to cultivate his style as a painter. Davis quickly became known for his spectral landscapes, which feature isolated, blurred black figures. Bordering on the surreal, Davis’s visceral paintings captured the attention of the nation.

Over the span of his career, Davis was featured in a succession of group exhibitions at notable institutions, including the LeRoy Neiman Gallery in New York, Rubell Collection in Miami, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and Corcoran Museum in Washington, D.C. His work is featured in the collections of The Studio Museum in Harlem and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Davis participated in the Studio Museum’s groundbreaking 2012–13 exhibition Fore, where he showed powerful paintings of black subjects.

Davis founded the Underground Museum in 2012, an alternative space inhabiting a row of storefronts in the heart of Los Angeles that sought to bring a meaningful cultural outlet to Arlington Heights, a largely working-class black and Latino neighborhood. There, he staged a series of exhibitions and installations, and most recently established a unique curatorial partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The Underground Museum marked the pinnacle of Davis’s short yet profound career, and its lasting impact speaks volumes to his complex vision and sensitivity to the cultural landscape of his adopted home. “He got Los Angeles,” says Museum of Contemporary Art Chief Curator Helen Molesworth. “He got that you could do impossible things here.”

Davis is survived by his wife, Karon Davis, and his mother, brother and young son, Moses.

Painting does something to your soul that nothing else can. It’s visceral and immediate and is always redressed in new ways that keep it relevant.

—Noah Davis

Noah Davis
Black Wall Street, 2008
The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of David Hoberman

Where in the World?

by Gina Guddemi, Registrar

Name: Conspicuous Fraud Series #1 (Eminence) (2001)

Artist: Kehinde Wiley

Starting Location: The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Current Location: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas

Distance Travelled So Far: 1,500 miles

From England to California (and many places in between), approximately twenty artworks from The Studio Museum in Harlem’s permanent collection are on loan or are being prepared for upcoming loan. As the Studio Museum’s Registrar and Collections Manager, I monitor and track the loaned artworks at every step of their journeys. Often, artworks on loan will be absent from Harlem for many weeks—and sometimes years! With each unpacking and installation, I collect condition reports, images and information from my museum registrar counterparts. It is a privilege to facilitate the inter-museum and gallery borrowing, which ultimately allows people all over the world to enjoy and appreciate the amazing artworks from the Studio Museum’s collection.

The driving distance from Harlem to Fort Worth is approximately 1,500 miles. The Studio Museum’s Kehinde Wiley, Conspicuous Fraud Series #1 (Eminence) (2001), snugly secured in a custom wood crate, made this exciting road trip earlier this year. After hanging at the Brooklyn Museum as part of the blockbuster exhibition Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic, the large framed canvas now finds itself in the heart of Texas. It is a powerful work, integral to the exhibition. Depicting a standing figure, dressed in a business suit, the work glows from within as the teal background pushes the figure forward into our space. On view at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth from September 20, 2015, until January 10, 2016, the exhibition then moves from Texas to the Pacific Northwest!
In Memoriam

Eldzier Cortor

In honor of Eldzier Cortor (1916–2015), we are proud to reproduce a piece of short fiction inspired by Cortor’s painting The Room (1949), an iconic work in the Studio Museum’s collection. This text, by Ginger Cofield, is featured in Re:Collection: Selected Works from The Studio Museum in Harlem (2010).

If I have a fresh flower in my hair, it doesn’t take long for the scent to get my mind back to the place I once was. Islands sprinkled along the Georgia coast where rice fields used to be, grains that floated on the surface of swamps now named after Civil War battles and men I don’t know.

I see what the newspapers on my wall say has happened in the world. “War Declared in Japan!” one says, and another, “Peace! President Announces Surrender!” The stories were someone’s idea for decorating, put up before I came here. I don’t know what they meant to him, but they don’t talk about anything that is happening to me.

Those Sea Islands tell a different story, one that most people don’t know anything about. Spanish moss hangs heavy over magnolias and giant oaks, connecting the sky to the earth, the cicadas singing in the after light. The people who live there don’t need newspapers to tell them what has happened in their world; they already know.

I once thought about tearing the newspapers down but I don’t know how to replace them. I don’t know how to decorate with my memories and dreams about moving and staying. Sometimes if I stare at the wall long enough I start to imagine that it’s taking over—the wood panels eating away at the edges of the stories, trying to make a blank slate. But most of the time, I think about all of the things the papers don’t say, the things they just ignore.

It is true that this is my room. These four walls are mine, but they don’t tell my story.
Features
Here's to You, Mr. Robinson

by Timothy Stockton,
Visitor Services Associate

Timothy Stockton of Visitor Services caught up with Norris Robinson, Security Supervisor, about his recent retirement from the Studio Museum. After twenty-eight years of dedicated service, we send him our sincerest congratulations on a job well done!

Timothy Stockton: When did you start working at The Studio Museum in Harlem?


TS: Who was the Director at the Museum when you came?

NR: Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell.

TS: Were you a resident of Harlem?

NR: Yes, I was a resident. I lived in Harlem.

TS: When you were working at the Museum, I know you saw a lot of shows. Who are some of your favorite artists that you met while you were there?

NR: Jacob Lawrence is actually my favorite artist. So is Romare Bearden. Kehinde Wiley is another one, a very inspiring artist. He grew like the Museum did, you know, because when I got to the Museum we had a vacant lot next door, right next to the Public Assistance Building and it had a lot of junk, tires and all kinds of stuff in it. On the other side was a liquor store where the gift shop is now.

TS: Wow! So during those twenty-eight years I’m sure you saw a lot of changes in the Museum. What have you been doing since you retired?

NR: I retired in August 2015. So far I’ve done a little fishing and just a little mechanic work, but my plans are to go down to the South—to Jonesville, South Carolina. I have property there and I’m planning to build a deli and a big barbecue in the back where I can cook jerk chicken and everything else I can think of.

TS: What else do you plan to do in your retirement?

NR: Hunting and fishing.

TS: The Museum was very lucky to have you for almost three decades, and we’re sorry to see you go, but we wish you a happy retirement.

NR: Tim, it was a pleasure. It was a pleasure being there.
Organized by Assistant Curator Amanda Hunt, *A Constellation* traces intergenerational connections among twenty-six artists of African descent. Eight of the artists in the exhibition are represented in the Studio Museum’s permanent collection, and their works serve as historical, material and conceptual keystones of modern and contemporary art. The eighteen younger artists, all of whom are exhibiting at the Museum for the first time, embrace the legacies established by the artists of a previous generation and expand on similar material and conceptual themes. In their own words, ruby onyinyechi amanze, Torkwase Dyson, Aaron Fowler, Julia Philips and Tschabalala Self reflect on how their respective practices and relationships to art have been impacted by those that preceded them.
It was 2006 when I came across an interview between David Hammons and Kellie Jones from 1986. Hammons said the process to get to brilliance requires emptying the brain of every silly idea so that one can find the way to the brilliant ones. When I work, I don’t mind the ugly drawings that happen sometimes. Maybe I rip them up, maybe I hide them, sometimes they’re comic relief. But if it wasn’t for all of those steps, I couldn’t think my way through to where I am or where I’m going. I like that he spoke of that place not as a specific destination, but more as a necessary and individualized turning point in the process of creation. If you want to be brilliant, you’re never exempt from Process. Looking back at his work now, I see that Hammons clearly did whatever idea came to mind. I think it’s rare to find artists with that kind of honesty or such trust in who they really are.

David Hammons
*Too Obvious*, 1996
The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of Edward Clark, New York
*Photo*: Marc Bernier

ruby onyinyechi
*that low hanging kind of sun ...*, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Tiwani Contemporary, London
Torkwase Dyson on Jack Whitten

My work engages with a moment in which ideas related to built and natural environments become more measurable and simultaneously more immense. There is duality between the measurable and the immense, born from the acceleration of contemporary spatial and environmental changes. The historic dialectic between these ideas in abstract painting and drawing is compelling because of the way it symbolizes mutual dependency in our world today. In Jack Whitten’s evolving practice, I see the symbolic capabilities of abstraction absorbing this duality. I relate the shifts in his practice between logic and the phenomenological experience of immensity to larger questions that address spatial conditions pressing upon both our material conditions and imaginations. This is especially clear in his “energy field” paintings. The work informs my practice, both formally and conceptually, as an artist thinking about visualization of spatial effects. Whitten’s process work and art historical engagement reveal an intellectual and ecological dignity synonymous with pure environmental inquiry.
When I think about souls that capture me and artists to whom I can relate spiritually, Betye Saar comes to mind. I first met Saar at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture and recall how she walked around campus with her head down, looking for materials. She visited my studio and we spoke about how I was making things from my new environment, and how excited I was to be in the woods and finding materials at the junkyard that would change my practice. She was empathetic and excited because I was so excited. Both of our practices rely on the metaphysical, or the importance of feeling and sharing the spirit of objects in a work. We both value an artwork that draws you in from a distance and allows you to discover new things as you get closer. We are moved by emotion and the spiritual.
Julia Phillips on Mel Edwards

The sculptures of Mel Edwards initially attracted me through our shared interest in functional objects. His use of tools provides points of familiarity and access to the viewer. My sculptures also incorporate functional elements, though in each piece the combination results in one specific tool of an imaginary use. Another shared interest lies in forms that provoke harmful meanings. Several of Edwards’s works, including the “Lynch Fragment” series, evoke an interpretation of violence and domination. The relation between the body and functional devices is a core interest in my work as I pose questions about the power dynamics generated by the imaginary interaction with the tool, and the role of the body operating it. Edwards’s open compositions blur the line of subject-object relations and complicate the reading of power dynamics, which in my work is further complicated by indicated aspects of gender.
During my senior year of high school, I met Faith Ringgold at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I was very excited to have the opportunity to meet an artist whose work I looked at often in my favorite childhood book, *Tar Beach*. My mother bought me *Tar Beach* in 1996. We read it together, and saw seemingly familiar faces in familiar places throughout time. I saw myself as Cassie, the little girl in the picture book. I loved *Tar Beach* because everything in it looked like me and my world. The book is based on the story quilt by the same name, which is part of Ringgold’s 1988 “Woman on a Bridge” series. Today Ringgold’s practice inspires me to acknowledge my personal reality and truth. Her work brings the fantastical alive and has sparked my own imagination and interest in natural and supernatural beauty.
Building Dispatch

J. Max Bond Jr.
On July 6, 2015, The Studio Museum in Harlem was delighted to share its groundbreaking plans to build a new custom facility, designed by Adjaye Associates with executive architects Cooper Robertson. In this structure—which will be built on the Museum’s current site on 125th Street—the Museum will be an intellectual and community hub for our local and global communities. After announcing this project and receiving widespread support, we are energized and inspired. The building is first and foremost for you: our visitors, our readers, our members, our friends—and it’s our priority to share news about and perspectives on the project with you in these pages.

For nearly fifty years the Museum has been at the vanguard of arts and culture. For thirty-three years we have been a cultural anchor on 125th Street, where we bring black artists into the conversation on modern and contemporary art. The Museum has sought not only to rewrite art history by weaving in the narratives of critical artists, but also to engage our audiences with dynamic educational and public programs.

Much of what the Museum has been able to accomplish is because of late architect J. Max Bond Jr. He had a remarkably integrated approach to architecture and designed buildings deeply rooted to their surroundings, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. His renovation of the Studio Museum’s turn-of-the-century former bank building at 144 West 125th Street helped the Studio Museum become the institution it is today. In the two-floor space that Bond created, and in subsequent additions, Museum curators have mounted a broad and influential range of exhibitions—from showcases of mid-century greats such as Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Archibald Motley and Hale Woodruff, to exhibitions of brand-new work by our artists in residence.

Now the Studio Museum will be reimagined by another pioneering architect of African descent, David Adjaye. The synchronies between Bond and Adjaye are apparent. The work of both architects is focused on the people who enter, pass by and activate each building. As ambitious visionaries, they have always spoken a global architectural language that creates public spaces ingrained in community.

Like Adjaye, Bond viewed space and structure through a worldly lens. He studied and worked in France with Andròr Wogenscky, an associate of renowned artist and architect Le Corbusier. Bond also spent extensive time in Ghana—the birthplace of Adjaye’s parents—where he continued to develop his ingenuity, sensitivity to place, and consideration of the needs of a building’s community.

Bond and his firm, Davis Brody Bond, worked with David Adjaye and Adjaye Associates to design the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Bond passed in 2009, shortly after the collaboration between The Freelon Group, Adjaye Associates, Davis Brody Bond and the SmithGroup was selected for the commission, but the firms have remained in close contact and the project is nearing completion. After Bond’s passing, Adjaye told Time: “I had always had the goal of working with Max on a public commission . . . . The more I got to know him, the more my admiration and love for this architect, humanist and wonderful counselor increased.”¹ The dynamic connection between Adjaye and Bond is deep-seated and continued by The Studio Museum in Harlem: Bond’s historic reconstruction on 125th Street will endlessly be in dialogue with Adjaye’s design on the same lot.

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This year, Expanding the Walls: Making Connections Between Photography, History and Community celebrates fifteen years of programming that has impacted a broad community of people through direct work with nearly two hundred New York teens. Expanding the Walls (ETW) is a deeply engaging photography-based program that uses the work of renowned photographer James VanDerZee as a catalyst for discussion and art-making. ETW participants work with a diverse group of arts professionals to explore topics related to community, history and culture while learning the basics of photography. The program ends with an exhibition of student and VanDerZee photographs in the Studio Museum’s galleries.

In November, Sandra Jackson-Dumont, the Frederick P. and Sandra P. Rose Chairman of Education at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and founder of Expanding the Walls, sat down with Shanta Lawson, Education Director at the Studio Museum and myself, Gerald Leavell, Expanding the Walls and Youth Programs Coordinator, to reflect on the past fifteen years and consider the future of this extraordinary program.
**Gerald Leavell:** What led you to create the *Expanding the Walls* program?

**Sandra Jackson-Dumont:** When I came to work at the Studio Museum (from the Whitney Museum), I was excited about building upon what had happened historically in Harlem, and the Museum’s amazing history of photography and film. A request for proposals came out from the Nathan Cummings Foundation. They were interested in organizations at a transition point, in that place of discomfort, and what could come out of that. Everything was in transition at the Studio Museum: We had new leadership, the city around us was changing, the block was under construction. Everything about this place was moving and changing. The world was changing. There was talk of Bill Clinton moving to Harlem.

I thought, “Oh, I could take everything I learned from the Whitney, bring what was successful about that model together with what this place had historically done and what the young people aspire to do.” We wrote a proposal that had an anchor in community, an anchor in youth voice, an anchor in the Museum’s collection. Working across generations was something we did well at the Whitney that I wanted to bring here, and I was interested in figuring out what skills the young people could learn through photography. And then I wanted to connect that to something historical that was deeply rooted in this particular community—so it was really site-specific—and that’s where James VanDerZee’s work came in.

*Expanding the Walls* was never supposed to be a program where you hand the kids a camera and then they go out and take pictures and you celebrate them. It was about developing a certain level of intellectual criticality in young people so they could make decisions that were fruitful and responsible and just for them.

**Shanta Lawson:** I’ve had the incredible opportunity to see generations of *Expanding the Walls* students, and for me that’s what resonates the most. The participants go on to do amazing things, whether they stay rooted in photography or art history, or go on to something completely different, like nursing. From the most outgoing student in the program to the quietest one, there’s been something transformative for each person, not just from the work they were able to produce in the Museum space, but from seeing themselves in different contexts: having an effective conversation with a seven-year-old on a first museum visit or a senior who hadn’t been to the Studio Museum in fifteen years. Gerald, you have been working on *Expanding the Walls* most recently—across the last five years—and I wonder what resonates for you as the most poignant things about the program.
GL: As Sandra just mentioned, it’s not a program where kids are just handed cameras and then celebrated for the photographs they take. What I’ve seen over the past five years is that students who are in it understand that it’s not about the camera. It’s like, of course we want the camera so we can continue making work that we love. But they always say that that’s not what it’s about. It’s about all of these other components—being able to engage with younger people, older people, their peers; being able to communicate things about their experiences that they may not otherwise be able to; or using the photograph as a first step toward communicating those ideas. You’re right, they all have different interests, but the thing that brings them all together is an interest or curiosity in photography. And then from there they get all these other things, you know? I had a conversation with somebody who wants to be a cosmetic surgeon; she’s really interested in repairing cleft palates. Hearing her make connections between what she’s learning here in Expanding the Walls and the field of medicine is so interesting to me.

SJD: I think one thing that has been wonderful about this program is that it moves us away from the notion that, as a black museum, a museum rooted in black culture, history and aesthetics, our work is always about deficiency. It’s not always about having young people who are actually disenfranchised, can’t do this or are underperforming in school. But that’s what is said. And young people are actually saying, “Pay attention to those of us that actually are performing, that are able to do this, that bring something different to the table.” And I think what happens in a program such as Expanding the Walls is that you bring young people who are nothing alike together and this good friction happens. Whether they like it or get it at the beginning, by the time it’s over they realize that there’s something that they need to be doing for people other than themselves.

GL: Absolutely.

SL: There’s a lot of talk right now about the “Twenty-first-century Museum.” I can’t help but think that Expanding the Walls and all the amazing teen programs happening right now are part and parcel of that conversation. I am curious about your thoughts. Why are museum teen programs so important to the evolution of museums?

GL: Well, I think one of the most obvious answers is that the teenagers are someday going to be adults. They’re going to have children and inspire younger people. They’re going to become the people exhibiting and educating in the Museum, so it’s important that they begin to develop their understanding and participation at a young age.

SJD: For me, I don’t think of museums as being separate from the world, so it’s a part of a bigger ecology. When I think about why teen programs are important to the future of museums, I go back to why teens are important. They matter because they’re human beings. Most of them actually are not going to be the people that will lead museums—the chances that the young people in the program would actually lead these institutions are so slim because there just are not that many jobs. But it’s important because in these programs we end up having conversations about the world we live in.

It is truly about our society and young people developing skills. A byproduct of that work is that they end up being shepherds of the places that make them who they are. I think if we stop focusing on how we can get people to come to museums and start focusing on the needs of the people we’re serving, museums will be packed with people. People will feel this energy, this connection, in ways that are so contagious. So the museum of the twenty-first century has to have a needs-based approach to its practice. Not, “I exist and you should come.” That means it needs to be about relevance, it needs to be about rigor, it needs to be about the relationship to world issues.

GL: Absolutely. Not everyone who comes through Expanding the Walls wants to be an artist or a museum professional or anything like that. Half of them don’t know what they want to be and won’t know for a while. But they know that they’re having an experience at a place and learning things about themselves, learning things about the world that are really valuable. A lot of people cite the conversations that they have in Expanding the Walls as one of their favorite components of the program.

SJD: That’s interesting to me because I remember some very uncomfortable conversations . . .
One Stop Down:
Expanding the Walls 2015
(exhibition view)
July 16–October 25, 2015
Photo: Adam Reich
Students visit the African Burial Ground (2010)

Expanding the Walls artists viewing their exhibition (2011)
Photo: Victor Ferreras

Opposite Page: An Expanding the Walls student participates in a month-long intensive workshop at NYU (2013)
GL: A lot of them are.

SL: And to that point, I’ve always held onto the idea that this program is developing a community of thinkers. If you can move on from this place and be a better thinker, know how to absorb and analyze information that’s coming to you, you’ll get a ripple effect. I imagine Expanding the Walls will kind of just move off . . .

GL: Expanding off the walls!

SL: Exactly, moving on from the walls of the Museum to the communities that they’re in.

SJD: I don’t know even know where I came up with that phrasing, Expanding the Walls: Making Connections Between Photography, History and Community. It’s kind of weird you know? That’s why I shortened it to ETW. It’s like this must have been for a grant proposal, right? But I remember talking about it and thinking that perhaps the Museum could be like a balloon. People were feeling like they couldn’t penetrate the building. I could stand out front and people would say “What? They have a museum in Harlem?” So this became about how could we make the building more permeable? Could we expand it so much, like a balloon, that it would actually become see-through?

SL: I think in my first year of seeing Expanding the Walls, in 2002, the installation of the photographs was on a wall that looked like it was literally expanding—to make room for young people. So in my first year of experience in a museum I was like, “Oh, I get it.”

SJD: It was in the lobby or something?

SL: It was. Sort of a trapezoidal kind of thing going up and expanding and making room for youthful voice and imagery in a museum. It was pretty cool for me. That’s how I interpreted it in my first year.

SJD: That’s good that you bring that up, because in terms of museum education practices, this program is successful because the exhibition comes into the museum space now. It didn’t always. That trapezoidal wall was built specifically because Expanding the Walls was seen as a kids’ show that was not to be in a museum. But on the other hand that trapezoidal wall was great because it was so public-facing. You didn’t even have to walk into the Museum to see that show.

SL: We’re thinking now about the future of the Studio Museum and our programs. So I want to ask how we imagine Expanding the Walls in another fifteen years? Where will we be? I’m wondering how to utilize technology, and a lot of the things that we are starting to take for granted every day, to allow young people to have conversations with others in other communities.

GL: I find it really important to have cross-cultural dialogue, not just within New York and the United States, but across the globe. I also see interest in the students taking on greater leadership roles. But in terms of the program evolving, I think a lot about it. I really feel like we can have some kind of influence on how the program can be fifteen years from now.

GL: When I was in Ethiopia I visited a gallery and I was like, “Wow, how cool would it be if the Expanding the Walls exhibition were able to travel, or how great would it be for there to be an Expanding the Walls program there?” So I’ve thought about things like satellite programs. I think that as the Museum grows and the staff grows, a lot of those things will be possible. Frankly I’m looking forward to seeing them.

Edited and condensed by Elizabeth Gwinn

Top Image: Students shooting on a Saturday in Manhattan (2005)

Bottom Image: Expanding the Walls participants and seniors at Mount Morris Senior Center discuss Harlem history and James VanDerZee (2011)
In October, Curatorial Intern Zuna Maza sat down with Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling (SHCMAS) Associate Director of Curatorial Programs and Studio Museum Artist-in-Residence program alumna Lauren Kelley. SHCMAS opened its doors in October 2015 in the lower level of the Sugar Hill Project, a Broadway Housing Communities development that includes affordable housing, a preschool and offices. The museum focuses on engaging younger audiences and their families with art to build a lifelong appreciation of art and creativity. Designed by architect David Adjaye, the museum is constructed with children in mind, and displays artwork at lower levels alongside educational texts for both kids and their families that encourage them to reflect and respond. Kelley comes to SHCMAS from a slew of professional accomplishments, including a 2015 Creative Capital Award and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award in 2011.
Zuna Maza: What does your role as Associate Director of Curatorial Programs entail?

Lauren Kelly: I think I am always going to be an artist and maker first, and I know that curators come to this field from so many different entry points. I just think that I am always going to come into this with a love of supporting the artist. My belief is in making sure that the artist has what she needs to make the best possible show she can, given the limitation the site presents. I think that’s how I am always going to position myself—as a helper.

ZM: For these initial years, what is your main goal for exhibition programming?

LK: The curatorial umbrella under which I’m working has three parts. We have the Legacy Gallery, where we work with artists who speak to the history of Sugar Hill, as well as the legacy of the many great people and layers of stories that exist in this community. This community is a tapestry of a lot of different types of narratives, languages, cultural customs and traditions, and down each avenue there are people who definitely uphold those legacies. It’s my job to seek out these people, seek out these stories, and really give them another platform for being celebrated. Our salon, which is our most interchangeable space, does a lot of things at the same time. We’re doing exhibitions with artists who work in direct relationship with children, and also group shows. I am still thinking through what some of those will be. I think I want to make sure that our shows are always hung lower than adult eye level to privilege our target viewing audience of children between three to eight and their families. It’s the worst when kids have to be held up to see a work of art. I want them to be independent enough and confident enough to go into the next museum or the Met and just feel like, “Where am I?” I feel like that is a question every kid should ask, “Where am I in this place?” Then our Living Room, the main gallery space, is a one-artist mural, a kind of installation—Saya Woolfalk, right now—that’s an opportunity for artists to work with the wall, to work with the space. I was brought in with a belief in the power of contemporary art, to not bring shows here that dumb down what a viewer can engage, no matter how short, old or young. So we want artists who work in a myriad of ideas and media to continue working the way that they do. I am on the hunt for people who use color in accessible ways, and texture, and words, and ideas that I know are large enough for someone small to take a stab at playing with.

ZM: Alongside the exhibitions program, SHCMAS’s Artist-in-Residence program aims to engage artists with the community’s youngest members. Will there be a specific approach to artists’ engagement with the community? Will it vary based on the artist?

LK: It’s so much about prototyping. We are just figuring out what will work, who will work, what does not, and our artist in residence right now, David Schrobe, has been amazing. He is a Joan Mitchell Teaching Fellow and a graduate of Hunter College. He is a fourth-generation Harlemite, and we worked to find David in conjunction with The Laundromat Project, a really socially responsible and brilliant organization. It’s that level of thoughtfulness that is essential for finding the right person. We, as per The Laundromat Project’s idea, found David after auditioning him with our preschool. Each finalist had a thirty-minute demo, and David came with a fantastic exercise, one that I know I did not encounter until I was in high school. It was one about interpreting line through sound, interpreting line through blind texture and interpreting line through something else... maybe it was music, as opposed to abstract noise. Everybody, I think, was making one line at some point, and then one kid was brilliant enough to say, “How about a spiral?” and then everybody, “Oh yeah, a spiral, spirals.” The idea of thinking, “You may not get it, but let me just drop this seed with you,” at age four, starting the process of wiring kids to see this... that was all we needed. I don’t know who is going to come next, but whoever it is will be the type of person who is just as eager to drop something and see what happens.

See Saya Woolfalk’s preparatory drawings for the Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling on pages 72 & 73.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Lauren Kelley
Photo: Zuna Maza
It was a bright, sunny fall morning as the art shipper’s truck arrived at the corner of 155th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. Inside the large vehicle were twenty-six perfectly packed paintings, sculptures and drawings from The Studio Museum in Harlem’s permanent collection. As the art handlers unloaded the fragile artworks, using dollies and cardboard bins, I ticked off each on the exhibition checklist, prepared by Associate Curator Lauren Haynes. The artworks were being included in one of Al Loving’s *Hex 4* (1968) ready for installation at the Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling. Photo: Gina Guddemi

Over the course of the following two weeks, we installed the exhibition in the beautiful Legacy Gallery. Art handlers, led by Exhibition Manager Marc Bernier, meticulously unpacked the artworks as I inspected them for condition changes. The pieces were placed in the gallery, where Haynes carefully crafted the exhibition narrative through thoughtful placement. With the layout finalized, each work was hung at a height suitable for the museum’s target audience: children. Then, last but not least, a scissor lift hung Al Loving’s striking, geometric *Hex 4* (1968) approximately thirty feet in the air. With it safely in position, my job was complete, and the exhibition was ready to open.
Studio Jr.
At the start of this school year, The Studio Museum in Harlem was proud to kick off its second year of participation in Teen Thursdays, an afterschool initiative from the New York City Department of Education that engages seventh- and eighth-grade New York students in rich learning experiences focused on American history.

The program partners middle school classes with cultural institutions for a series of seven Thursday sessions held at the institutions. Lessons engage students in hands-on learning experiences developed collaboratively between teachers and museum education staff.

The Studio Museum has had the pleasure of partnering with three different Harlem-area middle schools since beginning with Teen Thursdays in fall 2014. Key goals for the curriculum include guiding students toward a deeper understanding of American history through experiences with the Studio Museum’s exhibitions and permanent collection, increasing students’ knowl-
Teen Thursdays students say:

“I learned that there are many ways of making art.”

“I liked the opportunity to present my artwork.”

“I learned that museums can be about anything.”

edge of artists of African descent and creating a platform for students to explore Harlem history and notions of community. In addition, we work closely with the teachers to develop students’ critical thinking skills, vocabulary, writing skills and verbal expression in line with classroom curricula. Toward these goals, the galleries are filled with student conversation centered on the artworks in the current exhibitions. The workshop rooms transform into artist studios, where students make artwork, from sculpture to painting to collage, to further investigate artists’ perspectives, as well as the students’ personal reflections.

In the end, students have completed meaningful projects that demonstrate new knowledge of American history and represent the personal connections they make with the artwork and the Museum.
Betye Saar’s interest in assemblage is a result of numerous life experiences with the idea of reclaiming unwanted materials and revitalizing them. The California native’s seamstress mother and quilter grandmother shared with her the art of blending dissimilar parts together and giving them new meanings. While spending time with her grandmother in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts throughout the 1930s, Saar witnessed the construction of the Watts Towers. Artist Simon Rodia, with no previous artistic training, single-handedly built seventeen interconnected sculptural structures with steel, concrete and wire mesh. Rodia rummaged and received discarded materials such as porcelain shards, bottles and shells, which he then embedded in the towers. Saar acknowledges that witnessing Rodia’s transformation of detritus into beautiful, Gothic-like spires inspired her to become an assemblagist.

While attending the National Conference of Artists in Chicago in 1970, Saar and artist David Hammons visited the Field Museum’s African art collection. This visit had a profound effect on Saar, and pushed her to further explore the ritualistic and mythic in what she refers to as her “ancestral works.” Part of Saar’s “ancestral works,” *Window of Ancient Sirens* (1979) is a selection of various cultural images and objects encased in three small frames that form part of a larger wooden frame. Each of the artwork’s components calls to mind associations connected with an image or object. The work’s title refers to the mythological figure of the siren, a part-woman, part-bird creature that lures sailors into danger. From left to right, the “sirens” presented are: an actual fabled siren, a pharaoh funerary mask with mirrored eyes, with a framed bird figurine located in front, and a regal dark-skinned woman with an orange robe standing with a quasi-solar system to her back and a peacock feather on the frame’s edge. The imagery and objects can remain cryptic. In fact, Saar herself doesn’t always know the exact meaning of the objects she incorporates in her works so as to foster a sense of mystery. In that same spirit, the viewer depends on his or her own knowledge to extract meaning from the images and objects in Saar’s assemblages. In *Window of Ancient Sirens*, Saar has taken images and materials and transformed them by giving them a new context in which new meanings can be created. The association with the mythical and ritualistic remains integral to the piece. But which myths and rituals? That is up for discussion.
Betye Saar’s *Window of Ancient Sirens* (1979) invites us to consider the associations we bring to individual items, and how the connections we make with objects may shift when the items are placed in different contexts. The artwork offers educators an opportunity to introduce the concept of a “collection,” and to engage students in creative writing inspired by the meanings they draw from an assemblage of objects.

**Objective**
- To examine and discuss connections among a collection of objects
- To use assemblage as a starting point to develop narratives

**Essential Question**
How might you use assemblage as a tool to develop a narrative?

**Materials**
- Students’ “collection” items from home
- Writing materials
- Camera

**Vocabulary**
- An assemblage is a collection or gathering of objects or people.
- A collection is a group of objects gathered for purposes including study, exhibition or hobby.

**Preparation**
1. Use visual inquiry to generate a discussion about *Window of Ancient Sirens* and students’ interpretation of the piece. Introduce vocabulary words and discuss them in context of the school environment and current curriculum.
2. Assign students the task of bringing in a collection of three to four objects from home, with which they will create an assemblage.
3. Prepare an area of the classroom where students can place their collection objects from home.

**Methods**
1. Have students place objects brought from home on their desks or work tables. Students should take turns discussing the personal significance of their collections.
2. Ask students to consider the essential question, and allow them time to create an assemblage with their objects. Remind them to consider the objects’ connections to one another, and how they might come together to tell a story.
3. Assign a class photographer to take photos of students’ finished assemblages for future reference.
4. Prompt students to write a narrative inspired by the connections and stories that emerge from the materials they have assembled.

**Closing**
1. Invite students to share their narratives, either with the class or in small groups.
2. Ask students to discuss the choices they made in creating their assemblages and narratives.
3. Revisit *Window of Ancient Sirens*, and discuss similarities and differences with students’ works.
4. Create a classroom display of assemblage photographs alongside the corresponding student narratives.
Mini Curator!

Maya Evans, affectionately known as Mini Curator, is back! In November, Maya sat down with 2004–05 artist in residence Marc Andre Robinson in front of his Project Space installation *Twice Told*. They discussed his career, what inspires him and, sure enough, his apple preference.

—Dana Liss, Communications Coordinator

**Maya Evans:** Where were you born?

**Marc Andre Robinson:** I was born in Los Angeles.

**ME:** When were you born?

**MAR:** In 1972.

**ME:** What inspired you to make all these sculptures and pictures?

**MAR:** Well, inspiration comes from a lot of different places. Both of my parents are artists, and it seemed that making art was really part of our everyday growing up. That’s probably where it started, when I was a kid just like you. Since then I’ve drawn inspiration from other artists, from music, from dance, just from everywhere.

**ME:** Why is your art usually with pieces of chairs or spoons?

**Photo:** Dana Liss
MAR: I like to use old furniture for a lot of my sculptures because it’s a material that speaks to me, and when I see a chair that’s been used, I can’t help but think of lives lived—you know, the way we use things in our everyday lives. I like how you can see that in an old piece of furniture.

ME: Have you ever sold your art?

MAR: I have.

ME: How long does it take to do your art?

MAR: Sometimes it’s fast and sometimes it’s slow. There have been times when I’ve been able to make a sculpture in a day, and sometimes it might take me a whole year to do a sculpture.

ME: When did you start being an artist?

MAR: I think I’ve always been an artist, but I started really focusing on making art independently when I was in high school. I had a teacher who let me make up my own projects in art class, so instead of doing all the assignments that the other kids were doing, she let me make my own assignments.

ME: How do you feel when you work on your sculptures?

MAR: That is a good question, Maya. When I’m working on my sculptures I try to connect to a certain energy that I’m trying to get across. Like this piece, *Twice Told*, as I was working on it, I was trying to feel the speed of it. If I could put a feeling to that, I would say I try to feel connected when I’m making that sculpture.

ME: Have any of your sculptures reminded you of something in your lifetime?

MAR: Hmm, that’s a good question, too. Yeah, when I was an artist in residence here at the Studio Museum. That was about ten years ago. That should be right around the time you were born probably, right? How old are you?

ME: I’m nine, but that was when my brother was born.

MAR: I did a piece that kind of mimicked a feeling that I had about Malcolm X. I made a portrait of Malcolm X and I took it outside, in the streets of Harlem, in front of the Museum and over in front of the Schomburg Center. It was a mannequin with clothes on, and I asked people to talk to the sculpture as if they were talking to the real person. And people sat down and talked to my sculpture. Your question was, has it reminded me of something in my life? That process was to recreate the desire that I had to talk to Malcolm X. So I asked other people to do it, and that’s how it came to life. I found out that a lot of people have the same kind of questions that I have.

ME: Why are you interested in the history and culture of African Americans?

MAR: I’m interested in the history and culture of African Americans because I am African-American. My father is African-American and my mother was born in Africa and immigrated here, so I had a little bit of a different sense of what being African-American is when I was growing up. There’s a black African American and then there’s an American from Africa in my family. My mother was born in South Africa, but she is white, so her ancestors came from Europe, from Holland. African-American history has always been something that I am very interested in and inspired by, and reading and learning about it has always made me feel more connected to African-American culture.

ME: So this is my follow-up question. I’ve asked this question to all the people I’ve interviewed. What type of apples do you like?

MAR: Let’s see . . . I like sweet apples better than tart ones. I like Red Delicious and pretty much any type of red apple. How about you?

ME: I just usually have green apples.

MAR: So you like the tart ones?

ME: Yes. I don’t like sour.
DIY

Black Sculpture in Relief

by Elan Ferguson and Chloe Hayward,
Family Programs Coordinators

On view in Black: Color, Material, Concept are a number of sculptural works that utilize an all-black palette. Featuring works primarily from the Studio Museum’s permanent collection, the exhibition considers ideas around the notion of “black.” Discover the materials used and the interesting ways the sculptures are displayed, and be inspired to create a masterpiece of your own!

Key Words
• SCULPTURE is any artwork that is not flat, but rather three-dimensional. Sculpture can be created out of abstracted forms or can be representational, and are made from a wide variety of materials.
• RELIEF is a sculptural technique. The term “relief” is from the Latin verb relevo, “to raise.” To create a sculpture in relief is to give the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background plane.
• LAYERING is the sculptural technique of placing objects on top of each other.

Materials
• Cardboard
• Glue
• Scissors
• Black paint
• Paintbrush
• Cup of water
DIY

Black Sculpture in Relief

**Step 1**
Have an adult cut different-sized rectangles out of cardboard.

**Step 2**
Place smaller rectangles on top of a large rectangle for a base. Play with the composition of different-sized rectangles.

**Step 3**
When you have chosen the arrangement you like, glue the pieces in place.

**Step 4**
Once the glue has dried, color with brush and black paint.
Studio

Friends
Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Born in Enugu, Nigeria, in 1983, Njideka Akunyili Crosby received her BA from Swarthmore College (2004) and her MFA from Yale University School of Art (2011). Her work was exhibited in Njideka Akunyili Crosby: The Beautyful Ones at Art + Practice, Los Angeles in 2015, in conjunction with Hammer Projects: Njideka Akunyili Crosby at the Hammer Museum. Akunyili Crosby’s work is informed by her Nigerian heritage, contemporary postcolonial African cosmopolitanism and her life in the United States. The tension between these experiences is critical to her work.

In her vibrant, textured works on paper, Akunyili Crosby employs collage and acetone-transferred images in depictions of intimacy and domestic life. Her scenes are created by incorporating paintings and photographs of herself, her husband and her family with found images from popular Nigerian fashion and lifestyle magazines. Her intimate depictions of domestic spaces and everyday life provide an important counternarrative to the often troubled representations of Africa’s complex political and social conditions in the media and in the public imagination. The paintings—with their unorthodox shifts in perspective, introduction of specific Nigerian or West African points of reference and foregrounding of subjects of African descent—challenge conventions of representation and portraiture, even as they filter a number of art historical and literary influences.

Among her many accomplishments, Njideka Akunyili Crosby was awarded the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s James Dicke Contemporary Art Prize in 2014. She participated in The Studio Museum in Harlem’s Artist-in-Residence program in 2011–12 and has been featured in Studio Museum group exhibitions including Draped Down (2014), The Bearden Project (2012) and Primary Sources: Artists in Residence 2011–12 (2012). Her work has been exhibited widely at venues including New Museum, New York; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC; and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Philadelphia, PA.

On October 26, 2015, Studio Museum Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden awarded the tenth annual Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize to Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Established by jazz impresario, musician and philanthropist George Wein, in memory of his wife Joyce, a dedicated Trustee of The Studio Museum in Harlem, the Wein Prize honors the legacy of a woman whose life embodied a commitment to the power and possibilities of art and culture. In keeping with Joyce’s support for living artists, the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize recognizes and honors the artistic achievements of an African-American artist who demonstrates great innovation, promise and creativity. Envisioned as an extension of the Studio Museum’s mission to support experimentation and excellence in contemporary art, the Prize includes an unrestricted monetary award of $50,000.
Gala 2015

Renaissance: Leadership, Innovation and Vision, the theme of The Studio Museum in Harlem Gala 2015, embraced the milestones and anniversaries celebrated on the evening of October 26, 2015. Gala 2015 recognized inspirational visionaries, and the Museum was thrilled to honor the decade-long tenure of Thelma Golden’s leadership as Director in the company of so many artists, patrons and friends of the Museum. In the spotlight of Gala 2015’s program, the annual Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize was awarded to Njideka Akunyili Crosby, the tenth artist to receive this prestigious $50,000 cash prize for innovation, promise and creativity. The Museum was thrilled to announce that a record $1.9 million was raised at Gala 2015 in support of the Museum’s groundbreaking exhibitions, education and public programs and renowned Artist-in-Residence program.

The Director and Chief Curator, Board of Trustees and staff of the Studio Museum would like to express heartfelt thanks to the supporters listed on the following pages.

Jerome A. Chazen, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Thelma Golden, George Wein & Glory Van Scott*

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Gala 2015

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On Tuesday, October 6, 2015, Pippa Cohen, a dear friend of The Studio Museum in Harlem and longtime member of the Museum’s Acquisition Committee, generously opened her home to our Global Council, the Museum’s premier patron group. Guests enjoyed a festive evening of cocktails, conversation and, of course, some truly fabulous art. Pippa’s home, affectionately known as the “Studio Museum South,” boasts an incredible collection of art by artists of African descent, including Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Mark Bradford, Samuel Fosso, Hugo McCloud, Wardell Milan, Adam Pendleton, Gary Simmons and Mickalene Thomas.

The Studio Museum’s Global Council is a philanthropic circle for donors who support the Museum with unrestricted charitable gifts of $5,000 or more annually. The Council gathers from time to time in social settings for important and timely dialogues with senior Studio Museum leadership—dialogues that we hope both give insight into current cultural trends and bring the group closer to the Museum. In turn, Council members are asked to demonstrate their commitment to the Studio Museum by providing critical unrestricted support, which strengthens the Museum’s ability to be fluid and responsive to our needs, challenges and opportunities. This is an especially exciting moment in the life of the Studio Museum, which has been at the forefront of presenting work by artists of African descent since 1968. As we look toward our fiftieth anniversary in 2018—one that we will celebrate with the construction of a new facility designed by Adjaye Associates, in collaboration with Cooper Robertson—we will continue to build upon our reputation as a world-class institution and deepen our commitment to work by artists of African descent from around the world. Global Council patrons, as leading supporters of the Studio Museum, play a central role in ushering in the next fifty years of the Museum’s life.

For more information about Global Council, please contact Erin Dooley, Manager of Major Gifts, at 212.864.4500 x265.
Member Spotlight

Katie Wilson-Milne
Member Spotlight

Katie Wilson-Milne

Art lawyer and litigator at Schindler Cohen & Hochman LLP and Harlem resident

Level: Studio Society

Member since 2014

What do you recall of your first visit to The Studio Museum in Harlem?

I first visited the Studio Museum before I moved to Harlem—maybe even before I moved to New York on a visit during college. Once I moved to the city, I visited with a group from MoMA. I remember Thelma Golden giving a talk, and then we visited the Museum’s artists-in-residence studios on the third floor before heading to Red Rooster for lunch.

What made you want to become more involved in the Studio Museum?

I was an African-American studies major in college, and although I didn’t focus on art, I was interested in African-American culture and the locations and spaces in which it is most vibrant—the Studio Museum being one of them. Since I moved to New York, art has become a major part of my life. I knew that I wanted to have an attachment to a smaller New York museum related to my interests. So when I moved to Harlem I decided to commit to the Studio Museum. It’s a warm and welcoming environment, and you feel like you’re a part of a community here. And the art is great!

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

I really love the exhibition *When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South* because it evoked the South, but not in a way you would typically imagine. *Stars* only could have taken place at the Studio Museum, given its complex treatment of the South and its place in the American imaginary.

What does it mean to you both to contribute to the Studio Museum and to participate in Studio Society?

I moved to Harlem pretty deliberately. I want to live in a neighborhood that is truly diverse. I find the same kind of diversity at the Studio Museum and that’s part of what draws me, and many supporters like me, to it. Participating in Studio Society gives me the opportunity to engage more with the Museum and the community. I love events that connect Studio Society members directly with artists, such as private visits to the artists-in-residence studios, or the recent tour of the Museum with artist Stanley Whitney. It’s a great feeling to be in the loop, and it’s great to know that supporting the Studio Museum enables so many others to enjoy it too.
The Museum’s Membership Program has played an important role in the institution’s growth for over forty years. Thank you to all the following who helped maintain our ambitious schedule of exhibitions and public programs during the 2015–16 season.

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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

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