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The Dispute, 2015
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Most issues of Studio have a theme. Sometimes that theme is specific and named, such as in last fall’s 50th anniversary issue; and other times, it’s an internal framing device we use to shape how we present and celebrate the Museum’s mission, exhibitions, and activities. And in some instances a theme simply emerges as we take stock of the stories that need to be told and the activities that are central to the life of our institution at a particular moment in time. If this issue has a theme, then it is “beyond.”

As we work to create The Studio Museum in Harlem’s new physical space, our programming now exists fully beyond the site on 125th Street that was our home for thirty-five years. We are thrilled to be working with peer institutions throughout the five boroughs of New York City—and beyond. These collaborations are playing a critical role in furthering the Museum’s mission.

I recently had the amazing opportunity to organize Projects 110: Michael Armitage, one of the re-opening exhibitions in the newly-expanded Museum of Modern Art, as part of the Studio Museum’s multiyear partnership with the Museum of Modern Art and MoMA PS1. The partnership kicked off this summer with our annual Artist-in-Residence exhibition, MOOD: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2018–19, which delighted tens of thousands of visitors at MoMA PS1. This partnership has been—and will continue to be—a tremendous opportunity for both institutions to build on our shared values and audiences.

Much of our work during this interim period is under the auspices of our inHarlem initiative, now entering its fourth year. inHarlem encompasses artists’ projects and events and programs for all ages, presented in collaboration with organizations throughout our neighborhood. NYC Parks has been a keystone partner since our very first inHarlem project presented sculptures by Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk, and Rudy Shepherd in four Historic Harlem Parks in 2016. We’re excited to work with them once again to present Chloë Bass: Wayfinding. In this issue, you’ll find a unique feature the conceptual artist created to complement her twenty-four incredibly impactful site-specific sculptures in St. Nicholas Park.

Back on 125th Street, we’re making steady progress on the project to build our new home, designed by Adjaye Associates with Cooper Robertson. I hope you’ll visit studiomuseum.org/our-new-building for the latest updates and milestones, including a feed of our construction camera.

All of this work is possible because of the vision and commitment of the Board of Trustees of the Studio Museum, and because of you: our supporters, neighbors, visitors, and friends. We are beyond grateful.

Thelma Golden
Director and Chief Curator
Projects 110: Michael Armitage

Practice in Print

New Acquisitions

Educate to Liberate:
Black Panther Party Liberation Schools

Building Spaces for Creativity and Healing at Rikers Island

In the Flesh: Body Modification as Art
Visitor Information

The Studio Museum’s building at 144 West 125th Street is closed for construction of our new museum.

Studio Museum 127, our temporary exhibition space, is located at 429 West 127th Street between Amsterdam and Convent Avenues. Opening hours are Thursday through Sunday, 12 to 6 pm.

Our inHarlem initiative also presents exhibitions and events at a variety of partner and satellite locations in Harlem. Other programs take place at additional partner locations throughout the city and beyond. Visit studiomuseum.org for full details on specific programming.

Follow us on social media!
@studiomuseum

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Exhibition Schedule

Chloë Bass: Wayfinding
September 28, 2019
–September 27, 2020
St. Nicholas Park
Between 128th and 141st Street
Enter at 135th to view exhibition

Harlem Postcards: Fall 2019
September 23, 2019
–January 19, 2020
Studio Museum 127
429 West 127th Street

Dozie Kanu: Function
November 15, 2019–March 15, 2020
Studio Museum 127
429 West 127th St.

Projects 110: Michael Armitage
October 21, 2019–January 20, 2020
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street

Check studiomuseum.org for the latest on our exhibitions and programs.
Introducing the 2019–20 Artists in Residence

by Yelena Keller
The Studio Museum in Harlem is thrilled to welcome E. Jane, Elliot Reed, and Naudline Pierre as the next cohort of its catalytic Artist-in-Residence program. As part of the Museum’s foundation and the impetus for its name, the program has long served as a pivotal and formative influence on the trajectory of its artists’ careers. The artists selected each year speak to a moment in history and to exciting possibilities for the future of art.

This cohort of residents includes the first Internet artist and pop star in the program’s history, a performance artist, and a painter. This unique intersection comes in a moment of polarization in America, seldom quelled by the limitless plane of digital interrelations. As such, their individual practices propose fresh perspectives and speak to the multiplicities and ever-changing realities of the black experience.

In October 2019, the artists will begin working toward their culminating exhibition while honing a deeper critical eye on their respective practices throughout the yearlong program. The exhibition, to be held at MoMA PS1 in summer 2020, is part of a multiyear partnership between the institutions.

Conceptual artist E. Jane (b. 1990, Bethesda, MD) uses digital imagery, sound, performance, sculpture, and installation to interrogate conceptions of personhood and the ways in which subjugated bodies navigate the media and cyberspace. Jane operates across both digital and physical realms through their stage persona, MHYSA, an underground pop star who appears live in performance, and through Jane’s Lavendra/Recovery (2015–present), an iterative installation. MHYSA explores the iconography and influence of celebrity, and the performativity of gender, as informed by Jane’s embrace of writer Alice Walker’s womanism, an inclusive feminism that centers black women. The artist is interested in creating alternative worlds that resist the influence of colorism and stereotypes about black femininity and womanhood while engaging new media materials as a means of furthering this conversation both on- and offline.
Performance artist Elliot Reed (b. 1992, Milwaukee, WI), rejects historical delineations of theater by often breaking the fourth wall to engage directly with his audience. To this end, Reed regularly performs with no make-up or costume, making his position on performance participatory. His durational performances are fueled by a series of games and challenges designed to unify the audience, and require those in the room to come together toward the execution of the work itself. Reed utilizes a highly engaging method of improvisation, teaching gestures, and vocal commands. In a recent project, CURB ALERT! the artist hired performers from Craigslist to improvise a performance centered on an original script derived from the “Free Stuff” section on the site. These transformative experiences carve out ephemeral moments of collectivity and engagement offline, which is compelling in a moment in which the mediation of human interaction often comes via digital platforms.

Elliot Reed,
I’ll Be Here Unless I Don’t Need to Be (Until Then ...), 2018
Photo: Courtesy the artist
Naudline Pierre’s (b. 1989, Leominster, MA) paintings are vibrant, otherworldly depictions of her imagined mythology, in which recurring characters appear in tandem with the artist’s own shadowy alter ego. Pierre’s father is a minister of a church in Miami’s Little Haiti; her early experiences in the church—most notably the casting out of demons and the mythology of scripture—inform the fantastical figures that appear in her work. Engaging with symbols, characters, and motifs that have typically dominated the Western canon, Pierre works to insert herself and her experiences in the apocalyptic biblical messaging of sin, damnation, and purity. Providing a canonically black intervention, Pierre’s paintings work to unspool the many ways that these mythical creatures and the narratives that drive them have informed and complicated representations of the black body throughout history.

As part of a multiyear partnership between The Studio Museum in Harlem, The Museum of Modern Art, and MoMA PS1, building on the institutions’ existing affiliations and shared values, this wide-ranging collaboration encompasses exhibitions and programming at both The Museum of Modern Art and MoMA PS1, and takes place during the construction of the Studio Museum’s new facility.

Naudline Pierre

Hold Me This Way, 2017

Courtesy the artist
Autumn Knight:
WALL
by Eric Booker
How high is the wall? The wall is high. Is the wall high? How is the wall high? How high? These words fill the room in the first moments of Autumn Knight’s WALL (2014–16). Sung by her collaborator Natasha L. Turner, the line becomes at times a question and at times an answer, and thus embodies Knight’s practice of improvisational transformation.

As Turner repeats and remixes this statement, she pushes it to its breaking point: New possibilities emerge. Through WALL, Knight creates a loosely defined internal experience in which burdens can be placed, imagination is fostered, and mental and physical survival strategies can emerge. Performed by a self-identifying black and femme ensemble, the work considers the social, historical, and political structures of space through black feminist experience. In Knight’s hands, the wall becomes a psychological, spiritual, and embodied place for black women to reimagine.

Invested in the psychological and structural dynamics of groups and institutions, Knight is committed to laying bare, as Rashida Bumbray describes, the “contemporary trauma of racial and spatial violence.” Knight’s interdisciplinary background in theatre and drama therapy allows her to decenter the roles of artist and audience, and the spaces we inhabit through improvisational, often participatory, performance. At times host, director, and participant, she refuses a singular voice or subject in her work, as in her ongoing series “Here + Now” (2013–present) and “Sanity TV” (2016–present). Adapting these works to a given environment and audience, she allows for interactions to unfold and usher forth meaningful exchanges that sow empathy and propose new forms of understanding.

At a time when walls are at the forefront of our collective consciousness, Knight’s performance speaks volumes. The borders and prison walls that restrict and confine so many, as well as institutional walls that invisibly bar entry, all register as contentious sites for people of color. Walls of refuge—those that protect our homes, clubs, or temples—also form vital spaces of care. Knight references several such structures within our geopolitical imaginary—the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, in Jerusalem and the Galveston Seawall in Texas—while considering their spirituality and permanence.

As the last remnant of the second temple in Jerusalem, the Western Wall is considered Judaism’s holiest site. Known as the Buraq Wall in Islam, the site is also recognized as an important location in the prophet Mohammed’s physical and spiritual ascension to paradise. The wall exists under the terms we ascribe to it, a vessel for the beliefs of many. Running over ten miles along the Texas coast, the Galveston Seawall protects a historically black community from ocean surges. It was constructed after the Galveston hurricane of 1900, which was the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. The seawall stands as a reminder of collective achievement and impermanence, while also recalling the artist’s communities in Texas and her Houston upbringing.

WALL is distinct from Knight’s more participatory works through its relationship to audience. The performance gathers a cast of black femmes, who are local to each staging of the work and represent various ages, body
types, and orientations. Dressed in cobalt blue, they sit in a line facing the audience but do not look at visitors directly. While Knight and Turner gesticulate around them—laboriously building up walls, breathing and praying, challenging and consoling one another—the seated performers stoically carry out a subtle choreography of gestures that adjust our focus back to the presence of each. The sounds, rituals, and actions position black feminine subjectivity at the forefront. We observe this work from a distance, collectively upholding an extraordinary space.

On the conceptual roots of performance, Tavia Nyong’o writes that it is “concerned less with the object than with the process of its making.” This “making” defines the power of Knight’s work. Somber yet hopeful, WALL conveys the psychological effects of being a black woman in this world—one in which walls are used to hold, protect, and break down. As each participant steadily rises and walks out of the room, Turner begins to sing: Never ever. Maybe sometimes? Maybe never? Sometimes never?

Autumn Knight: WALL celebrates the Studio Museum’s acquisition of WALL (2014–16) by 2016–17 artist in residence Autumn Knight. Featuring the first performance to enter the Museum’s permanent collection, Autumn Knight: WALL is presented by the Studio Museum and Danspace Project. Autumn Knight: WALL marks an important phase in the Studio Museum’s acquisition process, ensuring that the embodied knowledge of Knight’s performance and participatory practice is contextualized within the Museum’s collection.

Autumn Knight: WALL is organized by Eric Booker, Assistant Curator and Exhibition Coordinator, and presented in partnership with Danspace Project. The acquisition of Autumn Knight’s WALL was made possible by the Studio Museum’s Acquisition Committee. The production and acquisition framework for WALL is directed by living archives specialist Cori Olinghouse on behalf of The Portal. Special thanks to Judy Hussie-Taylor, Executive Director and Chief Curator; Lydia Bell, Program Director and Associate Curator; Sophie Sotsky, Production Manager, and Kathy Kaufmann, Lighting designer Danspace Project; and Connie H. Choi, Associate Curator, Permanent Collection; Amarie Gipson, Curatorial Assistant, Permanent Collection; and Mia Matthias, former Curatorial Fellow, The Studio Museum in Harlem.

1. Knight’s use of “self-identifying black and femme” aims to encompass the broadest range of black feminine experience, considering the futurity of WALL and the elasticity of identity.
2. Autumn Knight, in conversation with the author, June 6, 2019.
Salome Asega

Born 1989, Las Vegas, NV
Lives and works in New York, NY

*almaz*, 2019
Chromogenic color print
Courtesy the artist
Leslie Hewitt

Born 1977, New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY
*Riffs on Real Time (2 of 10), 2012–17*
Silver gelatin print
Courtesy the artist and Perrotin
Skye Mayo

*Expanding the Walls* participant
Born 2003, Bronx, NY
Lives in Manhattan, NY

*Lookout*, 2019
Chromogenic color print
Courtesy the artist
Fred Wilson
Born 1954, Bronx, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY
BLACK EGYPT, 2019
Chromogenic color print
Courtesy the artist
Salome Asega

*almaż* is an extension of Salome Asega’s “on the line,” a series of digital and archival explorations started in 2012. Asega recontextualizes found family photos and creates postcards to send back to her grandmother in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For *Harlem Postcards*, she walked around Harlem and photographed a collection of objects that remind her of home—a cassette tape, kitchen cloth, earrings, netelas, and this airbrushed shirt of a Coptic angel with her grandmother’s name, “Almaz,” written in Amharic. Almaz means “diamond.” Almaz means “brilliance.” The wrought-iron design on this garage gate radiantly holds the shine of the diamond at its center. This decorative iron is found all over the neighborhood, in front of homes and along brownstone steps, but is usually painted black. This vibrant red channels energy and determination.

Salome Asega is an artist and design researcher whose practice explores multiplicity and collaboration through technology and immersive experiences.

Fred Wilson

While walking across 125th Street, shopping and speaking to street vendors, I was reminded of my father. When I was a boy we walked across town on that street to explore the rich cultural backdrop of the area where he was raised. What is captured in my photo *BLACK EGYPT* is a strong evocation of “Afro-Americana.” More memories of my father emerged. As a young artist I visited him in Cairo, where he worked as a civil engineer on a project to rebuild Port Said. Years later I returned several times to create works for the Cairo Biennial and the Whitney Biennial. *BLACK EGYPT* suggests a powerful affirmation of ancient Egyptian/Nubian blackness. It is as significant a visual and conceptual statement as any vernacular cultural artifact in America. I must say that 125th Street has many varied gems of displays. Several of these, on folding tables on this storied Harlem street, should be in the Smithsonian!

Skye Mayo

I was born and raised on Burnside Avenue in the Bronx. I had some of the best moments of my childhood there, but it also holds my worst memories. I moved to Harlem when I was around six or seven years old and I have lived here ever since. Honestly, living here has shown me things that no one would see anywhere else in New York. Black pride and black representation, but most importantly a black community that cares about its neighborhood and unique culture. It’s really amazing how lively the streets of Harlem are, filled with black people, people proud to be themselves and not afraid to show who they are and their culture. Even in the signs and graffiti around Harlem you can see that pride, and how it can’t be taken away. I am grateful that I can see and experience it myself, through my own lens. I picked photos that show Harlem from my window. I have seen cookouts, parties, and people just gathering outside of my building, with the sound of distant laughter and people reminiscing. Usually people think Harlem is a dangerous and disgusting place, but it truly isn’t. It’s a place that represents family, unity, closeness, and pride. I was influenced by Lorna Simpson, who takes photos of her community to portray it in a different light, as well as the paintings of Jordan Casteel.
Citi. Proud Partner of *Harlem Postcards*. Proud Sponsor of Progress.

Chloë Bass: Wayfinding
by Legacy Russell
The Studio Museum in Harlem presents *Chloë Bass: Wayfinding*, the conceptual artist’s first institutional solo exhibition. This monumental commission is situated in Harlem’s St. Nicholas Park and features twenty-four site-specific sculptures that gesture toward the structural and visual vernacular of public wayfinding signage.

The exhibition begins with and revolves around three central questions, poetically penned by the artist and featured throughout the park in billboard form: *How much of care is patience? How much of life is coping? How much of love is attention?*

Through a combination of text and archival images, Bass’s sculptures activate an eloquent exploration of language, both visual and written, encouraging moments of private reflection in public space. Bass’s “wayfinding signage” is positioned along various pathways throughout the park. Through this, Bass asks the viewer to follow along, in an exploration of the park, spurred by the artist’s gentle sculptural interventions. The signs, in their querying, build an existential bridge between a deeply individual interiority and ongoing external social and political dialogue. This is amplified by the artist’s audio guide that carries listeners through sharply composed vignettes that grapple with notions of site, memory, belonging, joy, and risk, as mapped to the quiet, ritualized habits of the everyday.

The mirrored billboards that begin Bass’s *Wayfinding* reflect Harlem back at the viewer as it transforms across time. These works reflect what Bass observes as “gentrification and the quiet force it enacts” on a city in constant motion and the people within it. Across the landscape of St. Nicholas Park, the artist carries the viewer on a journeying through the self and toward a collective consciousness. Through *Wayfinding*, Bass makes space to be lost and found all at once in a vulnerable interrogation of the known and unknown. The artist hopes that viewers will take time to seek out each of the signs that, differing in site, scale, and composition, intrigue and surprise as they surface unexpectedly. In the artist’s words, “You’ll have to trust me when I say that many of the things I appear to know most deeply, I feel I know by accident.”

*Chloë Bass: Wayfinding* is organized by Legacy Russell, Associate Curator, Exhibitions, and is an *inHarlem* project, presented by The Studio Museum in Harlem in partnership with St. Nicholas Park and NYC Parks. The exhibition can be found in St. Nicholas Park in Harlem and runs from September 28, 2019, to September 27, 2020.

#WayfindinginHarlem

The work on the following pages draws from excerpts of Chloë Bass’s *inHarlem* project *Wayfinding*. The complete text is also currently available in audio form on the Studio Museum’s website. The *Wayfinding* text brings together several sources: landscape architecture teaching guides, reports on aging and disorientation from the National Institutes of Health, and the artist’s own personal reflections. It also incorporates phrases inscribed on the project’s signs as part of her *inHarlem* commission.

Photo: SaVonne Anderson

Chloë Bass: Wayfinding
HOW MUCH OF LOVE IS ATTENTION?
ONE: PATHS/CIRCULATION

The circulation system is the key organizing element of a site or building. People use circulation systems to develop a mental map.

ONE: DIAGNOSIS

A single instance is an example of nothing. The minimum to define a pattern is three. Yet somehow we are primed to recognize exceptionalism and struggle to see at the level of daily behavior.

You’re at the top of the subway stairs and see someone walking up, heading right in your direction. Do you:

a) evaluate the person’s age, gender, and physical condition to see who needs the banister more, them or you?

b) keep on keeping on;

c) quietly hope to disappear before the train comes?
I did not know (until I looked) that the symptoms of dementia are partially classified as social: “the inability to recognize common things.” I wonder about the baseline of “common”: what threshold of democracy does a thing need to cross in order to acquire that status? Fifty-one percent? Thirteen percent? The percentage of minutes per hour during a nightly news broadcast?

The problem is: whether treated or untreated, these kinds of symptomatic lapses will eventually lead to death.

The question is: your own death, or others’? In the case of old age, the answer seems clear; outside of this condition, results vary. I hear the only treatment for these ailments is palliative, designed to minimize discomfort for the patient and those around them. So now I begin to question the boundaries of “around”: what constitutes nearness? How far is too far, even if it’s right next door? I’ve been stuck on this phrase for years: “extending the boundaries of who we call our neighbors.”

The spatial anxiety scale was developed by scientist M.P. Lawton. Lawton (2001) used an Internet-based survey of 240 individuals and found that men tend to employ a spatial survey or overview approach using distance and cardinal directions as if one were reading a map, whereas women tend to navigate using landmarks encountered along the route (turn left at the church). Schmitz (1999) reported way-finding experiments with 32 German adults and suggested that anxiety provides an additional explanation of sex differences with regard to way-finding. Lawton and Kallai (2002) conducted two separate studies of way-finding behaviors among 513 psychology students (from the United States and Hungary). They reported that women’s anxiety about finding their way in unknown areas influences the way that they navigate. Lawton and Kallai attributed this anxiety, at least in part, to differences in upbringing where young girls are often more closely monitored and given less freedom to explore than boys at an equivalent age.
A few months ago, I heard a podcast about a new form of disorientation in the elderly: ageing New Yorkers who can no longer navigate their neighborhoods because of the rapid rise of new buildings. A kind of gentrification-based confusion induced not by a shift in culture, but by an unpredictable horizon.

I spent a long time describing this podcast to a friend. Later I went back to find it, hoping to use some quotes from the featured gerontology specialist in my work. Despite persistent searching, both on my behalf and on behalf of the friend I originally described it to, I’ve been unable to locate anything.

If you’re certain that something happened, but you can’t find the evidence of it anywhere, are you willing to concede it was a dream?
OF LOVE IS ATTENTION?
Elsewhere
Julie Mehretu
November 3, 2019–May 17, 2020
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, California
lacma.org

Julie Mehretu is the first-ever comprehensive retrospective of Mehretu’s career. This mid-career survey covers two decades, with more than seventy works that examine the history of colonization, war, capitalism, and displacement through abstraction, architecture, and figuration. After opening at LACMA, Julie Mehretu will travel to the Whitney in June 2020 and continue on to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

Julie Mehretu
Stadia II, 2004
“Something over Something Else”: Romare Bearden’s Profile Series

September 14, 2019 – February 2, 2020
High Museum of Art
Atlanta, Georgia
high.org

“Something over Something Else”: Romare Bearden’s Profile Series, titled after Bearden’s own description of his creative process, is the first reassembling of the artist’s “Profile” (1979–81) series. The series begins with Bearden’s earliest memories as a boy in North Carolina in the 1910s and concludes with his life as a young artist in Harlem in the early 1940s. Works in these series are brought together in their original order with Bearden’s text, as the artist intended.

Romare Bearden
Profile/Part I, The Twenties,
Mecklenberg County,
School Bell Time, 1978
Kingsborough Community College,
The City University of New York.
Romare Bearden Foundation/VAGA
at Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York.
Photo: Paul Takeuchi.
Great Force

October 5, 2019–January 5, 2020
Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia icavcu.org

Great Force explores how art can examine racial constructs in the United States, and features work from Studio Museum alumni Sable Elyse Smith, Pope.L, Glenn Ligon, Carrie Mae Weems, and many more. Borrowing its title from James Baldwin, who said “The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us ... “ this group of artists examine how contemporary artists address racial bias and inequality.

Carrie Mae Weems
Untitled, 2009–10
Courtesy Rodney M. Miller Collection
Frederick J. Brown: Dreams and the Possibility of …

October 23, 2019 –September 27, 2020
Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling
New York, New York
sugarhillmuseum.org

Frederick J. Brown: Dreams and the Possibility of … honors the work of expressionist artist Frederick Brown, who is known for his abstract style and city themes. This exhibition covers the artist’s interpretation of dreams through three perspectives: the imagined landscape, aspiration, and possibility, as well as the “American Dream." Using fictional characters and motifs throughout the work, Brown challenges the ideas of self, myth, and home.

Frederick Brown
Joshie’s Dream, 1980
Courtesy Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling
Theaster Gates: Assembly Hall
September 5, 2019 – January 12, 2020
Walker Art Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
walkerart.org

Assembly Hall brings together Theaster Gates’s collection of objects cast aside from libraries, archives, and collections in an installation created by the artist. In this exhibition Gates considers what he calls “resurrections,” or the act of bringing old objects and spaces back to life, while examining the historical and social context of their making.

Theaster Gates
Theaster Gates: Assembly Hall, 2019
Courtesy White Cube
Photo: Sara Pooley
This exhibition, the second in a series of exhibitions curated by Pulitzer Prize–winning author Hilton Als, focuses on the work of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. Selected by Als in collaboration with Yiadom-Boakye and the Center, this display highlights recent paintings and prints by the London-based artist, focusing on her portrait-like studies of characters drawn from the world of fiction, found images, and imagination.

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Fly VI, 2012
Yale Center for British Art, Laura and James Duncan, Yale BA 1975, and Friends of British Art Fund, in honor of Gillian Forrester
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott

September 20, 2019 – January 12, 2020
Contemporary Arts Center
Cincinnati, Ohio
contemporaryartscenter.org

Art and Race Matters is the largest-ever traveling exhibition of compelling and controversial artist Robert Colescott. Organized by former Studio Museum director Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims with Matthew Wesley, the exhibition highlights fifty-three years of Colescott’s career through eighty-five works that both bring to the surface and challenge diversity and racial stereotypes.

Robert Colescott
George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook, 1975
Estate of Robert Colescott/Artist Rights Society, New York
 Courtesy the estate and Blum & Poe
Photo: Jean Paul Torno
Two major exhibitions this fall celebrate Betye Saar’s long and prolific career. *Betye Saar: Call and Response* examines the progression and relationship between preliminary sketches and finished works. The LACMA exhibition covers the span of Saar’s career, including work from her early years up through a new sculpture. *Betye Saar: The Legends of Black Girl’s Window* at the newly-reopened MoMA, is in-depth solo exhibition exploring the deep ties between the artist’s iconic autobiographical assemblage *Black Girl’s Window* (1969) and her rare, early prints, made during the 1960s.

Betye Saar
*Black Dolls Sketchbook, San Diego, Mingei International Museum, 2015*
Collection of Betye Saar,
Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles
Pope.L: Choir
October 10, 2019
–Winter 2020
Whitney Museum of American Art
New York, New York
whitney.org

member:
October 21, 2019
–January 2020
The Museum of Modern Art
New York, New York
moma.org

Along with the September 2019 performance Pope.L: Conquest, Pope.L: Choir and member: Pope.L, 1978–2001 form an ongoing trio of exhibitions, Pope.L: Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration, organized by the Public Art Fund, the Whitney Museum, and The Museum of Modern Art. At the Whitney, the artist will create a new installation entitled Choir, inspired by the fountain, the public arena and John Cage’s conception of music and sound. At MoMA, member: Pope.L, 1978–2001 focuses on a group of landmark performances that have defined the artist as a consummate agitator and humorist who has used his body to examine division and inequality.

Pope.L
Reflections of water in test tank in artist’s studio in preparation for Choir,
July 2, 2018
Courtesy the artist
Projects 110: Michael Armitage, the first U.S. solo museum exhibition by Michael Armitage, presents a group of eight paintings that, in the artist’s words, explore “parallel cultural histories.” These works are presented in Museum of Modern Art’s new building this October, as part of The Studio Museum in Harlem, MoMA, and MoMA PS1’s multiyear partnership built on the institutions’ existing affiliations and shared values. Nairobi-born Armitage received his BFA and MFA in London, at Slade School of Art and Royal Academy of Arts, respectively. Today, the artist travels between the two cities, and cites each as core to his creative practice.
This grouping of work interrogates contemporary visual culture in timely dialogue with art history and the legacy of Modernism as it veers toward—and breaks from—the West. Alongside a Modernist influence, Armitage draws inspiration from East African artists Meek Gichugu, Chelenge, and Jak Katarikawe. As such, he celebrates a living lineage of narrative, abstraction, and color, with one eye toward the future and another looking to the past in homage to the rich and complicated history of painting.

An intervention within the painterly canon, Armitage employs lubugo bark cloth in lieu of canvas as a foundation for his paintings. In 2010 the artist first encountered the Ugandan fabric in a Nairobi tourist market. The material creates the irregular fissures found across these works, which incite a rich conversation between the artist and his study of landscape and the body. Delicate in nature, the cloth is subject to such irregularities, ripping and tearing as the artist paints across it. These breaks in the simultaneously skin-like and topographic surface become part of the texture and form of each painting.

The scenes in The Promised Land and The promise of change were inspired by political rallies held before the 2017 general elections in Kenya. While both works depict these collective gatherings at the height of pre-election fervor, The Promised Land places the viewer within the crowd, while The promise of change bears witness from on the stage.

In Nyali Beach Boys (2015), the artist puts forth a proposition that pushes back against the gendered “male gaze” that stretches across art history in works such as Pablo Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907) and Édouard Manet’s Olympia (1865). The painting shows male Kenyan sex workers, known to locals as “beach boys” for their combing of East African beaches for affluent, European female tourists.

Across his compositions, Armitage oscillates between real and surreal, celebratory and sinister. He merges memories of Kenya with media depictions of East Africa, a consciousness traversing lines of socio-political unrest. In these works the artist considers how political reportage, African bodies, and the body politic are traded as capital, highlighting the fraught relationship between Africa and the West on a global stage.
Projects 110: Michael Armitage is organized by Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator, with Legacy Russell, Associate Curator, Exhibitions. The exhibition will be on view starting October 21, 2019, through January 20, 2020, at The Museum of Modern Art as part of a multiyear partnership between The Studio Museum in Harlem, MoMA, and MoMA PS1. Building on the institutions’ existing affiliations and shared values, this wide-ranging collaboration encompasses exhibitions and programming at both The Museum of Modern Art and MoMA PS1, and takes place during the construction of the Studio Museum’s new facility.
Projects 110: Michael Armitage
Practice in Print continues The Studio Museum in Harlem’s commitment to emerging artist’s voices through the commissioning of new work for Studio. With each iteration, artists are offered a chance to experiment—to pursue previously unrealized ideas or expand on an existing aspect of their practice. For this issue, D’Angelo Lovell Williams (b. 1992) created a series of photographs that build on his recent explorations of kinship. Through meticulously staged compositions, Williams portrays the queer Black body in a multitude of forms.
His photographs—intimate performances that linger in the mind—offer tableaux vivants of queer subjectivity and provide a lens through which to view complexities of Black male experience that are so often overlooked. Born in Jackson, Mississippi, Williams underwent a Southern and religious upbringing that shaped his approach to image making. He earned his MFA from Syracuse University in 2018. While in Syracuse, the artist began to use himself in a series of self-portraits, positioning his body in vulnerable yet resolute postures. Staring unflinchingly at the camera, often nude and in uncanny repose, the artist stands as a testament to othered bodies and challenges the status quo of desire within the gay community and the invisibility of queer people of color throughout the South and beyond. As Roberta Smith writes in her review of the artist’s 2017 exhibition, Williams’s use of his “Black, male body as shape-shifting subject and material” allows him to become an archetype.1 The artist appears as both an individual and collective Black male subject in these photographs, drawing attention to personal and shared notions of race, gender, sexuality, and desire of Black bodies.

Williams’s recent photographs invite other queer Black men into the frame, as the artist constructs increasingly surrealistic scenes that illicit a variety of associations from the viewer. In Love Train (2018), Williams appears in the center of a row of three men standing on a platform. Draped in black velvet with sequins, they appear ready for an impromptu performance. The man at the left lifts the artist’s chin with his hand, while Williams wraps his fingers around the other man’s throat. The staging and symbolic gestures within the scene suggest a series of references—the physical markers of queer S&M, chattel slavery, or perhaps the staging of a home movie—that speak to the associative power that Williams crafts within his work.

Williams’s new work, which the artist made during his travels through Louisiana and Wisconsin, explores the intimacy of kinship in varying forms. While visiting his father in Louisiana, the artist created Daddy Issues (2019), the first time he has photographed his father. The two are locked in an arm wrestling pose. They are shirtless; we see their tattoos, jewelry, and sweat gleam in the sunlight: symbols of masculinity, femininity, and history rendered in a state of flux.

The work conjures Lyle Ashton Harris’s “The Good Life” (1994), a series of photographs that the artist made in collaboration with his given and chosen family. Three of those works—Brotherhood, Crossroads and Etcetera #1, #2, and #3—depict Harris and his brother in various states of embrace while holding each other at gunpoint. Like Harris, Williams’s work dislocates the gendered and familial perceptions placed on him through the command of his own image. The title, Daddy Issues, adds a double entendre that furthers the ambiguity.

Like Daddy Issues, 3-Way (2019) situates Black bodies in rustic or pastoral landscapes, and continues the artist’s exploration of intergenerational kinship. Physical connections recur throughout, as hands grab or reach for one another in enigmatic exchanges between the artist and his collaborators. Open-ended, the image has a bucolic or brotherly feeling, depicting love among Black men with the same agency as Harris’s photographs. Williams’s images speak to the tension and violence of
paternal relationships within Black and gay communities, and the toxic misconceptions of intergenerational queer relationships, while concurrently dismantling any one perceived understanding.

Williams’ photographs makes visible those moments that should be seen. His work presents Black and queer masculinity as an ever-evolving performance that questions our ways of looking. For Williams, the queer Black body is a site of refusal as well as possibility.

As The Studio Museum in Harlem sees the construction of its new home, this historic moment presents a unique opportunity to consider holistically the permanent collection, and acquire work that fills in gaps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of art history as it relates to artists of African descent. This past fiscal year (July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019) has seen significant growth in the collection, including works by several artists who were not previously represented.
Lezley Saar
I dream the body ..., 2017
The Studio Museum in Harlem;
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee in memory of David Beitzel 2019.11
Tavares Strachan,
Next Time, 2019
The Studio Museum in Harlem;
gift of Ivor Braka Limited 2019.6
Thanks to the incredible generosity of Studio Museum Trustee Ann Tenenbaum and her husband Thomas H. Lee, the Museum acquired *Baby* (1966), by Emma Amos, in partnership with the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Painting and Sculpture Committee. Amos was the youngest and only female member of Spiral, a New York–based black artists’ collective founded in 1963 in response to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In addition to Amos, the collective included Charles Alston, Romare Bearden, Calvin Douglass, Perry Ferguson, Reginald Gammon, Felrath Hines, Alvin Hollingsworth, Norman Lewis, Earl Miller, William Majors, Richard Mayhew, Merton D. Simpson, Hale Woodruff, and James Yeargans. *Baby* is a significant acquisition not only because it is Amos’s first painting to enter the collection, but also because the work was created shortly after the first Spiral-mounted exhibition, *First Group Showing: Works in Black and White*, in 1965. The Studio Museum opened just a few years later, in 1968, with members of Spiral among its earliest supporters.

*Pray for America* (1969), by David Hammons, another incredible addition to the collection, was jointly gifted to the Museum and The Museum of Modern Art by the Hudgins family. This work is from an extended series of “body prints” Hammons made by pressing his skin and clothing, smeared with grease or margarine, against a board or sheet of paper. *Pray for America* was one of the signature works in *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963–1973*, organized by Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, then–Director of the Studio Museum, in 1985. In this work the artist is depicted with his hands joined in prayer, with an American flag draped over his head and shoulders. It was created just a year after the opening of the Studio Museum—and after the

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*Kara Walker*

*Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta from Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*, 2005

The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of an anonymous donor 2018.44.21
Previous Page:
Kwame Brathwaite
Untitled (Garvey Day, Deedee in Car), c. 1965, printed 2018
The Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee, Ruthard C. Murphy II in memory of Anderson dos Santos Gama, and anonymous 2019.10
Image courtesy the artist and Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles.
Copyright Kwame Brathwaite

Cy Gavin
Untitled (Wave), 2018
Acrylic and gesso on denim.
The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of Barbara Gladstone 2018.45
assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, during a time of nationwide protests, riots, and demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

Two other significant gifts have had an incredible impact on the growth of the collection this year. A particular focus for the Museum is ensuring that every artist in residence is represented in the collection. Thanks to the generosity of the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, the Museum acquired a work by 1992–93 artist in residence Michelle Talibah, who had not previously been included in the collection. An incredible donation of twenty-one works by an anonymous collector also added several new artists to the collection, including Artist-in-Residence alumni Leslie Hewitt, Titus Kaphar, Adam Pendleton, and Julie Mehretu, as well as work by Kori Newkirk, Chris Ofili, Yinka Shonibare CBE (RA), and Kara Walker, all of whom have had solo exhibitions at the Studio Museum.

The Museum received an incredible donation of forty-seven photographs from the Joy of Giving Something’s collection, including work by Akintunde Akinleye, Dawoud Bey, Hervé Cortinat, Renee Cox, Bruce Davidson, Roy DeCarava, Karoly Demeter, Jeff Dunas, Wendy Ewald, Carol Guzy, Chester Higgins Jr., Birney Imes, James H. Karales, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, Eugene Richards, Malick Sidibé, Frank Stewart, Doris Ulmann, and Carrie Mae Weems. The Joy of Giving Something, which supports students pursuing studies in photography or media art, has been a longtime supporter of the Museum’s teen photography program, Expanding the Walls.

The following additional gifts and contributions were made this past year. Longtime supporter of the Acquisition Committee, Ellen Stern, donated work by Pascale Marthine Tayou, Wangechi Mutu, Lamar Peterson, and Robert Pruitt. The Museum is grateful to Ruth Geri-Diop for her donation of a bust of her husband, Albert A. Diop, by Inge Hardison. Five remarkable etchings on paper by Henry Ossawa Tanner were donated by Samuel and Sheila Rosenfeld. A portfolio of the “Hiroshima” series by Jacob Lawrence was donated by Regina Hackett, Paul O’Neil, and Elizabeth Miu-Lan Young.

Lynne Darcy gifted three incredible sculptures by Tom Lloyd, including a work from his solo show Electronic Refractions II, which also served as the inaugural exhibition at the Studio Museum. The Museum is grateful to Barbara Gladstone for her donation of a work by Cy Gavin, and to David Lusenhop for his donation of four photographs by Robert A. Sengstacke. Longtime supporters of the Global Council, Arthur Lewis and Hau Nguyen, donated work by Kori Newkirk and Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle.

This past year, the Acquisition Committee—a select group of individuals who meet three times a year and support the Museum’s collection through philanthropic support—exclusively considered artists who were not previously represented in the Museum’s permanent collection. Through their generosity, the Museum acquired work by Aria Dean, Christopher Myers, Elle Pérez, Enrico Riley, Lezley Saar, Kwame Brathwaite, and the 2018–19 artists in residence: Allison Janae Hamilton, Tschabalala Self, and Sable Elyse Smith.

The Museum is grateful to the following Committee members for their support above and beyond their annual dues: Neda Young, for her purchase of an additional work by Elle Pérez, *Binder* (2015–18); Ruthard C. Murphy II, for additional support of the purchase of *Untitled (Garvey Day, Deedee in Car)* (1965) by Kwame Brathwaite; Miyoung Lee, for providing additional funds in support of the purchase of *Therese Raquin* (2011) by Lezley Saar; Martin Eisenberg for underwriting the purchase of *The Will & The Way ... Fragment 1* (2019) by Tony Cokes, and for his promised gifts of *Untitled* (2017) by Frida Orupabo and *Nicole* (2018) by Elle Pérez; and John Friedman for his gift of *Don’t Cut Corners* (2013) by Tony Lewis.

The remarkable growth of the permanent collection over the past two years—beginning with the extraordinary bequest by Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and continuing through the present—has had an outsized influence on the Museum’s ability to carry out its mission of serving as the nexus for artists of African descent locally, nationally, and internationally. The permanent collection is an essential resource for the institution, used not only in exhibitions, but also as a tool by our Education and Public Programs and Community Engagement teams. For this reason, a growing and comprehensive collection is essential for the continued success of the Museum.
In 1968, just two years after the Black Panther Party (BPP) was founded in Oakland, California, the Party’s headquarters mandated that all chapters inaugurate “serve the people” programs. Community service had become a central component of the BPP’s mission and the group committed itself to organizing nearly two dozen social and educational programs to benefit black communities across the nation, from free medical clinics to voter registration drives. In fact, by 1970, a People’s Free Medical Clinic was a requirement at every chapter.¹
The commitment to these programs came from the BPP’s recognition that the legislative strides made in the 1960s, namely the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, did not break down the barriers to equality still faced by black communities. The programs “were instituted as parallel alternatives to the Johnson administration’s antipoverty scheme .... With its programs to serve the people, the Party sought to remedy the practical and ideological deficits of civil rights ‘progress’ as it was embodied in the War on Poverty.” By working directly in and for local communities, the BPP ensured that their programs served those who needed the services they provided.

As part of their commitment to black communities, the BPP began liberation schools led by volunteers after school in storefronts, churches, and homes in 1969. Following these early schools and recognizing the failure of public schools to adequately prepare black youth for the life ahead of them, the BPP formed the Intercommunal Youth Institute (later renamed the Oakland Community School) in January 1971, to begin breaking this “seemingly endless cycle of oppression.”

From 1967 to 1973, photojournalist Stephen Shames had unprecedented access to the BPP, documenting the organization, the Institute, and its individual members. Scholar bell hooks suggests that before racial integration, African Americans struggled to create “a counter-hegemonic world of images that would stand as visual resistance, challenging racist images.” Given the media attention on the BPP’s militant appearance, this counter-archive of images produced by supporters of the BPP, such as Shames, ensured that the true commitments of the organization would be documented and preserved.

In a 1971 photograph, Shames captured twelve Panther children of various ages, wearing black berets and collared shirts and standing erect, with hands by their sides, at the Institute (above). Posters of BPP cofounders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, as well as various graphic work depicting armed black men and mothers with children, created by the BPP’s Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, adorn the walls.

The posters and illustrations serve as visual reminders of the BPP leaders and the goals of the organization, while also functioning as reaffirmations of Panther children’s roles. Like Newton, the children do not...
acknowledge the camera. Instead, they stand at attention, staring straight ahead. Their countenance suggests that the children are being taught to carry on the mission of the BPP. They represent the future—of the organization and of society. However, the children's unsmiling gazes hint at the complex role they inhabit. They are no longer solely children, but militant supporters of the BPP.

By 1972, the earlier rigidity at the Institute had disappeared, perhaps reflecting the growth of the school as it expanded to include neighborhood children. Shames's photographs show this shift, with images of students and teachers in everyday clothing instead of the standard Panther uniform. The focus on education and the mission of the Party are still apparent in these images, but are now supplemented with ideas of fun and play.

In one 1972 photograph, Brenda Bay, then director of the Institute, sits with four children (above). The image reads like a tableau, with two boys seated at desks on the left and Bay seated on a built-in bench with two girls standing close beside her. Although the image appears staged, the bond between teacher and students is apparent. The relaxed positions suggest a familiarity and ease that is not present in the earlier group photograph. Another 1972 photograph shows two female students working together at a table (right). The tightly cropped image emphasizes the engagement and concentration on the girls' faces. In both photographs the children appear to be more at ease, their expressions relaxed instead of stiff.

The prominence of the BPP uniform in the 1971 photograph recalls the emphasis that organizations such as the American Missionary Association placed on behavior, dress, and comportment for African-American students. This late-nineteenth-century idea of molding and shaping students to fit an ideal—a value influenced by evangelical Protestantism at the time—is also seen in the BPP's overall regimented structure, most clearly represented in the uniform and the image it projected to the world. The later images of the Institute, however, suggest the influence of progressive education and experiential learning.

The success of experiential learning models, seen through the efforts of nontraditional schools in the Bay Area, impacted the pedagogical model utilized by the Institute. Administrators built a curriculum that combined traditional subjects with activities that put students in direct contact with the mission of the BPP and the systems of racial and class inequities that led to the civil rights and Black Power struggles. For example, stu-
Students as young as four learned writing skills by penning letters to incarcerated BPP members and other political prisoners. The Institute’s goal was to impart children with all of the skills and knowledge, both academic and social, they would need to overcome societal disparities.

Ericka Huggins, director of the Institute in 1974, later explained, “I think that the school’s principles came from the socialist principles we tried to live in the Black Panther Party. One of them being critical thinking—that children should learn not what to think but how to think ... the school was an expression of the collective wisdom of the people who envisioned it. And it was ... a living thing [that] changed every year.” In providing students with a traditional education and the skills needed to be politically active and aware, the Institute sought to “expose the children to a great deal of information and direct experience with the world so they can receive a more realistic view of the world,” thus fulfilling the school’s mission to “educate to liberate.”

2. Ibid., 55.
9. Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest, 169

**Opposite:**
Black Panther children study with their teacher, Brenda Bay, at the Intercommunal Youth Institute, the Black Panther school, in Oakland in 1972.

Photo: Stephen Shames/Polaris

**Two girls studying at the Intercommunal Youth Institute, the Black Panther school in Oakland in 1972.**

Photo: Stephen Shames/Polaris

**Educate to Liberate**
Building Spaces for Creativity and Healing at Rikers Island

by Jennifer Harley and Chloe Hayward

As the Studio Museum’s Education Department grows, we continue to expand the way our programs consider the role of art in society and the importance of access. In June 2019 Jennifer Harley, School & Educator Programs Coordinator, and Chloe Hayward, Manager, Education Programs, attended *Arts in Corrections: Reframing the Landscape of Justice*, a conference hosted in Santa Clara by the California Lawyers for the Arts and The William James Association.
The conference connected organizers, artists, and cultural organizations working to bring art inside county jails and state prisons. Those in attendance provided a spectrum of experience, as interns, returned citizens, and arts professionals with decades of experience came together. It was an incredible experience to meet such a breadth of professionals serving those impacted by targeted criminalization and mass incarceration. We gained insight into our colleagues’ new programs, challenges, and current research, and witnessed their results through art exhibitions, plays, and classes with master artists.

The most impactful part of the conference was hearing directly from returned citizens about how cultural institutions and organizations can serve those who’ve experienced targeted criminalization. The conference created a beautiful opportunity to build awareness and see first-hand how art can create healing spaces and transform oppressive systems. Shortly after our return we began conversations about how to use everything we learned from the Arts in Corrections Conference for our continued work at Rikers Island.

Just north of the runways at LaGuardia Airport sits New York
City’s principal jail complex, Rikers Island. The four-hundred-acre island houses ten individual jails with eight thousand incarcerated individuals on an average day. Throughout the year, about seventy thousand people will spend time at Rikers. An overwhelming majority, almost eighty-five percent, have not yet been convicted of a crime or sentenced. They are serving time at Rikers awaiting trial, either on bail they can’t afford to pay or after having been remanded to custody.

In response to Rikers’s reported poor conditions, management problems, use of excessive force, solitary confinement, and sexual and physical violence, grassroots organizers, criminal justice reform activists, politicians, and returned citizens formed an independent commission to study reforms, and have held protests demanding the complex be shut down. In 2017 New York City released a report closely aligned to this research that outlined a proposal to close Rikers in 10 years by reducing the jail population by half and moving remaining individuals to newly built borough-based jails. These plans continue to evolve and are still being solidified by the city.

Our partnership at Rikers began in 2016 when former artist in residence Julia Phillips connected the Education Department to Mia Ruyter, Education and Outreach Manager for the Center for Justice in Education at Columbia University’s Heyman Center for the Humanities. This partnership is at the core of the Education Department’s mission to foster inclusive creative spaces and inquiry-driven critical dialogue in support of social justice, centered on works by artists of African descent.

The first two years our partnership focused on the Rose M. Singer Center, where we worked with young women between sixteen and twenty-five, some of the youngest individuals at Rikers.
After conversations with the New York City Department of Corrections, we decided to shift the focus of our work to a facility that has one of the lowest rates of programming at Rikers, the Otis Bantum Correctional Center (OBCC) that houses adult men.

This summer we worked with two housing units at OBCC and fifty men, with a focus on building a creative community space in each unit. We asked participants to identify and visually communicate what they value and celebrate about themselves, and the messages they want to share with the people important to them, and to their wider community, through art. Using artwork from the Museum’s permanent collection, we gathered to discuss work by Titus Kaphar, Barkley L. Hendricks, Romare Bearden, Derrick Adams, Norman Lewis, Sam Gilliam, and Faith Ringgold. After making artwork in response to what they saw the group spent time sharing their creations with one another.

Teaching Artist Nia Iman Smith has worked at the Museum for ten years and has facilitated this partnership since it started. Jennifer Harley spoke with Smith to discuss how she creates supportive and creative spaces, what she envisions for the future, and why teaching at Rikers Island is important to her.

Jennifer Harley: Before we started this year, we all took a moment to sit down as a group to share why we choose to be a part of this partnership. Can you please share your reasons?

Nia Iman Smith: I’ve always had the fundamental belief that the viewing, discussion, and creation of art shouldn’t happen solely within the confines of a museum’s physical space. As public institutions, I think museums have a responsibility to make their collections, program-
ming, and resources available to a variety of audiences who may be unable to visit the space. I believe those audiences are entitled to the same access as those who are. Given that, it was important for me to be a part of a partnership that modeled this. On a personal level, I have family members who have been and currently are incarcerated, so I wanted to honor them by participating in this partnership.

**JH:** Tell me a little about your practice as an educator and how that informs the way you build the supportive and creative spaces you have worked with participants to co-create over the past three years?

**NIS:** I like to like to think of myself as an “everywoman” educator—a large part of my practice is informed by the fact that I come to the museum education field in an “untraditional” way, in that I don’t have an art history background. Even in my eight-plus years of experience as a museum educator, I’m still learning. It’s that dual feeling of “insider/outsider” that allows me to be transparent when I’m engaging with a group: I am as much as a learner as I am as a facilitator. Saying this automatically disarms any pretense that I’m there to act as “expert,” and allows everyone to feel comfortable with sharing their perspectives about the artwork.

**JH:** Can you talk about the artworks you chose to focus on this year?

**NIS:** I selfishly admit I chose artworks that are personal favorites! It was important to me that I shared works that celebrate people, places, and things of cultural importance, such as Bearden’s tribute to the conjure women, or Faith Ringgold’s work honoring Harlem. I wanted the men to view work that specifically addresses issues relevant to them, to show them the ways in which contemporary black artists are creating work that is socially, politically, and culturally relevant to their lives. In doing so, it was my goal to select work that felt relevant and connected to some part of the men’s past, present, and/or future.

**JH:** Can you tell me about the participant’s response to Titus Kaphar’s The Jerome Project?

**NIS:** The Jerome Project deeply resonated with the men—in fact one of the men who participated in the first group immediately shared that he thought the artwork was about men who had been incarcerated, as soon as he saw their mouths covered. He shared this prior to being given any context about The Jerome Project, and hearing that made me see how palpable this body of work was for these men, and how they immediately saw themselves and their situations in the different Jerome portraits.

**JH:** What were your specific goals for this partnership?

**NIS:** My overall goal for the partnership has been to create an environment where the men feel comfortable expressing themselves intellectually and creatively. Throughout the four weeks, it was important to me that the men saw, valued, and heard themselves and each other as individuals with a wide range of perspectives and talents that were to be explored and celebrated.

**JH:** Is there a moment or two that really stood out to you?

**NIS:** When the men shared the quilt pieces they created of places that are important to them in response to Faith Ringgold’s Echoes of Harlem. We had the men “assemble” their individual pieces into a “quilt” on one of the tabletops. It was beautiful to see all their works in conversation with one another, to see the men be engaged with each other’s artwork by asking questions like, “Who made this?” or, “What’s the story behind this square?” and be openly supportive and complimentary of one another. This moment was really powerful to me.
In the Flesh: Body Modification as Art

by SaVonne Anderson

For the past four years I have fantasized about getting a half-sleeve tattoo. I spent hours saving reference photos on my phone and doing endless research on who I would want to sit with for hours to create a permanent piece of art that I’d carry forever. Very early on I decided I wanted the artist to be a woman of color—and that search proved to be quite difficult. Despite New York being one of the most diverse places in the country, with a sizeable tattoo community, there are not many women of color that I could find who work on dark skin. I realized that I wasn’t alone in noticing this absence.
“I created Ink the Diaspora because I felt a need to connect with other people who look like me,” says Tann Parker, who runs the Instagram account @inkthediaspora. “I didn’t see myself represented in the industry and had difficulty connecting with both tattoo collectors of color and tattoo artists who were comfortable tattooing dark skin.”

Luckily, we both were able to find Doreen Garner, sculptor and inscriber of flesh. Garner’s work investigates what it means to inflict pain onto black bodies. I found Garner through her Invisible Man Tattoo project at Recess in 2018. Finally, this year, I got my fifth and favorite tattoo by Garner: a floral masterpiece to remind me of my relationship with this Earth, an ancestral legacy of plant-work, and the power of plants for healing.

Going through this experience created a heightened sense of curiosity for how other black folks have historically engaged with body modification. From my research, common narratives include: indigenous practices of tattoos, piercings, and scarring; enslaved Africans being branded with hot iron (and the contemporary practice of fraternity branding by the same method); gang tattoos; and prison tattoos. From a white Western perspective, these narratives are often wrought with exoticization, negative stereotypes, and shallow understanding.

In response to my findings, this collection of quotes presents contemporary accounts of how black folks are using their bodies as canvases to do several things: advance their own artistic practices, express love, reclaim ownership of themselves, and tell stories—and, most importantly, how they are doing this all with intention.

Artistic Practice

“There is artistry in modifying a body and there is artistry in giving someone the permission to do so. It’s performative and visual all at the same time .... Tattooing has forced me to work on myself as a visual artist, pushed me to keep striving. If I don’t make art, then I won’t have anything to tattoo. They go hand in hand. Tattooing is beautiful because it allows people to have affordable versions of my art forever.”

Quiara Capellan, 22,
Visual Artist
43 small tattoos, 5 piercings
“I am a sculptor and inscriber of flesh. My sculpture work is all about the body and involves a lot of work with the skin, which helped me get into tattoos. This is probably the closest I can get to being a surgeon without going to get a medical degree.”

Doreen Garner, 33,
Sculptor and Inscriber of Flesh
Too many modifications to count

“Poetry for me is as much about how you inhabit the world as it is about what you make. I feel like a poet even when I’m not writing and a lot of my tattoos are about—and I think this is true for a lot of people—being able to remember things. I use them to remember the ways that I want to ask myself to inhabit the world.”

Anaïs Duplan, 27,
Poet and Arts Administrator
11 tattoos, 5 piercings, top surgery

Manifestation of Love

“I have my maternal grandmother tattooed on me. And that’s really meaningful to me because she passed away before I was born. I never knew my grandparents, so to have a portrait of her, and it’s the only portrait I’ve ever seen of her, that means a lot to me.”

Tann Parker, 28,
Tattoo Consultant
More than 50 tattoos, 6 piercings

“My mother passed when I was thirteen, and five years later I got her name as my first tattoo. It was an important part of my journey through grief. Even though she isn’t here physically, it made me feel good to have her name on me forever.”

SaVonne Anderson,
Designer
5 tattoos, 1 piercing
“I tattooed the lowercase ‘i’ on my hand. It is a reminder that no matter how I may feel or how bad I want to not be around, I have a purpose for myself, my family, the worlds I live in. I see that tattoo every single day. While I feed myself, wash and groom myself, when I’m happy and even when I’m not.”

Quiara Capellan

Reclamation of Self

“It’s my canvas and I feel like it helps me claim ownership of my body. Body modification, I feel, has opened a lot of expression for myself.”

Tann Parker

“Body modification allows us to express our true selves. It allots us the agency over how we present ourselves to the world. For some people, wearing bold clothing and bright colors helps them make a statement. For others, its modification of the human form. It’s quite beautiful, actually. It’s the only kind of pain and scarring we have control over.”

Quiara Capellan

“My parts aren’t unique. People have different abilities and body shapes and sizes, but we are all constituted fairly similarly. So there’s a way that body modifications are just small changes that you make to what is overwhelmingly the same. For me that feels like an investment in being alive in a way. It’s like the difference between like moving into an apartment and never unpacking versus nesting.”

Anaïs Duplan

“Being a trans masculine person, I think often about my transition. I am now in the phase of my body that I was thinking about getting into and it’s so bizarre and euphoric and crazy. It is something that I’ll be dealing with and thinking about for my whole life.”

Anaïs Duplan

“They help me operate in a world guided by white supremacy. I have a ‘Black Excellence’ script across my chest so white people know what I’m about and how to approach me. I think tattoos can be really useful in that way, as public declarations. Your body is something that you can use as a platform to extend your messages beyond verbal communication.”

Doreen Garner
Storytelling

“I was born in Haiti but left when I was three to live in the United States. There’s these spirits, who are called loa. They symbolize various things: a loa for death and a loa for communication. They function as part of the voodoo system, which culturally, especially like among Haitians who live in the United States, seems very stigmatized. The media, especially white media, has made such a mockery of voodoo as a tradition. I worked with the tattoo artist who helped me come up with this piece. We came up with lots of different configurations of the loas and this was really like a reclaiming of a tradition. The symbolic significance is there, but it’s also about taking a spiritual system from my cultural background and trying to come to a synthesis that I can carry around that makes sense for me.”

Anaïs Duplan

Intention

“Tattoos are forever, yes, you can cover them up or get them removed, but our bodies store trauma. Every single tattoo matters. It will live with you forever.”

Quiara Capellan

“For me, a lot of the intention comes from the client side. People actually have been reaching out to me with very specific intentions of getting tattooed by a black woman.”

Doreen Garner

“This is the body that I intend to be in for as long as I live. And I don’t know how long that will be, but hopefully it’s a long time. So I want to keep literal space for lessons that I will learn a long time from now, and be able to represent those like alongside the messages and ideas that are important to me now.”

Anaïs Duplan
Preserving Black History with BLK MKT Vintage

by Maleke Glee and Jennifer Harley
BLK MKT Vintage founders Kiyanna Stewart and Jannah Handy preserve black history through their collection of ephemera, photographs, accessories, and other materials that represent the African diaspora. This fall they will accomplish an impressive feat when they open their first brick-and-mortar store in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

The Brooklyn natives both have a childhood relationship with antiques and thrift shopping. Kiyanna reintroduced Jannah to what was then a hobby after they met in their college years. Throughout their journeys in antique, thrift, and consignment shops, the couple found a dearth of items that reflect their experiences. BLK MKT Vintage was created to fill that void, and to make history more accessible. In many ways, this digital and retail experience removes the barriers to holding and understanding one’s history, barriers often associated with institutions that are gatekeepers of similar materials.

As educators Kiyanna and Jannah are committed to building a space where people can spend time exploring and learning from their archive and through programing that activates the personal histories and intimate conversations that are at the core of their work.

The couple views their work as expanding narratives preserved and presented in the canon. “We aren’t in the business of deciding who represents history,” Kiyanna says. Aware that the recollection of black history is often paired with the politics of respectability, BLK MKT Vintage reflects all walks of life.

For BLK MKT Vintage, it is not just about celebrating the glorious moments of our history, often encapsulated under the idea of “Black Joy.” Their collection reflects the complexities of the black experience, which can include moments of grief, pain, and resilience. In its contribution to Radical Reading Room, BLK MKT Vintage has shared magazines with iconic images, articles, and covers that illuminate many facets of black life in America. For Radical Reading Room, The Studio Museum in Harlem has invited more than forty artists, writers, publishers, and community organizations to share works— their own or those they admire—that engage with the history of black printed matter and the discourse surrounding its circulation.

On their experience participating in the exhibition, the couple says, collectively, “We’re honored to be participating in what we see as a transformative reimagining of a community archive. It’s moving to see so many works pulled together in celebration of the Studio Museum’s anniversary, together representing a full picture of black cultural production. We’re in the business of preserving vintage/antique materials, so it was fitting that we contribute 1940s–1960s library-bound editions of some of our most coveted black publications. Tan, Sepia, Ebony, and Black World. As millennial-adjacent New Yorkers, we spent so much of our formative years learning about Harlem’s contributions to the culture. As a business, we can now say that we’ve partnered with the Schomburg Center and the Studio Museum to find new ways to build community, give access, and exercise partnership and collaboration. This work is more about community than it is about physical things.”

Harlem holds a special place in African-American history, shaping artistic, intellectual, and political movements. Kiyanna and Jannah realize that for many African Americans, particularly those whose lineage is informed by the Great Migration, heirlooms are scarce. Many possessions did not make this great trek north, so many ancestral histories exist only through oral transmission. This retail experience shares histories that may not be readily accessible but are intimately relatable. The brick-and-mortar store expands the work accomplished by their online and social presence, and will roll out programming and provide a contemplative space for scholars and creators. They hope that the venue will give birth to fruitful conversations and be a resource for black creatives.

Opposite: Jannah Handy (left) and Kiyanna Stewart (right) founders of BLK MKT Vintage
Photo: Monique Muse Dodd
Courtesy BLK MKT Vintage
Reflections on Radical Reading Room
by Cy Statham

A trip to Radical Reading Room opened up a wealth of inspiration as I digested the printed matter from artists, writers, publishers, and organizers on display at Studio Museum 127.

My hands gravitated towards zines, small-circulation self-published materials. They are familiar to me as a form. I have made zines full of personal art and writings and have curated zines on behalf of artist collectives, but for the first time I was surrounded by zines made by people of color, alongside some of my all-time favorite radical works. The juxtaposition of radical methods of publication and radical works creates an environment of collectivity where I felt like I, too, could contribute to black radical thought and discourse. We are all in conversation, even if we are not as well known as Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, or bell hooks.

As an artist who also creates zines, I wanted to create something that merges those interests while paying homage to black radical thinkers who have inspired me and others. I decided to create a collage for Assata Shakur, a thinker that has been influential in my life and artistic practice. What makes collage art special is the ability to use found material and the inspiration around us to create new futures and possibilities. This is also the power I see in Radical Reading Room.
Mirror/ Echo/ Tilt: The Art of Pedagogy

by Ilk Yasha
Mirror/Echo/Tilt (2019), an exhibition by Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, and 2018–19 artist in residence Sable Elyse Smith, is the culmination of over four years of work examining the impacts of the carceral state. Performed and filmed in decommissioned prisons and abandoned courthouses across New York City, the project gives insights into the layered memories and traumas felt by those affected by the criminal justice system.

Through video and photography, Mirror/Echo/Tilt presents vignettes of movement exercises and workshops enacted across architectural spaces that were sites of entry (or purgatory) for people branded with the label of criminal. Beckoning the viewer into a traditionally concealed world, one filled with preconceived notions about race, gender, and class, the project explores the pain and complexity of the subjects’ lives through choreographies without words or voices. The work relies on physical gestures to narrate personal experiences and emotions—gestures that, in conversation with the sites, bring new insights to moments that will remain entrenched in the lives and stories of the subjects and the state. Through this process of stripping stories of their words, the exhibition encourages the audience to slow down as it processes the looks, gestures, and movements that hum across the multichannel films.

Though their practices span themes such as media, culture, and technology (Crean); masculinity and identity (Leonardo); and the seen and unseen effects of violence (Smith), all the artists are also educators dedicated to teaching through art. Working in partnership with court-involved youth across New York City, the project attempts to center the lived experiences and memories of those affected by the justice system. In a public program at the New Museum, Crean, Leonardo, and Smith expressed the importance and priority of being building relationships and being in conversation with participants before creating a curriculum or video project for the public. “The priority was existing in space, together, first. There is a way in which, through both an art lens and pedagogical lens, we understood that you couldn’t just enact a process without learning and being together,” Leonardo explained.

This care for the participants’ stories and experiences was distilled not only into the exhibition, but also into the online curriculum that can be a resource for a community of educators, activists, and advocates who want to change the systemic cycle of criminality and incarceration. As Smith explains, the project’s aim is to work with people involved in the court systems to envision a curriculum that could “create and facilitate an impact—to create a curriculum for somebody it has to be with somebody.”
All photos: Mirror/Echo/Tilt production still
Courtesy the artists
of the project allow for critical thinking around the experiences and methodologies of incarceration. To empower the participants, the project required storytelling, improvisation, listening, vulnerability, community building, and intimacy—all of which are fundamental tenets for creating a responsible educational environment.

Like the exhibition, the curriculum is arguably a critique of the privilege of storytelling, and asks us to think about the stories and lives that merit an equal footing in public discourse and contemporary art. Mirror/Echo/Tilt reimagines how the arts can unearth concealed stories that force us to tilt our perspectives on the carceral state’s ability to target and capitalize on the lives of the most oppressed. As Crean said, the project uses “imagination as a political force” to help imagine what a restorative, and not punitive, justice system would look like. This could not be done without centering education and acknowledging its importance as a catalyst for human progress.

This portion of Mirror/Echo/Tilt was conducted inside the old Bronx Borough Courthouse, built between 1905 and 1914, and then boarded up and finally abandoned in 1978. While the Courthouse housed the Bronx’s Supreme, Surrogate, and County Court systems for several decades, its last occupant was the New York City Criminal Court, in the 1960s and 1970s.
Perspectives on Teen Leadership
by Seloni Daryanani

My experience in The Studio Museum in Harlem’s Teen Leadership Council gave me the opportunity to fully understand the importance of youth programming and safe spaces for teens.

Though I love my school and family, it was nice to escape my parents’ expectations, the looming cloud of college applications, and just the stress of managing friends, schoolwork, and extracurricular activities—even if the escape was only for a couple of hours.

At the Council, I was able not only to take a break from the chaos of my life and talk to other teens about my problems or de-stress while creating art, but also to gain a newfound independence while planning public programs for other teens.

School and home should be safe spaces, but that isn’t always the case. Through the Council I was able to find a positive and creative space where I did not feel as if I had to act a certain way. I felt free and unburdened by my own expectations and those of others. As the world can feel like it is growing more divisive, hanging out with a group of my peers allowed me to regain faith in the idea of strength through community. I knew that each event we planned could never have happened without everyone’s support.

The Teen Leadership Council taught me so many lessons, from not taking myself too seriously, to confidently speaking in public, to learning how to lean on others. These lessons have helped me grow as a person and impacted how I interact with the world. I am so thankful not only for my time with the Council, but also for youth programming in general, because each program has made me feel like a part of a community and allowed me to explore my passion for art.
Dozie Kanu: Function

Opening
November 15, 2019
Studio Museum 127
429 W. 127th St.

Dozie Kanu
Chair [sif], 2018
Courtesy the artist
Member Spotlight: Marla Rose
by Paloma Hutton

Photo: SaVonne Anderson
In January 2018, The Studio Museum in Harlem closed its doors to the public in preparation for construction of its new building. While the Museum is closed, the membership program is fully operational, with special *inHarlem* benefits at each level. In this issue’s spotlight, we are asking Marla Rose, restaurant owner and longtime Harlem resident, what inspired her to join the Museum as a member—after the building closed.

**How long have you lived in Harlem?**
I have been living in Harlem for thirteen years.

**What inspired you to get involved in the Studio Museum?**
I love the arts and feel it is important to support museums and artists. It’s exciting for me to be in a space where I can observe works by artists of color displayed and celebrated.

**What drew you to become a member after the building closed?**
Joining the Studio Museum has brought me great pride and joy. I joined to support the Museum in whatever way I can. I am aware that the Museum is undergoing a building project and thought joining was a way for me to contribute, if only on a small scale. I feel the Museum is a creative, diverse, and welcoming place. The Harlem community and vibe speak to my soul. I purchased my first home right here in central Harlem and opened my first restaurant. My strong love of the history, culture, and energy of Studio Museum drew me to become a member. I view my membership as a way to be a part of the community’s past, present, and future. I eagerly anticipate the reopening and look forward to the opportunity to visit again.

**What is your favorite part of being a member?**
My favorite part is having access to great art in my backyard. I also thoroughly enjoy *Studio* magazine. The images and articles are great and very informative.

**When was your first visit to the Museum?**
I moved from Pittsburgh to New York in fall 1986 and joined the NYPD in 1987. Being a member of the police department helped me get a rapid and broad knowledge of the city, which enabled me to explore various neighborhoods and eventually discover the Studio Museum. My first visit had to be in the late 1980s or early 1990s. I have been visiting ever since. I think it is fantastic that we have a museum of this caliber in our community.

**What has been your favorite *inHarlem* program?**
I visited *Radical Reading Room* at Studio Museum 127 this summer. My busy schedule prevents me from visiting the Museum more frequently, since I am both chef and co-owner of Peque Vinos & Tapas on West 145th Street.

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*Radical Reading Room*
(installation view)
On view at Studio Museum 127,
May 3–October 27, 2019
Presented by The Studio Museum in Harlem
Photo: Adam Reich

Member Spotlight: Marla Rose
Remembering the Life and Radical Spirit of Camille Billops (1933—2019)

by Amarie Gipson
With work spanning sculpture, illustration, printmaking, and, most notably, film, Camille Billops is internationally recognized for her multimedia art practice. Billops was born in 1933 in Los Angeles, where her parents migrated to escape the cruelties of the Jim Crow South.

Her mother, Alma Gilmore, from South Carolina, and her father, Luscious Billops, from Texas, raised her with the strong, traditional Southern belief of black female servitude. It was a tradition she would grow to rebel against in her later years.

Billops studied sculpture, drawing, and ceramics at the University of Southern California. She moved to New York City in 1965 to develop her career as an artist. She was a member of Women Artists in Revolution, a collective founded in 1969 that also included Faith Ringgold, Elizabeth Catlett, and many other important artists. She and her husband James V. Hatch founded the Hatch-Billops Collection, which holds an incredibly rich archive of black contemporary artistic production from the 1960s through the 1980s. Billos and Hatch shared a loft in SoHo, and used their home to sell their artwork, host artists, and steward the careers of young, black artists in their community.

Billops is revered for her radical and imaginative spirit. She understood art making to be key to her survival and her sole means of expression. Her illustrations are featured in The Harlem Book of the Dead (1978), a publication created in collaboration with James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Toni Morrison. In the late 1980s, she began producing documentary films and in 1992, she became the first black woman producer and director to win the Grand Jury Prize for documentary at the Sundance Film Festival for Finding Christa (1991). Billops has been featured in several group exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem, including Handcrafted (1972), Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade: 1963–1973 (1985), and The Blues Aesthetic, Black Culture and Modernism (1990). Most recently, two of her prints were featured in the groundbreaking exhibition We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–1985 (2018) at the Brooklyn Museum. A recent acquisition in our collection, Billops’s Who’s Dat Nigga Dar a Peepin’ (Minstrel Series) (1997) depicts white entertainers in blackface surrounding a mirror that floats above racist song lyrics from 1844. Through sarcastic and mimicking, the sculpture invites the viewer to speculate on America’s history of racial stereotyping and discrimination.

Billops passed away this year at 85 and is survived by her husband, who still lives in their New York City home.

Opposite:
Camille Billops
Who’s Dat Nigga Dar a Peepin’ (Minstrel Series), 1997 The Studio Museum in Harlem; bequest of Peggy Cooper Cafritz (1947–2018), Washington, D.C., collector, educator, and activist 2018.40.40
2019 Spring Luncheon

Zachery Cafritz, and Nora Cafritz*
On a foggy day in New York City, spirits were high as Studio Museum Spring Luncheon attendees celebrated the life and legacy of Peggy Cooper Cafritz, civil rights activist, educator, avid art collector, and one of America’s best-known patrons of the arts. Upon her passing, her bequests to the Museum and the Duke Ellington School of Arts included more than six hundred and fifty works of art—the largest gift of artwork by artists of African descent ever made. In addition to art, Peggy cultivated people. She surrounded herself with a diverse circle of politicians, artists, celebrities, and educators. Artist Simone Leigh shared moving words about Peggy and the impact she had on her own career. The Museum extends its sincerest gratitude to Peggy’s family for the opportunity to commemorate a true visionary. Peggy’s impact as an avid collector and change-maker was, and still is, immeasurable.
After Simone’s moving speech, Expanding the Walls participant Ashley Teague gave a galvanizing speech on the impact of the Museum’s digital photography residency in her life. Moving the audience of more than three hundred to tears, Teague said, “Through Expanding the Walls, I feel as though I have finally found my purpose, and that is to become a photographer, to share my message with others, which is to love yourself, understand your worth .... I feel as though I am becoming that girl I stare at in the mirror and always wish for—more confident, strong-minded, and willing to stand up for what is right.”

Thanks to the generosity and support of the Museum’s incredible patrons, artists, and friends, Spring Luncheon 2019 raised over $400,000.
Studio Museum Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden
Tonya Lewis Lee and Spencer Means
Andre D. Wagner and Kambui Olujimi
Noida Lewis and Christina Lewis*
Ashley Teague and Ginny Huo
Dr. Denise Murrell
Cooper Robertson is serving as executive architect in collaboration with Adjaye Associates in the design of the new home for The Studio Museum in Harlem. Cooper Robertson approaches design through a deep exploration of a project site and its inherent possibilities. No matter the project type, this examination becomes the base from which a resonant and sustainable design can emerge—one that will endure over time.

For this issue’s Building Dispatch, we speak to Cooper Robertson’s Director of Architecture, Erin Flynn. She discusses her early inspirations, longtime relationship with the Museum, and goals for the new building.

Can you tell me about your role at Cooper Robertson and how you got there?

I’m the Director of Architecture at Cooper Robertson, where I serve as a resource and mentor for our designers, and where I’m responsible for managing our work on the Studio Museum project. We’re an architecture and urban design firm based in Lower Manhattan, and we have a long-standing practice in planning and designing museums and cultural facilities. At the Studio Museum, we’re working as the executive architects, which means we collaborate very closely with David Adjaye and his team at Adjaye Associates, and coordinate with the other project team members to facilitate the design vision.

Growing up on the West Coast, I knew two architects who were women, which inspired me to go to architecture school. School was thrilling for me. I loved the creative design process that benefited from rigorous critical thinking. I came to New York City a year out of architecture school, in 1998, and lived in the city until 2010, when my husband and I moved to Beacon. In professional practice,
I focus exclusively on museums; fairly early in my career, I worked on Yoshio Taniguchi’s renovation of MoMA, and that’s when I realized how much I love museum projects, and that institutional work is what I really want to do. I joined Cooper Robertson specifically to work on the new Whitney Museum of American Art. I learned so much on the Whitney, and I’ve been lucky to be able to expand on those lessons with other museum projects, including this one.

**What are some significant challenges you face in your field?**

A lack of diversity is one of the most significant challenges facing the architecture field. It’s something we need to address in very fundamental ways. In our office, we’re thinking about how we can reach out to people who might not see themselves in the profession. One of our goals is expanding outreach to colleges and universities, and to public high schools throughout New York. I know from experience that diverse teams are more successful; bringing multiple points of view together makes for better built environments that serve everyone.

**What excites you about the Studio Museum project?**

I truly love this project. From Thelma Golden’s vision for the institution, to the Adjaye team’s interpretation of the building’s main design features, it’s been a really enjoyable process. What excites me the most is how welcoming the Museum will be to the community. The ground floor and lower level will be free to all visitors, letting anyone experience two of the main connective elements in the Museum—the lecture hall and the vertical gallery. The lecture hall is conceived as a reverse stoop, a place to gather, hang out, and take a respite from the street. The glass doors can open directly to the sidewalk on special occasions. It is such a beautiful idea of creating a living room in Harlem. The vertical gallery will have a commissioned art piece that will be made from material from the existing building—memorializing the history of the Museum in the heart of the new building.

**What do you hope to accomplish with the project?**

My goal with museum and cultural work is always to honor the institution, its mission, and its future. If the building is still serving that mission twenty, thirty years from now—that’s a successful project. I’m looking forward to seeing the community embrace the new Studio Museum building, to watching people enjoy the space, and to feeling that we’ve helped introduce the Museum and its mission to people who might not have known about it otherwise. I hope this project helps the Studio Museum broaden its reach to a wider audience, while enabling it to be an even better member of the Harlem community.

**Outside this project, what is your relationship to the Studio Museum?**

This project brought the Studio Museum into my family’s life. We’ve often visited together. Both of my kids really engaged with the artwork, and the Museum has opened up my own knowledge of artists of African descent. For the last several years, I’ve had the pleasure of discussing the project with our friend Isaac Diggs, who has a long history with the Museum and Harlem. It was exciting to see his photographs in the last issue of *Studio* magazine. I’m thrilled that he has the opportunity to document the construction process through his photography.

**How does this project compare to your past projects?**

This one is more intimate. Most of the other museums I’ve worked with are either larger or not as closely tied to their surrounding communities—in terms of collections or programs—or they’re academic, which is a different kind of community. The Studio Museum feels unique in the way it engages the public, and I think the design really embodies that mission. The project team has been lucky to work with such a strong institutional vision, because it opens the door for creative concepts such as the reverse stoop and open lecture hall.

**What do you most enjoy about your work?**

I always think of my work as a puzzle: You start the design process with a sense of where it’s going, but you need to adapt and fit in all these different pieces, and work and refine until everything comes together. Managing that process at so many different scales—from talking with the client and understating their goals, to figuring out really specific and technical challenges, to coordinating with big project teams—is a complex but very rewarding kind of work. And at the end, you’ve built something real. That’s what I enjoy most.
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The Board of Trustees and Director of The Studio Museum in Harlem extend deep gratitude to the donors who supported the Museum between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019. We look forward to providing a list of our fiscal year 2020 donors in the Spring/Summer 2020 edition of Studio.
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Photo: Scott Rudd Events