The preparation for the summer season—deep in process as I write this—is among my favorite times at the Studio Museum. Not only are the parks and streets of Harlem coming alive with the beginnings of summer, but our staff is busy preparing for two of our beloved signature projects.

I’m eagerly anticipating our latest Artist-in-Residence exhibition, Things in Themselves, organized by Assistant Curator Lauren Haynes. Each summer we present the work of the three talented artists who have spent a year working in the Studio Museum’s third-floor studios. A touchstone of the Museum’s programming since our founding in 1968, the Artist-in-Residence program boasts more than a hundred alumni, including some of the most prominent contemporary artists working today. I am honored to welcome Steffani Jemison, Jennifer Packer and Cullen Washington Jr. to this illustrious group!

Expanding the Walls: Making Connections between Photography, History and Community offers another sort of residency experience. The program gives high school–age students a comprehensive course in digital photography and unparalleled access to the James VanDerZee archive. Make sure to check out their work alongside VanDerZee’s in Expanding the Walls 2013: No Filter.

Summer also brings the first solo museum exhibition in New York for a Houston-based artist you will remember from appearances in The Bearden Project (2011–12), Frequency (2005–06) and the pages of this magazine! Robert Pruitt: Women, organized by Assistant Curator Naima J. Keith, features a selection of the artist’s evocative, large-format portraits of women.

While the summer season offers the best of the Museum’s fantastic homegrown projects, this fall is all about collaboration. We’re thrilled to once again work with Valerie Cassel Oliver, Senior Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and a groundbreaking scholar of black conceptual art. Together with New York University’s Grey Art Gallery, the Studio Museum will present Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art, originally organized by Oliver in Houston in 2012, and brought to New York through the dedication of Assistant Curator Thomas J. Lax and Grey Director Lynn Gumpert. Radicalpresenceny.com launches in September and will feature exhibition resources and a robust calendar of events and performances.

Naima J. Keith has spent the last year collaborating with London-based independent curator Zoe Whitley to organize The Shadows Took Shape, an exhibition and book that will debut this fall. Shadows is an interdisciplinary look at contemporary art through the lens of Afrofuturist aesthetics, and will feature many Studio Museum alumni alongside several international artists exhibiting here for the first time.

Every season, year after year, our most important collaborators are YOU: our visitors, supporters and friends. Tell us what you think and share your stories and pictures with us. Find us on Twitter and Facebook, and check out our ever-expanding presence on Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube and more!

See you around, online, and—of course—uptown!

Thelma Golden
Director and Chief Curator
Museum

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Museum
What’s Up

Exhibition Schedule
Summer/Fall 2013

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

July 18–October 27, 2013
Robert Pruitt: Women
VideoStudio: Long Takes
Expanding the Walls 2013: No Filter
Body Language

November 13, 2013–March 9, 2014
The Shadows Took Shape
Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art

Always on View
Harlem Postcards
Glenn Ligon: Give Us a Poem
Adam Pendleton: Collected (Flamingo George)
When the The Studio Museum in Harlem was founded in 1968, it was originally conceived of as a non-collecting museum. As the Museum and its group of supporters grew, this policy shifted and the Museum began to accept gifts from generous artists and donors. Currently, the Museum's collection, which numbers close to 2,000 objects, continues to thrive with the addition of donations of artworks by artists and collectors. In addition to these gifts, since 2001, the Studio Museum’s collection has grown through purchases thanks to the assistance and guidance of the Museum’s Acquisition Committee. Helmed by Studio Museum Board Member Nancy L. Lane, the Acquisition Committee meets three times a year to review and select works presented by the Studio Museum’s Curatorial Department, including this recent acquisition, Untitled (05–2010) (2010) by abstract painter Stanley Whitney. This is the first work of Whitney’s in the Museum’s collection, and it continues the Museum’s commitment to supporting artists of African descent at all stages of their careers. Without the knowledge and foresight of the Acquisition Committee, the Studio Museum’s collection would not blossom as it does. As the Museum’s collection grows, so does the membership of the Committee for their support of and dedication to the Museum, our mission and artists of African descent.
Stanley Whitney
*Untitled (05–2010), 2010*
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee 12.16.1
What’s New

by Jamillah James,  
Communications Coordinator  
and 2012 Curatorial Fellow

Recent Acquisition

Beauford Delaney

One of The Studio Museum in Harlem’s spring 2013 exhibitions, Brothers and Sisters, showcased a selection of later works by painter Beauford Delaney (1901–1979), including a recent Museum acquisition, Lithographie Afrique (1963). The cross-generational exhibition examined the relationships between Delaney’s works made between 1958 and 1969, and works in the Studio Museum’s permanent collection. Emphasizing the continuation of painterly abstraction, the exhibition was organized into small groupings, or “families” that share formal and stylistic characteristics, to map the expanded conversations around abstraction by black artists in the twentieth century. Delaney and his counterparts exemplify a rigorous dedication to process, repetition and gesture as a means of transcendence or reflection. This commitment, and the use abstraction as a radical gesture for African-American artists in particular, have been documented in earlier exhibitions at the Studio Museum, such as Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980 (2006).

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, Beauford Delaney moved to New York in 1929. Dividing his time between Greenwich Village and Harlem, Delaney surrounded himself with a diverse group of artists and writers, and began to achieve wide recognition for his portraits. In 1953 he moved to Paris, where he remained until his death in 1979. Author James Baldwin (1924–1987), a long-time friend, wrote in the introduction to Delaney’s 1978 retrospective at the Studio Museum that the artist’s work underwent “a most striking metamorphosis” in Paris. Indeed, during this time Delaney began to move away from figurative representation and toward an investigation of geometry and color.

Lithographie Afrique presents an interesting change of pace for Delaney. As the title suggests, the work is a lithograph, which is an unusual choice for Delaney. Lithography is a printmaking process that involves etching an image onto a metal or limestone plate, then applying paint and pressing it onto paper. As a gestural painter, Delaney’s hand is essential to understanding how his images are created. A printing method such as lithography changes the way in which an image is manufactured, dislocating the element of intimacy between artist, material, image and surface. However, the swirling pink and blue forms in Lithographie Afrique translate the movement often found in Delaney’s paintings beautifully. The Studio Museum is thrilled to add this exciting work to its permanent collection.

The Studio Museum in Harlem would like to thank Joan Willentz for her generous donation of Lithographie Afrique. The Studio Museum’s permanent collection is broadened and enriched through the extraordinary generosity of many collectors, artists and Museum supporters. We are deeply grateful to them all.

The Studio Museum in Harlem’s permanent collection is supported with public funds from the following government agencies and elected representatives: The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; Council Member Inez E. Dickens, 9th Council District; and Speaker Christine Quinn and the New York City Council.

Brothers and Sisters was organized by Jamillah James, 2012 Curatorial Fellow, as part of the Museum’s year-long curatorial fellowship program dedicated to fostering emerging curators of diverse backgrounds.
Beauford Delaney
Lithographie Afrique, 1964
Gift of Ted and Joan Wilentz 12.35.3
Photo: Marc Bernier
Alex Da Corte  
Born 1980, Camden, NJ  
Lives and works in Philadelphia, PA  

Crossover Cameo, 2013  

Historically, the cameo refers to works in which a carved relief portrait was made in a contrasting color to the background, achieved by carefully carving a piece of material with a flat plane where two contrasting colors meet. This removes all of the first color, except for the image, leaving a contrasting background. Typically, the portraits were immediately recognizable icons.

A “crossover cameo” refers to an icon that has crossed over into public domain and does not require copyright or royalty payment, similar to how a stock photo operates.

This work examines what it means to embody anonymity over the iconic in culture—become a crossover cameo, wear a costume, perhaps a long white tee and a du-rag, to blend in with the stuff around us—and what happens when one reaches out into the world to push against that notion, to stand tall and make waves.

Letha Wilson  
Born 1976, Honolulu, HI  
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY  

Double Rock Harlem (Point of Rocks & Coyote Buttes), 2013  

In my studio practice I take the photograph as a starting point for works that physically change, disrupt or activate the image plane—I fold and cut the images, layer images together, even introduce materials such as concrete and paint. Often I photograph the natural landscape of the Western United States, and although I have lived in New York City for 15 years, I have never taken photographs here. The Harlem Postcards project offered me an opportunity to turn my lens towards the urban environment, specifically in Harlem.

I came across St. Nicholas Park, between 127th and 141st Streets, and was struck by this impressive rock outcropping paired with the stone wall in the foreground. St. Nicholas Park is one of Harlem’s several “ribbon parks,” which was built on a rugged mass of rock, following the steep and irregular topography of Northern Manhattan. Afterwards I learned the site of this photograph is very near the “Point of Rocks” where General George Washington had positioned himself during the Battle of Harlem Heights in 1776.

Once I had printed this photograph of the rock outcropping in the darkroom, I brought it back to my studio and placed the second photograph on top of it. I took the second photograph while on a day hike in the Coyote Buttes North area of the Paria Canyon-Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness, in southwestern Utah.
**Ugo Rondinone**  
Born 1964, Brunnen, Switzerland  
Lives and works in New York, NY

*Wish You Were Here, 2013*

The sun is the star at the center of the solar system and is Earth’s primary source of energy.  

Harlem is the new star at the center of my life and my primary source of energy.  

This sun can be found on the wall by the front door of the Children’s Zone Promise Academy on 125th Street and Madison.

**Jumoke Sanwo**  
Born 1977, Lagos, Nigeria  
Lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria

*Buttons, 2012*

My first impression of Harlem was similar to looking at a delicately woven patchwork of history, culture and art. I was fascinated by the vibe emanating from all corners. I focused on the signs, which represented to me time spent in Harlem.  

I documented posters, handwritten messages and advertisements, which revealed an underlying, coded transmission between the writer and the rest of the community. I was drawn to the buttons in this image because they reflected the sociopolitical topics in Harlem that were resonating in general across America. I am fascinated with the figures represented through imagery (Malcolm X) and text (Trayvon Martin); symbols of the struggles of African-American men in twentieth and twenty-first century America portrayed on a fashion statement piece.

*The Harlem Postcards Tenth Anniversary Collector’s Set is now available at the Museum Store! studiomuseum.org/shop*
Catching Up with the Artists in Residence

Organized by Jamillah James, Communications Coordinator

The Studio Museum’s 2012–13 artists in residence, Steffani Jemison, Jennifer Packer and Cullen Washington Jr., took time from their busy schedules and preparation for their summer 2013 exhibition, Things in Themselves, to have an informal conversation with Communications Coordinator Jamillah James. They spoke about their year on 125th Street in Harlem, what’s influencing them and their respective artistic practices.

Jamillah James: Before you became artists in residence here at the Studio Museum, what had your relationship to the Museum been?

Cullen Washington Jr.: I’ve been an admirer of the Studio Museum for some time. I first became aware of it in 2005 as a graduate student at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. From the first visit, I was engaged with the exhibited work and believed it to be some of the best I had ever seen. The creativity, concept and intelligence behind the work moved me. Immediately, I knew I wanted to be a part of this institution.

Steffani Jemison: I had been familiar with the Studio Museum for many years. I came to the Museum often as an undergraduate. In 2011, I was invited to join the Museum for a micro-residency. At the time, I was in the second year of an artist-in-residence program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. I was invited by [former Associate Curator] Naomi Beckwith to be at the Museum for a week. That was a really lovely introduction to the curatorial staff here. Then, last year, I was included in The Bearden Project.

Jennifer Packer: The first time I came here was for the Lynette Yiadom-Boakye show, Any Number of Preoccupations in 2011.

JJ: Which other residencies have you participated in, if any? What have the differences been? Were there challenges with working here?

CW: I don’t know if there have been any challenges but there are differences in this program compared with others I have participated in. I think what stands out in any program is the kind of support that is given. For me, the Studio Museum provides a gateway to the art world, substantial financial allowance and the freedom to make the best work I can possibly make. It’s really a holistic approach to support the artist. Even though the residency is for a year, the benefits last well beyond.

SJ: I’ve been fortunate to benefit from a few residencies in New York and elsewhere. This residency at the Studio Museum offers, by far, the most financial support. I like that the Museum respects the different ways we work, whereas some residencies play a more hands-on role in providing feedback or support. All of the current artists in residence were included in Fore, so as we were working here in the studio, our work was also on view in a museum in New York. This created an additional set of opportunities. It really shaped my experience of the residency and encouraged an interaction with the curatorial staff that we might not have had otherwise.

JP: I love the feeling of independence, that it’s hands-off, if I want it that way. In looking at other residencies, I feel like this is a really extraordinary experience—the financial support and studio are great and I feel really thankful for it.
Catching Up with the Artists in Residence

**JJ:** What are you currently reading? How do these readings relate to your work, if at all?

**JP:** I was reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, until I felt it became problematic. And I’m reading Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*. Barthes talks about photography, and how its relationship to painting is so strong, particularly the way in which painting has tried to take the place of photography in its attitude and presentation of information. The book feels applicable to a painter’s studio, which surprised me for a man talking about photography forty years ago. It’s really on point.

**CW:** I am currently reading about the artists of the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements. And I’m looking to get my hands on a copy of [Vasily] Kandinsky’s “Concerning the Spiritual in Art,” a manifesto on the theory of abstraction. What intrigued me about the writings are the ideas of dissolving distinctions between design, painting, craft and sculpture. However, what drew me initially was the use of geometric forms as a visual language. Reading their thoughts affirmed my own ways of thinking about abstraction, my process and the impetus for making my work. The similarity lies in the use of formalist visual communication. For me, pure subjectivity creates infinite objectivity. This is why I have drastically reduced the evidence of representation in my work. The use of lines, squares, circles, and neutral primary colors becomes the basic building blocks that communicate my ideas onto canvas.

**JP:** Who’s in this group?

**CW:** There were multiple groups with similar qualities that influenced one another. The Dutch artist Piet Mondrian was a part of the De Stijl movement. Paul Klee, Kandinsky and Josef Albers were affiliated with the Bauhaus and Kazimir Malevich with the Suprematists. There are similarities in all of their work that seeks to show a sense of spiritual or psychological purity.

**JP:** I’m interested in representations of purity in your work—the found object as it relates to the notion of purity.

**CW:** In my current work, I’m not as dependent on the “found object.” I found myself not wanting to be at the mercy of my environment to supply me with materials. Instead, I wanted more creative agency over the materials. I construct and deconstruct the painting and reuse the materials that once served as a means of support. For example, laying down tape aids in painting straight lines, but then I use the tape to become line. In a way, this is a more pure sense of objectness; it’s almost as if the painting creates itself.

**JP:** When I think about you in the studio, I think about how you are without burden. Considering that purity and how you often speak about the urban space as influential, I feel like they come from two different places. Like maybe the spiritual and natural?

**CW:** That’s an interesting point. There’s definitely a paradox in terms of material being the means to express something that’s immaterial. I guess I’m forced to operate within that realm, which is a good place to be because I like to tear things up. [Laughs.] If I’m tearing up canvas, I’m having fun, you know what I mean? Urban space definitely plays a role in how the work looks. The dirt and grit of the streets and sidewalks is reflected in the neutral black tones and rugged surfaces of my work. The environment informs the work but a spiritual and intuitive nature directs the assembly of information. This reminds me of some of the conversations that we’ve had about abstraction and figuration. Would you say that you search for purity in figuration?

**JP:** I don’t know if there is any. I don’t know what it would be, and I don’t know that I actually believe in the idea of purity in [artistic] practice—unless we talk about integrity in the studio.

**CW:** What about you, Steffani? What are the different ways you consider objects or objecthood in your work?

**SJ:** I’m still thinking a little bit about the relationship between purity and integrity, particularly in some of the conceptual practices that influence my work or, as you said, that shape the landscape in which I work. [Conceptual artist] Charles Gaines has written and spoken in really interesting ways about an expected symmetry of labor in the intellectual
Catching Up with the Artists in Residence

Jennifer Packer’s studio
Photo: Marc Bernier

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economy of fine art. When thinking about the effort you put into making a work of art, and the energy required to behold, interpret or approach that work, the idea that those two activities should be parallel or symmetrical is an integral part of conceptual practice. He’s identified and challenged this impulse in ways that are really interesting to me.

I read a lot of fiction in addition to nonfiction or theoretical texts. I return to the same books over and over again—one of those is Painting as Model by Yve-Alain Bois. A chapter entitled “Painting as Model” has been especially interesting to me recently as I think about the relationships between what it means for a work to exist as a diagram, or an abstraction, or a model, and the different ways those representations fail.

JJ: How has it been working with 125th Street right outside the studios? What are you favorite things about working in Harlem? Has it influenced your work since you’ve been here?

JP: It’s great. I love to keep my windows open and watch whatever’s going on downstairs. I have binoculars.

CW: The specificity of being in an urban environment is pertinent to my practice. The amount of stimulation, vibration, all the different noises, sounds and sights help inform the work and make it non-static. I moved to Harlem initially out of convenience, but since I’ve been here, I’ve come to really like Harlem and New York.

SJ: On one hand, I would say that much of what I’ve done since I’ve been here is an extension of what I was already thinking and doing. One of the nice things about working in a distinct environment and community is that it provides a brand-new context for thinking about the work you’ve already been making, and how the works are transformed by new...
sights and sounds. On the other hand, I also think concretely about the view from the studio and the visibility of the studio from the street—the ways in which we are secluded from 125th Street but at the same time open to it. All of that has worked its way into my studio work.

**JP:** I love Harlem. It’s always humming. I came to Harlem for convenience as well, and I didn’t really know what to expect. Now I’m really invested in Harlem. [James] Baldwin is one of my favorite writers and his investment in Harlem was so strong. It’s nice to experience some of the things he was talking about. I can still read him and feel his presence here. You know, there’s something else about Harlem, too—how eye contact and the level of engagement differ. I like to make eye contact with a lot of people all throughout Manhattan, but in Harlem, it sometimes results in an automatic conversation.

**CW:** I agree!

**JP:** It’s like people are always ready to engage you.

**CW:** Yeah, that’s true. I like the sounds. You know there are all these different conversations you hear in passing. The snippets of conversations you hear—it’s almost like flipping through channels on the television. You know, like “free cell phone,” “I gotta get these new kicks,” “would you like a Final Call newspaper,” “Newports! Newports!” and so forth. I get a chance to be an anonymous observer and slice through the crowd. I don’t think other streets have that same buzz—I think it’s just 125th.

**SJ:** Yeah, 125th is special.

**CW:** What do you like about it?

**SJ:** I live in Brooklyn now, but have lived in Harlem at different times.
I lived a couple of blocks from the Museum from 2002 to 2004. I learned about the diverse ways of being a black person in New York from living in Harlem. Many of the images and ideas that come through in my work come from that. Cullen, you mentioned the sounds coming from 125th Street—the idea that the facade of this building is a permeable membrane is really fascinating. The distinction between inside and outside becomes so tenuous. What happens then is you end up not having control over your own body or experience, or you have your experiences shaped by the people around you or everything you encounter. The sounds are really important.

I think one time we were talking about the street vendors and how intrusive they can be. But there’s also something about them that’s so specific to this neighborhood and community. You know that if you want shea butter, you can come up here and get it, and you can take your pick of tables. Or if you want the latest “The Cartel” novel [from the series by Ashley and JaQuavis], or faux Calvin Klein essential oils, you can get them here.

**JP:** And it will say Beyoncé on the bottle.

**SJ:** Beyoncé in a bottle. Dolce & Gabbana in a bottle. It’s like a bazaar.

**CW:** Yes, definitely.

**SJ:** It’s so amazing. It’s immersive for all of the senses—sound, sight, smell. I think it’s safe to say 125th Street definitely has a unique scent, a combination of . . .

**CW:** Incense.

**SJ:** . . . incense, exactly, and . . .

**CW:** Fried fish. What is the name of that place? The Catchers of Men? The Fishers of Men?
Catching Up with the Artists in Residence

**JP: The Fishers of Men II: The Sequel.** [Laughter] Actually, 125th has a lot of positivity. It’s not just a presence—there’s a lot of joy on the streets. There aren’t that many street vendors, but it’s just the energy. Like the certain time of day when they put down their mats to pray, it’s very touching. It feels like a very sincere space, where people are invested in their interactions in a sincere way.

**SJ: So much of being in New York is filtered through this mask of irony.** There’s a different sort of experience here. There’s a lot of hope on the street, too. People come here to be their best selves. There’s so much possibility.
Catching Up with the Artists in Residence
Body Language

Organized by Abbe Schriber, Curatorial Assistant

Body Language explores how artists have used text to reflect on the physical body, and figurative imagery to consider how the body can be “read” visually. Drawn primarily from The Studio Museum in Harlem’s permanent collection, the artwork in this exhibition shows how language can be physical or gestural and, by the same token, how figurative imagery can reveal how we understand ourselves and others. How do artists insert the presence of the body into words? How can the body be “read” as a way of interpreting, or projecting one’s ideas onto, someone else? The collection offers a unique perspective on these ideas, particularly as a consideration of language in the construction and perception of racial identity.

The works in this exhibition stem from the traditions of postwar artistic movements that have utilized text, especially conceptual and post-conceptual art. Artists have drawn or painted directly onto text to purposefully evoke the presence of the body; engaged literary sources, vernacular slang or secretarial shorthand; or contemplated self and others through painted meditations on identity. Other works appropriate the literal, functional texts of everyday life—parking tickets, passports—and imply larger questions about how the body is treated and regulated in the social world. Reading is itself a physical act, as several of the artists in the exhibition emphasize, as they layer, repeat and manipulate words to make them illegible and strain the eye.

If text can reflect the body, the body can itself become a text. Body Language also explores figuration, considering the human form as a site of interpretation for which there is no simple reading or understanding. How might speech and writing play a role in imposing meaning onto bodies? In presenting expressive, straightforward images of figures, ranging from painterly portraits to photographic documentation, the exhibition examines how meaning rests with the viewer, and how images can reveal cultural constructions and perceptions of people. The body’s ability to “articulate,” in performance, gesture or movement, is also explored in this exhibition, with artists using their bodies, literally, as tools for mark-making.

In conflating language with bodily presence, Body Language strives for, to quote participating artist Glenn Ligon, “the knowledge of the body, in what your body memorizes that comes with the reading. It’s very different than a printed page.”

Bruce Talamon
David Hammons, Slausson Studio, 1974
Promised gift of Ruthard C. Murphy PG12.19.1

Charles Gaines
String Theory: Romare Bearden, 2011
Gift of the artist 12.7.1

Opposite:
William Pope.L
Green People are Hope without Reason, 2004
Museum purchase made possible by a gift from Barbara Karp Shuster, New York 05.4.1
GREEN PEOPLE ARE HOPE WITHOUT REASON!
New York is dramatic, serene and mysterious to its millions of inhabitants and visitors: At any turn it can offer a person deserving notice, a building begging for attention, a beautifully odd forest not expecting guests or even a strange light in the sky querying one’s idea of reality. And they all represent some of the city’s most alluring identities.

The Expanding the Walls 2013 artists have been inspired by James VanDerZee’s early examples of photo manipulation and the ways in which he documented the Harlem community. These artists are also attentive to idealist and surrealist concepts. They use rapid third-eye movement and augmented reality to photographically explain their ideas and surroundings.

The reflections shared here—landscapes, lights and portraits of the known—offer flashes of insight into various perceptions of utopia within New York. These twelve artists passionately call this particular project Percitopia.

To see the Percitopia project, visit Expanding the Walls 2013’s Tumblr at etw-studiomuseum.tumblr.com

See more work by these students in No Filter: Expanding the Walls 2013 on view July 18–October 27, 2013

Expanding the Walls is made possible with support from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; Colgate-Palmolive; Dedalus Foundation, Inc.; Joy of Giving Something, and Surdna Foundation.
The Shadows Took Shape

by Naima J. Keith, Assistant Curator, and Zoe Whitley

In February 2012, we embarked on collaborative research for The Shadows Took Shape, an exhibition examining the intersection between Afrofuturism and contemporary art. Fascinated by the ways in which artists today are inspired by the established genre as a site of unique agency and expression, we sought to consider a range of practices that utilize the language of science fiction to construct visual narratives about identity, politics and technology.

The Shadows Took Shape is an interdisciplinary exhibition that seeks to explore contemporary art through the lens of Afrofuturist aesthetics. With roots in avant-garde musical compositions by sonic innovator Sun Ra, Afrofuturism is a creative and intellectual genre that emerged as a strategy to explore science fiction, fantasy, magical realism and pan-Africanism. Artists, writers and theorists have used Afrofuturism as a way to prophesize the future, redefine the present and reconceptualize the past. The term "Afrofuturism" was coined by cultural critic Mark Dery in his 1994 essay "Black to the Future." He linked the African-American use of science and technology to an examination of space, time, race and culture.1 While the term dates to the 1990s, the aesthetic and socio-cultural choices it so aptly describes far pre-date the label. In the mid-1950s the music of Sun Ra blended science fiction, mysticism, African culture and jazz fusion, coalescing in his 1972 film Space Is the Place. In 1975, George Clinton formed his bands Parliament and Funkadelic, which took Afrofuturism to new and often kitschy heights. Today, the movement is invigorated by contemporary musicians such as Saul Williams, Janelle Monáe, Outkast and DJ Spooky, along with writers such as Colson Whitehead, Junot Diaz and Kodwo Eshun. Its reach is evident in cinema since Space Is the Place, in works such as The Brother from Another Planet (1984), The Last Angel of History (1996), The Matrix trilogy (1999–2003) and, more recently, District 9 (2009) and Pumzi (2010).

Opening November 2013, The Shadows Took Shape will be a major exhibition exploring the ways in which this form of creative expression has been adopted internationally, and will highlight the range of work made over the past twenty-five years. Often cast as an exclusively black preserve, Afrofuturism has expansive dynamism and global influence, its protean philosophy embraced by artists seeking to create alternative futures while often grappling with present-day complexities. The exhibition title is drawn from a little-known Sun Ra poem, later assigned to a series of posthumously released recordings. Through this apt metaphor for the transnational and cross-generational long shadow cast by Sun Ra, the exhibition will feature artist and New York hip-hop pioneer RAMM:ΣLL:ΣΣ, alongside an international selection of established and emerging practitioners, including Derrick Adams, John Akomfrah, Laylah Ali, Edgar Arceneaux, Sanford Biggers, William Cordova, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Ellen Gallagher, Khaled Hafez, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Kira Lynn Harris, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Wayne Hodge, David Huffman, Cyrus Kabiru, Wanuri Kahiu, Hew Locke, Cristina de Middel, Mehreen Murtaza, Wangechi Mutu, Harold Offeh, The Otolith Group, Robert Pruitt, Larissa Sansour, Cauleen Smith, William Villalongo, Saya Woolfalk and Sun Ra himself.

Opposite: Cyrus Kabiru
Nairobian Baboon, 2012
Courtesy the artist and Amunga Eshuchi
Crucial to the presentation of these works is the juxtaposition of established and emerging artists. While the majority have long engaged with Afrofuturist aesthetics, for others it demonstrates a new direction in their practices. In response to the exhibition, a number of artists are making new commissions. New York–based artist (and 2007–08 Studio Museum artist in residence) Saya Woolfalk is creating a new site-specific work based on her ongoing series, “The Empathics,” a fictional group of women documented anthropologically, who blend racial and ethnic identities as they metamorphose, taking on characteristics of both humans and plants. John Akomfrah, one of the United Kingdom’s foremost cinematic visionaries and a founder of the influential Black Audio Film Collective, brings to the Studio Museum his 1997 follow-up to The Last Angel of History (1995), Memory Room 451 (1997), an elegiac musing on the future’s commodification of dreams. The Studio Museum is also pleased to announce this as the first American museum exhibition of Kenyan artist Cyrus Kabiru. His wearable sculptures, “C-Stunners,” are fashioned from found materials and attest to an innate drive not only to create but also to reshape modes of self-representation.

This exhibition presents a new picture that can aptly bear the title of what Okwui Enwezor has called the “postcolonial constellation.” These works chart the evolution of Afrofuturist tendencies, spanning not only personal themes of identity and self-determination in the African-American community, but also persistent concerns of technoculture, geographies and hegemonies of the new Global South, utopias, dystopias and universal preoccupations with time and space.


Zoe Whitley is an independent curator based in London. She is co-curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem’s Fall/Winter 2013 exhibition, The Shadows Took Shape (with Naima J. Keith, Studio Museum Assistant Curator).

From 2003–13, she was a curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, and was named their Curator of Contemporary Art in 2005. During that time, she contributed to numerous exhibitions and catalogues, including commissions by Anselm Kiefer (2006), Romuald Hazoume (2007), Yinka Shonibare MBE (2007) and Mat Collishaw (2010), among many others. She is the author of a forthcoming monograph on graphic designer Paul Peter Piech (Four Corners Books) and coauthor of In Black and White: Contemporary Prints of the African Diaspora (N & A Publications, 2013). Whitley is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Lancashire, researching contemporary black artists’ engagement with institutions.
Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art

Organized by Valerie Cassel Oliver at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH), Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art is the first comprehensive survey of performance art by black visual artists. The exhibition provides a critical framework for a discussion of the history of black performance traditions within the visual arts—beginning with Fluxus and conceptual art in the early 1960s, through the 1980s and into the current practices of emerging contemporary artists. Radical Presence features video and photo documentation, graphic scores, installations, interactive works and works created as a result of performance actions. In addition, the exhibition features a live performance series scheduled throughout its run. Studio Museum Assistant Curator Thomas J. Lax spoke with Oliver about her exhibition history, the challenges of Radical Presence and the future of black performance art.

Thomas J. Lax: Your exhibitions have looked at a range of media—film and video, sound and light—and focused on a variety of issues in contemporary art, such as craft as a performance practice and the contributions of black artists to conceptual art. What through-lines do you see in your curatorial interests?

Valerie Cassel Oliver: I’m interested in uncovering what’s in plain sight and in bringing to light the way an artist or a group of artists has worked for generations, even if those ways are not necessarily held up in the canon of the history of art. Black artists have worked conceptually and engaged in performance for generations. These practices are not new, they’re not anomalies, they’re not atypical—they’re part of a trajectory. If there’s a through-line in all of my projects, it’s a bringing to the fore the story of how these artistic practices have been established historically, and challenging the expectations of what black art looks like.

TJL: As you have described your interests and in your scholarly contributions, you’ve framed questions of social and personal identification through formal, material and process-oriented concerns. What are the stakes of placing race, gender and sexuality in exhibition-making and artistic practice in this moment?

VCO: When you get into questions about “identity,” you run the risk of engaging in what some people would relegate as a dated conversation. That being said, I am a child of the 1960s. I was born in the 1960s and, in one sense, one could say I am a quintessential assimilation baby. That provides insight into how—as the young folks say—my mind pops. I’m constantly looking for the bridges between the past and present, and I’m keenly aware that, in terms of chronicling the history of how artists of color work, you have to straddle multiple worlds; you have to be both multicultural and multilingual.
I am ultimately fixated on innovations that happened in the art world, and my charge at the museum is chronicling that history over the last fifty years—the art of our times. That doesn’t happen in a vacuum. I don’t situate my work in a fixed way or through identity politics for that matter. It’s not about identity politics; it’s about trying to capture the full complexity—the fullness of the story. We don’t have those full stories.

**TJL:** Talk to me about the impetus for *Radical Presence*.

**VCO:** More and more artists are coming to grips with the history of performance as it becomes a touchstone in their training, both academic and informal. Finding a considered way to engage a public is important for artists again. To a large degree, I’m following the artists and seeing what they are integrating in their own practices. All of that made me take a second look, and it became obvious that there’s not a lot of information out there about this history with relationship to black artists. It seemed to be a perfect opportunity to mine that.

**TJL:** I know that you worked on a project with Clifford Owens and that your conversations with him were in some ways a catalyst for the kind of historization that this show proposes. Can you talk more about how artists have prompted your curatorial investigation?
VCO: I’ve known Clifford since his undergrad days at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. When he found out I was doing an exhibition on Benjamin Patterson [the founding Fluxus artist and musician’s first major retrospective, which travelled internationally] at CAMH, he was very interested in having a conversation about the progenitors of black performance artists. We initially wanted to compile this in a book, but that never materialized. Our research and conversations, however, were invaluable and later provided frameworks for this exhibition and Cliff’s subsequent art project. For Cliff, this eventually became the project and exhibition Anthology, organized in 2011–12 by Christopher Lew at MoMA PS1. As a curator, I was grappling with what this research and inquiry could look like physically as an exhibition. Radical Presence became the manifestation of that quandary: How do you present performance art in an exhibition that is not relegated to documentation alone? The exhibition became a curatorial experiment in how to keep the space and the work infused with movement and animation. What I hope people will see is that balancing act, of presenting both documentation and living, breathing artwork.

TJL: Can you talk about the role of Houston and the artists that live and make work there in terms of how you go about making exhibitions at the museum?

VCO: We partnered with several organizations, Project Row Houses, for example, as well as the Progressive Amateur Boxing Association, where Shaun El C. Leonardo did a piece called The Arena [2012]. It’s a Houston institution in and of itself, where Muhammad Ali, then Cassius Clay, trained at PABA with the Reverend Ray Martin and George Foreman; they even prayed next door at the El Dorado Ballroom, which at the time was a mosque. We also partnered with the Houston Museum of African American Culture to present Kalup Linzy’s concert, Introducing Kaye (Romantic Loner) [2012]. Moreover, Adam Pendleton came to give a lecture-performance at the Glassel School of Art. These activities, both within the gallery and the city itself, kept a nice momentum going for the exhibition.

Our mandate as a museum is to bring contemporary art conversations into the city, but also to be diligent in understanding the conversations that are organic to the people who live in our backyard. It’s obviously great when the two can be seamlessly integral to one another. There’s a tremendous amount of activity in Houston. The collective Otabenga Jones & Associates is here, as are younger artists such as Nathaniel Donnett, Lisa E. Harris, Autumn Knight, Flash Gordon Parks and M’kina Tapscott, who also came together to engage these conversations around black performance in an exhibition called The Stacks at the Art League around the same time.

TJL: Tell me about some of the themes that, together, the artists in Radical Presence explore.
Valerie Cassel Oliver is Senior Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH). At the CAMH, she has organized numerous group exhibitions, including Splat Boom Pow! The Influence of Cartoons in Contemporary Art (2003); Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since the 1970s (2005); Black Light/White Noise (2007); Cinema Remixed and Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image Since 1970 (2008, co-organized with Andrea Barnwell Brownlee and the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art); and Hand+Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft (2010). In addition, her solo exhibitions include Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us (2010); Donald Moffett: The Extravagant Vein (2011); and exhibitions on the work of Alvin Baltrop, McArthur Binion and Clifford Owens. She is the 2011 recipient of the David C. Driskell Prize.

The New York presentation of Radical Presence is co-organized between New York University’s Grey Art Gallery and The Studio Museum in Harlem. It will be on view at the Grey from September 7 through December 10, 2013. In addition, a festival of performance will occur during Performa 13, the fifth visual art performance biennial, November 2013.

VCO: Clearly the use of the body is true of any performance practice. By putting one’s body on the line, an artist puts all that that body represents into play and into discourse, including gender, ethnicity, cultural identity, physicality, sexuality. So, for example, when Tameka Norris punctures her tongue and creates a painting from her own saliva and blood for Untitled [2012], with people bearing witness to that as spectators, there’s a tangle of conversations that interrogate history: the history of painting and the role of women in interrogating that history. What does it mean to mine that history not with paints, not with a brush, not on canvas, but on wall with blood and saliva? So the through-line is the embodiment of a politic and critique and engagement through actions. It’s a walking discourse in and of itself.

TJL: Looking forward, what are your hopes for what the show will yield, once it’s finished its tour, for the discourse, history and creative practices of artists of African descent working in performance?

VCO: While the exhibition feels somewhat comprehensive, there is much more scholarship to be done. Also, I know that I stood on other people’s shoulders and research in pulling this project together. Leslie King Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims’s Art as a Verb [1988], for example, which took a different lens, but still asked questions about the mutable space between installation, performance and video. You also have seminal texts such as Contextures [1977], written by Linda Goode Bryant and Marcy Philips, that looked at ways of naming social issues in art outside a logic of racial representation. But in terms of Radical Presence, I’m hoping it becomes a framework for more investigation, more focused attention into the larger conversations about performance and art by artists of African descent.
Radical Presence:
Black Performance in Contemporary Art
We remember an artist and connoisseur of African and tribal art, Merton D. Simpson (1928–2013). Simpson established a reputation as one of the most respected and knowledgeable African and tribal art dealers, in addition to being an accomplished Abstract Expressionist painter.

Simpson, born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, began demonstrating artistic promise at a young age. Working mainly in an Abstract Expressionist mode, Simpson grew and developed his talents, benefiting from the tutelage of long-time mentor William Halsey.

Studying with Hale Woodruff and William Baziotes at the Cooper Union in New York was pivotal in the solidification of Simpson’s voice and the emergence of his interest in collecting African art. The Spiral group, in association with Woodruff and Romare Bearden, also played a heavy role in Simpson’s development with the “Confrontation” series, begun in the 1960s. Simpson began his career in collecting in the late 1940s, and by the early 1950s he began to shift toward art dealing. Following trips to Africa in the 1960s to 1970s, Simpson began to truly emerge as a prominent dealer in the field in the United States.

With his artistic work exhibited in locations such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum, and a growing collection of his own from around the world, Simpson opened a gallery on Madison Avenue in 1954, the Merton D. Simpson Gallery.

Featuring African and modern art, the Merton D. Simpson Gallery collection continues to add to the cultural and visual discourse with monumental holdings in both tribal and contemporary art. The Studio Museum in Harlem thanks Merton D. Simpson for his irreplaceable contribution to the historical lineage of African art and, in turn, its influence on all art communities.
Elsewhere

Completely Biased, Entirely Opinionated Hot Picks

by Thelma Golden,
Director and Chief Curator

Understanding and exploring cultural contexts, Migrating Identities compiles a diverse group of U.S.-based artists, including past artists in residence Meleko Mokgosi and Saya Woolfalk. Migrating Identities illustrates a generation’s reflections and musings on diasporic ideals and cultural affiliation, while embracing and defining the fluidity of self.

Migrating Identities
June 28–September 29, 2013
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
San Francisco, California
ybca.org

Saya Woolfalk
Chimera, 2013
Courtesy the artist

Opposite Left:
Nick Cave
Untitled, 2013
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
Photo: James Prinz Photography, Chicago

Opposite Right:
Faith Ringgold
Early Works #25, Self-Portrait, 1965
Private Collection
© Faith Ringgold, 1965
Photo: Jim Frank
Nick Cave: Sojourn
June 9–September 22, 2013
Denver Art Museum
Denver, Colorado
denverartmuseum.org

*Nick Cave: Sojourn* features approximately forty new artworks, including more than twenty new Soundsuits. Cave’s multi-sensory, immersive installation transports visitors to a magical world of color, texture, sound and movement.

American People, Black Light: Faith Ringgold’s Paintings of the 1960s
June 21–November 10, 2013
The National Museum of Women in the Arts
Washington, DC
nmwa.org

Before originating the African-American story quilt revival in the 1970s, Faith Ringgold painted bold images in response to the Civil Rights and feminist movements. Her unprecedented exploration of race and gender in America is revealed through 45 rarely-exhibited paintings in which she developed expressive figures and adapted African designs to reflect on the momentous events that shaped America in the 1960s.
In the Tower: Kerry James Marshall
June 28–December, 2013
National Gallery of Art
Washington, DC
nga.gov

Kerry James Marshall’s first solo exhibition in Washington includes ten paintings and some twenty works on paper. Marshall’s 1994 painting *Great America*, recently acquired by the National Gallery, is the centerpiece of the exhibition, which brings together a sequence of related paintings and drawings to explore important themes and imagery woven throughout Marshall’s work. *In the Tower: Kerry James Marshall* marks the sixth in the Tower Project series of installations in the National Gallery’s East Building Tower, focusing on developments in art since the mid-twentieth century.

Perspectives 182:
LaToya Ruby Frazier
June 21–October 13, 2013
Contemporary Arts Museum Houston
Houston, Texas
camh.org

LaToya Ruby Frazier is at it again, exploring the psychological connections between the self and our surrounding communities. Featuring the piercing black-and-white photography for which Frazier is known, this exhibition explores self-portraiture and its intersection with documentary. She continues to investigate issues of propaganda, politics and self, revitalizing questions about social and economic progress.
Music, art history and African-American culture intermingle in the art of 2012 Joyce Alexander Wein Prize recipient Jennie C. Jones. Jones creates audio collages, paintings, sculptures and works on paper that explore the formal and conceptual junctures between modernist abstraction and avant-garde music, particularly jazz. Higher Resonance is an immersive installation that reflects the extension of Jones’s practice to include acoustics and architecture, and features a listening area carved out of the Hirshhorn’s unique building.
Elsewhere

Theaster Gates: 13th Ballad
May 18–October 6, 2013
Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
mcachicago.org

13th Ballad extends Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates’s 12 Ballads for Huguenot House, exhibited at Documenta 13, the 2012 iteration of the international art exhibition in Kassel, Germany (and profiled in the Winter/Spring 2013 Studio). Gates and his collaborators partially restored Kassel’s dilapidated Huguenot House during the multi-disciplinary, participatory project. 13th Ballad features a monumental sculpture showcasing objects they left behind, along with a set of repurposed pews from the University of Chicago’s Bond Chapel. This anchoring work alludes to how art museums, not unlike churches, are sites of pilgrimage and contemplation. In addition, a video presentation reprises key aspects of 12 Ballads.

The Venice Biennale
June 1–November 24, 2013
Venice, Italy
labiennale.org

I’m so excited to see the work by many friends, colleagues and Studio Museum alumni at the 55th International Art Exhibition, the latest edition of the Venice Biennale. The Encyclopedic Palace (Il Palazzo Enciclopedico), organized by Biennale curator and New Museum Associate Director Massimilliano Gioni, features more than 150 artists from 37 countries, including Bouchra Khalili, Steve McQueen, J.D. ’Okhai Ojeikere, John Outterbridge, Jack Whitten and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. The American Pavilion presentation comes thanks to our neighbor, The Bronx Museum of the Arts. Sarah Sze’s installation Triple Pointe (2013) was co-commissioned by Holly Block, Director of the Bronx Museum, and Carey Lovelace, critic and independent curator.

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Switcher, 2013
Courtesy the artist, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and Corvi-Mora, London
Ellen Gallagher: Don’t Axe Me
June 19–September 15, 2013
New Museum
New York, New York
newmuseum.org

Ellen Gallagher: AxME
May 1–September 1, 2013
Tate Modern
London, England
tate.org.uk/modern

Running concurrently in London and New York, Ellen Gallagher’s dual exhibitions present works that span the past twenty years of her career. In London, check out key works such as DeLuxe (2004–05), and Bird in Hand (2006). At the New Museum, look for the first New York presentation of Osedax (2011), in collaboration with Edgar Cleijne, an immersive environment consisting of 16 mm film and painted slide projections inspired by a species of undersea worm that burrows into the bones of whale carcasses. Drawing inspiration from literature, black popular culture, music, science fiction and a variety of other sources, Gallagher addresses a lot of questions and might leave you with a few of your own.
Much has been said about how quilts and quilting are regarded in our culture. They serve as foundational texts in the narrative of American history, mnemonic devices, grids for family memories and the basis for a code devised for communicating along the Underground Railroad. Consider the quilt and its evolution from domestic necessity to objet d’art. Faith Ringgold’s painted story quilts document African-American life, her family and landmark moments both real and imagined. For Sanford Biggers, Civil War-era quilts function as supports and compositions for his painted star charts, and paintings of other mapping symbols or cultural signifiers that reference the periods from which they came—variant and compelling all at once.
Deana Lawson’s enigmatic photographs investigate perceptions of beauty, womanhood, family relationships and aspects of subculture. Lawson creates a rapport with her subjects, an intimacy that carries through to her portraits. Her photographs recall those of Lyle Ashton Harris in their striking candor. Harris has been exploring representations of gender since his earliest works of the late 1980s, often using his own body a primary resource. Both Harris and Lawson occasionally employ a mask motif in their work as a means to both reveal and obscure.
If You Like . . .

Among the constellation of artistic achievements of Gordon Parks, his revelatory photographs documenting abject poverty in America have become part of the American cultural narrative. LaToya Ruby Frazier’s project addresses invisibility, class and race in the poetic portraits of the residents of her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, in her inaugural exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, LaToya Ruby Frazier: A Haunted Capital, on view through August 2013.

Gordon Parks
(born 1912, Fort Scott, Kansas; died 2006)

Fontenelle Children Outside Their Harlem Tenement, 1967
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee 01.25.1

LaToya Ruby Frazier
(born 1982, Braddock, Pennsylvania)

Grandma Ruby and Me, 2005
Courtesy the artist
If You Like . . .

Yinka Shonibare MBE  
(born 1962, London, United Kingdom)  
*Party-Time: Reimagine America, 2009*  
Courtesy the artist

Elizabeth Colomba  
(born 1973, Paris, France)  
*The Ants, 2011*  
Courtesy the artist

The life-size installations of Yinka Shonibare MBE convey so much through humor and gorgeous costume design. His critique of European imperialism works through his trademark use of Dutch wax prints imported from Indonesia, which have been diffused and reinterpreted in the African marketplace. With her lush paintings, Elizabeth Colomba presents textured narratives replete with religious symbols, history and canonical art historical references. They feature female protagonists as central figures—exquisite and alone in domestic spaces.
**Book Picks**

*by Edwin Ramoran, Manager of Public Programs and Community Engagement*

**Jean-Paul Goude**  
*Jungle Fever*  
Xavier Moreau, 1981

Grace Jones, French graphic designer and photographer Jean-Paul Goude’s muse, growls from a cage on the cover of this out-of-print hardcover book. It presents the provocative style and tricks of an artist at his creative peak during the disco era and right before the dawn of digital manipulation.

**Keith Boykin, ed.**  
*For Colored Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Still Not Enough*  
Magnus Books, 2012

Though Jason Collins came out as the first openly gay NBA player, the suicide rate among queer youth remains higher than that of their straight counterparts. This anthology highlights works by emerging and established writers of color, including Hassan Beyah, Clay Cane, James Earl Hardy, Nathan Hale Williams, B. Scott, Will Sheridan Jr., José David Sierra, André St. Clair Thompson and Emanuel Xavier.

**Laina Dawes**  
*What Are You Doing Here? A Black Woman’s Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal*  
Bazillion Points, 2012

With a foreword by Skin of the British band Skunk Anansie, this book dives headlong into the lives of black women active in the milieus of the predominately male punk, heavy metal and hardcore music scenes. Tracking her personal experience getting beyond ostracism, Dawes reaffirms the inherent diversity in musical communities and the freedom to listen to whatever we want.
**Book Picks**

**Taiye Selasi**  
*Ghana Must Go*  
Viking, 2013

This is the first novel by Selasi, who calls New York, New Delhi and Rome home, and was included on this year’s *Granta* list of twenty Best Young British Novelists. The narrative focuses on the Sai family—comprised of a Ghanaian father, a Nigerian mother and their four children—and their lives throughout the United States and West Africa.

**Vivek Bald**  
*Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*  
Harvard University Press, 2012

Based on South Asian migration to the United States from the 1880s through the 1960s, and delving into issues of labor and public policy, such as anti-Asian immigration laws, this book focuses on the lives of the primarily male working-class migrants, many of them Bengali Muslims who have settled in New York, Detroit, Baltimore and New Orleans. Bald is currently working on a documentary feature film on this unearthed history.

**Nyuol Lueth Tong, ed.**  
*There Is a Country: New Fiction from the New Nation of South Sudan*  
McSweeney’s, 2013

It’s not every day we get to witness the birth of a new national literary tradition! So we’re super-excited about *There Is a Country*, featuring eight pieces by South Sudanese authors. The first collection of its kind from the world’s newest country, this anthology is an exciting landmark.
Torkwase Dyson is a Brooklyn-based artist who earned her undergraduate degree in painting and printmaking from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2001 and an MFA in the same discipline from Yale University in 2003. She also works with video, photography, site-specific installation and performance. She has taught at several institutions, including Spelman College in Atlanta. Recently she took a break from teaching to turn her full attention toward developing a new approach.

Those familiar with Dyson’s work will be surprised to learn that she has returned to painting, a medium she has not worked with since graduate school. For the last several years, she has been known for creating large-scale, sculptural installations constructed of found materials. She has always been interested in nature and ecology, but the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the oil spill off the coast of Louisiana, where she has familial roots, provided the impetus for incorporating issues about the environment vis-à-vis blackness in her work. She brings to her practice the conviction that those events exposed the vulnerability of people of color to the effects of climate change.

The basis for her new paintings is notes and sketches she made during a trip to Elmina Castle in Ghana in 2002. The experience of visiting the castle, where Africans were held to be enslaved in the Americas from 1637 to 1814, stayed with her for over a decade before it began to manifest in her work this year.

In this project, Dyson conflates the visual language of landscape architecture with the practices of assemblage and abstract, minimal painting to render Elmina and other sites of historical significance, namely major slave ports around the world. This geopolitical approach can be traced back to the lyrical prose of Frederick Douglass’s first narrative. So faithful was he in describing the landscape of the Maryland plantation where he was enslaved, that archaeologists have used his first book as a map to excavate the site. From a bird’s-eye view (the perspective of the omniscient narrator), Dyson establishes place, vegetation, water and all ambient surroundings. Off-center but prominent, an internal staircase in the castle is a focal point. She then departs from documenting the structure and takes poetic license to reimagine the site to pay homage to the women who passed through the “door of no return,” juxtaposing the visual data with the castle’s troubled history. The drawings are abstracted and painted white, with subtle blue undertones. The canvases uncannily resemble what distant memory looks like in the mind’s eye. Dyson calls the paintings a “love letter” to her ancestors.

These love letters are whispered across the ocean and then echoed back to the viewer. That is not to say the paintings are at all sentimental. The compositions are not peopled with tormented bodies. Nor are they explicit attempts to show the brutality of slavery. Instead, they are decidedly about dematerializing her practice. Dyson hopes the viewer will have a more visceral, intimate response to her work by reading the minimal landscapes with the understanding of all that is implied.
Come on home to Harlem
& I’ll be waiting in uptown Manhattan
with my cultural lifeline
my primary school for psychological headaches
& my emergency exit for flirting lovers &
violent showdowns
Yes, yes
I party with all parties
chant with all chanters
concert with all concert goers and
collaborate with famous faith healers
funeral directors newscasters
beauticians preachers
& political activists
check it out
I’m listed in the dictionary of who’s who
and I have spots made by ingredients
of every cleanser known in the universe
can you believe it
I carry fingerprints of each person
that ever touched this microphone
& my floorboards are matted with split reeds
sealed with the strong-smelling resin of
grieving widows
embedded with
shouts & screams &
the scrambling footsteps of an audience
betrayed by someone
we once called beloved
you hear what I’m saying
it was a nasty fonky day
a day dominated by
self-hatred & the misplaced loyalty of
negro killer convicts
sent on a suicide mission
to blow holes through
the X of my Malcolm
& now
frozen in that blood
I am Ballroom Audobon
sweet-smelling birthplace of a martyr

Reprinted from On the Imperial Highway: New and Selected Poems
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Features
Artist × Artist: Odili Donald Odita on Ayé A. Aton

By Odili Donald Odita

Organized in spring 2013, Ayé A. Aton: Space-Time Continuum was musician and painter Ayé A. Aton’s first solo museum presentation. With over 200 slides and an accompanying soundtrack, the presentation included photographic documentations of murals the artist made in the homes of African-Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Referencing ancient Egypt, Christianity and outer space, Aton’s murals provide an intimate glimpse into the domestic lives of a community in the midst of cultural transformation. Ayé A. Aton: Space-Time Continuum was organized by Assistant Curator Thomas J. Lax.

Artist Donald Odili Odita reflects on Aton’s contributions to the development of Afrofuturism and on the vibrant street life in today’s Philadelphia.

My first real encounter with Sun Ra’s music came when I was working as a gallery assistant at the renowned Kenkeleba House in New York, on Second Street and Avenue B, in the heart of Alphabet City. It was 1993, and I had just finished installing Howardena Pindell’s retrospective with Kenkeleba’s Director at the time, Sur Rodney Sur. Our next job was to install new work by sculptor Peter Bradley. It was an all-day job. I worked alone, with the radio on WKCR, which was playing Sun Ra all day long to commemorate his passing. I heard great music that day, and I marveled out loud at the man’s genius. It was amazing to listen to his words of wisdom echoing throughout the space as I contemplated my own life and prospects as an artist in the city. His words on action and life stuck in my head, and I became a fan from that moment on.

Sun Ra had many devotees around the world for his words, insight and music. Ayé A. Aton is special among the legion of Sun Ra followers, and would become an instrumental part of the Sun Ra legend. Like Sun Ra, Aton made work for the future and about the future. As the “space” drummer of the timeless jazz band, the Sun Ra Arkestra, Aton not only provided the rhythmic percussion that pushed the band in its exploratory drive for space, but also made works of art that contributed to advancing the band’s aesthetic ethos. During the late 1960s, through the early 1970s, Aton made murals, primarily on walls in private homes in Chicago, Philadelphia and his home state of Kentucky. These murals show the great influence of Sun Ra, carrying his themes surrounding a possible future with an Afrocentric perspective—later called “Afrofuturism.”

Aton was born Robert Underwood in 1940 in Versailles, Kentucky. He studied at Kentucky State University, and then moved to Harlem and later Chicago, in 1960. Starting in 1961 and continuing for eleven years, Aton maintained a long-distance phone discourse with Sun Ra, speaking almost on a daily basis. Sun Ra inspired him to investigate his life experience as an African American to move beyond the standardized confines of cultural stereotype. He also encouraged Aton to expand on these themes through painting. Aton’s murals from this period are testaments to his exploration into the future of his potential—as an artist of this community.

Many of the works in Aton’s Studio Museum exhibition depict pulsating spaces, or radiating spaces with a center, or probable center, within the painting. The radiating points often start from nowhere, making a proposition for the infinite, and in some cases indicating a sun, moon or nebula, giving the implication of a space of origin, or of a return home. The colors in several of the murals are derived from the Earth as a cornucopia. In other instances, the colors might define a cosmos seen and imagined from
Earth. Many of the compositions envision solar systems, possible space ways, new constellations and the force of movement and light cutting through these spaces. What emerges from these images is a state of community—community implied in the collected forms and collective reading of this visual iconography. Sun Ra spoke of communication to and from the cosmos—through space, culture and time. Sun Ra spoke about both origins and futures, and the great power that existed before time. What he wanted for himself and others to understand was the responsibility of accepting this reality. Aton’s work can be seen as a celebration of these forces within and around all of us.

Today I live in Germantown, Philadelphia, minutes from the house that Sun Ra lived in so many years ago. The house still radiates with his gathered community. In Germantown, the Afronauts of past and present still walk the streets, spreading the gospel according to Sun Ra, but they do not wear the stellar silver and colorful silk of their inspiration. Rather, their dress is of the current environment and surroundings. From street to street,
one finds a mix of the ancestral and the contemporary—from the traditional dress of African Muslims to the contemporary outfits of native-born American Muslims. There are Jewish Africans and West Indians, as well as suited dandies and the beautiful-hat ladies who accompany them. You can find new-age, dashiki-clad hippies with organics and incense alongside skateboarding kids, and the death-defying cyclists and motorcyclists who brave the streets among unobservant motorists. And all the rest wear the latest hip-hop street gear or daily business wear. Diversity, multiplicity and the acknowledgement of difference are whole and real in this community; it is about freedom of mind and choice in one’s own voice. This multiplicity is an escape from a reductive, immobilizing and censoring monoculture. Sun Ra preached that we all have the opportunity to place ourselves on a pathway of freedom. In his space, creativity, vision and agency can, in fact, be our cornucopias. The mental space of Sun Ra was a stellar place, and Aton visualized and represented this clearly, with future-minded, polychromatic intensity.

Odili Donald Odita is an artist based in Philadelphia and New York. Recent projects include wall paintings at the Savannah College of Art & Design Museum of Art (2013) and the New Orleans Museum of Art (2011). Odita has exhibited at the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, Texas (2010); the Ulrich Museum at Wichita State University (2009); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2008); and the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati (2007). Group exhibitions include Magical Visions: 10 Contemporary African American Artists at the Mechanical Hall Gallery, University of Delaware (2012); ARS 11, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2011); The Global Africa Project, Museum of Arts and Design, New York (2010); Wallworks, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2009); and the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007). In 2007, Odita was awarded a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant. In the same year, he inaugurated the Project Space at The Studio Museum in Harlem with his exhibition Equalizer.
Artists and the Curatorial Impulse

by Kristina Maria Lopez, Curatorial Intern

Artists have held a central role in the energy of The Studio Museum in Harlem since its opening in 1968 through their efforts to engage the Museum’s immediate community and a larger local, national and international network. In 1968, the opening exhibition was Tom Lloyd’s *Electronic Refractions*, a series of abstract light and kinetic sculptures that pushed away from the popular Social Realist approach to engaging with the visual dynamics of black experience. Despite trepidation from his predecessors and even contemporaries, with regard to understanding the inherent political motives within geometric forms, Lloyd did not feel separated from the social implications of his work. “The rhythms in my work are the rhythms of our city environment—regular and hard,” he said.1

William T. Williams, another artist working in the realm of abstract forms, through hard-edge painting, was the first Director of the *Artist-in-Residence* program. Artists such as Lloyd and Williams helped prepare the groundwork for the Museum’s budding film series and exhibitions. As part of the Art Workers’ Coalition, Lloyd, along with other artists, filmmakers, critics and museum workers, pressured various New York museums to reform their exhibition practices to address their immediate communities and include more art by artists that had historically been absent in their spaces. As an artist, I knew the Studio Museum was the perfect place for me to experience how these issues are addressed when planning exhibitions within the context of a museum. The close relationships that artists can share with institutions became clearer to me during my time here as a Curatorial Intern.

The role of artists as creative and cultural producers in their communities has often been intertwined with the institutions that display their works to larger publics. Artists have self-organized exhibitions, performances and protests that rub against the mythological and physical facades of such institutions. Andrea Fraser asks us not to fall into the traps of the rhetoric of institutional critique, but rather to question “what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to.”2 When artists engage with different forms of the spread of knowledge, they create contact with and between people and places both near and far. This engagement creates new sets of relations that reshape, revitalize and review multiple histories.

Opposite Top: Sean Shim-Boyle
*Salt House*, (installation view), 2013
Courtesy Project Row Houses, Houston
Photo: Eric Hester

Opposite Bottom: Exterior view of *Round 34* opening,
Courtesy Project Row Houses, Houston
Photo: Eric Hester
Prime examples of such community-based initiatives established by artists can be found in geographically specific projects led by Edgar Arceneaux and Rick Lowe. From 1999 to 2012, Arceneaux was Director of the Watts House Project, an artist-driven neighborhood redevelopment project. Artists, architects, designers and volunteers came together to reimagine the possibilities of the immediate environment in the Watts district of Los Angeles. Originally conceptualized by Lowe, the Watts House Project is a direct reflection of his earlier proposition, Project Row Houses. Since 1993, Project Row Houses has invigorated Houston’s Third Ward with a sense of community through displaying art and celebrating African-American history and culture. The success of both projects is rooted in thinking about art as a form of social activity. The projects facilitate multiple conversations between creative workers and residents, rather than dictate the forms that the neighborhood takes.

Another example of artists working in the realm of the curatorial happens when an artist is invited to represent the collection of a museum. Perhaps the most pertinent instance of this would be Fred Wilson’s installation at the Maryland Historical Society, Mining the Museum (1992–93). However, this method has become a practice in and of itself, as spaces where art is displayed are increasingly inviting artists to participate as exhibition-makers. In 2012, Ellen Gallagher was invited to organize Printin’, a satellite exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, with Sarah Suzuki, Associate Curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books. In tandem with a larger survey of prints and books, Print/Out, Printin’ utilized Gallagher’s complex portfolio of sixty prints, DeLuxe (2004–05), as its central point. Gallagher reworked images from mid-twentieth-century black lifestyle magazines with a variety of technical processes, including tattoo machine engraving and laser-cutting. By surrounding DeLuxe with works by a full range of artists, from Dutch engraver Experiens Sillemans’s seventeenth-century penschilderingen to pioneering graffiti writer and multidisciplinary artist RAMMΣLLΣΣ’s Gold Letter Racers (1987–89), Gallagher initiated a new discourse on how her own work could be understood and placed in a larger history of art.

This rerouting of accepted art histories becomes doubly focused when it involves practices that cannot be contained within square rooms. Courtesy the Artists, a curatorial and artistic collaboration between Malik Gaines
and Alexandro Segade, presented *The Meeting*, a performance program in conjunction with the opening of *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980*, curated by Kellie Jones at MoMA PS1 in late 2012. The geodesic dome in PS1’s courtyard, where this program was held, was built specifically to host a wide array of programs including performance art, film, dance and other multidisciplinary projects—quite literally works that don’t fit within the museum’s main building. As part of *The Meeting*, local artists, such as niv Acosta, Adam Pendleton and Xaviera Simmons, among others, were invited to respond to a song from activist and Black Panther leader Elaine Brown’s 1969 agitprop album *Seize the Time*. The duo behind Courtesy the Artists each performed their own responses, deliberately shifting their roles from organizers to collaborative performers.

The curatorial impulse by artists is often inseparable from their visual practices, thus leading to openly subjective approaches toward making meaning. When artists’ practices leak into the shaping of exhibitions, they not only are collaborating and performing with other institutions and artists, but also are inviting viewers to join them in the spread of knowledge.
In celebration of our exhibition The Shadows Took Shape, we are excited to reproduce an excerpt from “Positive Obsession,” an essay from Bloodchild and Other Stories (Seven Stories Press, 1995) by Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006). Butler, who was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 1995, is one of the best known female African-American writers of science fiction.

1
My mother read me bedtime stories until I was six years old. It was a sneak attack on her part. As soon as I really got to like the stories, she said, “Here’s the book. Now you read.” She didn’t know what she was setting us both up for.

2
“I think,” my mother said to me one day when I was ten, “that everyone has something that they can do better than they can do anything else. It’s up to them to find out what that something is.”

We were in the kitchen by the stove. She was pressing my hair while I sat bent over someone’s cast-off notebook, writing. I had decided to write down some of the stories I’d been telling myself over the years. When I didn’t have stories to read, I learned to make them up. Now I was learning to write them down.

3
I was shy, afraid of most people, most situations. I didn’t stop to ask myself how things could hurt me, or even whether they could hurt me. I was just afraid.

I crept into my first bookstore full of vague fears. I had managed to save about five dollars, mostly in change. It was 1957. Five dollars was a lot of money for a ten-year-old. The public library had been my second home since I was six, and I owned a number of hand-me-down books. But now I wanted a new book—one I had chosen, one I could keep.

“Can kids come in here?” I asked the woman at the cash register once I was inside. I meant could Black kids come in. My mother, born in rural Louisiana and raised amid strict racial segregation, had warned me that I might not be welcome everywhere, even in California.

The cashier glanced at me. “Of course you can come in,” she said. Then, as though it were an afterthought, she smiled. I relaxed.

The first book I bought described the characteristics of different breeds of horses. The second described stars and planets, asteroids, moons, and comets.
My aunt and I were in her kitchen, talking. She was cooking something that smelled good, and I was sitting at her table, watching. Luxury. At home, my mother would have had me helping.

“I want to be a writer when I grow up,” I said.

“Do you?” my aunt asked. “Well, that’s nice, but you’ll have to get a job, too.”

“Writing will be my job,” I said.

“You can write any time. It’s a nice hobby. But you’ll have to earn a living.”

“As a writer.”

“Don’t be silly.”

“I mean it.”

“Honey . . . Negroes can’t be writers.”

“Why not?”

“They just can’t.”

“Yes, they can, too!”

I was most adamant when I didn’t know what I was talking out. In all my thirteen years, I had never read a printed word that I knew to have been written by a Black person. My aunt was a grown woman. She knew more than I did. What if she were right?

...
An obsession, according to my old Random House dictionary, is “the domination of one's thoughts or feelings by a persistent idea, image, desire, etc.” Obsession can be a useful tool if it's positive obsession. Using it is like aiming carefully in archery.

I took archery in high school because it wasn't a team sport. I liked some of the team sports, but in archery you did well or badly according to your own efforts. No one else to blame. I wanted to see what I could do. I learned to aim high. Aim above the target. Aim just there! Relax. Let go. If you aimed right, you hit the bull’s-eye. I saw positive obsession as a way of aiming yourself, your life, at your chosen target. Decide what you want. Aim high. Go for it.

I wanted to sell a story. Before I knew how to type, I wanted to sell a story.

I pecked my stories out two fingered on the Remington portable typewriter my mother had bought me. I had begged for it when I was ten, and she had bought it.

“You’ll spoil that child!” one of her friends told her. “What does she need with a typewriter at her age? It will soon be sitting in the closet with dust on it. All that money wasted!”

I asked my science teacher, Mr. Pfaff, to type one of my stories for me—type it the way it was supposed to be with no holes erased into the paper and no strike-overs. He did. He even corrected my terrible spelling and punctuation. To this day I'm amazed and grateful.

I badgered friends and acquaintances into reading my work, and they seemed to like it. Teachers read it and said kindly, unhelpful things. But there were no creative writing classes at my high school, and no useful criticism. At college (in California at that time, junior college was almost free), I took classes taught by an elderly woman who wrote children's stories. She was polite about the science fiction and fantasy that I kept handing in, but she finally asked in exasperation, “Can’t you write anything normal?”

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I was twenty-three when, finally, I sold my first two short stories. I sold both to writer-editors who were teaching at Clarion, a science-fiction writers' workshop that I was attending. One story was eventually published. The other wasn’t. I didn’t sell another word for five years. Then, finally, I sold my first novel. Thank God no one told me selling would take so long—not that I would have believed it. I’ve sold eight novels since then. Last Christmas, I paid off the mortgage on my mother’s house.

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So, then, I write science fiction and fantasy for a living. As far as I know I’m still the only Black woman who does this. When I began to do a little public speaking, one of the questions I heard most often was, “What good is science fiction to Black people?” I was usually asked this by a Black person. I gave bits and pieces of answers that didn’t satisfy me and that probably didn’t satisfy my questioners. I resented the question. Why should I have to justify my profession to anyone?

But the answer to that was obvious. There was exactly one other Black science-fiction writer working successfully when I sold my first novel: Samuel R. Delany, Jr.

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Wayne Hodge
Android Negroid #2, 2011
Courtesy the artist
Fellow to Fellow: Jamillah James & Monique Long

In April 2013, the Studio Museum’s 2012–13 Curatorial Fellow Jamillah James sat down with Monique Long, the 2013–14 Curatorial Fellow, to discuss their shared experiences and provide insight into their respective interests as emerging curators.

Jamillah James: Tell us about your background.

Monique Long: I’m from Philadelphia. I don’t know how that has shaped my interest, but Philly has one of the best modern art museums in the country [the Philadelphia Museum of Art], and I grew up going there. I stared at academic paintings. They have great contemporary art as well, and a great costume collection. I went to Columbia University and I think the first fashion exhibition I saw was at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, where I spent some of my youth. The exhibition focused on Jacqueline Kennedy. The clothes themselves weren’t sartorially spectacular, but they told a story. I found it interesting that you could talk about history in a museum setting using clothes. It was kind of an epiphany. I studied American Studies so I could contextualize the art I was interested in within history, particularly the history of fashion, which is a niche within academia. I wrote my thesis arguing the premise that by reading clothes as texts, one could create narratives around historical moments.

JJ: What are the differences between the art scenes in Philly and New York?

ML: As someone who developed as a thinker about art here, and not in Philly, it’s a hard question to answer. I think people generally think that New York is the place where things happen, but in art, music and fashion, there’s always influence from Philadelphia that comes up in surprising ways.

JJ: Before you came to the Studio Museum, which other institutions did you work with?

ML: Columbia had a special arrangement with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I worked in the Thomas J. Watson Library as a page. After I finished school, I got a curatorial internship at the Guggenheim. After that, I worked at the Museum of Arts and Design as the Art Table mentee. The mentorship is structured so you get to work with someone in the field that you’re interested in, and you work intensively on a project over the course of a summer.
I was fortunate enough to work with Lowery Stokes-Sims (former Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum) on the Global Africa Project.

**ML:** How did you find out about the fellowship at Studio Museum?

**JJ:** I had been working independently after Art Table, and had made some significant connections. The application came to me in an email. I was in the middle of a time-consuming project, so I just cranked it out. I love Harlem and its community, and I thought the fellowship would be a great opportunity to give back in some way.

When was the first time you came to the Studio Museum?

**JJ:** It was in 2006, on the occasion of Frequency. My twenty-five-year-old mind was effectively blown. At that time I decided to reinvest my energies toward working as a curator rather than as a critic or writer of theory. It was many years before I was able to come back, since I was living in Chicago at the time. Fast-forward to 2010, when I was on a curatorial fellowship at the Queens Museum after a few years of working independently as a curator in Baltimore. Tom Finklepearl [Director of Queens Museum] suggested I schedule a time to meet with Thelma Golden about any sort of writing opportunities at the Studio Museum because I expressed an interest in getting some more writing under my belt. She suggested that I contribute to Studio, which is how my formal relationship with the institution began.

**ML:** What was the first exhibition you curated?

**JJ:** The first exhibition I ever did was in 2004, a sound art show called Imaginary Landscape at an alternative space I co-directed in Chicago. It coalesced my interests in music—which at the time, I was playing in a band and organizing live shows in my living room—and the art world. Sound is somewhat underrepresented in institutional spaces. There are places, particularly here in New York, that are dedicated to presenting sound as an experiential medium, such as Roulette, Diapason Sound Art and ISSUE Project Room. Jennie C. Jones had that remarkable 2011 show, Absorb/ Diffuse at The Kitchen that was both visual and aural; Christian Marclay had his retrospective at the Whitney that incorporated a number of performances; and the Studio Museum hosted American Cypher: Mendi and Keith Obadike this spring, as well as the series StudioSound for a couple of years. But all these are a bit anomalous. Exhibition-making is problem-solving, and with that first show, I wanted to address what I saw as an issue. I still think that way about my practice.

**ML:** What were the highlights of your fellowship?

**JJ:** The last year was great, especially working with the three curators of Fore from the very beginning, making the catalogue and brochure. It was amazing to work on an exhibition that would be a part of the legacy of black, emerging artist exhibitions for which the Museum is well noted. And, of course, working on Brothers and Sisters was really reflective of my change in interests since completing my undergraduate degree—a shift to focusing on post-war abstract painting and sculpture, which is radically different from where I was, say, seven years ago. I knew we had a number of works by Beauford Delaney in the collection, and wanted to somehow recontextualize his work in tandem with that of people working at the same time or contemporary artists working in a similar vein. I am interested in continuing to study his work beyond this exhibition. I think he made a number of important contributions. To have access to the Museum’s collection, nearly 2,000 works, was an incredible experience, to see all the history. I love that we’re an active, collecting institution.
whose acquisitions will continue to historicize the contributions of black artists for many years to come.

What are some of the things you’re interested in exploring this year leading up to your fellowship exhibition next spring?

**ML:** Fashion exhibitions are seeing an emergence for a mass audience, which is very exciting. I hope I can continue and build on my interest in fashion and history while I’m here. My thesis was entitled “Speaking Sartorially: Semiotics and African-American Clothing.” It was a historical narrative about blacks in America, told through clothing choices since the antebellum period. I did a close reading of fugitive slave ads, which had very detailed descriptions of what they were wearing. The slaves took clothing other than rags when they escaped so they could potentially pass as free. I talked about the Harlem Renaissance, the emergence of a black middle class, the black nationalism movement and also hip-hop. I’m interested in the legacy of a people who were able to subvert through clothing choices.

**JJ:** It’s important to bring diverse ideas and interests to the table. I wouldn’t consider myself a specialist in African-American art or culture. I’m just a weirdo who likes a bunch of different things. I am still very much an Adrian Piper and William Pope. I fan, and also people such as Nayland Blake and Glenn Ligon are important to me, in terms of authoring LGBT art history. I have the flexibility to do my non-mission-specific work outside of my time here. I have a few projects coming up later this year, and I’m concentrating on writing and teaching as well.

**ML:** I don’t know if it is specific to this line of work or just New York, but it seems like there’s no distinguishing between life and work. It’s fully integrated, but not in a negative way. Wouldn’t you agree?

**JJ:** I think that’s just the nature of living in New York. There’s always a constant changeover with the museums and galleries here. Sometimes it’s hard to keep up, but you have to. Periodically, I take breaks. Everyone went on a forced break with Hurricane Sandy to deal with the recovery, but I feel that now there is a lot of activity, which is very exciting.

**ML:** One of the payoffs of working as much as possible and being dynamic is making those connections that can lead to other opportunities. I feel lucky to be here, and to be able to put faces to the names of people whose work I know. I’m looking forward to looking back on the highlights of this experience—and it’s all been a highlight thus far. I remember when I came to the Studio Museum, while I was an intern at the Guggenheim, and [former Associate Curator] Naomi Beckwith led a gallery tour. I remember her saying that I know you’re getting a lot of theory in school, but in the real world, you have to be able to engage with the art, talk about the work and not project meaning or construct meaning in the laboratory of the classroom. That really stuck with me, and I couldn’t wait to have more practical experience, which is why I’m so glad to be here.

**JJ:** Naomi was totally right. You can have a handle on all manners and directions of art history and theory, but you have to be able to talk the talk and walk the walk at the same time. It’s crucial to have these kinds of opportunities to learn new or different research methodologies and put them into practice. Otherwise what’s the point?
Exploring Art Together

by Erin K. Hylton,
School Programs Coordinator

School may be out for the summer, but there are fun activities parents can do with their children at the Studio Museum to enrich out-of-school time through visual art. Art creation and exploration help children develop cognitive, social and creative skills, as well as help encourage imagination. Here are a few of my favorite activities for families when they visit the Museum.

Explore and Describe
A. Explore the galleries together to find a work of art that has your child’s favorite colors, shapes or objects.
B. Discuss what materials the work is made from.
C. Find a work of art based on a descriptive word, such as tall, short, colorful, shiny, smooth or rough.
D. Keep an art journal for your family and ask your child or children to sketch what they explored in the Museum.

Scavenger Hunt
A. Explore the Museum’s website to discover what works of art are in the current exhibition season.
B. Decide on a family theme for the day, based on explorations of particular colors, textures, movements and shapes.
C. Create a sheet of particular objects or materials in the galleries that your family can search for.
D. Include objects and materials familiar to and outside of your family’s neighborhood to encourage family learning opportunities.
E. Explore the Museum together to find objects on the list.
F. Don’t forget to bring your pencil to check off items!

Postcard It!
A. In the galleries, discuss with your child or children what work of art they would like to make into their own postcards.
B. At home, have note cards and art-making materials handy to encourage your child to create their own postcard based on what was in the galleries.
C. Crayons and markers are great art tools to use in this activity!
D. Encourage your child to write a note to a pen pal on the back. (Younger children will need your assistance.)
E. Finally, take the postcard, as a family, to mail to your child’s special friend.

Photos: Erin K. Hylton
DIY Body Language Watercolor Resist Project

by Elan Ferguson, Family Programs Coordinator

Our summer 2013 exhibition, Body Language looks at works from the permanent collection that focus on text and language—from the written word to the body to spoken sound. Our DIY project for this season, Body Language Watercolor Resists, uses easy-to-find materials to create a piece of art from your bodies and words to express how you feel.

You will need:
- 2 or 3 pieces of white cardstock
- Oil pastels or crayons, including white ones
- Cotton balls
- Cup of water
- Stencil or body part
- Watercolor, solid or liquid
- Smock and newspaper for easy cleanup
- Spray bottle (optional)
Step 1
Your parents should prep a space with newspaper and supplies. Keep things close so the mess stays in one area.

Step 2
Pick a part of your body—a foot, arm, hand or head—to trace. You can also use stencils of letters and/or shapes to add to the design.

Step 3
Trace the outline of your body part and/or stencil onto the white paper with the white oil pastel or crayon. You will notice that the white on white is hard to see. Parents, remind your children that this is part of the watercolor magic. Using the outline as a beginning, make a beautiful drawing by adding lines, letters, words, poems or more stencils.

Step 4
Prep your watercolor by dipping cotton balls—one at a time—in the water for three seconds, but don’t put the whole cotton ball in the water. You want it to be wet, not soaked and dripping. Place each wet cotton ball on top of a different watercolor compartment until each color has a wet cotton ball of its own.

Step 5
Beginning with the lightest color in your watercolor palette, use the cotton ball to dab the color onto the white paper. Layer color upon color, getting darker as you go. The color will appear on the paper, but not on the parts you drew with the white oil pastel or crayon, revealing your design.

Step 6
When you are done with the watercolor, let it dry for a few minutes. Then you can continue to add to your artwork with more color, lines and words using crayons and/or oil pastels. Oil pastels are best because their colors are brighter.
Five for the Family!

by Elan Ferguson,  
Family Programs Coordinator

When I was given the task of writing about family activities in Harlem, I was concerned—not because I didn’t want the assignment, but because in the last few years Harlem has bloomed into a community bursting with activities and places to go.

I have lived in Harlem for thirteen years. Raising my two children here has given me insight into fun and easy ways to entertain the entire family at little or no cost. There are so many options, but I had to limit this list to just five of the best free options. I hope you agree.

The Studio Museum in Harlem:  
Target Free Sundays

I don’t mean to toot my own horn, but toot-toot. The Studio Museum’s Target Free Sundays offers free tours at 1 pm and free art workshops from 2 to 4 pm. The art workshops introduce visitors to artists of color, and artistic techniques and materials. Topics are appropriate for all ages, and projects can be done by both novices and experts. Fun for all!  
studiomuseum.org

The Dream Center

The Dream Center (203–205 West 119th Street) is excellent for preteen, teens and adults, as they look to expand their early childhood workshops. They have a large assortment of workshops, topics and programs for teens and adults, such as dance, yoga, theater, self-esteem, fatherhood, art and much more—most for free or a small donation. My son and daughter have taken a free theater class there on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.  
dreamcenterharlem.org

Cooper-Hewitt Design Center

Located in the Park Heights/Harlem neighborhood, the Cooper-Hewitt Design Center (111 Central Park North) is a new, 1,500-square-foot space dedicated to events, workshops and activities for students, families, educators and adults. Cooper-Hewitt design educators lead creative hands-on activities, as well as a free after-school drop-off program for children ages five and older.  
cooperhewitt.org

F.C. Harlem

If sports are more your thing, try F.C. Harlem soccer (441 Manhattan Avenue), a Harlem-based community youth development organization. My son attends the recreational league, for boys and girls of any skill level. There are no prerequisites in terms of skill or experience, and the sessions are about having fun while learning the rules of the game. They also work with high school students, and have free-play days for parents on Sundays.  
fcharlemlions.org

Sol La Ti's Music Together

Sol La Ti is a Harlem extension of nationally known Music Together, which began in 1987 as an educational program of the Center for Music and Young Children located in Princeton, New Jersey. It was founded by composer and early childhood educator Ken Guilmartin and professor of early childhood education Lili Levinowitz. Gabriele Tranchina, a certified voice teacher, has directed Sol La Ti’s Music Together since 1997, with four locations in the Upper West Side (601 West 114th Street), Morningside Heights (100 LaSalle Street) and Harlem (310 West 139th Street and 318 West 139th Street). Music Together offers dance and movement programs for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents/caretakers, as well as free demo classes, usually every month.  
mtsollati.com
Every destination is just a part of a journey. In this coloring page, called No Space, traveling around in New York by subway is an adventure. Take time out to document something interesting you notice on the train and make a drawing of your own. Maybe you can show it to me next time you visit the Studio Museum!

by Elan Ferguson, Family Programs Coordinator

Turn the page to start coloring
Talking with Teachers

by Erin K. Hylton,
School Programs Coordinator

The Studio Museum in Harlem offers on- and off-site professional development programs for educators, from pre-K to twelfth grade, that focus on using the Museum as a resource for developing visual and cultural literacy. Designed to focus on core curriculum areas, including the arts, English language arts, social studies, humanities and math, the workshops present creative methods for using and integrating art in the classroom. These programs encourage partnerships between teachers, artists and Museum professionals through in-depth gallery discussions and workshops around key issues in art created by artists of African descent locally, nationally and internationally.

The Museum hosts monthly on-site opportunities for educators includes Open House for Educators, a seasonal preview of exhibitions and resources; Teaching and Learning Workshops for K–12 Educators, hands-on art-making workshops exploring art integration strategies for the classroom; and Professional Development for Educators, grade-specific training sessions.

Here are few highlights and comments from educators who have attended one of the Museum’s professional development programs in the 2012–13 school year.

Photos: Erin K. Hylton and Ivan Forde
“I teach young adults with autism. We follow a functional curriculum, and although the content might not be as relevant to them, I can definitely use the images to allow them to express themselves and be creative.”

“What I liked most about today’s presentation was that it was all practical. It made art available to everyone, whether or not you see yourself as an artist.”

“Wonderful combination of hands-on work, discussion with working artists and time to visit exhibits.”

“I teach in the South Bronx—I feel the activity will help students transfer analysis from photo to text, which they normally struggle with.”

“It was really helpful seeing a lesson plan and the connection to the Common Core Standards. Great program—and inspiring.”

“Today’s activity can be used in so many different ways in the classroom. I’m already excited to use materials in the classroom in a variety of ways.”
Friends
Happy Birthday Sam Gilliam!

by Naima J. Keith, Assistant Curator

Iconic artist Sam Gilliam turns eighty this year! To celebrate this momentous occasion, we are spotlighting Lion’s Arc (1981), a landmark painting from the Studio Museum’s permanent collection. Originally shown in the 1982 exhibition Sam Gilliam: Journey Toward Red, Black and “D”, Lion’s Arc was a highlight of the spring 2013 exhibition Assembly Required: Selections from the Permanent Collection. A revolutionary figure in postwar American art, Gilliam is best known for his experimentations with abstraction resulting from an interest in moving away from figurative imagery to adopt color as the main subject of his paintings.
Gala 2012

Rescheduled for February 4, 2013, Gala 2012 raised nearly $1.7 million, celebrated the incomparable Agnes Gund and presented the seventh Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize to Jennie C. Jones. Check out some of our favorite pictures! For a complete list of supporters, please see the Winter/Spring 2013 issue of Studio.

All photos: Julie Skarratt
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The Studio Museum in Harlem held its sixth annual Spring Luncheon on Friday, May 3, 2013, at the Mandarin Oriental New York. The Spring Luncheon is a fantastic occasion to celebrate the importance and continued success of arts education programming with a distinguished group of individuals. The afternoon acknowledges the Museum’s commitment to education and creativity. This year, guests saluted Linda Johnson Rice, Chairman, Johnson Publishing Company. Guests were also treated to a special presentation by Expanding the Walls artist Arnell Calderon of the NYC iSchool. Our arts education program is best known for its creative and bold approach to reaching out to traditionally underserved communities. Our education programming highlights black art and culture through stimulating lectures, dialogues, panel discussions and performances, as well as interpretive programs for children and teachers, both on- and off-site.
Spring Luncheon 2013

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<td>Sarah Buttrey</td>
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<td>Evelyn Clarke</td>
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<td>Sadie &amp; Roberto Cordingle</td>
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Museum Hours
Thursday and Friday, noon–9 pm; Saturday, 10 am–6 pm; Sunday, noon–6 pm.

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