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In our recent publication, *Harlem: A Century in Images*, my friend and colleague Elizabeth Alexander wrote that “today’s Harlem lives ghosted by its past.” Indeed, this neighborhood and this museum are steeped in a rich and complex history that informs—but does not limit—the present, and the future.

I am reminded every day of the over one hundred artists from Charles Abramson to Saya Woolfalk who, as artists in residence, created fantastic work in this building and our previous home at 2033 5th Avenue. I am aware of the incredible context that creates for our newest residents, Njideka Akunyili, Meleko Mokgosi and Xaviera Simmons. I am inspired by the brilliant directors that led this institution before me, including my immediate predecessors Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims, Kinshasha Holman Conwill and Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell. And most of all, I am exhilarated by the generations of creative luminaries that have lived, worked and created in Harlem.

Our 2011–12 season coincides with the centennial of the birth of one of the brightest of those luminaries: Romare Bearden. Over the course of *The Bearden Project*, an ambitious and unusual exhibition initiative overseen by Assistant Curator Lauren Haynes, we’ve asked dozens of artists to create work inspired by Bearden’s life and art. If you’ve been to the Museum or visited our exhibition site, thebeardenproject.studiomuseum.org, you know what diverse and unexpected creations make up what *The New York Times* called “a sparkling cross-generational Bearden shout-out.” But over the course of this project we’ve discovered more than exciting new artworks. It seems that everyone has a Bearden story, and it’s been a great joy to uncover the specific and myriad ways that this iconic artist touched so many lives. I’ve heard amazing anecdotes from friends, artists, writers, visitors and Museum staff detailing how Bearden encouraged them personally or through his art.

You can read some of these stories on the exhibition site and Studio Blog, and I invite you to share your Bearden story! Email thebeardenproject@studiomuseum.org to add to our growing archive.

I feel so lucky to live and work in a place where extraordinary ghosts mingle with longtime habitués and emerging creative talents. I’ll see you around, and definitely uptown.
What’s New

Hurvin Anderson
Mrs. S. Keita – Turquoise, 2010
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee 11.1.2

Recent Acquisition
Museum

What’s Up?: Exhibition Schedule 04
The Bearden Project: 06
Celebrating an Icon
Spring Preview: Caribbean: 12
Crossroads of the World
Kira Lynn Harris: Drawing on Bearden 14
Collected, Ritual 17
Who, What, Wear 18
VideoStudio: Rodney McMillian / Robin Rhode 22
Spring Preview: Ralph Lemon 24
Spring Preview: Shift 26
Bearden Plays Bearden 27
Studio Lab 30
Harlem Postcards 34
Spotlight on Education: Group Tours 38
Spotlight on Education: Arts & Minds 39
Spotlight on Education: ETW Interview 40
The Art of Participation 41

Beyond

Elsewhere 45
A Beautiful Thing 49
Blackpower Mixtape 50
If You Like 52
Remembering Ruth Williams 56

Features

Surrealism in the Caribbean 58
Meet the AIRs 62
Studio Visit: Crystal Z. Campbell 66
In Conversation: Betye Saar and Naima J. Keith 70
Aesthetic of the Cool 74

Studio Jr.

Narrative Art with Pat Cummings 78

Friends

Gala 2011 84
Wein Prize Honoree 88
Member List 89
Supporter List 94
Membership Info and Form 97
Visitor Info 100
Studio

Museum
What’s Up?

Exhibition Schedule
Winter/Spring 2012

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

November 10, 2011–March 11, 2012
The Bearden Project
VideoStudio: Rodney McMillian / Robin Rhode
Collected. Ritual

November 10, 2011–May 27, 2012
Kira Lynn Harris: The Block | Bellona
Who, What, Wear: Selections from the Permanent Collection

March 29–May 27, 2012
Shift: Projects | Perspectives | Directions
Ralph Lemon

Always on View
Harlem Postcards
Glenn Ligon: Give Us A Poem
Adam Pendleton: Untitled (Flamingo George)
The Bearden Project

Celebrating an Icon

by Lauren Haynes, Assistant Curator

In honor of the centennial celebration of Romare Bearden’s birth, the Studio Museum is inviting artists to create new works of art inspired, influenced or informed by the life and work of one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. The Museum is sharing these works with the public through The Bearden Project, a dynamic exhibition initiative that will grow and change throughout the centennial year.

Though they represent a broad range of stylistic vantage points and work in a variety of media, all of the artists in The Bearden Project have been impacted by Bearden’s legacy. Some of the artists in the exhibition, including Charles Gaines, Faith Ringgold and Jack Whitten, knew him. Others attended lectures and talks given by him when they were young artists just beginning their careers, and still others never met him, but closely studied his work. Bearden was one of the first black artists that many people—not just the artists in this exhibition—ever encountered, and his legacy continues to have a vital presence. Below is a sampling of statements that the participating artists wrote in response to their involvement in The Bearden Project.

Nzuji De Magalhães
Born 1976, Luanda, Angola
Lives and works in Costa Mesa, CA

Romare Bearden’s work dealt with the occurrences of his own time and space. The struggles and joys were critical moments that he poignantly
The Bearden Project

Celebrating an Icon

captured and transcribed in his pieces. Equipped with his vision, collage technique and statuesque figures, he documented events now accepted as part of black history.

*Give Me the Strength* is a piece that represents Bearden’s imagery. The woman reflects on her past, present and legacy, which hopefully she will leave behind for her future. This woman has a humble, “church lady”–like appeal, filled with symbolic entities engraved in her attire.

In her head, she carries the burden of her ancestors’ long and painful past, while her jacket is covered with the mended patches of forgotten history found later in life. Bearden’s approach of collecting and adding mementos in his work spoke of the people around his community. Today, his work continues to represent many of these same realities and *Give Me the Strength* embodies his legacy of honor and humble admiration for future artists to follow.

Wayne Hodge
Born 1976, Roanoke, VA
Lives and works in Harlem, NY

The genius of Bearden is the way in which he constructed worlds of amazing depth and form. I am always amazed to see an original work, as I get lost in the many layers of the image. He is both a master storyteller and grand architect. His worlds are both mirrors and X-rays of our own that fantastically render things that are familiar.

His attention to materials transcended the medium, and there are times when I really believe that I am no longer looking at a collage, but at a relief or even a sculpture. He is an artist that I have looked to in my own work, and he continues to inspire me, as I know he continues to inspire new generations.

Nicole Miller
Born 1982, Tuscon, AZ
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Layers of images reveal to me a sense of process in Bearden’s work. I can visualize his thoughts through images intertwined between subjectivity and the iconic. They seem to say, “Things are complicated, but I am piecing them together.” Bearden was both a witness and a creator—an example of the artist’s place in the “call and response” dance between maker and viewer, back and forth again.

Kori Newkirk
Born 1970, Bronx, NY
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

The clear-eyed crystalline fracture of blackness. The burden and the privilege of it all.

Tapped into the inner mad scientist, Dr. Frankenstein, truth and storyteller. A whisper in your ear, a shout from the hills and the rooftop... cause an echo that never fades but returns as fierce as ever.

The rock. Does it form the foundation as it shatters the window?

The paper. Common and communal. Light as a feather, heavy as lead, history on its surface.

The scissors. Cold and sharp, a slice a cut. The microphone forged from a weapon and tool.

Urgent beats on a drum to urgent digital beats remixed and sampled to create anew.

The hand that caresses raised into a fist.

Who is holding the mirror and who is reflected back? There is no fire next time... the fire is now.
Robert Pruitt
Born 1975, Washington, DC
Lives and works in Houston, TX

I have always found great value in Romare Bearden’s engagement with the Spiral Group artist collective. This group grew out of, and responded to, the politics around race in its moment. The collective emulated similar movements and groups of its time, but as an artist group, it laid the groundwork for many of the cultural and social organizations I am personally fond of: AfriCOBRA, the Black Arts Movement, the AACM, etc. His involvement with this collective suggested to me an investment in community and a need to communicate the varied and complex black condition. His own work, particularly the collages and photomontages, seem to mirror this need to disseminate and transmit our multitude of experiences. Within those layers of jumbled images and faces are echoes of a diverse but shared account, and it is this method of storytelling that I have found the most influential.

William Villalongo
Born 1975, Hollywood, FL
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

My high school art classes introduced me to Romare Bearden’s work. At that point, he was one of the few African-American artists I had ever heard of. I remember being struck with awe, as if some metaphysical force was allowing me a glimpse into the past to a vision of African-American life that was different from my time and space, yet so hauntingly familiar. Seeing his work today reminds me of how nostalgia for a time long past for African Americans is almost always a double-edged sword. One can almost hear jazz musicians practicing scales in those packed urban scenes through the sharp scale shifts of cut magazine images and Color-aid paper. The figures have a familiar swagger and style. Joy and poverty are not contradictory, nor is beauty passive. In other works, black figures find themselves the subjects of quintessentially Western romantic narratives.

Alison Saar
Born 1956, Los Angeles, CA
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

I recall Romare Bearden’s The Prevalence of Ritual catalogue having a place of reverence in our home. I was in high school at the time, struggling with the things sixteen-year-olds struggle with and his work helped me make sense of my identity. The strength of family, the shared rituals of food, music and dance, all took on a new importance.
I was immediately enamored with his art and hence spent a good deal of my first years in college emulating his work. Sadly I never had the opportunity to meet Bearden, but I continue to be thrilled every time I get to see one of his gems in “the flesh.”

Shinique Smith
Born 1971, Baltimore, MD
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

My earliest memories of looking at art, seriously and intently, come from when I was a child growing up in Baltimore. I spent hours staring at reproductions of Romare Bearden’s work that my grandmother had on her walls. She loved him and we would make special trips to the Baltimore Museum of Art to “see the Beardens.” She would talk about his work and say his name with a certain deep tone and joyful inflection—I could feel that the images affected her deeply. They held the same patterns, the same cloth of our surroundings. He had captured life’s joys, hardships and common quiet with a whimsy that made it all seem beautiful. She decorated her home with him and filled my mind with fabrics and collage, and he filled my heart with a romance for the figure and the everyday. This work is dedicated to memory of them both.

William Pope.L
Born 1955, Newark, NJ
Lives and works in Chicago, IL

My grandmother introduced me to the work of Romare Bearden when I was nine or ten. We saw his work at The Studio Museum in Harlem and later at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Romare Bearden came into my consciousness before Michelangelo, before Picasso, before de Kooning, Ryman, Wittgenstein or Cronenberg. He SEEMED so important. My grandmother thought so. The museums thought so. Maybe he was too important. I couldn’t fathom it back then. And now I still cannot. How did he stomach his role as the Jackie Robinson of the American art world? And where did he put all the bits of himself that could not be accepted as part of the so-called “African-American experience”? And if each Bearden-bit is, in some sense, a separate and distinct Bearden then how might you rank and number these bits? With what bit would you start and conclude? Would you end with Bearden’s death or his legend? If you ended with his legend, how would you conclude it?
Spring Preview

Caribbean: Crossroads of the World

by Katherine Finerty, Curatorial Intern

Groundbreaking in scope and collaborative nature, Caribbean: Crossroads of the World will explore historic and contemporary art related to the Caribbean and its modern history, acknowledging the region’s diversity of voices to reveal a truly diasporic vision. As a joint project between El Museo del Barrio, the Queens Museum of Art and The Studio Museum in Harlem, this exhibition will expand both historical and visual representations of the Caribbean, ultimately portraying the region as a confluence of multiple cultures. By revealing the interconnections between internal and external cultural influences, Caribbean seeks to make new links between traditional and evolving art aesthetics, as well as diverse museum audiences.

All three venues for the exhibition are situated in urban communities that have many people of Caribbean origin or descent, a population that has developed largely through immigration and cultural exchange. These settings endow this exhibition with unique local relevance, in addition to global breadth and impact. United by their parallel missions of progressive, creative representation and local outreach, El Museo, the Queens Museum and the Studio Museum will present distinct but interrelated exhibitions empowering indigenous and diasporic voices. Through dynamic theoretical, art historical and exhibitionary frameworks, each museum will investigate the variety of international cultures that have served as both impositions and inspirations shaping Caribbean expression. While the influences of Spanish, French, Dutch, English and both South and East Asian societies will be thoroughly explored, Caribbean ultimately seeks to stress the impact of indigenous and African cultures on Caribbean identity.

Six years in the making, Caribbean’s multi-venue exhibitions and citywide programs will be open to the public starting in June 2012. This project’s ambition is further exemplified by the extensive commitment and cooperation of an unprecedented number of curators, scholars and staff members contributing to the development of a momentous publication, school curriculum and comprehensive symposia relating to the exhibition themes. The principal curators, experts and art historians include Edward Sullivan (on twentieth-century Latin American art), Gerald Alexis (on Haitian art), Virginia Perez-Ratton (on Anglophone Caribbean art), Lowery Stokes Sims (on Cuban and American art) and Yolanda Wood Pujols (on Caribbean and Cuban art). Each museum will approach two distinct themes: “People” and “Places.” At El Museo, Patriot Acts will investigate the complex formations of national and local identities within the paradoxical landscape and waters of the Caribbean, and Counterpoints will juxtapose models of colonization with the sharply contrasted outcomes of social, economic and political development. The Queens Museum will present Kingdoms of This World to address the transculturation resulting from European
contact and conquest, highlighting how performance, spirituality and the body came to serve as modes of survival, resistance and celebration that can still be seen today in aesthetic forms such as Carnival. *Fluid Motions* will explore the literal and symbolic significance of the water framing the Caribbean as a point of constant encounter and movement. Departing from this history, *Fluid Motions* will also interrogate how the region is currently framed as a “paradise of disguise”—an idealization of luxury, bliss and tourism that ominously conceals the tragic truths of economic, political and social corruption.

Finally, at The Studio Museum in Harlem the theme of “People” will be represented in *Shades of History*, a selection tackling the demonization of black people since the Haitian Revolution—a phenomenon that has fueled the myth of the inherently violent black man that our society still faces. Using slavery, abolitionism and the Haitian Revolution as historical foundations, the exhibition will explore cultural manifestations and confrontations of this stigma in modern ideologies such as the New Negro, Negritude and postcolonialism. This theme will be expanded through *Land of the Outlaw*, which confronts the conjured aesthetic of danger and fear originally perpetuated by outlaw slave traders and treasure seekers who represented black people as ruthless devils, zombies and sorceresses. By confronting these disturbing and rampant racial stereotypes of the past and present, the Studio Museum aims to enable contemporary artistic visions to create a nuanced and empowered representation of the Caribbean today.

*Caribbean: Crossroads of the World* seeks to be as diverse as the rich cultural history of the Caribbean itself. By examining notions of “hybridity” through the region’s transnationalism and cross-fertilization, the creative expression presented will break borders and establish new routes for a more fluid understanding and appreciation of the Caribbean within global culture.
For the Studio Museum's newest installation in the Project Space, interdisciplinary artist Kira Lynn Harris has created *The Block | Bellona*, a reimagining of Romare Bearden's *The Block* (1971), his iconic, six-panel, eighteen-foot-long collage depicting life in Harlem. In honor of this installation, Assistant Curator Lauren Haynes posed a series of questions to Harris about her installation and her experiences with Bearden's art.

Lauren Haynes: Why did you choose to do a Project Space installation about Romare Bearden? And why focus on *The Block* specifically?

Kira Lynn Harris: Using *The Block* as a touchstone seemed natural in terms of my own work and art practice. Most, if not all, of my work addresses architectural spaces and the phenomenology of those spaces. I’ve also created several works that center on Harlem, my home since fall 1998. Those works include sound, video and photographic pieces, all investigating some aspect of Harlem as a lived aesthetic experience. What is different here is working with building exteriors, rather than my usual interior spaces.

LH: When was your first experience with Bearden's work?

KLH: My first encounter with Bearden and his work was during my undergrad years at Occidental College in Los Angeles. I’d recently decided to major in art and realized it might be a very tough go as a profession for anyone, especially a woman of color. I began looking for antecedents, and while I was able to find art by white women artists with a little digging, finding evidence of African-American artists proved more challenging. Finally, one day I happened to be hanging around the art studios as art students do and, leafing through a random art magazine, I came across a feature article on Bearden. He was the first professional African-American artist I learned about. I later transferred to University of California at Santa Cruz, where I made such a project of researching women artists and African-American artists and, by extension, feminism and black history. My fellow students became genuinely confused as to my actual major. In graduate school at CalArts, this developed into the study of critical studies and postcolonial theory. Ironically, rather than making these investigations the focus of my own art practice, I instead became ever more concerned with formal issues, subjective experience and the phenomenological. Somehow, knowing the richness and variety of art-making by African Americans and other marginalized artists helped me feel free to investigate issues other than those addressing what Walter Mosley dubbed “the nature of our own chains.” Instead, my work enters into territory usually deemed the “universal,” territory almost always reserved for the “universal” subject/artist—an artist described by artist Adrian Piper, in an incredibly funny riff, as the “het WASP male, the pampered only son of doting parents.”

LH: Does your installation focus on any particular parts of *The Block* or the whole thing?

KLH: I look at various sections, not necessarily in the same layout as the original. However, as light is one of the main investigations of my practice, I hope to integrate that crazy oversized light bulb. That’s a bit more literal than I tend to get, but I also like that it’s as much a nod to Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937) as a way to incorporate one of my main interests in a space in which light will be notable mostly for its absence.

LH: What was your first experience using chalk? What made you want to work in that medium?

KLH: I honestly don’t even remember my first encounter with chalk! Almost certainly it was as a child in kindergarten. That being said, who didn’t want to be able to write on the classroom chalkboard when young? Of course, a lot of kids now know only dry erase and Smart boards. So anyway, chalk certainly resonates with childhood and learning in many ways. More central to my own practice, however, is the ephemerality of the medium. Most of my work is site-specific, experiential and fleeting—requiring the viewer to actually be present to see the piece at all. Such transient work also carries with it an inherent urgency in anticipation of its loss.
Kira Lynn Harris

Drawing on Bearden

LH: Science fiction is a big aspect of your practice. Are there any sci-fi elements in your Project Space installation?

KLH: Yes, absolutely there are sci-fi references, both implicit and explicit, specifically to the work of Harlem native Samuel Delany, whose writings range from speculative fiction to critical essays to memoirs and letters. My interest in Delany’s work has to do with his exploration of themes such as perception, memory, mythology and language. Like my choice of The Block, referencing the work of Delany, as I also did in an installation at CUE Art Foundation in 2009, seems natural.

Kira Lynn Harris was born and raised in Los Angeles, received her MFA from California Institute of the Arts in 1998 and completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1999. In addition to a 2001–02 residency at the Studio Museum, Harris has held residencies at the Center for Photography in Woodstock, New York; Omi International Art Center in Ghent, New York; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Her work has been shown at institutions across the world, including the CUE Art Foundation in New York (2009), Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2007), Delaware Center for Contemporary Art (2006), MoMA PS1 in New York (2005) and the Studio Museum. Harris lives and works in Harlem.

The Project Space is a dynamic location dedicated to site-specific works and projects at the Studio Museum. This facet of the Museum’s exhibition program continues our commitment to activating multiple architectural sites throughout the building—such as the lobby, atrium and façade—that provide artists with laboratories for innovative contemporary art projects. The Project Space was inaugurated in 2006 with Equalizer, an installation by Odili Donald Odita and, in 2008, featured Like it Like that, an installation by Shinique Smith.

Collected. Ritual explores the performative and process-oriented aspects of making art and examines ritual as an act of special—and sometimes mythical—significance. The works in this exhibition were chosen for the artists’ innovative engagement with ritual, whether through artistic practices that use symbolic actions, or the day-to-day act of art making itself. This exhibition, organized by Assistant Curator Naima J. Keith, explores the connections between art and ritual through twenty-five works of art from the permanent collection, that span the last thirty years.

For many artists, including Betye Saar (b. 1926), interest in ritual and spirituality led to experimentations with collage and assemblage, including visual musings on African, Caribbean and African-American mysticism. Since the 1960s, Saar has used assemblage—in which traditionally non-artistic materials are combined into three-dimensional structures—to create both small pieces resembling shrines and large scale installations. While attending the National Conference of Artists in Chicago in 1970, Saar and artist David Hammons (b. 1943) visited the Field Museum’s African art collection. The spiritual power and cumulative aesthetic of several African ritual art traditions inspired Saar to produce what she regards as her “ancestral works,” which mimicked African processes of accumulation and ritualization. For many artists, the 1960s and 1970s brought a renewed interest in African art. Saar felt a stronger connection to an ancestral past and in later years sought to capture emotional and spiritual power in her artistic process through symbolic steps she called her “ritual.” Through this predetermined process, Saar transformed objects by investing them with alternative narratives—effectively ritualizing them. The completed art became remnants of this ritual experience.

For others, such as William Pope.L (b. 1955), ritual layering is an evident artistic process. Since 1978, Pope.L has staged more than forty “crawls,” in which the artist literally crawls through city streets on his belly, back, hands, and knees in an attempt to draw attention to the plight of those members of society who are least empowered. His “Skin Set Drawings,” rife with complexity and humor, speak to broader, frailer human questions on prejudice and racism, which Pope.L frequently addresses. As the artist put it: “I believe art re-ritualizes the everyday to reveal something fresh about our lives.”

Betye Saar
Window of Ancient Sirens, 1979; Gift of Wynn and Sally Kramarsky, New York 82.6.1

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; The City of New York; and Council Member Inez E. Dickens, 9th Council District, Speaker Christine Quinn and the New York City Council.
Who, What, Wear: Selections from the Permanent Collection looks at evolutions in self-expression, fashion, artistic technique and societal ideals of beauty, as seen through the Studio Museum’s permanent collection. Organized by Assistant Curators Lauren Haynes and Naima J. Keith, and on view through May 27, 2012, Who, What, Wear seeks to examine how style mediates the self and the world, and how outward attire mirrors inner taste while consistently reflecting the complicated time and places in which we live. For Studio, the curators reflect on four of the artworks in the show.

In Samuel Fosso’s Self Portrait, the young artist is posed in a tight shirt, dark glasses and high-waisted pants. He isn’t looking into the camera, but is focused on an imaginary point in space, like a controlled dancer. He stands in front of a gray backdrop; the technical setup of his indoor studio is indicated by vertical rows of studio lamps made from tin cooking pots. Fosso described the intention behind his self-portraits as an attempt to stage himself as part of a cosmopolitan pop culture. He wanted to show how good he looked, and this photograph does not disappoint. Interestingly, Fosso never intended...
to publish these images. It was only in 1994, after French photographer Bernard Deschamps happened upon Fosso’s work, that they reached the international art world. Today, these photographs transmit far more than the admittedly justified narcissistic intent. Fosso’s staged images reveal formal and conceptual inventiveness as he experiments with his dual roles of photographer and model, consistently projecting a modern and international identity in his work.

During a time when commercial photography and museum art photography operate in largely separate contexts, Fosso has become one of an increasingly rare species of people who is both a photographer and artist. Once described by Studio Museum Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden as the “Madonna of The Studio Museum in Harlem” Hendricks’s Lawdy Mama is full of style, both personal and artistic. His bold portrayals of attitude and style capture moments of fashion following the civil rights movement, presenting his subjects as powerful icons. The artist painted his subject, his cousin Kathy, in a style deeply influenced by Byzantine-era religious art, bringing to mind images of saints, angels and the Virgin Mary. Lawdy Mama is emblematic of Hendrick’s portrait style, which brings the fashions and personalities of people living in urban centers during the 1960s, 70s and 80s together with many art historical styles and references, including the gold-leaf techniques found in ancient Roman and Byzantine iconography. Like many of Hendrick’s portraits, Lawdy Mama’s style isn’t only seen through her clothes and hairstyle, but also in her attitude and her gaze.

First exhibited for his one-man show at The Studio Museum in Harlem in 2005, Chris Ofili’s “Afro Muses” series comprises a suite
of 181 colorful, quietly celebratory, watercolor portraits of men and women whimsically depicted in expression and dress. For *Who, What, Wear*, we decided to include one of the female diptychs from the larger series. *Untitled (diptych from Afro Muses series)* depicts a woman, rendered in a three-quarter pose, adorned in colorful costume with richly painted jewelry, pink lips and a somewhat fantastical hairdo. As real as she seems, she doesn’t actually exist. She grew out of Ofili’s imagination, inspired by images he spotted in magazines or on television or conjured up from subconscious impressions absorbed on the street or at a party. Ofili’s muse is the contemporary black woman and all her glorious countenances. The works elicit both visceral and intellectual responses, making the viewer complicit in the dance between the seducer and the seduced.

The kids in Lolo Veleko’s “Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder” series ooze cool. From their choices of fashion to the way they pose for the camera (some look boldly at the viewer, others gaze shyly away), they all share a certain element of coolness. Sibu, a frequent subject in this series, has a certain style and attitude that make it possible for him to look good wearing an outfit that others might
not even consider—matching pants and a jacket with bright colors over another brightly colored shirt with flowers. Veleko’s “Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder” series gives viewers a look into the fashions and style of the urban street scene in Johannesburg, South Africa. The artist so named the portrait series because, as she says, “other people, when they saw those people dressed up like that, would ask: ‘How can you dress up in yellow pants and a lime green jersey with stripes?’ And I thought the way I see beauty and the way I perceive beauty might be different to someone else next to me.”


VideoStudio

Rodney McMillian / Robin Rhode

by Thomas J. Lax, Exhibition Coordinator and Program Associate

Rodney McMillian

Untitled (futon)
(still), 2009
Courtesy the artist and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

VideoStudio is an ongoing series of video and film installations inaugurated in fall 2008. Organized by Exhibition Coordinator and Program Associate Thomas J. Lax, this fifth iteration of the program takes an in-depth look at individual works by two artists who have significantly contributed to the relationship between moving-image technology and other artistic media, including performance, drawing, painting and installation. Through innovative and experimental forms, both artists create new ways of engaging with contemporary ideas about society.

Rodney McMillian

Untitled (futon)


Rodney McMillian's (b. 1969) Untitled (futon)—shot in one static take, using lo-fi equipment—depicts the artist repeatedly stabbing a futon with a knife, reducing the mattress to a pile of cotton, which he subsequently discards. In the video, McMillian uses performance as a strategy, both acting before a camera to make a recording for an audience, and performing the discrete task of destroying a mattress. Through a simple, repetitive gesture, the artist makes reference to the history of painting, substituting futon and knife-jab for canvas and brushstroke.
Robin Rhode’s (b. 1976) *Parabolic Bike* follows a child as she tries to ride her bike across an ever-changing curved line. To make the video, Rhode staged aerial photographs from the roof of his mother’s house in Johannesburg, South Africa, then sequenced the images to create a stop-motion digital animation. The whimsical narrative depicts the young girl as she tries to ride across a parabola formed by bricks that are continually rearranged and consistently turn her around. In this concise video, set to music that oscillates between consonance and dissonance, the artist uses bricks as a drawing tool and emphasizes the passing of time as shadows of a tree and telephone wires shift across the cracked, tan ground.

*VideoStudio: Rodney McMillian / Robin Rhode* is generously supported by a grant from the Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation.
Spring Preview Ralph Lemon

by Thomas J. Lax, Exhibition Coordinator and Program Associate
Ralph Lemon (b. 1952) is a movement-based artist who works in multiple media including choreography, sculpture, photography, video and drawing. Trained in literature, theater and dance, Lemon founded the Ralph Lemon Company in 1985 as a touring ensemble based in dance theater and postmodern movement. In 1995, he shifted his focus and established Cross Performance, a research-based company he has continued to use as a platform for creating new modes of presentation through collaborations across cultural forms and artistic disciplines.

Lemon’s work consistently privileges the notion of artistic process. As projects develop over several years, they incorporate, accumulate and redact elements from previous iterations. This upcoming exhibition, for example, emerges from the artist’s ongoing work with Walter Carter (1907–2010), whom Lemon met during a research trip to Little Yazoo, a historically black rural town in the Mississippi Delta region where Carter was known as the oldest man. Lemon and Carter developed a friendship that evolved into a collaboration as Carter unexpectedly became a partner in Lemon’s creative endeavors. Creating performances together, Lemon prepared scores that varied from task-oriented instructions to reinterpretations of movement from science-fiction films he screened for Carter. In these pieces, often performed with no audience and not originally meant for public viewing, Carter interpreted Lemon’s scores in radical and unexpected ways. This shared experience in turn became inspiration and fodder for a number of Lemon’s choreographies and exhibitions over the past eight years, including *Come Home Charlie Patton* (2004), *Walter* (2006–08) and *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere* (2010).

This exhibition marks an important iteration of Lemon’s work—the material fruition of live performance in a museum gallery setting. This three-part project includes a video installation, a suite of eight photographs and thirty drawings made into a video animation. Together, the exhibition transforms elements from what was an intimate and shared experience into a publicly accessible narrative. The works on view draw on rich cultural references, including science-fiction film (often used to explore the trespassing of time and place as well as aspirations for modern timelessness) and the rich history of the Mississippi Delta (emblematic of the American South’s racial, economic and musical legacy). An allegory for the possibilities and limitations of moving between different performance contexts and cultural locations, the project asks questions about translation, meaning and loss. What are the stakes when communicating between two distinct life worlds? When Carter appears in the video and photographs, do we see him or a symbol of him, what Lemon has described as “an imagined open space story”? How do these ideas test the emotional ground of filial love, personal mourning and cultural memory?
This spring, the Studio Museum presents Shift: Projects | Perspectives | Directions. Organized as a group of small exhibitions, Shift presents work in thematic groupings, series of works by individual artists and focuses on single works of art. Drawn from both the Studio Museum’s permanent collection as well as special loans, the exhibition provides contemporary reflections on ongoing artistic ideas, themes and visions.

Tracey Moffat
Invocations (10), 2000
Gift of Rena Bransten, San Francisco
03.4.18
On Thursday, August 11, 2011, the Studio Museum partnered with Maysles Cinema for the first outdoor film screening in the Museum Courtyard. With a set by DJ Ski Hi, a pop-up movie screen and a projector, we treated over 120 guests to Nelson E. Breen’s documentary *Bearden Plays Bearden* (1981), which chronicles the life of the Modernist master through groundbreaking interviews and a highly original form. In this Q+A, the Studio Museum’s Thomas J. Lax sits down with Maysles Cinema’s Jessica Green to discuss the Maysles Institute and its relationships to its various communities and partners.

**Thomas J. Lax:** Can you tell me a little bit about Maysles Cinema’s history and mission?

**Jessica Green:** The Maysles Cinema is a half of the Maysles Institute, a community center for documentary film that also houses a low-cost-to-free youth and adult documentary arts education program. The Maysles Institute was founded by documentary pioneer Albert Maysles, who, along with his brother David, codirected the films *Salesman* (1968), *Gimme Shelter* (1970) and *Grey Gardens* (1976).
Bearden Plays Bearden

The Maysles Cinema is an independent, nonprofit movie theater up the block from the Studio Museum. We primarily show documentaries, often followed by discussions, and performances twenty-one nights a month. Every summer we also hit the road for a series of free music performances and film screenings around the neighborhood. The Studio Museum event was part of that.

TJL: What is the relationship between the genres of documentary film and narrative film and Harlem as a neighborhood and community?

JG: Harlem has been depicted to great lengths in nonfiction and fiction film, so there’s a lot of material to reflect upon. I Remember Harlem (1980), Across 110th Street (1972), Alice Neel (2007), The Cool World (1964), Rezoning Harlem (2008) and The Black Power Mixtape (2011) have all been shown at the Cinema and there are many others we have yet to show. So there are many opportunities to consider Harlem at different historical moments. We also host a lot of really interesting discussions following the viewings about Harlem at the Cinema with artists, community organizers, writers, performers, politicians, scholars and audience members. Harlem has historically been—and will continue to be—a deeply creative community, the kind of neighborhood that inspires all the arts.

TJL: Because this year marks the centennial of the birth of Romare Bearden (1911–1988), screening Nelson E. Breen’s 1981 film Bearden Plays Bearden was particularly timely. What drew you to this important film?

JG: I really like Breen’s film and its aesthetic, for one thing. I saw the effort on the part of the Studio Museum, and collectively around Harlem, to celebrate the centennial. I thought that was beautiful and I wanted Maysles to be a part of it. Without a doubt, Bearden’s work speaks to the relationship between Harlem and creativity. He embodies it and it embodies him. Indeed it’s good that there is acknowledgment of the centennial, because he is quite the inspiration, both for aficionados and for those noticing him for the first time.

TJL: For me, the evening was a success because we were able to get both longtime Studio Museum supporters and completely new audiences to come out on a Thursday evening during the summer.

JG: I noticed that some of the audience members seemed to recognize, personally, some of the artists and scholars in the film, including Bearden. That kind of rootedness is, in part, what I think made the evening so special. And I’m really pleased that a new audience showed up, and in the Studio Museum’s absolutely lovely courtyard!

Maysles Cinema is located at 343 Lenox Avenue. For more information, visit mayslesinstitute.org.
Over the past year, the curatorial team—including former Associate Curator Naomi Beckwith, Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden, Assistant Curator Lauren Haynes, Exhibition Coordinator and Program Associate Thomas J. Lax, Curatorial Fellow Tasha Parker and Curatorial Assistant Abbe Schriber—organized Studio Lab, an artist-centered program for ideas in formation. Over the summer we concluded the program, organizing an Artist-Initiated Exploration with local artist Derrick Adams, as well as three Think Tanks with contemporary artists, Museum staff and cutting-edge academics.

We organized the Think Tanks around three interrelated topics: cultural specificity, performance and socially engaged practice. Before each Think Tank, we prepared a concept paper describing the issue from our understanding and perspective, and posed a set of questions designed as prompts for our colleagues’ presentations. We defined culturally specific institutions as museums and alternative art spaces conceived of in the late 1960s both to contextualize art by individuals from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups and to provide a progressive model for viewers and gallery-goers to engage with art work, ideas and artists directly. Since then, desegregation, the culture wars and identity politics have shifted the place of black artists in relation to art institutions, begging the perennial institutional question: Are culturally specific institutions still necessary? Performance art emerged at a similar historical moment as
widely held cultural specific institutions had, responding to art’s perceived sanctity, aspirations to material posterity and intimate relationship to systems of market valuation and exchange. Recently, museums have embraced performance through exhibitions, collections, documentation and re-performance. How might performance practices by artists of African descent shift presumptions about how performance is historicized and historically mediated? In the past decade, socially engaged artistic practices have gained institutional support as Masters of Arts programs have been founded, edited volumes have been published and nonprofit organizations have been built—all dedicated to this artistic approach. How can and should a museum support and otherwise engage with this way of working? What are the specific demands of Harlem’s multiple and changing communities on this way of working?

We designed these discussions to be a place of critical brainstorming, with no fixed outcome, to promote honest reflection on some of the most pressing issues facing museums today, for our curatorial staff, interdepartmental colleagues and peers alike. Offering a rare opportunity to step back from the day-to-day work of organizing exhibitions, we were able to engage ideas that we will continue to share with our publics through our curatorial program, public programs and printed matter, such as our publication imprint and Studio magazine. The presentations ranged from theoretical positions on innovative ideas to concrete examples of exhibitions and projects. As a start, here’s a short list of some of the questions we posed to our Think Tanks.

**Cultural Specificity**

Should the roles and expectations of culturally specific institutions be different from those of other museums? Why does the Studio Museum use the term “black art” to describe the various and open-ended ways artists of African descent make work, when ideas of “post-blackness” and “post-racial society” predominate in popular discourse? Can a culturally specific institution define its “communities” in ways that are experimental or provisional, while still providing reliable alliances, networks and nexuses for those communities?

**Performance**

Is performance a medium with a historically determined genealogy and set of concerns? Or is performance an approach, a mode of analysis, a reworking of grand historical narratives? How have exhibiting and collecting performance changed the ways contemporary artists make work in performance? Is performance inherently live and time-based? Can we consider a work a “performance” in the absence of a performer or through a seemingly static object?

**Socially Engaged Practice**

What is “socially engaged practice”? Is it defined as works of art that directly engage participants, through the building of organizations and institutions beyond the gallery and...
museum, or by the creation of significant relationships between artists and communities? How should museum curators, educators, publishers and programmers engage with artists who work in these ways? Is it important to hold on to an idea of “art” that is distinct from “life”? Are there differences between artists with socially engaged practices and artists who make paintings, film and sculptures with political, ethical and social aspirations?

For our Artist-Initiated Explorations, we gave free rein to artists, and asked them to identify hypotheses to further explore and develop. During one- to two-week-long residencies, invited artists pursued their ongoing interests and, in different ways, engaged with the idea of the public. During his residency, Derrick Adams (b. 1970) conducted research on David Hammons’s Bliz-aard Ball Sale (1983), in which Hammons staged a street sale of snowballs at Cooper Square in the East Village after a New York snowstorm. Adams, whose multimedia practice both critiques and makes use of media culture, consumerism and product placement in contemporary art, extends Hammons’s humorous critique of commodity culture in his sale of an object that would most likely not make it home with its new owner. For his exploration, Adams read art historical texts, explored the site where the performance had taken place, spoke with people who had participated in the performance and researched other artists who had referenced this work. His residency informed his November 2011 exhibition, Communicating with Shadows (independently produced and organized by Carmen Hammons). For the time-based project, he created improvisatory interpretations—which he distinguishes from literal reenactments—of five performances in the history of postwar American and European art. Appropriating iconic photographic documentation, Adams created two-dimensional cutouts onto which he projected a light to cast a shadow in which he performed. In this way, Adams’s new work ... I Just Crush a Lot (2011), for which he crushed several bags of ice into a snow-like material in a borrowed studio space, stresses the material qualities of ephemerality, transformation and disappearance in ways that test the institutionalization of Hammons’s anti-institutional practice.

Adams describes his performance practice as one that “remixes and highlights an original artistic context and intent, and explores new ways of seeing these historical works as they pertain to current conversations.” Studio Lab seeks to follow Adams’s lead, highlighting the ways museums can work alongside artists to contextualize and interpret historic ideas and works of art according to the exigencies of the contemporary moment.

Studio Lab is generously supported by the Ford Foundation.
The Fine Art of Collecting

Collecting art isn’t just for museums! Collecting is rewarding, meaningful and fun for art enthusiasts on any budget. *The Fine Art of Collecting* demystifies the collecting process, putting you on the path to beginning or growing your collection of art by artists of African descent.

*The Fine Art of Collecting* relaunches in spring 2012! Please contact Erin Gilbert at egilbert@studiomuseum.org or 212.864.4500 x212 for details.

Leslie Hewitt  
*Riffs on Real Time*, 2008  
Edition of 35 produced for the Studio Museum Benefit Print Project  
Courtesy the artist
Tribble & Mancenido
James Frank Tribble  
Born 1983, Columbia, SC  
Tracey Mancenido-Tribble  
Born 1980, Staten Island, NY  
Live and work in Jersey City, NJ

I Love You, Harlem, 2011

We created a “Found in Harlem” series focusing on the commodities one finds on 125th Street—African fabrics, incense and oils, books, mix-tape-style CDs, etc.—staying clear of the corporate chain stores that are dramatically altering the landscape. We felt that it was important to document what has made, and continues to make, Harlem so unique. These individual merchants and their goods are a large part of that. I Love You, Harlem is a celebration of Harlem as a place and an idea, in both past and present.

Senetchut Floyd
Expanding the Walls participant,  
Born 1995  
Kamit Preparatory Institute,  
Brooklyn, NY

Faceless, 2011

St. Nicholas and West 125th Street. I sit here watching the people, calling out to them, calling for them to come and read me or have a conversation, but no one comes, no one notices me. I am faceless.
What Is Won by “Continuing to Play,”
East Harlem, NYC, 2006

This photograph was taken quickly. There is nothing canned about it. The man in the photograph lived down the street from me. I had attempted to photograph him a number of times, but the information in the frame of the photograph(s) didn’t quite come together. Sometimes it is helpful for an artist to stay in an area—to saturate. But other times it can make work tired and stale. As luck would have it, the potential of the image presented itself, and I had my camera with me.

Hands With a Heart, 2011

I was walking along the streets of Harlem when I heard the sound of drums fill the air. I made my way toward the music and was pleasantly surprised to find this group of men sitting under the Adam Clayton Powell statue on 125th Street. The group was large—men both young and old laughed and smiled together as their hands tapped rapidly along the drums’ surface. Their cheer was contagious; a crowd formed as the music brightened the environment. Onlookers clapped and cheered as the festive drumming brought warmth to their souls. Even I, tired as I was, tapped my feet and moved to the rhythm. I quickly brought out my camera and began to snap pictures. This is Harlem, I thought, a world of its own full of culture, color and energy.
Kabakov Son, 2011

In 1984, Russian artist Ilya Kabakov slang-shot his cosmonaut hero beyond Earth’s authorized reality in his famous piece *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment*. The same year, actor Joe Morton was chased through the streets of Harlem as an extraterrestrial nonbeing in director John Sayles’s urban sci-fi classic, *The Brother from Another Planet*. Some twenty-seven years later, Harlem has again become the landing strip for a “brother from another planet.” I imagine Kabakov as the hero cosmonaut, but with an illegitimate child who gets propelled back to Earth. Thrust from the fence-tangled stroller, the child’s body slices space, bouncing from cool brick to grizzled pavement. His entrance smacks with the reality of Harlem. Like Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Kabakov’s child roams Harlem, searching for artistic ways to discuss the complexities of life.

Disassociated, 2011

My paintings, with their loud colors, divergent angles and competing layers, seem to indulge in the language of expressionism. But upon inspection, the colors are thin, artificial; the compositions are deliberately unresolved; the layers do not build and cohere but drift, ignore each other or clash. Despite this lack of conviction, a certain buoyant or even jubilant attitude is communicated. For my *Harlem Postcard*, I focused on aspects of the urban landscape that beckoned me with visual kismet. Zooming in on ragged or discolored signage, I flagged the ripped edge, seeking reflections in panes of glass, awning stripes and leftover duct tape. I saw in abstraction not essence, but artifice.

It was fun.

This image was a last-minute decision—the façade of a supermarket, its window display tattered by the abuse of the workaday, the pixels of the printed sign exposed like enlarged pores, offering up an image of fractured abundance.
I wanted to make a work that addresses what I already know about Harlem. For me, the Harlem Globetrotters represent a certain kind of lineage and heritage associated with black people. Harlem has been the stage for many black performers, whether at the Apollo, the Dance Theatre of Harlem or the Studio Museum, and has played host to a slew of entertainers over the years. Every time I make a painting, I feel like I’m putting on a show within the pictorial space. I feel a direct connection between the Globetrotters and what art does: entertain and engage the viewer through a type of performance.

A poem by Langston Hughes brought me to Sugar Hill, curious about a neighborhood with a nickname so fanciful that I never imagined it could exist. I devoured Sugar Hill in hungry snapshots for months on end. I worked a convoluted subway route to enter and leave by both day and night, so tantalized was I by the potential for sticky-sweet residue from the famed glory days of the Harlem Renaissance. Almost a year after I first strolled the streets of Sugar Hill, I found a resident who lives Harlem’s rich creative legacy. The elegant and hospitable Marjorie Eliot treats the public to jazz concerts at her home each weekend. Here she is paying tribute to a former bandmate at Jackie Robinson Park.
Spotlight on Education

Group Tours

by Shanta Scott, Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs

Last fall, kindergarten teacher Loisanne Duke from Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School brought twenty excited students to the Studio Museum for a guided tour and workshop. A museum educator led students in a discussion of artworks in Spiral: Perspectives on an African-American Art Collective, and Lyle Ashton Harris: Self/Portrait. Following the tour, the students moved into the workshop room to create artwork inspired by what they viewed in the galleries. Ms. Duke took a few moments with Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs Shanta Scott to share her thoughts on the experience.

Shanta Scott: Why did you decide to bring your students to the Studio Museum for a tour?

Loisanne Duke: It is important that my students understand their heritage and those that help create it.

SS: What did you enjoy most about the experience?

LD: I enjoyed watching my students interact with the artwork. They were able to make a direct connection to the work by talking about what they observed and what it meant to them.

SS: What impact did the visit have on your students?

LD: They have learned about new artists and made connections with them. After the workshop, they walked away knowing that they, too, can create art!

SS: What should other teachers know about group visits at the Studio Museum?

LD: The museum visit can be integrated into your classroom work, such as the social studies curriculum. We are using Romare Bearden’s artwork to address the common core standards. The Museum educators provide an engaging and enriching experience for the students.

To schedule a Museum visit for your class, visit studiomuseum.org/visit or contact the Education Department at 212.864.4500 x258.

School Programs at The Studio Museum in Harlem are supported with public support from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency. Additional funding is provided by Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Bank, Con Edison, Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts, Dedalus Foundation, Inc., The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, the May & Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Inc. and Wells Fargo.
Peek inside the galleries at the Studio Museum on a Tuesday afternoon and you might see a guided tour taking place, or an art-making workshop with lively discussion, compelling questions, thoughtful silence and, very often, laughter. That program happens to be *Arts & Minds at the Studio Museum*, which is designed especially for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and their care partners.

*Arts & Minds* was spearheaded by James Noble, Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology at Columbia University Medical Center. Noble was familiar with Alzheimer’s programs at other museums in the city, but noted that there was no such program in Harlem to which he could refer his patients. He then partnered with museum education consultant Carolyn Halpin-Healy, who reached out to the Studio Museum to discuss the possibility of such a program—and *Arts & Minds* was born. A pilot version of *Arts & Minds at the Studio Museum* was successfully held in spring 2010. Since then, the programs have taken place twice a month and the audience continues to grow. *Arts & Minds* is the first of its kind uptown.

Halpin-Healy, now Executive Director of a new nonprofit organization, *Arts & Minds*, Inc. observed, “In these galleries, people who are living with memory disorders come together to engage with art and to discuss matters of profound importance. As one gentleman who comes regularly to *Arts & Minds* said, ‘We can say what we feel here.’” At a time in people’s lives when forming new memories has become challenging, the Studio Museum is proud to serve as a space where people can creatively engage in the present.

*Spotlight on Education* by Shanta Scott, Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs

For more information on *Arts & Minds*, please contact Carolyn Halpin-Healy at chalpinhealy@artsandminds.org.

Senior Programs are supported by Council Member Inez E. Dickens, 9th Council District and Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer.
Glenn Leavell: So Neil, I’m gonna jump right in. I was watching a film called *Willie Dynamite* (1974) and one of the characters said to a group, “You got to have visionnnnn.” What comes to your mind when you think of “having visionnnnn”?

Neil Robinson: When I think of having vision I think of the ability to carve the future. You don’t see exactly what’s going to happen next, but you feel it. Part of knowing the future is knowing what you want out of life.

Glenn Leavell: Have you always been a person with vision?

Neil Robinson: I believe so. Growing up, I saw everything more than one standard way, or with many points of view. To have that ability of vision, I had to see things from a 4-D perspective. You have to have that extra sense, not just 3-D.

Glenn Leavell: Would you say that your vision was heightened in ETW?

Neil Robinson: I would say that it was tuned to a certain path. It was like a frequency. I had the vision, it was just identifying the right path to get to where I want, and ETW allowed me the opportunity to choose the path of studying art history—a portal to get where I want.

Glenn Leavell: Before you were interested in psychology, right? What was it...
about ETW that helped you arrive at this new path?

**NR:** I mean, attending ETW was like attending the Xavier School for Gifted Mutants. You saw that everyone has unique perspectives about art and life. Everyone was different, but at the same time we could all relate. It’s like, this is the environment that I’m getting exposure to. It’s just a part of art history. Imagine having a career in this. I could see myself doing this and loving it and then branching off into being a curator. I want to take art history somewhat out of its tradition and expand it to the common population. I want to be able to show the exact connections between art history and culture, and how it plays into everyday living.

**GL:** Okay. You want to bring it to the people.

**NR:** I want to bring it to the people.

**GL:** You used the word “expand” a few times. What does “expanding the walls” mean to you?

**NR:** “Expanding the walls” means many things. It means training yourself to break down the walls you were taught and reconstructing better walls for more space. You don’t want to be contained in just one idea or one belief just because you think you know a lot about it. Why be contained when you can broaden your knowledge, develop your senses, the way you talk, the way you understand languages, the way you see things. “Expanding the walls” is just another way of saying, “embracing the unknown.”

**GL:** What are some of the things you discovered about art, yourself, people or anything during the residency?

**NR:** Well, I was always an A++ student when it came to history. It’s something about having the privilege to know that something happened even though you weren’t there. So I incorporated that understanding into my art. In ETW we talked a lot about all types of artists—Wassily Kandinsky, Hank Willis Thomas, etc., and a lot about James VanDerZee. He’s a major part of history. I took his art, the way he photographed things and people, and I put that in a way to show that history is a form of art. No matter what. The art of war. The art of politics. Art is a part of everything. And without art there’s no way to express what’s different. To me, the definition of art is “different.” Artists take the time out to really understand what they see and ask, “Why do I have the urge to replicate or interpret this?”

**GL:** So you’ve been exposed to many different artists in ETW. Name some artists who you worked with that draw from real life and expose their audiences to facets of reality that they may not identify on their own.

**NR:** I would say Hank Willis Thomas with his un-branding and re-branding series, Jamel Shabazz and Kamau Amu Patton. Kamau did a workshop with us that helped us see the importance of diversity and understanding others, and how to not be brainwashed, but rather influenced or inspired by each other’s ideas.

**GL:** What makes ETW what it is?

**NR:** The people. And it’s an ongoing evolution.

**GL:** Do you think art is a way to reach the soul?

**NR:** Exactly.

For more information on Expanding the Walls, contact Gerald Leavell at 212.864.4500 x256.

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., The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and The David Rockefeller Fund.
The Studio Museum’s work doesn’t stop when we hang art on the walls. Exhibition-related programming engages our audience in interpretive, interdisciplinary and interactive experiences. Inspired by themes and topics in our exhibitions and permanent collection, our curators and educators create multiple opportunities for dialogue and learning about art and culture. We hope you’ll join in the discussion (and the fun!) at programs including The Artist’s Voice, The Fine Art of Collecting, walking tours of Harlem, Books + Authors and Uptown Fridays!

The Artist’s Voice is a series of discussions featuring emerging, mid-career and established artists in the Studio Museum’s exhibitions and permanent collection. The series investigates ideas and issues black artists address today and provides context for experiencing contemporary art by artists of African descent.

The Museum’s signature series The Fine Art of Collecting educates a new generation of art connoisseurs, providing them with access to renowned collections and world-class curators, conservators, appraisers and galleries. This series pools the resources of the Museum’s knowledgeable staff with that of other acclaimed arts professionals, and responds to an ever-evolving collecting market.

Gallery tours are an easy way to learn more about current exhibitions from the perspective of a Museum curator or educator. Come early to contextualize an evening program or stop by every Saturday for a fresh perspective!

From cathedrals to brownstones, historic sites to the latest hotspots, the streets of Harlem have something for everyone. Take advantage of the summer weather to explore the music, architecture, food and history of this vibrant, diverse and eclectic neighborhood by joining local experts on walking tours of Harlem.

Books + Authors explores the powerful connections between visual art and literature in our popular series of book signings, staged readings and conversations about nonfiction, poetry and novels, from the classic literature of the Harlem Renaissance to the latest contemporary fiction.

And don’t forget everyone’s perennial favorite, Uptown Fridays! Celebrate art, culture and summer in Harlem with neighbors and friends, and experience live music, fine wine, gallery tours and more.

For more information, visit studiomuseum.org.

Public Programs for Adults are made possible by support from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency, the MetLife Foundation and an endowment established by the Ron Carter Family in memory of Studio Museum in Harlem Trustee, Janet Carter.
Museum Store

During the month of February, Studio Museum members will receive a 25% discount on all items in the Museum Store!

The incredible selection of books, clothing, handcrafted jewelry, creative gifts for children and much more is sure give everyone a chance to find something to love.

Visit the Museum Store in person or online at studiomuseum.org/shop.
by Thelma Golden
Director and Chief Curator

CHICAGO, IL

*Rashid Johnson: Message to Our Folks*
April 7–August 5, 2012
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA)
Chicago, IL
mcachicago.org

*Message to Our Folks* is Rashid Johnson’s (b. 1977) first major museum solo exhibition to date, and includes ten years of work (with an emphasis on work made in the past five years), as well as new work commissioned by the MCA. Johnson, whose work was included in *Freestyle* (2001) and is in the Studio Museum’s permanent collection, is a New York–based conceptual artist questioning self-presumed notions of African-American identity. By investigating the roots and limits of knowledge, power and selfhood, often through the iconography of alchemy and magic, Johnson engages a complex unknown that denies true belief in black and white.

*Yto Barrada: Riffs*
March 11–April 29, 2012

*Dawoud Bey*
May 13–June 24, 2012
The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
renaissancesociety.org

Tangiers-based artist Yto Barrada (b. 1971) exhibits *Riffs*, a multimedia installation that mines shifting
politics in her North African home through a combination of documentation and metaphorical imagery. Barrada exhibited at the Studio Museum in 2010 as part of VidéoStudio: New Work from France. Riffs draws from and combines her past and present bodies of work, creating newly textured meanings.

In the spring season, the Renn also presents a survey of work by Chicago-based photographer Dawoud Bey (b. 1953). Along with four other group exhibitions at the Studio Museum, Bey was the subject of a solo exhibition, Harlem, USA, in 2010–11, and his work is included in the permanent collection.

LOS ANGELES, CA

Places of Validation, Art and Progression
September 29, 2011–April 1, 2012
California African American Museum
Los Angeles, CA
cammuseum.org

This solo exhibition presents new work from Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971), including her collages and other departures from her previous bodies of work. Best known for her elaborate rhinestone portraits of women, Thomas explores and reinterprets female identity and classical beauty. Thomas has participated in several group exhibitions at the Studio Museum, and we are so lucky to have her work as part of our permanent collection.

A former student of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1879–85), Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937) is now recognized by his alma mater with a traveling exhibition that chronicles his career and life as an international artist. Raised in Philadelphia following the Civil War, Tanner became a successful expatriate painter, leading an artist’s colony in rural France and working with the Red Cross during World War I. Formally, Tanner developed a style that modernized religious painting, reworked French Orientalist painting and photography through his depictions of the Holy Land and North Africa, and made significant technical innovations—all of which are explored in this upcoming exhibition. This exhibition is paired with a scholarly publication, a landmark catalogue featuring essays by countless notable American and French scholars and a children’s book illustrated by Faith Ringgold. Follow this PAFA-organized exhibition as it travels to the Cincinnati Art Museum (May 26–September 9, 2012) and Houston Museum of Fine Arts (October 14, 2012–January 6, 2013).
NORTH ADAMS, MA

Sanford Biggers: 
The Cartographer’s Conundrum
December 11, 2011–October 30, 2012
Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art
(MASS MoCA)
North Adams, MA
massmoca.org

Sanford Biggers (b. 1970) presents the third of his three solo exhibitions to debut on the East Coast in 2011 (along with exhibitions at Sculpture-Center in New York and the Brooklyn Museum). The Cartographer’s Conundrum is inspired by the artist’s cousin, scholar, artist and Afro-futurist John Biggers (1924–2001). A longtime friend of and exhibitor with the Studio Museum, Biggers here illuminates the career of his master painter relative while investigating the genre of Afro-futurism and its project of creating a new folklore pertaining to the histories of people of color.

BOISE, ID

Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Center of the Earth
May 19, 2012–November 4, 2012
Boise Art Museum
Boise, ID
boiseartmuseum.org

Follow Nick Cave (b. 1959) to Idaho as Meet Me at the Center of the Earth, organized by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, travels to Boise. Cave’s “Soundsuits,” forty of which will be on view, are highly crafted, and at times wearable, sculptures that best come alive through dance. Composed ornate layering of potholders, buttons, thrift store sweaters, sequin blouses and doilies, these works re-beautify the cast-off fashions of an older generation while simultaneously producing a sublime armor scaled to the artist’s body. Cave’s “Soundsuits” are human-made totems that blur the lines between haute couture, dance, music, fine art, ritual, high craft and the repurposed everyday object.

Don’t miss some of our favorite traveling exhibitions at their latest venues!

30 Americans
March 16–July 15, 2012
Chrysler Museum of Art
Norfolk, VA
chrysler.org

Glenn Ligon: AMERICA
February 12–June 3, 2012
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
Forth Worth, TX
themodern.org

Nick Cave
Soundsuit, 2009
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery
We are so excited that Nick Cave is making Patchwork Leggings, which you can check out on his recently launched website, SoundSuitShop.com. These stretch leggings, made from a textile that depicts sewn-on buttons, embroidery and sequined fabric scraps, make Cave’s “Soundsuits” street-wearable!
The Black Power Mixtape: 1967–1975 (2011) is a stunning compilation of 16mm footage unearthed after thirty years in the basement of Swedish National Broadcast Company. Written and directed by Göran Olsson, the film includes appearances by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), Martin Luther King Jr., Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Huey P. Newton, Emile de Antonio and Angela Davis, with additional commentary by Erykah Badu, Talib Kweli, Harry Belafonte, Kathleen Cleaver, Robin Kelley, Abiodun Oyewole, Sonia Sanchez and Questlove.

The film begins with a series of lectures and interviews with Carmichael, whose intelligent and poised, yet contentious, remarks set the tone of the film. The Black Power Mixtape is not meant to present a period in American history. Rather, it seeks to undermine our total understanding of the American story. As Carmichael puts it, “The birth of this nation was conceived of with the genocide of the red man.” While sitting in on an interview between his mother and a Swedish reporter, Carmichael takes over and leads his mother to ruminate on the reasons for his impoverished upbringing, as if to say: The problem is not that we do not have the right responses—it is that you choose to avoid the right questions. The crux of The Black Power Mixtape is felt most deeply in its intimate depiction of Angela Davis, in particular during a rare
Beyond

The Black Power Mixtape

Courtesy Göran Olsson and Sundance Selects

interview with her in prison in 1971, while she was on a hunger strike before her murder trial. In response to a question, Davis lucidly says, “When people ask me about violence, I just find that absolutely incredible, because what it means is that they have absolutely no idea what black people have gone through.” Carmichael also maintains a steady calm in response to questions no doubt meant to encourage an impassioned response. When asked by a French reporter whether he was scared of going to jail, Carmichael responds, unblinkingly, “I was born in jail.”

The Black Power Mixtape claims no other intention than to “show America as it was seen by some Swedish filmmakers.” With that in mind, the film coolly reflects on the American media during the civil rights movement, and investigates its resulting impact on the movement’s historicized narrative. The distant and neutral position of the Swedish filmmakers—enhanced by the film’s sleek Scandinavian design—highlights America’s strong hold on its own media, disinterest in portraying an open and positive depiction of the Black Power movement, and poor international reputation during its occupation of Vietnam. In this Swedish light, aided by footage of active Black Power youth education initiatives and community meeting centers, The Black Power Mixtape is an inspiring denouncement of apathy. As put by Questlove, “The worst crime that can be committed on mankind is ignorance.” The film, the movement and its subjects demand that we not let that crime be our own.
If you like ...

by Tasha Parker, Curatorial Fellow

If you like ...

Sam Gilliam
Born 1933, Tupelo, MS
Lives and works in Washington, DC
Northwest Wind, 1992
Gift of Darrel Walker 02.10.1

Check out ...

David Antonio Cruz
Born, 1974, Philadelphia, PA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

ife]duendcealwaystrainstravelslight,thenletthemeatcake, 2011
Courtesy the artist

If you like ...

Barkley L. Hendricks
Born 1945, Philadelphia, PA
Lives and works in New London, CT

Check out ...

Kajahl Benes
Born 1985, Santa Cruz, CA
Lives and works in New York, NY

Ma Petite Kumquat, 1983
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Untitled (Moorish Olmec), 2011
Courtesy the artist
If you like ...

Meschac Gaba
Born 1961, Cotonou, Benin
Lives and works in Rotterdam, Netherlands

*Lipstick Building*, 2004
Museum purchase made possible by gifts from Anne Ehrenkranz, New York and Nancy Lane, New York. 05.5.1

Check out ...

Osi Audu
Born 1959, Abraka, Nigeria
Lives and works in New York, NY

*I Have A Landscape In My Head, No. 16: Workers*, 2010
Courtesy the artist and Skoto Gallery, New York

If you like ...

Demetrius Oliver
Born 1975, Brooklyn, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

*Sidereel*, 2010
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee. 10.1.2

Check out ...

Abigail DeVille
Born 1981, New York, NY
Lives and works in Bronx, NY

*Harlem*, 2009
Courtesy the artist
In conjunction with *The Bearden Project*, the Studio Museum will publish an exhibition catalogue featuring stunning reproductions of all of the artworks included in the show, as well as statements from the participating artists.

The catalogue will be available spring 2012, so be sure to visit the Museum Store in person or online at studiomuseum.org/shop to pick up your copy!
If nothing else, a critical reader affirms the place of its subject—be it an idea, person, place or thing—within a discourse. Critical readers create a localized experience of a subject, bringing together diverse parts of an extended, often interdisciplinary, dialogue.

It seems just to begin a review of *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader* with a critical reading of critical readers, allowing this essay to be as “meta” in form as the artist’s body of work is. Conceptual artist Fred Wilson’s career is based largely around installations that deconstruct institutional and historical representations of people of color. He has curated and reinstalled museum permanent collections, presented collections of racist paraphernalia and excavated local and global histories.

*Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader*, released in 2011 by Ridinghouse, is a great entry to understanding Wilson’s practice. The reader begins with an introduction by former Studio Museum President and current Museum of Art and Design Curator Lowery Stokes Sims, and includes essays by curators and scholars including Alan Prokop, Simon Dumenco, Lisa G. Corrin, Ira Berlin, Jennifer A. González and Salah Hassan. The book also compiles a number of interviews with Wilson, and some with other artists invested in institutional critique, such as Judith Barry, Renée Green and Andrea Fraser. Other interviews pair Wilson with scholars such as K. Anthony Appiah and Huey Copeland.

Naturally, some of the most powerful essays in the reader were written on the occasion of Wilson’s watershed 1992 exhibition *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society. Corrin’s essay situates the exhibition by outlining both a history of museology practices related to people of color, as well as the history of artistic installation using existing permanent collections or replicating a museum’s atmosphere of authority. Similarly, most of the critical essays in the text illuminate the histories that Wilson’s installations index.

Another article written for the *Mining the Museum* catalogue is perhaps the most historically supplemental to Wilson’s practice. By Ira Berlin, University of Maryland professor of U.S. history and slavery, “Mining the Museum and the Rethinking of Maryland’s History” gives a detailed account of African Americans in the state, noting that at one point its early social dynamics gave it the most free blacks in the nation. Where Wilson’s installation is a preparatory gestural drawing of Maryland’s history, Berlin’s essay is a fully realized illustration.

Overall, *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader* feels like a natural and inevitable compilation. Wilson’s work, dialogic at its very root, welcomes the kind of critique and discussions that make up the text.
Ruth Williams, Harlem community leader and founder of the Ruth Williams Dance Studio, passed away on July 31, 2011. Beloved by generations of locals, Williams instructed students in tap, ballet, modern, jazz and African dance in her Harlem school.

Williams, who never wanted her age in print, was well into her nineties at the time of her passing, though you would never guess by her youthful appearance, which she credited to her West Indian genes. Her fiery, tell-it-like-it-is persona made her a staple in the Harlem community since the founding of her school in 1948. After more than six decades of teaching, Williams said that she could not walk certain streets in Harlem if she was in a hurry because she was frequently approached and greeted by former students.

Although dance was always Williams’s true passion, she also served as Director for Child Care at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene until she retired in 1981. She received her master’s in early childhood education from New York University. Williams spent her early years training as a dancer and even performed in the original Broadway production of *Porgy and Bess*. As an adolescent she studied dance in Harlem with Ella Gordon, whom she credited for her strong foundation in ballet and tap. Now her former students—over 40,000 dancers from three generations—think fondly of their childhoods thanks to Williams’s influence.

One student, Starrene Rhett, wrote a blog entry dedicated to the influential instructor: “[Williams] accepted nothing less than perfection ... I remember being in awe of Ms. Williams. She kept a dance school afloat in Harlem for over fifty years and gave everyone a chance.”
Surrealism in the Caribbean

The Art and Politics of Liberation in the Crossroads of the World

by Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims

This is an excerpt from the essay of the same name to be published in the catalogue for the exhibition Caribbean: Crossroads of the World (June 14–October 21, 2012).
In 1967, eight years after the Cuban Revolution, Wifredo Lam, the Cuban Surrealist painter of African, Chinese and European descent, brought a selection of work shown at the annual Salón de Mayo exhibition in Paris to Cuba. He arrived in his native land with a delegation of international artists who were encouraged to interact with the artists and people of Cuba. The exhibition itself was formally inaugurated at the Cuban Pavilion on July 26. Lam did the cover of the newspaper-format catalogue, depicting one of his horned Elegua devotional heads as the sun rising over the sea in red, black and yellow, the colors of the Cuban flag. The names of the participants in the exhibition and the visiting delegation were written on the periphery of the image.

In his opening remarks, Raúl Roa, then Cuba’s minister of foreign affairs, declared that the Cuban Revolution “guaranteed and exalted” the right of artists and writers “to freely express reality.” If the Salón de Mayo was the universal expression of the revolution in painting, then Cuba “represented today . . . the dream and the reality of the revolution on this side of the Atlantic, and the pathway, which is full of the audacity and surprise of the revolution within the Revolution.”

Roa then emphasized Cuba’s position at the crossroads of world geography and world events. “The New World which flows on this island of promise is the fruit of the creation of a socialist and communist society by a people determined to move heaven and earth to do so,” he said. “[As such] it represents the seventh day of creation in the struggle of man to know himself and to live in the realm of liberty as a conscious necessity in a magnificent
development of his inexhaustible abilities and power. . . . This is a new time in history and a new time in life.”

Roa’s association of art and revolution mirrored that promoted by the French Surrealist artists in their publications and public manifestations during the 1920s and 1930s. During this period the Surrealists questioned the imposition of European values and culture on colonial cultures, and astutely examined the political and economic situations of those cultures. Along with the Surrealist magus André Breton, members of the Surrealist cohort such as René Crevel, Jacques Viot and Jules Monnerot promoted the idea that non-Western cultures held their own integral values systems, and that they should be left unmolested by European colonialist presumptions.

It would be easy to dismiss the pronouncements of the Surrealists as mere liberal posturing and, indeed, at times their gestures to protest the gap between Western industrialized cultures and traditional, material-based ones seem in hindsight amateurish and naive. For example, in a 1929 issue of the magazine *Variétés*, they published a map of the world that featured a dramatic reorientation of geopolitical hierarchies. Various regions were exaggerated in scale and proportion to emphasize regions of greater Surrealist activity. These locales of the “marvelous” (that elusive expression of the “very essence of beauty” that was characterized by “an impassioned fusion of wish and reality . . . where poetry and freedom are one”) included Russia, New Guinea, Alaska, Mexico and Easter Island. On the other hand, the “lower forty-eight” states of the United States and the continent of Europe were practically collapsed out of existence.

So when Roa evoked the notion of Cuba—and by association the Caribbean—as a crossroads of European and New World entities, he echoed on a political plane the Surrealists’ notion of this region as a site of cultural revolution. But the Surrealists had conceived this new
world before they had actually encountered the Caribbean in the 1940s as they fled Vichy France in the early years of World War II. As a result, on the 1929 map, the Caribbean was just a summary series of dots and dashes that didn’t begin to indicate the number of islands in that region. By the late 1930s and 1940s, however, new political and social paradigms emerged in the area, as intellectual and political leaders such as Léon Damas (French Guiana), Aimé and Suzanne Césaire (Martinique) and Wifredo Lam (Cuba) left Europe to return to their native islands or, as in the case of Eugenio Granell from Spain, exiled themselves in the Caribbean.

The interaction of these writers and artists with the French Surrealists in Paris before World War II resulted in a direct transplanting of Surrealist ideas to the Caribbean. In fact, the 1932 Surrealist manifesto Murderous Humanitarianism—written by Crevel and signed by Breton and other Surrealists—was full of anticolonial rhetoric and expression of proletarian politics, and has been associated with “Black Surrealism,” a concept conceived by historian Robin D.G. Kelley. The chief tool for promulgating ideals of self-affirmation, political change and cultural hegemony was through journals: We can point to Tropiques, published by the Césaires and their associate René Ménil, and La Poesia Surprendida, founded by Granell in the Dominican Republic.

The Surrealists began to realize qualities of the marvelous when they came into contact with artists from the Americas, and Latin America and the Caribbean in particular. The first was in 1938 when Breton visited the renegade Communist Leon Trotsky, who had been driven to Mexico and taken refuge in the home of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. The second came in 1941 when Breton, Lam and members of the Surrealist movement were fleeing Vichy France and were detained several weeks on the island of Martinique, where they met the Césaires and Ménil. These two encounters brought the Surrealists, and Breton in particular, into contact with “New World” artists from the Caribbean basin whose work complemented their own ideas. Kahlo had begun to assert her own artistic personality, bringing an emotional dream imagery that chronicled her physical travails, relationships and the particular cultural hybridity of Mexico, where African, European and Amerindian societies had been intermixing for over four centuries. Upon seeing her work, Breton declared Kahlo to be an “innate surrealist.” As a follow-up to this initial meeting, Breton invited Kahlo to Paris for an exhibition of her work in 1938.

That same year, Lam, who had been living and working in Spain since 1923, found his way to Paris, fleeing the ultimately triumphant Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. Lam first reached out to Pablo Picasso, whom he naturally considered his artistic mentor and predecessor. Picasso was clearly fascinated by the Afro-Chinese Cuban artist who forced him to confront artists descended from the cultures whose art he’d appropriated for his own stylistic innovations at the beginning of the twentieth century. Interestingly enough, Picasso introduced Lam to Breton. Lam would then find his unique signature in association with the group artistic activities of the Surrealists, which resulted in his unique hybrid vocabulary incorporating human, plant and even animal forms that expressed the syncretistic tenets of Afro-Cuban religious systems.

And the rest is history.
From the Studio: Introducing the 2011–12 Artists in Residence: Njideka Akunyili, Meleko Mokgosi & Xaviera Simmons

In October 2011 Njideka Akunyili, Meleko Mokgosi and Xaviera Simmons moved their paintbrushes and laptops into the Studio Museum’s third-floor studios. During their yearlong residency, they will develop their respective artistic practices, participate in public programs, engage in dialogue with critics and curators and create work for a summer 2012 exhibition. Njideka, Meleko and Xaviera not only join the ranks of over a hundred prominent artists who have participated in the Artist-in-Residence program, they join the eclectic and dynamic Studio Museum family. We asked our new friends to tell us a little bit about what they’re thinking about up on the third floor.
Njideka Akunyili

I grew up in a Nigeria, both acculturated to and independent from Britain, and immigrated to the United States as an adult. In creating my artwork I explore my internal tension between my deep love for Nigeria and my strong appreciation for Western culture by amalgamating different media, modes of representation and images. I make graphic images that, at first glance, take the form of traditional Western paintings. Upon closer inspection, however, nuances in my mode of representation emerge, connoting the multilayered nature of my cultural experience, as well as its complications. I interweave acetone-transferred images and collage into painted drawings of domestic life with my white American husband. These overlaid textural images of my Nigerian life serve to connect the physicality of my American life with my inherent Nigerian identity. My integration of these media creates a visual metaphor for the harmony and friction that I experience as an American citizen who is still a proud Nigerian. Thus I build upon my foundation in traditional Western painting and utilize a unique mix of media to instill my work with layers that evoke the complexity of multicultural identities.
How can we account for the perseverance of national identification in the age of globalization, transnationality and the so-called fluidity/multiplicity of identity formation? My thesis: Nationalism arises out of a singular mixture of jouissance and lalangue. A nation persists so long as its distinct enjoyment continues to be materialized in a set of practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices. Jouissance is the incomplete paradoxical enjoyment that cannot be fully represented in meaning—yet invests meaning. Lalangue is the part in language where despite the investment in meaning carries no actual meaning. Lalangue, the symptomatic use of language, reveals the existence of only enjoyment in language—meaningful nonsense (ab-sens). And this is how we can understand a word like grigamba. The Xhosa term refers to a dirty little animal, a dung-beetle and the apparently nonsensical and ugly “noises” that foreigners make when they speak. Grigamba names purely for the sake of naming; it stands in for the negative affect that is displaced onto the black foreign national. So the word, from a particular mother tongue, represents a certain untranslatable idiosyncrasy relating to the very materiality of the signifier, the sonic material that differentiates one language from another. Nationalism is not about ideas, political procedure or institutions. It is about enjoyment and libidinal investment, the thing-ness of desire and the partial experience of enjoyment. The libidinal bond between subjects always implies a shared relation towards a thing. It appears to us as our thing, the nation-thing. Nationalism, compelled by the thing, comes before the nation-state yet it has no distinct origin. There is no nation-state, no nation, before nationalism.
What is desire and how is it revealed in an artwork, through an artwork? What are the components of desire and what occurs when desire demands an experience? Does the attempt at the fulfillment of a desire crown, complete or quell the need for that which was originally desired? And what of the fulfillment that comes from just seeing that which is desired? And after seeing, what about the other senses? How does the producing of one work, through the process of its creation activate the desire to craft another and another? How does the creation of one work, through the process of its birth, lead to a system of producing other works that all began with one initial desire, the desire to see? And how does the desire to see lead to the overwhelming need to taste, to touch, to smell and to hear?
If memory is “produced through objects, images, and representations,” the practice of multidisciplinary artist Crystal Z. Campbell (b. 1980) complicates an already murky relationship by privileging sound and abstraction over representational imagery. Recently on view at Rutgers University’s Mason Gross Galleries in the exhibition Mass Distractions and Cultural Decay (2011), curated by artist LaToya Ruby Frazier, her video Witness (2010) picks up where Vito Acconci’s Claim Excerpts (1971) or Chris Burden’s TV Hijack (1972) leave off, using confrontation and anticipation of violence to disturbing effect. I sat down with Campbell, a recent graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program, to discuss her interest in the act of witnessing and how this position forces simultaneous negotiations of the imaginary and the real, past and present, personal and cultural.

Central to Witness is audio taken from a 2003 police recording of a “suicide by cop” confrontation between Deandre Brunston, a 24-year-old Compton resident, and Los Angeles County Sheriff deputies that ended in gunfire. Campbell uses the audio recording, a widely circulated example of excessive police force, against an abstracted, unintelligible image inspired in part by filmmaker Derek Jarman’s 1999 film Blue, in which a static image is scored by a feature film’s worth of background sound. Brunston, it was later found, was unarmed, posturing with a flip-flop hidden in the side of his T-shirt. “I found [the recording] so disturbing ... I felt
I had to do something with the video to purge the act of violence, but it was difficult, because you have to replay it, you have to relive it each time,” says Campbell, who received the video three years ago from a friend. The incident is a footnote in an unfortunate history of police interventions gone awry, with law enforcement asserting privilege over how their identities are constructed—as heroic in a time of perceived crisis—and the alleged criminal not having the luxury of fair representation after death.

The act of witnessing an event becomes what Michel Foucault called a “subjugated knowledge”—that is, what is considered fact becomes shadowy terrain, subjective perception, and hence can be seen as an unreliable source of information and can subsequently be read back into the margins of history or, worse, forgotten alongside countless other news stories. Campbell states that “memory and visuality are linked in such a way that sound becomes secondary.” Long before the post-9/11 24-hour news cycle and social networking or television coverage of major national events such as the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, the Columbine shootings, or the Oklahoma City Bombing, people received a fair amount of news by radio. Campbell’s work asks a viewer to relate to events in a similar way. Remembering becomes a substitute or surrogate, another theme Campbell explores, for participation or presence. In the video A Dark Love Story for Clowns (2011) (and in her site-specific installation for Project Row Houses...
The act of memorializing takes on symbolic form. Inspired partly by William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” (1970) and the Yoruban practice of ere ibeji, Clowns uses an abstraction of audio and visual information to underscore the narration of a personal account by a recently widowed woman. On screen, a female clown attempts to resuscitate or revive her partner by engaging the surrogate body in daily rituals. While working on her installation Passing: The Evidence of Things Not Seen (2010) for Project Row Houses in Houston, Campbell attended funerals for both her grandmother and uncle in the span of a week. She incorporated materials inherited from both relatives—mismatched jewelry, a six-foot set of wind chimes fabricated from metal shower curtain rods—into the work, creating a space of remembrance and grief that suggests corporeality through objecthood, a nod to the practice of conceptual artist Felix Gonzales-Torres.

“A certain kind of community comes out of grief,” she says, and the desire to preserve and mobilize this community to actively remember events and those no longer with us becomes apparent in Campbell’s body of work thus far. Using sound as a point of entry, she challenges viewers to recalibrate their participation when vision fails. Campbell insists that the act of bearing witness has the potential to be active, even when the information arrives through questionable channels or manifests in unpredictable ways. Evidence left behind by things not seen—the sounds, suggestions of presence, marks and traces suspended in time—relocates absent bodies in an ongoing dialogue on personal and cultural tragedy, encouraging us to actively confront the ease and lure of forgetting when met with distress.

2. Conversation with Crystal Z. Campbell, October 14, 2011
3. As an Oklahoman, the lasting impact of this event has influenced some of Campbell’s interests as an artist.
4. Conversation with Crystal Z. Campbell, October 14, 2011

Jamillah James is a curator based in Brooklyn and editor of the blog FRONTIERS. She recently completed a year-long curatorial fellowship at the Queens Museum, where she curated the group exhibition NOT THE WAY YOU REMEMBERED (2011), and is co-organizer of Queens International 2012, a biennial survey of local artists. Before returning to New York in 2010, James lived in Baltimore and Chicago, where she worked on a number of curatorial projects. She holds a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on Art History, Theory and Criticism and Cultural Studies from Columbia College Chicago.
Target Free Sundays

Thanks to the generous support of Target, Museum admission is free every Sunday. Target Free Sundays reflects a shared commitment to engage the community and offer a vital cultural experience to all.

To learn more about upcoming events, visit studiomuseum.org/event-calendar
In Conversation: Betye Saar and Naima J. Keith
**Betye Saar is a pioneering artist featured** in seven of the recent Pacific Standard Time exhibitions. Assistant Curator Naima Keith (and former Curatorial Fellow for the Pacific Standard Time exhibition *Now Dig This!: Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980, (2011)*) interviewed Saar in November 2011. The following is an excerpt.

**Naima Keith:** The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, included *Secrets and Revelations* (1980) in their Pacific Standard Time (PST) show *Under The Big Black Sun: California Art 1974–1981*. This was an installation you originally did here at the Studio Museum. Can you tell me more about the installation, how it came about and how you feel about its inclusion in PST?

**Betye Saar:** I’m very pleased that you asked me about *Secrets and Revelations* because I felt that in a way the Studio Museum is a part of Pacific Standard Time—it connects the East Coast and the West Coast, and being there was part of my artistic history and development. It was a big thing for me to be exhibiting at the Studio Museum in 1980. I had had things in group shows, but, you know, the West Coast is sort of ignored. I think PST is letting the world know that we are here and we are making art.

The show that I did at the Studio Museum in 1980 was called *Rituals: The Art of Betye Saar*, and Mary Schmidt Campbell was director then. I had done a series of collages about ritual, altars that were either like a small altar in a box or a freestanding altar. I know the Museum still has one of these pieces in their collection, *Indigo Mercy* (1975).

**NK:** Yes, we do. Which is now in *Now Dig This!* at the Hammer Museum.

**BS:** *Indigo Mercy* had been shown on a pedestal and people gave offerings. In a way it became a tableau or a mini-installation with all the things that people had taken from their pockets or purses, or even brought in. You know, some carnival beads wound up on it. And that was kind of the beginning of an installation [Secrets and Revelations]. I’ve always been interested in theater and sets and so forth, and so, I said it would be so cool to make something like walking into one of my little assemblage boxes. And then walking about the Museum, I found a small little alcove, I think it was down in the basement in a corner and was just used for storage. It was a wall that kinda jagged out about a foot and a half and then went flat again. It had a little notch in it. I asked Mary, “What if I made something in here?” And she said okay. There were about three or four sacks of pea-size gravel around. So I said, oh, I could use gravel on the bottom and put things on the wall. I don’t know if they painted the wall or not. It was in a part of the Museum that wasn’t really used. I know you had to walk down a hall to get to it.

**NK:** Oh, okay. The Museum has slightly changed since that original version.

**BS:** I had made a visit to the Museum to see that space. Then when I got home I found objects to put on the wall to make a pattern. And objects to put on the floor. At that time accumulation was part of making my ritual pieces, collecting a lot of little things to put together to make one thing. I had a table that had been previously used to hold croquet mallets. And so that was painted red and became the center of the so-called altar piece. It was the first time that I had done anything that big, you know, working in a room. And I think it was about just the idea of accumulating things, like when you go to visit an altar at a church in Mexico or Haiti or someplace, there are all sorts of things put on it. Things wanting to bring blessings or healing, or things that are special to the person that gave them. And candles and things like that. So working on that premise, I just started collecting things. I used the gravel on the ground and I had organic things. I had some fans from Japan, and some spindles. Oh, I found those in New York. I had found those spindles—those wooden spindles. Alison [Saar] and I, I think we were walking down Broadway one evening. At that time Broadway was just converting; the old factories were being closed out and people were building condos and shops were coming up and artists were moving in. So there were always boxes of stuff that they were clearing out from old factories. I guess the spindles were used in clothing factories where they wove cloth or something. So we got a couple armfuls of those. And old bottles and things.

This site installation was created especially for The Studio Museum in Harlem. And was executed as a “ritual.” And that’s in quotes. The *ritual* is a series of acts of process that includes the imprint, the search, the accumulation,
the manipulation and the release. This was how I was making—and defining ritual from just an ordinary piece of art. So when I say the imprint, that means the idea, or the exchange that goes between my search and finding my idea and attaching that idea to an object, and then the search of finding those objects, accumulating all the materials that I want to use. The manipulation is changing them, painting them, sanding them, gluing things on them and so forth. And then the release is just to exhibit them, to put them out there, and that becomes a release of letting go of what you’ve made.

NK: Working with found objects must be challenging. When you incorporate a found object into your work, you have to work with the existing piece’s size, shape and color, and manipulate something that has been produced by someone else.

BS: There is definitely a challenge to it because I have to figure out how to integrate one aspect of a found object with another—what makes them work together, what makes them click together. I like my particular way of working with materials to be seamless, that it just seems like it’s meant to be that way from the very beginning. And sometimes I try to force myself to make things a little bit edgier so that you feel uncomfortable with looking at the two items together. But sooner or later I work it out so it goes together, or I eliminate one part of it. And I can always get integration by painting something or removing the varnish and making it a natural thing and just working with the natural color of the object, wood for example. It is a challenge, but I’ve been doing it for so long it just seems like, oh, that should work there. You know, trial and error, that doesn’t work and then finally I’ll decide on items that work together that seem to integrate and feel comfortable together, and those are the ones that I will set aside and really adhere them to each other and create a finished piece.

NK: Can you walk me through your assemblage process and how you go about finding the found objects that are incorporated into your work?

BS: My process for making assemblage, collages and installations means going to flea markets and yard sales, thrift stores, antique shops and specialty shops like at a museum or collectible shop, or just looking for things. Since I have been collecting for quite some time, my mind and I are so trained to always be seeking something to recycle, that that just seems to be part of my lifestyle now.

NK: Do you usually have a specific work in mind when you’re going out to these different antique shops? Or does it begin with the found object?

BS: I shop intuitionally. If I’m stuck in creating a piece and I need a certain something, I usually don’t even know what it is that I need, I just go out there and see what comes to me. So it’s not that it’s a big mystery or anything, but that’s just the way I shop. When I come to the studio, I have a way of filing things, like in a certain area I may have clocks, metal and glass things, and then in another area I’ll have organic things like bones or feathers or other materials that I find from nature.

NK: When you find an object do you do a lot of research into its background, or is it more about the new life that you give the object?

BS: It’s more about the intuition. You know, I’m at the flea market and I find a mask—oh, that’s not interesting, but I can tell the difference between an African mask and a mask from Mexico. Or a mask from Bali, or Southeast Asia or something like that. Sometimes when it’s really close, I don’t know. I just painted it red and put it on the wall. But there are certain things that are distinctive about a mask of a certain country, and they differ from a particular region, from carver to carver. The times that I use research is when I want to use symbols or maybe colors that would be particular to one culture as to another culture.

NK: How has your process changed over the years?

BS: My interest in the reason for making art has changed. And that has been fairly recent—within the last year and a half. I’m less interested in creating something for a commercial exhibition, like in a gallery or something, and more for creating an environment, creating objects to put into a room. And that started out with Secrets and Revelations. My current interest is to involve the viewer so it becomes more like theater—not theater because it’s not as formal as that, but like walking on a set. If you were to go to a play and then afterwards you walk on the set. And you could still feel the energy of what happened in that space.
Aesthetic of the Cool:

Robert Farris Thompson in Conversation with Lowery Stokes Sims

by Katherine Finerty, Curatorial Intern
“If you don’t know by now, don’t mess with it,” Robert Farris Thompson stated at the start of his program at the Studio Museum on October 20, 2011, followed quickly by a spirited promise that he was, indeed, going to “mess with it.” “It” being, of course, the topic of the evening: Afro-Atlantic art.

The Studio Museum galleries were filled with guests eager to hear from two of the most prestigious art historians of our time. On the occasion of the release of Thompson’s *Aesthetic of the Cool: Afro-Atlantic Art and Music*, the author sat down with Lowery Stokes Sims, Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, and former Studio Museum President, to discuss his concept of the “cool” in Afro-Atlantic culture.

Thompson is a legendary figure in the field, famous for enlivening his lectures at Yale University, where he has taught art history and African-American studies since 1965. With his speech patterns embodying rhythm and soul as much as the art he so passionately researches, Thompson projected an infectious dynamism to frame his erudite ideas as accessible and, indeed, entertaining. In helping us visualize his aesthetic theory of an Afro-Atlantic kind of cool, he quickly rejected the tempting images of sunglasses-clad youths ubiquitous in Hollywood representations of glamour and nonchalance. Rather, he turned our attention to stylistic trends found in arts of the Yoruba, one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. In many Yoruba sculptures of heads, a distinct formal aesthetic is conveyed through full, pursed lips and wide, calm eyes. These traits, Thompson explained, are facial embodiments of the cool.

Cool, in this sense, can represent a variety of ideas and symbols that are both traditional and evolving, including stability, healing, peace and giving. Moreover, we can find this kind of expression nearly everywhere, breaking the limits of geography and time so often imposed upon the cultural expressions of Africa and their influences. We can see the cool in the sculptural heads of kings from Benin, Nigeria; in mambo dancers from Brazil; and in jazz musicians from Harlem. Thompson has been establishing this artistic and musical approach to the cool as an aesthetic philosophy for more than forty years, and with his new book we now finally have access a comprehensive presentation of his writings, both new and old, some of which were previously unpublished or out of print.

The highlight of the event was when Thompson brought to life the serenely dignified Nigerian woman gracing his book cover. Accompanying a video from 1965, of Agbeke Asoko dancing with a sculptural crown of the deity Eyinle atop her head, Thompson provided impressive drumming to enhance the energy of the moment. The Egbado Yoruba dancer balanced the terracotta sculpture with awe-inspiring grace, bound physically and spiritually to the god whom she mirrored wholly in facial expression, state of mind and, ultimately, coolness. As her arms undulated slowly yet forcefully, Thompson drummed with skill and vibrancy, gaining speed and exuberance to match the dancer’s subtle gestures and spellbinding movement. He proceeded to chant with passionate composure in both Nigerian dialects and English: “Balance in the name of God!” And as we then knew from his recurring assertions throughout the lecture, balance is definitely cool.

After this spirited display, Sims candidly conversed with Thompson, starting with a question perhaps on everyone’s mind: How did a white man from Texas come to love and research a culture so seemingly distant from his own? Afro-Atlantic studies were significantly more obscure when Thompson was a student. How did he eventually become one of the most prestigious scholars in the field, credited with establishing a new wave of African art discourse? Thompson attributed his passion to the first
This interest in contemporary cultural expression was put to test during the event’s concluding Q&A, when Thompson was asked where he stood on the popular debate over young people wearing baggy pants. Cultural icons such as Bill Cosby have notoriously come down on African-American youths for wearing low, saggy pants, associating the trend with a lack of respect and character. Yet rather than critiquing or pathologizing the act of wearing baggy pants, Thompson chose to analyze and embrace its nuanced connotations, ultimately empowering rather than marginalizing the many young people who identify with this style. “I love sag,” he answered with a smile. Thompson then proceeded to offer a thoughtfully erudite response on how black style has been an expression of controlling the extremes throughout history. Harlem jazz musicians mastered the tightest of the tight with their slim-cuffed zoot suits, and now, he explained, Harlem hip-hop artists turn to baggy pants to master the loosest of the loose. Exhibiting his cultural savvy and creative open-mindedness, Thompson confirmed, “In hip-hop loose is cool—that’s why you don’t tie your shoelaces.”

Robert Farris Thompson is Col. John Trumbull Professor in the History of Art Department at Yale University and has been a Ford Foundation Fellow. Since 1958, he has devoted his life to the serious study of the art history of the Afro-Atlantic world. His iconic books include *Black Gods and Kings* (1977), *Flash of the Spirit* (1983) and *Tango: The Art History of Love* (2006).

Lowery Stokes Sims is Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, and is former Executive Director, President and Adjunct Curator for the permanent collection at the Studio Museum. Sims received her PhD from the Graduate School at the City University of New York and was on the education and curatorial staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1972 to 1999. She is a specialist in modern and contemporary art, specifically in the work of African, Cuban, Caribbean and Native American artists.

*Aesthetic of the Cool: Afro-Atlantic Art and Music* is available at the Studio Museum Store.

Shrine Head, Ife, Nigeria, 12th–14th century
Courtesy The Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Usually, when I tell stories in a picture book, they are about a character with a problem who needs to do something to fix it.

It often takes three tries to get it right. I’m not sure why. But three is a very popular number in children’s books. Maybe if everything went right on the first try, it would seem like there wasn’t much of a problem in the first place...so why tell the story?

- Pat Cummings

The Law of
3 pigs,
3 wishes,
3 blind mice
A DO-IT-YOURSELF STORY
(Fill in the blanks and color.)

___________ lived in an old
at the edge of town. One day,
he heard a loud knock at the door.
But when he looked, no one was there.

A strange was laying on the
doorsstep. And written on the first
t page were instructions on how to
make something disappear.

To get started, you need to find things:

A and a

The hat was easy. His dad had one that he kept in his
________. In the kitchen, ________ found a . “This will
work fine,” he said. Running outside,
he tried to find a
sign of one

Suddenly,

__________ had a
great idea.
“Hey,” he said. “I bet my pet Sparky would work. He would be just as good at hopping out of a hat as any old would be. Sparky’s perfect for the job!”

So ran to his room to scoop Sparky out of his tank. But, in his excitement, he never noticed the tiny writing at the bottom of the instructions.

Plopping Sparky into the hat, he put it on and tapped it times, as the book said to do. Immediately, he felt a very, verrrry, verrrrrrrry curious itching sensation on his head.

"YIKES!" he yelled. Yanking off the top hat, he released a swarm of excited that went flying everywhere! Sparky hopped away.

It took a lot of time to chase all of the out of the house. And even more time to find Sparky, who was hiding out in his little sister’s.

“Okay,” he said. “Maybe I need a real.” He went straight to the back yard and to his surprise, saw the perfect little bunny calmly munching on his mom’s.
"This time, it should work," said.

Stuffing the rabbit into the hat, he gave it 3 strong taps.

At first, nothing happened. Then there was a loud pop. Followed by a gurgling sound. The hat slid off his head as a stream of bubbles floated out.

Grabbing towels, he was gently wiping off the bunny and the book, when he noticed the tiny message he had somehow missed before:

Only use the wand that comes with this book. (See page 99)

Sure enough, a wand was attached to the last page.

Getting the bunny back in the hat was not easy. It took a whole bag of baby corn before the rabbit was in place. Holding his breath, once again tapped the top hat 1, 2, 3 times. He waited.

No

No

The bunny was still there.

"Some magic book!" he said, going to toss it out.

But the book had suddenly disappeared!
The Studio Museum in Harlem sincerely thanks the businesses and individuals on the following pages for their generous support, which contributed to the overwhelming success of Gala 2011, where we raised nearly $1.6 million.

The Museum extends gratitude and congratulations to the phenomenal Gala Co-Chairs Kathryn C. Chenault, Joyce K. Haupt and Carol Sutton Lewis, as well as the dedicated Gala Vice-Chairs Jacqueline L. Bradley, Amelia Ogunlesi and Teri Trotter. This year’s Gala celebrated the Museum’s four decades of collecting by honoring its permanent collection. We also express our utmost gratitude to Mr. Wein, who established the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize six years ago, and wholeheartedly congratulate the 2011 Wein Prize recipient, Leonardo Drew.
Gala 2011

October 24, 2011

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The Studio Museum Gala 2011 on October 26, 2011, marked the occasion of the sixth annual Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, which was awarded to Leonardo Drew. The Wein Prize was established in 2006 by jazz impresario, musician and philanthropist George Wein to honor his late wife Joyce Alexander Wein, a longtime Trustee of the Studio Museum and a woman whose life embodied a commitment to the power and possibilities of art and culture. The $50,000 award recognizes and honors the artistic achievements of an African-American artist who demonstrates great innovation, promise and creativity. Leonardo Drew, known for his large-scale sculptural installations, called the award “a profound honor.”

Leonardo Drew is based in Brooklyn, New York, and San Antonio, Texas. Using found materials ranging from wood, fabric, paper, cotton and rope to metal, rust, animal pelts and bones, feathers and everyday trash, Drew meticulously assembles, reassembles and manipulates human detritus to create order and unexpected beauty.

Working consistently and ambitiously in this alchemical style since his 1988 breakthrough work Number 8, Drew brilliantly juxtaposes a host of seemingly contradictory concepts and influences. He creates pure abstraction out of materials seemingly imbued with past uses, producing works that are formally beautiful but loaded with material significance.

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*Xaviera Simmons*  
*Gold, 2011*  
*Courtesy the artist*
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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.
In celebration of The Bearden Project exhibition, an unprecedented tribute to modern master Romare Bearden, the Winter/Spring 2012 issue of Studio has been printed with four covers—each bearing a different work of art featured in the show.