

American Artist

b. 1989, Altadena, CA; lives and works in New York, NY

Octavia E. Butler Papers: mssOEB 1-9062 I (Mother to Daughter),
2022

Huntington Library stationery, graphite, pencil, felt

American Artist's thought experiments mine the history of technology, race, and knowledge production. Beginning with their legal name change in 2013, positioned as a centering of Blackness within the definition of the term "American artist," Artist's work spans multiple forms of media and narrative to provoke a rethinking of how history and information are used, by whom, and to what end.

Shaper of God (2022-2025) is a three-chapter, multi-year project rooted equally in biography and fiction, inspired by the life and work of science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler. Like Butler, Artist spent their formative years in and around the adjacent communities of Altadena and Pasadena, California. *Octavia E. Butler Papers: mssOEB 1-9062 I (Mother to Daughter)*, one work in a larger series of similarly titled drawings, depicts printed matter from Butler's archive at the Huntington Library in Los Angeles, copied in pencil with exacting detail—bus timetables, maps, ID's, personal reminiscences, correspondences, lists, and notes for stories. Mistakable for tracings, Artist meticulously rendered each piece in situ on the light pink sheets of regulation paper, alongside facsimiles of the request slips they filled out. Here, the looping script, intermittently legible, belongs to Butler's mother, and acts as a memoir of Butler's adolescent life in rural Louisiana before moving to California. Among other notes, it reads: "A letter to my daughter... I pray for you always God save you..." The series is a telling analysis of informational preservation, historical connection, and archival patterns, but most of all, of the foundation of Butler's monumental legacy as an archivist of her own history, across a lifetime.

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council

manuel arturo abreu

b. 1991, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; lives and works in Berlin, Germany

ambient portraits, 2017

Six audio portraits generated by using selfies as wavetables; dried eggshell powder, audio (00:18:08)

manuel arturo abreu defines himself as a non-disciplinary artist working with what is at hand. Through their ephemeral sculptures, videos, poetry, and theoretical writing, abreu synthesizes performance, pedagogy, and an Afro-Caribbean orientation to magical thinking and the ritual aspects of aesthetics. For abreu, magical thinking “encompasses forms of contemplating and making which have been maligned by European rationalism and religion.”

Originally conceived as a digital-born work, *ambient portraits* is presented here as a physical installation featuring a mound of cascarilla (eggshell powder), a ritual material used in Caribbean and Central American spiritual practices, such as “Santería” and “Ifá,” for cleansing and protection. The work is a suite of sound-based portraits made from selfies of five of the artist’s friends. Using a technique inspired by “data-bending” (the manipulation of a file with software designed to edit different file formats), abreu processed each image in an audio program called SonicPhoto, generating twelve randomized sound outputs per selfie and mixing them into a final sonic portrait.

Challenging the dominance of the image and visual forms in Western art, abreu draws on philosopher Édouard Glissant’s concept of “dividuation”—the idea of embracing multiple, complex selves—and his “right to opacity,” or the right not to be fully seen or understood. *ambient portraits* rejects the image entirely, using sound emerging from ritual material as a way to question the hyper-visibility of Blackness and explore sound as an alternative, expansive form of portraiture. With this work, abreu queries: *Can sound be a more generative way to depict Black identity, particularly among young Black artists?*

Courtesy of the artist. Originally commissioned by Aria Dean for Rhizome’s *New Black Portraitures* (2017).

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

b. 1995, London, United Kingdom; lives and works in Berlin, Germany

***PIRATINGBLACKNESS/BLACKTRANSSEA.COM*, 2021**

Interactive archive

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley works in animation, sound, performance, and video games. Her practice uses gaming technology and its infrastructures to imagine environments that center the lives of Black Trans people. Intertwining reality and fiction, Brathwaite-Shirley creates participatory works that allow players to engage with these stories and subjectivities, prompted by questions and rules of engagement that push participants to examine what might ordinarily be a voyeuristic practice. Her video game projects, which live on the Internet, archive, congregate, celebrate, and remember the Black trans community, where the worldbuilding landscape of gaming becomes the site and tool for memory and connection. Real-life stories of Black trans people are blended within speculative landscapes to fight erasure and hold transness on its own terms. *PIRATINGBLACKNESS/BLACKTRANSSEA.COM* is an immersive computer game that reconstructs the lost history of Black trans people in the Atlantic slave ship crossings. The work presents an alternative past in which the ocean is magically animated and refuses to be an accomplice of colonization. Brathwaite-Shirley, who fantasizes “about the search for Black trans history lost in the water,” here, in her words: “imagines a narrative of an ocean that refuses to let us drown.” The game instructs: YOU WILL GUIDE A SHIP / YOUR HISTORY WILL DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR SHIP / AND IF IT WILL SURVIVE THE JOURNEY.

Courtesy of the artist

chukwumaa

b. Lagos, Nigeria; lives and works in New York, NY

***SWEET (clinging to her bible and her scapula and the memories of the way things were)*, 2018**

Swiss voile lace fabric, subwoofer, bluetooth transmitter, phone, Prince_Nico_Mbarga_-Sweet_Mother.mp3, various electronics

Taking the form of found, soft sculptures, surreal performances, and other media experiments, chukwumaa makes work concerning liminal characters, Igbo trickster myths, archetypal sonic motifs, and non-linear narratives. Their practice finds interest in the edges of connectivity, using performance and sculpture to explore the invisible vectors drawn between the lands where West African people originated and where they have been dispersed. *SWEET (clinging to her bible and her scapula and the memories of the way things were)* is a sound sculpture that creates a generative and improvised sonic composition. The work limits the tonal range of one of the most popular songs in Africa, released in 1976—Nigerian musician Prince Nico Mbarga’s “Sweet Mother.” The track is sonically reconfigured on a subwoofer to solely its “low end,” or bass frequency typically below 250 Hz. The artist plays it through a deliberately choppy Bluetooth signal from a phone just beyond the range of clear transmission, at approximately 33 feet. The signal depends on, collides with, and is responsive to the physical presence of anything sharing space with it, like walls, furniture, or bodies. chukwumaa borrows the subtitle for the sculpture—(*clinging to her bible and her scapula and the memories of the way things were*)— from the lyrics of British rock band Bloc Party’s song “Where Is Home?.” The song was written by lead vocalist and writer, Kele Okereke, in response to the widely-covered racially-motivated killing of Okereke’s family friend, Christopher Alaneme.

Courtesy of the artist

Tony Cokes

b. 1956, Richmond, VA; lives and works in Providence, RI

***Untitled (m.j.: the symptom)*, 2020**

Video + Sound (Looping)

“It is possible to dance and think at the same time,” Tony Cokes asserts. Since the late 1980s, the artist has created a prolific body of work that engages with critical theory, cultural studies, American politics, and popular culture. His video works incorporate found text from essays, books, newspapers, archives, statements or “rants” by public figures, and news media, set to dissonant, pulsating soundtracks of pop songs, hip-hop, and dance music. Flashes of text unfold on the screen against bright, changing monochromatic fields of purple, neon green, or yellow, where Cokes exploits the sensory gaps between text and overlain sound to heighten and complicate the reading experience. The resulting assemblages not only fragment and remix our media landscape and its codes, but disarmingly hold a carefully layered social and political critique. Borrowing text from assorted excerpts by Joshua Clover, Jeremy Gilbert, and Charles Holland from the Mark Fisher-edited essay collection *The Resistible Demise of Michael Jackson* (2009), set against samples of Jackson’s music, *Untitled (m.j. the symptom)* obliquely explores the contested legacy of the “King of Pop”. The dizzying narrative Cokes draws out in the video contemplates how Jackson and his music reflect an accelerated American consumer capitalism that transforms labor, spectacle, racial politics, and counterculture.

Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

A.M. Darke

b. 1986, Buffalo, NY; lives and works in Santa Cruz, CA

Fairlyintelligent.tech, 2021

Web-based interactive work with audio

A.M. Darke is a media artist whose work explores the intersections of systems, aesthetics, and relational dynamics across various mediums. Through game design, speculative media, and community-driven projects, Darke examines the exclusion, erasure, and exploitation of Black cultural production. In projects such as the *Open Source Afro Hair Library*, a 3D archive of Black hair textures and styles, co-curated by Black artists from around the world, Blackness is not merely a subject, but a generative logic; an alternative way of seeing, creating, and relating that resists being subsumed into mainstream aesthetic norms. In doing so, their work connects the historical legacies of colonial violence with contemporary digital distortions, questioning how these forces shape both past and present. In Darke's words, their work is "self-emancipation," with each project standing as an expression of personal and collective freedom.

Darke extends these concerns in *failyintelligent.tech*, an interactive web-based work that initially presents itself as a user-friendly AI onboarding experience. However, as the user engages, the work subtly exposes the underlying systems of digital surveillance, data commodification, and algorithmic harm. Built around Darke's fictional Fairly Intelligent™ software, the project invites users to design an ethical AI system, all while unknowingly participating in the same extractive processes they intend to resist.

Courtesy of the artist

Stephanie Dinkins

b. 1964, Amboy, NJ; lives and works in New York, NY

***An African-American WOMAN SMILING*, 2021**

Computer-generated images (GANs) printed on metal accompanied by animations of the computer training process

***A Dark-Skinned African-American WOMAN SMILING*, 2021**

Computer-generated images (GANs) printed on metal accompanied by animations of the computer training process

Stephanie Dinkins's practice explores Black personhood in relationship to, and as interpreted by, AI systems. *An African-American WOMAN SMILING* (2021) and *A Dark-Skinned African-American WOMAN SMILING* (2021), were produced using a text-to-image GAN (General Adversarial Network), or a machine learning system that produces composite images in response to user prompts that are pulled from a dataset. These distorted, abstracted images result from Dinkins prompting the machine to produce "an African-American woman smiling" and "a dark skinned African-American woman smiling." Each image represents the closest the learning model could come to producing realistic, affectual images of Black women.

The failure of AI learning systems to produce realistic representative images of Black bodies with humanizing nuance exposes the inherent biases in open datasets. In turn, revealing whose experiences these learning models exclude. The text-based prompts that accompany these images are the runaround words to achieve this desired, less abstracted image. When prompted with "African-American woman" or "dark skinned African-American woman," Dinkins finds that the model distorts and abstracts images at a higher rate, evidence of racial bias in the AI system, and the people who create them. Many datasets are reflective of values and ideas driven by Western storytelling and mythmaking—a product of the culture that creates them—so the difficulty of these systems in producing realistic images of Black people is telling. Through her work, Dinkins challenges the cultural sovereignty of these learning models and calls for fairer, more inclusive, and accurate models of AI representation.

Courtesy of the artist

L. Franklin Gilliam

b. 1967, Washington, D.C.; lives and works in New York, NY

***Playing the Race Card*, 2002**

Video + Sound

Total run time: 04:35 minutes

***Playing the Rage Card*, 2024**

Video + Sound

Total run time: 04:08 minutes

L. Franklin Gilliam is a filmmaker and media artist who deals with issues of race, gender, and sexuality. Their work takes the form of video, installation, game-events, illustrated lectures, and collective organizing. Gilliam's projects explore the interplay between obsolete technology formats and the faulty transmission of historical knowledge and difference. In the past fifteen years, Gilliam has launched a game-based learning public school with the Institute of Play, stewarded an innovation network that furthers web literacy at Mozilla, and developed experiences and products to increase accessibility to coding at Girls Who Code. Here, an installation comprising two works, *Playing the Race Card* and *Playing the Rage Card*, visualizes a hate crime incident that Gilliam experienced between 2001-2002 when they were a professor in the Bard MFA Program, and chair of the Division of the Arts. "A stirring drama of pedagogy and displacement," reads the title card in *Playing the Race Card*. From frame to frame, Gilliam takes up misogynoir as a framework, and the language and culture that sustains it. Their footage alternates high-contrast photo documentation of their workplace after the attack of graffitied profanities with flashing text. The artist newly revisits this work, made the year after the attack, to create a more televisual re-edit titled *Playing the Rage Card*. Both works, displayed on TV monitors from different decades, embrace filmmaking tropes like the storytelling devices of the silent film era title cards.

Courtesy of the artist

E. Jane

b. 1990, Bethesda, MD; lives and works in New York, NY

***soft like Marianne, sad like Marianne, loved like Marianne*, 2025**

Video (color, sound), fake rose vines, standing mount, custom body pillow made to artist's bodily dimensions, pillow cover (various textiles including plant dyed panel with bleach, paint pen and mascara)

Total run time: 01:40 minutes

Through video, performance, sculpture, and installation, E. Jane explores the interiority, perspectives, and labor of Black women and femmes. Their interdisciplinary work considers Black femmehood and the relationship between networked culture, surveillance, and digital archives. E. Jane takes up the Black diva as a Black feminine archetype in their practice; their alter-ego MHYSA—a queer underground pop star—examines it as an embodied presence in performance and recorded music, and as a study of experience that contemplates the complexities, tensions, and histories of divas (particularly in Black music). *soft like Marianne, sad like Marianne, loved like Marianne* riffs on the 1995 film adaptation of the novel *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) by writer Jane Austen. We hear excerpted audio of actor Kate Winslet playing Marianne Dashwood, a character known for her spontaneity, excessive sensibility, and romantic idealism, weeping mournfully over her love interest John Willoughby, who has left her. The video constructs what E. Jane calls an “empathy feedback loop” through scenes of a few stems of purple and white flowers left broken and windswept on the ground, interspersed with fragmented frames of the artist evoking a crying sensation on screen. A soft, full-size pillow sculpture sewn with the words “Hold Me” accompanies the video, reflecting on objects as vessels for longing and need. E. Jane’s presentation seeks to address how the Black body shows up in the context of an exhibition space versus how the Black body is asked to perform in the world at large.

Courtesy of the artist

Devin Kenny

b. 1987, Chicago, IL; lives and works in New York, NY

***Do You Even Talk To Your Neighbors?*, 2018**

35-gallon drum grill, photographs, documents, cellular phones, aluminum foil, a BBQ grill fabricated by local artisan Alabama Joe is converted into a Faraday cage

Devin Kenny is an interdisciplinary artist, musician, and writer who explores the intersections of technology, critical theory, and Black cultures. Kenny considers the shape of racial politics and community in contemporary American culture, interrogating the interconnected dynamics of gentrification, displacement, and diaspora. Kenny's work draws upon networked technologies, locating the often unsettling and uncanny intersections of complicity and exploitation within structural power.

Do You Even Talk To Your Neighbors? is a 35-gallon oil drum (inside of it are old artifacts like photographs, documents, and cell phones) turned barbeque smoker grill fabricated by local artisan Alabama Joe, a Black Brooklyn chef who regularly hosts free community cookouts. The grill, symbolic of block parties, street culture, and social or familial gatherings in places that are highly surveilled, converted by Kenny into a Faraday cage, gesturing to a larger system of resource exploitation. At the same time, the sculpture itself is insulated from electromagnetic signals. These enclosures protect people and equipment against electric currents, such as lightning strikes and electrostatic discharges; they are often used to guard against location GPS and cellular tracking.

Kenny creates an object displaced from its utility, instead referring to the invisible logic of an external entity. Kenny's work prompts the question: *In our current sociocultural context rife with accelerated gentrification, increased police presence, and anti-immigration sentiments, what exactly conjures a "neighborly attitude?"* The work is a material gesture of site-specific encryption that indexes the structural conditions of systemic anti-Blackness and architectures that resist surveillance.

Courtesy of the artist

Kalup Linzy

b. 1977, Clermont, FL; lives and works in Tulsa, OK

As Da Art World Might Turn (the series) (Season 1) Episodes 1-6, 2013

Video, color, sound; written, directed, edited, and produced by Kalup Linzy

Total run time: 29:04 minutes

Since the early 2000s, artist Kalup Linzy has created a resounding body of work encompassing performance, video, music, writing, and directing. His alternative televisual world embraces a DIY sensibility, the audiovisual syntax of daytime television, pop music, drag influences, and theatrical modes of collaboration. More than his recorded characters and personas, Linzy's practice extends into live performance, photography, collages, and drawings. His own family story, set in the self-contained rural town of only several hundred people in Stuckey, Florida, nurtured his love of soap operas (a long-standing family viewing tradition with his great-grandmothers) as much as an interest in social identities and community dynamics.

As da Art World Might Turn (the series) (Season 1) Episodes 1-6 tells the story of Katonya (the alter-ego of Linzy, appearing in a blond wig), who is a rising star in the art world about to have her first gallery exhibition. In a send-up of camp and satire told through five chapters, Katonya is melodramatic but unequivocal as she learns "how to deal with the economics of the art world," while defining her role as an artist within it. A series of events about her exhibition and opening reception are set into motion after she receives a call from her gallerist, Sholeva.

Linzy emphasizes identity and relationships through the constructed nature of performance, playing upon raunchy humor, sexual intrigue, racial critique, and poignant class commentary. He notably takes on multiple roles of his ensemble cast (playing six distinct roles). Whether or not Linzy physically portrays a character, he always voices them, inflecting upon and manipulating the pitch and speed of how gender and personhood play out on camera. The editing techniques of Linzy forshadow the formats that have since been popularized on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Pope.L

b. 1955, Newark, NJ; d. 2023, Chicago, IL

theblackfactory.com, 2003 - ongoing
Website

Known for his irreverent and absurdist style, Pope.L used a range of materials and mediums to explore the interplay between the concept of “abjection,” the state of being cast off and separated from societal norms and rules, and his lived reality as a Black man in the United States. Often incorporating his own body through social practice and performance, Pope.L sought to provoke critical thought around “sense-making,” the process by which people derive meaning from their collective experiences, and create space for embracing society’s inherent contradictions. During an early, and infamous, performance staged in a New York City storefront, the artist smeared his semi-naked body in mayonnaise as a way of thinking “about race in a more playful, strange, and open-ended way. For example, the idea that there’s a pure good blackness or a pure bad whiteness is untenable for me. I use contradiction to critique and simultaneously celebrate.”

theblackfactory.com is an interactive digital archive and extension of *The Black Factory* (2003 - 2023), a satirical public art project that engaged with definitions of “Blackness.” Central to the project was a customized van the artist used to travel across the country and invite the public to donate objects they believed represented Blackness. At each stop, the van hosted interactive programs led by “factory workers,” who blended rehearsed skits and improvisation to spark conversations, community action, and social change. Referring to himself as the factory’s CEO, Pope.L described the project as “a chance to imagine the color of a future we want, instead of one imposed on us.”

Courtesy of the Estate of Pope.L. Conservation courtesy of Rhizome.

Nandi Loaf

b. 1991, New York City, NY; lives and works in New York City, NY

PC (nightmare), 2024

Repurposed computer parts

Nandi Loaf creates sculptures, paintings, and photographs positioned as tokens of social and financial exchange, designed to become the conditions for, or facilitate, distinct participatory systems for audiences. Her practice mystifies and investigates the existential role of the artist by implicating herself as a self-mythologizing persona in the construction of the identity “Nandi Loaf: the artist.” Loaf often blurs the lines between her simulated and physical presence. She notably eludes an online presence and manages to do so in the gallery space too, playing with both theatricality and absurdity in how she designs her installations and orchestrates encounters between audiences and her work.

Loaf’s practice, centered around the symbolic and material pursuit of data mining, collapses notions of artist and object, work and product, capital and art, and prompts us to consider: *how do we find the point of artistic creation?* *PC (nightmare)*, a sculpture made of repurposed computer parts, refers to a previously executed series by the artist of similar form. For Loaf, they are “generators whose sole function is to activate the Nandi Loaf machine.” The object is an automaton, or a machine that performs a function according to a predetermined set of coded instructions; it works without an output, therefore it acts but does not “think” or function autonomously. A symbolic source of interest for the artist here is the wall’s power supply, proposing that the sculpture becomes a symbiotic appendage to the gallery, collection, or museum in which it is exhibited and resides.

Courtesy of the artist and King’s Leap

Pastiche Lumumba

b. 1988, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe; lives and works in New York City, NY

Images You Can Hear no. 2-9, 2025

Oil on canvas

Pastiche Lumumba is an artist whose work examines cultural conventions and normalized power dynamics within the contexts of masculinity and Blackness. Lumumba's work uses shifts in context to relate to otherwise disparate elements in culture, interested in the shifts between signifiers like "highbrow" and "lowbrow" as mediated through commodity and Internet cultures. The artist examines these elements of context and their effect on subjective experience and positions the form of the meme or animated GIF to explore the conventions of computational interactions, social media, and editing software. *Images You Can Hear no. 2-9* is a series of six oil paintings (in a collection of over forty) that depict moments of Black virality online. This project pulls image stills from viral videos often containing iconic quotes, circulated so widely that they have become memes.

As memes, Lumumba proposes that these images dislocate the familiar sound and image from itself, making them universally relatable, standing in for and describing a range of different emotions. Exhibited in a square-shaped tile to resemble thumbnails, each painting begins with Lumumba downloading and saving the original source video—an important gesture that concerns the obsolescence of certain digital content and becomes a continued practice of cultural data preservation. The artist catalogs these digital gestures to shape a visual lexicon in real time, each of which forms part of a larger archive of Black affect. Lumumba ensures the screen is still there in your perception of the work; the size of each painting is native to the aspect ratio of their source material, further playing on the concept of circulation or virality as a multi-sensorial experience.

Courtesy of the artist

Julie Mehretu

b. 1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; lives and works in New York, NY

***When Angels Speak of Love (Barcelona)*, 2018**

Ink and acrylic on canvas

Julie Mehretu is an Ethiopian-American artist whose paintings, prints, and drawings apply the tradition of abstraction to reimagine and resituate geopolitical and diasporic histories of landscape, architecture, and map-making. Invested in what Mehretu has called “a tectonic view of structural history,” the artist’s works visually represent the kinetic experience of the movements of people and places—by force, and by choice alike—across space and time. Mehretu’s presentation here marks a return to Michigan, where the artist grew up following her family’s departure from Addis Ababa in the midst of political upheaval in Ethiopia. The work’s title invokes citations spanning Afrofuturist pioneer musician and composer Sun Ra’s 1966 album *When Angels Speak of Love*, the multiharmonic centerpiece of which, “Next Stop Mars” begins with the chant: “Take a trip to space! The next stop, Mars!” Mehretu’s title also nods to the 2005 compendium of poems published under the same name by Black feminist thinker and activist bell hooks. In this compilation, hooks writes: “the flame / of this too hot / heavy love / for it will turn / our world to ash / and make the heart / a grave.” Mehretu charts a tender lineage of Black radical thought, considering within this a past, present, and future that longs for a planet where Black people, exalted and loved, can be safeguarded and call home.

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

Marilyn Nance

b. 1953, Brooklyn, NY; lives and works in New York, NY

***Soulsista Manifesto*, 1996**

Vinyl produced from a digital screenshot

Marilyn Nance is known for her work that explores human connections, Black spirituality, and the use of technology in storytelling. Over fifty years, Nance has produced an extensive archive of unique images and moments in the cultural history of the United States and the African Diaspora. In 1995, Nance developed her website soulsista.com during her time as an Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. The impulse to create a website came from her desire to find a way of archiving herself, to make herself “findable” an early engagement of Search Engine Optimization tactics which have since become central to major search engines such as Google. This period of the “ancient website,” as she calls it, relied on the data reference technique of hyperlinking, which she viewed as a way to create connections between topics. A digital pioneer, Nance developed a web app prototyping Ifá (Yoruba) divination in 1997, and in 1999 curated a digital project for the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The project digitizes more than 500 accessible images of 19th century Black Americans with accompanying texts by Black women writers of the time. Soulsista.com was a space of power and storytelling speaking into the future. Nance’s *Soulsista Manifesto*, published on her website in 1995, is an anti-imperialist proclamation of her role as an artist, storyteller, mother, teacher, and critic, 88 years removed from the conditions of slavery. She traces her familial African and Native-American bloodlines into her own present experiences, writing about her commitment overall to creativity and persistence as radical acts: “I am committed to the creation of reflective spaces [...] I am spirit driven and driven by love.”

Courtesy of the artist and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Mendi + Keith Obadike / Obadike Studio

Mendi, b. 1973, Palo Alto, CA; Keith, b. 1973, Nashville, TN; lives and works in Ithaca, NY

***The Skeuomorph (BlkBx 2.0)*, 2024-2025**

Black nylon, custom electronics AI agent, digital audio, code

Mendi + Keith Obadike are artists, composers, and writers whose work blends art, music, and language, drawing from experimental media and performance histories. Their early collaborations in the 1990s and early 2000s pioneered the emerging field of Internet Art, challenging the notion of computer systems as neutral. In their *Black.Net.Art Actions* (2001-2003), which included putting “Blackness” up for auction on eBay, the artists questioned the techno-optimism of the time that envisioned the Internet as an equalizing space. They explored how programming languages, like all languages, encode racial meanings and embed these ideas into the very infrastructure of the Internet. Through this work, Mendi + Keith Obadike argue that identity cannot be separated from the Internet’s structure, asserting that our bodies and identities are inseparable from how we interact with the network.

In their new installation *The Skeuomorph (BlkBx 2.0)*, the artists have created a custom-built, intelligent speaker that operates both as a functional AI system and a sculptural object, bridging real and narrative worlds. In their words, “the installation explores questions of liberation, surveillance, ethical production, and the potential and peril of AI systems...It invites participants to engage an archive of historical and contemporary voices advocating for justice.” The installation is the latest in a more recent group of physical works that examines “listening” as an act of freedom, considering what it means to listen together in public space as a transformative action.

Courtesy of the artists

Ayodamola (ayo) Okunseinde

b. 1974, Montclair, NJ; lives and works in New York City, NY

Fanon – Run #2, 2022

Green neon

Ayodamola (ayo) Okunseinde is a Nigerian-American artist, designer, anthropologist, and “time-traveler,” whose works range from painting and speculative design to physically interactive works, wearable technology, and explorations of “Reclamation.” Much of ayo’s work is actualized through a series of collaborative research groups that bring together a broad range of artists, designers, and technologists to, in his words, “reimagine notions of race, identity, politics, and culture as we travel through time and space.”

In 2018, ayo founded *Black Corpus*, a research laboratory focused on addressing bias in machine learning (ML) systems and making ML environments more accessible. Despite rapid growth, the ML field lacks representation from Black, Indigenous and people of color, leading to biased algorithms, skewed datasets, and harmful products that risk creating systems that further marginalize underrepresented communities. To address this, the *Black Corpus* team works primarily with Black and African Diasporic language, text, and vernacular to produce both alternative ML datasets and expressive artworks. Their methods include analyzing language structures within Black communities, using ML tools to extract meaning from text, and creating artworks that promote diversity in the ML field. One mode of exploration includes *Black Corpus Neons*, which aim to generate new language about Blackness by feeding text by Black theorists into ML systems. Using the GPT-2 algorithm, the works of Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, and Octavia Butler were used to train models that respond to questions on race and social issues. The output, which includes the work *Fanon - Run #2*, reveals hidden subtext, creating new, generative conversations around Blackness.

Courtesy of the artist

Sondra Perry

b. 1986, Perth Amboy, NJ; lives and works in Newark, NJ

***Black/Cloud*, 2010**

Color, silent, HD video

Total run time: 24:39 minutes

***imakelandartnow.com*, 2015**

Color, sound, HD video

Total run time: 02:41 minutes

Sondra Perry dynamically congregates sculpture, video, sound, animation, and text into installation. The artist often constructs “work stations,” sculptural and structural apparatuses that act as surrogates for bodies and experiment with technical hardware to explore efficiency or productivity culture. The artist is interested in how the physical object, as much as the materiality of artificial contexts, moving images, and avatars, can explore the condition of visibility for Black people in relation to digital technologies. Perry often incorporates Chroma-key blue, a color used as a blank space to be activated by computer generated image special effects. The color evokes what she defines as a specifically Black space—one where understandings of Blackness beyond the body can be realized.

Black/Cloud is an early video work created when Perry was a BFA student and interned with artist Kalup Linzy, whose practice greatly influenced hers. The work manipulates a performance by Joiri Minaya and Danny Giles, captured on black and white video, in which their bodies appear, glitch, and vanish in hazy images of light and shadow. Perry considers how abstraction relates to the differences between HD video, analog images, and a screen’s aspect ratio, questioning how images between time and space can move digitally. *imakelandartnow.com*, a quick, witty video, samples pop group Art of Noise’s “Moments in Love” atop an image of what looks like the Grand Canyon. Perry confronts the historically imposing and exclusionary canon of land art with a simple proposal: “I MAKE LAND ART NOW. PUT ME IN ALL YOUR WHITE MALE + NANCY HOLT ART SHOW NEXT SPRING.”

Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Tabita Rezaire

b. 1989, Paris, France; lives and works in French Guyana

***Premium Connect*, 2017**

Video with LED glow

Total run time: 13:04 minutes

Tabita Rezaire is an artist, doula, and cacao farmer whose cross-dimensional practice envisions network sciences—organic, electronic, and spiritual—as healing technologies that shift one’s consciousness. Through video, screen interfaces, collective offerings, and immersive installation, Rezaire explores digital, corporeal, and ancestral memory to contemplate and nourish visions toward emancipation. Interested in expressions of longing between the earth, the cosmos, and one another, the artist explores and visualizes spiritual connections as communication networks that nurture a mind-body-spirit-technology symbiosis. The artist foregrounds the myths, wisdom, and cognitive practices of non-Western cultures, often extracted or erased by colonial powers. Rezaire proposes that our information superhighway might find its roots in African spirituality.

Premium Connect, a single-channel video with LED glow, rethinks how information moves. The work envisions studying communication technologies that explore African divination systems, the fungi underworld, ancestral communication, and quantum physics. Rezaire explores the possibilities of decolonial technologies. Significant research attributes the birth of binary mathematics—the foundational principle of computing science—to African divination systems such as Ifá from the Yoruba people of West Africa. Here, the artist investigates cybernetic spaces where organic, technological, and spiritual worlds connect, asking: *How can we use biological or metaphysical systems to upend technological processes of information, control, and governance?*

Courtesy of the artist

Kahlil Robert Irving

b. 1992, San Diego, CA; lives and works in St. Louis, MO

FlatGROUND_section [Ground Celebration]Pipe Fragment + faux fruit & BELL, 2023-2024

Glazed and unglazed ceramic, decals, lusters, colored enamel

Kahlil Robert Irving's practice examines digital media, memory, race, and Black life as embedded subjects. Irving's works are made entirely by hand; they are ceramic replicas of everyday objects, rather than found objects. The artist's labor-intensive technique underscores the relationship between body and machine and creates a slip of cognition in the viewer. The artist fires individual pieces multiple times in the kiln to achieve an intricate layering of image, glaze, and color that resembles a fragment of something that might be destroyed. For Irving, the technological is located "[W]here invention is tied to developing and continuing the legacy and the growth of what has come before us."

Irving's relationship to community and what is inherited is embedded in the different architectures of his practice that includes ceramic assemblages, digital collages, paintings, and vinyl wallpapers. The sculptures are covered in images either taken by the artist or found on the Internet that might relate to current political issues, or recall an ancient or historical position. *FlatGROUND_section [Ground Celebration]Pipe Fragment + faux fruit & BELL* plays with cross sections of concrete layered with images and details on the flat edges of the sculpture that depict both asphalt and a digital ground. Whereas historical "still lives" are painted from a table top set of information, this is a glitchy mash covered in confetti. The artist notes: "Everything in the work desires that the fractured collage be closer and closer to the pixel. Blurring the real through the digital, retransmitted through ceramic sculpture."

Courtesy of the artist

RaFia Santana

b. 1990, Brooklyn NY; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Rafia's World, 1996

Online Exhibition

Multimedia artist RaFia Santana combines animated graphics, self-portraiture, and music production to “soothe the self, bend perception, and make jokes.” Their work explores the humor, sensory overload, and hyper-productivity of Internet culture, using these elements to comment on issues such as gentrification, racism, mental illness, and the pressures of capitalist expectations.

Through their “visual abstractions,” often presented as animated GIFs, Santana employs vibrant colors, rhythm-driven compositions, and pop culture references to capture attention while critiquing the social, cultural, and racial dynamics at play in the “digital attention economy.” In their ongoing online series *Black Power Project* (2014-present), the work *Black Bieber* depicts pop star Justin Bieber shifting between light and dark skin tones, offering commentary on the entertainment industry’s commodification of appropriated Black culture.

A significant focus of Santana’s work is the “selfie” as a form of self-expression and identity formation within Internet culture. *RaFia’s World*, described by the artist as their first “Net Art” work, can be seen as a precursor to the selfie phenomenon. The point-and-click game is hosted on their mother artist Marilyn Nance’s website, *Soulsista.com*, which features an archive of Santana’s childhood writings and drawings. In dialogue with their later digital self-portraits, Santana views these early images as acts of self-care and empowerment in a world shaped by structural inequalities. Santana explains: “As a small, short Black woman, I have always had to affirm my existence and place...these images are a reflection of me standing my ground on this planet and showing how important I feel I am, as we should all feel we are.”

Courtesy of the artist and Marilyn Nance / soulsista.com

Bogosi Sekhukhuni

b. 1991, Johannesburg, South Africa; lives and works between Portland, OR, and Johannesburg, South Africa

***Solar Cycle 25 Clock*, 2020-Ongoing**

Social media page accessible via printed QR code

***Dark Gravity*, 2018**

Metal, plastic, rubber

Conceptual worker and designer Bogosi Sekhukhuni describes himself as a “lightworker and creative director” whose work offers considerations on cultures and histories of technology. Working across sculpture, video, set design, furniture design, and performance, Sekhukhuni develops approaches that think through the mechanics of futurity. Their research-driven practice questions the conceptual logics of computation from the physical computer itself, or, the logics that inform how we relate and go online. Challenging the notions of what an artist is, Sekhukhuni works in emerging practices before they are deemed “art,” contemplating the artist’s role not as social commentator but as social reimager.

Dark Gravity comprises a bowling ball at the center of an exercise trampoline. The sculptural pairing is informed by artist and sculptor Marcel Duchamp and a textbook analogy for how planetary masses warp space—a miniature, monochromatic cosmos constructed from ready-made sports equipment. Grown out of a dissatisfaction with traditional interdisciplinary research, Sekhukhuni turns to researching particle physics, geology studies, deep time, and evolutionary biology. Their digitally-hosted project *Solar Cycle 25* is a multi-year, compounded research and material science project. This work focuses on helio-studies and architectures for astronomical work and archives the most recent 11 to 22 year solar cycle. As a public archival study, it connects to ritual and demystifies the work of “hard science,” continuing in the scientific tradition of using the sun as a laboratory for understanding fundamental physics.

Courtesy of the artist

Martine Syms

b. 1988, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

***SHE MAD: The Non-Hero*, 2021**

Single channel video (color, sound) in 4 parts; total runtime: 4:00

Total run time: 04:00 minutes

***Bonnet Core*, 2021**

Cotton, rhinestones, metal, paint, lace, polyester, thread

A self-proclaimed “conceptual entrepreneur,” Martine Syms has become known for a creative practice that, in her own words, “combines conceptual grit with humor and social commentary.” Informed by popular media, radical feminist thought, and Black vernacular traditions, Syms works across video, sculpture, installation, and publishing to satirize the absurdities of everyday life; critically examining the influence of digital technology on the expression and perception of gender and race.

The Non-Hero is the final episode of *She Mad* (2015-2021), a semi-autobiographical video series, described as a “periodic, conceptual sitcom,” in which Syms plays the protagonist—a young Black woman trying to make it as an artist in Los Angeles. The series draws from cinema, television, advertisements, and Internet memes to explore how Black experiences are portrayed in the media. In *The Non-Hero*, Syms imitates the viral TikTok series “Life Story” by rapper Lil Nas X, presenting her narrative in a vertical video format that mimics the aspect ratio of a smartphone. This episode is a commentary on the way autofiction spreads through social media, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. The work also explores the evolving nature of identity and the expectations surrounding it means to identify as an “artist” in an era of endless self-promotion. Reflecting on these concerns in episode one, Syms says: “I like the idea of trying to make myself into this kind of caricature. What are the things so specific about me that they become relatable to anyone?”

Courtesy of the artist

Wes Taylor

b. 1978, Eynsham, United Kingdom; lives and works in Detroit, MI

***Black Portal (Excavating These Future Buildings)*, 2025**

Clay, Plastic, Paper, Plaster, Brick, Wood, Glass, Electronics

Wes Taylor's relational and network-building practice experiments with new modes of working in community. Rooted in the liberatory and process-driven politics of local Detroit activists like Grace Lee and Jimmy Boggs, Taylor describes his evolving and collaborative creative projects as "institutional grassroots initiatives" that remain responsive to the cultural specificities of Detroit and its urban landscape. Across projects past and present, Taylor and his collaborators explore the role of design and technology in supporting social change. Through initiatives like the Design Justice Network, Taylor's work engages with concerns surrounding equitable design; developing principles to ensure the inclusion of marginalized communities within the making process.

For *Code Switch*, Taylor presents a constellation of interconnected artifacts that offer viewers a prismatic snapshot of his latest project, *Black Portal*, an extension of his work with Talking Dolls in the city's northeast (described as "a nexus of progressive art and community-led activism"). Both conceptual and architectural, *Black Portal* aims to transform a former theater into a dynamic practice space; envisioning a future for Detroit's built environment as seen through the lens of its vibrant music community. Taylor is hosting a series of collaborative gatherings that bring together a range of local stakeholders, from musicians and artists, to architects and city planners. In Taylor's words, "these sessions invite participants to engage deeply with the site by uncovering the building's history, sharing stories of the surrounding neighborhood, and engaging in creative activities such as sketching, prototyping, and performance. The aim is to create a space where the boundaries between music and design blur, resulting in new experiences and artifacts that fuse both disciplines."

Courtesy of the artist. The artist would like to extend thanks to the following collaborators: Ricky Blanding, Christine Wyatt, Boaz Sender, and Michael Demps.

Muriel Tramis

b. 1958, Fort-de-France, Martinique; lives and works in Paris, France

***Freedom: Rebels in the Darkness*, 1988**

Image stills of a slave rebellion strategy game; graphics made with the Commodore Amiga personal computer

Freedom is one of many celebrated video games developed during the 1980s and 1990s by Muriel Tramis, the world's first-known Black female video games designer, for the now-cult French gaming company Coktel Vision. Created in collaboration with author and fellow Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau, *Freedom* is a powerful strategy game that explores themes of slavery, resistance, and the desire for liberation. Set on a plantation in 1822 Martinique, characters with strong, multifaceted personalities, such as "Defiant" and "Fanatical," seek to lead a rebellion against the oppressive system. One of the game's most striking scenes involves the protagonists infiltrating the plantation to sabotage it, followed by the dramatic act of burning down a building.

Through the game's design and visuals that offer a vivid and colorful portrayal of the island's geography, Tramis and Chamoiseau confront the painful legacy of colonialism while celebrating the rich, complex and hybrid identities that make up Caribbean society. Speaking to the game's intent, Tramis says: "I felt a great emptiness on the side of our myths and founding legends, on the side of our history, unknown or suffocated under a bundle of shame. I wanted to extend the Creolity movement to video games too. I was convinced that there were all the emotional springs needed to immerse users in a universe, which was certainly painful, but rich in dramas, actions, characters and historical facts that Europe, Africa and America all together had lived through for four centuries."

Courtesy of the artist

Fatimah Tuggar

b. 1967, Kaduna, Nigeria; lives and works in Gainesville, FL

***Robo Makes Dinner*, 2001**

Computer montage (inkjet on vinyl)

Fatimah Tuggar is an interdisciplinary artist and educator whose work engages the relationship between race, gender, and technology. Born and raised between Nigeria and the United Kingdom, Tuggar turns a critical eye to legacies of colonialism, considering technology's relationship to the global diaspora and colonial imperialisms. A self-proclaimed "culture-jammer and resistor," Tuggar transforms and mutates material, often drawn from archival sources and the media, and broadcasts via visual culture as a way of recontextualizing, disrupting, and reframing dynamics of power. In the digital collages presented here, the artist intermeshes references from African and Western visual vernaculars. These spaces of hybridity merge conceptions of the body and the machine. In *Robo Makes Dinner*, a robot takes the place of the human centerstage, enacting its labor and artificial intelligence to produce nourishment for an expectant audience of diasporic diners. In *Lady & the Maid*, Tuggar positions a white woman in service of an African woman in the setting of a living room, inverting expectations of a Eurocentric gaze as typified within traditions of portraiture across art history. Behind the two figures is a cabinet teeming with Meissen-style porcelain wares, a decorative technique originally developed in China and Japan and exported via the trade routes of the Dutch East India Company. Across these works, Tuggar nods to the tensions of Orientalism, drawing out lines of connection between symbols of ascendancy and dominion—and the violence concealed by the labor of these materials—that continue to undergird the constructs of class politics at a global scale.

Courtesy of the artist and BintaZarah Studios

Fatimah Tuggar

b. 1967, Kaduna, Nigeria; lives and works in Gainesville, FL

***Lady & the Maid*, 2000**

Computer montage (inkjet on vinyl)

Jack Whitten

b. 1939, Bessemer, AL; d. 2018, New York, NY

Website, 2009

Acrylic on MDF panel

Jack Whitten was a painter and sculptor daring in his invention of new forms of abstraction and process throughout his nearly six-decade career. His experimental practice connected painting to photography, sculpture, printmaking, music, and new technologies, defying the traditional binds of abstraction and representation. “Every historical age carries a metaphor,” Whitten remarked, “... the metaphor that I choose is technology.” The artist’s interest in gestural mark-making and ideas of automatism were explored through the development and use of unconventional tools like squeegees, metal blades, and afro combs, usually given signature names. An example of this is Whitten’s “developer”: a twelve-foot-long 40-pound wooden rake invented by the artist to move large amounts of acrylic paint in a single gesture, resulting in large-scale color field “slab” paintings. As seen here, the precision of many of Whitten’s paintings suggest the presence of a machine. However, Whitten’s methods engage directly with the hand of the artist, a synthesis between the materiality of both texture and light grounded in the movement of the artist’s physical self. Whitten began using tiles of dried acrylic paint as collaged tesserae, a turning point for his idea of painting as a dimensional space rather than just a surface. Working with tesserae and other prefabricated acrylic units or tiny forms cast from molds, Whitten constituted an infinitely combinable digital grid into this process. His tesserae served a diverse pictorial function coded into his multipart construction, like that of a pixel—each with a distinct piece of light. In his *Notes from the Woodshed* studio log in Fall 1992, Whitten writes: “My paintings are objects designed for the spirit to have a place of rest.”

Courtesy the Jack Whitten Estate and Hauser & Wirth

Sofía Córdova

b. 1985, Carolina, Puerto Rico; lives and works in Caguas, Puerto Rico

***Echoes of a Tumbling Throne (Odas al fin de los tiempos) Live! 8: COOERPOH A COOERPOH*, 2017**

Video, color, original sound composition by XUXA SANTAMARIA (Sofía Córdova + Matthew Gonzalez Kirkland)

Total run time: 45:00 minutes

Performances in order of appearance: Elvi Barrigan, Alexandra Buschman aka Sandy Sleeper, French Clements, Nic Feliciano, Adee Roberson, Las Sucias (Danishta Rivero Castro + Sandy Sleeper), Sofía Córdova

***dawn_chorusi: LA PREKUELA*, 2016-2021**

Video, color, original sound composition by XUXA SANTAMARIA (Sofía Córdova + Matthew Gonzalez Kirkland)

Total run time: 45:00 minutes

Performances in order of appearance: Sabine LeBel, Alison Taylor, Sid Branca, Nicole Killian, Ng Chor Guan, Matthew Gonzalez Kirkland, Charlie Donaldson

Code Switch QR



***F.Y.G* contains adult language that may be inappropriate for minors.**

Please see the front desk for extended wall labels for these artworks.

Sofía Córdova makes work that considers colonial contamination, climate change, migration, and science fiction as alternative history. She visions revolution, historical and imagined, through performance, video, sound, and photography. In her practice, Córdova considers dance music's liberatory dimensions, forming one half of the conceptual music group Xuxa Santamaria. Shot in the woods of Western Finland, the deserts of New Mexico, and the Driftless Region of southwestern Wisconsin, *dawn_chorus i: LAPREKUELA* is one work from the artist's *dawn_chorus* trilogy that reconsiders the past's revolutionary potential, scrutinizing capitalism's historic depredations against the Global South and their present day climatic blowback.

Córdova's video presented here is a "play within a play," drawing on the poetry of Julia de Burgos, the Kalevala, Ursula K. LeGuin's *Tehanu*, and Clarice Lispector's *Água viva*. It explores the promises and failures of technology and ritual in a post-apocalyptic world 500 years from now. *dawn_chorus i: LAPREKUELA* serves as the prequel to *Echoes of a Tumbling Throne (Odas al fin de los tiempos) Live! 8: COOERPOH A COOERPOH*, a live video and performance suite contemplating the dystopian landscape of a future world on the other side of ecological decline. Here, the landscape's inhabitants, artifacts, and culture are a site for considering new realities unfettered by the current social order. The failure of a trusted set of rituals in *LAPREKUELA* leads to an unspecified undoing, which gives way to the "digitally corrupted," yet liberated earth in Córdova's *Echoes* series.

Courtesy of the artist

Charles Gaines

b. 1944, Charleston, South Carolina; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

***Faces 1: Identity Politics, Drawing #11, Molefi Kete Asante*, 2018**

Ink on paper

***Faces 1: Identity Politics, Drawing #10, Edward Said*, 2018**

Ink on paper

Charles Gaines is widely known within the field of conceptual art. His artistic practice surveys meaning-making, cognition, and language. Spanning across decades and disciplines, the artist activates different forms with the use of installation, video, drawings, photography, and other media. Gaines began experimenting with numeric systems and math in the 1970s, using methodical calculations to explore ideas of subjectivity, objectivity, and aesthetics. His use of grids and numbers engages data as a formal material and an architecture within which he reformats images, making his work both algorithmic and computational. Gaines notes his shift toward numeric systems as a pedagogical frame: “I wanted to demonstrate how our poetic and aesthetic judgments are embodied within discourse, rather than being totally free properties, and to explain why I wasn’t interested in subjectivity as a tool of production.”

The two works on display are from Gaines’s ongoing *Faces* series, in which the artist presents portraits of leading theorists and philosophers. The first portrait is the Palestinian-American critic, academic, and scholar Edward Said (1935-2003), renowned for his foundational work on Orientalism. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) positioned a critique of the Western world’s relationship and perceptions of the East, both past and present. The second portrait features Molefi Kete Asante (b. 1942), an African-American philosopher who advocates for an Afrocentric position within the study of the world, one that celebrates the African-American experience and contributions of the Black diaspora. Gaines’s spotlight on Said and Asante underscores identity as a construct, and insists on sightlines toward knowledge that pushes against the flawed assumptions of Eurocentric narratives and history as being the most valued and placed at the center of all cultural production.

Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Juliana Huxtable

b. 1987, Bryan-College Station, Texas; lives and works in New York, NY

***ARTHRO ANARCHY*, 2024**

Triptych; acrylic and vinyl stickers on printed canvas

An artist, writer, musician, and performer, Juliana Huxtable excels in probing dormant and marginalized histories, narratives, and technologies to disrupt contemporary perceptions of identity, futurity, and politics. Through painting, photography, music, performance, text, and video, she has defined an aesthetic language that often plays into a digital, Tumblr-ized visual identity, or a kind of “collaged rap and visual rapture.” Huxtable’s works pull together references from science fiction, queer nightlife, Internet subcultures, fetishes, and furry fandom into portrayals of speculative social archetypes as a method of resistance and liberation. In the words of the artist: “inseparable from the political, the personal is our opportunity for disobedience.”

In *ARTHRO ANARCHY*, a triptych painting, Huxtable expands the cast of characters populating her canvases in earlier works, evolving a synthesis of thought and technique from the exploration of her own image into a resulting mythologized universe of her own. *ARTHRO ANARCHY* depicts an arachnid body from which a self-portrait emerges. Huxtable’s evolving visual lexicon is created through a convergence of physical processes and technological fixations, such as the transference of specific forms created on an iPad to canvas. She closely replicates a spider’s textured body according to standards of anatomical zoomorphic accuracy found in the work of furry illustrators on social network platform DeviantArt. Looking closer, some of Huxtable’s detail-rich animal or bodily markings are raised, laser-cut, vectorised vinyl stickers, applied directly to the painting. Her celebrated practice probes histories and discourses on identity, and their role as both aesthetic and communal forms. Huxtable recasts our understandings of “the image” and “the human,” hinged upon, in her words, “empathy, desire, and agile distortion as a political and social paradigm.”

Courtesy of the artist

Howardena Pindell

b. 1943, Philadelphia, PA; lives and works in New York City, NY

***Rope/Fire/Water*, 2020**

Black and white video, sound

Total run time: 19:00 minutes

**This artwork contains violent imagery.
Viewer discretion is advised.**

Xenobia Bailey

b.1955, Seattle, WA; lives and works in Philadelphia, PA

***Works in Progress: Narrative MoJo Altar Series: Elder Trans, Foster Parent, Singing Story-Teller*, 2025**

Still life; crochet, found objects, digital collage

***Works in Progress: Narrative MoJo Altar Series: Hallowed Be Thy “2020” Covid Babies*, 2025**

Still life; found objects, crochet, Shindana Toys, digital collage

***Works in Progress: Narrative MoJo Altar Series: Alice ‘The Magnificent’ Coltrane*, 2025**

Still life; crochet, found objects, digital collage

Artist, designer, and activist Xenobia Bailey initially studied ethnomusicology, or the study of music and world culture, before moving her focus to industrial design. Known for her intricate needlework, Bailey cites Bernadette Sonona, a master crochet artist, as being formative to her deepening in an understanding of the medium, introducing her to “free-style crochet,” which innovated beyond typical design formats.

Bailey uses what she calls a “funk aesthetic” as a way of centering the African diaspora and the reengineering of Black space as a means of world-building for Black people. Her work often features mandalas and concentric circles, the repetition of which operates as an encrypted coding and radical musical notation, drawing on the sound and color composition of “Cosmic Funk” design styles of the 1960s and 1970s. Bailey is invested in the relationship between Afrofuturism and speculative reconstruction of Black environments through utilitarian fabrication. The artist reflects on this and her own lived experience, observing: “My funk and the funk from my community is about survival and living a dream in a nightmare. That’s what my funk is about. [I]t was always about survival and maintaining the little bit of Africanness that we can, especially since we were severed from everything, our culture, our people, our language, everything.”

Bailey’s alchemy, transforming the ordinary into extraordinary technologies, can be seen with the works presented here, wherein the artist actively arranges and documents Barbie dolls and miniature figurines to create digital prints of cosmic landscapes. In *Narrative MoJo Altar Series: Elder Trans*, Foster Parent, Singing Story-Teller, the infant figure seated in the wicker chair invokes the iconic photo by Blair Stapp of Black Panther Party founder Huey P. Newton (1942-1949). In *Narrative MoJo Altar Series: Alice ‘The Magnificent’ Coltrane*, Bailey reimagines the U.S. postage stamp as homage to jazz musician, composer, pianist, harpist, and Hindu spiritualist Alice Coltrane (1937-2007), born and raised in Detroit, who became central to the city’s music scene.

Courtesy of the artist

Howardena Pindell's expansive career as an artist, curator, critic, activist, and educator has traversed numerous realms of practice and pedagogy. After studying as a painter, in 1967 Pindell became the first Black woman curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and in 1979 began teaching at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, where she is still a professor today. Pindell's work ranges from glittering abstract paintings and mixed media collages to video and performance work. Her essays and curatorial vision have long pushed artists and institutions to rise to the challenges of our time. "I saw numbers as a means of drawing... I called them nonsense numbers," Pindell recalls, growing up observing her father, a mathematician and educator, write numbers and record statistics in a graph paper book.

Pindell's monumental video work *Rope/Fire/Water* debuted forty years after her transformative *Free, White and 21*. *Free, White and 21* is a video created by Pindell following her departure from MoMA and a car crash that resulted in significant memory loss. In this work, the artist reconstructs individual and national memory, oscillating between performing both as herself and as a character in a blond wig and whiteface, recounting her experience as a Black woman in America. In *Rope/Fire/Water*, Pindell takes an aerial view that expands beyond her personal story, instead narrating a dense and breathless history of violence as enacted unto Black people in the United States across centuries. Pindell interweaves numerical data and archival imagery from analog and digital sources to tell a story of Black life, survival, and Black death from the Transatlantic Slave Trade through to the death of George Floyd in 2020. Central to the video is Pindell's bridge between those who have been victims of police brutality and the terroristic tradition of lynching as a framework of supremacy and control. Pindell speaks about the data analytics of her work as it spans across the many chapters of her prolific career, observing, "When I was working on my art world surveys [on racism in the art world], I felt that keeping track of the racism needed to be done through counting. And I basically say the numbers say everything."

Courtesy of the artist, Garth Greenan Gallery, New York, and White Cube

fields harrington

b. 1986, Rancho Cordova, CA; lives and works in New York, NY

The Value of an Individual, 2020

Digital C-Print

Surreptitious Spread (Ventilation Series), 2023

Aluminium round air duct and hardware

fields harrington explores how tools, technologies, and infrastructures—often perceived as neutral—are shaped by underlying ideologies of race, value, and power. His work investigates the enduring impact of oppressive systems, such as the financial logic of slavery and racist ideologies, on scientific instruments and data production.

The Value of an Individual from harrington's series *Entropic Path* (2020) illustrates the prognosis of mortality for insurance companies, like Prudential Life Insurance Company. The series contemplates the social implications of taxonomies of difference and value, and how this data drives the racializing surveillance of statistical law and biological ordering. harrington questions the process by which numerical thinking and quantification becomes embedded within an organization, society, or system; influencing its structures, practices, and culture. The artist rethinks the logic behind these processes, alongside economies of labor, and the tools and devices designed for accurate measurements or tasks. The photograph is paired with harrington's sculpture, *Surreptitious Spread (Ventilation Series)*, which takes up the figure of the HeLa cell as a signifier of immortal or non-exhaustive work. The HeLa cell is named after Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman who died of cervical cancer in 1951. During her treatment, a sample of her cancerous cells was taken without her knowledge. HeLa cells have the remarkable ability to continuously grow and divide in a laboratory setting, making them "immortal," and have become fundamental to scientific research. In bringing these works together, harrington asks: *what does it mean to have the body "labor" indefinitely as a signifier of capitalism and as an indicator of the Black, gendered body performing as machine?*

Courtesy of the artist

Auriea Harvey

b. 1971, Indianapolis, IN; lives and works in Rome, Italy

mother/child, 2017

3D printed composite (silk, PLA), epoxy clay, satin ribbons, velvet fabric, with .GLB and HTML file

Webcam Movies, 1999

CRT monitor, media player

With a career spanning over thirty years, Auriea Harvey has consistently been at the forefront of the intersection between art and technology. A trailblazer of the so-called “first wave” of Internet and New Media Art in the 1990s (then referred to as “Net Art”), Harvey played a key role in the first major Internet Art project commissioned by an art institution and received the first international prize for an interactive artwork. In the early 2000s, Harvey co-authored the *Realtime Art Manifesto* with longtime collaborator Michaël Samyn, with whom she also co-founded the net art collective Entropy8Zuper!. The manifesto became a foundational text for the independent games movement, boldly proclaiming that the rise of 3D computer graphics—referred to as “realtime 3D”—was “the most remarkable new creative technology since oil on canvas.” It served as a rallying cry, urging creative minds—from video game designers to fine artists—to embrace this emerging medium and explore its vast potential.

Harvey’s early project *Webcam Movies* features archival footage of herself working in her studio, perpetually connected to the Internet. Created during her time with the Net Art collective and experimental online platform hell.com—hailed as “an iconic example of avant-garde expression in the digital realm”—this work marks a pivotal moment in the development of her approach to portraiture. Today, Harvey draws on both personal experience and classical influences, particularly Hellenistic art, to create hybrid sculptures that bridge digital and physical realms. Her work *mother/child*, based on a 3D scan of her niece and son asleep in the back seat of a car, exemplifies this fusion. Harvey sees the work as a meditation on motherhood, echoing the spirit of Michelangelo’s *Pietà*, which stands just a few blocks from her home in Rome, Italy.

Courtesy of the artist

Nontsikelelo Mutiti

b. 1982, Harare, Zimbabwe; lives and works in New York, NY

Morning 0 (excerpt), 2025

Cut vinyl and website

Nontsikelelo Mutiti is a Zimbabwean-born visual artist and educator dedicated to elevating the cultural practices of Black people—past, present, and future. Through her conceptual approach to design, publishing, archiving, and institution-building, Mutiti explores ways to highlight Black diasporic histories and knowledge.

Over the past decade, Mutiti has worked on a series of ongoing, multi-disciplinary projects that explore and experiment with hair braiding as a complex cultural technology. She sees braiding as more than just an aesthetic practice of adornment, but deeply rooted in African and diasporic traditions, holding specific cultural knowledge, language, and motifs. Historically, braiding has served as an ancestral medium to signify social roles and group identity. During slavery, braiding was even used to design hidden maps for escape, intertwining hair along paths toward emancipation. In the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, braiding became a symbol of beauty, pride, and resistance to colonization. Through repetition and sampling, Mutiti's work across various media transforms the act of braiding into a rhythmic and algorithmic pattern, and draws parallels with digital image-making and typographic processes.

For this exhibition, Mutiti presents a static form of her digital publishing project *braidingbraiding.us*, initiated in 2015. The featured vinyl patterns represent a transcription of conversations from a braiding session in Johannesburg, South Africa, and point to the artist's interest in hair salons as spaces of kinship and knowledge exchange. As Mutiti reflects, "braiding is not just about beauty; it's about perseverance, trust, and creativity. It's also a generous act, spending time with someone, working on them."

Courtesy of the artist

Taína Cruz

b.1998, New York, NY; lives and works in New Haven, CT

***Liberty.exe*, 2025**

Oil on canvas

***RentaRoot.com*, 2025**

Oil on canvas

Cruz's visual language blends eerie abstractions of Internet culture with the magical realism and folklore of her Caribbean heritage. With a background in computer science, Cruz adapts digital technologies as "secondary tools" for her paintings. The artist uses 3D modeling software to manipulate digital imagery drawn from her extensive archive, and maps out compositions before translating them to canvas by hand. Cruz employs this hybrid method as a mode of addressing concepts and themes like "deepfakes," (digital media, typically videos or images, manipulated using artificial intelligence to replace a person's face or voice with that of another person) and social media's impact on self-image and body commodification, both on and beyond the screen. Embedding her paintings with a layer of irony implicit within much of Internet meme culture, Cruz pokes fun at how digital technologies reshape our understanding of self and society, while challenging traditional representations of Black womanhood.

Courtesy of the artist and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin

Cameron Rowland

b. 1988, Philadelphia, PA; lives and works in New York City, NY

***Presumption of guilt*, 2020**

Door Alert

A door alert is used to ensure observation of potential theft.

Courtesy of the artist and Maxwell Graham, New York

-{ john-henry }-[thompson]

b. 1959, Kingston, Jamaica; lives and works in New York City, NY and Philadelphia, PA

***COVID-19 Memorial Ticker*, 2021**

Web-based memorial

-{ john-henry }-[thompson] is a computer scientist and visual artist known for his invention of the scripting language Lingo in 1989. Lingo became the primary programming language for Adobe Shockwave, a multimedia platform used for creating and playing interactive content and games on web pages and dominated the market during the 1990s. Lingo enabled the creation of user interfaces, as well as the manipulation of computer graphics, and other data processing tasks, with specialized syntax for image processing and 3D object manipulation. During the 1990s, several graphic adventure games, including *The Journeyman Project*, *Total Distortion*, *Mia's Language Adventure*, *Mia's Science Adventure*, and the *Didi & Ditto* series, were developed using Lingo.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Thompson created the *COVID-19 Memorial Ticker* to visualize daily mortality data from the Johns Hopkins CSSE database. The installation represents daily COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. as white squares, showing the daily count along with prior days' data since February 2020. A 10-second pause is included for reflection before displaying each new day's data. Using the open-source COVID-19 Impact Dashboard, the work explores how data visualization can humanize the pandemic's statistics, fostering community-driven mourning and memorialization. Here, we consider: *how can a public memorial reflect the vast scale of loss while honoring each individual life lost?*

Courtesy of the artist

Cameron A. Granger

b. 1993, Cleveland, OH; lives and works in Columbus, OH and New York, NY

***Hollowfolk # 2 – Black Herman Covers The World*, 2024**

Silkscreen print, archival inkjet prints

Granger's work reflects his experiences growing up in the post-industrial Midwest and the ongoing effects of systemic injustice in the region. Across video, print, and sculpture, Granger uses video games and magic as frameworks to explore alternative methods of liberation for Black communities impacted by the racist outcomes of gentrification.

In a series of short films created in collaboration with his friends and neighbors, Granger portrays "Bad City," a fictional town that, in the artist's words, represents any "post-industrial town with a Black community that's been drained by urban development." The latest installment in this series of pseudo-documentaries, *Here & There Along the Echo*, depicts a neighborhood plagued by black holes—surreal, spatial wounds that symbolize the cumulative effects of segregative design and environmental racism. However, in Granger's narrative, all is not lost. By weaving together various multimedia components, the artist mimics a video game-like sequence that offers puzzles, tips, and charms to help understand and potentially repair these ruptures.

Granger's work also draws on ancestral magic traditions and spiritual knowledge from across the African diaspora. *Hollowfolk # 2 – Black Herman Covers The World* references figures such as Henry "Box" Brown, an enslaved man who escaped to freedom by arranging to have himself mailed in a wooden crate in an event that became publicly known as a "resurrection," and Benjamin Rucker—also known as "Black Herman"—the most prominent African-American magician at the turn of the 20th century.

Courtesy of the artist

to be placed near screenprint

Minne Atairu

b. 1992, Benin, Nigeria; lives and works in New York, NY

ML Dataset from Benin Kingdom (1899-1962), 2021

Paper, acrylic sheets, images of Benin Bronzes clipped from colonial-era auction catalogs and academic journals

metadatamemoir (<https://ars.electronica.art/hope/en/metadata-memoir/>), 2024 - ongoing

Metadata, Smart Contract, API (Application Programming Interface)

Minne Atairu is an interdisciplinary artist whose research-based practice seeks to reclaim the obscured histories of the Benin Bronzes—a collection of looted artifacts from her ancestral home in Benin, Nigeria. In 1897, the British Empire invaded the West African kingdom of Benin (presently Edo state in Nigeria) that culminated in the pillage of approximately 4,000 crafted artifacts commissioned by the Benin royal court. The artifacts were then auctioned off by the British, and made their way into collections in Europe and the United States. Atairu encountered these objects as a teaching artist at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. Utilizing generative AI and additive fabrication, the artist reassembles historical, visual, sonic, and textual fragments into conceptual works that engage with repatriation-related questions, colonial dispossession, and epistemic justice. Atairu investigates art historical gaps that remain understudied for “either the absence of empirical evidence or the existence of undocumented evidence, like praise poetry or oral history.” To visualize these untold narratives, Atairu fine-tunes her generative AI models using archival images. *ML Dataset from Benin Kingdom (1899-1962)* presents image clippings of Benin Bronzes from colonial-era auction catalogs and academic journals. Notably, Atairu’s *metadatamemoir* project, accessible in both Nigerian pidgin English, and standard English, is a decentralized archive programmed to autonomously document repatriated objects in real-time, achieving this through The New York Times and The Guardian news APIs. Upon identifying relevant news, the system generates documentation for each returned object. To date, the smart contract has recorded 64 returns from 8 institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Horniman Museum in London.

Courtesy of the artist

Shawanda Corbett

b. 1989, New York, NY; lives and works in Cambridge, United Kingdom

Cyborg theory: The adequacy of tenderness to our antipathy,

2022

Video and Sound

Total run time: 31:34 minutes

Venusloc (Vanessa Reynolds)

b. 1990, Detroit, MI; lives and works in Detroit, MI

F.Y.G., 2022

Video

Total run time: 2:08 minutes

Cameron A. Granger

b. 1993, Cleveland, OH; lives and works in Columbus, OH and New York, NY

Here & There Along The Echo, 2024

Digital video

Total run time: 27:00 minutes

Neta Bomani

b. 1994, Berrien Springs, MI; lives and works in New York, NY

Total run Time: 24:55 minutes

Dark Matter Objects, 2021

2-color red and black risograph printed handbound booklet. Red and black paper of various stocks, grey craft paper, lotka paper, newsprint, transparency, cotton from North Carolina, red light-emitting diodes, copper tape, coin cell battery, wire cable, fiberglass printed circuit board, black silkscreen. Made with Chibitronics Chibi Chip, MacBook Pro (13-inch, M1, 2020), TextEdit, Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Premiere, and EAGLE. Printed on RISO Ez 221 U, Cricut Explore Air 2, and Brother Monochrome Laser HL-L2370DW. Filmed on Sony XDCAM PXW-FS5 and Panasonic Lumix DC GH5.

Shawanda Corbett

b. 1989, New York, NY; lives and works in Cambridge, United Kingdom

***Cyborg theory: The adequacy of tenderness to our antipathy*, 2022**

Video and Sound

Total run time: 31:34 minutes

Shawanda Corbett combines ceramics, painting, film, music, and poetry to challenge gendered and racialized ideas surrounding identity and its relationship to our physical selves. Guided by her perspective as a differently-abled Black woman, much of Corbett's work begins with the question: what is a "complete body?" To help answer this, Corbett applies an intersectional lens to Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), reinterpreting and grounding its feminist theory in lived reality. Haraway's manifesto suggests that growing human dependence on machines will dissolve rigid boundaries of identity, enabling the creation of cyborgs who define their own existence.

Corbett makes this exploration of "cyborg identity" explicit in their short film *Cyborg theory: the adequacy of tenderness to our antipathy*. The film uses dance and performance to explore concerns around access and availability. Created during the pandemic, it acknowledges the communities often overlooked as the scientific field develops. In Corbett's telling, the work "takes the perspective of a cyborg's conscious and subconscious throughout the day. It addresses how trauma takes place where love should be, and how the body recalls coldness instead of warmth in its movement. The cyborg is double-visioned, a person of color with a hybrid identity, which impacts how they experience and remember events... It is impossible to understand vulnerability and freedom within our bodies without remembering the journey. And that journey is self-love."

Courtesy of the artist

Venusloc (Vanessa Reynolds)

b. 1990, Detroit, MI; lives and works in Detroit, MI

F.Y.G., 2022

Video

Total run time: 2:08 minutes

Venusloc, a self-taught video artist and musician, explores modes of thinking and communicating that exist outside the algorithmic structures shaping our digital and physical worlds. Using tools like 3D modeling software, the artist creates animated videos that blend early Internet aesthetics with Black expressive culture, inviting viewers to enter a “world of their own making.”

F.Y.G. is a satirical music video that critiques the absurdities of surveillance culture. What began as a response to a malfunctioning audio deterrent at their local Dollar Store evolved into a broader commentary on the racial implications of digital security systems. The title, “F.Y.G.” (short for “F**k Your Greenlight”), plays on email jargon and a popular R&B song to challenge Detroit’s “Project Green Light.” Launched in 2016, the initiative has installed over 400 surveillance cameras connected to police headquarters in local businesses, claiming to improve public safety and contribute to Detroit’s revitalization. In 2017, the city added facial recognition technology, which uses AI algorithms to scan video and image databases. However, studies show that these algorithms often reinforce racial and gender biases, leading scholars to label them as part of the “New Jim Code.”

Through the layering of audio clips from the Dollar Store’s loudspeakers with visual caricatures of surveillance systems, superimposed with a digital avatar of the artist, *F.Y.G.* uses humor and pop culture to critique how these technologies perpetuate a legacy of racialized state control. These systems, which disproportionately target Black and Brown communities, echo historical practices like redlining and the criminalization of Blackness. Through this, *F.Y.G.* challenges notions of “public safety”; exposing the role of biased technology in reinforcing systems of racial inequality, while hinting at a world beyond.

Courtesy of the artist

Neta Bomani

b. 1994, Berrien Springs, MI; lives and works in New York, NY

***Dark Matter Objects*, 2021**

2-color red and black risograph printed handbound booklet. Red and black paper of various stocks, grey craft paper, lotka paper, newsprint, transparency, cotton from North Carolina, red light-emitting diodes, copper tape, coin cell battery, wire cable, fiberglass printed circuit board, black silkscreen. Made with Chibitronics Chibi Chip, MacBook Pro (13-inch, M1, 2020), TextEdit, Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Premiere, and EAGLE. Printed on RISO Ez 221 U, Cricut Explore Air 2, and Brother Monochrome Laser HL-L2370DW. Filmed on Sony XDCAM PXW-FS5 and Panasonic Lumix DC GH5.

Compiler: Neta Bomani

Sound engineer: Khari Lucas

Theme song composer: Christelle Bofale

Printmaker: Holly Meadows-Smith

Video engineer: Adder Chu

Circuit board engineer: Taylor Levy

Narrators: Alexander Fefegha, American Artist, Ashley Jane Lewis, Bomani Oseni McClendon, Gabrielle Octavia Rucker, Galen Macdonald, Fred Moten, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Laolu Numa, Lina Chang, Marilyn Nance, Melanie Hoff, Sadé Powell, Simone Browne, Sol Cabrini de la Ciudad, Stephanie Dinkins, Sydney Spann, Zisiga Mukulu

Neta Bomani's work as a community organizer, educator, and zine maker is centered around empowering people to "engage critically with technology, embrace abolitionist and Black feminist philosophies, and co-create systems that promote liberation through "do-it-yourself" methodologies." In addition to their creative practice, Bomani serves as the co-director of the School for Poetic Computation, an experimental school supporting interdisciplinary study in art, code, hardware, and critical theory. They are also involved with Sojourners for Justice PressS, a micro press founded by prison abolitionist and activist Mariame Kaba, which provides a platform for experimental work in print media. Bomani's video work *Dark Matter Objects: Technologies of Capture and Things That Can't Be Held* (2018-present) blends their creative interests and political explorations. The project features a multivocal reading of a unique, handmade zine that Bomani created. Described as "a storybook for children and adults about computational history and technology," the zine binds together elements from both the past and present of cybernetics. The title of the project is a reference to Simone Browne's *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, which argues that modern surveillance technologies are rooted in the methods used to control and police Black lives during slavery and the Jim Crow era. Through this work, Bomani explores the enduring dynamics of the "master-slave relationship" that shapes the social, political, and economic systems underlying technology.

Courtesy of the artist

Cameron A. Granger

b. 1993 in Cleveland, OH; lives and works in Columbus, OH and New York, NY

***Here & There Along The Echo*, 2024**

Digital video

Starring: Akillah Clark, Hakim Callwood, Shala Miller, Alonee Gray, Reg Zehner, SolaSystem, Wahala.Wav, Dom Deshawn, Joey Aich, Chad Pendergrass, Keith “Coach” Neal Score:

Love Higher Production Assistance: Jeffery Grant Jr., Jules Tong

Total run time: 27:00 minutes

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Courtesy of the artist