

# FRIEZE

November 18, 2025

## Will Rawls Takes to the Green Screen

At The Kitchen, New York, his expanded cinema addresses the mediation of Black bodies

By Zoë Hopkins



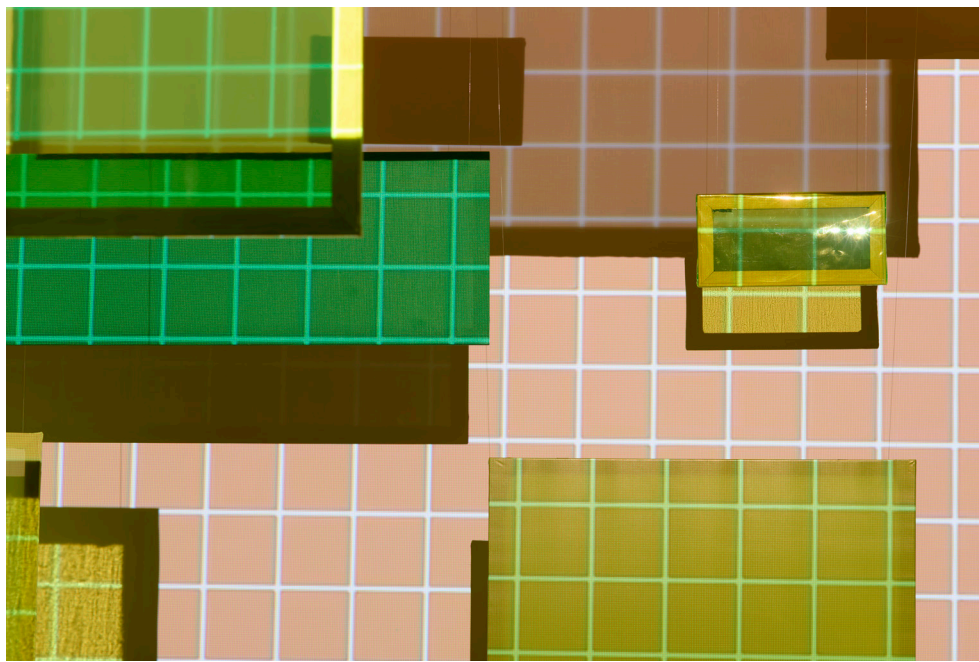
The Latin *sic* marks the presence of an errancy that repudiates correction, a tear in the laws of the dictionary or the grammarian, the shudder of convention. Will Rawls's exhibition '[siccer]' at The Kitchen, New York, takes its cues from the glitchiness that gives rise to *[sic]*, reading for an anti-grammar of Black performance that contaminates and contravenes the jurisdiction of correctness, going with the rough grain of the impure and improper.



Will Rawls, '[siccer]', 2025, exhibition view. Courtesy: The Kitchen at Westbeth, New York; photograph: Phoebe d'Heurle

The fulcrum of the exhibition is the artist and choreographer's titular 2023 film, which emerges from the join between the movement of Black bodies and their mediation by technologies of spectatorship. Rawls's cast of movers takes to the screen, where they casually dance, sing, meander, and muse. The unconcealed presence of a green screen within the film and the deployment of stop-motion, which animates bodies and their movement throughout most of the film, stridently announce the film's mechanics of production. The cinematic apparatus stands naked before us, so honest about its contrivances that it can only be described as *real*.

The green screen – that glaringly chromatic sign of the virtual – appears behind those in the film, for whom it becomes a total environment: there is no ersatz backdrop laid upon it, only the backdrop of production itself. Thus emerges a metaphor for those omnipresent techniques which reduce and produce Blackness for a spectator. 'I can't really get out of here,' announces a mover mid-film: live actors captured with stop motion, they are entrapped in a perpetual condition of being perceived, continually rendered – through the hyper-present mechanics of cinema – for an observer.



Will Rawls, 'siccet', 2025, exhibition view. Courtesy: The Kitchen at Westbeth, New York; photograph: Phoebe d'Heurle

This attention to the construction of vision explodes beyond the screen and into the gallery space. Our scopic field is divided and dynamized by myriad, variously sized green frames hanging from the gallery ceiling, constituting a matrix of portals through which our gaze may enter, lines of sight along which to travel. Yet the frames also disrupt the continuity that extends between our eye and the screen. Just as these devices intervene in the unity of our sight, stop-motion injects disunity into the film's diegesis.

Rawls's animation technique calls into question the continuity and fluidity presumed to inhere in motion, dispensing with any notion of film as a coherent, unified text. It also pointedly demonstrates the intensity with which bodies are mediated for the camera: their movement appears governed not by the animacy of muscle and breath but by the opening and closing of the aperture and by procedures of sequencing. At times, the stop-motion seems to race; at others, it lags, and the bodies move as if battling an immense wind.

Then there are the moments when the technology reveals its inner workings: we hear the serial click of a camera, see it capture a body vacillating between the cessation and renewal of movement, re-



Will Rawls, '[siccer]', 2025, exhibition view. Courtesy: The Kitchent Westbeth, New York; photograph: Phoebe d'Heurle

iteratively suspended at the knife-edge of inertia before setting off again. As the stop in stop-motion pierces every vector of action, every second of the body's passage through space and time, movement seems to erupt in an open struggle against itself, with the friction of its imminent arrest.

On the one hand, the *stop* in stop motion reminds us that for Blackness, to move is to do so in relation to an oppressive superstructure that chases after your kinesis – to be at the mercy of an imposed immobility. And yet a freedom leaks from the agitated interstices between stop and motion, from the glitch that sparks this particular form of animation and its play with the laws of motion. Rawls scripts Blackness as an ongoing, recursive disjunction and discontinuity, a cut that upends the course of movement and its apprehension.

*Will Rawls's '[siccer]' is on view at The Kitchen, New York until 22 November*

*Main image: Will Rawls, '[siccer]', 2025, exhibition view. Courtesy: The Kitchen at Westbeth, New York; photograph: Phoebe d'Heurle*