

RESHAPING THE FIELD: ARTS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORAS ON DISPLAY
November 4–6, 2021

DAILY SCHEDULE:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4

4:15 p.m.

Opening welcome and land acknowledgment

Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

4:30–5:05 p.m.

Keynote I: Art, Museums, and the Fear of a Black Planet

Bridget R. Cooks, Associate Professor, Department of Art History and Department of African American Studies, University of California, Irvine

Ten years after the publication of her book *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (2011), scholar and curator Bridget R. Cooks discusses art, museums, and demands for change in the age of Black Lives Matter. She considers the anxieties that Blackness provokes for rethinking art history and museum practices and explores how artists imagine worlds of Black freedom.

Chair: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

5:05–5:30 p.m.

Q&A

5:30–5:40 p.m.

Break

5:40–6:10 p.m.

Keynote II: Africa and the Anthropological Myth-Making of Museums

Monique Scott, PhD, Associate Professor in the History of Art Department and Director of Museum Studies, Bryn Mawr College

In her recent research, Monique Scott, focuses on how racial hierarchies not only show up in museum displays but also lurk in the museum archives. While conducting extensive research in the archives of the Penn Museum in Philadelphia over the past few summers, Scott sought to find traces of the journeys that the museum's African objects took from maker to museum. In

doing this work, Scott aims to expose how Blackness was constructed, capitalized on, and trafficked through the actions, language, and political rhetoric and political power employed by ethnographers, missionaries, art dealers, and other actors who contributed to the Penn Museum collection. For this project, she is primarily interested in how we can use museum archives of African collections—photographs, diaries, ledgers, and so on—to shed light on the colonial past of African objects in order to activate them in new ways in museums.

Chair: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

6:10–6:35 p.m.

Q&A

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5

9:45 a.m.

Opening welcome: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

10:00–10:50 a.m.

MARGINALIZED LEGACIES AND NETWORKS

This panel highlights the networks of artists and historically Black colleges and universities that not only exhibited Black artists but also fostered a dialogue that spanned across the United States. For example, the artist Hale Woodruff (1900–1980) founded the first art department at a Southern Black university, where he taught alongside the sculptor Nancy Elizabeth Prophet from 1931 to 1946. Woodruff also established the Atlanta Annuals in 1942 (until 1970), which showed exclusively African American artists. Closing the link between artists of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden, and influential art educators like J. Eugene Grigsby, Woodruff taught at New York University from 1946 until his retirement in 1967. Through their collections, historically Black colleges and universities created a foundation for the flourishing of Black art, art education, and artists, including in recourse to exhibition-making.

Mapping Art History at the Atlanta University Center

Cheryl Finley, Director of the Atlanta University Center Art History + Curatorial Studies Collective and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Art History at Spelman College, Atlanta

Fisk University Galleries

Jamaal B. Sheats, Director, Fisk University Galleries

Highlights from the Howard University Gallery of Art's Exhibition History

Abby Eron, Registrar, Howard University Gallery of Art

Chair: Richard J. Powell, John Spencer Bassett Professor of Art & Art History, Duke University

10:50–11:35 a.m.

Discussion and Q&A

11:35 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Break

12:15–1:05 p.m.

BETWEEN INCLUSION AND MAKING SPACE

This panel addresses the tension between anthropological exhibitions organized via an ethnic signifier and exhibitions that aim at establishing art as universal. Within this tension, Black artists have insisted on inclusion by organizing exhibitions outside mainstream museums, while others have utilized the museum, as artist David C. Driskell did, to highlight Black artists' contributions. This panel will also assess where we are at today.

Insisting on Inclusion and Making Space Downtown

Howard Singerman, Phyllis and Joseph Caroff Chair, Department of Art and Art History, Hunter College

Revisiting *Exhibiting Blackness*

Brittany Webb, Evelyn and Will Kaplan Curator of Twentieth-Century Art and the John Rhoden Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

More than Preamble: Anticipating *Two Centuries of Black American Art*

Julie L. McGee, Interim Director, Special Collections & Museums; Associate Professor, Africana Studies & Art History; Director, Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center, University of Delaware

Chair: Bridget R. Cooks, Associate Professor, Department of Art History and Department of African American Studies, University of California, Irvine

1:05–1:50 p.m.

Discussion and Q&A

1:50 p.m.
Break

2:50–3:35 p.m.
RUPTURES

The 2001 exhibition *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, curated by Thelma Golden and Christine Y. Kim, heralded the term “post-Black” as a shift in the positioning of Black artists who were born after the Civil Rights Movement and at the same time reintroduced the ongoing debate on identity and art. *Freestyle* and its format of exhibiting emerging Black artists in a group show emphasized the Studio Museum’s role in fostering young talent and introducing them to the wider public while attempting to redefine the meaning of Blackness for the 21st century. Art historian Derek Conrad Murray, explores the queering of post-Black art, while CCS Bard Associate Professor Nana Adusei-Poku emphasizes the importance of post-structural discourses and transdiasporic connections as part of the post-Black discourse.

Does the Plantation End When the Market Begins? Personal reflections and More Than a Few Questions in Personal and Public Practice Post-Freestyle
Senam Okudzeto, artist

Blackness on Display: On Racial Fetishism and the Right to Opacity
Derek Conrad Murray, Professor, History of Art and Visual Culture Department, University of California, Santa Cruz

How *Freestyle* Ruptured Black Art
Chair: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

3:35–4:20 p.m.
Discussion and Q&A

4:20 p.m.
Closing remarks and housekeeping for tomorrow: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

4:30pm
Break

5:00p.m.
Virtual tour of the exhibition *The Open Work: An Exhibition History of Elvira Dyangani Ose* with curator Serubiri Moses, on view in the CCS Bard Galleries

5:15 p.m.

Pre-recorded Audio Conversation between Serubiri Moses and Elvira Dyangani Ose

Moses and Dyangani Ose will discuss her curatorial approach in relation to the recovery of missing archives, as well as critical exhibition history of African and Black artists and collectives. This talk will be available to watch throughout the conference by clicking the link on the conference webcast page.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6

9:45 a.m.

Opening welcome: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

10:00–10:45 a.m.

DIALOGICS OF DIASPORA

The Thin Black Line (1985), curated by Lubaina Himid, *The Other Story* (1989), curated by Rasheed Araeen, and the later *Transforming the Crown* (1997), curated by Mora Beauchamp-Byrd, are just three examples from and focusing on the U.K. that exemplify the intense debates on the ways Black artists have been exhibited in the Black Diaspora. Araeen advocated for an acknowledgment of African and Asian artists' contribution to postwar Britain and their engagement with modernism, instead of reducing their work to their ethnic signifiers. Beauchamp-Byrd's *Transforming the Crown*, on the other hand, took a corrective stance on the history of British art and continued the activism for visibility and inclusion that Marlene Smith and many other Black British artists fought for in the 1980s. This panel reflects on this rich history and includes several speakers who shaped the discourse through their practices.

Moving Images, Exhibition Histories: *Dreaming Rivers and Handsworth Songs*

Lucy Steeds, Reader in Art Theory and Exhibition Histories, University of the Arts London

The Afterlives of *Transforming the Crown*: Black British Art and the Survey Exhibition

Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd, Visiting Assistant Professor of Art and Design, The University of Tampa

Discussant

Kobena Mercer, Charles P. Stevenson Chair of Art History and Humanities, Bard College

Finding the Room Next to Mine

Chair: Marlene Smith, artist and curator

10:45 a.m.
Discussion and Q&A

11:30 a.m.
Break

12:45–1:30 p.m.
CURATING BLACK FUTURES NOW—Roundtable conversation

This closing panel aims to give space to the perspectives of contemporary curators working within the field of African diasporic art. How do they see the future of the field, what influences their work, and within which historical dialogues do they see their work?

a plot and a promise

Amber Esseiva, Associate Curator, Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, and CCS Bard alum

No Real Closure

Languid Hands (Imani Robinson and Rabz Lansiquot), independent curators and Curatorial Fellows, Cubitt Gallery

El Agua Que Hace Dulce El Plátano / The Water that Makes the Banana Sweet
Serubiri Moses, independent curator and CCS Bard alum

Creating the Histories We Think We'll Need: Thoughts on Black Futurity

Brittany Webb, Evelyn and Will Kaplan Curator of Twentieth-Century Art and the John Rhoden Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Chair: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

1:30 p.m.
Discussion and Q&A

2:30 p.m.
Closing Remarks: Nana Adusei-Poku, Associate Professor and Luma Foundation Scholar, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College