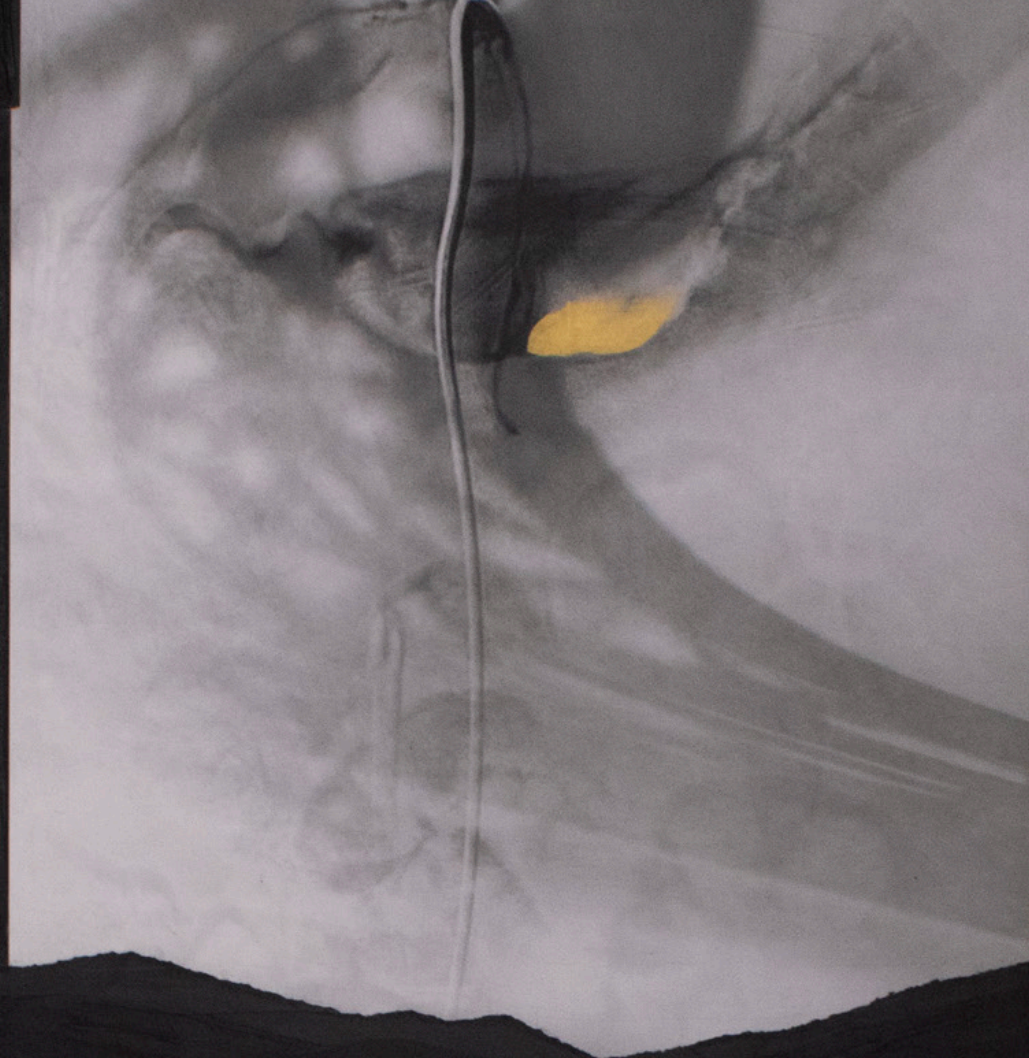
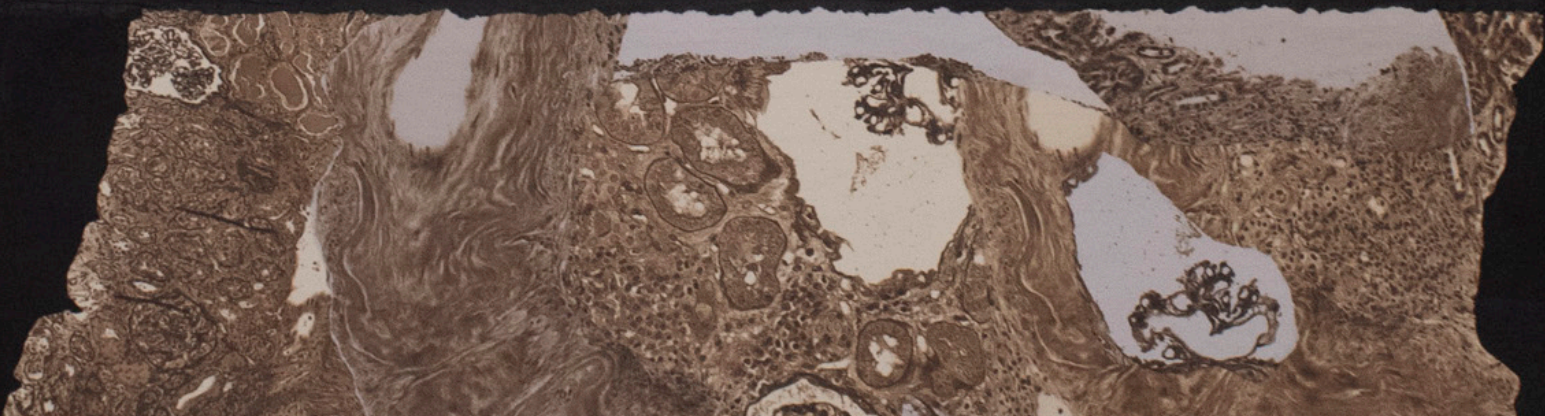




BORDER *lands*

Soft Margins, Hard Truths



Acknowledgements

Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths was made possible through the generous support of the Studio Art Department and the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE) at Connecticut College.

The exhibition and accompanying catalogue grew from a rare cross-departmental collaboration that marks the CCSRE’s twentieth anniversary by celebrating the central foci of its work, including globalization, diasporas, and legacies of slavery across the Americas, to name a few. I am deeply grateful to all whose vision and labor shaped this project.

Special thanks to Chris Barnard, Annika Tucksmith, Alison Madole, and Amanda Russhell Wallace, whose care and support were foundational to realizing this space. I also thank David Jon Walker for his thoughtful design of the exhibition graphics and didactics, which helped frame and deepen the experience of the works on view.

Above all, I extend my deepest gratitude to the thirteen exhibiting artists, without whom this vital platform for cultural experimentation, dialogue, and critique would not exist: Ophelia Arc, Nic[o] Brierre Aziz, Alex Callender, Adger Cowans, Lewis Dérogène, Adama Delphine Fawundu, Shabez Jamal, Fidelis Joseph, Nsenga Knight, Ron Norsworthy, Theda Sandiford, Toby Sisson, and Amanda Russhell Wallace. Their vulnerability and courage—especially amid the urgency of our current sociopolitical moment—deeply enrich this exhibition, calling viewers toward both reflection and action.

Reading List

- *Airless Spaces*, Shulamith Firestone
- *The Artist’s Way*, Julia Cameron
- *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria E. Anzaldúa
- *Demonic Grounds*, Katherine McKittrick
- *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe
- *Paradise*, Toni Morrison
- *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant
- *Post Colonial Love Poem*, Natalie Diaz
- *Sunset in Biafra*, Elechi Amadi
- *The Dialect of Space: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, Shulamith Firestone
- *Weathering: The Extraordinary Stress of Ordinary Life in an Unjust Society*, Dr. Arline T Geronimus
- *When My Brother Was An Aztec*, Natalie Diaz
- *Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness*, Renée Mussai

Ophelia Arc
Nic[o] Brierre Aziz
Alex Callender
Adger Cowans
Lewis Dérogène
Adama Delphine Fawundu
Shabez Jamal
Fidelis Joseph
Nsenga Knight
Ron Norsworthy
Theda Sandiford
Toby Sisson
Amanda Russhell Wallace

CURATOR
nico w. okoro



Frontispiece:
[Amanda Russhell Wallace](#)
Welling (2), 2026
From the *Welling* series
Mixed media on wood panel
24” x 48”

Publication made possible by the generous support of the Studio Art Department and the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE) at Connecticut College.

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BORDERlands

Soft Margins, Hard Truths

BORDERlands

Soft Margins, Hard Truths

by nico w. okoro

Introduction: A Fractured World

Borders are often imagined as firm lines—clear divisions, demarcating one territory, identity, or ideology from another. Yet, in reality, borders are experienced as charged spaces of dual convergence and rupture, where contested identities slip, cultures clash, and histories echo. *Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths* reframes the concept of borders, not as a fixed boundary, but as a mutable space, shaped by social movement, cultural negotiation, and political uncertainty. These soft margins suggest permeability—edges that blur rather than sever, inviting cohabitation rather than enforcing closure. The artworks on view boldly dwell in this space of contradiction, a nexus of possibility and constraint, where imposed binarizations falter and humanity’s most painful truths take shape.

Through a diverse range of media—including large-scale paintings, text-based installations, hand-sewn talismans, and personal photographs—*Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths* uplifts the work of the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity at Connecticut College by visualizing historical wounds and gesturing toward contemporary modes of reimagining and rebuilding a fractured world. The featured artists—Ophelia Arc, Nic[o] Brierre Aziz, Alex Callender, Adger Cowans, Lewis Dérogène, Adama Delphine Fawundu, Shabez Jamal, Fidelis Joseph, Nsenga Knight, Ron Norsworthy, Theda Sandiford, Toby Sisson, and Amanda Russhell Wallace—draw upon personal history, collective memory, and intergenerational dialogue to invite viewers into moments of embodied reckoning.

Adama Delphine Fawundu

“Klin wata no boku, duya, I du so!”, 2024

Water sachets (Sierra Leone), textiles, shells (South Carolina, Cuba, Maine), cyanotype paper, Mardi Gras, beads, raffia, Spanish moss, healing herbs (Mali), Carolina Gold Rice (Low Country, South Carolina), 180” x 80”



I. An Emotional Residue

“A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.”

— Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Chicana poet, philosopher, and feminist theorist Dr. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa introduced the concept of *borderlands* into cultural discourse through her seminal 1987 text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. For Anzaldúa, a borderland is not merely a geographic demarcation but a psychic, cultural, and embodied condition—what she terms *nepantla*, a liminal state of sociopolitical and cultural in-betweenness. Her articulation of a *mestiza consciousness*, shaped through the continual navigation of and resistance to dominant social norms, offers a critical lens through which to engage the artworks on view.

Klin wata no boku, duya, I du so! (2024) by Adama Delphine Fawundu is the first work visitors encounter upon entering the gallery. Its striking verticality demands distance, while its intricate detail and seductive semitranslucency draw viewers closer, placing them in a state of perceptual oscillation akin to *nepantla*. This embodied negotiation mirrors Fawundu’s own practice: a Brooklyn-based artist of Mende, Krim, Bamileke, and Bubi descent, she traverses Africa and its diasporas, gathering cultural materials alongside the affective and historical residues they carry.

Here, Fawundu stitches together drained water sachets, garra cloths evocative of her late grandmother, and handmade papers embedded with materials used in healing rituals, such as mud, hair, raffia, and cowrie shells. Sourced from Sierra Leone, South Carolina, Cuba, Maine, Mali, and the South Carolina Low Country, these materials trace geographies linked by the Transatlantic Slave Trade, particularly the forced migration of people from West Africa’s Rice Coast to American plantations. Rather than presenting these as discrete geographies, Fawundu reveals material and cultural continuities that bind diasporic communities.

In so doing, the work exemplifies Anzaldúa’s call to reject rigid binaries in favor of a fluid consciousness

capable of holding hybridity. As the artist asserts, *Klin wata no boku, duya, I du so!* “defies national political boundaries and colonial place-making,” situating itself within a diasporic borderland where cultural memory, ritual, and identity are continuously performed and remade across time, space, and invented borders.

Theda Sandiford similarly engages an embodied artistic practice, reclaiming charged matter from sites of temporal and ecological rupture. Based in St. Croix, Sandiford walks its shorelines, gathering cultural remnants churned to the ocean’s surface by seasonal hurricanes. These “storm-shaped objects” are woven, coiled, and knotted into what she terms “social fabric,” material assemblages that weave disparate histories, memories, and lived experiences into intimate association.

In *Liminal Staff*, Sandiford transforms a traditional emblem of authority into a sacred object of spiritual protection. In *Offering to the Lost Ones*, she renders an abstracted altar to honor those lost in the Transatlantic Slave Trade—Anzaldúa’s “prohibited and forbidden”—while “reflecting on our disrupted relationship with the natural world”. Through material experimentation and a distinct visual poetics, she positions oceanic borderlands not as sites of erasure but as spiritual axes of ancestral reverence and ritualistic healing, where the past and the present coexist in productive tension.

In a new series of striking blue oil paintings, Alex Callender examines the political and ecological borderlands of America’s economic waterways. Drawing on archival sources—including eighteenth-century merchant ledgers and company charters—Callender traces rivers, lakes, canals, and channels to “connect trade, banking, and financial instruments of the American Northeast to other slave societies of the Caribbean and Atlantic world.” By juxtaposing

historical ephemera, vignettes of human suffering, and speculative narratives of ecological disruption, Callender “unsettles the settler state,” critiquing tools of colonial mapping and empire-building, and the ruin they leave behind.

In *a piece of a border, unfixed in blues* (2024), Callender depicts displaced protective grasses alongside spectral traces of bodies, ships and treasures buried at sea. Anchoring the composition, the phrase “A BORDER IS AN IDEOLOGICAL TOOL” appears within an embroidery sampler, exposing political borders—and the ideologies they protect—as human-made constructions. In *the settler state wandered, looking to make new borders but the rising water washed all the lines away and there was nowhere else to go* (2024), Callender further destabilizes militarized landscapes of early American tourism, foregrounding the porosity of human geography, the fragility of the built environment, and nature’s capacity to level imposed power structures.

Across her three mixed-media works, Toby Sisson likewise interrogates borders as ideological tools, tracing the enduring lines of race and class that divide the United States. Sisson engages a diverse range of mediums—including charcoal, graphite, beeswax, oil, ink, paper, photographs, and wood—to navigate her mixed-race heritage and investigate otherness and hybridity, both culturally and materially.

In *Mississippi River with Water Tower* (2023), Sisson pays homage to her father and the river that “cut a shifting path through the landscape” alongside hurricane winds the summer before his northward migration. *Constellation* (2025) interrupts memories of bright delta skies with traces of gunfire, arranging them into celestial formations that reference the North Star. Together, these works recall the promises of the Great Migration, while questioning the possibility of Black liberation within a landscape continuously segregated by race and class, and marked by violence—enduring legacies of slavery.

A.M.E.R.I.C.A.N. (2019) fractures the word “American” into its constituent letters, reassembling them as a conceptual prompt that affirms individual agency, while questioning how national identity is construct-

ed, and by whom. Across these works, Sisson’s layered collage and encaustic monotype techniques occupy an aesthetic borderlands between abstraction and figuration—soft, fading memories and sharp, symbolic topographies.

Nsenga Knight similarly examines family and collective memory as foundations for a spiritual sense of home—one shaped by the concept of global citizenship and resistant to fixed borders. In *Metem* (2024), Knight—a Brooklyn-born, Afro-Caribbean, American Muslim artist based in Qatar—gathers her family for a traditional Guyanese dinner marking her mother’s first return to Guyana since 1960. Knight’s first visit to her mother’s homeland becomes a site of intergenerational exchange, where stories, food, and photographs illuminate interconnected diasporic lives.

The resulting three-channel video takes its title from metemgee, a traditional Guyanese dish introduced by Africans forcibly brought to the region during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Highlighting how communal practices resist divisive forces, Knight’s work considers how African words, customs, and artistic forms endure across time, space, and systematic attempts at erasure, serving as vessels of cultural continuity.

Together, these works frame borderlands as soft, transitional spaces, where culture persists, forcefully yet mutedly. They also surface hard truths: the emotional residues of forced migration and colonization that continue to shape memory, identity, and belonging today. Here, art becomes a means to imagine futures in which the unnatural boundaries that divide and constrain us are rendered porous.



Lewis Dérogène
Liberation, 2022
Photograph
30" x 20"

II. A Thing To Be Pressed Against

*“What is a wall if not a thing to be pressed against?
What is a bedroom if not an epicenter
of pillage? And what can I do with a hundred houses
but abandon them as spent shells of desire?”*

— Natalie Diaz, *Toward the Amaranth Gates of War or Love*

In her poetry and public discourse, Natalie Diaz—a Mojave poet, educator, language activist, and founder of the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands—frames borderlands as spaces marked by trauma yet teeming with collective resilience and innovation. She also reminds us that, long before artificial border walls were erected to oppress, innate structures like flowing rivers, towering mountains, and sprawling deserts shaped senses of identity, place, belonging and home.

For Diaz, navigating the borderlands between personal and social identities is as complex as traversing those between natural and imposed borders—Indigenous land and stolen territory. While the contours of borderlands forged by settler colonialism are shaped by structural oppression and violence, their rich interiors resist cooptation—they radiate as self-defined, willfully ungovernable expanses marked by radical creativity, cultural endurance, and political resistance. Here, Anzaldúa’s “prohibited and forbidden” repopulate barren political landscapes, emerging as prized architects of portals to global citizenship.

Like Diaz’s poetry, Lewis Dérogène’s photographs foreground borderlands where practices of self-making intersect with the politics of public life. Often staged in intimate spaces like her bedroom and using materials like bed linens, Dérogène’s highly narrative self-portraits teeter between gestures of softness and expressions of rage, meditations on catalytic moments from her private life and public statements on challenges uniquely faced by women of color.

She constructs and embellishes her photographic scenes, pre- and post-production, adding temporal layers that engender visible complexity in her images. In *Liberation* (2022), Dérogène presents a dynamic self-portrait, whose curves imply motion and earthly transcendence. In the diptych *The Lady and The Chair* (2022), Dérogène uses symbolism to tell the story of a woman who, after laying down her burdens, leaps through an open window to experience rebirth in another realm. Across these highly Afro-futuristic yet classical photographs, Dérogène materializes Diaz’s insight that borderlands resist Western notions of time, serving as generative terrain upon which identity can continuously unfold.

Across their three works in the exhibition, Shabez Jamal similarly investigates how images and materials register time and transformation. With roots in Kinloch, Missouri—the oldest, incorporated Black community in the state—Jamal draws on personal, familial, and public archives to trace the socioemotional and physical impacts of gentrification on Kinloch’s dwindling population and infrastructure. Jamal likens the story of Kinloch to that of Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*, underscoring how segregation, discriminatory planning, and the construction of barricades and walls systematically dismantled the community.

In *Garden Excavations* (2025), Jamal presents six deliberately imperfect concrete blocks, each of which encases a family Polaroid cast in pewter and developed within the curing concrete. These blocks enact a tension between vulnerability and permanence, and read as remnants of Diaz’s “spent shells of desire” or monuments to derailed pursuits of the American

Dream. Concrete functions as both critique and memorial—an irrefutable record of systemic oppression and a material foundation from which collective Black identity can fortify and rebuild itself.

Nic[o] Brierre Aziz's *When The Slaves Go Marching In (Gilbert)* (2025) also engages resistance as both artistic subject and method, revisiting the 1811 German Coast Uprising along the Mississippi River. In this armed revolt, more than 500 enslaved people marched toward New Orleans in pursuit of freedom and the formation of an independent Black state. Many were later tried and executed without due process, their severed heads displayed along the river as a warning against dissent.

Presented in a structure reminiscent of an NFL Hall of Fame display, Aziz's work repurposes symbols such as the fleur-de-lis—historically used to brand enslaved Africans—to critique the West's ongoing exploitation of Black bodies as spectacle and commodity. As Aziz observes, “the simple fact that we have an entire football team of almost all Black players wearing this symbol on the same position of their bodies as their enslaved ancestors is devastating.”

Part of Aziz's *RAFTER* series—a wordplay drawn from football vernacular and the Transatlantic Slave Trade—the work embeds court case numbers and the names of those executed into football jerseys. In collapsing histories of sport, spectacle, and racialized violence into a single symbolic framework, Aziz meets attempts at erasure with embodied acts of resistance.

Also on view are three silver gelatin prints by Adger Cowans, who—across his six-decade career in film, photography, painting, and activism—has produced numerous bodies of work capturing Black history, identity, and beauty. These archival images register Cowans's firsthand account of Malcolm X's 1963 *Harlem Unity Rally*, where Malcolm X called for Black solidarity across divisions of religion, class, politics, and national borders. Echoing earlier resistance movements, the rally advanced a vision for Black self-determination, grounded in Pan-Africanist thought.

Malcolm X himself occupied a political borderland—between Islamic faith and ambivalence toward the Nation of Islam, and nonviolent resistance and liberation “by any means necessary.” Cowans's photographs capture this tension and the immediacy of the moment: protest signs declaring “There Is No God But Allah” and “We Don't Want Any Congo Blondes”

juxtapose spiritual conviction with a rejection of assimilation and respectability politics. Through these photographs, Cowans documents not only a historical event but the lived experience of ideological negotiation intrinsic to the borderlands.

A founding member of the Kamoinge Workshop and AfriCOBRA—two Black artist collectives founded in the 1960s—Cowans himself is no stranger to claiming space for Black cultural production and representation, by any means necessary. Through his distinctive photographic language, he transforms collective struggle into enduring cultural memory, and the fleeting act of witnessing into a political act of protest.

Like Cowans, Ron Norsworthy spent his early career navigating the aesthetic borderlands between Hollywood and fine art. In his relief collages and shadow-box tableaux, Norsworthy channels his art production, design, and architecture backgrounds to produce highly cinematic artworks that narrate tales of Black resilience amidst structural constraint. Norsworthy draws upon “the shared imagery of American pictures” to visualize the disjunctures between the American Dream and the Black, lived experience in America—the myth of upward mobility and the reality of striverism within a rigged system.

Norsworthy's signature use of color, form, and line reminds Black people of our innate beauty, and his use of buildable plywood layers—that place archival photographs, cultural ephemera, contemporary objects, and speculative gestures in tense dialogue—affirms our enduring strength. In *Sold (We Had to Deal With What Has Passed)* (2023), Norsworthy reimagines the living room of Ralph and Fanny Ellison, embedding symbolic disruptions that destabilize narrative certainty and critique photography's role in selling an unattainable lifestyle to generations of Black families. A FOR SALE sign marked SOLD, and a staircase leading ambiguously skyward, expose opportunities foreclosed by structural racism, underscoring the artifice of the American Dream and the precarity of its promises.

Across these works, borderlands emerge as charged spaces where trauma and resilience coexist in productive tension. Each artist confronts systemic violence and erasure while forging self-defined spaces of reclamation that press back against oppression. Here, art becomes a strategic tool for redefining agency, occupying space, and experimenting with radical forms of presence, witnessing, and becoming.

Ron Norsworthy
Sold (We Had to Deal With What Has Passed), 2023
Mixed Media on Wood Panel
45" x 63" x 2"



III. A Degrading System

“...the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is antiblack. [...] In what I am calling the weather, antiblackness is pervasive as climate. The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies.” — Dr. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

“Weathering is about hopeful, hardworking, responsible, skilled, and resilient people dying from the physical toll of constant stress on their bodies, paying with their health because they live in a rigged, degrading, and exploitative system.” — Dr. Arline T. Geronimus, *Weathering: The Extraordinary Stress of Ordinary Life in an Unjust Society*

Authors and scholars Dr. Christina Sharpe and Dr. Arline T. Geronimus offer critical frameworks for qualifying and quantifying the degradations produced within exploitative sociopolitical systems. Sharpe’s conception of “the weather” and Geronimus’s theory of “weathering” recast social injustice as an atmospheric condition that is at once ambient, cumulative, and embodied.

For Sharpe, antiblackness operates as climate: a pervasive condition that saturates and structures Black life. Geronimus renders that climate legible at the scale of the body, defining weathering as the physiological toll exacted by prolonged exposure to structural inequality—a toll that is socially produced and biologically borne, bridging the borderland between nature and nurture. Read together, these frameworks position borderlands as sites of intensified exposure, where stress degrades communities, bodies absorb harm, and history is inscribed in flesh.

Within this exhibition, abstraction emerges as a material analogue to weathering, tracking how oppressive climates are lived, metabolized, and passed down across generations—its distortions, porous edges, and refusal of fixed form mirror the instability of weather itself. Here, abstraction also, and perhaps most importantly, maps patterns of erosion, improvisation, and adaptation across ecosystems.

Embracing abstraction as a highly-political visual language, Amanda Russhell Wallace presents two new works from her *Welling* and *Under the Weather* series. Each visualizes findings from *The East Texas Oil Field as an Architecture of Memento Mori*, her ongoing research into the environmental, social, and economic

impacts of the 1930s oil boom on Black families. Operating as both researcher and subject, Wallace activates her family cemetery in Tatum, Texas as “a locus for thinking about potential origins of biological weathering in [her] family,” directly linking historical extraction to intergenerational health outcomes.

By layering photographs and narratives from her family’s medical archives with public archival images of oil infrastructure, Wallace traces pathways of chronic illness and trauma as embodied legacies of structural oppression. Her compositions merge abstract historical imagery of diseased tissues—often hers or her family’s own—with landscapes marked by oil rigs and derricks to engage weathering, not as a phenomenon but as a strategic tool of necropolitics, the mechanism through which power determines whose lives are protected and whose are rendered expendable. These works study industrial decay to meditate on mortality, revealing how intergenerational trauma manifests within both biological and ecological systems.

In two paintings from his *Detention* series, Nigerian artist Fidelis Joseph navigates the borderlands between wealth and poverty, freedom and confinement in his homeland. His work examines the structural disparities between Northern and Southern Nigeria—conditions shaped by British colonial extraction, uneven development, and inequitable access to resources. Inspired by Elechi Amadi’s powerful memoir, *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), which narrates the author’s firsthand experience of the Nigerian Civil War, Joseph also explores necropolitics, with a focus on whose stories are deemed worthy of telling and whose are degraded within dominant historical narratives.

Using a wet-on-wet, multi-layered painting technique, Joseph transforms archival court records into dual spectral and speculative visual narratives. The obscured forms in *Stephen* (2024) and *Detention Series 1* (2023) demand prolonged engagement, echoing the labor of uncovering painful histories suppressed by the national archives. These works expertly visualize the slow accumulation of trauma under prolonged exposure to systemic inequality, revealing how such forces act upon individual bodies and divide communities.

Ophelia Arc’s biomorphic, hand-crocheted sculptures engage the politics of care, revealing the vast borderlands between feminist infrastructures for equitable care labor, and the institutional environments that shape inequitable health outcomes. In *ascension model for gauze web I* (2024), Arc sews hospital gauze, hand-dyed yarn, flower-dyed thread, tulle, a human tooth, and a ring into a suspended form marked by diverse material histories. Collectively, these seemingly disparate elements break open countless possible narratives—imagined tales of vulnerability, trauma, care, and healing.

Conclusion: A Scab Forms

“Before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, forming a border culture.”
— Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Gloria E. Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as *una herida abierta*—an open wound that resists healing because the forces that produced it persist. *Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths* names these harmful forces and offers innovative approaches to collective healing. The borderlands mapped here are both lived and living systems—bodies in and of themselves—that demand constant care. Within this context, art asserts itself as a radical form of care labor—a tool to delicately yet deliberately reopen and cleanse the wound, so that the body can mend itself.

Healing emerges not as resolution, but as an ongoing, collective practice that requires attentiveness, proximity, and the willingness to dwell within the productive uncertainty of the borderlands. The artworks in this exhibition ask us to enact this practice—to slow down, inhabit our bodies, observe difficult truths, and imagine gestures of repair.

In discussing the resonance of this practice with the ongoing work of The Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE) at Connecticut College, exhibiting artist Amanda Russhell Wallace—

Informed by Arc’s own experiences within the medical-industrial complex—a system notorious for disbelieving the pain of marginalized people, and prioritizing corporate capitalism over patient-centered care—her work positions the body as a site of dual inscription and resistance. She treats the surfaces of her works as porous membranes, with all the imperfections characteristic of skin; their sutures expose the fragility of human existence, while their scars bear witness to accumulated stress. Like weathering itself, Arc’s materials register time and pressure, transforming invisible pain into a tangible object capable of holding both trauma and transcendence.

Together, these works reveal how chronic exposure to oppressive systems degrades bodies and communities, physically and psychologically, across generations. Through archival research, material experimentation, and embodied storytelling, these artists strategically deploy abstraction as a tool to dismantle social environments and political systems born from abuses of power and privilege.

who is also an Assistant Professor of Art and CCSRE faculty fellow and advisory board member—states, “Situated in a liberal arts educational institution, where making ‘connections’ is at its core, *Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths* provides a range of visual anchors to the various foci and principles of the CCSRE. Each work in the gallery interrogates some form of intersectionality, weaving topics such as immigration, legacies of transatlantic slavery, transnationalism, ethnicity and the environment, and more. The exhibition is timely—it is also a reminder of just how much work remains.”

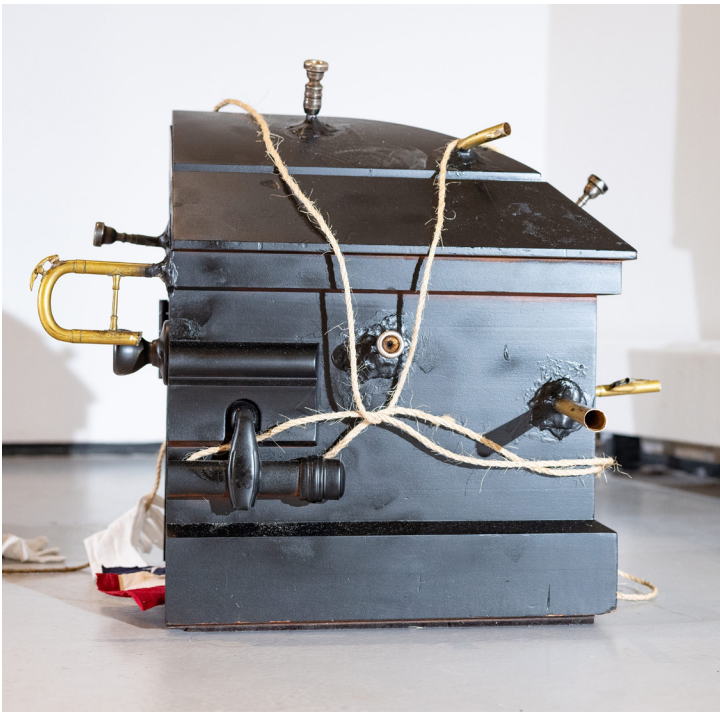
While an exhibition cannot abolish embedded structural inequities on its own, it can make visible what power seeks to obscure. In today’s society, governments have profited greatly from transmuting indigenous concepts of borders into artificial divisions between here and there, us and them, and ours and yours. *Borderlands: Soft Margins, Hard Truths* envisions an end to these living legacies of colonialism by dismantling the political constructs of race, space, and place.

Ophelia Arc

Ophelia Arc (b. 2001) is a research-based multidisciplinary artist based in Queens, NY. Working across sculpture, video, and installation, Arc explores psychoanalytic themes rooted in personal experiences and memory. She earned her BFA from Hunter College and received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Arc's work has been featured in publications such as *Artspiel*, *ArtNews*, *ArtNews China*, *Textiel Plus*, *Tique* and *Visionary Magazine*. Her work is included in private collections and has been exhibited in galleries in New York and beyond, including Lyles & King, 81 Leonard, Kates-Ferri Projects, No Gallery, Marinaro, and Collarworks. Arc is currently represented by Lyles & King and has a forthcoming 2026 solo show at Don't Look Projects in Los Angeles, California.



ascension model for gauze web I, 2024
gauze, hand dyed yarn, rotten flower dyed thread, tulle, human tooth and welded ring on oxidized chain
9" x 24" x 84"



Nic[o] Brierre Aziz

Nic[o] Brierre Aziz is a Haitian-New Orleanian interdisciplinary artist and curator born and raised in New Orleans, LA. His practice often engages themes of history, pop culture and satire while centering narratives of the Caribbean and Southern United States. He has worked extensively leading community based projects throughout New Orleans with entities such as the Office of Mayor Mitch Landrieu, Antenna, the Arts Council of New Orleans, Prospect and the New Orleans Museum of Art. His work has been featured by numerous publications including *The Oxford American*, *The Associated Press*, and *Burnaway* and he has written for sites such as *HuffPost* and *Hyperallergic*. He has also been the recipient of several prestigious artist residencies and fellowships including an Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Fellow, a Joan Mitchell Center Artist-in-Residence, an Art Matters Foundation Fellow and most recently a Santa Fe Art Institute Fellow. In addition to his personal artistic practice, he currently serves as the lead artist educator for the Dia Art Foundation's Durational Pedagogies Fellowship. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Morehouse College, a Master of Science degree from The University of Manchester (UK) and most recently a Master of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in Sculpture from the Yale University School of Art.

When The Slaves Go Marching In (Gilbert), 2025
Mixed Media; Tattered New Orleans Saints Jersey, Machete, Transatlantic Slave Trade Shackle, Cotton
24" x 30"

Untitled (Domicile), 2025
Mixed-Media; Wood, Brass, Jute, Cotton
13" x 17" x 2"

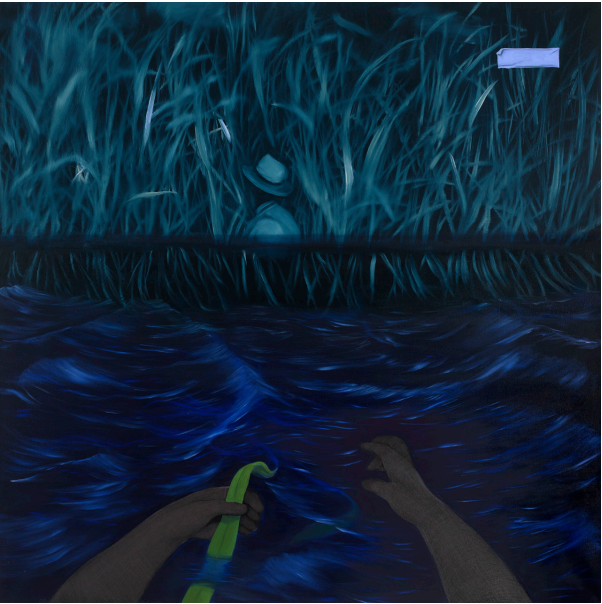
Alex Callender

Alex Callender’s practice uses methods of drawing, painting, and installation to trace and remap historical materials as a means to explore with both criticality and care, how we might disentangle the interwoven relations of race, gender, and capitalism. Callender has had solo exhibitions and projects at the Center for the Arts Northeastern University, UMass Contemporary Museum of Art, NYU Gallatin Galleries, the Rubber Factory (NY), and Michigan State University’s LookOut Gallery. Alex has received artist grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and the Massachusetts Cultural Council and has held artist residencies with MacDowell Colony, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The Drawing Center’s Open Session program, Art in Embassies Program, The Vermont Studio Center, the Santa Fe Art Institute, Alice Yard in Trinidad, and DRAWinternational and The BAU Institute in France. Callender was raised in Brooklyn, NY and currently lives and works in western, Massachusetts, where she is an Associate Professor of Art at Smith College.



they left to hold on, 2024
Graphite and Oil on Canvas
36” x 36”

*a piece of border,
unfixed in blues, 2024*
Oil on Canvas
36” x 36”



*the settler state wandered, looking to make new
borders but the rising water washed all the lines
away and there was nowhere else to go, 2024*
Oil on Canvas, 60” x 48”



Adger Cowans

Adger Cowans (b. 1936) is a pioneering painter, photographer and filmmaker whose career spans more than six decades. Cowans studied photography at Ohio University and later pursued training at the School of Motion Picture Arts and the School of Visual Arts in New York City. His eye for light and composition was sharpened through his early work with Gordon Parks at *LIFE* magazine and his career as a film still photographer on more than thirty Hollywood productions with directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Sidney Lumet and Spike Lee. He is one of the founding members of the Kamoinge Workshop—a collective of Black photographers committed to portraying Black life with dignity and depth—and also joined influential groups from the Black Arts Movement, including Group 35 and Afri-COBRA. His photographic work spans a wide range of approaches and subjects, from street photography in Harlem to documenting major historical events like the rallies and the funeral of Malcolm X. Cowans’ work has been exhibited at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Studio Museum of Harlem, The Cleveland Museum of Art, and Harvard Art Museums, among others. He has taught photography at Wayne State University, the University of Michigan, and the Cleveland Institute of Arts and his work has been published in several magazines including *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Esquire*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Life*, *Time*, and *Modern Photography*.

125th Street, 1963
Silver Gelatin Print
19” x 13”

Malcolm X Speaks, 1963
Silver Gelatin Print
19” x 13”

Malcolm X Rally, 1963
Silver Gelatin Print
19” x 13”

Lewis Dérogène

Lewis Dérogène (b. 1997), aka PhenomenaLewis, is an artist based in CT and works as the Head of Exhibitions at MoCA\CT. She has an MA in Fashion Art Direction from AAU and a BFA from SVA. She is featured in several publications, including Giorgio Bonomi’s photo book *Il Corpo Solitario IV*. Her art explores themes of identity, power of storytelling, and beauty in imperfection—empowering Black women to overcome harmful tropes set by society.



The Lady and The Chair, 2022
Part 16 and Part 25 of 25
Photograph
20 23/25” x 14 23/25”
Limited Edition, 1 of 5 AP



Liberation, 2022
Photograph
30” x 20”
Limited Edition, 1 of 5 AP

Pnuema, 2020
Photograph
16.5” x 11.25”
Limited Edition, 2 of 5 AP



© Adama Delphine Fawundu. Courtesy of the artist and HESSE FLATOW, New York. Photo: Jenny Gorman



Adama Delphine Fawundu

Adama Delphine Fawundu is a visual artist of Mende, Krim, Bamileke, and Bubi descent. Her distinct visual language centers around themes of indigeneity and ancestral memory as it relates to climate awareness. Fawundu co-published the critically acclaimed book *MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora*. Fawundu’s commissions include the 36th São Paulo Biennial, the inaugural Malta Biennale, the Park Avenue Armory’s *100 Years / 100 Women* Project, and Audible Public Art. Her most recent solo exhibitions were on view at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Harvey Gantt Center for African American Arts & Culture, Historic Lefferts House in Prospect Park Brooklyn, Newark Museum of Art, Princeton University Museum, and Project for Empty Space. Her awards include the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Catchlight Fellowship, the Anonymous Was A Woman Award, the New York Foundation for The Arts Photography Fellowship, and the Rema Hort Mann Artist Grant. Her works are in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Princeton University Museum, Bryn Mawr College, The Petrucci Family Foundation of African American Art, The Brooklyn Historical Society, Norton Museum of Art, The David C. Driskell Art Collection, Montclair art Museum, and several private collections. She is an Assistant Professor of Visual Arts at Columbia University.

“Klin wata no boku, duya, I du so!”, 2024, Water sachets (Sierra Leone), textiles, shells (South Carolina,Cuba, Maine), cyanotype paper, Mardi Gras beads, raffia,Spanish moss, healing herbs (Mali), Carolina Gold Rice (Low Country, South Carolina)
180” x 80”

Palii ~ Seat of the Ancestors and Water Spirits, 2022-2023
3-Channel Video Installation

Shabez Jamal

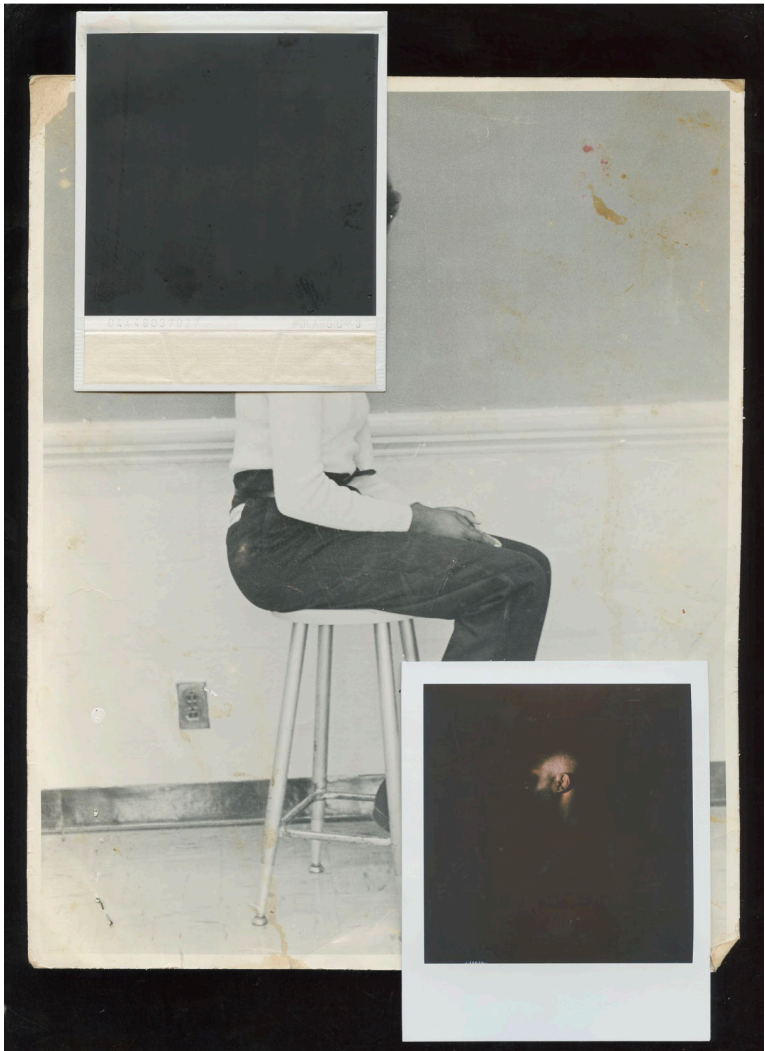
Shabez Jamal is an interdisciplinary artist and educator. Born in 1992 in St. Louis, Jamal earned their BA from the University of Missouri - St. Louis and their MFA from Tulane University of Louisiana. Their visual practice and research explore the temporal nature of photographic imagery and memory relating to physical, political, and socio-economic spaces. Jamal has received numerous fellowships and awards, including Harvard University's In the City Fellowship, the Mellon Community Engaged Fellowship, and Washington University's The Divided City Research Grant. Their work has been displayed in various national and international art spaces, such as the St. Louis Art Museum, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.



Untitled (Page Reconstruction no. 85), 2023
Ink on archival paper
24" x 19.25" (framed)

Garden Excavations, 2025
Pigment on cast pewterPolaroids, in
poured cement.
Dimensions Variable

Light Study No. 04, 2026
Treated plywood, translucent /
acrylic tiles and white light
24" x 24" x 6 3/4"



Fidelis Joseph

Fidelis Joseph is a visual artist from Adamawa state, Nigeria. Joseph began his formal education where he studied Fine and Applied Arts, at the Federal College of Education, Yola in 2012. He practiced full time studio for 4 years in Lagos after graduating with a B.A in Fine Art from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria in 2017. Joseph was the winner of the Cranbrook Art Museum Purchase Prize Award, upon the completion of his MFA in the painting department at Cranbrook Academy of Art (2023). Joseph has exhibited his works internationally which includes, The Shepherd Detroit, Ford Foundation Art Gallery, Kasmin Gallery and Fridman Gallery in New York among other galleries and institutions. Joseph currently lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut.



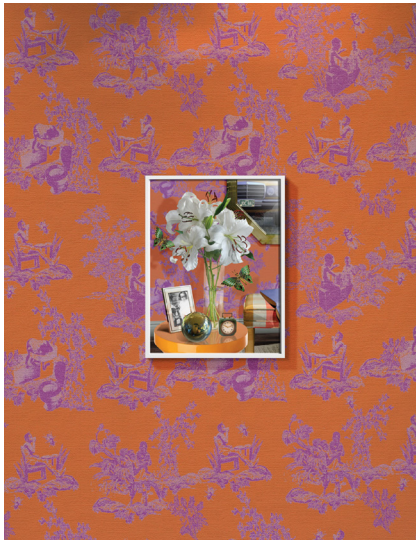
Stephen, 2024
Oil and Acrylic Spray Paint on
Canvas
48" x 36"

Detention Series I, 2023
Oil, Oil Stick and Acrylic Spray
Paint on Canvas
78" x 88"

Nsenga Knight

Nsenga Knight is a visionary artist whose interdisciplinary and conceptual practice forges deep connections between audiences and their spiritual nature, collective history, and community. Working at the intersection of Islamic art, Western abstraction, and Black aesthetics, Knight draws from archival research, memoir, ritual, and documentary photography to create works that challenge and expand our understanding of identity, place, and belonging. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, to Afro-Caribbean and South American parents who embraced Islam as young adults, Knight's work is deeply informed by her first-generation Black American Muslim experience. Through paintings, prints, video, and social practice, she explores themes of decolonization, migration, and communal narratives, engaging audiences in critical conversations about race, nationhood, and faith in the 21st century. Her work has been exhibited at major institutions, including the New Museum, PS1 MoMA, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and the Queens Museum, where she presented her debut solo New York museum exhibition, *Close to Home*. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant and a Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant, and has participated in residencies at BRIC, the Drawing Center, and Elsewhere Museum, among others. As Knight herself states, "Through the experience of looking at and participating in my work, I am inviting my audiences to challenge traditional boundaries of race, nationhood, and religion and create wholly new constructions that broaden our collective imaginations."

Metem, 2024
(Exhibition Copy)
3-Channel Digital Video
Installation
Dimensions Variable
Courtesy of the Artist



Ron Norsworthy

Ron Norsworthy is an interdisciplinary artist whose broad practice engages the fields of art, architecture, filmmaking and design. Informing his work is a foundational belief that the rooms, spaces and environments we inhabit and interact with speak volumes not only about who we are now, but also about our dreams, aspirations and our struggles as well. Through the creation of collaged reliefs, decorative objects, textiles and installations, his work carries the viewer through a non-linear, layered story of his life, one shaped by his lived experience as a queer person of the global majority. Norsworthy was born in South Bend, Indiana and currently lives and works in Connecticut and New Jersey, respectively. His work has been exhibited at the Studio Museum of Harlem, NY; The Old Stone House, Brooklyn, NY; Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ; The Wassaic Project in Wassaic, NY; Five Points Gallery, Torrington, CT; Standard Space, Sharon, CT; Project for Empty Space, Newark, NJ; the International Quilt Museum, Lincoln, NE; the New York Historical Society, NYC; the Governor's Island Art Fair, Governors Island, NY; the Armory Show, NY; Paris Photo; and it is also in the permanent collection of the Newark Museum of Art. In 2023, Norsworthy was awarded a MacDowell Fellowship in Visual Arts.

Untitled (Self-Portrait, Lot #50), 2021
Custom Textile, Cotton Batting, Polyfill and Foam, Padding Upholstered on Panel
46" x 46" x 4"

Trying to Remember the Future, 2025
Mixed Media Collage in Relief on Wood Panel
30" x 40"
Edition of 3 + 1 A.P.

Sold (We Had to Deal With What Has Passed), 2023
Mixed Media on Wood Panel
45" x 63" x 2"

Theda Sandiford

Theda Sandiford is a celebrated interdisciplinary artist known for her innovative approach to fiber and installation art. Based in St. Croix, USVI, she explores racial trauma, ancestral memory, and personal narrative through weaving, coiling, knotting, and the transformation of found and gifted materials. These elements form what she calls “social fabric,” intertwining contemporary issues with lived experience to create multidimensional, interconnected stories. Community engagement is central to Sandiford’s practice. She designs inclusive, collaborative art-making experiences that merge site, environment, and participation, opening conversations around equity, sustainability, collective care, and belonging. Her gatherings emphasize the power of shared creativity as a tool for healing and transformation. Sandiford’s work has been exhibited internationally and is held in the permanent collections of institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum and the Pittsburgh Children’s Museum. She has shown at World of Threads, Expo Chicago, Untitled Art Fair, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, and the American Contemporary Craft National Juried Exhibition. Her honors include recognition in Excellence in Fibers VI and Fiber VIII by Fiber Art Now, the 2020 Jersey City Arts Visual Artist Award, the 2021 New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship in Craft, the 2022 Jersey City Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship, and a 2023–24 National Leaders of Color Fellowship. Across all her work, Sandiford continues to bridge personal experience with collective histories, creating art that invites reflection, connection, and community-wide dialogue.



Be with yourself as the ocean holds the tide,
neither resisting nor demanding stillness.
Let every wave rise with joy, sorrow, ache, unrest.
Let them crest and fall without grasping,
without turning away.

Honor yourself in the rawness and the unknown,
not as a captive, but as a witness.
Let your breath be a refuge.
Let your body be a home,
a sacred space where all of you belongs.

Receive yourself in every ache and opening,
not as something to be mended.
Let each feeling be met with grace,
Let each moment arrive without shame,
wholly and with welcome.

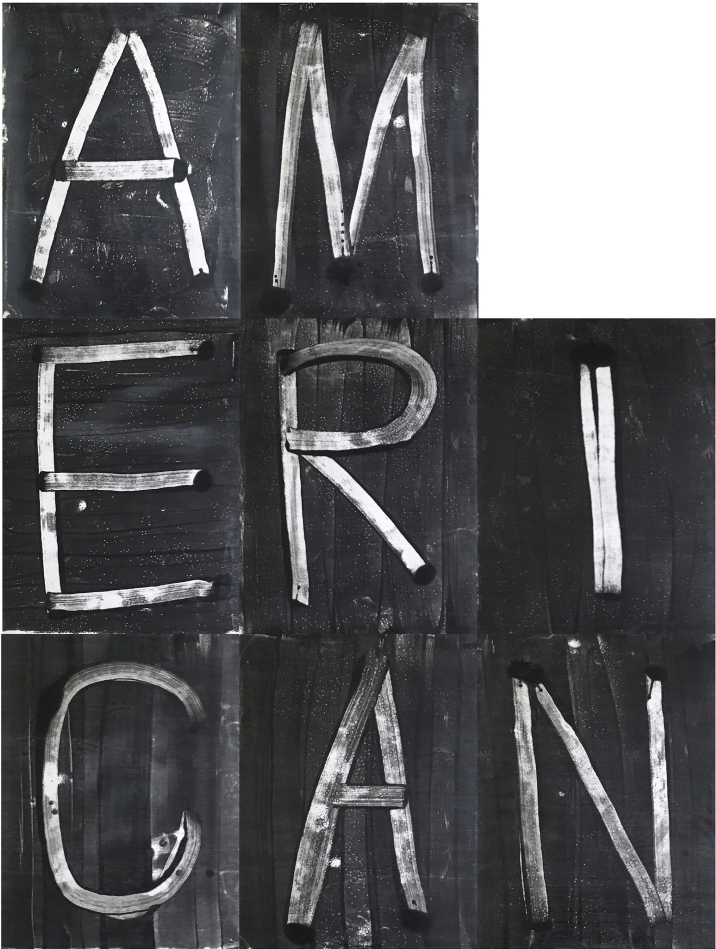
Offering to the Lost Ones, 2024
Recovered marine line, sea tumbled, woven and knotted with eyelash yarn, acrylic yarn, deconstructed line, beads, shells, chain and handmade bells, 42” x 10” x 5”

Liminal Staff, 2024
Recovered marine line, sea tumbled, woven and knotted with alpaca wool, acrylic yarn, fabric, beads, shells, washers, vintage watch and deconstructed line, 32” x 12” x 4”

To be met, 2025
Site-Specific Poetry Installation
Dimensions Variable

Toby Sisson

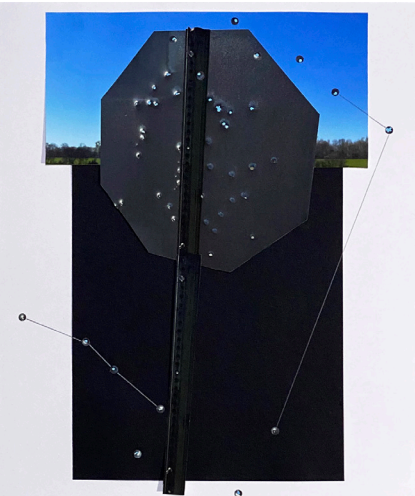
Toby Sisson earned her M.F.A. from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and is an Associate Professor of Studio Art at Clark University in Massachusetts. In addition to her studio practice in drawing, painting, printmaking, and collage, Sisson’s areas of specialization incorporate community-based service learning, collaborative public art, and curatorial projects. Her creative research explores themes at the intersection of history and race in America with a recent focus on migration movements, concepts of place making and homeland, and how a sense of belonging informs our commitment to the environment. She is a recipient of an Artistic Practitioner Fellowship from the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America at Brown University and is the 2026 Research Resident at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. Sisson has exhibited her work widely, including the Tianjin Art Museum in China, Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Hunterdon Museum of Art, the John D. O’Bryant African American Institute, Louisiana State University, Rhode Island College, and St. Thomas University. Her work is in numerous public and private collections, among them Brown University, the Worcester Art Museum, and the Newport Historical Society. Toby Sisson’s home and studio are located in Providence, Rhode Island.



A.M.E.R.I.C.A.N., 2019
Encaustic Monotypes on Paper
Mounted on Wood
72” x 54” (8 – 24” x 18” panels)

Mississippi River with Water Tower, 2023
Collage of Cut Paper, Photographs, Encaustic Monotype Prints
17” x 14”

Constellation, 2025
Collage of Cut Paper, Photographs and Graphite
17” x 14”



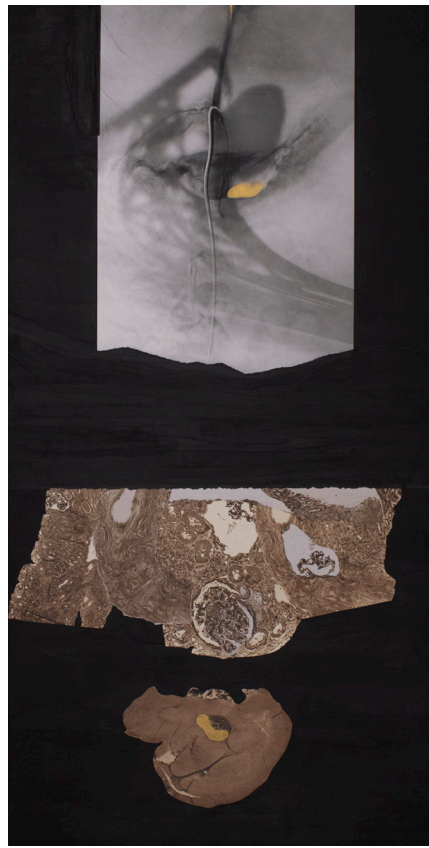
Amanda Russhell Wallace

Amanda Russhell Wallace is a primarily lens-based artist and family documentarian. She often works as a historical collagist bridging the past and present. This includes thinking about the formation, performance, and presentation of identities/selves across time. Her process often sources archival and contemporary remnants of speech, texts, imagery, and more recently, medical references. While using different visual production methods, she has been recently visualizing notions of residence for explorations of migration, genealogy, domesticity, and other parameters of home-making, with a focus on Black American experiences. In this process, she questions what it means to be a resident, being in residence, how someone/something resides, and how pasts are residual. Her work has been shown in a variety of venues, including the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts,

El Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i la Modernitat (MuVIM), Newark Museum, and Flux Factory. Her project, *Mourning Breaks*, was granted the 2020 Documentary Essay Prize from the Center of Documentary Studies at Duke University. Additionally, in 2021 she was awarded a research and development grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Wallace will be among forty artists participating in *The Aldrich Decennial: I am what is around me*, opening June 2026, at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. She received her MFA in Photography, Video & Related Media from the School of Visual Arts. Wallace is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at Connecticut College.



Welling (1), 2026
From the Welling series
Mixed media on wood panel
24" x 48"



Welling (2), 2026
From the Welling series
Mixed media on wood panel
24" x 48"



Fidelis Joseph
Stephen, 2024 (Detail)
Oil and Acrylic Spray Paint on Canvas
48" x 36"

BORDER *lands*
Soft Margins, Hard Truths