

EMPAC





AN AFTERNOON WITH
ANAÏS DUPLAN

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021 4PM
STUDIO 1—GOODMAN

EMPAC artist-in-residence Anaïs Duplan presents a screening, discussion, and book-signing. Following a program experimental documentary works selected by Duplan there will be a collective discussion on the films and videos that inspire his work.

Blackspace is an ongoing project that encompasses Duplan's recent book and his EMPAC-commissioned radio series that follows the artist's lyrical exploration of the political potential of aesthetic experiences, from everyday sensations to the transformative reckoning with an artwork. These experiences are viewed through the prism of how Black and Indigenous artists and artists of color are working with media technologies on their own terms to seek "liberatory possibility" through specifically aesthetic means.

The screening features films and videos that Duplan is currently researching. Each in its own way subverts the documentary impulse and expresses the tension between a straightforward documentary form of "telling" and an aesthetic approach that experiments with opacity as a strategy of refusal.

The event will finish with a book-signing by the artist of **Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture** (Black Ocean, 2020). A limited number of copies are available for our campus community for free on a first come first served basis.

Screening curated by Anaïs Duplan
Event curated by Vic Brooks, Lindsey Vogelmann, and Victoria Wisniewski

PROGRAM

SPLASH

Thomas Allen Harris
1991, 7 min, color, sound

Writes Harris: "**SPLASH** began as an experimental documentary about a black woman, hair and conventions of beauty and desire. As I began to delve deeper into the project and immersed myself in the works of Isaac Julien, Marlon Riggs, bell hooks, Stuart Hall, Toni Morrison, and Alice Miller, as well as my brother Lyle Ashton Harris, I began to understand that my own ambivalence around issues of ethnicity, gender, representation, and desire, issues I was exploring indirectly through this black woman."

The work of Thomas Allen Harris explores desire, ambivalence and the construction of diasporic identity through a critical engagement with questions of blackness, sexuality and the body. Foregrounding the position of artist as "cultural warrior," Harris meshes performance with personal narrative in order to articulate the multiple positions possible within "difference." Writes Harris: "The programs I produced came out of my experiences as a black gay male raised in a working-class community in the Bronx, who has lived and traveled abroad in Africa and Europe... It was in the process of attempting to hold true to these experiences that I became increasingly aware of my relationship to, and my personal investment in, the subject matter I approached. I was interested in disclosing this investment in ways that were critical, self-reflexive, and accessible."

GRAFT AND ASH FOR A THREE MONITOR WORKSTATION

Sondra Perry
2016, 9:05 min, color, sound, HD video

In her video **Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation** (2016) Sondra Perry subtly interrogates and undoes pervasive technological claims about our ontological position, and our being in the world, stitched into the programs, interfaces, and systems that dominate and organize our lives. Graft and Ash was part of several video installations within Perry's first solo institutional show, "Resident Evil," at The Kitchen, New York. The piece was split across three LCD monitors that were retrofitted atop a bike workstation, painted in electric blue automotive paint.

Sondra Perry makes videos, performances, and installations that foreground digital tools as a way to critically reflect on new technologies of representation and remobilize their potential. Perry's engagement with consumer image-making technologies produces artworks that reveal the calibration, protocols, and algorithms inherent in these devices. She repurposes exercise machines, video games, chroma studios, and computer graphics in multidisciplinary artworks that together form a corrective against the unreflective naturalization of technology. Her works examine how images are produced in order to reveal the way photographic representations are captured and recirculated.

NOR WAS THIS ALL BY ANY MEANS

Anthony Ramos
1978, 24 min, color, sound

In this densely layered work, Ramos explores his cultural and personal heritage through a collage of recorded and appropriated footage. Juxtaposing African and American landscapes, personal and media imagery, he traces a spiritual and physical journey that moves from Harlem to Goree Island, Cape Verde and Tanzania. In a forceful portrait of cultural disenfranchisement that refers to the African diaspora and the bitter harvest sown by slavery, he challenges the veracity of mass cultural images of African-Americans.

Performance and media artist Anthony Ramos was among the earliest video artists to use the medium as a tool for mass media critiques and cultural documentation, and to examine media presentations of "truth." In his powerful but rarely seen video works of the 1970s, Ramos sought to combine art and activism, giving agency to marginalized individuals and communities. In his earliest black-and-white video pieces, Ramos engaged in forceful, direct performances for the camera, often using physical endurance and actions to confront political issues.

OFF LIMITS

Rea Tajiri
1988, 7:30 min, color, sound

Writes Tajiri: "**Off Limits** presents an analysis of representations of the Vietnam War, the 1960s, and the Vietnamese characters that have been portrayed in the recent series of films about this subject. I juxtapose a fragment from the film of the same title, made in 1987 about Vietnam in 1968, with a fragment from **Easy Rider**, a film made in 1968 about America in 1968. A scene is retold from the point of view of a Vietnamese character who in the film had no dialogue, no voice. His story is recounted through visual rolling text, written by myself, and it describes his own death as formulated by the narrative. This text is layered visually over a blue field, which in turn becomes a 'curtain' behind which the images and soundtrack from Easy Rider unfold and play simultaneously in real time underneath. The narratives from both stories converge and climax simultaneously with the death of the two American 'antiheroes' shot by the redneck farmers (Easy Rider) and the shooting of the Vietnamese character by two American 'heroes' (Off Limits)."

Bringing complexity and sophistication to her deconstruction and appropriation of popular texts, Rea Tajiri decodes the images and soundtracks of Hollywood cinema and mass media as a strategy of cultural analysis. Fragmenting and rereading the vernacular of pop cultural narratives, she deciphers their embedded meanings to expose how history and memory are rewritten through media representation.

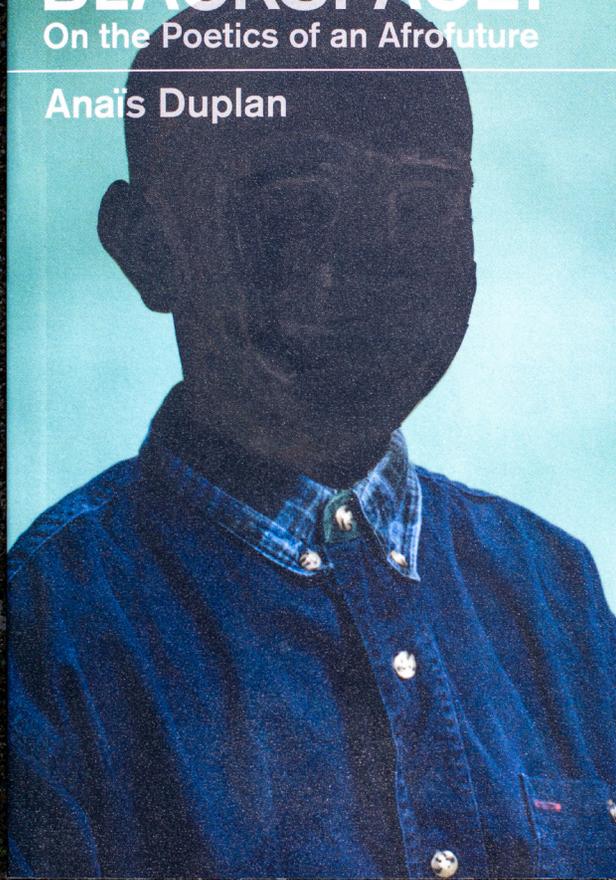
BLACK OCEAN : UNDERCURRENTS



BLACKSPACE:

On the Poetics of an Afrofuture

Anaïs Duplan



WATER PLASTIC BAG

Anthony Ramos
1973, 8:45 min, b&w, sound

Water Plastic Bag is one of a series of durational, risk-taking performances that Ramos made with fellow artists Lowell Darling and Joe Ray. An idyllic shot of beach and surf is the setting for this unnerving performance. Ramos and Darling are tied into body-sized plastic bags and then buried in the sand by shovel-wielding children. As passers-by stroll along the beach and curious dogs investigate, the two men struggle free of the sand and then roll and tumble, still sheathed in their plastic bags, into the crashing surf. Eventually they emerge from the waves and the bags and exit the scene.

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HAND DRYER

Maggie Lee
2012, 00:27 sec, color, sound

In **Hand Dryer**, the artist dries her hands in the bathroom of the Loews Theater in Union Square after a screening of **Men in Black III**. The camera draws attention to the force and loudness of the dryer.

Maggie Lee was born in 1987 and lives and works in New York. She has had recent solo exhibitions at Édouard Montassut, Paris; Arcadia Missa, London; Lomex, New York; 356 Mission, Los Angeles; Real Fine Arts, New York; and LadyBug House, San Francisco. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at Svetlana, New York; Shoot The Lobster, New York; Stadgalerie Bern, Bern Switzerland; White Columns and Art Production Fund, New York; Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York; Musee d'Art Moderne de Paris, France; Kai Matsumiya, New York; Kunstalle Zürich, Switzerland; T293, Rome, Italy; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Schloss, Oslo, Norway; Triple Canopy, New York; New Museum, New York; and Greene Naftali, New York.

RE DIS APPEARING

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha
1977, 2:30 min, b&w, sound

The artist speaks a word, which is quickly echoed in French, so that the words are only barely comprehended. Simple images — a bowl, a photograph of the ocean—appear and disappear.

From the mid-1970s until her death at age 31 in 1982, Korean-born artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha created a rich body of conceptual art that explored displacement and loss. Her works included artists' books, mail art, performance, audio, video, film, and installation. Although grounded in French psychoanalytic film theory, her art is also informed by far-ranging cultural and symbolic references, from shamanism to Confucianism and Catholicism. Her collage-like book **Dictée**, which was published posthumously in 1982, is recognized as an influential investigation of identity in the context of history, ethnicity and gender.

LANDSCAPES AND SUBTITLES

C. Spencer Yeh
2013, 6:16 min, color, sound, HD video

Fictitious subtitles from imagined non-English language films are synchronized to landscape videos shot by the artist on consumer equipment, often using existing structures, such as bus windows, as makeshift dollies or tripods.

C. Spencer Yeh is recognized for his interdisciplinary activities and collaborations as an artist, composer and improviser, as well as his music project Burning Star Core. Much of Yeh's video work engages with avant-garde composition and performance, variously as studies in form and technique, or as documentation of other artists working within his musical, geographic or social spheres. Other projects are humorously charged excursions into pop and trash cultural anthropology within “tape trading”-style distribution, such as applying highly polished treatment to bootleg video sources or canned pop songs. Pitched at the turn-of-the-millennium transition from “IRL” trades of prized physical objects to BitTorrent file transfers, this aspect of Yeh's work engages questions of value, authenticity, access, and social interactions within shifting paradigms for (unauthorized) circulation of images.

ART THOUGHTZ WITH HENNESSY YOUNGMAN: RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

Jayson Scott Musson

2011, 5:27 min, color, sound, HD video

Art Thoughtz with Hennessy Youngman is an episodic, Internet-based talk show in which Musson performs in the guise of hip-hop “art critic” Hennessy Youngman. In a series of short, talking-head monologues, Youngman offers aspiring artists his irreverent views on the contemporary art world, from relational aesthetics and performance art to how to be a successful black artist. Musson uses hip-hop vernacular to critique the exclusionary language of art discourse, hilariously pitting hip-hop and art world idioms against each other in a dual parody of cultural clichés. (Hennessy Youngman’s name references both the comedian Henny Youngman, who was famous for his one-liners, and Hennessy cognac, a status liquor in the hip-hop world.) With the **Art Thoughtz** series, Musson uses YouTube as a platform to expand his audience beyond art institutions and the art world; the series has become a viral video phenomenon.

In writing, performance and visual art that incisively satirizes pop culture and the art world, Jayson Scott Musson provokes the boundaries that define cultural and racial stereotypes. His most well-known creation is the “art critic” Hennessy Youngman, whose episodic Internet talk show **Art Thoughtz** has become a viral video phenomenon. In the guise of Hennessy Youngman, Musson uses hip-hop vernacular to critique the exclusionary language of art discourse, hilariously pitting hip-hop and art world idioms against each other in a dual parody of cultural clichés. Engaging hybrid media and contexts, Musson uses platforms such as YouTube to circumvent traditional art institutions and reach a mass audience on his own terms.

All films and videos and their descriptions in this program are courtesy of the artists and EAI / Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

BLACKSPACE RADIO

Anaïs Duplan presents a series of five radio shows broadcast weekly on Rensselaer’s WRPI Troy 91.5FM on Mondays from November 8th to December 6th at 5PM.

Blackspace is commissioned by EMPAC at Rensselaer in association with WRPI.

Based on his recent book of essays, **Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture** (Black Ocean, 2020), the broadcasts entwine histories of liberation movements, labor struggles, criticism, and poetry with music, soundtracks, field recordings, and Foley sound. Duplan takes us on a journey that follows his lyrical exploration of the political potential of aesthetic experiences, spanning from the quotidian encounter of a bakery’s smell to the transformative reckoning with an artwork. These experiences are viewed through the prism of how other artists of color are working with media technologies on their own terms to seek “liberatory possibility” through specifically aesthetic means.

Guided by Duplan’s voice, each broadcast employs “ekphrastic” methods—vivid verbal descriptions of the actions of artworks—as well as the sensory potential of Foley sound to produce a richly evocative auditory experience. The dialogue is interwoven with audio samples from films and videos by artists such as Ephraim Asili, Deanna Bowen, Tony Cokes, Leah Franklin Gilliam, Ulysses Jenkins, and Sondra Perry, TV and movie soundtracks, and an extensive range of music from Liz Mputu, Juliana Huxtable, Perfume Genius, Actress, Mal Devisa, and Hieroglyphic Being and more.

BIOGRAPHY

Anaïs Duplan is a trans* poet, curator, and artist. He is the author of a book of essays, **Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture** (Black Ocean, 2020); two full-length poetry collections, **I NEED MUSIC** (Action Books, 2020) and **Take This Stallion** (Brooklyn Arts Press, 2016); and a chapbook, **Mount Carmel and the Blood of Parnassus** (Monster House Press, 2017). He has taught poetry at the University of Iowa, Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, and St. Joseph’s College.

Duplan’s video works have been exhibited by Flux Factory, Daata Editions, the 13th Baltic Triennial in Lithuania, Mathew Gallery, NeueHouse, the Paseo Project, and will be exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art in L.A. in 2021.

As an independent curator, he has facilitated curatorial projects in Chicago, Boston, Santa Fe, and Reykjavík. He was a 2017-2019 joint Public Programs fellow at the Museum of Modern Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem. In 2016, he founded the Center for Afrofuturist Studies, an artist residency program for artists of color, based at Iowa City’s artist-run organization Public Space One and previously worked as Program Manager at Recess.

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