

Institute of Contemporary University Art of Pennsylvania

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NEWS RELEASE



Dave McKenzie, *Futuro*, 2013. Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, 60" H x 60" W. Edition of 5, 1 AP. Courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

Pioneering three-part exhibition exploring race, history, and time to unfold at ICA in Philadelphia across 2019

Innovative Juxtapositions between Contemporary Works and Historical Artifacts will Aim to Establish New Discourse Around the Everyday Experiences of Black Americans

November 30, 2018
Philadelphia, PA

On February 1, 2019, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania (ICA) will launch *Colored People Time*, a powerful, thought-provoking, and experimental presentation that re-envision the traditional exhibition format to build new narratives and public discourse around the everyday experiences of black Americans.



Martine Syms and Paul Cowan, *Most Days*, 2014. Audio recording released on 12" vinyl LP with score composed by Neil Reinolda. ©Martine Syms. Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York.

Broken into three distinct chapters opening over the course of 2019 - *Mundane Futures*, *Quotidian Pasts*, and *Banal Presents* - the year-long exhibition will offer a profound exploration into how the history of chattel slavery and colonialism in America not only shaped the foundations of our country but exists in our present moment and impacts our future. The title of the exhibition draws from the black vernacular phrase "Colored People's Time" which has functioned as a linguistic tool for people of color to control their own temporality even when placed within the construct of Western time. Conceived by Meg Onli, assistant curator at ICA, the format of *Colored People Time* will root itself within this malleable and fluid concept of time, enabling a new and responsive curatorial approach that will build on new ideas and discoveries from previous chapters, challenging the conventional exhibition structure.

Unexpected connections between contemporary art and historical works and texts will inform and activate each chapter, fostering innovative dialogue between the Penn Museum's African Collection and a wide range of media and new commissions created by emerging and established artists, including Aria Dean, Kevin Jerome Everson, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Carolyn Lazard, Dave McKenzie, Martine



Kevin Jerome Everson, *IFO*, 2017. Film still. © Kevin Jerome Everson. Courtesy of the artist, Trilobite-Arts DAC, and Picture Palace Pictures.

Author Griggs, Sutton E.
(Sutton Elbert), 1872–1933
Title Imperium in Imperio: A Study
of the Negro Race Problem. A Novel
Language English
LoC Class PS: Language and Literatures:
American and Canadian literature
Subject Political fiction
Subject Radicals—Fiction
Subject Utopian fiction
Subject Racism—Fiction
Subject African American men—
Fiction
Subject Texas—Fiction
Subject Racially mixed people—Fiction
Subject Black nationalism—Fiction
Category Text
Copyright Status Public domain in the
USA



Sutton E. Griggs, *Imperio and Imperium*, 1899 / 2018, Paperback books designed by Studio ELLA with a new forward by Meg Onli.

Syms, Sable Elyse Smith, and Cameron Rowland. More information about each exhibition chapter can be found below. *Colored People Time* will also be accompanied by a catalogue published in the form of a reader in 2020.

“The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is one of the leading institutions in the country dedicated to spearheading new, exciting, and profound opportunities for audiences to engage with issues around race and social justice in a powerful and meaningful way,” said Amy Sadao, Director of the ICA. “*Colored People Time* builds on the theme of exploring alternate, overlooked, and underserved narratives, which was recently presented in the 2018 ICA exhibition *Speech/Acts*.”

“CPT builds upon my ongoing curatorial investigation of how black Americans use language as a tool to navigate a society marked by inequality and racism,” said Meg Onli, exhibition curator and assistant curator at ICA. “The title of the exhibition is drawn from the vernacular phrase ‘Colored People’s Time,’ which is simultaneously perceived as both a joke within the black community and as a performance that allows an individual to exist within a temporality created by themselves.”

Mundane Futures

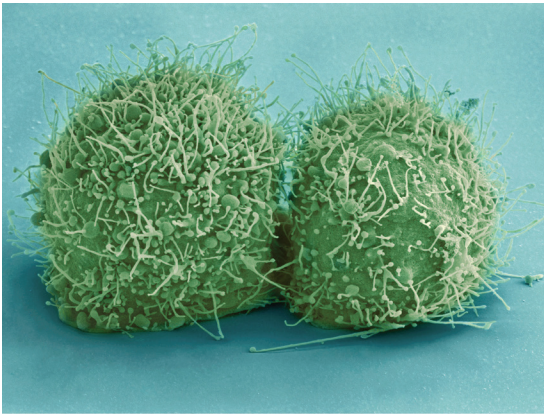
February 1 – March 31, 2019

The first chapter of *Colored People Time* aims to peer into the future of black cultural production through the lens of the ordinary. Contemporary artists Martine Syms, Kevin Jerome Everson, Aria Dean, and Dave McKenzie will present works that imagine the future as a continuation of the present, comprised of banal and everyday experiences.

Carefully and deliberately displayed within the smallest exhibition space in the institution, *Mundane Futures* will invoke a visible and spatial connection to the historical relegation of black art to isolated museum galleries. Martine Syms’ *The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto* (2013), which reimagines the future of black aesthetic both within the context of our current reality and as an extension of our past, will form a loose framework for the exhibition and will be transcribed and displayed as a wall painting inside the space. Inside the space, Dave McKenzie’s *Futuro* (2016), a large-scale photographic work depicting black hands mirroring white hands holding a bedpan, offers an equally amusing and sobering representation of the future.

Other key highlights include:

- An hourlong video from “Notes on Blaccelerationism” (2017), a critical essay originally developed by Aria Dean for *EFlux* that explores aesthetic and philosophical trends in black cultural production; the film marks the audiovisual manifestation of her artistic practice that evolved out of the essay.
- *IFO* (2017) by Kevin Jerome Everson, a 16mm film which weaves together the story of three suspected UFO sightings in Ohio through footage shot through the lens of the everyday, presenting



National Institutes of Health / Getty Images, *Scanning electron micrograph of just-divided HeLa cells*, purchased 2018, stock image.



Aria Dean, *Notes on Blaccelerationism*, 2017. Digital video, 75 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

ideas associated with our future as an extension of our current reality.

- An image of Henrietta Lacks' 'Immortal' cells, which were taken without consent from the recently deceased woman in 1951 for medical research. The photograph is jointly owned by the National Institutes of Health and Getty Images, and its presentation will raise profound questions around ownership over a person, the critical connection between a black body and our future, and the implications around the science fiction concept of eternal life.

The exhibition seeks to contextualize the mundane future within the past through the presentation of two historic texts: Sutton E. Griggs' 1899 black dystopian novel *Imperium in Imperio* and *The Ten-Point Program* published in the 1972 issue of *The Black Panther*. Both works will create a tangible link that ties the concept to the history of blackness in America.

A series of programs that will further delve into the concepts explored within the exhibition will accompany *Mundane Futures*, including a conversation with Columbia University professor Saidiya Hartman, who specializes in African American literature and history, around the launch of her new book; a full screening of Kevin Jerome Everson's work, curated by Maori Karmael Holmes, founder and artistic director of the BlackStar Film Festival; a performative lecture by artist Dave McKenzie; and a Mundane Afrofuturist Writing Workshop.

Major support for *Colored People Time: Mundane Futures* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Additional support has been provided by Arthur Cohen & Daryl Otte, Cheri & Steve Friedman, and Brett & Daniel Sundheim.

Quotidian Pasts

April 26 – August 11, 2019

Directly following *Mundane Futures*, *Quotidian Pasts* will contextualize the second chapter of the three-part exhibition within the complexities around presenting objects collected from foreign nations. Co-curated with anthropologist Monique Scott, *Quotidian Pasts* will be presented in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and will bring together their historic collection of African art and objects, letters, and archival photographs with contemporary artwork, facilitating a critical and globally relevant dialogue around how museums currently value, communicate, and exhibit these pieces.

Quotidian Pasts will foster a conversation between the historic and contemporary through a thought-provoking approach to exhibition-making. Objects and archival materials on loan from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology collection will be displayed inside the Museum's historic display cases and positioned around a new commission from artist Matthew Angelo Harrison. Placed in the center of the gallery space, the 3D printed ceramic sculptures will create a dynamic counterpoint to the surrounding collection, their forms seamlessly morphing into different historic objects originating from across the African continent that have been

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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MUSEUM HOURS

WEDNESDAY, 11AM–8PM
THURSDAY- SUNDAY, 11AM–6PM

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drawn from the Penn Museum collection. The pieces will be exhibited in a facsimile of the Museum's display cases, creating a physical representation that brings attention to the critical issues of engaging with the past and facilitating discussion around procedures for future displays around similar collections.

Banal Presents

September 13 – December 22, 2019

The final exhibition chapter of *Colored People Time*, *Banal Presents*, will feature new and recent work by Sable Elyse Smith and Cameron Rowland and a newly commissioned work by Carolyn Lazard. More information will be released on this chapter in spring 2019.

ABOUT MEG ONLI

ICA assistant curator Meg Onli focuses her work on the intricacies of race and the production of space. *Colored People Time* marks Onli's most recent exhibition at ICA and builds on the themes first presented in her 2018 exhibition *Speech/Acts*, which was dedicated to exploring underrepresented portrayals of blackness which counter societal stereotypes.

Prior to joining Institute of Contemporary Art as assistant curator, Onli was the program coordinator at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. While at the Graham Foundation she worked on the exhibitions *Architecture of Independence: African Modernism* and *Barbara Kasten: Stages*. In 2010 she created the website Black Visual Archive, for which she was awarded a 2012 Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is a non-collecting institution presenting exhibitions at the forefront of contemporary practice and culture that challenge audiences to think in new ways. The ICA is free for all to engage and connect with the art of our time. Since its founding in 1963, ICA has served as a laboratory for the new, introducing and supporting the production of urgent and important contemporary art, beginning with ICA's inaugural show of paintings by Abstract Expressionist Clyfford Still, followed by the first museum show of works by Andy Warhol in 1965. Throughout its history, ICA has been instrumental in identifying and developing many promising artists before they attained prominence within the international art world, some of whom include—in addition to Warhol—Laurie Anderson, Richard Artschwager, Vija Celmins, Karen Kilimnik, Barry Le Va, Glenn Ligon, Robert Mapplethorpe, Agnes Martin, Pepón Osorio, Tavares Strachan, and Cy Twombly.