

FLOODING:

Notes From The Artists & Curators

Curators: Laurel McLaughlin (Bryn Mawr College) & Tamir Williams (University of Pennsylvania)

Featured Artists: James Allister Sprang, Danièle Dennis, Eric Yue, and Monika Uchiyama (MFA University of Pennsylvania)

Memory acts a liminal space between the fictitious and the factual, even intervening in the many precarious places that fall outside of the binary. The act of recalling that which has been—“rememory,” as American novelist and essayist Toni Morrison aptly describes it—demands the use of imagination with memory, and positing the past in a perpetual state of flux between reality and magical reality. This imaginative rememory enables a fluid reinterpretation or retelling of the past through new modes of transmission. Morrison’s essay, “The Site of Memory” (1987) uses the Mississippi River in her description of how memory functions and how fiction, in its many manifestations, follows suit. As Morrison illustrates, rememory, like the water of the Mississippi remembering its river beds, is the work of things “forever tr[ying] to get back to where [they were],” and is often born in “a rush of imagination”—a “flooding.”



Monika Uchiyama, *limits of feeling*, 2017, two channel video and projection, red filter, sound

The four artists in the exhibition *Flooding*, Danièle Dennis, James Allister Sprang, Monika Uchiyama, and Eric Yue, consider such “flooding,” or rememory, in relation to personal, collective, familial, and cultural heritage themes. Employing sonic, visual, and tactile modes of memory transmission and translation, the works in this exhibition wrestle with questions around the transfer, usefulness, and malleability of memory. *What does it mean to inherit a memory? What narratives are lost amid larger cultural processes of remembering and forgetting? What or who can embody memory? How do collective and cultural memories inform the personal and vice versa?*

James
Allister **Sprang**

This image-object emerges as the final phase in Sprang's *ante-normative** three-tier process which simultaneously reimagines and abstracts traditional emblems and notions of blackness. Sprang begins by pouring slabs of concrete pigmented with superabundant amounts of red, blue, and black hues into wooden square frames. Sprang's subsequent performative fragmentation of the heavily pigmented slabs acts as a corporeal rememory of continuous strides to release definitions and expressions of blackness from rigid confines. The final act of reassembling the concrete fragments into cairns (constructed piles of stones meant to serve as a memorial), photographing them from above, and surrounding the resultant image-object with a musical composition remarks on contemporary concern with how to simultaneously address both the present and traces of a heavy history.

*The term *ante-normative* was coined by the scholar Fred Moten.

Written by Tamir Williams



Untitled Concrete Color Arrangement (Cairn documented in Queens, NY, 09-19-17), 2017, Archival Ink Print Resting on Concrete Plinth, dimensions variable

James Allister Sprang received his BFA from Cooper Union in 2013, and he is currently a MFA candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. He has shown work and performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, The Abrons Center, Apollo Theater, the Brooklyn Museum, and The Kitchen.

Suggested Reading from the Artist:

Margaret Iverson, *Photography, Trace and Trauma*
Fred Moten, *In The Break*

Ana Mendieta Miwon Kwon, *Bloody Valentines: Afterimages*
Samuel Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*
Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*

Danièle

Dennis



soundclash (je me souviens), 2017, two channel video, 23 min., loop

Suggested Reading from the Artist:

Carolyn Cooper, *From Beowulf to Bounty Killa: Or How I Ended Up Studying Slackness*

Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Louise Bennett, *No Lickle Twang*

Malcolm Gladwell, *The Creole Creation*

Pierre Georgeault, *Le français au Québec: 400 ans d'histoire et de vie*

Dan Bilefsky, *Québec tries to say au revoir to 'Hi' and Hello to 'Bonjour'*

nayyirah waheed, *immigrant (Salt)*

soundclash (je me souviens) draws upon the sonic competitions present in Jamaican culture in which soundcrews, utilizing elaborate stereo systems, engage in musical battles before large crowds who act as judges of their musical selections and performances. The sound in these competitions fluctuates between merging and clashing. Viewing speech as a sort of sound system, Dennis applies this concept of convergence and collision to her exploration of Jamaican *patwa*, a creole language that merges English and West African languages due to colonization, and Québécois French. Born and raised in Québec to Jamaican parents, Dennis turns inward to interrogate her own linguistic and cultural soundclash. Through this sonic rememory of Jamaican *patwa* and Québécois French, Dennis tackles issues around societal privileging and derogation of certain languages, cultivation and perseveration of vernacular languages, and language in relation to displacement, loss, and belonging. In addition, Dennis asks us to consider how the use of multiple languages, both vernacular and standardized, is mapped onto or is manifested in the body.

Written by Tamir Williams

Danièle Dennis's experiences as a Jamaican-Canadian woman inform her practice and prompt her investigation of racial and cultural issues through the use of time-based media, material exploration, and installation. She is a MFA candidate at the University of Pennsylvania.

Incident Light, 2017 begins with granulated grays, pixelated across a widely removed projection perched in an upper corner. As if seeping through the gray screen and squeezing between cracks in the aural fuzz, bursts of light and cacophonous crackles abound: fireworks.

Eric Yue

Referring to the optic term, *Incident Light* is the ray of light that strikes an object, person, or surface. In such an instance, light travels a distance, and only a portion makes its mark. Fireworks, brazen demonstrations of light and patriotism, distribute light onto the faces of eager viewers below, bathing them in the awe of such power. But for what and whom? Why do we stop and stare? For Yue, the grand gesture of the firework show mirrors the captive experience of the screen (or removed black-box) and the spectacle seen through the photographic aperture. Viewers gaze upon distant experiences and objects in such situations, only absorbing fleeting moments, tracking reality in curated quantities, and perhaps missing the intentions behind the seductive glow.

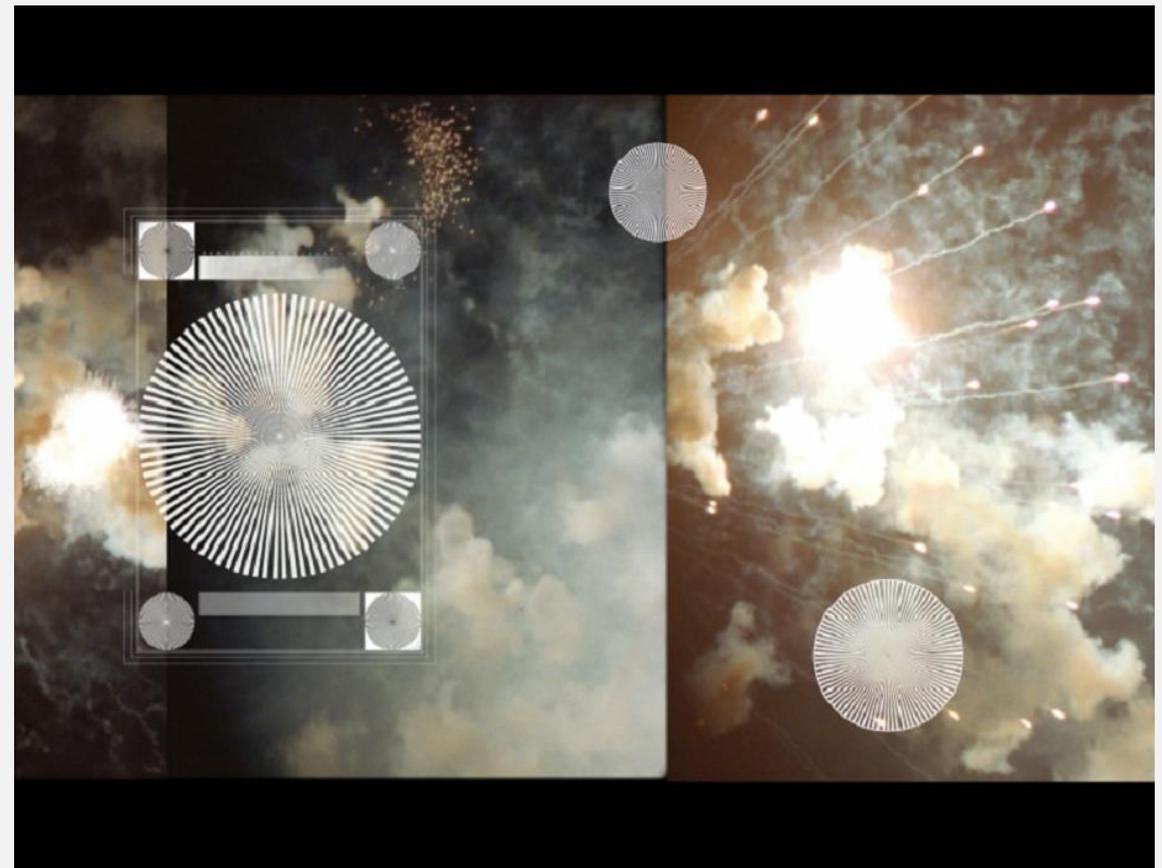
Incident Light functions as the eerie reminder of rememory, drawing our attention to seducing images that continually craves our cognizance. Do we recognize the strangeness of celebrating warfare rhetoric in the afterglow of the light show or the uncanniness of living through the luminosity of the screen?

Written by Laurel McLaughlin

Eric Yue received his BFA in filmmaking from New York University and is a MFA Candidate at University of Pennsylvania. His work draws from his background in film production as a director and cinematographer, exploring the relationship of the screen, light, and space.

Suggested Reading from the Artist:

Harun Farocki, *Phantom Images*



Incident Light, 16mm digital transfer (looped), 18% Grey Reflector, Grommets, TV mount, Projector, Projector mount, Paper



Monika Uchiyama, *limits of feeling*, 2017, two channel video and projection, red filter, sound

Monika Uchiyama's two channel video *limits of feeling* queries the porosity of memory—its ability to shape perceptions of reality. Situating viewers among the layers of her uncle's memories through projected images and a voiceover in Japanese with English subtitles, Uchiyama bursts the seams in the supposedly continuous fabric of reality with enigmatic flashes of interaction with the Tokyo cityscape. A red gel mediates the alignments and misalignments among past, present, and the possibility of fiction. In this way, *limits of feeling* journeys into the meta-narrative of a memory, rather than the actual event, unveiling the knowledge of second-hand encounter.

Monika

Uchiyama

Monika Uchiyama is an artist working primarily in video. She received a BA from CUNY City College, attended the Yale Norfolk Summer School of Art, and is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Pennsylvania.

At one particular point in the film, the relationship between memory and the present appears to disintegrate. Uchiyama's uncle describes his experience before and after brain surgery, claiming that his body feels unlike his own and more like a cyborg. Invoking the idea of a hybrid self, the work questions the extent to which viewers know their own memories and bodies—*Can we be severed from memory that links us to our bodies and ultimately to a sense of self? With what are we left?*

Written by Laurel McLaughlin

Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.*

Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"

Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*

Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through."

Sigmund Freud, "Notes on the Mystic Writing Pad."

Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory.*

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History.*

Suggested
Reading from
the
Curators

Flooding, The Incubation Series IX, is hosted by AUTOMAT,
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Founded in 2015, **The Incubation Series**, is a collaboration
between students in the Fine Arts and History of Art graduate
programs at the University of Pennsylvania.

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