

A PLAGUE OF STARLINGS

AUGUST 5 - NOVEMBER 12, 2022

CURATED BY ASHLEY STULL MEYERS

CURATORIAL BRIEF:

A Plague of Starlings considers the artists' relationship to the landscape and various natural ecologies in the face of societal assumptions that center whiteness at the heart of "being outdoors". Featuring works by Walter Kitundu, Rick Silva, and Marisa Williamson, the exhibition employs sculpture, sonic interventions, the remnants of site-specific projects, and digital renderings of landscapes both real and imagined.

The works in *A Plague of Starlings* illustrate a long and sacred history of diverse cultural communities' engagement with the land as a life-giving force and source of cultural roots. The artists' catalog, critique, and re-image the ecologies they address in order to marry an acknowledgment of historical harm to poetry about future possibilities. Encouraging conversations about land ownership, community care, and being a non-white body in public space, the exhibition proposes that "belonging" in outdoor settings is a complex negotiation that too often de-centers generations of curiosity, labor, and care exemplified by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color.

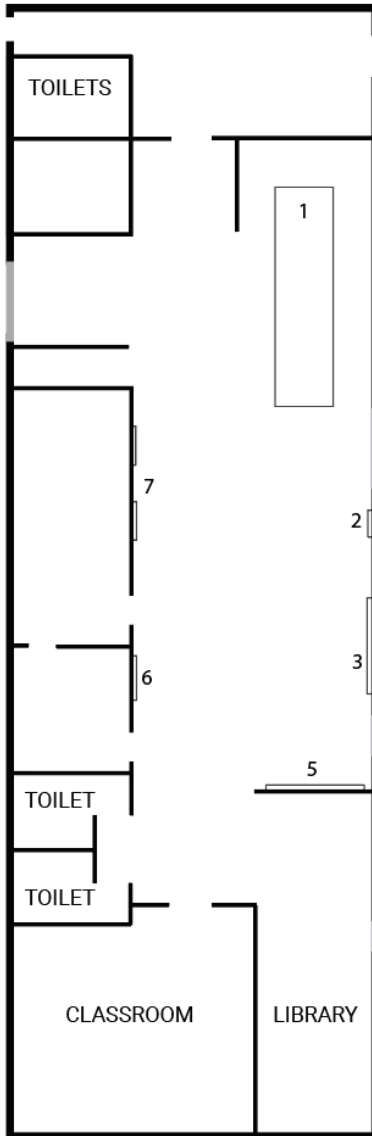
The concept for *A Plague of Starlings* was born from conversation between artists, writers, musicians, and variant makers who grapple with the politics of being visible, included, and accepted within the various natural landscapes they call home.

Curated by Ashley Stull Meyers, the exhibition takes its title from the poem of the same name by Robert Hayden.

1250 E 13TH ST.

13TH ST ENTRANCE

MAIN ENTRANCE



COURTYARD

4 - QR code in exhibition booklet and gallery door.

1226 E 14TH ST

1

Upepo Mweusi

Walter Kitundu

Wood, string, steel, carbon fiber, plastic, electronics

2022

2

Monuments to Escape video

Marisa Williamson

Video, 4 minutes

2020

3

Monuments to Escape

Marisa Williamson

Accordion postcard books and prints

2020

4

Monuments to Escape audio stories

Marisa Williamson

4, MP3 audio tracks

2020

5

The Silva Field Guide to Birds of a Parallel Future

Rick Silva

Video, 11:30 minutes, sound

2014

6

The Silva Field Guide to Birds of a Parallel Future v2

Rick Silva

Video

2022

7

Print #1 features the kite standing on a path.

Print #2 shows the artist wearing the instrument at the edge of a river with a graffiti covered railroad trestle in the background.

Walter Kitundu

24 x 36" and 20 x 30"

2022

Ashley Stull Meyers

(she/her/hers) is a writer, editor, and culture worker. She has curated exhibitions and public programming for a diverse set of arts institutions along the west coast, including those in San Francisco, CA, Oakland, CA, Seattle, WA, and Portland, OR. She has been in academic residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE) and the Banff Centre (Banff, Alberta). She has served as Northwest Editor for Art Practical and has contributed writing to Bomb Magazine, Rhizome, Arts.Black and SFAQ/NYAQ. In 2017 Stull Meyers was named Director and Curator of The Art Gym and Belluschi Pavilion at Marylhurst University, and the following year was made co-curator of the 2019 Portland Biennial. Currently, she is Program Director for the Multicultural Resource Center at Reed College, and contracting as an Independent Curator.

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Walter Kitundu

Kitundu creates kinetic sculptures and sonic installations, develops public works, builds (and performs on) extraordinary musical instruments, while studying and documenting the natural world. He is the inventor of a family of Phonoharps, multi-stringed instruments made from record players that rely on the turntable's sensitivity to vibration. Kitundu has created hand-built record players driven by the wind and rain, fire and earthquakes, birds, light, and the force of ocean waves. In 2008 he received a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in recognition of his work and creative potential.

His eclectic art practice includes receiving a major public art commission, creating a complex site-specific installation in a small town museum, developing wildly imaginative instruments for a string quartet, composing for dance and theatrical production, teaching sculpture at the university level, engaging in fieldwork with wild birds of prey, and heading the design and fabrication of environments for learning at a prominent science institution.

Kitundu has performed and been in residence at art centers and science museums internationally. He has collaborated with the renowned Kronos Quartet, bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, the electronic music duo Matmos, and the legendary Marshall Allen of Sun Ra's Arkestra - in venues from Carnegie Hall to a high school library in Egilstadir, Iceland.

www.kitundu.com

Upepop Mweusi is a reflection on Blackxk relationships with nature in the context of this particular society. There is no question that slavery and white supremacy have affected the established connections with the natural world held by Black people. Some of the ways this shows itself today is by the moves we must make to render ourselves as legible, and therefore safe, as we move through the world. These moves have become reflexive, instinctual ways of surviving in a world that can punish you for just existing. So we are conscious of what we wear, how we move, what we carry, our gestures. These things can lead to moving through the world in a way that could be interpreted as diminished. It can be unsafe to bring your full self into the world.

The work is an example of that burden in that it can be worn as a backpack and carried through the world while birding, but it is also a rejection of the idea that we have to move in any way that is diminished. Instead it offers a chance to walk through the world with a 7 foot black kite and a record player on your back in a gesture that claims space and asserts your right to be.

It is principally a vehicle for gathering people together to talk about these themes and to share stories about both the joys and trials of navigating the natural world as a Black person in this country, at this time. The kite acts as a journal, a record of the times it has flown and the stories it has heard. The recordings are from Black birders who are recounting their experiences in the natural world, bringing their voices into the room as a way to extend the scale of the work beyond the walls of the gallery.

And the nature of the work means that the conditions have to be right in order for it to get aloft, just as the conditions have to be right when we leave the house.

Upepo Mweusi participants

Aisha White

Alex Troutman

Chelsea Connor

Christina Greer

Joelle Jenkins

Liam Barker

Tiffany Christian

Asinaabe Inini

Megan Bang

Bird calls sourced from Xeno-canto.org featuring recordings by:

Richard E. Webster - Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Phainopepla

Eric DeFonso - Black Rail

Paul Marvin - Common Grackle, Brewer's Blackbird, American Coot, Double-crested Cormorant, Phainopepla, Tricolored Blackbird

Jarrod Swackhamer - Common Black Hawk

Bobby Wilcox - Common Black Hawk

Scott Olmstead - Common Raven

Jarek Matusiak - Common Raven

Jeremy Minns - Common Raven

Ed Pandolfino - Phainopepla

Uku Paal - Phainopepla

Oliver Swift - Common Starling

Thomas Ryder Payne - Common Starling

Dean McDonnell - Common Starling

Marisa Williamson

Williamson is a project-based artist who works in video, image-making, installation and performance around themes of history, race, feminism, and technology. She has produced site-specific works at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (2013), Storm King Art Center (2016), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2016), the University of Virginia (2018), and SPACES Cleveland (2019), and by commission from Monument Lab Philadelphia (2017), and the National Park Service (2019).

Her work has been featured in exhibitions at Artpoetica, SOHO20, and BRIC in Brooklyn, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (NYC), Vox Populi (Philadelphia), Mana Contemporary Chicago, Human Resources (LA), and Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato and Stefania Miscetti gallery in and Rome, Italy.

Williamson has been awarded grants from the Graham Foundation, Rema Hort Mann Foundation and the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. She has been a resident artist at the University of Virginia, Triangle Arts Association, the Shandaken Project, and ACRE. She was a participant in the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in 2012 and the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program in 2014-2015. Williamson holds a BA from Harvard University and an MFA from CalArts. She joins the faculty of the McIntire Department of Art at the University of Virginia in the fall of 2021.

www.marisawilliamson.com

www.monumentstoescape.com

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Monuments to Escape audio stories

Rick Silva

Rick Silva is a Brazilian-American artist who makes experimental 3-D animations that explore virtuality, futurology, and speculative ecologies. His works have been screened and exhibited internationally. Recent exhibitions include *Hors Pistes* at The Centre Pompidou, and *State of the Art* at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. His work has been featured in publications such as *WIRED* magazine and Rhizome's book *Net Art Anthology*. Silva lives in Eugene, Oregon, where he is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of Oregon.

www.ricksilva.net

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STOVE WORKS

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