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Black Woman as/and the Living Archive

A virtual film, performance, and talk series

Project Dates: May 2 – June 13, 2020
Opening Program: Saturday, May 2, 2020, 6:00 - 8:00 pm
Location: Events will happen online. Please see PROGRAMS for details and RSVP links

Washington Project for the Arts is pleased to announce “Black Woman as/and the Living Archive,” curated by DC-based, interdisciplinary artist Tsedaye Makonnen. “Black Women as/and the Living Archive” is a virtual film, performance, and talk series aimed at initiating a conversation about the modes in which Black women encode, preserve, and share memory through community. Central to Makonnen's inquiry is *Children of NAN: Mothership*, a recent film by Alisha Wormsley that functions as a metaphor for the survival and power of Black women in a dystopic future.

Artist-curator Tsedaye Makonnen writes about the project: “I see myself (a mother, Black woman, artist, and conduit of Light) throughout Alisha Wormsley’s practice and film, *Children of NAN: Mothership*. Wormsley’s film carries material that we all need to acknowledge, uphold, understand, and absorb in order to survive the present and thrive in the future. The message is clear — until Black women are supported, loved, and nourished in our eternal role as the Creator, none of us are going to make it, period.”

Over the course of six weeks, Makonnen will bring together Wormsley and many of the cast and collaborators of *Children of NAN: Mothership* for a film screening, a reading, two performances, and a discussion. The participants include artists Li Harris, Autumn Knight, Jasmine Hearn, Jamila Raegan, and curator, Ingrid LaFleur. Additionally, Ola Ronke, creator of

The Free Black Women's Library, contributes an annotated bibliography of five books, inspired by Wormsley's film.

Black Women as/and the Living Archive programs are organized around four themes: Space, Moving Image, Memory; Collective Memory; Pleasure Memory; and Mama Memory [& Care]. All programs are open to the public and require an RSVP to join online (except those that take place on Instagram).

PROGRAMS

SPACE, MOVING IMAGE, MEMORY

A Pre-Screening Happy Hour w/ Alisha Wormsley & Li Harris

Instagram Live Event

Friday, May 1 at 5:01-6 pm

A Double Feature Screening of Alisha Wormsley's film *Children of NAN: Mothership* and Li Harris's film *Cry of the Third Eye: The Last Resort*

Virtual Event, [RSVP Here](#)

Saturday, May 2 at 6–8 pm

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

A Reading by Ola Ronke, from N.K. Jemisin's book *How Long Til' Black Futures Month*

Instagram Event

Wednesday, May 27 beginning at 12 pm

A Newly Commissioned Performance, *The Length*, by Autumn Knight inspired by Alisha Wormsley's film *Children of NAN: Mothership*

Virtual Event, [RSVP Here](#)

Thursday, May 28 at 8:30–9:15 pm

PLEASURE MEMORY

A Performance using Embodied Sound, Storytelling, and Dance by Jasmine Hearn

Virtual Event, [RSVP Here](#)

Saturday, June 6 at 5–6:30 pm

MAMA MEMORY [&CARE]

An Informal Discussion with all Participants and Special Guests: Ingrid LaFleur and Jamila Moor

Virtual Event, [RSVP Here](#)

June 13 at 6–8 pm

PARTICIPANTS

Alisha B. Wormsley is an interdisciplinary artist and cultural producer. Her work is about collective memory and the synchronicity of time, specifically through the stories of women of color. Wormsley's work has been honored and supported by a number of awards and grants. Her recent projects include: *The People Are The Light* (part of the Hillman Photography Initiative), *afonaut(a)* film and performance series (Homewood Artist Residency), *Children of NAN: Mothership* film series, and archive, and *There Are Black People in the Future* body of work. These projects have been exhibited at The Andy Warhol Museum, Octavia Butler conference at Spelman University, Carnegie Museum of Art, Johannesburg SA, Studio XX, Project Row Houses, Houston Art League, Rush Art Gallery, The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and most recently the Mattress Factory. She is currently working on: a public park design around community and sustainable water, a temporary installation in Pittsburgh's Market square, and creating a public program to use her text "There Are Black People In the Future" to open up the discourse around displacement and gentrification. Wormsley has an MFA in Film and Video from Bard College and was awarded a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Art at Carnegie Mellon University.

Ola Ronke is the founder of The Free Black Women's Library, an interactive mobile library with a collection of over 2000 books written by Black women. This mobile library pops up monthly, mainly in Brooklyn but has also been presented in Harlem and Queens, as well as Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The mission of this social art project is to center and celebrate the writing and lives of Black women and provide free access to their wide range of words and stories.

Lisa (Li) E. Harris is an interdisciplinary artist, performer, and composer from Houston. She is a trained classical voice/opera singer and is certified as a facilitator of DEEP LISTENING, the sonic philosophies of composer Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016). Harris's work focuses on the energetic relationships between body, land, spirit, and place. She uses voice, theremin, movement, text, and new media to explore healing in performance. In 2007, Harris founded Studio Enertia, a multi-media production collective, and in 2013 began the artist-run Studio Enertia Artist Residency Program in Houston. She is a 2015 Valiante Award recipient, a 2016 inaugural artist in residence at The New Quorum, and a 2017 MANCC Forward Dialogues Fellow at Florida State University, Tallahassee. Her two new opera films *Cry of the Third Eye* and *Children of the Lost* use vocal composition and film to amplify the quelled voices of youth and displaced people due to rapid gentrification in Houston's Third Ward. Harris attained a Bachelor of Music Degree from Mannes College and a Master of Music Degree from Manhattan School of Music.

Autumn Knight is an artist working with performance, installation, video, and text. Her performance work has been presented at Akademie der Kunste, Art League Houston, Blaffer Art Museum, The Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Crystal Bridges Museum,

DiverseWorks, Krannert Art Museum, The New Museum, Optica, The Poetry Project, Project Row Houses, and Skowhegan Space. Knight has been an artist-in-residence with In-Situ, Galveston Artist Residency, YICA, Artpace, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. She is the recipient of an Artadia Award (2015) and an Art Matters Grant (2018). She has served as a visiting artist at Montclair State University, Princeton University, and Bard College. Her performance work is in the permanent collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem. She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2016 and holds a MA in Drama Therapy from New York University.

Jasmine Hearn is a performer, director, choreographer, organizer, and teaching artist. A native Houstonian, they graduated magna cum laude from Point Park University with their BA in Dance. Hearn is a member of the Urban Bush Women Dance Company and also collaborates with BANDportier, Vanessa German, and Alisha B. Wormsley. They have worked and performed with Alesandra Seutin's vocabdance, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, David Dorfman Dance, Helen Simoneau Danse, Jennifer Myers, Kate Watson-Wallace, Lovie Olivia, Marjani Forté-Saunders, Solange Knowles, STAYCEE PEARL dance project, Tara Aisha Willis, will rawls, and with Nick Mauss as a part of the exhibition, *TRANSMISSIONS*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Awarded a 2017 "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Performance with Skeleton Architecture, Hearn has had residencies at Bronx Museum of the Arts, The Camargo Foundation, Dance Source Houston, and the PearlArts Studios. She is a 2018 Movement Research AIR and a 2019 Jerome Foundation Jerome Hill Artist Fellow.

Ingrid LaFleur is a curator, pleasure activist, and Afrofuturist. Her mission is to ensure equal distribution of the future, exploring the frontiers of social justice through new technologies, economies, and modes of government. As the founder of [The Afrofuture Strategies Institute](#), LaFleur implements Afrofuturist foresight methodologies to empower Black bodies and oppressed communities.

As a thought leader, social justice technologist, public speaker, teacher, and cultural advisor she has led conversations and workshops at Centre Pompidou (Paris), TEDxBrooklyn, TEDxDetroit, Ideas City, New Museum (New York), Harvard University and Oxford University, among others. LaFleur is the host of the podcast Decolonize Your Destiny and serves on the board of JustSpace Alliance, Powerhouse Productions, and the Cooley ReUse Project.

Jamila Raegan is an interdisciplinary artist whose work addresses inequity and violence, a marker of her personal and cultural experiences. She most often creates sculptures and environments to provide a space for mourning and collective healing. Raegan studied photography and Pan-African Studies at the University of Louisville and later served as a founding board member and arts educator at Extreme Kids and Crew, a not-for-profit arts organization for children and families with special needs in New York City. Raegan currently lives and works in Chicago, IL where she studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Tsedaye Makonnen primarily works in sculpture, performance, installation, and textiles. Her studio, curatorial, and research-based practice threads together her identity as a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants and a Black American woman, as well as her experience as a doula and a mother. Her work is both an intimate memorialization and a protective sanctuary for Black lives.

Makonnen is the recent recipient of a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, DC Public Library Maker Residency, DC Oral History Grant and the Savage-Lewis Artist Residency on Martha's Vineyard. She has performed at the Venice Biennale, Art Basel Miami, Chale Wote Street Art Festival (Ghana), El Museo del Barrio, Fendika Cultural Center (Ethiopia), Festival International d'Art Performance (Martinique), Queens Museum, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, and more. She has spoken on migration and intersectional feminism at the Hirshhorn Museum, Black Portraiture, Common Field, DPLAFest, New York University, and elsewhere. Her light monuments have been exhibited at the August Wilson Cultural Center and National Gallery of Art. In 2019 she was on the front cover of the Washington City Paper's People Issue. Since the start of 2020, she has been in three exhibitions: a performance art two-person show at the August Wilson Cultural Center curated by Kilolo Luckett, a group show at Maryland Institute College of Art curated by Dr. Deb Willis, a group show at Latchkey Gallery in NYC, and a durational performance at The Africa Center in NYC. She lives in DC with her 9 year-old son.

ABOUT WASHINGTON PROJECT FOR THE ARTS (WPA)

Founded in 1975, [WPA](#) supports experimental artist-driven research, production, and exchange. We value artists as public intellectuals, critical thinkers, idea generators, and organizers, and believe that through collaboration and partnership, artists can shape the meaningful discourses of our time.

In 2016, WPA became the first arts organization between New York and Miami to become W.A.G.E.-certified, meaning that WPA is one of a handful of entities nationwide that pays artists according to W.A.G.E.'s minimum payment standards. In 2017, we elected artists to our board of directors and invited artists to begin setting the agenda for our program activities. In 2018, this new artist-driven approach was officially adopted in the form of a new mission statement. The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts recognized the change with an \$80,000, two-year grant in support of this new direction. Two years later, they have stepped up their investment in local arts organizations and artists by partnering with WPA on Wherewithal Grants.

SUPPORTERS

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