

ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER *presents*

IN SPITE OF MODERNISM

Contemporary Art,
Abstract Legacies, & Identity

curated by **HALEY CLOUSER**

on view **JANUARY 29 — MARCH 19, 2022**



ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER *presents*

IN SPITE OF MODERNISM

Contemporary Art,
Abstract Legacies, & Identity

featuring

PAOLO ARAO
ASA JACKSON
JULIA KWON
ESTEBAN RAMÓN PÉREZ
TARIKU SHIFERAW

curated by

HALEY CLOUSER

on view JANUARY 29 — MARCH 19, 2022

Cover: Julia Kwon, *Embodied Disruption V*, 2015 (detail). Oil on canvas, thread, needle, and felt, 26 x 18 in.

Left : Asa Jackson, *Urban Planning* (detail), 2021. Textiles, oil paint, hair, thread, 66 x 64 in.

CATALOG ESSAY



Paolo Arao
Overtones, 2020
Sewn cotton, canvas, acrylic, corduroy, nylon, felt
18 x 15 x 1¼ in.

In Spite of Modernism: Contemporary Art, Abstract Legacies, and Identity features contemporary artists who challenge abstract styles narrowly associated with Modernism in order to confront the movement's exclusions of race, gender, and sexuality. Applying approaches stemming from global visual languages, such as geometric abstraction and flat, colorful compositions, artists including Paolo Arao, Julia Kwon, and Tariku Shiferaw, among others, offer a reframing and more inclusive reading to what Western Modern artists have conventionally received claim to fame.

Flat surfaces, geometric shapes, linear designs, as well as bold, vibrant colors are just some of the formalist, abstract principles held by Modern artists during the mid-twentieth century, such as Josef Albers, Sam Gilliam, and Alma Thomas. Although in many cases Modern artists' conceptual trajectories and visual expressions were complementary or even reactionary to one another, each Modernist movement fostered social circles that were often distinct, segregated, and male-dominated,¹ and espoused styles that were uncanny to those existing within communities of color.² Ongoing racial and gender discrimination combined with entrenched, limited retellings of Modernism to this day also have caused a siloeing between Modern artists of various identities. This context nurtured an imbalance of acclaim to Euro-Western male artists, like Albers, Kenneth Noland, and Gene Davis on the one hand, and on the other hand, the under-recognition of women, queer, and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), among them Sam Gilliam, Alma Thomas, George Morrison, Neil Parsons, and many others.³ *In Spite of Modernism* seeks to not only pay tribute to these diverse artists working throughout the historic mid-century movement — those of whom overcame adversity

¹ Seth Feman and Jonathan Frederick Walz, eds., *Alma Thomas: Everything is Beautiful* (Yale University Press, 2021).

² Lara Evans, ed. *Action Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s* (IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA), 2020).

³ *Ibid.*

and set forth the stage for the contemporary exhibiting artists — but to also underscore the abundance of pre-existing abstract legacies despite Modernism’s monopolized authority over certain abstract designs.

Evident throughout the contemporary works of *In Spite of Modernism* are attributes stereotypically classified as “Modernist,” among them hard-edge abstraction and color field painting. The former is strict in its use of clean-cut lines and shapes, while the latter employs expansive applications of vivid color. The exhibiting artists, however, are keen to recognize the transcultural exchange of these abstract styles and reclaim their presence outside the hegemonic heteronormative, Euro-Western doctrine — either by incorporating references to culture, gender, and sexuality, or by drawing upon side-lined histories and influences of Modern art. Artists of *In Spite of Modernism* thus importantly shed light on the invisible stories, inspirations, and techniques derived from diverse communities that laid the foundation to principle styles of Modern art, while also identifying the existence of a pre-Modern artistic ancestry.⁴

Paolo Arao’s *Uncharted (What It Means To Be An Island)*, for instance, recalls the traditional color block graphics found on the sails of vinta boats in Southern Filipino fishing communities, emphasizing the global reach and atemporality of designs now reductively associated with mid-century Modernism. By comparison, his works *Birds in Flight (No. 2)* and *Overtones* resist the heteronormative connotations of Modern geometric abstraction and allude to its queer possibilities through their application of splattered paint against fixed, straight forms and the omnipresence of the triangle, a symbol of queer sexuality.

““ *I’m mending this lineage [of geometric abstraction] through my use of textiles, stitching patchworks that explore the elastic nature of queerness and reflects my Filipino heritage. I’m also questioning who is framing and for whom certain art histories are framed. There are many art histories and I’m invested in centering and giving visibility to perspectives that have existed on the margins or have been excluded or erased from the dominant art historical narrative.* —Paolo Arao



Tariku Shiferaw
Love Galore (SZA), 2021
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 in.
Photo by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

⁴ Bridget R. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 137.



Paolo Arao
Uncharted (What It Means To Be An Island), 2020
Sewn cotton, grommets, wood
98 x 86 in. (each)

Julia Kwon's *Homage to the Square Bojagi* represents the experience of othering by incorporating fabric perceived as “Korean” into the concentric squares of bojagi, a Korean tradition of object-wrapping-cloth performed by women since the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). By then reimagining the bojagi into the later work of Josef Albers' 1950s painting series *Homage to the Square*, Kwon identifies the minimalistic bojagi style as precedent to Modernist abstraction, ultimately demonstrating abstraction's long-lived practice across cultural and gender divides as well as the detrimental effects of whitewashed, androcentric histories. Her works from the series *Like Any Other*, which also apply bojagi and Modernist archetypes, are critical portrayals of her experience as a female Korean-American artist. Slashed or collapsing from their frames, these multimedia works embody the plight to fit within rigid molds of racial and gender identity and “authenticity” defined by the art world and beyond.

“ Although my work can be reminiscent of modernist abstraction, I am recreating and reframing traditional Korean patchwork textile designs to comment on the objectification of Asiatic female bodies and to resist the notion of reductive, easily legible identities. Most of my paintings in this exhibition are direct representations of existing, historical Korean textiles. *Bojagi precedes Modernism: the western audience's inability to see and acknowledge the minimalist Korean patchwork design as authentic (and not derivative of Modernism) is what led me to overload the Korean textile designs with ornate patterns that are perceived as “Korean” or “other enough” to expose people's preconceptions on what it means to be Korean.* — Julia Kwon

Tariku Shiferaw cites hip-hop, blues, and jazz for his series *One of These Black Boys* in order to honor the ways in which Black musical genres have informed visual expressions across time. *Forgive Them Father (Ms. Lauryn Hill)*, a work complementary to Albers' paintings as well as Sam Gilliam's draped wall-paintings of the 1970s, identifies Modernism's selective embrace of Black musical forms like jazz for inspiration, whilst excluding Black visual art and artists from its canon.⁵ Shiferaw's distinct color choices are also critical, as they range from gradients of various skin tones to the pairing of black and



blue — a layered reference to the writing of Ralph Ellison, to the songs of Louis Armstrong, and more. These subtle, visualized tributes further account for the role of Black communities and their visual, sonic, and literary expressions in the genesis of Modernism.

Julia Kwon
Homage to the Square Bojagi, 2016
Oil on canvas, felt, and wood
24 x 24 x 3 in.

⁵Bill Arning, Dean Daderko, and Valerie Cassel Oliver, eds., *Outside the Lines* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 2014).



Tariku Shiferaw
Forgive Them Father (Ms Lauryn Hill), 2020
Acrylic on canvas
79 x 35 x 16 in.

Photo by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

Asa Jackson collects fabrics and trimmings from his fellow artist community to create the colorblock, patchwork collage, *Urban Planning*. The various colors and arrangements within *Urban Planning* abstractly reflect the US Census Bureau's representation or misrepresentation of different people and resources, revealing the discrepancies between "representational statistics versus the diversity one might experience in everyday life." In creating a geometric abstract design out of textiles that personify different individuals, Jackson also makes reference to the underrecognized identities that often define larger art movements — an observation applicable to the people and histories of abstraction and Modernism.

“ The audience, critics, and social mores of different times determine whose voice is heard, whose work is seen, and ultimately how it is thought about and recorded in history. There is no way to determine all of the artists working in what style when and why, only who is recognized for it. So it becomes a question of who has access and who is doing the critiquing. —Asa Jackson

Each artist also goes beyond surface level analysis of Modernism's co-optation of cultural visual languages, and pinpoints deeper issues including its elitism. As art historian Briony Fer notes, Modern discourses perpetuated a hierarchy of media and disciplines — or art versus craft — resulting in the championing of paintings and sculpture over, for instance, woodworking and textiles.⁶ Case in point, the Gee's Bend Quilters, a collective of female descendants of formerly enslaved African Americans, who continue to collaborate today to create corduroy and denim patchwork quilts in the rural town of Gee's Bend, Alabama. While their quilts embody and even predate Modern abstraction, the women were marginalized from Modernist discourses due to their socio-cultural identities, lower economic status, and practice in craft.⁷ The quilts of Gee's Bend, however, importantly evince

⁶ Briony Fer, "Abstraction at War with Itself," in *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract art and Society, 1915-2015*, ed. Iwona Blazwick (Prestel, Munich, London, New York: 2015), 227. See also, Elissa Auther, *String Felt Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*.

⁷ Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness*, 135-154.



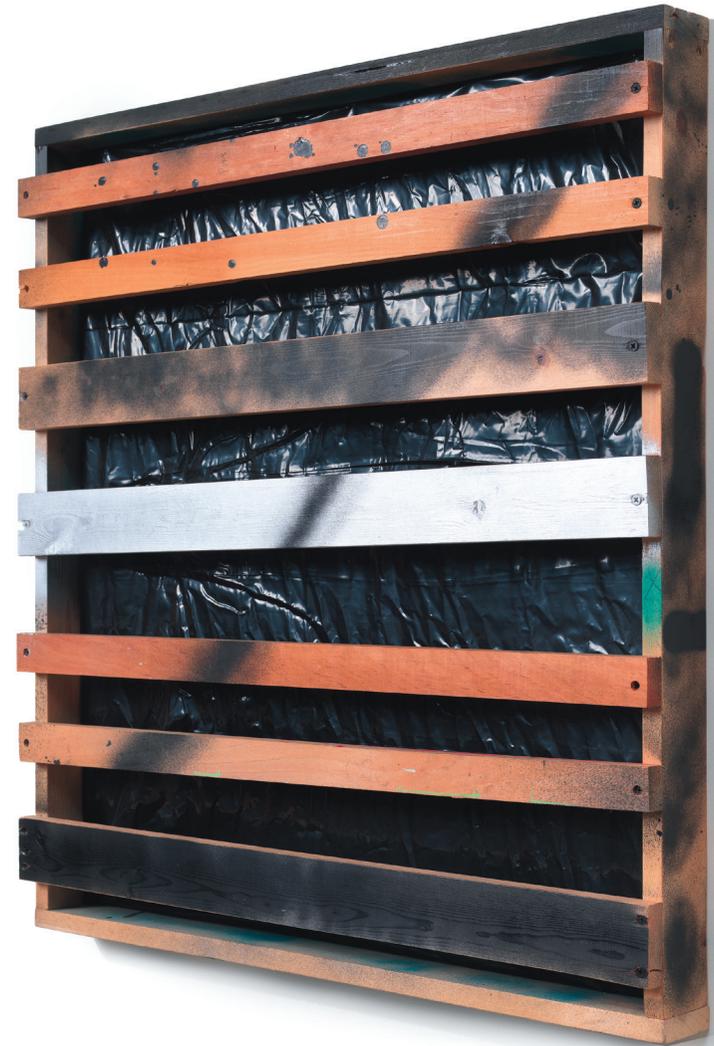
Julia Kwon
Too Much, Not Enough, 2019
Satin, brocade, thread, wood, and wire, sewn in the format
of enlarged Korean object-wrapping cloth bojagi
67 x 252 x 77 in.

that “...abstraction was not exclusive or ‘medium-specific’ to painting, as US high modernist critics like Clement Greenberg would later rigidly codify. On the contrary, the resilience of abstraction lay in its remarkable ability to adapt, transfer, and translate.”⁸

Artists in *In Spite of Modernism* subversively use craft materials to demonstrate both abstraction’s translatability as well as its legacies in the collaborative, craft traditions of diverse communities, particularly from the hands of working individuals. For his textile paintings and installation, **Arao** laboriously employs stitching patterns emblematic of Pacific Islander styles upon purchased and secondhand textiles, like silk and denim — most of which originate from working fabric markets in the Philippines and abroad. **Kwon**, although using a sewing machine for *Too Much Not Enough*, replicates the labor-intensive, hand-sewn traditions of bojagi on textiles that are perceived as “Korean” yet manufactured in the United States, including silky satin and bright, ornately patterned brocade. In *Black Friday* (*Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole*), **Shiferaw** uniquely uses a stratified wooden shipping pallet, an object of commerce and trade, to not only refer to the Black Diaspora and how Black bodies have been historically commodified, but to represent painted rectangular forms found across time from cave drawings to Modernist abstraction. In one fell swoop, the artist identifies via craft materials the histories of labor, Black contributions to visual expressions, and abstract legacies existent around the world.

“ I like how abstraction is not as easy to enter, it requires a little effort on the viewer’s end. It demands the viewer to understand the visual language and intentions of the artist, at least in part. It’s about noticing the subtleties — both in the visual and description of the work or series... I use abstraction to provoke critical thoughts around social structures and race. I interrogate all sorts of spaces — political, private and social. Who is allowed to freely exist in these spaces? For these critical reasons, I don’t think abstraction is done with us yet. —Tariku Shiferaw

⁸Fer, “Abstraction,” 227.



Tariku Shiferaw
Black Friday (*Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole*), 2017
Wood, plastic, and spray paint
31.5 x 30 x 3.25 in.



Esteban Ramón Pérez
DNA (Bad Blood), 2019
Leather, Zepol boxing gloves, vintage Everlast
boxing gloves, heavy bag mounts
144 x 144 in.
Photo by Martin Elder

Comparatively, **Esteban Ramón Pérez's** *DNA (Bad Blood)* utilizes scrap leather and other materials which recall his upbringing working within his father's upholstery shop. The patchwork 'leather painting,' as he calls them, blurs Mexican, Xicano, and American codices, like Mexican boxing and tattoo-needling, with traits of the Modern color field style, thereby reclaiming the cultural multiplicity present in the history of abstraction. Additionally, the work's use of leather — a material with histories of labor, connections to Pérez's family and work, and derivation from and orientation to the body and skin — emphasizes the vast human and labor elements behind abstract designs stereotypically classified to Euro-American artists.

“ I've been interested in the intersection between Mexico's and USA's modern and contemporary art movements... There's a lot of crossover that doesn't get covered in art history. I don't remember learning of any Mexican, Xicano, or Latin American artists... But there's Jackson Pollock's relationship to David Alfaro Siqueiros and his drip gestures, the Albers and their influence from an infatuation with Mexican indigenous art... When I was looking at [Abstract Expressionism], 60's pop, or minimalism, it felt familiar somehow, and I think that was part of my attraction to those movements.⁹
—Esteban Ramón Pérez

Jackson, inspired by fabric's embedded record of labor and lived experiences, calls upon his local community to produce textile collages with personal meaning, as with the work produced for *In Spite of Modernism*. Assembling together these once-disparate, yet symbolic materials into large abstract designs, the artists acknowledge the multicultural legacy and collective work involved in styles now problematically associated with individual Euro-Western Modern artists. As so beautifully exemplified by the exhibiting artists, the Gee's Bend Quilters, and others, abstraction has and continues to manifest in various media and across all demographics despite Modernists' sanctimonious claims that it inhabits the realm of painting or in the genius of a particular caste.

In Spite of Modernism therefore functions dually; first, as a visualized response to exclusionary Modernist histories, and second, as a proclamation

emphasizing the ongoing legacy of abstract styles and its creators despite the limited classifications connoted and perpetuated by “Modernism.” While paying tribute to the remarkable resilience and creative drive of the people behind these iconic abstract designs,¹⁰ *In Spite of Modernism* also brings to the forefront the all-too-common occurrence of how “raced, gendered, classed, and geographic identities have precluded artists' entrances into the art world as artistic, although their [art] has been accepted in some circles as art.”¹¹ Continuing her observation, art historian Bridget R. Cooks links the cause of this preclusion to the ongoing rift between artist and artwork — or the imbalance in value of the artist compared to their artistic productions.¹² Cooks voices that “until the poor, Black, rural, isolated women [of the Gee's Bend] are considered valuable,” and arguably all who are oppressed by systemic injustices, “there will be no significant or long-term change in the way they or their work will be regarded by the art world.”¹³ It is therefore critical that we not merely ensure more inclusive readings of history and its art and artists, but to also more importantly support and empower the living beings behind these visual legacies — a call to motion each artist poignantly prompts us to practice.

And so in the words of the inimitable abstract artist Jack Whitten, be reminded and reflect:

“Beneath every surface lies an identity.”¹⁴

⁹ Cristina Samper, “See Conceptuality Through the Eyes of Esteban Ramón Pérez” in *Art of Choice*. May 26, 2021. <https://www.artofchoice.co/see-conceptuality-through-the-eyes-of-esteban-ramon-perez/>

¹⁰ Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness*, 154. Cook explains that “the work [of the Gee's Bend Quilters] is not remarkable because it looks like modernist painting. It is remarkable because of its inherent aesthetic value, and because the quilts come from a group of women who have exercised their will to survive in the face of extreme poverty, exploitation, isolation and disfranchisement.”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, 153-154.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Katy Siegel, ed., *Jack Whitten: Notes from the Woodshed* (Zurich, Hauser & Wirth Publishers, 2020), 37.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & FURTHER READING

Albers, Josef. *Interaction of Color*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 1963. Reprint Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

Arning, Bill, Dean Daderko, and Valerie Cassel Oliver, eds. *Outside the Lines*. Houston, TX: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 2014.

Auther, Elissa. *String Felt Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Cooks, Bridget R. *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Dziedzic, Erin, Melissa Messina, eds. Text by Valerie Cassel Oliver, Lowery Stokes Sims, et al. *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction 1960s to Today*. Kansas City, OK: Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017. Exh. cat.

English, Darby. *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Evans, Lara ed. *Action Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s*. Sante Fe, NM: IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA), 2020. Exh. cat.

Feman Seth, and Jonathan Frederick Walz, eds. *Alma Thomas: Everything is Beautiful*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2021. Exh. cat.

Fer, Briony. "Abstraction at War with Itself." In *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract art and Society, 1915-2015*. Prestel: Munich, London, New York, 2015.

Martyr Joan, ed. *Women of Abstract Expressionism*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press and Denver Art Museum, 2017. Exh. cat.

Mizota, Sharon. "Review: Hank Willis Thomas, Tomashi Jackson and a Different Kind of Color Theory." Los Angeles Times, February 6, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2020-02-06/hank-willis-thomas-tomashi-jackson-review>.

National Museum of the American Indian (US). *Essays on Native Modernism: Complexity and Contradiction in American Indian Art*. Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2006.

O'grady, Megan. "Once Overlooked, Black Abstract Painters Are Finally given Their Due." The New York Times, February 12, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/12/t-magazine/black-abstract-painters.html>.

Patterson, Sala Elise. "Redlining, Green Books, Gray Towns, High Yellow: Artist Amanda Williams on the Relationship between Color, Race, Space and Value." Harvard Graduate School of Design, June 26, 2020. <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/2020/06/redlining-green-books-gray-towns-high-yellow-artist-amanda-williams-on-the-relationship-between-color-race-space-and-value/>.

Pollock, Griselda. "The missing future: MOMA and modern women." In *Modern Women: Women Artists at The Museum of Modern Art*. Edited by C. Butler and A. Schwartz, A. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010.

Puleo, Risa. "The Linguistic Overlap of Color Theory and Racism." Hyperallergic, December 14, 2016. <https://hyperallergic.com/345021/the-linguistic-overlap-of-color-theory-and-racism/>.

Rodney, Seph. "How to Embed a Shout: A New Generation of Black Artists Contends with Abstraction." Hyperallergic. August 23, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/389105/how-to-embed-a-shout-a-new-generation-of-black-artists-contends-with-abstraction/>.

Samper, Cristina. "See Conceptuality Through the Eyes of Esteban Ramón Pérez." Art of Choice. May 26, 2021. <https://www.artofchoice.co/see-conceptuality-through-the-eyes-of-esteban-ramon-perez/>.

Scott, Andrea K. "Reframing Modernism at the New Moma." The New Yorker. The New Yorker, November 12, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/reframing-modernism-at-the-new-moma>

Sheets, Hilarie M. "Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn." New York Times. March 29, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/arts/design/the-resurgence-of-women-only-art-shows.html>.

Siegel, Katy, ed. *Jack Whitten: Notes from the Woodshed*. Zurich: Hauser & Wirth Publishers, 2020.

Steve Locke, *Steve Locke: Homage to the Square Auction Block*. Boston, MA: LaMontagne Gallery, 2021. Exh. cat.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



Paolo Arao
Birds in Flight (No. 2), 2018
Acrylic, colored pencil, on pieced and sewn canvas, and cotton (10 total parts)
87 x 67 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Paolo Arao
Forest Skin, 2019
Sewn cotton, canvas, corduroy
20 x 16 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Paolo Arao
Overtones, 2020
Sewn cotton, canvas, acrylic, corduroy, nylon, felt
18 x 15 x 1.25 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Paolo Arao
Uncharted (What It Means To Be An Island), 2020
Sewn cotton, grommets, wood
98 x 86 in. (each)
Courtesy of the Artist.



Asa Jackson
Urban Planning, 2021
Textiles, oil paint, hair, thread
66 x 64 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Julia Kwon
Embodied Disruption IV, 2015
Oil on canvas and felt
48 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Julia Kwon
Embodied Disruption V, 2015
Oil on canvas, thread, needle, and felt
26 x 18 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Julia Kwon
Embodied Disruption VIII, 2015
Oil on canvas and thread
30 x 21 x 2 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Julia Kwon
Homage to the Square Bojagi, 2016
Oil on canvas, felt, wood
24 x 24 x 3 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Tariku Shiferaw
Black Friday (Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole), 2017
Wood, plastic, and spray paint
31.5 x 30 x 3.25 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Lelong & Co.,
New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.



Julia Kwon
Too Much, Not Enough, 2019
Satin, brocade, thread, wood, and wire, sewn
in the format of enlarged Korean object-
wrapping cloth bojagi
67 x 252 x 77 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Tariku Shiferaw
Forgive Them Father (Ms. Lauryn Hill), 2020
Acrylic on canvas
79 x 35 x 16 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Lelong &
Co., New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.



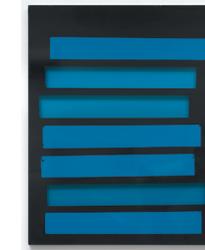
Julia Kwon
Wrong Signifiers, 2015
Oil on canvas
62 x 50 in.
Courtesy of the Artist.



Tariku Shiferaw
Love Galore (SZA), 2021
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Lelong &
Co., New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.



Esteban Ramón Pérez
DNA (Bad Blood), 2019
Leather, Zepol boxing gloves, vintage Everlast
boxing gloves,
heavy bag mounts
144 x 144 in.
Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Martin Elder.



Tariku Shiferaw
Together (Kaytranada), 2019-2020
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Lelong & Co.,
New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.



Tariku Shiferaw
Black Diamonds and Pearls (Blackalicious), 2017
Acrylic on stretched plastic
72 x 52 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Lelong & Co.,
New York. Photo by Dario Lasagni.



PAOLO ARAO

Born in Manila, Philippines

Living and working in Brooklyn and West Shokan, NY

Paolo Arao makes sewn paintings, textile constructions and site-responsive installations that are rooted in geometric abstraction. He mends this lineage of abstraction through the use of textiles; stitching patchworks that explore the elastic nature of queerness and reflects his Filipino heritage. Made with hand-dyed fabrics, second-hand clothing, hand woven fibers and weathered canvas, his works resemble flags or quilts, often carrying physical traces of the bodies that wore them.

Paolo Arao is a Filipino-American artist working with textiles. He received his BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Arao has shown his work widely and has presented solo exhibitions at the Columbus Museum (Georgia), David B. Smith Gallery (Denver), Western Exhibitions (Chicago), Jeff Bailey Gallery and Morgan Lehman Gallery (NYC.) Attended residencies include Art Omi, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, The Museum of Arts and Design (NYC), the Millay Colony, the Studios at MASS MoCA, Vermont Studio Center, Lower East Side Printshop Keyholder Residency, NARS Foundation, Wassaic Project, among others. Arao's work has been published in *New American Paintings*, *Maake Magazine*, *Artmaze*, *Dovetail* and *Esopus*. Paolo Arao is a 2021 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Painting from The New York Foundation for the Arts.



ASA JACKSON

Born in Washington, DC

Living and working in Hampton Roads, VA

Asa Jackson is a visual artist, curator, and director based in Hampton Roads, Virginia. As a multidisciplinary artist, Jackson's work explores the cross section of textile from various countries, peoples, time periods, and personal histories. His works are often anthropological studies, representing the lives of myriad people, their collective and individual stories. By cutting and sewing fabrics together, Jackson metaphorically mixes cultures, time periods, people and places into unified works of art.

After graduating from the Hampton Roads Academy, where he developed a passion for painting and art making, Jackson studied sociology at Boston University. He then moved to New York in 2010, where he was featured in several exhibitions, including a career-defining solo exhibition at the Samuel Owen Gallery in Greenwich, CT. Jackson then opened 670 Gallery in Virginia, leading the gallery as its director from 2014-2017. He has since featured his work in numerous exhibitions, including more recently at 1708 Gallery in Richmond, VA. Currently, Jackson is the founder and director of The Contemporary Arts Network (CAN) and CAN Foundation, a not-for-profit arts organization in Newport News, VA, with a focus on artist development, arts education, and public projects. He currently serves as Chair for the Virginia Commission for the Arts and is on the Board of Mid-Atlantic Arts.



JULIA KWON

Born in Woodbridge, VA

Living and working in Woodbridge, VA

Julia Kwon sews interpretative bojagi—Korean object-wrapping cloths historically created since the early Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910)—and wraps hallow human-scale figures with them to comment on the objectification of Asiatic female bodies. Further, she embeds patterns from contemporary sociopolitical events to challenge the notion of authenticity and examine the complexities of constructing identities within the context of globalism, cultural hybridity, and intersectionality. She also explores community, solidarity, and personal relationship building through various collaborative projects that advocate for a more equitable society for all.

Julia Kwon holds an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University and a BA in Studio Art from Georgetown University. Her work is in the permanent collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery (Washington, DC), Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (New York, NY), Museum of International Folk Art (Santa Fe, NM), and The New York Public Library (New York, NY). She has exhibited nationally at venues including the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, The Peale Center at Carroll Museums, Hartnett Gallery of the University of Rochester, and Torpedo Factory Art Center. Her work has been featured and reviewed internationally including the Smithsonian Magazine, The Washington Post, Korea.net, BmoreArt, PBS's WETA Arts, and SBS International News. She was an artist in residence at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Chautauqua School of Art, Vermont Studio Center, NARS Foundation, Textile Arts Center, among others. She presented lectures and workshops at institutions including Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Museum of International Folk Art, The Phillips Collection, Georgetown University, Lehigh University, University of Rochester, Emerson College, and Montgomery College.



ESTEBAN RAMÓN PÉREZ

Born in 1989, Los Angeles, CA

Living and working in Los Angeles, CA

Esteban Ramón Pérez utilizes his experience as a professional upholsterer and intertwines cultural and artistic sensibilities of his Chicano heritage with the visual language of postmodernism as well as issues rooted in postcolonial history. His work embodies facets of art histories, subjectivity, spirituality, and social issues.

Pérez received his BFA in Art from the California Institute of the Arts in 2017, his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University School of Art in 2019. His works have been featured in numerous exhibitions, including more recently *Sobre Las Olas*, Charles Moffett Gallery; *Eagle and Serpent* at Calderon Gallery, as well as *Patchwork* at Transmitter Gallery. Among his many awards and honors, he was recently granted the Studio Fellowship at NXTHVN in New Haven, CT in 2020 and received the Robert Schoelkopf Memorial Traveling Fellowship in 2018. Pérez lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

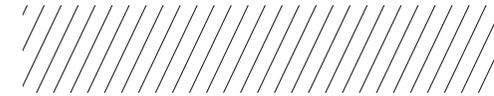


TARIKU SHIFERAW

Born in 1983, Addis, Ababa, Ethiopia
Living and working in New York City, NY

Tariku Shiferaw is known for his practice of mark-making that explores the metaphysical ideas of painting and societal structures. Apart from paint on canvases, Shiferaw also incorporates ready-made objects and materials in his installations, often using transparent and colored mylar, and subverting their utilitarian characteristics in assembly or hanging to create a body of evocative works that question perception and space. Shiferaw's work may be understood in the framework of midcentury abstraction, but the artist also infuses this formal vocabulary with critical observations from popular culture.

Shiferaw's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including the 2017 *Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; *A Poet*hical Wager* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Ohio; *Unbound* at the Zuckerman Museum of Art (ZMA), Kennesaw, Georgia; *Men of Change*, organized by The Smithsonian Institution, and held at the California African American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles; and *What's Love Got to Do with It?* at The Drawing Center, New York, New York. Shiferaw has participated in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art (Studio), in Open Sessions at The Drawing Center (2018-2020), and he was artist-in-residence at the LES Studio Program in New York City. Shiferaw is currently an artist-in-residence at the World Trade Center through Silver Art Projects. Shiferaw was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1983, raised in Los Angeles, California, and now lives and works in New York City.



HALEY CLOUSER

Curator
Living and working in Boston, MA and Richmond, VA

Haley Clouser is the current Curatorial Fellow at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA, and is an independent curator and writer of contemporary art. At deCordova, she assists with realizing exhibitions, including the forthcoming *New England Triennial 2022* and *New Formations*. Haley is also the curatorial lead for *Melvin Edwards: Brighter Days* and its public programming, the museum's 2022 *PLATFORM* series of outdoor public art, and other gallery installations.

Previously, she was the Exhibitions Research Assistant for *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse* (2021) curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, during which she also assisted with the permanent collection and gallery rotations. After receiving her MA in Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University, she was awarded the Samuel H. Kress Interpretive Fellowship (2019-2020) to develop and collaborate on the gallery exhibition *American Land, American People* at VMFA led by curator Johannah Minich. She has also held internships at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, Arlington Arts Center, among others.

Haley's writing has been published in *Burnaway* and *NUMBER, INC.*, and has been recently recognized for an Honorable Mention for the 2021 Toni Beauchamp Prize in Critical Art Writing for *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*. Her curatorial projects have included public art collaborations in Virginia, with forthcoming group exhibitions in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 across the United States. Haley lives and works in Boston, MA and Richmond, VA.

ABOUT ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER

Arlington Arts Center (AAC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit contemporary visual arts center dedicated to enriching community life by connecting the public with contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, educational programs, and artist residencies.

AAC was established in 1974 and has been housed since 1976 in an historic building in Virginia Square. Our facility includes nine exhibition galleries, a large lawn suitable for public art, working studios for twelve artists, and two classrooms. At 17,000 square feet, AAC is one of the largest non-federal venues for contemporary art in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

EXHIBITIONS

Through quarterly exhibitions, AAC serves as a launching pad for emerging artists, provides established artists with the opportunity to experiment, and offers the public a snapshot of the region's most compelling contemporary art.

AAC's exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and panel discussions offer opportunities for dialogue, and ultimately serve to illustrate the value of contemporary art—specifically, what it is and why it matters in our daily lives.

EDUCATION

AAC offers a stimulating schedule of art classes year-round for novice and seasoned artists of all ages, from toddlers to adults. Taught by experienced professional artists, AAC's classes are small and scheduled around the school and work day. Tuition is affordable and AAC's art students have access to the excellent contemporary art in our galleries to help stimulate and inspire their own efforts.

RESIDENT ARTISTS PROGRAM

AAC's resident artist program provides subsidized studio space in a supportive environment that encourages interaction, dialogue, and exploration. Residents become part of a creative community that enables them to exchange ideas, engage in meaningful conversation, and expand their practice.

HOURS & LOCATION

Arlington Arts Center is open free to the public Wed - Sun, 12 - 5 pm

Metro: Silver & Orange Lines: Virginia Square ●●

3550 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

703.248.6800

For more info about AAC visit: www.arlingtonartscenter.org

STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Catherine Anchin / director@arlingtonartscenter.org

CURATOR OF EXHIBITIONS

Blair Murphy / exhibitions@arlingtonartscenter.org

RESIDENT ARTIST & COLLECTOR LIAISON

Amanda Jirón-Murphy / residency@arlingtonartscenter.org

EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Lia Ferro / education@arlingtonartscenter.org

SPONSORS & PARTNERS

Our programs are made possible through the generous support of the The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation; Arlington County through the Arlington Cultural Affairs division of Arlington Economic Development and the Arlington Commission for the Arts; the Virginia Commission for the Arts/National Endowment for the Arts; the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia; the Washington Forrest Foundation; and generous individual donors.



arlington arts





ARLINGTON
ARTS
CENTER

VIRGINIA SQUARE • 3550 WILSON BLVD • ARLINGTON, VA
ARLINGTONARTSCENTER.ORG • 703.248.6800