



sol

Interview

The Same Three Questions

Catering Curatorially

index



Director's Letter

sol

Interview with Steffani Jemison

The Same Three Questions

Catering Curatorially



director's letter

Guest + Host = Ghost

I don't really have the words nor the language to fully express my gratitude to Steffani Jemison for hosting the Jake Legacy Residency at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery. If you find the guest/host inversion confusing, join the club. To further complicate the matter, when her exhibition, *sol*, ended on February 27, it marked an unclosing—it became apparition. While I can confirm that she was here and that there was workshopping and singing and reading and confessing and painting and applying vinyl and slide mounting and postering and lighting and hieroglyphics and flat tires and poetry and noodles and Coke Zero and record shopping and an opening and an exhibition, what matters now is what we do with the privilege of having these experiences continue to haunt us.

Scott Lawrimore
Director, Jacob Lawrence Gallery

Lucille Clifton (1936 - 2010) mulberry fields *

they thought the field was wasting
and so they gathered the marker rocks and stones and
piled them into a barn they say that the rocks were shaped
some of them scratched with triangles and other forms they
must have been trying to invent some new language they say
the rocks went to build that wall there guarding the manor and
some few were used for the state house
crops refused to grow
i say the stones marked an old tongue and it was called eternity
and pointed toward the river i say that after that collection
no pillow in the big house dreamed i say that somewhere under
here moulders one called alice whose great grandson is old now
too and refuses to talk about slavery i say that at the
masters table only one plate is set for supper i say no seed
can flourish on this ground once planted then forsaken wild
berries warm a field of bones
bloom how you must i say

*The first reading from *Apple, Acorn, Blackberry*, a workshop facilitated by Steffani Jemison.



sol



Steffani Jemison uses transparency and opacity as material and metaphor. Exhibition references include: Solresol, a universal language created in 1827 by François Sudre; *Black Utopia: Negro Communal Experiments in America* by William H. Pease and Jane Pease (1963); the confession of Nat Turner to Thomas Ruffin Gray (1831); and “Hamptonese,” the private script developed by visionary artist James Hampton. The exhibition was accompanied by two research workshops with Justin Hicks. For the opening, Hicks presented a performance in conversation with materials and recordings from the workshops.

workshops

fala fasi: excellent, the best

Is music a language? This workshop explores how musicians and music theorists have connected language to pitch, note length, melody, and harmony. We'll test music pedagogy systems, including the Orff Schulwerk method, the Kodaly method, Curwen hand signs, solresol, and other approaches to music pedagogy and musical language.



apple acorn blackberry

In two reading sessions—in which readings are executed together as a group, no preparation necessary—we will consider how language connects to travel and landscape. Featuring blog posts, petitions, and excerpts from academic texts by Susan Stewart, Sue Thomas, and others.

“While laboring in the field”
I have a confession. I am rarely out of doors.
“I discovered drops of blood”
Thirty years ago, I was unearthing
“on the corn as though it were”
fossils from the silt of the creek bed
“dew from heaven—and”
legs splayed before me, laboring into the
“I communicated it to many,”
brown, rubbing the ridged pebble on
“both white and black,”
my shorts, hoping to reveal a brachiopod.
“in the neighborhood”
But I have not seen a creek in decades.
“—and I then found”
I heard the brightest
“on the leaves”
days are nights. I like
“in the woods”
a moon on whom I can rely.

“hieroglyphic”
Twenty years ago, I was standing
“characters and numbers,”
arms spread like an angel in a field
“with the forms of men”
between the subdivision and the parking lot,
“in different attitudes,”
the back side of the grocery
“portrayed in blood,”
strange, stony,
“and representing”
concrete reddened by runoff.
“the figures I had seen”
They traveled thousands of miles
“before in the heavens”
to reach pavement.
“and as the leaves on the trees”
I am not surprised.

“bore impression of the figures”
Here, the beat drops continuously
“I had seen in the heavens,”
beneath my feet. In other words,
“it was plain to me”
my feet are scrambling beneath me.
“that the Savior was about to”
They prefer to scramble on a surface
“lay down the yoke”
that is hard and cool, one
“he had borne for the sins of men”
whose resistance can be measured
“and the great day of”
in advance. It’s a rhyme:
“judgement was at hand.”
mud, blood.





Steffani Jemison was born in Berkeley, California, and is currently based in Brooklyn, New York. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2009) and a BA in Comparative Literature from Columbia University (2003). Jemison uses time-based, photographic, and discursive platforms to examine “progress” and its alternatives. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at venues including the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Drawing Center, LAXART, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, Laurel Gitlen, Team Gallery, and others. Her publishing project, Future Plan and Program, commissions literary work by artists of color and has published books by Martine Syms, Jibade-Khalil Huffman, Harold Mendez, and other artists. She has participated in many artist residencies, including Smack Mellon, the International Studio and Curatorial Program, Project Row Houses, the Core Program at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Jemison was a 2013 Tiffany Foundation Biennial Awardee and a 2014 Art Matters Grantee. She is currently an artist-in-residence in the Sharpe-Walentas Space Program and teaches at Parsons The New School for Design and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

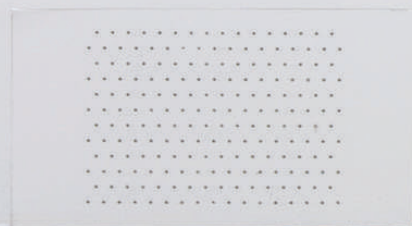
Justin Hicks is a composer, sound designer, and performer. His work has been featured at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Baryshnikov Arts Center, PS 122, The Juilliard School, The Knitting Factory, Jack, Arlene’s Grocery, and Pianos and Bowery Poetry Club. Justin was a performer and sound designer for The Geneva Project by Jennifer Harrison Newman and Charlotte Brathwaite (Jack 2015), Prophetika: An Oratorio by Charlotte Brathwaite (LaMama 2015) and Go/Forth (Please, Bury Me) by Kaneza Schaal (PS 122 2016). His work The Odetta Project: Waterboy and the Mighty World, was shown at Bowery Arts and Science in 2014 and was featured during the Freedom Songs Festival: Which Side Are You On, Friend? at Jack in 2015. Most recently, he served as musical director for Steffani Jemison’s Promise Machine (MoMA 2015).



interview

Conducted by:

Sarah Faulk, Haien Yoo, Anqi Peng



with Steffani Jemison

Why did you major in Comparative Literature as an undergrad? How did your education influence your art, and what has proved to be the most valuable aspects in informing your current work?

My undergraduate college—Columbia University—did not have an art major. I chose to study comparative literature, with a focus on ethnomusicology, philosophy, and literature. I draw upon the ideas I learned then in so many ways: they inform my research practice and also directly influence the subject matter and historical material with which I work. For example, in college I studied ethnomusicology and wrote my thesis about the philosophy of *négritude*, the concept of “soul,” a Curtis Mayfield song, and a poem by David Henderson. I’m still very interested in the relationship between music, language. I’m also very interested in theories of narration and their political implications, ideas to which I was first introduced as a student. I’m always looking for alternative models to describe, explain, and understand change.

After college, I worked for a nonprofit arts organization in New York City, where I managed an artist residency program. I supported and learned from hundreds of artists in New York, some of whom are still friends or colleagues, and was inspired by their success to imagine a path for myself as an artist.

How do you contellate the diverse components of your work? How much do you expect viewers to understand the theories, history, and results of your research, and do you feel the mediums you choose affect this?

The issues that interest me are interesting precisely because they entangle formal, visual, and conceptual matters. I think the word “matter” is helpful here because it implies subject and material and value; these three cannot be distinguished. I work with particular materials because I am interested in what they continue to reveal over time. For example, I have been working with slide projection for many years. Continuous slide projections are structurally specific: they are continuous, yet modular; linear, yet circular. The slide projection work in this exhibition presents a sequence of textual slides that feature a set of synonyms in different grammatical iterations. These synonyms are translated into color using a nineteenth-century artificial language called Solresol. The vocabulary that appears in the projection meditates specifically on relationships between the past, the present, and the future. It also meditates on relations between words that mean the same thing or very similar things—the very idea of similarity, and how and when we register difference. The form and the subject of the projection are inseparable parts of the same project.



Why are you interested in transparent materials?

Transparency is a physical property of materials. It is also used metaphorically to evoke openness: for example, when we speak of transparency in government. As such, it often evokes openness or resistance to interpretation—how easy it is to understand something, or the degree to which ideas make themselves available for understanding. The inverse of transparency is opacity, which

implies closure, resistance, and inaccessibility. What happens when inaccessibility is deployed intentionally? When something appears transparent but is actually opaque? I am interested in all of these questions.

Lately, I have been thinking in particular about the script that appeared in the journal of American visionary artist James Hampton. Hampton used a consistent lexicon of characters that are repeated frequently—the journal pages could be read as drawings, but they strongly imply language. When I look at pages from Hampton’s diary, my initial impulse is to try to figure out the meaning of the characters. I have to remind myself that I might not understand the material for a very good reason: I am not the intended reader. This writing transcribes a spiritual message that is obviously not for me. One text to which I refer several times in the exhibition is The Confessions of Nat Turner, an excerpt from which appears in the text work “Same Time.” In the confession, Nat Turner described seeing a message inscribed in “hieroglyphics” in a forest. What if Turner’s “hieroglyphics” and Hampton’s characters are one and the same?

In Turner’s text, the word “hieroglyphics” is used carefully—Turner is clear that this is written material, and as writing, it is theoretically comprehensible by anyone. But he is also clear that he is the privileged reader. He is literate in multiple tongues. He can speak your language—and he also has access to something you will never understand, a channel to prophetic political resources that can only be used by those who have access. Earlier in my career, I was accused of working with inaccessible materials like black vernacular fiction—books that are read by millions of Americans each year, far more than ever step foot into most art galleries and museums. In my work, I seek to reframe accessibility and reclaim privacy (as is found in the experience of reading), opacity (and the resistance to interpretation), and silence (instead of communication) as protective, spiritual and protective values.



I noticed that the posters have different hand gestures that correspond with different music notes. How do you expect the audience to decode messages in the exhibition?

As I mentioned earlier, part of what my work interrogates is the very idea that information can or should “transfer” fluidly from maker to receiver. That said, almost all artwork requires viewers to make an investment to understand the perspective of the artist creating the work. Hopefully, my work leaves open the possibility of multiple encounters. I like to think that there are many different ways of thinking about almost everything. For example, the slide projection can be experienced in one way by viewers who notice the reference to Solresol, a system that mapped language onto color. But it can be experienced in a different way as a meditative, repetitive, cyclical progression of color fields and textual synonyms. Similarly, I think almost all of the work in the show can be encountered by a viewer who has very little background information. The more they’re interested, and the more they investigate, the more their experience will be like mine. But there are rich possibilities for encountering and engaging with the work that don’t involve my perspective or my references.



Workshops are a big parts of your project; one that I attended was similar to a seminar. I feel like pedagogy is an important element of your work. I know your projects *Book Club* (2010) and *Alpha's Bet* (2011–14) created a space for discussion and the exchange of people and how is it different from being an educator and researcher in the traditional academic environment? What is the special role that artists have in this critical pedagogical realm?

The workshops that I organized for this exhibition do have some connection to reading groups that were assembled to accompany the exhibition at MoMA and the New Museum. My intention with these groups is to create a democratic space for exchanging information and exchanging knowledge. There are many spaces where ideas can be shared and trafficked, and formal education environments are not the only or the most important of these spaces. I do think that traditional classroom education is an experience shared by almost every inhabitant of the United States and most of the world. As a nearly universal shared experience, it's a model from which we can all draw, and that can be amplified, complicated, and extended in different ways through the museum or gallery.

Is there a significant difference in the conversations and outcomes of your workshops when they are held in settings other than museums and galleries?

There is not a huge difference because many of the artists and curators who are part of my community also are active as teachers at the university level. So there is a strong relationship between what unfolds in the museum and what happens outside it. What is nice about the workshops here is that they bring non-students into close proximity with students, which can be very productive and reverse traditional authority relationships. In addition students are often in contact with academic issues that are relevant but to which I haven't had exposure in years, so I learn a lot from them.

The meeting group model that I use now started when I was an artist in residence at Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas. I have also conducted reading workshops at Juxtaposition Arts, a community center in St. Paul. It's great to lead workshops outside of universities, where participants have diverse backgrounds and educations and bring really fresh approaches to the material.

At MoMA, I specifically invited community leaders outside of academe, including community organizers and social justice leaders whose ideas I felt would be an important critical challenge to our dialogue. They were some of the most active and interesting participants.

How does your work change as you continue to inherit visual strategies, and how would you characterize your relationship with history?

I am constantly reading and researching and looking at art and thinking about new modes of exploration and material and transformation, and practice. Those continually inform my work. I learn from every exhibition. And like many artists, I work in a studio where I can constantly experiment and cycle through approaches over time. It's important for me to reflect critically about the relationship between my practice in one moment and my practice in a later moment, and about the creative process not necessarily as a "progression" or a "development." Instead, I think exhibitions over time offer multiple snapshots of an artist's thought. When I use the title "Same Time" sometimes I'm thinking about the relationship between the time of one exhibition and the time of another, or the instance of an artwork in one exhibition and another, later, exhibition.



the same three
questions

with **PHILIP
GOVEDARE**

the same three
questions

the same three
questions

Philip Govedare



Excavation #6, 2010. oil on canvas. 66 in. x 59 in.

What's your praxis?

I am a painter. My work is a response to distant views of western landscape that show natural formations as well as the imprint of human activity such as roads, canals, water projects, mining or agriculture. Seen from an aerial perspective, these forms are evocative, intricate and visually compelling. They are suggestive of a complex narrative of natural structures and human transformation that elicits questions about our role in nature and how our activity has reshaped the earth's surface. My work is a response to a uniquely "mythical" American western landscape that is vast in scale and inspires the imagination to contemplate our place in the world, what came before us and what lies ahead.



Excavation #10, 2015. oil on canvas. 43 in. x 84 in.

What's on your Horizon?

I recently had a solo exhibition of Sky Paintings at Prographica Gallery in Seattle, and I'll be starting a new body of work this spring during my sabbatical leave. I plan to return to the southwest and explore new unusual and remote places. Pentagram, a philosophical and literary magazine (<http://www.rozekruispers.com>) based in the Netherlands will feature my painting *Excavation #7* on the cover of its April 2016 issue. *Excavation #7* is one of three paintings of mine that has been reproduced on fireproof fabric and recently installed at the new Swissport International Ltd. Aspire business class lounge at Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam.

What's your Pedagogy?

At the undergraduate level, I start with fundamentals (form, structure, material, color etc.), but I also encourage students to use drawing and painting as a means of inquiry through experimentation. I introduce students to artists of the past and those working today. I want students to think about what matters to them, contemplate their place in the world, and respond through the practice of painting.



Excavation #7, 2013. oil on canvas. 48 in. x 80 in.

EXHIBITION = CATERING ETHOS

***Tad Hirsch: Contentious Products* = Beer from contentious nations**



Graduating BFA Exhibitions = Cake!



Factory Showroom: Industry = Break-room staples



Factory Showroom: Idleness = Thanksgiving Dinner



Shedding + Shredding = Halloween Candy



Toward a Democracy of Making = Homemade pie with local ingredients



Fixing the Future: Technics + Time = Twinkies + McDonald's burgers

What?

The Jake Journal is conjured for and by students of the University of Washington School of Art + Art History + Design, and is published on the occasion of all new exhibitions at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery. Gallery programs are supported by the School, the College of Arts & Sciences, the Friends of Jacob Lawrence Gallery Endowment.

Where?

Jacob Lawrence Gallery
University of Washington
Art Building, First Floor
E Stevens Way NE
Seattle, WA 98105
(206) 685-1805
lawris@uw.edu
thejakegallery.uw.edu
facebook.com/jacoblawrencegallery
instagram @jacob.lawrence.gallery

Hours

Gallery Hours:
Tuesday - Friday 10am-5pm
Saturday 1pm-5pm
Closed Sundays & Mondays

How?

Admission:
Exhibitions and Programs
are always FREE and open
to the public

Who?

Journal Staff

Editor: **Scott Lawrimore**
(MA, Art History, 1995)
Designer: **Rachel Kettler**
(Visual Communication Design, 2017)
Photography: **Joanna Lee**
(BA, Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, 2016)

Gallery

Director: **Scott Lawrimore**
(MA, Art History, 1995)
Lead: **Joanna Lee**
(BA, Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, 2016)
Senior Designer: **Paige Kwon**
(Visual Communication Design, 2016)
Interns: **Jackson Irvine**
(Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, 2016)
Kalina Chung
(3D4M, 2017)
Haein Yoo
(Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, 2017)
Sabrina Oh
(Painting & Drawing, 2017)
Sarah Faulk
(Art History, 2017)
Rachel Kettler
(Visual Communication Design, 2017)
Anqi Peng
(Interdisciplinary Visual Arts, 2016)
Gallery Volunteers: **Colin Palmer**
(Photomedia, 2018)

Mission

The Jacob Lawrence Gallery is an inspiring space for exhibitions, a vital center for social interaction and dialog about art, art history, and design, and a critical para-educational resource for students and faculty. The Gallery is also a site of knowledge production dedicated to enhancing the intellectual life on campus by advancing discourses on contemporary exhibition and curatorial practice with its ambitious program of lectures, performances, screenings, discussions, and exhibitions, and always testing art’s capacity to challenge, teach and engage.

The Gallery, also known as “The Jake,” is named after one of the School’s most renowned faculty members, Jacob Lawrence, who taught here from 1970-1980, and who served as Professor Emeritus until his death in 2000. As an artist, Jacob Lawrence never shied away from difficult societal issues; as a professor, Lawrence inspired that same approach in his students. The Gallery is the living legacy of Lawrence’s exemplary life and admirable practice. As such, it is a community cultural laboratory, a platform for presenting a variety of artistic viewpoints, and an agent for deploying experimental pedagogy intended to help prepare students to enter and contribute to the cultural milieu while also serving the community at large as a site for discovery, wonder and meaningful exchange.

Steffani Jemison’s Sol was generously sponsored by





**THE
JACOB
LAWRENCE
GALLERY**