



Harmony Holiday

• **Spectacular Brooding**

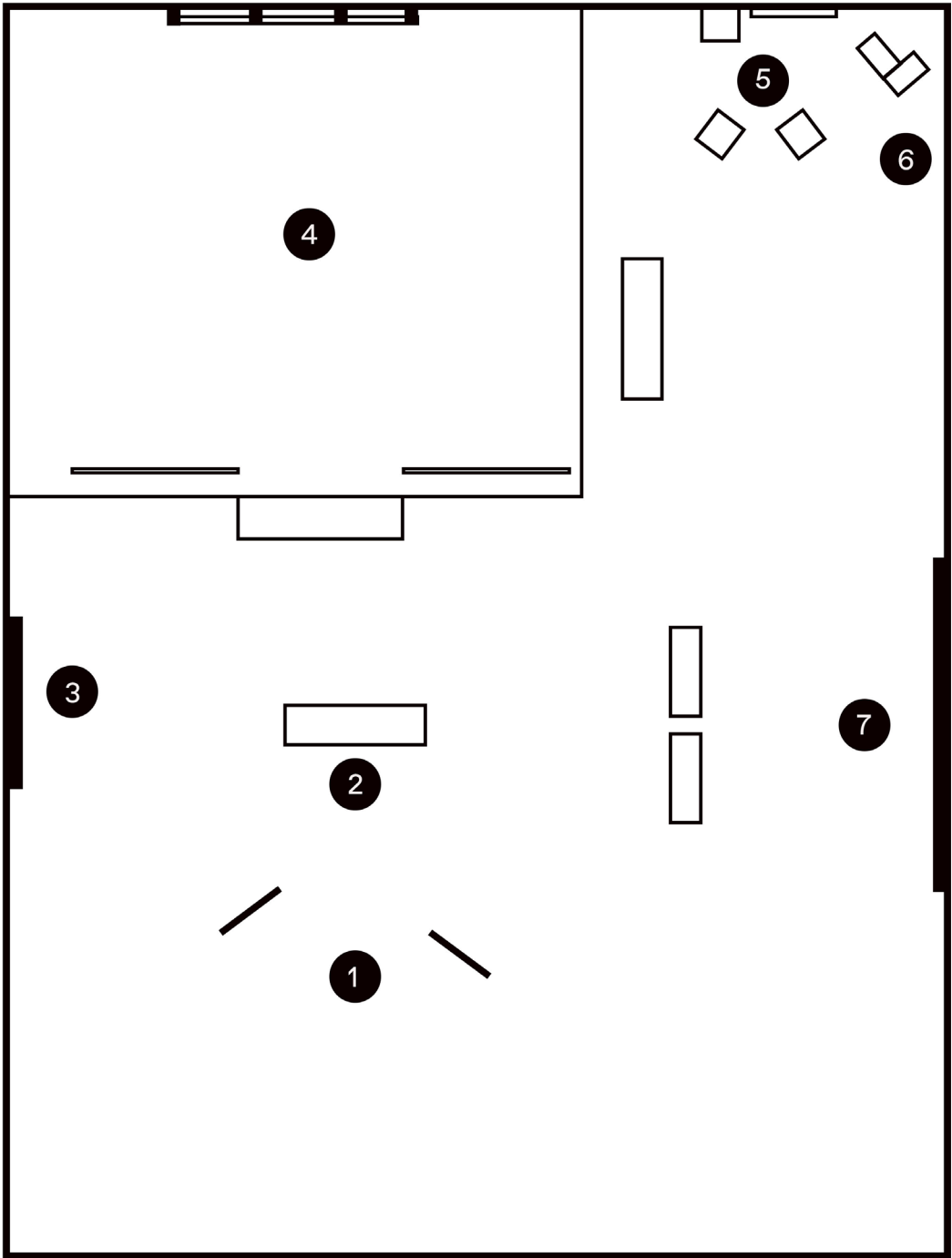
Exhibition

April 4 - July 5

CaLARTS



**ROY AND EDNA DISNEY
CALARTS THEATER**



① *Runners* (2024)

Screen prints on cotton fabric; 2 banners; 48 × 36 inches

Prints designed in collaboration with Angelique Rosales Salgado

Courtesy of the artist

Runners is a series of poems weaving together stories of influential black musicians. The poems serve as a means of building legacy for their unspoken narratives. These layered banners incorporate excerpts from tabloids, headlines, playbills, declassified FBI files, and runaway slave ads, alongside Holiday's own words. The title hints at who runs the show and who runs away, a back-and-forth dynamic that artists have to navigate.

② *Mourner's bench* (2026)

Wooden bench, audio recordings, books and written material from

Harmony Holiday's personal archive; 11 × 69 inches

Courtesy of the artist and private loan

Referencing the tradition of the mourner's bench as space to repent and connect with spirit, this work invites visitors to reflect on grief and confession through audio recordings and ephemera. Holiday's collection of books are accompanied by sample oral histories she has conducted as well selections of related archival sound clips, including funeral speeches.

③ *Life of the Party* (2026)

Projected images, film excerpts, and texts
Courtesy of the artist

Life of the Party Holiday presents a call and response between text to archive and annotate black music and performance. The work assembles photographs and moving image excerpts of artists including Sarah Vaughan, Judith Jamison, George Clinton, Don Cherry, Malcolm X, and Nellie Monk, along with selections from Holiday's own writing appearing in her forthcoming book, "Life of the Party."

④ *Cry Variations* (2026)

Sprung dance-floor, Ballet barre, 2-camera documentation with camcorder and self-wear camera, Audio and Projection playback system, bench, mirrors with ephemera and written material, lightbox;
24 feet, 4.25 inches x 29 feet, 11.75 inches
Courtesy of the artist

For *Cry Variations*, Holiday converts half of the exhibition space into a dance studio to work on the creation of a new solo. The documented process includes weekly Katherine Dunham Technique classes with choreographer Bernard Brown as well as rehearsal periods. Her dance will draw inspiration from iconic works by black American choreographers Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison, Bill T. Jones, and Robert Battle, as well as gestures of black performance and everyday life in digital culture. The title *Cry Variations* references Alvin Ailey's landmark solo "Cry" originated by dancer Judith Jamison in 1971. That piece, which Ailey created in tribute to his mother, moves from grief and hardship to ecstatic joy in a triumphant performance—all thematics that Holiday will explore within her new work.

⑤ *Abide With Me* (2024)

Digital color video with sound, 37:31 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Narrated by Fred Moten

Produced with David Riley and Angelique Rosales Salgado

Additional archival research supported by Tsige Tafesse

Abide With Me examines black artistic identity before fame, through a text written by Holiday and narrated by Fred Moten. Inspired by a brief mention in Robin D.G. Kelley’s biography of Thelonious Monk, Holiday’s film reimagines a three-year period of Monk’s life, when as a young composer and pianist he and an evangelist embarked on a tour of the Deep South in 1934 (the same year Holiday’s father was born.) The film features archival footage of artists both on and off stage, including John Coltrane, Amiri Baraka, Lauryn Hill, Sun Ra, Tina Turner, Nina Simone, and Azealia Banks presented here with archival footage of public funerals from Holiday’s personal archive. The work emphasizes what Holiday describes as “where the white gaze does not know how to look,” continuing her meditations on the “Black Backstage.”

⑥ *Cutting Floor Blues* (2026)

Desk, typewriter, related ephemera

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Cutting Floor Blues is a working site dedicated to the process of editing, noting and re-ordering ideas. Growing up with a songwriter father who worked on music daily, the home doubling as a studio, Holiday's writing practice and improvisation are deeply embedded in her everyday life. Across the exhibition, Holiday may utilize this space to write notes on choreography, edit forthcoming essays, and draft poetry.

⑦ *Notes from Holleyland* (2026)

Digital video, color, sound, 40 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Produced with Kahlil Joseph

Narrated and Directed by Harmony Holiday

Notes from Holleyland considers the tension between the public perception and private reality of artist Lonnie Holley. The work is a culmination of conversations with Lonnie Holley beginning in 2023 with a commission for his monograph. Taking the form of a tone poem, Holiday considers Holley's improvisational technique across music, sculpture, painting, and drawing, as well as his life beyond the stage. The film simultaneously recalls iconic celebrity estates such as Graceland and Neverland Ranch, as well as a mirage of Hollywood, and "the promised land" in a reconsideration of legacy.

With special thanks to: Lonnie Bradley Holley, Sr., Allie Maxwell, Kahlil Joseph, Even/Odd Studio, Parallax Los Angeles, Ross Chait, Alexander Provan, Paul Rogers, Kelsey Lanuzzi, and Fred Moten.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Harmony Holiday is a writer and interdisciplinary artist working across dance, film, music and archives of black culture. She is the author of 5 collections of poetry including *Hollywood Forever* (2022) and *Maafa* (2025). She curates a standing archive space for griot poetics and a related performance and events series at the Los angeles music and archive venue 2220arts. Holiday is a staff writer for *LA Times Image* and *4Columns* and has had featured writing in *The New Yorker*, *Bookforum*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Paris Review*, and *The Drift*, among others. Her first solo exhibition, *Black Backstage*, exploring the aspects of black performance culture that cannot be spectacularized through film and sound sculpture, was presented at The Kitchen in New York in 2024. Holiday won a 2025 Creative Capital Award and has received fellowships from The Poetry Foundation, Silver's Foundation, The Rabkin Foundation, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, among other awards for her writing. Holiday is currently working on a biography of Abbey Lincoln for Yale University Press, a book of memoir and music criticism, and her next collection of poems, among other writing, film, and curatorial projects.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Harmony Holiday will take Katherine Dunham Technique classes with choreographer Bernard Brown in the gallery on the following schedule:

Wednesday, April 8 - 12pm

Wednesday, April 15 - 12pm

Wednesday, April 22 - 12pm

Wednesday, April 29 - 12pm

Wednesday, May 6 - 12pm

Wednesday, May 13 - 12pm

Wednesday, May 20 - 12pm

Wednesday, June 3 - 12pm

Friday, June 12 - 12pm

Wednesday, June 24 - 12pm

Thursday, June 25 - 12pm

Wednesday, July 1 - 12pm



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