

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon Nov 10 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$11 [members \$9]

The Black Radical Imagination II

Curated by Amir George and Erin Christovale

Following a successful yearlong tour, the “Black Radical Imagination” series of short films and videos advances the conversation with a new program and crop of innovative artists. Focusing on stories from the Black Diaspora, this installment of the series, the second at REDCAT, relies on communing with the spiritual realm as a historical practice and point of collective memory. The lineup includes Lewis Vaughn’s *The Baptist* (2012), Jeannette Ehlers’ *Black Magic at the White House* (2009) and *Black Bullets* (2012), Lauren Kelley’s *Get the Bones from 88 Jones Because She Also Eats Meat* (2008), Sanford Biggers & Terence Nance’s *Moonrising* (2013) and Vashti Harrison’s *Field Notes* (2014). Rounding out the evening is John Akomfrah’s *Memory Room 451* (1997).

In person: curators Erin Christovale and Amir George, lecturer Martine Syms, and filmmaker Vashti Harrison

Presented as part of REDCAT’s ongoing Jack H. Skirball Series.

“The collection [makes] a necessity out of virtue, willing the *need* for the black radical imagination, the not-impossible blackness of the future anterior...” – Jared Sexton, *Artforum*

“The aesthetics of futurism, surrealism, and the magnificent.”
– *Chicago Reader*

“These films are helping to decentralize the stereotypical, stale narratives and representations of the Black image that Hollywood and mainstream media have forged.” – *Atlanta Black Star*

“Each work, which all embrace surrealist and futurist aesthetics, focuses on new stories in the African diaspora using new technologies and experimental techniques to reimagine and take control of black representation in film.” – *Boston Dig*

Program

Jeannette Ehlers: ***Black Magic at the White House***
2009, 3:46 min.

Ehlers is performing a voodoo dance at the Marienborg—a residence with a strong connection to the triangular trade that today plays an important role in Denmark as the official residence of the country's prime minister.

Jeannette Ehlers: ***Black Bullets***
2012, 5:05 min

Inspired by The Haitian Revolution, *Black Bullets* is a poetic tribute to the act of revolt.

Lewis Vaughn: ***The Baptist***
2012, 7:43 min

A fallen spirit seeks redemption after a life of compliance and misguidance. After being forced into an afterlife state, he attempts to navigate through a vivid forest while a mysterious creature taunts him.

Terence Nance and Sanford Biggers: ***Moonrising***
2013, 6:46 min

"The nose knows. We've been overdosing on pop perfume, a heady arrangement of melody and bounce – coddled by brightly colored choruses and whims of the Top Forty. But one flavor never made a stew. Sometimes we Earthlings are in need of a piece of meat caught between the wisdom teeth, just to suck it loose for a savory taste of the unpretty." – Kenya Robinson

"The lyric *I no longer trust the human race / I need you to hear me* coos over glitchy, ambient hip-hop as shirtless black men in minstrel-like gold masks confront the camera pointed at them. The video cuts to a man outfitted in a plumaged full-length jacket walking through the forest towards a pond. Later, another man stands with a patchwork quilt in the middle of the field, blanketing himself from sight. The serene, cerebral, and challenging six-minute short, *Moonrising*, is the latest from acclaimed filmmaker Terence Nance and interdisciplinary artist Sanford Biggers." – *Boston Dig*

Lauren Kelley:

Get the Bones from 88 Jones because She Also Eats Meat

2008, 6:41 min

An aerial view of the disposable nature of intimate relationships, this short, stop motion animation scrutinizes the gestures that occur between an invisible librarian and a capricious peacock—both are bookworms. Throughout this anti love story, the familiar predator and prey narrative elements are liquefied when what seems solid to a smitten protagonist cracks and falls apart.

Vashti Harrison: ***Field Notes***

2014, 17:44 min, 16mm

Best Short Film Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival

Field Notes is a visual and aural field guide to paranormal activities on the island nation of Trinidad told through the voices of one family.

John Akomfrah: ***Memory Room 451***

1997, 25 min

Memory Room 451 is the most extreme vision of the Neo-Expressionist aesthetic the Black Audio Film Collective pursued throughout the 1990s. Set in a dystopic world, dreams of hair become the new media platform of the 23rd Century and time travel is no more than poorly paid shiftwork.

TRT: 72min

The Artists

John Akomfrah was born in Accra, Ghana, to parents who were involved with anti-colonial activism, and educated at schools in West London and at Portsmouth Polytechnic, where he graduated in Sociology in 1982. He is one of the founders of the Black Audio Film Collective, which was active between 1982 and 1998, and was dedicated towards examining issues of Black British identity through film and media. As a member of the Collective, he directed such films as *Handsworth Songs* (1986), *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (1993) and *The Last Angel of History* (1996). In 1998, together with Lina Gopaul and David Lawson, his long-term producing partners, he co-founded Smoking Dogs Films. His latest feature is *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013).

Sanford Biggers' installations, videos, and performances have appeared in venues worldwide including Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, the Whitney Museum and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, as well as institutions in China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Poland and Russia. His works have been included in notable exhibitions such as: Prospect 1 New Orleans Biennial, Illuminations at the Tate Modern, Performa 07 in NY, the Whitney Biennial, and Freestyle at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Jeannette Ehlers is based in Copenhagen, Denmark and is a 2006 graduate of The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Her work revolves around the Danish slave trade in the colonial era. She is of Danish and Trinidadian parentage.

Lauren Kelley is a 2011 Lewis Comfort Tiffany Award recipient. In 2007 she received the New Museum's Altoids Award. She received her MFA in 1999 from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Currently, Kelley serves on staff at Prairie View A&M University overseeing the university's art gallery. She has been a resident of the Skowhegan School, the MFAH, and Glassell School's Core Program as well as the Studio Museum in Harlem. Her work has been exhibited at the New Museum and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York, NY; Spellman College Museum of Fine Arts, Atlanta, GA; LACE, Los Angeles; and Project Row Houses, Houston, TX. Reviews on her work have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Art:21 Blog*, *Art in America*, *ArtLies*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *Houston Press*.

Vashti Harrison earned her MFA in Film/Video from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and her BA from the University of Virginia where she studied Studio Art and Media Studies. She held the Aunspaugh 5th Year Fellowship in the McIntire Department of Art at the University of Virginia for the 2010-2011 academic year. She is from the Eastern Shore of Virginia, currently living in Valencia, California.

Terence Nance is an artist born and raised in Dallas, Texas, who comes from a family of artists. He studied visual art and his practice includes installation, performance, music, and moving images. His first feature film, *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty*, is an IFP Narrative Lab alumnus and premiered in the New Frontier section of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

Lewis Vaughn has had an insatiable passion for visuals since his father introduced him to the film *Jurassic Park* at the age of four. "There wasn't really a turning back for me after that, I was watching everything from then on." While in high school, he became a vivacious editor and was then chosen to co-write and direct his first feature *Paper Dolls* at the age of 17.

Curator's statement

"The title of the series was inspired by Robin D.G. Kelley's book *Freedom Dreams: The Black Imagination*. A summary of the freedom movements that have taken place in black America, the book articulates the notion that before we could even create or come together for these movements, we had to use our imagination to conjure new ideas. As an ideological by-product of the entertainment industry, the linear structure functions as a deterrent for people of color to express their stories. We curated this program in part to oppose this state of things, as well as the stereotypes we're constantly boxed in, and the lack of ownership we have over our identities on screen." – Erin Christovale

For more information about The Black Radical Imagination, please visit: <http://blackradicalimagination.com/2014-program/>