

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon Nov 28 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$11 [members \$8]

Let It Be Known Short Films Inspired by Octavia E. Butler

Curated by Erin Christovale

Los Angeles premieres

<http://www.redcat.org/event/let-it-be-known-short-films-inspired-octavia-e-butler>

Guest curator Erin Christovale presents a selection of richly imagined experimental shorts by contemporary artists informed by the work of Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006)—the groundbreaking African American science fiction writer who helped set the literary cornerstone of Afrofuturism. Exploring “the confluence of intersectionality and speculative fiction,” the films include: *Moon Tendon* (2013) and *Playing Possum* (2012) by Jamilah Sabur; *Big Gurl* (2006), a stop-motion animation by Lauren Kelley; *The Golden Chain* (2015) by filmmaker Buki Bodunrin and graphic novelist Ezra Clayton Daniels; *A Feeling like Chaos* (2015) by photo/video installation/collage artist Suné Woods; *The Origin of the Blues* (2013) by Ariel Jackson; *My father and I dance in outer space* (2011) and *Two* (2010) by Wura-Natasha Ogunji, who divides her time between Austin and Lagos, Nigeria.

Presented as part of *Radio Imagination: Artists and Writers in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler*, an exhibition and series of events curated by the Los Angeles arts organization Clockshop. For more information, visit: <https://clockshop.org/events/> and <https://clockshop.org/project/radio-imagination-events/>

“I have the kind of imagination that hears. I think of it as radio imagination.” - Octavia E. Butler

Radio Imagination celebrates the life and work of Pasadena science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006). This year-long program unfolding throughout 2016 centers on ten contemporary art and literary commissions that explore Butler’s archive at the Huntington Library, and includes premieres of new works, alongside performances, film screenings, and literary events. *Radio Imagination* bridges Butler’s groundbreaking fiction with contemporary conversations about the future of Los Angeles.

In person: Erin Christovale, Suné Woods, Jamilah Sabur, Buki Bodunrin, and Ezra Clayton Daniels.

“Octavia E. Butler, one of few African-American authors to become a prominent name in the white-dominated universe of science fiction, featured people of color in battles for control against aliens and hybrid species. Her work helped define the literary cornerstone of Afrofuturism.”– *CNN*

“Suné Woods coaxes layers of resonance from very simple means. A melancholic sense of fragmentation runs through [her work]. Ire rumbles just beneath the graceful surface. *A Feeling Like Chaos* is punctuated by a sudden, brief shot of a woman dressed in finery. She is laughing madly, but her glee seems less an expression of authentic joy than a clamoring hedge against alienation and anguish.”
– *The LA Times*

“Lauren Kelley’s *Big Gurl*, made with African-American Barbie dolls, succeeds in pitch-perfect dialogue and in conveying the gender-based power dynamics inherent in everyday situations.” – *Art in America*

“Wura-Natasha Ogunji works through her body as a way of understanding how bodies engage with space—as well as addressing the more abstract notion of diasporic space.”– *Okayfrica*

“Combining fantasy and dreams with a stark realism, Ariel Jackson may very well portray a new black aesthetic that continues to build on its blues inspired past, while inspiring artists of many colors to become change agents and ‘world-builders’.” – *Arte Fuse*

Program:

Jamilah Sabur: *Moon Tendon*
(2013, 11:47min) *LA premiere*

Enthralled with Saturn's hurricanes and the 62 moons it has in orbit, *Moon Tendon* is a perceptual play with texture, space, and locomotion. Jamila Sabur constructs a stream of consciousness video where she presents Galileo as a life-size doll-like figure with bells in his mouth and uses open source NASA footage of a hurricane on Saturn swirling inside a large, mysterious, six-sided weather pattern known as "the hexagon." Her encounter with Galileo's Acceleration Experiment and his writings to the Duke of Tuscany about his observations of Saturn's rings in 1610 influenced the arrangement of the video. Alternating between found footage, a constructed set, and recruiting Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* to perform on, Sabur presents a distant mental landscape. The film features "Tendon," a score created by American composer Jon Forshee on UPIC, a computerized musical composition tool, devised by Iannis Xenakis.

Jamilah Sabur: *Playing Possum*

(2012, 9:54min) *LA premiere*

A love letter to death, inspired by the song *Elijah Rock* by Mahalia Jackson. When a possum is under threat, it plays dead to avoid death. Sabur slips into a trance where the only goal is "becoming" – in a world that is underwater on the moon. In this "lunar water," and inspired by the atmosphere of the moon, Sabur dances to the changes in ambient pressure. She composed the sound piece that plays over the first two-thirds of *Playing Possum* by exploring sudden depressurization; the last third of the film features *Sinew*, a work composed by Jon Forshee on UPIC.

Lauren Kelley: *Big Gurl*

(2006, 6:40min) *LA premiere*

Various shades of Barbie-like dolls are brought to life with clay to form malleable characters that navigate viewers through mundane situations occurring in public restroom stalls or behind fast food kitchen counters. An earthy narrator is employed to lead a cast of inert beings through various vignettes about the durable nature and limits of human strength.

Buki Bodunrin and Ezra Clayton Daniels: *The Golden Chain*

(2015, 13:19min) *LA premiere*

The distant future. A Nigerian space station in a remote corner of the galaxy orbits an artificial pinpoint of matter so dense it cannot exist in

our solar system. It is a recreation of the birth of the universe itself, contained for the purpose of study, and overseen by Yetunde, sole crewmember on the space station Eko.

Suné Woods: *A Feeling like Chaos*

(2015, 4:05min)

Suné Woods collaborates with several performers to create three archetypal personas—Conjurer, Guerrilla, Sage—who transmit knowledge, sensuality, language, joy, the pleasure of the body, the journey to healing; they walk sometimes together and at other times alone through dream-like landscapes with a refrain repeating in Spanish, French, and English: “I am not afraid.”

Ariel Jackson: *The Origin of the Blues*

(2013, 4:17min) *LA premiere*

The Origin of the Blues is a story told by Confuserella, a character Ariel Jackson takes on to talk about her departure from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Filled with snippets of contemporary media, the piece paints a speculative picture of how the blues came to be.

Wura-Natasha Ogunji:

My father and I dance in outer space

(2011, 1min)

“The creation of *My father and I dance in outer space* began with a question I had about the physical gestures of my father who is now deceased. I wanted to visualize what it might be like if we could dance together. It could only happen in this futuristic, otherworldly landscape. I used stop motion animation techniques to create the sense of flight, dance and intergalactic connection.” (W-N O)

Wura-Natasha Ogunji: *Two*

(2010, 1:05min)

As the artist jumps in the air, the sound of her breath is truncated into exasperated grunts. Through the physicality of these acts, she proves it is as difficult—if not impossible—to walk on water and fly in the air, a struggle that embodies one’s desire to connect identity to history, time, and place.

The artists

Adebukola (“Buki”) Bodunrin is a film, video, and installation artist who explores language, culture, and media. In her collage animations, she manipulates film using unorthodox manual and digital techniques in order to produce unexpected cinematic experiences. Bodunrin completed her Master of Fine Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been screened or exhibited nationally and internationally at venues that include the Jersey City Museum of Art, the Scope Art Fair, Onion City Film Festival, the Chicago Underground Film Festival, Nightingale, Chicago, Festival Animator, Poznań, Poland, Ok, Quoi? Festival, Sackville, New Brunswick, Anthology Film Archives, New York, and the Black Cinema House, Chicago. She has participated in studio residences at the Chicago Artists Coalition as a part of the BOLT residency, and at the Chicago Cultural Center. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

Ezra Clayton Daniels is a writer and illustrator based in Los Angeles, CA. His critically acclaimed graphic novel series, *The Changers*, triggered a unique career peppered with a number of collaborative multimedia projects ranging from video games to animation to feature documentaries. He is the creator of the popular live art spectacle, *The Comic Art Battle*, which is a staple of the Stumptown Comics Festival, as well as *Loaded Blanks Greetings*, a line of fill-in-the-blanks comic-art greeting cards featuring both established as well as up and coming comics artists. Clayton Daniels collaborated with Chicago-based chamber group Fifth House Ensemble on the narrative concert series, *Black Violet*, which the Chicago Sun-Times called “a modern classic.” He also contributed animation to experimental hip hop luminary Alexis Gideon’s Video Musics series of animated rap operas and has worked on several interactive projects with interactive artist Erik Loyer. His most recent collaboration, an animated short film with experimental video artist Adebukola Budunrin, has screened in over a dozen museums and theaters, including the MFA Boston, REDCAT Theater, ATA San Francisco, and at Art Basel, Switzerland. Clayton Daniels spends his days as art director and UX/UI lead at Branchfire, whose award-winning iAnnotate PDF remains one of the most successful and influential productivity apps on the App Store, boasting over 1 million users.

Ariel Jackson is a Black American artist originally from Louisiana, currently living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Jackson's work draws from having experienced Hurricane Katrina, growing up on a farm, childhood aesthetics, and information regarding black lives in the face

of tragedy and catastrophe. Jackson uses her personal experiences as a base to build and explore historical, personal, and social perceptions of the blues. Her mediums of interest are video, animation, and sculpture which she uses to contextualize narrative and physical translations of intellectual and historical information into lyrical forms.

Lauren Kelley holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She received 2015 Creative Capital Award in 2015, a Louis Comfort Tiffany Award in 2011 and an inaugural Altoids Award through the New Museum in 2007. Kelley currently serves as the Associate Director of Curatorial Programs at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling that opened in Harlem in 2015. She has been a resident of the Skowhegan School, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Glassell School's Core Program and the Studio Museum in Harlem - - and is a 2016 resident at the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation's Studio Program. Her work has been exhibited in such venues as the New Museum, Spelman College Museum of Fine Arts, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., and the Contemporary Art Museum Houston. Reviews of her work have appeared in The New York Times, The New Yorker, Art:21 Blog, Art in America, ArtLies, Houston Chronicle and Houston Press.

A performance and visual artist who works in a variety of mediums, Wura-Natasha Ogunji is best known for her videos, in which she uses her body to explore movement and mark-making across water, land, and air. Her current performance series entitled 'Mo gbo mo branch/I heard and I branched myself into the party' explores the presence of women in public space in Lagos, Nigeria. Ogunji has received a number of awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2012) and grants from the Idea Fund, Houston (2010), and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation (2005). She has performed at Centre for Contemporary Art (Lagos), The Menil Collection (Houston) and the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts (St. Louis). Ogunji received a BA in Anthropology from Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, in 1992 and an MFA in Photography from San Jose State University, CA, in 1998. She lives in Austin and Lagos.

Jamilah Sabur was born in Saint Andrew, Jamaica and lives and works in Miami. She received her BFA in Interdisciplinary Sculpture from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2009 and an MFA from University of California San Diego in 2014. She is interested in cognitive science and the uncanny; the basis of her technique is rooted in movement – as a way to explore the unconscious mind.

Suné Woods is an artist living in Los Angeles. Her work takes the form of multi-channel video installations, photographs, and collage. Her practice examines absences and vulnerabilities within cultural and social histories. She also uses microsomal sites such as family to understand larger sociological phenomena, imperialist mechanisms, & formations of knowledge. She is interested in how language is emoted, guarded, and translated through the absence/presence of a physical body. She has participated in residencies at Headlands Center of the Arts, Vermont Studio Center, The Center for Photography at Woodstock, and Light Work in Syracuse. Woods is a recipient of the Visions from the New California initiative, The John Gutmann Fellowship Award, and The Baum Award for an Emerging American Photographer.

The curator

Erin Christovale is a curator based in Los Angeles focusing on film/video within the African Diaspora. She graduated with a B.A. from the USC School of Cinematic Arts and is the curator at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. She has lectured at Princeton University, CalArts, UCLA, and Syracuse University, and her curatorial projects have been discussed in Artforum, Hyperallergic, and Artnet. The first and second iterations of her ongoing film program, Black Radical Imagination, were featured at REDCAT in October 2013 and November 2014 respectively. Black Radical Imagination was invited in over 25 institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Yerba Buena Center of the Arts; Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival; and Art Basel.

For more information about Octavia Butler, visit:
<https://clockshop.org/project/octavia-e-butler/>

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