

"Kandis Williams Envisions Dancing Bodies Without Borders." *The New York Times* (October 28, 2021) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

Kandis Williams Envisions Dancing Bodies Without Borders

The artist's "A Line," her first New York solo show, sets the tone for the ambitious new 52 Walker, run by the gallerist Ebony L. Haynes.



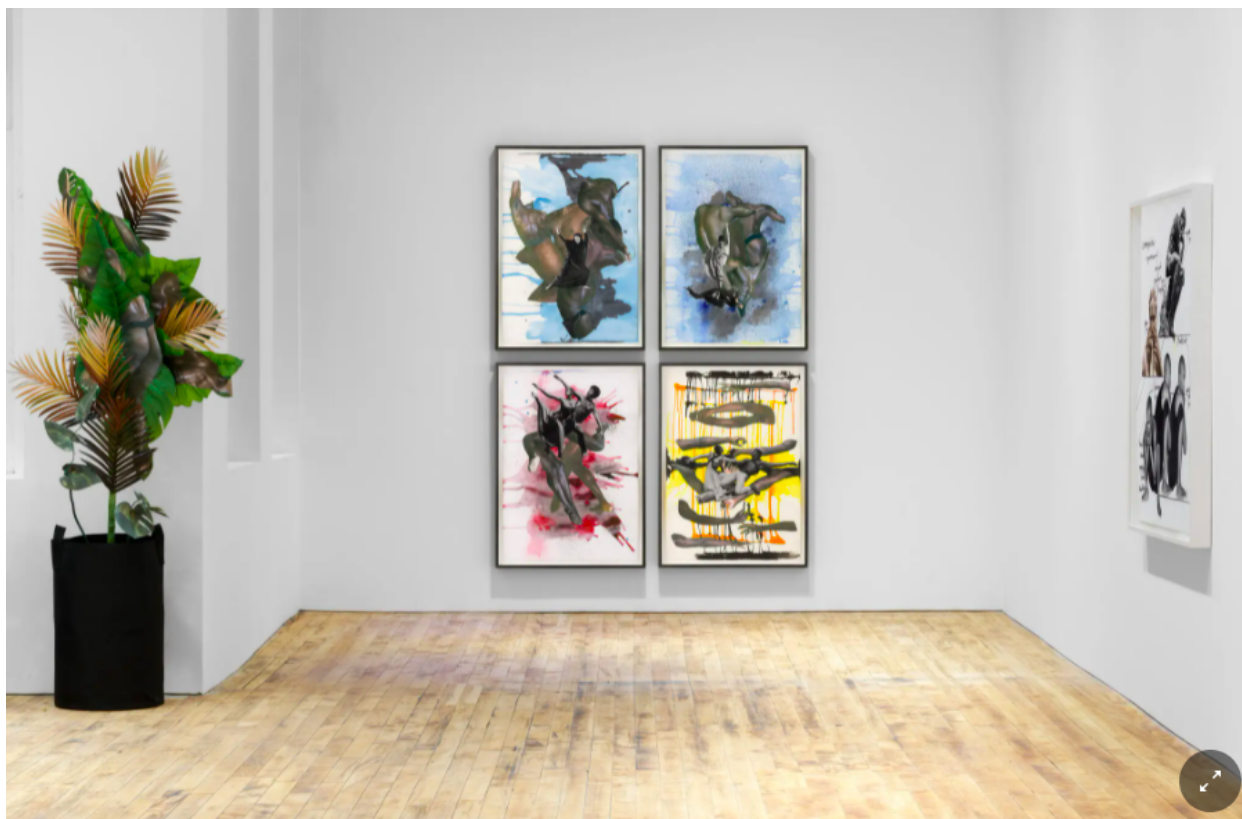
Left, Ebony L. Haynes, director of 52 Walker, the new TriBeCa gallery, and the artist Kandis Williams with three of her collages that mix images from dance history with others that Williams made of Black dancers in her studio. Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times

By Siddhartha Mitter and Siobhan Burke

Dance is both the central theme and a lens to inspect contemporary culture in “A Line,” the debut New York solo exhibition of the multimedia artist Kandis Williams, and the inaugural presentation of [52 Walker](#), the new space that the David Zwirner gallery has opened in Tribeca.

Large-scale collages on grid-lined paper mingle archival photographs of dancers and choreographers — some recognizable to aficionados, such as Alvin Ailey, George Balanchine and Martha Graham — with photographs Williams made in her studio. There, she worked with three Black dancers versed in ballet and modern dance, exploring how they have learned within, but also resisted, the enduring racial and gender conventions of their training. Some of the collages are marked with annotations, the artist thinking out loud about affect, performance and politics.

A video installation, presented on six squat old-school monitors, shows a dancer following lines on a studio floor, working through routines that Williams choreographed, as archival video flickers on a background screen-within-each-screen. Tall plants set about the gallery appear to break the theme, but on close inspection they are artificial, some leaves imprinted with eyes or colored in flesh tones, returning attention to the body.



From "Kandis Williams: A Line," a quadrant of ink and collage works on paper that explore the position of Black dancers amid the undercurrents shaping dance history, from Greek mythology to Orientalism and more. 52 Walker

Williams, 36, grew up in Baltimore and lately has divided time between Berlin and Los Angeles, where she recently won the Hammer Museum's \$100,000 [Mohn Award](#). She is an artist who draws connections; her first museum solo, [recently at the Institute of Contemporary Art](#) at Virginia Commonwealth University, explored migration, tobacco plantations, prison farms and tango. An inveterate researcher, she shares sources and intellectual inspirations in photocopied readers and zines she publishes through [Cassandra Press](#), the imprint she co-founded. Later in the run, "A Line" will add a library area where visitors may browse or borrow pertinent texts.

The exhibition keynotes an experimental, even exacting, program that the curator Ebony L. Haynes has set for 52 Walker, a kunsthalle-like venue where shows will run for several months. We visited with Williams and Haynes to talk about dance history, the foregrounding of Black dancers in today's popular culture, and Williams's own growing interest in choreography. The conversation has been condensed and edited.



Kandis Williams's collage, "Notes for Stage, Cult, and Popular Entertainment according to place, person, genre, speech, music, and dance," at 52 Walker. Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times



Another Williams collage, "Triadic Ensemble: started in the 1920s, Harlem Dance, Wigman and Duncan." Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times

Spotify



Installation view of 52 Walker, with collages and artificial plant-sculptures by Williams, embedded in moss. Some of the leaves are imprinted with imagery from the human body. Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times

SIDDHARTHA MITTER Kandis, what drew you to examine dance so closely now?

KANDIS WILLIAMS Dance is so reflective of social scripts and social impulses that we don't feel that we have to name, but that become wrapped in characters and fictions, and passed along as mimetic educational tools, for how we are supposed to interact.

And we're in a moment right now: Last year saw a proliferation of us, especially in Black communities worldwide, trying to disassociate and disidentify from caricature, state-sanctioned violence, social scripts that have been destructive to our community. And I don't think it's coincidental that we now see, in our art markets and commercial markets, a renewed interest in positioning Black bodies and dancers. [Black TikTokers](#), for example, are pervasively appropriated.

SIOBHAN BURKE We're also seeing more Black ballet dancers in corporate advertising.

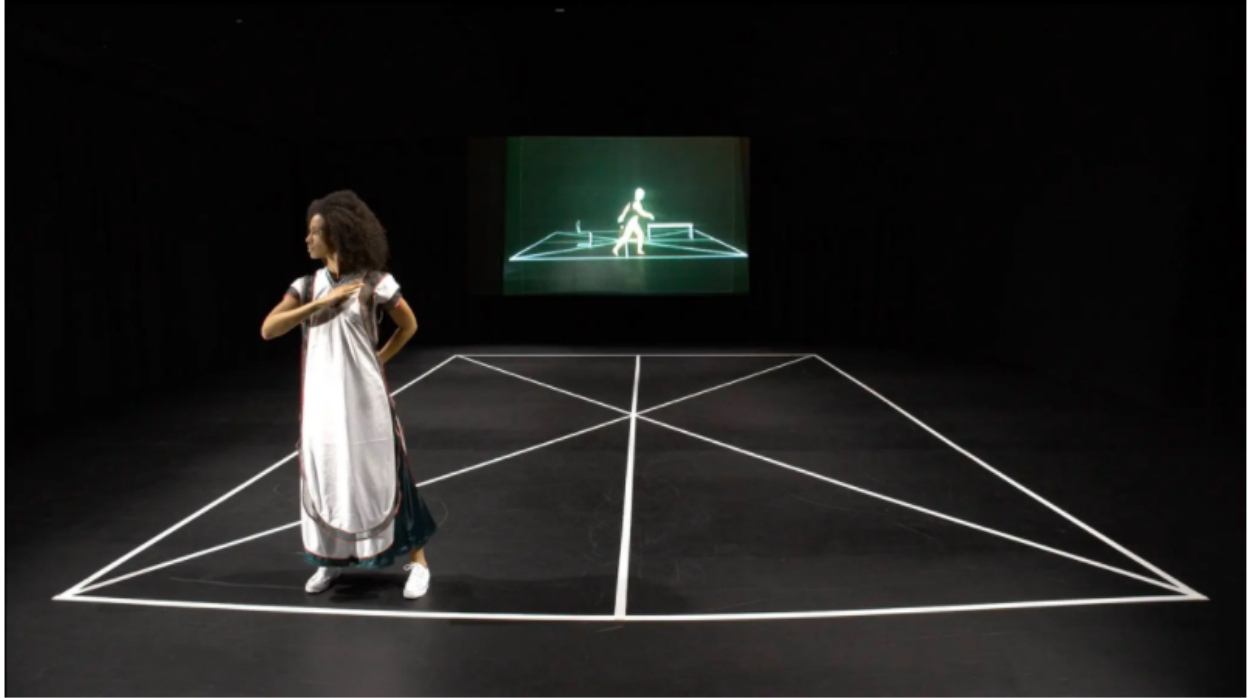
WILLIAMS The rush of diversity and inclusion campaigns has put performing Black bodies in places that have to negotiate racist performative expectations and anti-racist sentiments simultaneously. [The dance scholar] Brenda Dixon Gottschild says that the Black body keeps the [measure of popular culture](#).

MITTER Your new collages include photographs you made of three dancers you worked with — Catherine Kirk, Damond Garner and Natasha Diamond-Walker. What did that interaction consist of?

WILLIAMS I brought them into the studio, and we talked through what forms and shapes their bodies fit, what techniques they've been versed in. I think it's a common conversation in dance that maybe Black dancers and Black body types have certain phenotypic traits that deem them better suited to certain roles or positions. We thought through what their bodies have to go through, or feel, in certain attitudes or techniques.

MITTER So you're thinking of the way they've been trained —

MITTER So you're thinking of the way they've been trained —



A still from Williams's video work, "Triadic Ballet" (2021), in which she directed a dancer through movements drawn from many dance traditions. Kandis Williams and 52 Walker



Kandis Williams's "Triadic Ballet" plays on several monitors at 52 Walker. Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times

WILLIAMS And the accumulation of that training. When I'm directing, I'm sort of directing within that index of muscular and reflexive conditioning. But I'm also working with a person, a person who might hurt themselves in certain attitudes or techniques, or who might really enjoy the pain of certain positions.

BURKE In the video installation, Natasha Diamond-Walker moves across a stage marked with lines. How did you generate the movement?

WILLIAMS Those are all very particular movements. Each, literally point A to point B, is a set of three movements that hit the center, turn into another movement, and then finish at the end of the line. I'm using a host of vernacular dance movements: for example, take a part of the [Native American] Buffalo Dance, into a particular kind of jazz motif, into a tree pose.

She showed me things, too. I like working with dancers who can show me what their bodies can do and where they feel comfortable.

BURKE You went into this show with the idea of creating a dance notation — a system of symbols for documenting movement — but ended up going in a different direction.

WILLIAMS The idea of a notation is such a fraught space. Because notation so often denies the interiority of the dancer — it flattens the entire experience to the dynamics of the stage. So what I'm kind of doing here is riding the two sides of that line: a notation that could maybe contemplate the dualism of the experience of being a performative Black body.

I feel like with this show, I've crossed the stage. It's going to be nice to do more choreographic and performance work.



Haynes, left, and Williams during installation of her show. Haynes hopes that 52 Walker will show challenging work in a welcoming manner. "I want to invite people to come in, talk with me, sit with the work," she said. Simbarashe Cha for The New York Times

MITTER Your projects involve extensive and time-consuming research. What are some of your sources for the dance work?

WILLIAMS I'm kind of married to this practice at this point, so it feels like good quality time. The [Jerome Robbins Dance Division](#) [of the New York Public Library] has been really great. The Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art — I'm trying to shout out my sources! Jacob's Pillow has a really cool [interactive dance website](#).

MITTER Ebony, how does “A Line” set the tone for the program you want to build?

EBONY L. HAYNES As a director and curator, this is what you work for — to work with artists that you respect, and learn something along the way. Nothing's tied up in a fine bow at the end; that's not what I'm striving for. I'm trying to do something that hopefully affords more time to produce but also to be in the space. I want to invite people to come in, talk with me, sit with the work. You see it once, but maybe you come back and see it again.

Kandis Williams: A Line

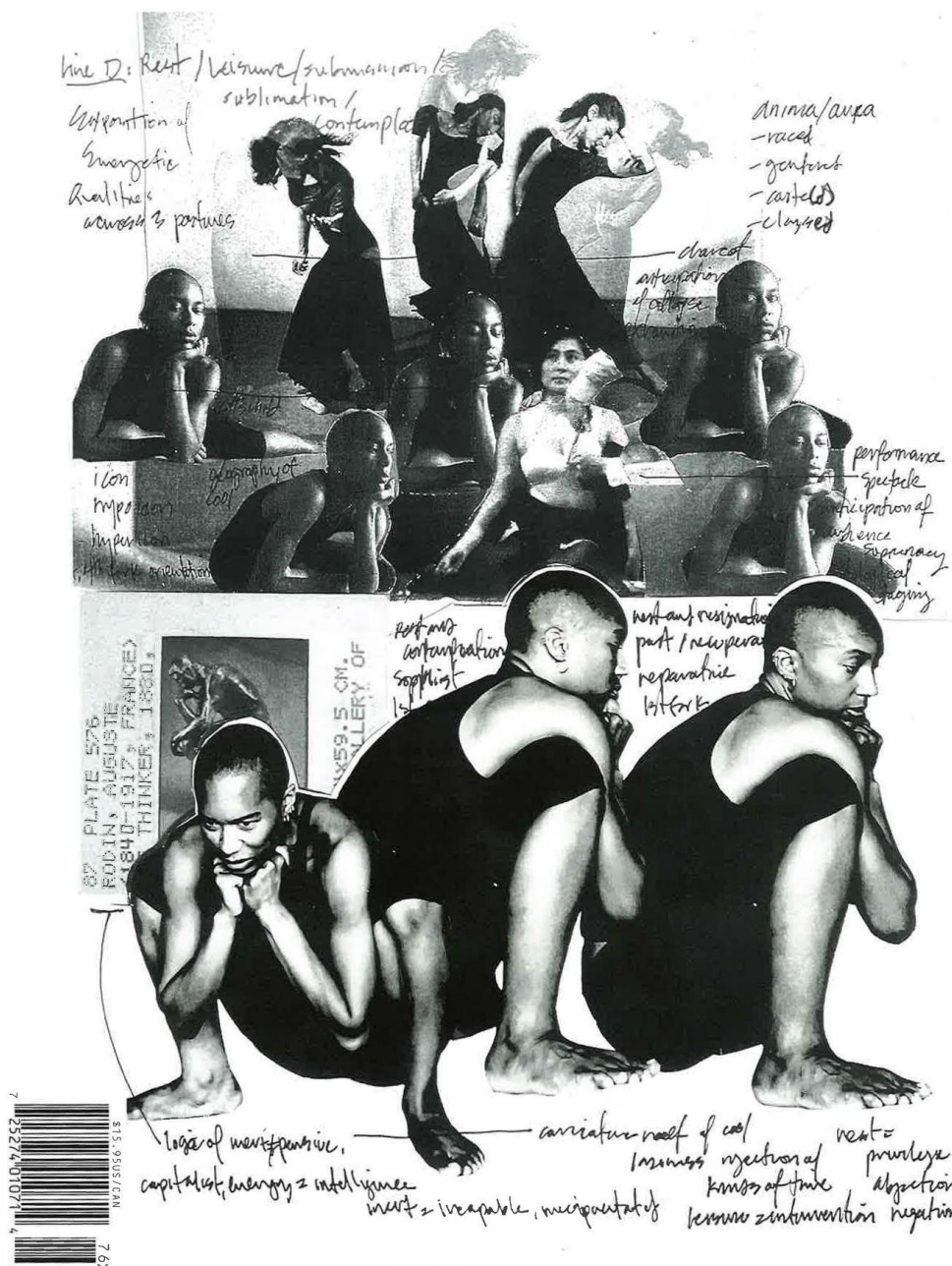
Oct. 28 through Jan. 8 at 52 Walker, 212-727-2070; 52walker.com.

Siddhartha Mitter writes about art and creative communities in the United States, Africa and elsewhere. Previously he wrote regularly for The Village Voice and The Boston Globe and he was a reporter for WNYC Public Radio.

Williams, Kandis. "Notes on Dance." *Flaunt* (September 2021): 200 - 207 [ill.] [print]

FLAUNT

F L A U N T



The Future Experience

KANDIS WILLIAMS. "CANDYMAN
URBAN THREAT MODELING,
BECKY, KAREN, NIKE, ATHENA:
A FUTURE FORECLOSED TO
ALL BUT KING KONG AND FAYE
WRAY" (2020). COLLAGE ON
ARTIFICIAL PLANT AND INDIA
INK IN VASE. 60" X 30" X 20". ©
KANDIS WILLIAMS. COURTESY
THE ARTIST AND NIGHT GALLERY,
LOS ANGELES.



ICE NOTES ON DANCE NO

Kandis Williams

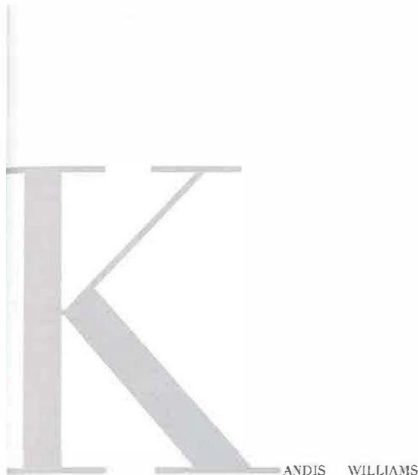
Photographed by Mark Clennon Styled by Gloria Johnson



KANDIS WILLIAMS, "UNLIKE
PENAL SYSTEMS,
GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS FAIL
TO RESPECT THE ARBITRARY
LINE OF STATE BORDERS."
(2020), COLLAGE ON ARTIFICIAL
PLANT. 60" X 35" X 20". © KANDIS
WILLIAMS. COURTESY THE
ARTIST AND NIGHT GALLERY, LOS
ANGELES.



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KANDIS WILLIAMS

is a contemporary artist, publisher, writer, editor, and educator. Born in Baltimore—and currently based between The Big Orange and Berlin—this October, Williams will inaugurate 52 Walker, a new David Zwirner galleries' root extension in New York City, programmed by Ebony L. Haynes, which will foster and present artists of color lead by an all-Black staff, and host internships for Black upstarts.

Williams is currently in residence in NYC, sitting for portraits and late night texting with magazines like the one you're holding, creating works for the Fall show.

Additionally, the artist is currently featured in The Hammer Museum's biennial, "Made in L.A. 2020: a version", where she was granted the affiliated Mohr Award for artistic excellence this July. Williams is also the recipient of the 2021 Grants to Artists award, presented by the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New York.

Beyond Williams' contemporary arts practice, which includes collage, performance, video, assemblage, and installation, the Cooper Union alum has an active curatorial and community practice, where in proxy she runs Cassandra Press—a 501(c)(3) publishing and educational

platform, which produces printed matter, projects, artist books, and exhibitions. She is currently a visiting faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts.

Williams created the cover art for this edition—The Future Experience—and her commitment to contextualizing the cover within her preparatory process ahead of the 52 Walker show, is exemplified in the following notes and observations.

Presented is a selection of notes on dance.
—Kandis Williams

CANDOMBE/ MILONGA

Candombe is a style of music and dance that immigrated to Uruguay with enslaved Africans.

To a lesser extent, candombe is practiced in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil.

African-Uruguayans organized candombe dances every Sunday and on special holidays such as New Year's Eve, Christmas, Saint Baltasar, Rosary Virgin, and Saint Benito.

The typical characters on the parade represent the old white masters during slavery in old Montevideo city. These characters were a mockery to the masters' lifestyle, with a rebel spirit for freedom and a way to remember their African origins.

Many researchers agree that the Candombe, through the development of the Milonga, is an essential component in the genesis of Argentine tango.

In fact, tango, milonga, and candombe form a musical triptych from the same African roots.

MILONGO

Milonga is a musical genre that originated in the Río de la Plata areas of Argentina, Uruguay, and the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MILONGO AND TANGO¹

"The relationship between the compadritos and the African-Argentine population in the Buenos Aires suburbs gave birth to the tango dance, which started as a result of the compadritos' mockery of the Black people's dances with an important difference: the Blacks danced separated and the compadritos danced embraced.

"Diverse historians affirm that the word tango derives from the name (in the slang of the Black people) of their dancing places, known as tambos and, later, tangos. It is widely accepted that the mocking new choreography was taken to the brothels by the compadritos before tango music really existed as such."²

AND

Notes on Dance, 2013:
An exercise of sets.

"ephemerality is not really legit any longer" dance can become a model for thought, the dialectic vs the experiential.

—Peggy Fehlen, Written on the body...

AND

Dance of Death, also variously called Danse Macabre (French), Danza de la Muerte (Spanish), Danza Macabra (Italian), Dança da Morte (Portuguese), Totentanz (German), Dodendans (Dutch), Surmatants (Estonian), Dansa de la Mort (Catalan) is an artistic genre of late-medieval allegory on the universality of death: no matter one's station in life, the Dance of Death unites all. The Danse Macabre consists of the dead or personified Death summoning representatives from all walks of life to dance along to the grave, typically with a pope, emperor, king, child, and labourer. They were produced to remind people of the fragility of their lives and how vain were the glories of earthly life. [1] Its origins are postulated from illustrated sermon texts; the earliest recorded visual scheme was a now lost mural in the Saints Innocents Cemetery in Paris dating from 1424–25.³

AND

"MARVEL NOT," SHE SAID, "IF YOU BELIEVE THAT LOVE

¹<http://www.caminitomilonga.com/the-tango-milonga-relationship>

²Selected Notes on Black Erotic, 2020 Books Lawrence Ross. *Money Shot: The Wild Nights and Lonely Days Inside the Black Porn Industry* (2007); Mireille Miller-Young. *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography* (2014); Et Al. *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* (2013); Ariane Cruz. *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography* (2016); Et Al. *Porn Archives* (2015); Nash, J. C. *The Black body in ecstasy: Reading race, reading pornography* (2014); Brenda Dixon Gottschild. *Joan Myers Brown & the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina: A Biography of American Performance* (2011). Collection: Jim Jager/ Third World Studio <https://www.netmuseum.org/art/collection/search/283338> Jager's studio, founded in 1976 in Chicago, specialized in soft-core pornography featuring casually posed Black male models. His photographs, stripped of the fantastic scenarios frequently contrived in erotica, were included in self-published magazines unabashedly titled *Black Sugar*, *Black Rants*, *Black Fester*, *Black Knights*, *Black Gold*, *Black Stars*, and *Black Thunder*.

³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse_Macabre





AND

"MARVEL NOT," SHE SAID, "IF YOU BELIEVE THAT LOVE IS OF THE IMMORTAL, AS WE HAVE SEVERAL TIMES ACKNOWLEDGED; FOR HERE AGAIN, AND ON THE SAME PRINCIPLE TOO, THE MORTAL NATURE IS SEEKING AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE TO BE EVERLASTING AND IMMORTAL: AND THIS IS ONLY TO BE ATTAINED BY GENERATION, BECAUSE GENERATION ALWAYS LEAVES BEHIND A NEW EXISTENCE IN THE PLACE OF THE OLD. MAY EVEN IN THE LIFE, OF THE SAME INDIVIDUAL, THERE IS SUCCESSION AND NOT ABSOLUTE UNITY: A MAN IS CALLED THE SAME, AND YET IN THE SHORT INTERVAL, WHICH ELAPSES BETWEEN YOUTH AND AGE, AND IN WHICH EVERY ANIMAL IS SAID TO HAVE LIFE AND IDENTITY, HE IS UNDERGOING A PERPETUAL PROCESS OF LOSS AND REPARATION—HAIR, FLESH, BONES, BLOOD, AND THE WHOLE BODY ARE ALWAYS CHANGING, WHICH IS TRUE NOT ONLY OF THE BODY, BUT ALSO OF THE SOUL, WHOSE HABITS, TEMPER, OPINIONS, DESIRES, PLEASURES, PAINS, FEARS, NEVER REMAIN THE SAME IN ANY ONE OF US, BUT ARE ALWAYS COMING AND GOING; AND EQUALLY TRUE OF KNOWLEDGE, AND WHAT IS STILL MORE SURPRISING TO US MORTALS, NOT ONLY DO THE SCIENCES IN GENERAL SPRING UP AND DECAY, SO THAT IN RESPECT OF THEM WE ARE NEVER THE SAME; BUT EACH OF THEM INDIVIDUALLY EXPERIENCES A LIKE CHANGE.

"FOR WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE WORD 'RECOLLECTION,' BUT THE DEPARTURE OF KNOWLEDGE, WHICH IS EVER BEING FORGOTTEN, AND IS RENEWED AND PRESERVED BY RECOLLECTION, AND APPEARS TO BE THE SAME ALTHOUGH IN REALITY NEW, ACCORDING TO

THAT LAW OF SUCCESSION BY WHICH ALL MORTAL THINGS ARE RESERVED, NOT ABSOLUTELY THE SAME, BUT BY SUBSTITUTION, THE OLD WORN-OUT MORTALITY LEAVING ANOTHER NEW AND SIMILAR EXISTENCE BEHIND UNLIKE THE DIVINE, WHICH IS ALWAYS THE SAME AND NOT ANOTHER? AND IN THIS WAY, SOCRATES, THE MORTAL BODY, OR MORTAL ANYTHING, PARTAKES OF IMMORTALITY: BUT THE IMMORTAL IN ANOTHER WAY. MARVEL NOT THEN AT THE LOVE WHICH ALL MEN HAVE OF THEIR OFFSPRING; FOR THAT UNIVERSAL LOVE AND INTEREST IS FOR THE SAKE OF IMMORTALITY."

"...THINK ONLY OF THE AMBITION OF MEN, AND YOU WILL WONDER AT THE SENSELESSNESS OF THEIR WAYS, UNLESS YOU CONSIDER HOW THEY ARE STIRRED BY THE LOVE OF AN IMMORTALITY OF FAME. THEY ARE READY TO RUN ALL RISKS GREATER FAR THAN THEY WOULD HAVE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, AND TO SPEND MONEY AND UNDERGO ANY SORT OF TOIL, AND EVEN TO DIE, FOR THE SAKE OF LEAVING BEHIND THEM A NAME WHICH SHALL BE ETERNAL. DO YOU IMAGINE THAT ALCESTIS WOULD HAVE DIED TO SAVE ADMETUS, OR ACHILLES TO AVENGE PATROCLUS, OR YOUR OWN CODRUS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE KINGDOM FOR HIS SONS. IF THEY HAD NOT IMAGINED THAT THE MEMORY OF THEIR VIRTUES, WHICH STILL SURVIVES AMONG US, WOULD BE IMMORTAL? MAY," SHE SAID, "I AM PERSUADED THAT ALL MEN DO ALL THINGS, AND THE BETTER THEY ARE THE MORE THEY DO THEM, IN HOPE OF THE GLORIOUS FAME OF IMMORTAL VIRTUE; FOR THEY DESIRE THE IMMORTAL."⁴

AND

Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) French neurologist and professor of anatomical pathology. He is known as "the founder of modern neurology" 1878 Studies for treating Hysteria with Hypnosis.

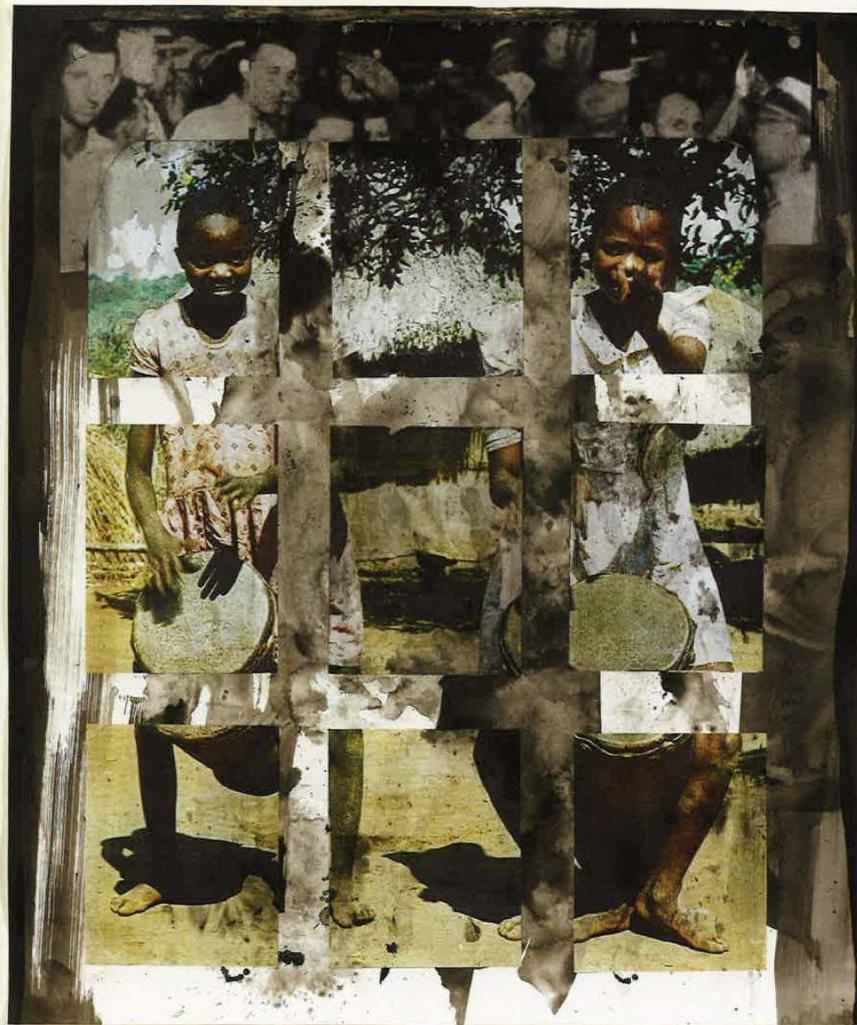
To note:

In this vein, I'd like to think through transcendental states via endurance, pain, denial, refusal, restriction, and how the body occupies such space. Where are guidelines of social dance, how do its varied psychological states enter into and function in the space of dance theater? When 'hysterical' ie fugitive, disabled, Black, gendered, hyper surveilled bodies are taken as scripts by theatrically trained interpreters, where are the theaters of the medical and legal amphitheater (courts, hospitals, schools) internalized in the body of the patient, dancer, fugitive, non-citizen, cartoon?*

AND

* two quotes 1) Ettinger: "matrixial participation of multiple bodies, co-mingling to the end of self-categorization" 2) Ligia Lewis: "be a sympathetic body, the dancer's greatest gift is the ability to hold multiple and probably contradictory beliefs at once. A practice of authentic movement and inauthentic movements to remind yourself that the distance between authentic and inauthentic is a matter of taste."

⁴ Socrates and Diotima, "Genealogy of Love: from Plato's Symposium" (204D-209E)



KANDIS WILLIAMS, "TRANSFORMED RELATIONS-WITHOUT-RELATING" (2019). XEROX COLLAGE AND INK ON PAPER, FRAMED, 43 4/5" X 35 3/4". © KANDIS WILLIAMS. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND NIGHT GALLERY, LOS ANGELES.

NOTES FOR THE CONCEPT OF THE SCORE WITH LINA VENEGAS, 2017:

hijikata girl
Wigman witch

performance of a histrionic vessel—offer the feminine as a living dimensional surface, a living and but not moving sculpture; a woman or vine that grows, lurks, and stretches towards light and recedes into shadow. Moving and co-joining a greater audience and their bodies through the passing of smoke from lung to lung to air to air and the use of mirrored armor—binding her body to the eyes of the viewer—compelling complicity in the scopic—that is beyond our hyper-colonized language of difference.

Drumming and low light compelling an audience toward an environment, a sensorial lack and excess.

Hijikata's scare, a movement analogy to the Wigman in its grounded seated posture, is hyper vulnerable yet sardonic and steeped in scandal and spectacle. Dancer must commit to hyper

exposed gestures and navigate the 'hiding from' or 'being captured' by the eye. A negotiation of seductive and expansive movements that alert sexual and hyper feminine associations. These associations are alerted differently, reconfigured through the Hexentanz witch figure. This figure, historically mined in the appropriation of Japanese dance of its time, exploits a kind of fetishistic relationship to forms deemed 'exotic' as though forms 'othered' anthro-ethnic affect regime placements give a possessing/of/access/to the supernatural, animalistic, thus largely laborious—this is process of 'primitivisation,' the dancer here has the task of relieving and possessing the 'text' of the Wigman performance from the appropriation, transforming the witch figure into an answer to the STAGED vulnerability of A Girl.⁵

AND DANCE AND COPYRIGHT

2020/1 Notes on Cultural Property, gathered with the help of the brilliant Clara Lee

According to the 1976 Copyright Act: a work of dance is quali-

fied for protection as “pantomimes and choreographic works”

SECTION 102. SUBJECT MATTER OF COPYRIGHT: IN GENERAL

(a) Copyright protection subsists, in accordance with this title, in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. Works of authorship include the following categories:

- (1) literary works;
- (2) musical works, including any accompanying words;
- (3) dramatic works, including any accompanying music;
- (4) pantomimes and choreographic works;
- (5) pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works;
- (6) motion pictures and other audiovisual works;
- (7) sound recordings; and
- (8) architectural works.

(b) In no case does copyright protection for an original work of authorship extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work.⁶

However, the copyright law does not so much as cover “dance” explicitly, instead:

For copyright purposes, choreographic works are a subset of dance and are not synonymous with dance. The drafters of the copyright law also made clear that choreographic works do not include social dance steps and simple routines. Registrable choreographic works are typically intended to be executed by skilled performers before an audience—Circular 52 Copyright Registration of Choreography and Pantomime (pdf)

AND FORTNITE

Epic Games offers Fortnite game play for free—but users pay for virtual clothing or various “emotes”—dances that allow users to express themselves online during in-game play. Fortnite players paid some \$2.4 billion in 2018 for the right to engage in such expressions.

“Since then, although the US Copyright Office has rejected ‘the Carlton’, for being too short of a dance routine, it has also granted registration for ‘the Random’ as a motion picture and ‘the Floss’ as choreography.”⁷

AND TIK TOK APPENDIX

Unfinished application to theater program, 2012
...there is the vital process of changing the actor into a monster, which is imposing certain aesthetic signifiers of monsterdom onto a living person... I try to deconstruct standardized art-historical narratives and their political

implications and reassemble them. What emerges is a totem of masks and skins that project outward, and off the wall ... able to open up their meaning and interpretations by engaging with their transubstantiate or talismanic values... an ethnographic form of glimmering opacity and transparency...

...there is a magic that occurs when a group or individual is able to attach its feelings about culture, identity, and power to an object. In an after school program that I taught in Bronx, I showed the 8th grade boys class Roman Coins, and had them design coins which they felt represented their community (and by implication its sources and symbols of power, and importance to culture). A kid whose coin depicted the World Trade Center bombings told me that his coin was not in memory of the actual event, but inspired by the image of the towers falling, made by folding \$5 bills in a certain way. The coin was a signifier for a precise fold he deemed able to emit or admit a fate, a destiny within a commonly held bill. This creative magic plays a role in the formation of new historical narratives....

AND

A man emerged from the crowd of other travelers around the time we got to Cleveland.

In Indianapolis, he asked me if he could buy me a cup of tea.

I accepted.

I trusted his cane and Kangol hat.

He gave me his pillow in Missouri, said he didn't need it.

I accepted.

I slept with it till Kansas, we'd spent our first day together, him sitting behind me, me twisted up luxuriously on the two free seats I'd managed to maintain from Baltimore until Oklahoma. A chat and a tea at every stop had made us friends.

It wasn't until the bus got crowded after a bad connection in Utah, forcing us to sit together that he started to feel less friendly.

A few hours outside of Las Vegas he invited me to stay with him in his ex-wife's house while she was away. Apparently they loved each other very much but a daughter of hers from a previous marriage caused their separation. She was delivering the daughter to another part of the country while he took refuge with relatives in Cleveland, he would return a few days before her.

Eventually, He asked me if I'd like to stay with him while she was away.

I declined.

Told him I was expected in Los Angeles.

He put his pillow in his lap and asked if I was still tired.

I declined.

He offered another story of his loving wife.

His wife was a very clever woman, she'd grown up in Los Angeles. She knew all about the vampires that lived there and had taken him to a park where they congregated. They walked hand in hand through that park, through an air of whispers and the feeling of being followed by dozens of gleaming eyes. She was the first person who'd shown him a nest of them, an outdoor hub of things that lived off the living. “If you got people that care about you, they won't mess with you. But don't sleep on the streets in Los Angeles, or they'll get you in time.”

Los Angeles, he warned, was infested.

⁶ **Dramaturgy:** Eduardo Kohn, “Thinking with a Forest's Thoughts”; “Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us,” served as the keynote lecture for “The Flesh of the Matter: A Hortense Spillers Symposium,” at Cornell University. Lecture by Hortense Spillers - March 18, 2016. Sandra Ponzanesi, *Beyond the Black Venus: Colonial Sexual Politics and Contemporary Visual Practices* (2005). Evelyn M. Hammonds, *Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence*. (1999). Karen Barad, *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter* (2003). Images: plant prototypes. Mary Wigman “Hexentanz” 1913 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALSSuFJ5c>, “Whereof One cannot speak thereof one must remain” <https://vimeo.com/209846512/e142a3f3b1-silent> (LACE performance) Affect: Network/Territory (Human Resources LA performance)

⁷ See Chapter 1: Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright of Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17)

⁸ The dance-off ends: a (partial) resolution to Fortnite's flurry of copyright lawsuits. <https://variety.com/2018/gaming/news/fortnite-dance-lawsuit-1203092141/> <https://www.theverge.com/2018/12/20/18149869/fortnite-dance-emote-lawsuit-milly-rock-floss-cartoon> <https://www.theverge.com/2019/1/15/18184401/epic-games-fortnite-dance-emote-legal-lawsuit-2-milly-cartoon-floss>. **Additional bibliography** Lee J. Matalon, “Modern Problems Require Modern Solutions: Internet Memes and Copyright,” Anupam Chander and Madhavi Sunder, “Dancing on the Grave of Copyright?” Ashleigh Greene Wade, “New Genres of Being Human: World Making through Viral Blackness.” Kyra D. Gaunt, “The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop (NYU press preview).”

⁹ Text Collage for performance at After the Eclipse, Berlin 2015:

I Story: Kandise Williams / Poem: Camille Lacadee
II Thierry Paulin / “The Nightmare”, by Henry Fuseli (1781), generated 3D image
III Hamlet: Act 1, Scene 5, William Shakespeare in two columns
IV Original Ending of Bram Stoker's Dracula / Screenshot of deleted scenes from Bram Stoker's Dracula by Francis Ford Coppola

Stipanovich, Alexandre. "Meet Kandis Williams and Her Dancing Bodies." *Interview* (December 29, 2021) [ill.] [online]

Interview

Meet Kandis Williams and Her Dancing Bodies

By [Alexandre Stipanovich](#)

December 29, 2021



In the eyes of Kandis Williams, no dancing body is innocent. Every one is a vessel, according to the Baltimore-born artist, loaded with political and cultural significance. Deciphering the movements of the waist, hips, groin, or solar plexus, for example, can enable us to read a body like a book—or at least offer us a glimpse into its cultural origins, its motivations, and its status as controller or controlled. Through a versatile practice that spans collage, performance, video, assemblage, and installation, Williams has made it her mission to deconstruct and re-present the racial history of dance and choreography as one rich in semiotics. Taking the likes of the Tchaikovsky ballet, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre as its subjects, the Los Angeles-based artist's work explores the ways that Black bodies have shaped ballet, and in turn, how ballet has impacted the Black body.



This winter, Williams opened *A Line*, her first solo show in New York and the inaugural exhibition at 52 Walker, the brand new [David Zwirner](#) gallery space. To mark the occasion, Williams talked with *Interview* about her favorite pieces in the exhibition, the relationship between the ballet and the Black body, and the motivation behind her multimedia practice.

A Lift and a Kick conflated



Kandis Williams, A Lift and a Kick conflated, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“This piece is about the territory of the waist. I’m interested in this space because of the territorialization of the solar plexus, and the almost antithetical connotations of the hips and the groin that are built into the canon of European dance theorization. This almost always belies anti-Black sentiments.”

Line intersection Sublimation: Uptown Downtown satisfactions of Swan Lake



Kandis Williams, Line Intersection Sublimation: Uptown Downtown satisfactions of Swan Lake, east west Pavlova to Mezentseva, Madonna Whore Balanchine to Dunham, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“This is one of my favorite works in the show, and the product of my earliest research. It’s about two things. First, it explores the external forces that are in operation regardless of the dancer’s interpretation of the choreography—the nature of the choreography itself, or the way that the dancing body is received in greater culture. Secondly, it explores the ways that certain popular ballets and their fairytale fictions have shaped popular discourse and taken on mythic or iconic proportions. *Swan Lake*, the Tchaikovsky ballet from the 1870s, was very unpopular in its first season, but reached extreme popularity in the 1960s. In that era, the black swan and the white swan became a placeholder for good and evil, control and domination. It’s a really interesting myth on-stage and off-stage, one that creates a forceful vision of white femininity by implicitly drawing on metaphors of race.”

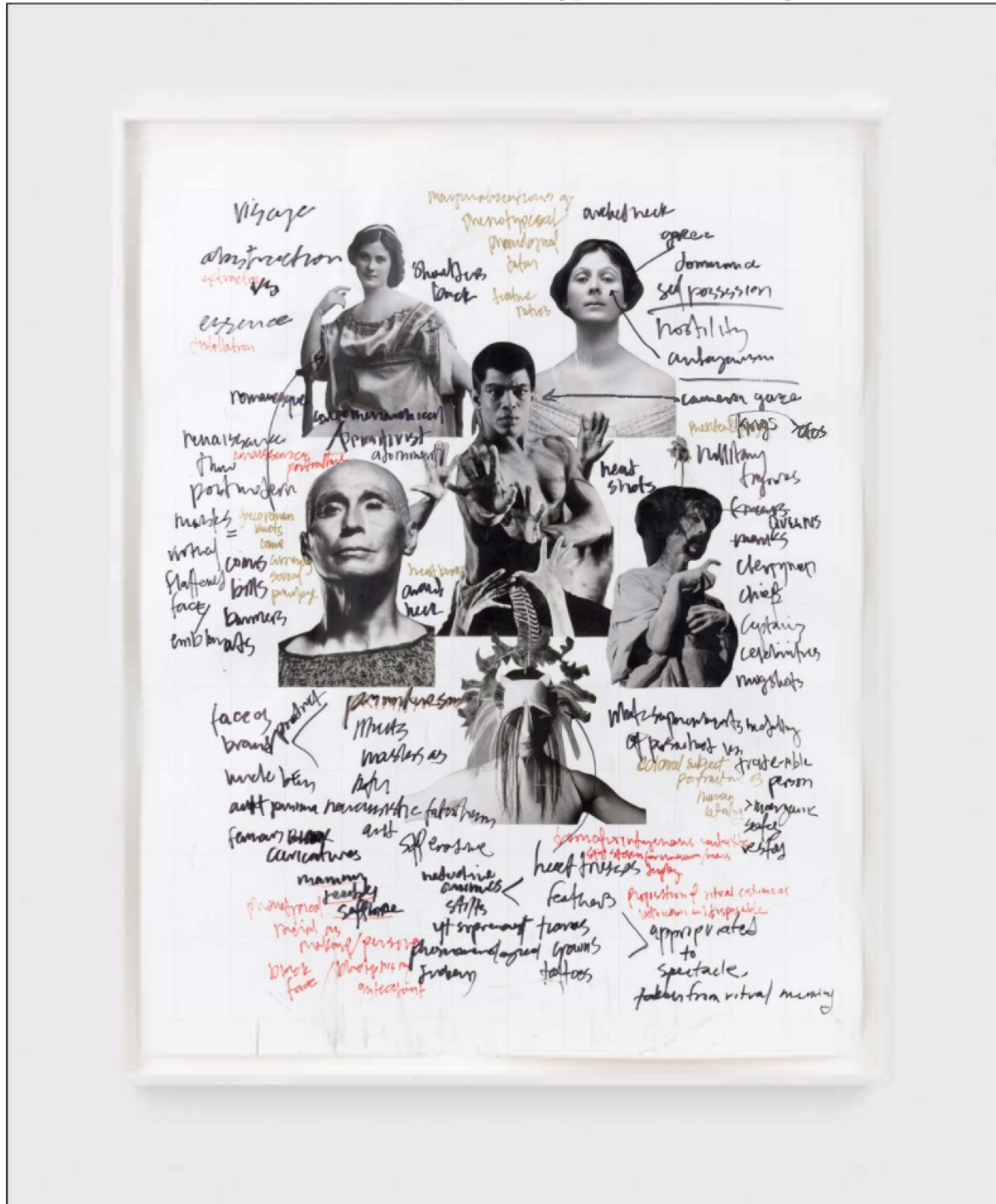
Triadic Ensemble: stacked erasures, Russes de Monte Carlo, Harlem Dance, Wigman and Duncan



Kandis Williams, *Triadic Ensemble: stacked erasures, Russes de Monte Carlo, Harlem Dance, Wigman and Duncan*, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“This piece is a stack of dance troupes. I was thinking about the ensemble as a hierarchy in Western dance. The dance company becomes a collection of certain physiques and aesthetics, and the visual consequences of that are the presence of the white-femme and Black-masc body—they are read in terms of collective traits. It was interesting thinking about the Harlem Dance Ensemble as a powerful and influential ensemble cast, especially in bringing Black bodies to ballet—and Black theater and dance to the international stage.”

Visage, uses of portrait and mask from rulers to icons through primitivism and phenotypical hierarchy



Kandis Williams, Visage, uses of portrait and mask from rulers to icons through Primitivism and phenotypical hierarchy, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“This is about the face as a performative space. I made a lot of notes here about coinage, flags, bannerings, and about the tradition of colonial subject portraiture. The mask also holds a special space of fascination in modernist theater—it’s essentially the cannibalism of ritual and religious values reconstituted to serve the wearer of the mask. We can see the power of that appropriation today in the form of social phenomena like blackfishing and white passing.”

Black Box, 4 points: Ausdruckstanz and Körperkultur holds Orientalism, Primitivism, Islamophobia, and Anti Indigenous Ideologies



Kandis Williams, *Black Box, 4 points: Ausdruckstanz and Körperkultur holds Orientalism, Primitivism, Islamophobia, and Anti-Indigenous Ideologies*, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“Here I was thinking about how important Aryanizing the theater was to the Nazi regime. Their control of public spectacle was implemented via theatrical mechanisms still in use today. I often think about World Wars I and II as wars in which fascism was a shared ideology—the U.S. victory did not vanquish fascism. This is about the Black body as a racial construct—the drama of extracting, appropriating, and liquidating simultaneously.”

Genes, not Genius



Kandis Williams, *Genes, not Genius*: The overlying purpose is to address how the social production of biologically determinist racial scripts—which extend from a biocentric conception of the human—can be dislodged by bringing studies of blackness in/and science into conversation with antipoletics, black Atlantic livingness, weights and measures, and poetry. A biocentric conception of the human, it should be noted up front, refers to the law-like order of knowledge that posits a Darwinian narrative of the human—that we are purely biological and bioevolutionary beings—as universal; elegance is elimination, 2021 (detail). © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

“This is one of my favorites. The title, *Genes, not Genius*, is taken from readings of Brenda Gottschild’s book *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography From Coon to Cool*. Her goal is to set logic to how we see terms like coon and cool—she asserts that the fetish gaze moves from degradation to the sublime through objectification and fetishism.”

Lau, Charlene K. "Kandis Williams: A Line." *The Brooklyn Rail* (December 21, 2021) [ill.] [online]



ArtSeen

Kandis Williams: A Line

By **Charlene K. Lau**



Kandis Williams, *Line Intersection Sublimation: Uptown Downtown satisfactions of Swan Lake, east west Pavlova to Mezentseva, Madonna Whore Balanchine to Dunham.*, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

Kandis Williams's first solo exhibition in New York, *A Line* breathes life into Tribeca, inaugurating 52 Walker, the new David Zwirner space directed by Ebony L. Haynes. Taking performance as form and content, Williams interjects Black bodies into the canon of live art, extending multitudinous lineages: classical ballet, modern dance, performance art, and theater. This tidy show of performance on video, Xerox collages, and sculpture (all 2021) plays out like an experiment in choreography; there's plenty of room for the viewers' moving bodies, allowing flow and flexibility, crisscrossing the floor, and marking invisible patterns on the gallery floor as dancers might with their footwork. The works exhale in the airy space for living things, which gives the impression of a lofted dance studio, its light and warmth.

ON VIEW

52 Walker

A Line

October 28, 2021 – January
8, 2022

New York, NY

In large-format collage, Williams inscribes gridded paper with cut outs of bodies from the archival material of historic productions and photographs of contemporary dancers taken from her studio. *Notes for Stage, Cult, and Popular Entertainment according to place, person, genre, speech, music, and dance* depicts the frisson of bodies—including Yoko Ono during her 1964 *Cut Piece* performance and Merce Cunningham. Art meets athleticism in dance notation form. Crushes of figures from across performance history are depicted all on the same plane atop gestural sweeps of red, blue, and yellow ink. The bodies are full of vitality, but at the same time, their flattening on the two-dimensional surface serves as a metaphor for perceptions and stereotypes of Blackness in culture more widely. Intertwined, their display holds aspects in tension, celebratory yet pressed upon by the weight of history, literally framed and glassed in.

Williams's extensive titles not only function as descriptions of the works but become their own discreet mini essays, like streams of consciousness, running critical commentaries on the state of Blackness and being within the history of dance. *black box, 4 points: Wading in Water, Archipelago, Myth, Revelations—B. Gottschild principle—muffled lines and ruptures—hyper-interpretation of africanist presence(s)* is one in a quadrant of collages, and cuts right to scholar and choreographer Brenda Dixon Gottschild's work on the representation of Blackness in European dance cultures and the avant-garde. Its Expressionistic splashes of red and black ink enmesh complex narratives of beauty and violence, while others from the series present seminal figures in dance: Alvin Ailey and Donald McKayle alongside racist ideologies and Greek mythology.



Kandis Williams, *black box, 4 points: Wading in Water, Archipelago, Myth, Revelations—B. Gottschild principle—muffled lines and ruptures—hyper-interpretation of africanist presence(s)*, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

Tall, artificial potted plants from the series “Genes, not Genius” flank the gallery, some sidling up to I-beam columns as if figures themselves. Looking closer, they in fact sprout leaves and limbs (images which have been taken from porn) and bear fruits painted the colors of various skin tones, inheritors of the artist's sculpture series “Fetish Plant” named after her white partners. Avatars for the body, the fruits read as sexual and reproductive, erotic and nourishing. Williams has previously spoken about Black bodies as sites for consumption, both as images and as embodiments of colonial commodities. In “Genes,” Williams conflates anatomy and eros with racial capitalism, as if to emit a toxic off-gas from their seemingly inert, fake, plastic selves.



Kandis Williams, *Britannica now: choreography*, the art of creating and arranging dances. The word derives from the Greek for “dance” and for “write.” In the 17th and 18th centuries, it did indeed mean the written record of dances. In the 19th and 20th centuries, however, the meaning shifted, inaccurately but universally, while the written record came to be known as dance notation. In biological taxonomy, race is an informal rank in the taxonomic hierarchy for which various definitions exist. Sometimes it is used to denote a level below that of subspecies, while at other times it is used as a synonym for subspecies. A race is a grouping of humans based on shared physical or social qualities into categories generally viewed as distinct by society.[1] The term was first used to refer to speakers of a common language and then to denote national affiliations. By the 17th century the term began to refer to physical (phenotypical) traits. Modern science regards race as a social construct, an identity which is assigned based on rules made by society.[2] While partially based on physical similarities within groups, race does not have an inherent physical or biological meaning.[1][3][4] Dance notation, the recording of dance movement through the use of written symbols. Dance notation is to dance what musical notation is to music and what the written word is to drama. In dance, notation is the translation of four-dimensional movement (time being the fourth dimension) into signs written on two-dimensional paper. A fifth “dimension”—dynamics, or the quality, texture, and phrasing of movement—should also be considered an integral part of notation, although in most systems it is not., 2021 (detail). © Kandis Williams.

A series of monitors dot the back of the gallery, each playing the single-channel video titled *Triadic Ballet*, which revisits the Bauhausler and “Master of Form” Oskar Schlemmer’s work of the same name. On screen, a lone dancer moves to choreography informed by numerous traditions including Buffalo dance of Native Americans and jazz. Recent years have seen fresh interpretations of and references to this work including those by Kia LaBeija and Haegue Yang. Like these artists, Williams responds to this history as interlocutor, producing new choreographic narratives that complicate the iconic work’s past within the institution of modern European theater.

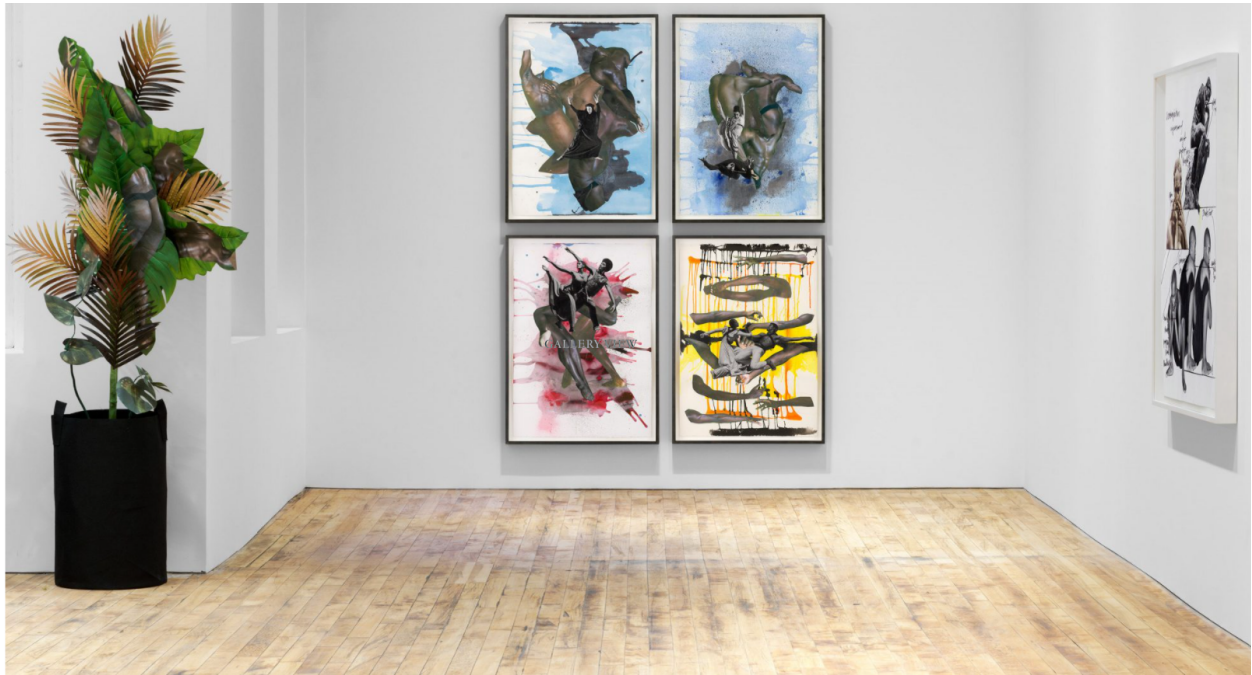
On the one hand, the exhibition engages with the politics of showing and displaying performing Black bodies, troubling their roles in performance history against the present day. Where and how do these bodies belong, and with what eyes do viewers gaze at them? On the other hand, it also serves as a record of breath and movement; Williams’s works enact a still and gestural choreography across the exhibition space. They rethink possibilities for how performance can look in the gallery—and therefore history—beyond a display of remnants after a live act that a viewer has almost certainly missed. A different kind of dance emerges, in the air and all around.

“Kandis Williams “A Line” at David Zwirner, New York.” *Mousse* (December 30, 2021) [ill.] [online]

MOUSSE

Kandis Williams “A Line” at David Zwirner, New York

30.12.2021



Kandis Williams “A Line” at David Zwirner, New York. Courtesy: 52 Walker, New York

David Zwirner is pleased to open 52 Walker, a new David Zwirner gallery programmed by Ebony L. Haynes, on October 28. The inaugural exhibition, *A Line*, will feature works by Kandis Williams, whose versatile practice spans collage, performance, video, assemblage, and installation. Her work interrogates issues of race, nationalism, authority, and eroticism. This will be Williams’s first solo presentation in New York.

Based primarily in Los Angeles, Williams will debut new works that were created in New York for *A Line*. The exhibition will feature a video, collages, and sculptures that move toward a formal dance notation. Notation has been used in different modes throughout history to capture and inscribe the qualities of movement in two dimensions. Williams draws upon her background in dramaturgy to envision a space that accommodates the varied biopolitical economies that inform how movement might be read. She establishes indices that network the parts of the anatomy, regions of Black diaspora, communication and obfuscation, and how popular culture and myth are interconnected.

Laying out a multipronged matrix, Williams introduces four “forks” that she has charted in her history of dance to unspool its white supremacist underpinnings. The first is the anthropological and social understanding of dance as a part of healing, ritual, and entertainment. The second is the “dance of death”: how martial forms emerged as a response to how societies have been organized. The third is an appraisal of courtly dance, which has heavily shaped ballet and modern dance as we understand it today. The final fork looks at contemporary movement and the intellectual property of dance.

The exhibited works traffic between these forks to shape an alternative language that suggests how Black moving bodies are regarded. The video will focus on markings and inscriptions that elaborate individual, collective, and historiographic schema from stage diagrams to astrological charts. A series of plant sculptures will feature representations of Black pinups, whose bodies turning away from the viewer are antithetical to the frontal, balletic positionality of contemporary dancers. The collage works will combine images that reference the ghosts of dance’s past, present, and future—subverting what oppressive structures might term “influence,” but what others might see as brutal appropriation.

A Line follows Williams’s 2020–2021 solo presentation *A Field* at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, which considered the tango through the transatlantic slave trade, prison labor, and horticulture through patterns of migration. Recasting history to evade hegemonic frameworks, Williams makes visible the inexpressible violence to which Black bodies have been subject in dance and beyond.

Clarion, the 52 Walker publication series from David Zwirner Books, will be releasing an accompanying exhibition catalogue featuring contributions by Haynes, artist and writer Hannah Black, and a conversation between Williams and the choreographer Okwui Okpokwasili. Additionally, Williams will contribute notes on the work and bibliographical references.

At David Zwirner, New York
until January 8, 2022

“Physical Apprehension of Black Skin Kandis Williams in conversation with Legacy Russell.” *Mousse* (October 5, 2021) [ill.] [online]

MOUSSE

Physical Apprehension of Black Skin Kandis Williams in conversation with Legacy Russell

05.10.2021

READING TIME 30'



Work from *Kandis Williams: A Field* (detail). Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, 2020–21. Courtesy of the artist and Nigro Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salvesson

The Black body as a site of experience, and the forced, aspirational social interactions that it undergoes—on the planes of the corporeal, the psychological, and the spectacular—are the grounding forces behind Kandis Williams’s multidisciplinary work. Here, in dialogue with curator and writer Legacy Russell, Williams discusses the founding of Cassandra Press and its linkages with Black Lives Matter and Black femmehood; the pedagogy of a collective community that also challenges preconceived understandings of institutional spaces; architecture as a means to explore how bodies are linked in space both abstractly and literally; and blackness as a communication technology both viral and vital.

LEGACY RUSSELL

You founded Cassandra Press in 2015, when the world looked very different, but also in many ways exactly the same in terms of the concerns and demands that brought the press into being and continue to make this work—archival work, witness work, listening work, thought labor, care work, dream work—necessary, urgent, and timely.

KANDIS WILLIAMS

When I heard the three words “Black Lives Matter” together for the first time, it was probably right around that moment in winter 2015, and it just exploded so many concepts that I had previously felt reined in by physically, emotionally, spiritually. It made me ask myself how it mattered to me, and begged for the space to question and interrogate so many internal and wider social dynamics. For many people, it gave a conceptual thread to start untangling blackness from social and historical death. So many other philosophical propositions that have been pivotal in our cognition while firmly denying Black life any right to be. The *making of blackness* has many modes and even more authors than just governing policies of European colonial power. Black Lives Matter started that conversation as well, being one of the only mainstreaming Black queer movements we’ve seen rise into everyday speech. It forced concerns about anti-life practices, extreme appropriative and erasure practices, that we had taken for granted under global white supremacy into the light of critical, popular engagement—the court of public opinion opened to Black voices en masse. Even with Black studies departments being active since the late 1960s, Black Lives Matter gave a vernacular call to arms that reached *all* Black ears, became call and response and echolocation. I ran with it as a proposition for the repair and instigation of respect for Black practices and Black life, Black folk. Renegotiating whiteness and the anti-life practices that emerge from whiteness as an identity—centering that discursively—was essential to starting the press. My attraction to Cassandra as a myth is through my feeling that the idea of *being believed* in a body just a few short years ago was considered both hysterical and intuitive, illegible in its otherness. Cassandra feels critical to understanding the paradox Black femmes face in ordering the world through song, dance, gesture, attitude, resilience, values, morality, et cetera, while being simultaneously brutalized, financially abused, demonized, and stolen from.

LEGACY

I love that notion of being believed as something you continue to center across your practice in conversations tied to blackness, and Black femmehood in particular. You’re also thinking about the pedagogy of collective community, and how that can be enacted through such vehicles as Cassandra Press. And about architecture as a framework for reflection on what needs to be built and how to reimagine history.

KANDIS

I imagine architecture in a twofold way. I think a lot about the material concerns that are offset by racialized constructs. This is really an issue of logistics, distribution of material, and extraction of resources and means of production that become one of the main historical means of global slavery. The primary concerns that Afro-Indigenous and Latino-Indigenous artists are bringing ever to the foreground, Rafa Esparza and Aline Cavalcanti being just two that I admire. Both the spaces that our bodies end up occupying *and* the things our bodies end up being clothed and wrapped and gathered by are as physical as they are psychological and metaphorical. My second way of seeing architecture is similar to anatomical abstraction, a program that can dictate futurity through movement, through especially how our bodies are linked in space or resting together or working together. That kind of architecture is an agreement between space, place, resources, governance, and our feeling, emotional, spiritual selves. I teach a 4D design course where we look intently at the hut, the church, and the prison, which could all be made of the same material and use very similar designs yet instigate distinct and different modes of being in the human occupier. I see “blackness” as a place-program-dynamic architecturally that has very little to do with Black people and so much to do with how we are sanctioned and annexed from shared human collectivity.

LEGACY

Climate change has been disproportionately impactful on Black people and communities of color. When we talk about sustainability, we are also refusing a paradigm of anti-blackness that has excluded Black people from what it means to be sustainable in the first place, meaning an investment in the future.

KANDIS

Right. With metaphorical abstraction especially and activation of some metaphorical extensions of shapes and materials, I see how architectural programs then become scripts that dictate social movement through space. By looking at the more violent aspects of a culture that lived in architecturally ratified segregation for all of its existence, we see the violence of forced movement in every structure we step into and the power to make another move, take their space, kill or harm them, possess or consume them, as a theater the Black body feels so bound to. I’m not sure why we don’t understand things like microaggressions, police brutality, redlining, interraciality. Their bedfellows are rape and colorism, and environmental predations as choreographic. Especially that distance between the definition of movement and the understanding of how and why we move is a space of dissonance my work tries to navigate, always asking the question posed by Saidiya Hartman in “Venus in Two Acts” (2008): “How does one revisit the scene of subjection without replicating the grammar of violence?”¹ And more importantly to my studio work: Do the possibilities that come with seeing and articulating that violence outweigh the dangers of looking at it? The cognitive dissonance and the associative properties that I like to juxtapose bring out the aporia held in some ungenerous metaphorical extensions of blackness into the material reality of Black life to understand how blackness provokes the mythic, provokes the iconic, while being held by death, without title, without support, without names, faces, so many other recognitions of life. I’m thinking about that lexicon of especially metaphorical creations and this multi-modal contained dissonance like a musical notation that we are all forced to learn and play throughout our lives.

LEGACY

Let’s talk more about abstraction, since it plays a special role in the ways you make and think. How does *A Line*, your forthcoming exhibition at David Zwirner in New York, relate to *A Field*, your project at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University (2020–21)? What is the lexicon you’re building? Your work seems to signify and direct like a Black script, or score, or—to invoke the word you use to guide us around your upcoming exhibition—*notation*.

KANDIS

I'm thinking about the image and abstraction, about text as afterimage or even pre-image. Dissonance there is contained. Recently I gave a presentation on image and representation in the context of starting a Black television network. It was really interesting to think about blackness as a communication technology because it is constructed and surveyed the same way an architecture program is, like so much of our historical existence. So much of the violence of our archive comes from these forced social scripts and forced movement scripts, and is from slavery disposition, dislocation. Even our joy is scripted, and has become an industry that produces further hermetic violence on Black subjects. Our celebration, our collectivity, happens for history in scripted places. Off-sites are often lost to the archive. The Maroon village is a beautiful speculative fiction without the serious support of new archaeologies and investigations; it will remain such for most of us. The Black home is dictated by redlining. What's interesting is how much energy and investment there is from non-Black people in the construction of spaces (physical and metaphorical) for Black beings to be contained by. Even anti-racist diversity, equity, and inclusion committees need a violent abstraction or a container to witness Black life. I think about that container as a capability for the almost instantaneous production of meaning. Actually, *A Field* was before and *A Line* is coming. Thinking about those containers as racialized constructs, negations of legacy, negotiations of history that become containers of meaning that are passed down, orally, in policy, through art and music and predicate a lot of our experiences of the material world. That's the link through *A Field* into *A Line*. That line moving forward and backward, the line with two sides that's one side. The physical apprehension of Black skin, the other constant containment of Black bodies into laboring, sexual commodities. This is Cheryl Harris's "Reflections on *Whiteness as Property*" (2020).² There's Black personhood, there's Black being, then there's Black bodies, Black death, Black spectacle. I see the infinite depth of the cognitive dissonance of participating versus resisting and how continuous that is, especially in developing meaning for us. But it becomes almost a volcano—right?—where we can short-circuit from the most general signifiers into the hyper-iconic. That's something we've seen with civil rights in the algorithm era—Black trending superstars like Kanye and their massive influence of vernacular aesthetic orders and prepares white audiences for Black death, for interracial white supremacy, and truncate Black experience as they amplify it. It renders our understanding of the lives of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor as not just political but as market signs, as spaces of investment, as content material, commodities like posters or T-shirts. That's the curse of Black participation right now—that our images are shaped as political and as collective by a few pop stars and millions of martyrs. We see that blackness has not just a vitality but a virality too, and thus a hyper-capacity for meaning production. I'm working through understanding those harmful means of production versus those means of production that are simply hyper-potent.

LEGACY

A lexicon and a rhizome, seeing viral blackness as something that exists through and beyond the digital. You've cited digital platforms like TikTok as places where blackness becomes both a trapping and a site of real and rigorous research and collective praxis, and how these exist both in opposition and also in great support of each other. Thinking about this broader world that is being imagined and built, and of course about architecture as critical to goals of Black futurity, I'm curious about what Cassandra Press is and exists and explores. Through this print material, are you continuing your research into the digital?

KANDIS

That maybe goes back to this comment about the machinic quality of humans in an architecture program. I've been giving a talk called "Reproduction Is Not a Metaphor," about caricature and its dual apprehension. How fetishism and caricature interact in the distinguishing of "taste"—caricatured performance becomes a space for white supremacy, but also misogyny, to socially reproduce *and* a space of financial and physical stability, validation, and reward. Thus, yes, safety for many Black performers and in greater contexts like *codeswitching*. This is an ungendered form of reproduction, just as machinic but essentially hyper-organic, hyper-memetic. It is how we teach each other where whiteness and death are, and how to avoid them. Also how we've built movement out of this previously "secret" knowledge. They become fields of mutual degradation and exacerbated, hyper articulate forms of communication. They reproduce dynamics of white safety and domination while cementing performative space for Black being. How we've learned about us is from those pauses and grins and side eyes that let us see the person under the performance. That communication in between the lines that a hundred years of Black actors gave through degrading scripts, degraded parts. So those scripts we learn, we internalize, we see the space under the performance, then write the elusive quality into our right to be—perform certain characters and they become instantly viral. This is why TikTok is so interesting. The script can be learned in thirty seconds. That is the glance of recognition of blackness within another person. We have a hyper-communicative culture because of the fight for our lives, our rights, in our pain and joy. This is Moten's *In the Break*, Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus*, Browne's *Dark Matters*. We have a hyper-communicative pause. We have a gestural base that is essentially written through the resistance to the reality of a century of forced scripts. I like the idea of a digital duration, but I also understand especially that space behind the eyes, that psychological space of blackness as a construct that is produced as infinite. It's always been a virtual difference, a scale of something more than human. I mean difference literally in terms of extracting certain parts or colors from the visual—difference and saturation. Mark Christian Thomas's *Black Fascisms* (2007) comes to mind, but also K. J. Greene's "Intellectual Property at the Intersection of Race and Gender: Lady Sings the Blues" (2008). I look to Bracha L. Ettinger's concept of trans-subjective co-poiesis to think through representation, media, and where we find resistance within imperial meaning making and vapid political slogans.

LEGACY

On the topic of mimesis: call and response, echo and imitation are important in this ongoing conversation and active participation. In the arts in general, thinking through how to crack open our assumptions about who art should be for, and how pedagogy can be shaped as a response to that, is radical and intervenes in the historical narrative.

KANDIS

Issues of encryption, audience, legibility, and participation are interesting because they link both to seeing myself within many worlds and my erasure, my own illegibility, my being barred access to certain conversations. The pains that gave birth to Cassandra Press had so much to do with the onslaught of virtue signaling from white peers and partners during the 2016 Trump campaign and election coupled with the expression of their inherent inability to respect their Black friends, lovers, bosses, employees. BLM opened a court of public opinion and expectations of accountability in white folk that explode from behind the veil of liberal etiquette—they had to be accountable in their bedrooms, offices, vacations, and be held to the same level of accountability as white lawmakers publicly and in media. When I have Cassandra shows within institutions, there is this strange kind of projected space of my own singular body and mind as collective. I would never say I'm acting or performing, but there is a way that this mythic woman has helped me find a theater to at least house the dissonance of my participation in systems that both erase and force the symbolic register—that dead archive—onto Black femme bodies. All of those questions feel a little bit deterministic. I've also learned from navigating that totem structure of mysogynoir, a reflex to look down the ladder of oppression. I've learned that it is over-deterministic, it doesn't allow us to see the superstructure that comes at us in an ever-closing circle, until it lives inside of us. Asking who I make work for doesn't allow those terms to exist in relation to me without power. I can only answer as to what I'm making work against. I love that my work finds people, that Black audiences find my work, but I also trust Black audiences to find the work they need to find. I ultimately trust the Black community in all its forms to elevate the work it needs to elevate. The work that I'm making with Cassandra is primarily against certain production propositions, certain publishing and dissemination protocols. We make art in almost every second of our innovative process, but what I'm making art against is the notion of the further commodification of Black women without us making a sound to intervene. What I'm working against is so many mechanisms that silence us emotionally, financially, and in our process of becoming in relation to others. I do a lot of my kicking and fighting behind the scenes. That's what I'm speaking to, really, is a space where future Black femme bodies aren't overdetermined and under-supported.

LEGACY

Cassandra Press also challenges our understanding of range within institutional space. You are turning inside out the notion that institutions must be fixed, specifically saturated in anti-Black understanding that limit our being and our becoming. Now it's important to reconsider replication, mimesis, and abstraction. The pure act of reproduction running alongside the idea of the mechanical certainly breaks open as we consider what it is to replicate and reproduce different models of blackness. On simulation of blackness, one of my favorite texts is Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). I was deeply enthused by the through lines and transference between that text and your forthcoming show because you're thinking about what it means for a culture that simulates blackness to confront understandings of Black personhood that may be misaligned with their assumptions. I'm curious about your blurring of what is real versus what is simulated, and how this question of authenticity—like an authentic blackness—is itself a root problem.

KANDIS

I think about the production of deviance, especially autonomous Black women's praxis, and how that autonomy is demonized and vehicularized and weaponized in order to fence in future Black femme identities, to perpetuate the caricature for future generations as dangerous. We see so many interesting implications of that deconstruction right now, especially the hyper-wheel around nostalgia. Even thinking about imitation, echo, reproduction, replication, and this concept of reproduction not being metaphorical especially in how we reproduce blackness, especially when it doesn't come from Black creators. All of those ethical quandaries and ethical paradoxes are reproduced alongside of it, render primary sources as footnotes, not authors. I felt this all in 2020 especially, painfully working alongside various non-Black artists in this time of Black virality. I've been using the term "genuine fakes" to describe working alongside non-Black cultural producers as a consultant on how to engage meaningfully in Black creative and intellectual history when their work attempts anti-racist sentiment but they have not held space for (or even considered) their own anti-Black sentiment. Working in white institutions as a Black cultural producer, I can genuinely say that those copies that use of blackness as a political stilt or viral trending content are void of much vital substance. They are like PDFs—compressed. Think about the Delectable Negro, a means of consuming. Authenticity as primitivism as well. Ettinger has a great term for it: "fascinence." Not fascination, not permanence, but fascinence. A way that fascination produces a constant umbilical relationship, where the poor Black experience becomes everyone's means of exploring their own joy, their own rage, their own dislocation, their own misappropriation. Even just looking at how Black Lives Matter gets transformed into all lives, blue lives, Black Labs, you know what I mean? It's like if you've lived in a Black body, you understand so quickly the cultural producers who are rendering us as substance. That substance becomes a moment of hyper-interpretability. We see those ethical holes, where Black bodies are used to expand representation for others while being subjected to production standards and structures that call for our erasure. Ethical misunderstandings will follow, and their work will always be shaped by them because it is an echo. The reproduction is not purely metaphorical. You will reproduce the staging. You will reproduce the lighting. You will reproduce the caricature that gives away your anti-Black register. And maybe only a few Black people will see it and probably they won't have enough voice to determine any form of critique. As afraid of cancel culture as people are, we still don't have a lot of those voices and praxis to produce critique. Just seeing the world freak out since 2015, be so confounded and confused and afraid of a Black populous chattering class online. Black Twitter strikes fear in the hearts of people. It's wild. Saying that even a small critical base of Black cultural producers are not bound by the institution has completely offset the idea of intellectual property and its distribution, the image of blackness versus the Black person and its distribution, the hyper-real. We have access to so many means of imitation, of replication, of sorting out original from copy, right? Black performance has an internal cipher, we're always inside and outside. We're always looking at it and deconstructing it. There's humor there. There's movement there. There's physical gesture there, but there's also an extremely potent discourse for exactly that resistance of the production of your own self as deviant. I laugh at my pain as much as I try to prevent it or soothe it. I love it and understand its horror. *Amor fati*.

LEGACY

As we are thinking about deviance, we must also think about how that is mapped out, engaging all the tropes of historical horror to the point of nostalgia. Nostalgia is in so many ways a trope of horror because as we look backward, as we romanticize what came before, we are effectively envisioning a world that refuses the presence and possibility of Black life. In your work, you explore the language and tropes of horror as part of this engine of replication, but also as a weapon of capitalism and theft of blackness in the United States and globally. The ways in which the Black body is transformed by having it fed back to itself in a kind of echo loop through an anti-Black lens is certainly monstrous. Part of the paradigm is also thinking about how these different tropes of monster, zombie, villain, or disintegrated cyborg are parts of this machinic work of trying to navigate and negotiate. But these things, as they come into contact, imbue in us almost a triple consciousness. To be both living, dead, undead, and reborn all at once allows for a collapsing of space and a supreme site that is inherently radical, and pushes us to represent ourselves outside of a colonial gaze. To refuse the institutions of Eurocentric supremacy that foreclose a possibility of future consciousness. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the collapse of space and time, especially in relation to your forthcoming exhibition. I think space and time are being renegotiated entirely, and you are establishing new models of what that looks like, asking us to step into these new histories. They certainly are back to what came before, but the reimagining becomes necessary given that you are asking us to actively restructure what the world should look like.

KANDIS

I teach horror within the definition that Dylan Rodríguez lays out in "Inhabiting the Impasse: Racial/Racial-Colonial Power, Genocide Poetics, and the Logic of Evisceration" (2015).³ Genocidal poetics is a view of exactly that dissonance. It's how we cope with and digest the totality of worlds ending, the real corporeality of so much torture mandated by various forms of white supremacist colonial ordering.

LEGACY

And this idea of a Black congregation that exists through and beyond the digital is a model of horror for an anti-Black audience, a Eurocentric audience that cannot envision a world where the central narrative is driven and dictated by anyone else's vision. There are opposing views of what is horrific. Your work allows us to exist on that carousel, and it's an uneasy one. For folks accustomed to standing on one side, it's important to reposition the understanding of whose horror, whose world is ending, and what are the ways in which the future can be built.

KANDIS

For me the carousel is less about whose form of horror, and more about whose horror is *active*. The genocidal poetic is exactly the wrapping of all of us into these narratives that create a binary of who's being tortured. I think the carousel is between horror and terror. Terrorism, and being able to terrorize others, comes from social, political, and religious regimes, also military strength used to occupy and disperse. There are volcanoes of meanings—all of those varying signifiers and means of control—from religious to militaristic. All of these processes create monsters, and horror is essentially the carousel between creating a form of terror (or perceived terror) through its poetic form, which would be horror. Especially for Black bodies, identifying with the monster is not necessarily recuperative politically, but it is such a rich base to think with discursively. This is a beloved thesis from art school my friend Micia Hussey just reminded me of: Linda Nochlin's "The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity" (1994). Horror essentially is the carousel between the creating of a poetic form out of physical terror or seeing socially accepted or state-sanctioned terrorism through a poetic lens, which would be my definition of horror as a genre that comes out the Victorian era. In that regard, for Black people, identifying with the monster is not necessarily recuperative politically but it is, like you're saying, such a rich base to think through what's happening discursively, what feelings remain after a massacre, what senses remain piqued after torture. And politically, as a genre it helps white bodies imagine their implications in the terrorism of marginal and Black folk as a fictional universal expression of good and evil. I just picked up Paul B. Preciado's report to the academy of psychoanalysts, *Can the Monster Speak?* (2021). Immediately they're like, "This was not the speech I ended up giving. When I actually stood in front of this room where I'm the only non-binary body, the feeling of being the monster actually limited their capacity to speak." There's something for me there, a huge part of that carousel between terror and violence. Another thing about trauma: when you're actually imbricated and imbued in it, there are so many silences. It's sad because we don't have a culture that can see one individual narrative as a truth. We need a structure to produce those truths, and that structure is normally argument. And so the argument of am I human or am I not produces historically many bodies as monsters. That form of narrativization, it's a Wynter sort of thing. It's a part of narrative that is completely unsettling because all parts of the story are colonially occupied.

LEGACY

From science fiction to magical realism, all the Hollywood tropes perpetuate the Black contour as the greatest threat. What that looks like obviously is populated in a million different ways. I am trying to think through how to disrupt some of that. To think about questions of agency within it and move toward a different understanding of who can be empowered within it. We need a redefinition of "human," even. The entire taxonomy of humanity is the problem. As you are building this incredible body of work that traverses discussions of creative and intellectual property, of course it intersects with Black culture and Black people, and anti-Black structures as systems of disenfranchisement. With respect to *A Line* and then *A Field*, how might we navigate such questions? What does it mean for "human" to be an inherently anti-Black taxonomy? We are active producers and contributors to the advancement of culture, while simultaneously the whole framework of property is itself an anti-Black proposition.

KANDIS

It's interesting to think about blackness and copyright law, patents and trademarking, and especially the critical Plessy v. Ferguson question of personhood and reputation as ownable property. Dis-identifying with ownership leaves us with a big void of understanding exactly how intellectual property law was developed around branding. These are legal policies that shape our existence. TikTok viral dance appropriation is very similar to the ownership of Black death—we do not inherently, let alone legally, own any of the means through which we communicate. Why can't we have a culture in which young Black kids can own the movements they generate that go viral, and be compensated for them? Why is that so far beyond what we consider in many of our creative industries? Cassandra just released a three-part reader on cultural property for the LAX Art exhibition *The Absolute Right to Exclude: Reflections on Cheryl Harris's "Whiteness as Property"* thinking through erasure and how subtly erasure happens, especially in large productions. Thinking about what was established right after the Civil War through the Lieber Code and especially how Black slave bodies were apprehended as cultural property, our labor and objects often registered as spoils of war—apprehended, captured, surveyed, and extracted from as cultural creators—and how that structure is still disenfranchising young Black creators today. This is the work of critical race theory, right? So much Black virality right now is impacting and being strategically gathered in order to shift policy, so it's really interesting seeing very similarly harmful viral caricatures be employed right now again in another form, populist chatter of Black Twitter. It seems as though that breath inside of the degradation, those speech/text/image acts and pauses of resistance, have made such powerful modes of thought out of caricatures that they Trojan horse their way into the middle of the conversation of capitalist consumption. Fighting back and seeing those means of erasure met with a constellation of talking heads. This is the nature of the anti-performance at the heart of Black Hollywood that I hold in fascination—a fully embodied disidentification from harmful abstractions and harmful stereotypes via memes. I love seeing this very dialogic conversation happening between young Black cultural producers, Black folk, and images that they feel they are scripted to perform. Seeing the fallout of the seeing together, where those predatory theaters (medical, political, structures) feel like they are getting Matrix-ed out of feeling like viable "reality."

LEGACY

There's been some discussion about American Sign Language (ASL) in terms of what it means to engage with Black vernacular in ASL and having that exist through and beyond TikTok, which I think is amazing and monumental. Who owns the gesture and how it should be expressed. How do you ensure that the transmission of Black data is done with care? This brings up so many questions regarding the structures these things are operating within. They are hyper-objects and larger than life. They touch on so many parts of what it means to exist in the world. But certainly they are also hyper-local, very granular, and that too is important given that these are Black vocalities.

KANDIS

Even the label "Karen" is so interesting. We're now thinking about that form of entitlement as performance, as social theater, with certain conventions. Even Karen is in this realm of copyright. There's actually a movie called *Karen* out now! Viral naming/seeing/being like this is increasingly codifying those social scripts. We are seeing them play out and play up through Black folk acting as community archivists. The Karen sightings and Karen accounts, what they do is testify, and I think that's back to this wit(h)nessing idea. They testify to harmful dramas, deadly theaters, where we as a society really need to evidence our truth. The archive of testimony of Black folk is building the political power of archives and online sharing platforms and shifting a lot of social policy.

LEGACY

As we think about reimagining and restructuring social policy, what would the world look like if Black women were believed? Are we healing yet? Can we get there? Can we love us? It's a destination we are journeying toward, trying to create space for that possibility to be assumed and empowered.

KANDIS

About putting myself in a future space: I feel like we are there. The thing we're dealing with now is a recognition that so many of our literary, political, and aesthetic dystopian fantasies of the future have been a negotiable present. Thinking back to abstraction: we produce a poetic in order to distill, distend, and distract us from the material present. But then there's another side of that, which is that the poetic acts as so much collective ether. Something that gives me a future is also rooted in a very undug history. I think a lot about Nyx, the goddess of night, and Erebus, the god of darkness, and their first children, Dawn and Ether. I think about blackness, and this void or the darkness as a construct that had power before racialized bodies, before aesthetic and moral coding of dark and light phenomenologically became political and began to be invoked en masse in order to separate and segregate. It's modern fruit hanging from an older tree. There's a real necessity to stop seeing the way we do. It's a painful process, even thinking about what I believe to be the Black feminine "we." Dissolving aspects of Being makes the word "fugitivity" too morally decisive, but I feel there's a way of being not-seen, a transformative aspect of unseeability, that is maybe darkness or maybe simply night, without light but fully possessed and in being. That might be a space of healing, and of rejoining with what we as people feel our powers, abilities, and capacities are. There are so many ways in which those semantic trappings become praxis, hyper-interpretable and imbued with unethical propositions, but I trust Black people to get there always. I think our lives, our images, our media histories have proven that we get there without this "we." Our eyes and our I's are so bound that phenomenologically this seeing is affirming one and all—that we're human to us—in conflict and in peace. We get there through the ether and we get there through the dawn. We get there through the sunsets. We get there through darkness, in night. Nyx and Erebus had other kids: dreams. Morpheus was the firstborn of their tribe of dreams. They also have the Keres, who are violent death goddesses. They have old age. They have joy. They have friendship. They have a giant. They have a couple of Egyptian kings. These aspects of being transformed without being seen are also potent, affective. I would love to see images evoke that. It's a dissonant space.

Kandis Williams (b. 1985, Baltimore) lives and works in Los Angeles. She has exhibited at Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Simon Lee, New York (2020); Frye Art Museum, Seattle (2018); and Underground Museum, Los Angeles (2014), among others. Recent exhibitions devoted to her publishing company, Cassandra Press, have taken place at Luma Westbau, Zurich (2021) and LAXART, Los Angeles (2021). In fall 2020, the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University opened *Kandis Williams: A Field*, a multistage solo exhibition curated by Amber Esseiva. Williams was featured in the 2020–21 edition of *Made in L.A. 2020: a version* biennial at the Hammer Museum and Huntington Libraries, Los Angeles, where she was awarded the Mohn Award for artistic excellence. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and the Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin. She is the recipient of the 2021 Grants to Artists award presented by the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New York. In fall 2021, Williams is presenting the inaugural show at the new David Zwirner exhibition space 52 Walker, New York, programmed and led by director Ebony L. Haynes. A solo show by Williams will open at Serpentine Galleries, London, in 2022.

Legacy Russell is a curator and writer. Born and raised in New York, she is the executive director and chief curator of The Kitchen, New York. Formerly she was the associate curator of exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Russell holds an MRes with distinction in art history from Goldsmiths, University of London, with a focus in visual culture. Her academic, curatorial, and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfhood, internet idolatry, and new media ritual. Russell's written work, interviews, and essays have been published internationally. She is the recipient of the Thoma Foundation 2019 Arts Writing Award in Digital Art, a 2020 Rauschenberg Residency Fellow, and a recipient of the 2021 Creative Capital Award. She is the author of *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (Verso, 2020), and her second book, *BLACK MEME*, is forthcoming from Verso.

Fateman, Johanna. "Goings on About Town: Kandis Williams." *The New Yorker* (November 22, 2021): 10
[ill.][print]

THE
NEW YORKER

As New York City venues reopen, it's advisable to confirm in advance the requirements for in-person attendance.

NOVEMBER 17 – 23, 2021



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Edmund de Waal's memoir, "**The Hare with Amber Eyes**," has inspired an exhibition of the same name, at the Jewish Museum, opening Nov. 19. At the heart of both the book and the show is an exquisite group of Japanese netsuke—ivory carvings used as kimono ornaments—acquired, in the nineteenth century, by an ancestor of de Waal's, the French art historian Charles Ephrussi. (Four are pictured above.) When the Nazis later looted the family's art collection, the netsuke, hidden in a mattress, eluded their grasp.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BALARAMA HELLER

AT THE GALLERIES

The extraordinary percussionist Milford Graves, who died in February, at the age of seventy-nine, didn't keep time—he set it free, seeing beyond the convention of drummer-as-metronome and tuning into the body's polyrhythmic vibrations. (His interest in heartbeats led to training as a cardiac technician and years of EKG-inspired improvisations.) This cosmic vision enriched far more than free jazz, as “**Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency**” (at Artists Space through Jan. 8) makes abundantly clear. An herbalist and an esteemed music professor, he also invented a unique martial-art form called Yara—Yoruba for “nimble.” The hand-painted “Yara Training Bag” Graves made circa 1990 (pictured right) prefigures the bristling, shamanic sculptures he began to create near the end of his life, forever breaking new ground.—*Andrea K. Scott*



cast that includes Sara Mearns, Tiler Peck, and Roman Mejia, of New York City Ballet; Jacquelin Harris and James Gilmer, of Alvin Ailey; Robert Fairchild; and Aran Bell and Cassandra Trenary, of American Ballet Theatre. The evening begins with three duets, one of which, “Cornbread,” is set to five infectious songs by the African American string band the Carolina Chocolate Drops. In the second half, the whole cast dances the new work “ALL IN,” set to Johannes Brahms’s Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120.—*M.H. (Nov. 17-21; nycitycenter.org)*

Yin Yue Dance Company

Known for its FoCo technique—which ripples and flows in the overlap between Chinese traditional and Western contemporary dance—Yin Yue Dance Company returns to live performance on Nov. 18, as part of the 92nd Street Y’s “Mainstage” series. “Ripple” is a linked set of calligraphic solos and duets which relish weight sharing and touch. The program is also streaming, Nov. 19-21, on the Y’s Web site.—*B.S. (92y.org)*

ART

Jasper Johns

In 1954, having had a dream of painting the American flag, Jasper Johns did so, employing a technique that was unusual at the time: brushstrokes in pigmented, lumpy encaustic wax that sensitize the deadpan image. The abrupt gesture—sign painting, essentially, of profound sophistication—ended modern art. It torpedoed the macho existentialism of Abstract Expressionism and anticipated Pop art’s demotic sources and Minimalism’s self-evidence. Politically, the flag painting

was an icon of the Cold War, symbolizing both liberty and coercion. Patriotic or anti-patriotic? Your call. The content is smack on the surface, demanding careful description rather than analytical fuss. Shut up and look. Johns’s styles are legion, and “Mind/Mirror,” a huge retrospective split between the Whitney Museum, in New York, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, organizes them well, with contrasts and echoes that forestall a possibility of feeling overwhelmed. In his tenth decade, the painter remains, with disarming modesty, contemporary art’s philosopher king—the works are simply his responses to this or that type, aspect, or instance of reality. You can perceive his effects on later magnificent painters of occult subjectivity (Gerhard Richter, Vija Celmins), but none can rival his utter originality and inexhaustible range. You keep coming home to him if you care at all about art’s relevance to lived experience. The present show obliterates contexts. It is Jasper Johns from top to bottom of what art can do for us, and from wall to wall of needs that we wouldn’t have suspected without the startling satisfactions that he provides.—*Peter Schjeldahl (whitney.org)*

Vasily Kandinsky

Some eighty paintings, drawings, and woodcuts by Kandinsky, the Russian hierophant of abstraction, line the upper three-fifths of the Guggenheim’s ramp, in the retrospective “Around the Circle.” The show’s curator, Megan Fontanella, recommends starting at the bottom, with the overwrought works of the artist’s final phase, and proceeding upward, back to the simpler Expressionist landscapes and horsemen of his early career. This course is canny in terms of your enjoyment, which increases as you go. The teeming complexities—enigmatic glyphs, contradictory techniques—that make Kandinsky’s late phase

are numbingly hermetic. A middle range, from about 1910 to the early twenties, seethes with the artist’s excitement as he abandons figuration to let freely brushed, spontaneously symphonic forms, intended as visual equivalents of music, enthrall on their own. Finally, we are engulfed in cadenzas of hue that may be the strongest art of their kind and their time, relatively crude but more vigorous than the contemporaneous feats of Matisse, Derain, Braque, and other Parisians whose Fauvism anchors standard accounts of modernism. The mining heir and mogul Solomon R. Guggenheim met Kandinsky in 1930 and began collecting him in bulk, advised by the enthusiastic German baroness Hilla Rebay, who also merits credit for recommending Frank Lloyd Wright as the architect of the museum’s hypermodern whorl, which opened in 1959. Kandinsky lingers in the ancestral DNA of the museum and his equivocal majesty haunts every visit to a building that cannot cease to amaze.—*P.S. (guggenheim.org)*

Jessie Makinson/Phumelele Tshabalala

In concurrent solo shows at the Lyles & King gallery, two painters—one British and one South African—conjure different, but equally opulent, mythic worlds. The London-based Makinson depicts sinister pleasure gardens and twilight pavilions, populated by women, animals, and sexy hybrids of the two. The witchy, conspiratorial mood of her exhibition is conveyed by its title, “Stay here while I get a curse.” The panoramic centerpiece features an orgiastic vision of chaos, equal parts Bruegel and Leonora Carrington. Tshabalala, who works in Johannesburg, uses fantastical imagery to counter colonialist histories, depicting Black joy in vibrant space-collapsing compositions, in his New York solo debut, “The act of witnessing the descendants of Hope.” The mixed-media, gilt, and Day-Glo canvas “When the dust subsides,” a psychedelic combination of contemporary figuration and magic realism, is emblematic of his rapturous approach.—*Johanna Fateman (lylesandking.com)*

Kandis Williams

52 Walker is more than the new Tribeca outpost of the Zwirner gallery—its director, Ebony L. Haynes, plans to run the space like a *Kunsthalle* rather than a commercial enterprise, organizing long-running shows by artists whose approaches are research-based. The compelling inaugural exhibition, “A Line,” is by the polymath Kandis Williams, who has a background in dramaturgy and founded the Cassandra Press, an independent distributor of radical texts. Lining the gallery walls is a series of Williams’s diagrammatic collages, combining ink and photocopied, cutout images of dancers; the results suggest a novel, conceptual method of movement notation. The works’ lengthy poetic titles underscore the tangle of historical, cultural, and racial dynamics at play. In the back, these concerns recur in austere videos on a phalanx of monitors. Installed along the floor, potted plants are, in fact, sculptural assemblages, bearing fake fruit painted in a range of flesh tones, with collaged eyes appearing, uncannily, on the occasional leaf, uniting the botanical and the anatomical.—*J.F. (52walker.com)*

COURTESY ESTATE OF MILFORD GRAVES AND ARTISTS SPACE

Kandis Williams

52 Walker is more than the new Tribeca outpost of the Zwirner gallery—its director, Ebony L. Haynes, plans to run the space like a *Kunsthalle* rather than a commercial enterprise, organizing long-running shows by artists whose approaches are research-based. The compelling inaugural exhibition, “A Line,” is by the polymath Kandis Williams, who has a background in dramaturgy and founded the Cassandra Press, an independent distributor of radical texts. Lining the gallery walls is a series of Williams’s diagrammatic collages, combining ink and photocopied, cutout images of dancers; the results suggest a novel, conceptual method of movement notation. The works’ lengthy poetic titles underscore the tangle of historical, cultural, and racial dynamics at play. In the back, these concerns recur in austere videos on a phalanx of monitors. Installed along the floor, potted plants are, in fact, sculptural assemblages, bearing fake fruit painted in a range of flesh tones, with collaged eyes appearing, uncannily, on the occasional leaf, uniting the botanical and the anatomical.—J.F. (52walker.com)

Civin, Marcus. "Kandis Williams." *Artforum* (November 23, 2021) [ill.] [online]

ARTFORUM



Kandis Williams, *A Kick and an extension; Graham dramatic solemnity—The Lindy Hop is black dance, funerary in solar plexus*, 2021, Xerox collage on paper, 48 x 65 3/4".

NEW YORK

Kandis Williams

DAVID ZWIRNER | 52 WALKER STREET

52 Walker

October 28, 2021–January 8, 2022

Dancers intermingle through time and space across sixteen large-scale collages, a video, and six sculptural, plant-like assemblages in the Los Angeles-based artist Kandis Williams's first New York solo outing, "A Line," curated by Ebony L. Haynes. The polymath's transhistorical narratives are rich, sharp, and choreographic: Take *A Kick and an extension; Graham dramatic solemnity—The Lindy Hop is black dance, funerary in solar plexus*, 2021, which is made up of carefully cut-out and glued images of modern dance pioneers Martha Graham and Donald McKayle, laid over a

graphite grid on white paper. Around the duo are pictures of contemporary Black dancers that Williams photographed in her studio. By surrounding Graham with these figures, the artist subtly reminds us that Graham appropriated Black and Indigenous dance into her own work while carving out a place for herself within the American vanguard.

References to Oskar Schlemmer's fantastical Bauhaus theater piece, *Triadic Ballet*, 1922, permeate this exhibition. Her nine-minute video of the same name, made in 2021, uses history instead of costume as its primary driver. In this work, a dancer navigates the space in front of a screen where the past flickers on and off: At various points, we see the Orientalist vaudeville performer Princess Rajah, in 1904, spinning with a chair in her mouth; volunteers taking scissors to Yoko Ono's clothing for her 1964 performance *Cut Piece*; Janet Jackson wearing militaristic gear and welcoming us to Rhythm Nation in 1989; and the beating of Rodney King by LA police only two years later. The show addresses the myriad ways people of color get exploited by a culture industry that rips off their innovations and efforts on a regular basis. Fortunately for us, Williams foregrounds these injustices, quietly but powerfully, while marking out parameters for another kind of vanguard.

— Marcus Civin

Tauer, Kristen. "Four New Art Gallery Shows to Check Out in November." *WWD* (November 5, 2021): 30 [ill.] [online]

WWD

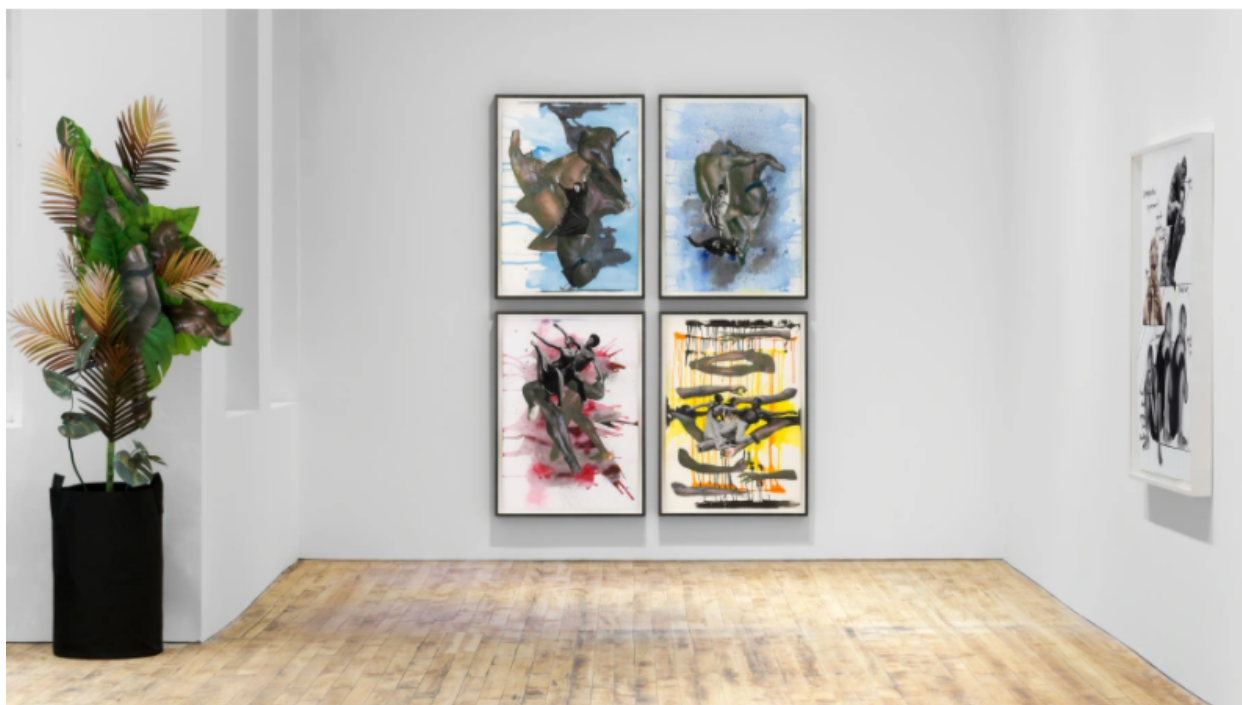
Four New Art Gallery Shows to Check Out in November

Exhibitions included Kandis Williams' show at the recently opened 52 Walker.

By **KRISTEN TAUER** 

NOVEMBER 5, 2021, 10:33AM

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Installation view of Kandis Williams' "A Line." KERRY MCFATE

From Tribeca and Chelsea to the Upper East Side, here are four recently opened gallery exhibitions to carry you into the holiday season — and Miami **Art** Week at the end of the month.

Kandis Williams: “A Line” at 52 Walker

David Zwirner opened a new gallery space concept, 52 Walker, in late October. The Tribeca gallery is led by curator Ebony L. Haynes, and is dedicated to extended exhibition timelines and providing a platform for early and mid-career artists outside the traditional gallery format. The space's inaugural show is “A Line,” featuring multimedia work by L.A.-based artist Kandis Williams in her first solo New York exhibition. Her work on view explores themes including nationalism, white supremacy and authority through the lens of dance, video, collage and sculpture. *On view through Jan. 8, 2022.*

"Three exhibitions to see in New York this weekend." *The Art Newspaper* (November 5, 2021) [ill.] [online]



Three exhibitions to see in New York this weekend

From the New Museum Triennial to 52 Walker, David Zwirner's new outpost



Ambera Wellman, *Strobe* (2021). Photo: Dario Lasagni.

Gabriella Angeletti, Kendra Walker and Ellen Frances

5 November 2021



Installation view of Kandis Williams: A Line at 52 Walker. Courtesy 52 Walker.

Kandis Williams: A Line

Until 8 January 2022 at 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan

The anticipated kunsthalle-style gallery 52 Walker, programmed by Ebony L. Haynes and operated by David Zwirner, has opened with an exhibition of new works by the Los Angeles-based artist Kandis Williams. The works consider race and gender issues relevant to Black dancers in mainstream culture, exploring the legacy of past Black dancers and dance history through a variety of media, including video installations, assemblage, collages and sculptures. Her choreographic work, which corresponds with photographs also on view in the exhibition, considers the dualism of Blackness and the multifacetedness of performance, raising questions around how Black movement is perceived, encountered and accepted by society in relation to ballet and modern dance. The gallery will be releasing a publication featuring contributions by Haynes, the artist and writer Hannah Black and a conversation between Williams and choreographer Okwui Okpokwasili.

Davis, Jensen. "Kandis Williams: A Line." *Air Mail* (December 2021) [ill.] [online]



"Kandis Williams: A Line." Photo courtesy of 52 Walker.

Kandis Williams: A Line

UNTIL JANUARY 8, 2022 **CLOSING SOON**

52 WALKER / NEW YORK / ART

The inaugural show at David Zwirner's fourth gallery in New York City, which opened this fall in Tribeca, presents Kandis Williams's sculptures, videos, and collages. Through this range of mediums Williams explores the intersection of dance and race. "Dance is so reflective of social scripts and social impulses that we don't feel we have to name," she recently told *The New York Times*, "but [they] become wrapped in characters and fictions." The works on view—from graphic collages of dancers to plant sculptures that feature leaves subtly printed with images of the human body—attempt to correct these fictions. Exhibition highlights include ink collages that foreground Black dancers, as well as a video of a dancer performing Williams's choreography. The video plays on six old-fashioned monitors at once. —J.D.

Woodward, Daisy. "A List of Great Things to Do Before the Year Is Out." *AnOther Magazine* (December 1, 2021)
[ill.] [online]

AnOther

A List of Great Things to Do Before the Year Is Out

DECEMBER 01, 2021

TEXT Daisy Woodward



Installation view, Kandis Williams: *A Line*, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy of the artist

Kandis Williams: *A Line* at 52 Walker Street, New York: Until January 8, 2022

New Yorkers, be sure to visit David Zwirner's new exhibition space programmed by Ebony L. Haynes. Its inaugural exhibition is a solo show by the American artist and writer Kandis Williams, whose multi-faceted practice "interrogates issues of race, nationalism, authority, and eroticism". For *A Line*, the artist has created a striking array of collages and sculptures, and a video, which together "move toward a formal dance notation". This sees Williams "draw upon her background in dramaturgy to envision a space that accommodates the varied biopolitical economies that inform how movement might be read," the show's text explains.

Knoblauch, Loring. "Kandis Williams @David Zwirner." *Collector Daily* (October 2021) [ill.] [online]

COLLECTOR
DAILY

Kandis Williams @David Zwirner

By [Loring Knoblauch](#) / In [Daybook](#) / December 14, 2021



Layering collaged gestures and echoed lines, via ballet bodies in Black and white. Kandis Williams at [David Zwirner/52 Walker](#).

[David Zwirner](#)
52 Walker Street
New York, NY 10013

“Kandis Williams A Line.” *THEGUIDE.ART* (October 28 2021) [ill.] [online]

THEGUIDE.ART

Kandis Williams
A Line
Oct 28th — Jan 8th

David Zwirner: 52 Walker
52 Walker Street

New York
Tribeca



Kandis Williams's first solo show in New York is also the inaugural exhibition of 52 Walker, a space directed by Ebony L. Haynes under the auspices of David Zwirner Gallery. Williams's research-based work is in line with Haynes's curatorial erudition; the art on view redevelops and subverts received narratives and representations, and even the sub-rosa mechanisms of their transmission, playing with recognizable imagery and insistently questioning it.

Williams is an interesting choice given her work's resonances and frictions with the new venture, which cites *kunsthallen* as its model. For instance, the Berlin- and Los Angeles-based artist co-founded a small press, Cassandra, which complements and makes one wonder about the gallery's sole use of its own publication, Clarion, in lieu of catalogues. Her solo show runs alongside a history of connecting and community building, and Haynes is teaching a class through Cassandra, "Black Students Only Sessions," for participants to discuss the art world and the operation of a commercial art gallery—models Haynes knows well, having previously worked at Foxy Production and Martos Gallery, but which 52 Walker intends to reimagine. The space will only host four exhibitions per year, each running for several months, with a range of artists from different career stages. It will feature only solo exhibitions of femme-identifying artists, and the gallery is entirely staffed by people who identify as Black.

Williams's exhibition includes sculptures, collages and videos, all of which bear very long titles that contextualize the imagery and draw parallels and incongruities between elements (consequently they're also abbreviated herein). The space is predominated by collaged black-and-white photos of dancers, expressively pasted onto a gridded ground that is occasionally emphasized with hand-drawn lines and sometimes textual notes by the artist. A few have ink applied in splashy washes that emphasize figures and gestures, notably in *Notes for Stage...* (all works 2021), which features famously intense images of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964).

The tableaux are instructive, choreographic, both in their imagery and their construction. And they take as some of their subject matter the embodiment, fostering and corrective discipline of values. In one piece, *A Line: the Diaghilev Ruler...*, the Soviet prima ballerina Marina Semyonova, in a collaged field of dancers, manipulates a student's body into its properly expressive form; her dancing and teaching was the corporealization of the New Soviet Woman, and here she is, putting ideology into youth by hand. This idea can be seen throughout, where historical images of white dancers predominate, and the bodies of Black dancers, such as Alvin Ailey (more temporally recent and more liberal in movement) disrupt and hurtle.

Those with text included are especially intriguing, as they show Williams thinking aloud the valences of posture, photographic angles and the coding of race, gender and class expectations as a form of power. They make explicit and cohesive Williams's use of pedagogy, community and the reconsideration of history against narratives built on the chassis of oppression. In two, *Lines of Contemplation...* and *Hyper-interpretation...*, photographic studies of a model posing in a variety of similar positions are juxtaposed with reference images, including stock photography and handwritten text. In the latter, photos from image searches for "seated women" are compared with women of various races and women whose identities are obscured by masks, with historical photos of Black women and in-studio studies, all annotated to describe how small discrepancies of glance or position in the model indicate "tension," "pensiveness," opposition and "secretiveness," as compared to "security" and "ease."

Sculptures of plants—with portions painted in skin tones, and with fruit, presumably in reference to Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" (1959)—throughout the space are far more invisible. They disappear against I-beam columns running through the gallery, but subtly emphasize awareness of the space and one's body moving through it. The sculptures' titles knit fragments of text appropriated from various sources, making explicit an argument suggested in the collages: the systematic relegation of Black poetics—here, dance—as uncultured and dangerous. In one, *On the contrary...*, the title quotes an analysis of the Nazis' fear of expression and contrasts it with Alain Locke's hypothesis about the vital role of social expression in Black art. While Nazism is often referenced as the Ur-racism against which all others are infuriatingly, and frequently, apologetically compared, it is worth repeating the history, often obscured, that Nazism was inspired and tutored by American white supremacy and Jim Crow.

At the back of the gallery are six CRT monitors displaying videos, each titled Triadic Ballet. People dance vaporously over an empty black space marked with a simple diagrammatic square, trisected, composed with what looks like spike tape. At times, figures dance in spectral overlap, double or maybe even triple-exposed. They're reminiscent of Lucinda Childs's *DANCE* (1979), which had been staged at the Joyce Theater in Chelsea in late October. *DANCE* projects video and still images over live dancers who perform in a ballet-influenced contemporary style over a gridded field, and the echoing elements between Williams and Childs were striking.

In a panel discussion following one performance, two dancers, Childs and historian Maura Keefe expressed consensus about how important it is to see dance right now. And while it's perhaps natural to expect that whatever one is producing will seem particularly crucial during crisis, it is hard to deny that dance, and especially an expanded vision of the practice as seen here, in the middle of racial reckoning and physical distancing (not to mention class-, gender- and race-based subjugation so long standing that "crisis" fails to adequately capture the state of affairs), *is in fact really* important to see and think about and experience. And that experience, provided in Williams's work—to see and question the way that the past has shaped bodies and to build something beyond the constraints of that history—is needed now more than ever. —Noah Dillon

Kandis Williams, *Line Intersection Sublimation: Uptown Downtown satisfactions of Swan Lake, east west Pavlova to Mezentseva, Madonna Whore Balanchine to Dunham.*, 2021. © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

Street, Maddie. "David Zwirner Gallery Celebrates its New Tribeca Opening With the Inaugural Exhibition "A Line," by Kandis Williams." *Untitled* (October 29, 2021) [ill.] [online]

UNTITLED

ART, NEW YORK — OCTOBER 29, 2021

DAVID ZWIRNER GALLERY CELEBRATES ITS NEW TRIBECA OPENING WITH THE INAUGURAL EXHIBITION "A LINE," BY KANDIS WILLIAMS

by MADDIE STREET



Kandis Williams "A Line"

A Solo Exhibition Presented By David Zwirner Gallery

EXHIBITION ON VIEW

October 28, 2021 – January 08, 2022

DAVID ZWIRNER GALLERY

52 Walker St, New York, NY 10013

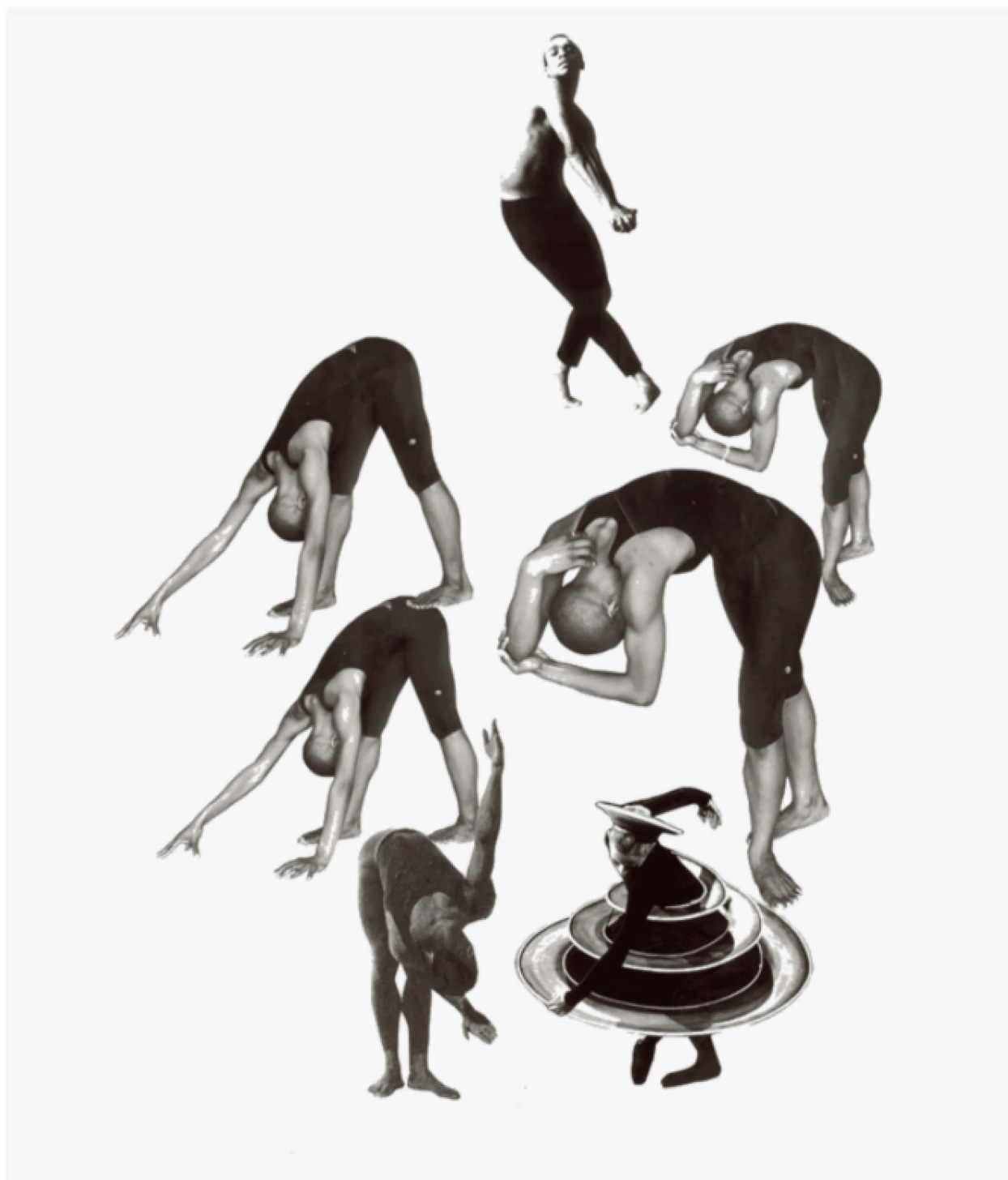


A Kick and an extension, Graham dramatic solemnity—The Lindy Hop is black dance, funerary in solar plexus, 2021. All works © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York

The new David Zwirner gallery space, located at 52 Walker, celebrated its opening on Thursday, October 28, 2021, by unveiling Kandis Williams's new solo exhibition, *A Line*. Organized by Ebony L. Haynes, *A Line* features works by Williams, whose versatile practice spans collage, performance, video, assemblage, and installation. Her work cross-examines issues of race, nationalism, authority, and eroticism. This will be her first solo presentation in New York.

While based primarily in Los Angeles, Williams is excited to debut new works that were created in New York specifically for *A Line*. The exhibition includes a video, collages, and sculptures that move toward a formal dance notation. Dance notations are symbolic representations of human dance movements and form, using different modes throughout history to capture and inscribe the qualities of movement in two dimensions.

Williams draws upon her background in dramaturgy to envision a space that accommodates the varied biopolitical economies that inform how the movement might be read. She establishes indices that network the parts of the anatomy, regions of Black diaspora, communication and obfuscation, and how popular culture and myth are interconnected.



The term "theater" designates the most basic nature of the stage: make-believe, mimicry, metamorphosis. Between cult and theater lies the stage seen as a moral institution. 2001. All works © Kara Walker. Courtesy the artist and g2 Walker, New York.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kandis Williams was born in 1985 in Baltimore and received her BFA from Cooper Union in New York in 2009. She is the founder of the publishing and educational platform Cassandra Press. Williams was recently awarded the Mohn Award for artistic excellence following her participation in the 2020 *Made in L.A.* biennial at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, The Huntington Library, Art Museum, Botanical Gardens, San Marino. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (2021); Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2021 and 2016); Cooper Cole, Toronto (2018); Works on Paper, Vienna (2017); St. Charles Projects, Baltimore (2016); and SAME, Los Angeles (2016). Williams is represented by Night Gallery, Los Angeles. The artist lives and works in Los Angeles.



A Stack—swans, lovers, gods; costuming is the most static aspect of social order, 2021. All works © Kandis Williams. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.