

“The 22 Best Art Shows of 2022.” *Cultured* (December 23, 2022) [ill.] [online]

CULTURED

ART

The 22 Best Art Shows of 2022

Rashid Johnson sailed to Menorca for his first solo show in Spain with Hauser & Wirth. Anne Imhof transformed an Amsterdam museum into a menacing labyrinth. Theaster Gates erected a moment of religious rapture for the Serpentine Pavillion. Linda Goode Bryant stayed just above Midtown for a MoMA show honoring JAM, her erstwhile radical art space. In Venice, Precious Okoyomon built a testament to growth and decay. As 2022 comes to a close, *CULTURED* reflects on 22 of the most brilliant gallery, museum, and institutional shows of the year, presented below chronologically.

WORDS

Cultured Magazine

December 23, 2022



Image courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.

"MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY" by Tiona Nekkia McClodden
52 Walker New York

The founder and director of Conceptual Fade, Tiona Nekkia McClodden explores shared values and traditions within the African diaspora—the “Black mentifact,” as she described it to *CULTURED* earlier this year. One of her two concurrent New York shows this summer, “MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY” was layered with meaning that slowly revealed a “variable Blackness” as the viewer moved through 52 Walker’s sweeping TriBeCa gallery. Largely consisting of firearms and fragments in low relief, molded, and on pedestals, the show also featured painted and printed works that spelt out words such as “My Trace / My Ruin” as well as moving imagery. Installed under custom lighting, the Philadelphia-based artist abstracted visibility to create a space to engage with complex, difficult issues, while also giving the viewer room for personal introspection.

Salam, Maya. "The Breakout Stars of 2022." *The New York Times* (December 16, 2022) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

The Breakout Stars of 2022

Here are the actors, pop stars, dancers and artists who broke away from the pack this year, delighting us and making us think.

 Give this article  



Quinta Brunson, the creator and star of ABC's acclaimed sitcom "Abbott Elementary," in a scene from the show. ABC



By **Maya Salam**

Dec. 16, 2022 Updated 1:50 p.m. ET

5 MIN READ

For many of us, 2022 was the year we emerged more fully from our pandemic cocoons, venturing out to movie theaters, museums, concerts — exploring our entertainment with eager, if weary, hearts and eyes before returning home to our TVs. Along the way, artists and performers across the world of the arts had, for the first time in years, the chance to connect more closely and fully with audiences, and deliver big. Here are seven stars who captured our attention in this moment and gave us a fresh perspective.

ART

Tiona Nekkia McClodden



The artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden in her studio; she had three major presentations of her work in New York this year. Hannah Price for The New York Times

Over the last few years, Tiona Nekkia McClodden, 41, “has emerged as one of the most singular artists of our aesthetically rich, free-range time,” Roberta Smith, co-chief art critic of The Times, wrote in her review of McClodden’s exhibition “Mask/Conceal/Carry,” a meditation on guns shown at 52 Walker in TriBeCa this year. Smith called it a “brooding beast of an exhibition, bathed in blue light.”

And that was only one of three major presentations of McClodden’s work in New York in 2022. At the Museum of Modern Art, she presented a room-size fetish-themed tribute to [Brad Johnson](#), a Black gay poet who died in 2011. At the Shed, she celebrated the groundbreaking 1983 festival [Dance Black America](#) with a program that included custom dance floors and video portraits of dancers.

McClodden, who was a star of the 2019 Whitney Biennial (she won the [Bucksbaum Award](#)), emerged as a filmmaker before expanding to boundary-pushing art installations.

Amid the pandemic and the George Floyd protests and counter protests, she decided to learn how to shoot guns, an activity that bore “Mask/Conceal/Carry.” “The statement is that I’m in the world, I didn’t try to run away from my position in this world, and I wanted to be able to defend myself,” [she told The Times](#) this summer.

Escalante-De Mattei, Shanti. "The Defining Artworks of 2022." *ARTnews* (December 15, 2022) [ill.] [online]

ARTnews

The Defining Artworks of 2022



BY THE EDITORS OF ARTNEWS

December 15, 2022 10:51am



GRAPHIC BY KAT BROWN. IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE ARTIST; COURTESY NEON FILMS; ©SIMONE LEIGH/PHOTO TIMOTHY SCHENK/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY; VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; ©OSTRICH ARTS LTD./COURTESY OSTRICH ARTS LTD AND CRISTEA ROBERTS GALLERY, LONDON; COURTESY CHRISTIE'S; VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In 2022, art roared back. Blockbuster exhibitions returned, and the world's top art festivals, including the Venice Biennale and Documenta, did as well. Historical study of past works continued apace, and new artworks were added to the canon. Although artists had been making art with the same passion during the pandemic as they did before, this year the energy was especially palpable.

Across the world this year, artists continued exploring the ways that racism, colonialism, and misogyny shape society, and they did so as vitally as ever. Their work offered powerful views into alternate universes devoid of these poisonous prejudices while also staring down realities that must be contended with.

Along the way, it became obvious that the study of art history must change too. Artists of color and women artists who had been dealing with these topics for decades were suddenly seen anew, and the works they produced seemed ever more notable. With the understanding that nothing is fixed, experts also upended past conceptions about famous works, even at one point discovering that a beloved abstraction had been hanging upside-down for years.

To look back on the past 12 months in art-making, below is a survey of some of the most important artworks made or presented in a new light in 2022.

23 Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *Fig. VIII. W 22mm* (2022)


Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *Fig. VIII. W 22mm*, 2022.

Photo : @Tiona Nekkia McClodden/Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York

Tiona Nekkia McClodden's show at New York's 52 Walker gallery, one of the most talked about exhibitions this year by an emerging artist, featured *Fig. VIII. W 22mm* (2022), for which McClodden used Kydex, an industrial type of plastic used for knife sheathes, among other things, to cover a handgun. The Kydex looks like shrinkwrap, hugging the gun's contours tight. Guns have become as American as apple pie—they've become symbols of either mass violence or Second Amendment rights, depending on who you ask. McClodden, a Black, lesbian artist from Philadelphia who learned how to shoot a gun following the destabilizing events of Covid and the George Floyd protests, doesn't give her weapon a single easily legible reading. Instead, she confronts every possible interpretation, offering it as something fearful, something that can save you, and something that is part of a larger system that can either oppress or empower you. —*Shanti Escalante-De Mattei*

Saltz, Jerry. "The Best New York Art Shows of 2022 Gonzo quilting, Mayan sculpture, and one wild group show made this a great year to hit the galleries.." *Vulture* (December 8, 2022) [ill.] [online]

VULTURE

BEST OF 2022 | 11:43 A.M.

The Best New York Art Shows of 2022
Gonzo quilting, Mayan sculpture, and one
wild group show made this a great year to
hit the galleries.



By Jerry Saltz, New York's senior art critic

Best of 2022

The best entertainment of the year, as chosen by
Vulture's critics.



Henri Matisse, *The Red Studio*, 1911. Photo-Illustration: Rowena Lloyd and Susanna Hayward; Photo: Henri Matisse. *The Red Studio*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 71 1/4" x 7' 2 1/4" (181 x 219.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. © 2022 Succession H. Matisse/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Art still thrills. This year, as I saw more and more work by artists who've long been underrepresented — more women, more so-called outsiders — I felt an uptick in excitement. And we're revisiting stories too, like Matisse's optic wonder *The Red Studio*. For art lovers willing to pore over as much as possible, 2022 shone its ever-loving light on us.

9. Tiona Nekkia McClodden, “MASK/CONCEAL/CARRY,” 52 Walker



Photo: Installation view, Tiona Nekkis McClodden: MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY, July 13—October 8, 2022, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

This standout from the 2019 Whitney Biennial came into her full powers in a show at the excellent new gallery 52 Walker. On hand were paintings based on patterns tracing a guns’ ammo-less firing, videos of the artist walking with a gun tucked into her waistband, and a monochrome work made of black leather with the imprint of the clip from an AR-15 assault rifle embedded in it. Also on hand was a kind of chain-mail headdress, which seemed to raise the dead or act as protective guardian; I saw it as a kind of magic helmet, in the vein of Richard Wagner’s Tarnhelm — a supernatural object in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* that allows the wearer to change their form. This show had that kind of power.

Smith, Roberta. "Best Art of 2022." *The New York Times* (December 7, 2022) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

Best Art of 2022

This was a year whose high points included an adult-feeling Whitney Biennial, a major survey of contemporary Puerto Rican art, and one of the great big-little exhibitions of all time.

By **Holland Cotter and Roberta Smith**

Dec. 7, 2022

ROBERTA SMITH

A Trove of Unexpected Delights



Tiona Nekkia McClodden's "Precision, in spite of a threatening figure," 2022, in her show at 52 Walker. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

Tiona Nekkia McClodden at 52 Walker

More excellence on the commercial gallery front came from 52 Walker, the Zwirner gallery's TriBeCa space, in the form of "Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Mask / Conceal / Carry." There McClodden, one of the most innovative artists of the moment, created a mysterious, unsettling environment in which guns, their handling and firing, their surrounding rituals and body language were broken down to yield abstract paintings, bronze sculpture, small wall reliefs and performance video. It was a gun-haunted show for a gun-haunted nation. (*Read our review of ["Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Mask / Conceal / Carry"](#)*)

Fateman, Johnanna. "Goings On About Town: Tiona Nekkia McClodden." *The New Yorker* (September 19, 2022): 8 [ill.] [print]

THE NEW YORKER

As ever, it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

ART

Bernd and Hilla Becher

This German couple met as art students in Düsseldorf, in 1957. Two years later, they married and embarked on their lifelong project: an exhaustive, profoundly influential photographic typology of industrial architecture (a subject they described as "anonymous sculpture"). The Bechers' singular focus was the imposing water towers, grain elevators, blast furnaces, lime kilns, coal bunkers, steel mills, and frame houses of Western Europe and North America, the world-changing structures that defined the modern era, which they documented passionately, in black-and-white. The Met's posthumous retrospective of the duo's taxonomical epic is the first one with full access to their per-

sonal archive. (Bernd died in 2007 and Hilla in 2015.) A selection of the artists' notes, Polaroid studies, and correspondence lends this otherwise staunchly formalist show, in which people never appear, a human presence. The inclusion of a grid of sixty-four tin squares, a floor piece by the Bechers' friend Carl Andre, from 1976, underscores the pair's affinity with Minimalism and its emphasis on seriality and industrial materials. The show is vast, even unrelenting, and, seen during what will likely be the coolest summer of the rest of our lives, its no-comment index of the abandoned, landscape-marring means of extraction and combustion feels as ominous as it does awe-inspiring.—*Johanna Fateman (Metropolitan Museum of Art; through Nov. 6.)*

Tiona Nekkia McClodden

The unsettling, contemplative show "Mask / Conceal / Carry," at 52 Walker, is the most complex of three exhibitions by this Philadelphia artist, now on view across New York City, which are thematically distinct

but united by their conceptual rigor and their interweaving of emotions, erotics, and politics. At MOMA (in a selection of contemporary works from its collection), McClodden exhibits a B.D.S.M.-inflected video installation from 2017, in which she is seen reciting the poem "On Subjugation," written in 1988, by the late Black gay poet Brad Johnson, while she hangs upside down. At the Shed, a sprawling sculptural installation pairs four portable dance floors with big screens showing films of Black performers. (The piece is an homage to the Brooklyn Academy of Music's legendary Dance Black America festival, held in 1983.) In Tribeca, at 52 Walker, McClodden dispenses with specific historical subjects to more broadly reflect issues of trauma and self-protection. Here, the practice of shooting a gun without ammunition, known as dry-fire training, becomes an aesthetic and rhetorical prompt for video works, drawings, and leather-and-plastic casts of components of an AR-15-style rifle, bathed in ghostly blue light. McClodden opens the show with a framed text denouncing the concept of trigger warnings, committing herself to complexity, in spite of the risk, when she writes, "I'd rather make a statement and stand behind that position, no matter the difficulty."—*J.F. (52 Walker and the Shed; through Oct. 20 and Dec. 11. Ongoing at MOMA.)*

"New York: 1962-1964"

This spectacular historical show of art and documentation addresses an era of season-to-season—at times almost monthly or weekly—advances in painting, sculpture, photography, dance, music, design, fashion, and such hybrid high jinks as "happenings." With Pop art and nascent Minimalism, New York artists were turning no end of tables on solemnly histrionic Abstract Expressionism, which had established the city as the new wheelhouse of creative origination worldwide. Instrumental to the moment was a brilliant critic and curator, Alan Solomon, who, as the director of the Jewish Museum during the years bracketed here, consolidated what he called "The New Art," mounting the first museum retrospectives of the trailblazers Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns and elevating such newbie Pop phenoms as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist in tandem with radically formalist abstract painters like Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland. The eruptive early sixties launched many folks on all sorts of trajectories. Some artists, at the margins of fame, hung fire for unjustly belated recognition, as demonstrated here by the achievements of the Spiral Group, a cadre of stylistically diverse Black artists who banded together in 1963. Few women at the time were given their due, which should accrue to them in retrospect. A garish relief painting, from 1963, by the underknown Marjorie Strider, of a glamour girl chomping on a huge red radish, could serve as an icon of Pop glee and sexual impertinence crossed with proto-feminist vexation.—*Peter Schjeldahl (Jewish Museum; through Jan. 8.)*

"Water Memories"

The Lakota expression *mni wičóŋi*—"water is life"—was heard around the world during

AT THE GALLERIES



Fifty years ago, a posthumous retrospective of a New York photographer broke attendance records for a one-person show at MOMA. Crowds lined up around the block to see a hundred and thirteen black-and-white pictures by Diane Arbus, a relative unknown whose brilliance was already an open secret among her peers. (Before she took her own life, in 1971, at the age of forty-eight, Arbus had few collectors, but they included Richard Avedon, Jasper Johns, and Mike Nichols.) The exhibition generated both rave reviews and hot takes; dissecting Susan Sontag's scathing essay "Freak Show," published in 1973, is now almost an academic subgenre unto itself. On Sept. 14, the Zwirner gallery, in collaboration with Fraenkel, in San Francisco, opens "Cataclysm: The 1972 Diane Arbus Retrospective Revisited," reuniting all the images from the exhibition ("Woman with a veil on Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C. 1968," above, among them). It's accompanied by the new publication "Diane Arbus: Documents," a doorstop scrapbook that reproduces a half century's worth of writing about an artist who, as Avedon once observed, "made the act of looking an act of such intelligence, that to look at so-called ordinary things is to become responsible for what you see."—*Andrea K. Scott*

Fateman, Johanna. "Goings On About Town: Tiona Nekkia McClodden." *The New Yorker* (September 2022) [ill.] [online]

THE NEW YORKER

ART

Tiona Nekkia McClodden

The unsettling, contemplative show “Mask / Conceal / Carry,” at 52 Walker, is the most complex of three exhibitions by this Philadelphia artist, now on view across New York City, which are thematically distinct but united by their conceptual rigor and their interweaving of emotions, erotics, and politics. At MOMA (in a selection of contemporary works from its collection), McClodden exhibits a B.D.S.M.-inflected video installation from 2017, in which she is seen reciting the poem “On Subjugation,” written in 1988, by the late Black gay poet Brad Johnson, while she hangs upside down. At the Shed, a sprawling sculptural installation pairs four portable dance floors with big screens showing films of Black performers. (The piece is an homage to the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s legendary Dance Black America festival, held in 1983.) In Tribeca, at 52 Walker, McClodden dispenses with specific historical subjects to more broadly reflect issues of trauma and self-protection. Here, the practice of shooting a gun without ammunition, known as dry-fire training, becomes an aesthetic and rhetorical prompt for video works, drawings, and leather-and-plastic cast objects, such as the components of an AR-15-style rifle, bathed in ghostly blue light. McClodden opens the show with a framed text denouncing the concept of trigger warnings, committing herself to complexity, in spite of the risk, when she writes, “I’d rather make a statement and stand behind that position, no matter the difficulty.”

— *Johanna Fateman*

Jul. 20-Oct. 20

📍 52 Walker
52 Walker St.
Downtown

212-727-1961

[Website](#)

David Zwirner

Luo, Shuyin. 'Live | New York 52 Walker Holds Slash Youth Tiona Nekkia McClodden Solo Exhibition.' *Artron*. (Aug 30, 2022). [ill.] [online]



Live | New York 52 Walker Holds Slash Youth Tiona Nekkia McClodden Solo Exhibition

Tiona Nekkia McClodden

Veil / Concealment / Endure

52 Walker Street

Exhibition Dates: July 13-October 8, 2022 New York





Installation view, Tiona Nekkia McClodden: *MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY*, July 13—October 8, 2022, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

McClodden can be described as a slash youth in the contemporary art world, born in the 1980s, currently working and living in Philadelphia. Not only does her work involve a variety of media, including film, sculpture, painting, and installation, she is also versatile. In addition to the creation of visual arts, she is also a filmmaker, curator, writer, and performs dance as part of her artistic creation. McClodden's current solo show *Veil/Hide/Understand*

Now being held at 52 Walker, this is also 52 Walker's fourth exhibition since it opened last year.





Installation view, Tiona Nekkia McClodden: MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY, July 13—October 8, 2022, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

Veil//Hide/Understand, which also includes works in various media forms. The exhibition site is shrouded in dim blue light, and the appearance of the exhibits is not intended to be clearly displayed to the audience. Only a few black objects can be recognized, but it is very clear that people realize that they are all in a state of melting. McClodden incorporates the meanings of "veil" and "unveiled" into the exhibition at the same time, trying to abandon the idea of social assimilationists - suppressing individuality and trying to make oneself normal, which is what most people are like. This is closely related to the "concealment" in the theme of the exhibition.

The exhibition also touches on the concept of "extreme training" in fitness, which advocates breaking the physical limits of the body during weight training, intentionally breaking muscles to stimulate new muscle growth. McClodden also uses extreme training methods when exercising, so she introduced this concept into her works to express the fragile boundary between pain and pleasure of the human body. "Extreme Training" and "Empty Gun Shooting" - the use of empty guns to

David Zwirner

improve shooting accuracy is also combined in the exhibition. In the ballistic bullseye work, McClodden uses his own shooting data to draw on Belgian linen Target, and engraved words, meaning that language is the initiator of violence!

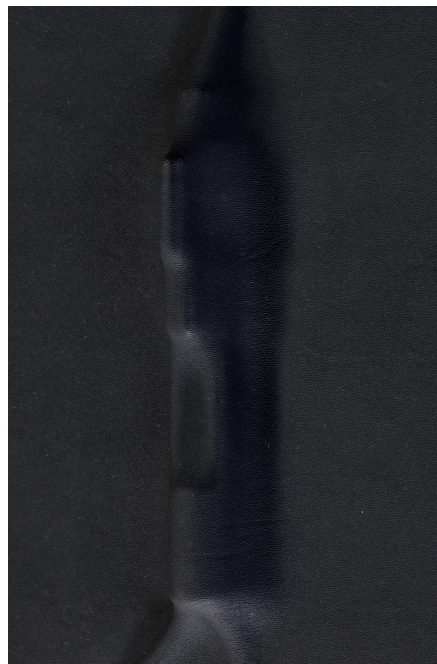
The Figures collection includes several embossed pieces, such as pistols, as well as AF15 rifle accessories vacuum compressed in thermoplastic and leather. Repeating the "veil" and "concealment", the artist casts a luxurious chainmail out of pure gold and silver, creating a strong contrast between war and beauty. The masks and reliefs in the exhibition echo each other in meaning, as do the bronzes, some of which were created by artists and others based on precious antiquities that exist today, such as the 19th-century British invasion of the Kingdom of Benin (now southwestern Nigeria.) looted Benin bronzes (the Horniman Museum in London, UK, has agreed to return 72 works of art to Nigeria, including the Benin bronzes). Tiona uses these works as a metaphor for African culture, not only alluding to the ancestral experiences of African peoples, but also to those who used violence, and their behavior in places and times.



In the artist's studio, 2022 © Tiona Nekkia McClodden Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, THE FIEFS OF RUTHFUL SPECTERS - DRUMMER Oh how we will die for you, a thousand deaths, drums for the god till our hands bleed, endlessly, 2022 © Tiona Nekkia McClodden Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, Fig. I. AR15 Bolt Carrier Group, 2022 (detail) © Tiona Nekkia McClodden Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, MASK CONCEAL CARRY, 2022 © Tiona Nekkia McClodden
Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, Precision, in spite of a threatening figure, 2022 (still) © Tiona Nekkia
McClodden Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York

David Zwirner

Tiona Nekkia McClodden is currently represented by Mitchell-Innes & Nash Gallery, and her works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Rennie Museum in Vancouver. Tiona also founded the Conceptual Fade art exhibition space and library in Philadelphia, USA.

(Editor in charge: Luo Shuyin)

Harper, Daria. “‘I’ll Learn From the Master and Then Break the Form’: How Tiona Nekkia McClodden Expanded Her Role From Artist to Cultural Historian.” *Artnet News* (August 24, 2022) [ill.] [online]

artnet® news

‘I’ll Learn From the Master and Then Break the Form’: How Tiona Nekkia McClodden Expanded Her Role From Artist to Cultural Historian

The filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist’s work crystalize the values, ideas, and beliefs of the African Diaspora.

Daria Harper, August 24, 2022



Tiona Nekkia McClodden. Photo: Jon Henry. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden, who first garnered recognition for her work as a filmmaker, is experiencing a moment of well-deserved praise within the art world. Perhaps most notably, the artist amassed critical acclaim for *I prayed to the wrong god for you*, her contribution to the 2019 Whitney Biennial. Now, with a solo exhibition at David Zwirner's outpost on 52 Walker Street, an extensive curatorial presentation at The Shed, and an installation on view at MoMA, McClodden's momentum and impact are more palpable than ever.

McClodden's commitment to deciphering society's complexities through visual mediums was sparked at an early age, and her love for filmmaking and mining history in various forms can be traced back to a source that's familiar to many: public television.

"I was a PBS kid," the artist recalled in a recent interview with Artnet News. "I watched a lot of documentaries and the first form of filmmaking that I wanted to do was documentary filmmaking." The Philadelphia-based artist also pointed to her father's purchase of a set of Encyclopedia Britannica and National Geographic magazines as an especially mind-opening experience in her formative years. "I don't know if people even know what those are anymore," she added, laughing.

The artist also reminisced about frequently seeing her father taking photographs and getting them developed throughout her childhood. Eventually, she was the one with the camera in her hand, evidenced in old family photos. "I have several pictures of me as a child with a camera, and I actually remember taking the pictures that I have," she said.



Installation view, "Tiona Nekkia McClodden: MASK/CONCEAL/CARRY", July 13–October 8, 2022, 52 Walker, New York. Courtesy 52 Walker, New York.

Now with an expansive practice comprised of film, installation, painting, and sculpture, McClodden interrogates constructions of race, gender, and sexuality with acute precision and care. A practitioner of the Afro-Cuban religion, Santería, exploration of spirituality also figures into her work. The artist is deeply interested in examining the shared ideas, values, and beliefs throughout the African Diaspora, something that she calls, "Black mentifact." Mentifact, a term frequently used in anthropological fields, generally refers to the cultural traits of a group of people.

"It helps me to remain reverential to a core knowledge of Black intellectual thought across age, background, you name it," McClodden explained. The artist's ongoing research around the Black mentifact also led to her thinking about the line between truth versus fact. "What someone will tell you about something that happened is usually very different from somebody showing you the documentation of something that happened," she explained. "I like that and I like truth."

McClodden has maintained a relatively prominent profile in the years leading up to this current trio of offerings. In 2018, she held a residency at the prestigious Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in Maine, and received the \$100,000 Bucksbaum Award for her 2019 Whitney Biennial work. She was also awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fine Arts in 2019 and is the recipient of the 2021-23 Princeton Arts Fellowship.

Like much of McClodden's oeuvre, "MASK/CONCEAL/CARRY," on view at 52 Walker through October 8, is imbued with a tangible sense of tension. The show hinges on a phrase from the world of weight training—"train to failure"—which holds that, in order to make progress, you need to carry more weight than you can handle. While the exhibition title might initially call to mind conversations around gun policy in the U.S., this body of work is, in many ways, an introspective and intimate reflection.



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *Precision, in spite of a threatening figure*, 2022 (still). © Tiona Nekkia McClodden. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

Drawing some inspiration from McClodden's experience procuring her weapon carry license two years ago, the show debuts a new series of paintings, a handcrafted chain-mail facial covering, and videos. Set to an ominous score with a deep blue lighting filling the gallery space, the culminating installation deals with dichotomous ideas of rage/composure, masking/unmasking, concealment/disclosure.

In a recent interview, Ebony L. Haynes, senior director at 52 Walker, detailed the multiplicitous nature of the exhibition, down to its title. "Each word has multiple meanings and can be applied very formally, very abstractly," she said. "Whether concealing something, carrying the weight of something, masking something, or masking oneself."

The pair, who first met back in 2018, worked together when Haynes included McClodden's film *black./womyn.:conversations with lesbians of African descent* (2008) in her blockbuster program "EBSPLOITATION" at Martos Gallery. Widely regarded as the artist's breakout work, the film features interviews with nearly 50 Black lesbians, and aimed to facilitate intersectional and intergenerational dialogue about the portrayal of Black lesbians throughout media and society.

Haynes spoke about McClodden's craftsmanship and dedication to both the labor and research behind her art. "I'm constantly amazed at how much effort and time she puts into thinking about the best way to present the work," Haynes explained recently.

Equally important to McClodden's work are her curatorial practice, and her commitment to scholarship and writing (she is also a recipient of the 2022 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant). At The Shed, McClodden has curated the exhibition, "The Trace of an Implied Presence," which takes an extensive dive into contemporary Black dance in America, inspired by the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 1983 festival Dance Black America.

Co-produced by Nike, the presentation centers around a multichannel installation of video portraits, with each screen accompanied by a custom dance floor. Viewers are encouraged to use the floors and document themselves doing so at any time throughout the exhibition. McClodden has also developed a series of programming alongside the show, including conversations and performances by several of its featured subjects. One event invites audience members to participate in a dance class led by subjects Audrey and June Donaldson. The couple will teach a popular Black social dance, and the official dance of Philadelphia, called the Philly Bop.



Installation view, Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *The Brad Johnson Tape, X – On Subjugation* (2017). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital Image © 2022 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Robert Gerhardt.

Meanwhile, McClodden's installation, *The Brad Johnson Tape, X – On Subjugation*, [now on view at MoMA](#), is a dedication to the late poet, whose work interrogates notions of sex and violence through his lens as a Black gay man. For the installation, originally created in 2017, McClodden created a video in which she recites Johnson's 1988 poem "On Subjugation," while hanging suspended in her studio. Surrounding the video are materials which reflect the poet's personal story and sexuality including rose petals and leather objects used in BDSM (bondage, domination, sadism, masochism).

"I'll go learn from the master and then I might come and do something that breaks the form," McClodden said of her practice in a recent video produced by The Shed. And her ability to complicate and innovate, both formally and conceptually, while honoring origins, means McClodden continues to expand her role in the art world, from an influential artist to that of historian and cultural custodian.

Smith, Roberta. "Her Art Comes Without Trigger Warnings." *The New York Times* (August 19, 2022): C7 [ill.] [print]

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2022

11

C7

Fine Art

ROBERTA SMITH | ART REVIEW



SCULPTURE: TIONA NEKKIA MCCLODDEN; VIDEO: TIONA NEKKIA MCCLODDEN AT WALKER

Her Art Comes Without Trigger Warnings

Tiona Nekkia McCladden's new show is a multidimensional meditation on guns as weapons and as sources for her work.

Above left, a work titled "If you had ever thought that you saw me let me know you that you have not seen me as I know my self because I have not found you worthy of this image," and above right, an image from the video "Precision, in Spite of a Threatening Figure." At right, from left, "Fig. V. AR15 Magazine Launcher," and "A Study in Qualification #6.5 AR15 / 97.6 AR15 / 8.1 AR15 / 96.9 2mm / 92.8 AK." Below, from left, a two-channel video "To Wind One's Way ...," and "Cats a Dark Figure ..."

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, Tiona Nekkia McCladden has emerged as one of the most singular artists of our aesthetically rich, free-range time. She announced her presence with a standout piece in the 2019 Whitney Biennial — which received its Bucksbaum Award — and has continued her rise with two impressive gallery solos, one at Company, on the Lower East Side in late 2019, and another currently at 52 Walker in Tribeca.

Like any true artist, McCladden makes work that derives from the complex, multifaceted nature of her identity, who she is and has become: a Black woman, a lesbian drawn to weight training and BDSM play, a priestess of Santería. She studied film in the early 2000s, becoming known as an underground filmmaker before turning to video installation and sculpture.

McCladden's works are meticulously grounded in their physical nature, evidenced by the way she always enumerates their material components. This precision is exemplified by the 120-word list of objects and materials that make up her 2017 installation "Brad Johnson, Tape X — on Subjugation," at the Museum of Modern Art. She is clearly not sympathetic to such vagueness as "mixed media."

At times these entries convey a startling tenderness and intimacy, as they do in "Mask / Console / Carry," her current exhibition at 52 Walker — a multidimensional meditation on guns. Here a leather case of the small oblong magazine of an AR-15 assault rifle is described as made of "leather with black dye, Sapfir shoe polish, and spit." Unlike anything else at 52 Walker these materials nod to her Company exhibition, where they figured in nearly every piece.

The Company show was one of the best shows by an emerging artist I'd ever seen. Its array of black leather objects against stark white walls crackled with interlocking ideas and references to different subcultures and fetishizations — from BDSM to modern art — that only increased as you looked.

The objects included biker jackets, linen harnesses, an English saddle — all readymades darkened and unified by the added shoe polish. A Marcel Breuer Wassily chair (1925-26), emblematic of high modernism, made us see the rectangles of leather on the walls as abstract paintings, evoking Kazimir Malevich's famous black squares liberated from their white backgrounds. The mind stammered along these allusions linking skin, blackness, modernism,



Tiona Nekkia McCladden: "Mask / Console / Carry" Through Oct. 8 at 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan; 212-727-1961, 52walker.com.

death, and the empowerment of a constructed persona. In retrospect, the Company show's title, "Hold on, let me take the safety off," pointed directly to "Mask / Console / Carry."

The 52 Walker show lacks the immediate clarity and black-against-white sparkle of its predecessor. In contrast it dwells in an almost aqueous blue twilight, but it bites off more. Combining painting, sculpture, video, performance and language, it creates a portrait of the artist and her art within a larger view of American life.

It begins with a printed statement on the wall — an artwork titled "I Don't Believe in Trigger Warnings Anymore," with which McCladden tersely dismisses the notion that anyone is responsible for anyone else's sense of safety in artistic realms.

And it unfolds as an extended demonstration of how McCladden takes care of herself — what she does to feel safe — and how these habits have moved from her life into her art, coming to center on guns.

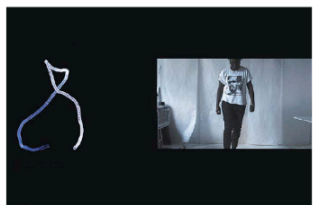
This means guns as omnipresent in American society, as alternately threat and protection. It means guns as objects whose parts and processes can yield artworks, and a similar focus on the rituals surrounding both their safe use and their fetishization, namely the firing range. Prominent among these rituals is "dry firing" — digitally analyzed target practice without ammunition. McCladden converts handguns and parts of larger guns into reliefs using a plastic called Kydex that records but also softens and abstracts each object's form. Parts of larger guns cast in bronze with black patina yield alluring but overly mysterious sculptures on pedestals. Amid them is an anomalous scene-stealer: a gorgeous masked helmet of chain mail, made in silver, gold and stainless steel thread (and "sweat," the checklist says). Its long title expresses an empowering anger while also recalling the

marginal Tarbelen of Wagner's "Ring," which gave its wearer the power of invisibility. (The chain mail helmet also compares the Crusades, the beginning of Western colonialism.)

Dry firing target practice results in the seven seemingly abstract paintings here; a laser and computer program translate the infinitesimal movements of a shooter's hand into jumpy Twombly-esque scribbles. McCladden has transferred the records of her practice sessions to canvas, evoking modern art (specifically automatism) while liberating the shooter's skills to the painter's.

McCladden's videos add crucial life, light, shifting sounds and music to the show. "Cats a Dark Figure ...," centers on an enlarged view of the outer oven in which the artist heats the Kydex for use, but memorably resembles a life-size coffin or sarcophagus. In the two-channel "To Wind One's Way ...," McCladden is seen alone in her studio, walking but getting nowhere — Naudin-esque activity, pursued on a treadmill it seems. She looks buff and assured in her signature white T-shirt and bluejeans, occasionally shifting a pistol in her waistband, nonchalance at ease. On the work's second screen her movements, again recorded by computerized lasers, register as looping, twisting, animated lines suggestive of abstract film.

In the video "Precision, in Spite of a Threatening Figure," the scribbles appear again, this time on photographs of people aiming guns in our direction, some from cars, the aisles of liquor stores or fictive hostage situations, others against blank backgrounds. These random images — creepily available online and used as targets in police and military training — are mostly of white people who frequently seem lost, maybe delusional. Gathered by McCladden into art, they accidentally join a tradition that includes photographs of Americans by Walker Evans, Robert Frank and Diane Arbus, and they can make you fear for this country.



Smith, Roberta. "Her Art Comes Without Trigger Warnings." *The New York Times* (August 18, 2022) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

Her Art Comes Without Trigger Warnings

Tiona Nekkia McClodden's new show is a multidimensional meditation on guns as weapons and as sources for her work.



View of Tiona Nekkia McClodden's show "Mask / Conceal / Carry." Left, "If you had ever thought that you saw me let me assure you that you have not seen me as I know my self because I have not found you worthy of this image," 2022. At right, an image from the video "Precision, in Spite of a Threatening Figure," 2022. via 52 Walker, New York

By Roberta Smith

Aug. 18, 2022, 4:49 p.m. ET

In the last three years, Tiona Nekkia McClodden has emerged as one of the most singular artists of our aesthetically rich, free-range time. She announced her presence with a standout piece in the 2019 Whitney Biennial — which received its [Bucksbaum Award](#) — and has continued her rise with two impressive gallery solos, one at Company, a gallery on the Lower East Side in late 2019, and another currently at 52 Walker Street in TriBeCa.

Like any true artist, McClodden’s work derives from the complex, multifaceted nature of her identity, who she is and has become: a Black woman, a lesbian drawn to weight training and BDSM play, a priestess of Santeria. She studied film in the early 2000s, becoming known as an underground filmmaker before turning to video installation and sculpture.

McClodden’s works are meticulously grounded in their physical nature, evidenced by the way she always enumerates their material components. This precision is exemplified by the 120-word list of objects and materials comprising her 2017 installation “[Brad Johnson, Tape X — on Subjugation,](#)” at the Museum of Modern Art. She is clearly not sympathetic to such vagueness as “mixed media.”

At times these entries convey a startling tenderness and intimacy, as they do in [“Mask / Conceal / Carry,”](#) her current exhibition at 52 Walker — a multidimensional meditation on guns. Here a leather cast of the small oblong magazine of an AR15 assault rifle is described as made of “leather with black dye, Saphir shoe polish, and spit.” Unlike anything else at 52 Walker these materials nod to her Company exhibition, where they figured in nearly every piece.



“Fig. V. AR15 Magazine Leather,” 2022, a small relief in “leather with black dye, Saphir shoe polish, and spit.” via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

The Company show was one of the best shows by an emerging artist I'd ever seen. Its array of black leather objects against stark white walls crackled with intersecting ideas and references to different subcultures and fetishizations — from BDSM to modern art — that only increased as you looked.

The objects included biker jackets, lineman harnesses, an English saddle — all readymades darkened and unified by the added shoe polish. A Marcel Breuer Wassily chair (1925-26), emblematic of high modernism, made us see the rectangles of leather on the walls as abstract paintings, evoking [Kazimir Malevich's](#) famous black squares liberated from their white backgrounds. The mind skittered along these allusions linking skin, blackness, modernism, death, and the empowerment of a constructed persona. In retrospect, the Company show's title, "Hold on, let me take the safety off," pointed directly to "Mask / Conceal / Carry."

The 52 Walker show lacks the immediate clarity and black-against-white sparkle of its predecessor. In contrast it dwells in an almost aqueous blue twilight, but it bites off more. Combining painting, sculpture, relief, video, performance and language it creates a portrait of the artist and her art within a larger view of American life.



Installation view of McClodden's 2019 show at Company Gallery: black leather unified with black shoe polish. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and Company Gallery, New York

It begins with a printed statement on the wall — an artwork titled “I Don’t Believe in Trigger Warnings Anymore,” with which McClodden tersely dismisses the notion that anyone is responsible for anyone else’s sense of safety in artistic realms.

And it unfolds as an extended demonstration of how McClodden takes care of herself — what she does to feel safe — and how these habits have moved from her life into her art, coming to center on guns.

This means guns as omnipresent in American society, as alternately threat and protection. It means guns as objects whose parts and processes can yield artworks, and a similar focus on the rituals surrounding both their safe use and their fetishization, namely the firing range. Prominent among these rituals is “dry firing” — digitally analyzed target practice without ammunition.



“A Study in Qualification 89.9 AR15 / 97.6 AR15 / 98.1 AR15 / 95.9 22mm / 92.9 AR”
(2022): five squiggles from five bullet-free shots, on view at 52 Walker. via Tiona Nekkia
McClodden and 52 Walker, New York



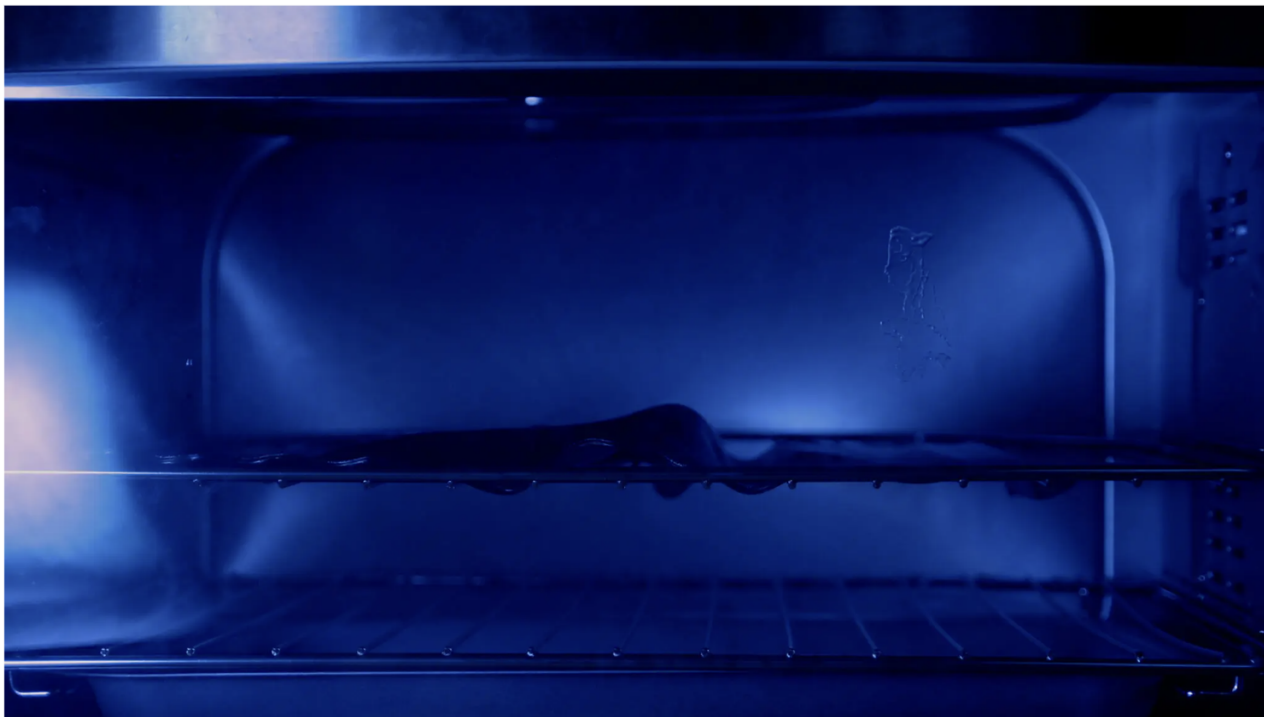
“Fig. VIII. W 22mm” (2022), Black Kydex. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

McClodden converts handguns and parts of larger guns into reliefs using a plastic called Kydex that records but also softens and abstracts each object’s form. Parts of larger guns cast in bronze with black patina yield alluring but overly mysterious sculptures on pedestals. Amid them is an anomalous scene-stealer: a gorgeous masked helmet of chain mail, made in silver, gold and stainless steel thread (and “sweat,” the checklist says). Its long title

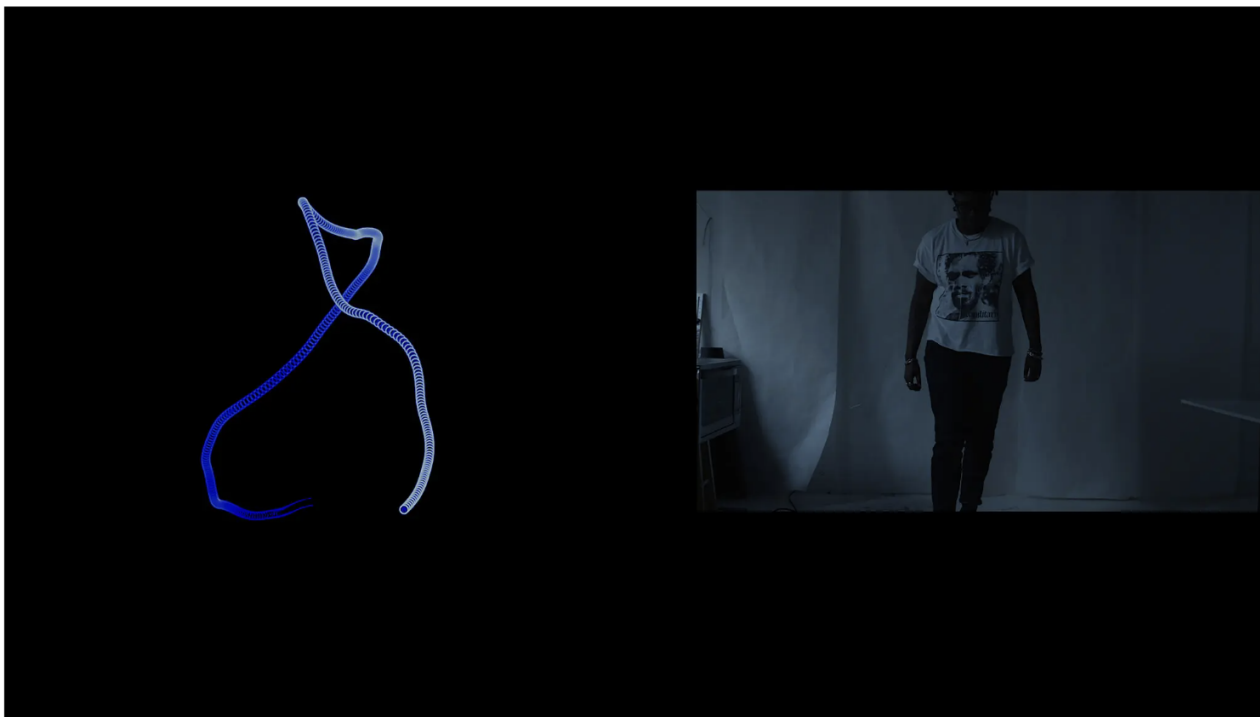
expresses an empowering anger while also recalling the magical Tarnhelm of Wagner's "Ring," which gave its wearer the power of invisibility. (The chain mail helmet also conjures the Crusades, the beginning of Western colonialism.)

Dry firing target practice results in the seven seemingly abstract paintings here; a laser and computer program translate the infinitesimal movements of a shooter's hand into jumpy Twomblyesque scribbles. McClodden has transferred the records of her practice sessions to canvas, evoking modern art (specifically automatism) while likening the shooter's skills to the painter's.

McClodden's videos add crucial life, light, shifting sounds and music to the show. "Cuts a Dark Figure ..." centers on an enlarged view of the toaster oven in which the artist heats the Kydex for use, but memorably resembles a life-size coffin or sarcophagus. In the two-channel "To Wend One's Way...", McClodden is seen alone in her studio, walking but getting nowhere — Naumanesque activity, pursued on a treadmill it seems. She looks buff and assured in her signature white T-shirt and bluejeans, occasionally shifting a pistol in her waistband, nonchalantly at ease. On the work's second screen her movements, again recorded by computerized lasers, register as looping, twisting, animated lines suggestive of abstract film.



In “Cuts a Dark Figure ..” (2022), a toaster oven heating Kydex evokes an occupied sarcophagus. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York



A two-channel video “To Wend One’s Way ..” (2022) features McClodden walking in her studio next to a computerized tracing of her movements. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

In the video “Precision, in Spite of a Threatening Figure,” the scribbles appear again, this time on photographs of people aiming guns in our direction, some from cars, the aisles of liquor stores or fictive hostage situations, others against blank backgrounds. These random images — creepily available online and used as targets in police and military training — are mostly of white people who frequently seem lost, maybe delusional. Gathered by McClodden into art, they accidentally join a tradition that includes photographs of Americans by Walker Evans, Robert Frank and Diane Arbus, and they can make you fear for this country.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Mask/ Conceal / Carry

Through Oct. 8, 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan [\(212\) 727-1961](tel:(212)727-1961);
52walker.com.

A version of this article appears in print on Aug. 19, 2022, Section C, Page 7 of the New York edition with the headline: Her Art Comes Without Trigger Warnings. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Dowling, Danielle. "5 Things to Do This Weekend." *The New York Times* (August 5, 2022) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

5 Things to Do This Weekend



Danielle Dowling
Seeking the arts everywhere

"If 'social change' even creeps into my work, I'm destroying it," says the artist Tiona McClodden, whose exhibition **"Mask/Conceal/Carry"** is on view at 52 Walker in Manhattan through Oct. 8. She also has installations currently at the Museum of Modern Art and the Shed.

[Read our profile.](#)

via 52 Walker, New York



Mitter, Siddhartha. "Tiona Nekkia McClodden Is Not Running Away." *The New York Times* (August 4, 2022) [ill.] [online]

The New York Times

Tiona Nekkia McClodden Is Not Running Away

An artist's journey to establish her position in the world took her to the shooting range and produced a bold, original show.



Tiona Nekkia McClodden at her studio in Philadelphia. Her newest gallery show, "Mask/Conceal/Carry," at 52 Walker in New York, includes shooting targets used for dry firing (without ammunition), right, and a series of banners, left. Hannah Price for The New York Times

By **Siddhartha Mitter**

Aug. 4, 2022, 12:39 p.m. ET

PHILADELPHIA — The artist [Tiona Nekkia McClodden](#) hit the gun range on a sweltering Monday in July. The air was sticky inside the facility, but her routine would not be denied. She shoots every week and avoids weekends, when the range gets crowded and loud with men firing off assault-type rifles, inviting sensory overload.

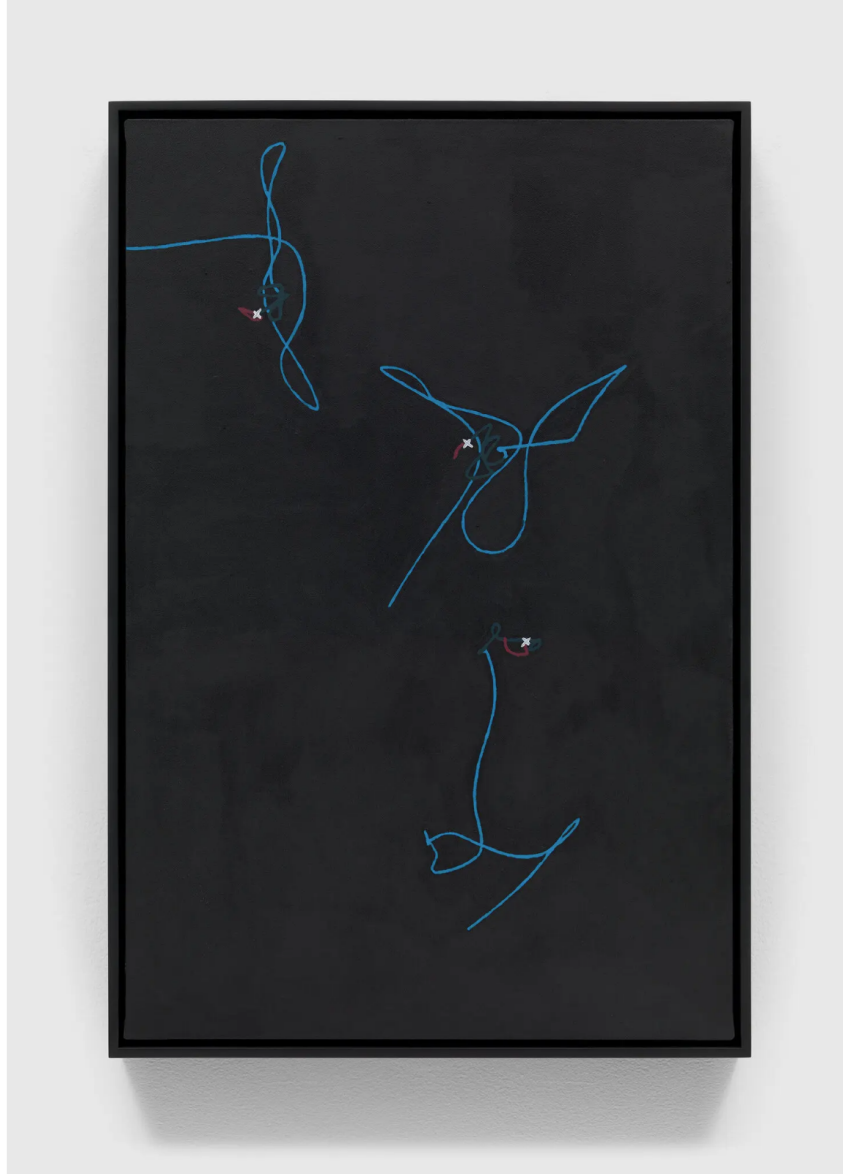
It might be a familiar activity for some Americans. Less so for an artist. But McClodden, 41, a [star of the 2019 Whitney Biennial](#) who has three major presentations of work now up in New York City — at [52 Walker](#), [the Shed](#), and the [Museum of Modern Art](#) — didn't purchase guns and get her carry license two years ago with art in mind. At least at first.

She did it — like many other Black Philadelphians, she recalls — after the pandemic drained the streets, and then the George Floyd protests and counter-protests filled them with interlopers and a sense of swirling violence. Safety and self-defense were her concerns.

The staff at the range greeted her warmly — she trained here, earning her membership. She bought ammunition and paper targets with pink silhouettes or multiple oval bull's-eyes. At her lane, she took out her three handguns — a Walther .22 with a Glock and Smith & Wesson, both 9-millimeters — and placed them before her, with care.

“Every bullet that I load, I'm breathing through it,” she said. “I'm adjusting to being in the space. There's a protocol.”

An hour later, McClodden was headed to her studio in North Philadelphia. She had concluded her target practice, as always, with a sequence where she drew methodically, before each shot, to break the machine-like spell of firing without pause. This put the human stakes directly in her thoughts — reminding her that this isn't a game. “There's life there,” she said.



McClodden's "A Study in Qualification 93.8 Smith + Wesson 9mm / 91.2 Smith + Wesson 9mm / 90.2 Smith + Wesson 9mm," 2022. She traced in paint the data gathered from a shot she fired. "It's like a graphic score," she said. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

It wasn't for art — but art happened anyway. The result is "Mask/Conceal/Carry," a brooding beast of an exhibition, bathed in blue light, at 52 Walker, the David Zwirner space in TriBeCa.

It finds McClodden, who emerged as a filmmaker before expanding to installations, at her formal broadest, including videos, sculptures, bronzes, text and her first painting series. But its theme is tight: An artist's journey through shooting to confront herself and establish her position in the world — in all the facets of her identity.

Bold, frequently jarring, the exhibition forms a kind of triptych this season with McClodden's other Manhattan presentations: a room-size installation at MoMA that is a tribute to [Brad Johnson](#), a Black gay poet who died in 2011, with a bondage and fetish theme; and at the Shed, a sweeping program she curated on the history of Black dance.

The result is three ways to meet an artist who may be America's most essential today, one who is adamantly individual and searingly frank about race, gender, sexuality, spiritual life and more — the better to carve a responsible role in the culture. Celebrating a forgotten figure like Johnson, or an entire field like Black dance, is her way to acknowledge and renew artistic lineages — a kind of accountability.

“This is all a practice in not being ignorant,” she said. “Period.”



A bronze casting by the artist of a drum magazine, a high-capacity container that holds 50 shots. “The Fiefs of Ruthful Specters — Drummer. Oh how we will die for you, a thousand deaths, drums for the god till our hands bleed, endlessly,” 2022. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York



Masking is a recurrent theme in McClodden's work. The title is “If you had ever thought that you saw me let me assure you that you have not seen me as I know my self because I have not found you worthy of this image,” 2022. via Tiona Nekkia McClodden and 52 Walker, New York

On the wall by her desk were her talismans — a poem by Johnson, a photograph of Jean-Michel Basquiat, and a dark object that bristled with short vertical spikes. It was a rustic tool used to remove seeds from cotton, redolent with associations with Black labor. “It’s the most painful thing in the studio,” she said. “I have it there because it’s a representation of a feeling — something that causes me immense distress but is almost unseen.”

Topping one pile of books was “[Unmasking Autism](#),” a new work by the psychologist Devon Price. Back in 2001, McClodden said, a doctor suggested that she was on the autism spectrum but she dismissed the idea. “I took it as a negative,” she said. But in 2019 she received a diagnosis — it took time and was expensive — and she continues to embrace its insights.

“I hid for a long time,” she said. She lived with the symptoms — overstimulation, nonverbal periods, confrontational behavior — while forging on with her art. Now it offers guidance. “I’ve decided to match my lived experience as a person with autism, at the intersection of a lot of identities, as a constant state of discomfort,” she said. “So the work has to be uncomfortable.”

Her autism experience played a role in the alchemy of events that produced “Mask/Conceal/Carry” (and adds another layer of meaning to the title). When she started training to shoot, the noise and action were overwhelming. “My sensory issues sent me out of the range,” she said. “I couldn’t get the sound off my skin.”



On her Philadelphia studio wall is stenciled text on canvas from a new series rotating through the show. Some read like mantras. "It's from a training on how to live with difference," said McClodden, who in 2019 received a diagnosis on the autism spectrum. Hannah Price for The New York Times



In the studio are a toaster oven and a vacuum press for making sculptures out of Kydex, a synthetic material used for gun cases. Hannah Price for The New York Times

To ready herself, she took up dry firing — shooting without ammunition — in the studio. A phone app measured data from a node on the gun and she incorporated the information in paintings: They are black with a few squiggles in blue, green, white or red segments, tracing in paint the data report on a shot. “I can feel in my body everything that I see here,” she said. “It’s like a graphic score.”

In the studio were a toaster oven and a vacuum press for making sculptures out of Kydex, a synthetic material often used for gun cases. On the studio wall were stenciled texts on canvas, from a new series. Some read like mantras: “Train to Failure,” “Hold Everything At Once.”

“It’s from a training on how to live with difference,” she explained. Other messages to herself — “Black Insanity on the Ledge of a Death Star” — had a wilder feel. “It’s almost like the name of a punk band,” she said.

The books in her library suggest other influences on the show, including titles on trauma and race; the sculptor [Nancy Grossman](#), whose heads evoke ritualistic bondage; the Benin bronzes, and W.E.B. Du Bois’s pioneering data portraits of Black America. “He’s able to deliver information about the dire circumstances of an entire group of people,” she said.

Shopping online for targets, McClodden discovered a world of photographs of staged scenes: a shooter behind a car, a hostage situation. They are often used in law enforcement training and she was intrigued that almost all the figures were white. She made a video where a sequence of images reveal a single dark silhouette beneath these characters.

But McClodden is here to observe, not to opine. Sure, she has views — she supports “[red flag](#)” laws that would prevent potentially dangerous people from owning guns; opposes gun access for minors, and “wouldn’t mind” an assault rifle ban. But this is not a show about gun policy.



“Precision, in Spite of a Threatening Figure,” 2022, a still, from her installation at 52 Walker using a staged scene from law enforcement training. via Tiona Nekkia McClodde and 52 Walker, New York

“I’m not interested in articulating or taking on grief for the larger society, as a Black woman,” she said. “I’m telling you how I sleep well at night. This is the regimen that I took to know of this time.”

Ebony L. Haynes, the director of 52 Walker, who curated the exhibition, said that the show may feel well-timed but that it is not about the news. “The material that Tiona is working through has a long history that is important to uncover,” Haynes said.

“If ‘social change’ even creeps into my work,” McClodden said, “I’m destroying it.”

McClodden has a samurai-like reputation in the art world, reinforced by her choice to remain in Philadelphia — where she has turned her studio annex into a micro-gallery and reading room called [Conceptual Fade](#) — and to keep distance from the New York art scene. Her friends pull between expressing their own admiration and pointing to her lighter sides.

“You use thumbtacks, Tiona uses a razor blade,” [Sadie Barnette](#), who shared residency time with her in 2018 at the Skowhegan School, said of her precision. At the same time, “she’s this person who drinks fancy whisky, D.J.s the best party of the summer, and is kind.”

“People are scared!” the artist [Kevin Beasley](#) said. “She has that ability to tighten up the space just by entering the room.” He added, “She’s the audience you want to have, someone who makes you more conscious of the decisions you make.”

McClodden talks frankly about her edge. “I’ve worked on some of my difficulty,” she said, “because I had to understand what it is.”



Installation view of “Mask/Conceal/Carry” at 52 Walker includes banners, objects and a series of paintings involving data from firing exercises. via 52 Walker, New York

She grew up in Greenville, S.C. The family had times of instability and transience. She was smart and drawn to photography, and gravitated to the punk scene. She enrolled at Clark Atlanta University but dropped out.

She is lesbian — she uses the term proudly, convinced it is being marginalized — and talks fondly about her mentors: “The butch, the bull-daggers, those are the folks who took care of me when I was sneaking off to the clubs.” For her [first film](#), in 2008, she interviewed some 50 Black lesbians of different backgrounds. “I was trying to complicate that monolith,” she said.

She found homes, too, in the BDSM and kink world, and in African and Afro-Cuban spirituality; she is initiated in Santería, and her orisha is Ogun, the god of iron and war. His force is felt in her [epic installation for the 2019 Whitney Biennial](#), which involved felling a tree by axe in Maine, carving ritual objects from its wood in the studio, carrying them to Cuba and Nigeria and filming the process. It earned her the \$100,000 [Bucksbaum Award](#) given to an exceptional Biennial artist. Adam Weinberg, the Whitney’s director, called her contribution “extraordinarily rich with cultural, historical, and spiritual resonances.”

Her fearlessness is currently on view at MoMA in “The Brad Johnson Tape, X — On Subjugation,” a work first produced in 2017 and recently acquired by the museum, where she filmed herself reciting Johnson’s poetry while hanging by her ankles from a rig. Fetish objects, books and an avalanche of rose petals complete the display.

“The work offers an extraordinary model of freedom,” said [Lanka Tattersall](#), a MoMA curator of drawings and prints. “To understand and express your sexuality and erotics to the limits of your possible comfort is one of the biggest offerings an artist can give.”



Installation view of Gallery 211 at MoMA: "The Brad Johnson Tape, X — On Subjugation," shows McClodden hanging by her ankles as she reads poetry. The curator called it "an extraordinary model of freedom." via The Museum of Modern Art; Robert Gebhardt



Film still: a portrait of Mikki Shepard, left, by McClodden, right, from "The Trace of an Implied Presence," 2021, a multichannel HD color video currently showing at the Shed. Tiona Nekkia McClodden

McClodden’s project at the Shed celebrates [Dance Black America](#), a groundbreaking 1983 festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It includes custom dance floors, video portraits of dancers of different styles and generations, and a performance series. One subject is [Mikki Shepard](#), who produced the original event.

“I’m glad she discovered it,” Shepard said. “She’s documenting it again but through a fresh pair of eyes.”

McClodden recalls spending long stretches during the pandemic driving in Louisiana and Mississippi, researching “[Play Me Home](#),” her installation in the Prospect 5 triennial in 2021. It was a roots journey. She located relatives, saw lands they hold and other sites lost to predatory leases. She remembered how men in her family — always men — frequently hunted, and served in the military.

To know herself as a shooter deepens this intimate voyage. But the art is a record for history. “This is about to be material culture of this time,” she said. “The statement is that I’m in the world, I didn’t try to run away from my position in this world, and I wanted to be able to defend myself.” She added: “I’m not trying to hide behind slavery, or something in the 1700s. I’m like: In 2020 to 2022, this is what I was doing.”

Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Mask/ Conceal / Carry

Through Oct. 8, 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan ([\(212\) 727-1961](tel:2127271961)); 52walker.com.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden: The Trace of an Implied Presence

Through Dec. 11 at the Shed, 545 West 30th Street, New York, (646) 455-3494; theshed.org.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden, The Brad Johnson Tape, X — On Subjugation

Ongoing, the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, Manhattan; (212) 708-9400. mom.org.

“D.C. Rubell Museum Names Director, Design Miami Cancels Inaugural Paris Edition, and More: Morning Links for August 2, 2022.” *ARTnews* (August 2, 2022) [ill.] [online]

ARTnews

D.C. Rubell Museum Names Director, Design Miami Cancels Inaugural Paris Edition, and More: Morning Links for August 2, 2022



BY THE EDITORS OF ARTNEWS  August 2, 2022 8:36am



A 2020 of Washington, D.C., the seat of American power, the sight of a new Rubell Museum.
AP

ARTIST UPDATES. **Salman Toor** got the profile treatment from **Calvin Tomkins** in the *New Yorker*, in a story that includes guest appearances from **Rachel Feinstein** and **John Currin** (who has “started to look a bit grizzled, according to Tomkins). The one-namer **Badiucao**, whose work critiques the **Chinese Communist Party**, was featured on *60 Minutes*. **Pipilotti Rist**, with an exhibition on tap at **Tai Kwun** in Hong Kong, was featured in the *South China Morning Post*. **Tiona Nekkia McClodden** has a doubleheader of exhibitions in New York, at the **Shed** and **52 Walker**, and is in *Cultured*. And **José Parlá**, who was in an induced-coma for three months after contracting Covid-19 in early 2021, is in the *New York Times*, timed to his new show at the **Library Street Collective** in Detroit. “It’s a miracle that I’m here talking to you,” Parlá told the paper.

Keenan, Annabel. "Tiona Nekkia McClodden Uses Her Dynamic Art Practice to Unmask the Black Experience."
Cultured Magazine (July 29, 2022) [ill.] [online]

CULTURED
 MAGAZINE



ART

Tiona Nekkia McClodden Uses Her Dynamic Art Practice to Unmask the Black Experience

With concurrent shows at 52 Walker and The Shed in New York, the multidisciplinary artist has established herself as a leading voice in contemporary Black culture.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden's artistic practice resists categorization. The talent excels as a painter, sculptor, writer, filmmaker and curator. She is the founder and director of Conceptual Fade, a micro-gallery and library centered on Black thought and artistic production. Her work explores shared values and traditions within the African diaspora, the "Black mentifact," as she calls it. Now, with a solo show on view at David Zwirner's Tribeca outpost [52 Walker](#), and another opening August 3 at The Shed in New York, McClodden has firmly established herself as a leading voice in contemporary Black culture.

WORDS

Annabel Keenan

July 29, 2022

“MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY,” McClodden’s exhibition at 52 Walker, includes new painting, sculpture and video. With just three shows under its belt, the gallery—run by *Cultured 2022 Young Curator* alumnus Ebony L. Haynes—has already become known for immersive exhibitions that are refreshingly long, each spanning roughly three months compared to the standard four to six weeks. McClodden’s show is a perfect example of how powerful this *kunsthalle* model can be. Each work in “MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY” is layered with meaning that slowly reveals itself as the viewer moves through the space. Dark paintings with simple line drawings hang across a long wall. Sometimes resembling faces, they are ultimately abstract, yet it’s hard not to feel like there’s something more behind them.



Installation view of "Tiona Nekkia McClodden: MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY," at 52 Walker, New York. Photography courtesy of 52 Walker, New York.

The lines suddenly appear in a video projected onto a large screen. In some parts, the video shows a line forming in space, drawn by an invisible hand in a continuous loop. In other clips, lines hover over the silhouettes of figures on ballistic training paper, which are then replaced with images of people. With this video, the viewer understands the abstract lines on the paintings are actually tracings of ballistic practice used to improve one’s aim. There’s something arresting in realizing beauty was made by an act inextricably connected with violence. As she often does in her work, McClodden has provided a space to engage with complex, difficult issues, while also giving the viewer room for personal introspection.

“The Trace of an Implied Presence,” McClodden’s upcoming show at The Shed, demonstrates her skill as a researcher, storyteller and filmmaker. In creating this body of work, she mined the archives of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Her research led her to BAM’s 1983 Dance Black America, a landmark festival featuring Black dancers, choreographers, scholars and dance companies. McClodden became interested in the organizers of the festival, in particular the lead curator, Mikki Shepard.



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, 2022. Photography by Jon Henry, courtesy of 52 Walker, New York.

“I was immediately taken with the archival materials,” writes McClodden in her artist statement accompanying the show. “I decided to focus on Mikki, a Black woman who facilitated so much Black cultural production. The archive demonstrates the immense opportunity of the project, but also how much was at stake. When I met with Mikki, she was warm, light and humorous. She was really sharp. She was generous. So I pitched her my idea. I proposed that I make an addendum to Dance Black America.”

The project centers on a multichannel video installation that looks at the lasting impact of the festival, including those participants still dancing, teaching and writing today, as well as the surviving dance companies that continue to preserve the legacies of their founders. “For those who have passed, and for the companies that survived, those organizations become the legacy of the dancer,” writes the artist. “I’m interested in this citation through the body, how performances and dances function as scores and how a company can retain the pitch and quality of their founder.”



Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *The Trace of An Implied Presence*, 2021. Film Still: Audrey and June Donaldson.

Photography courtesy of the artist. © 2022.

Projected onto screens hovering above four individual dance floors installed as stages, the video combines archival footage from the festival with features on key figures involved in its organization and footage of a Black social dance McClodden filmed in Philadelphia called the Philly Bop. Viewers are invited to dance on the stages alongside the videos. The result is both a living history and an intergenerational conversation on contemporary Black dance.

Remarkably different in disciplines and subject matter, these concurrent exhibitions offer a glimpse into McClodden's rich, multifaceted practice, one that paints a picture of an artist whose curiosity leads her. In all of her chosen media, questioning, unmasking and revealing Black experiences, artistic contributions and histories is a guide to art making.

Smith, Steve. "Weekend arts planner: A different kind of exhibition at 52 Walker and a world-music birthday party at Lincoln Center." *WNYC* (July 23, 2022) [ill.] [online]



WNYC news Published by WNYC News

Weekend arts planner: A different kind of exhibition at 52 Walker and a world-music birthday party at Lincoln Center

▶ Listen 4 min + Queue ...

f t e

Jul 23, 2022

WNYC's Culture and Arts Editor [Steve Smith](#) joins us for another edition of his Weekend Arts Picks. Speaking with Weekend All Things Considered host [Tiffany Hanssen](#), he delivers his latest picks:

1. ["Tiona Nekkia McClodden: MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY"](#)

We've taken you to some big shows at major museums and galleries during recent weeks, but we've got a different kind of experience to share this week. "MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY" is a new show featuring work by [Tiona Nekkia McClodden](#), a 41-year-old multidisciplinary artist, filmmaker and curator based in Philadelphia. McClodden is familiar to lots of New York arts audiences — she's got works in local museums, and she's been involved with programming at places like The Kitchen.

Her show is at [52 Walker](#), the new Tribeca outpost of David Zwirner Gallery that's directed by dealer and curator Ebony L. Haynes. The space is run by an all-Black staff, and it's intended to offer something different than the conventional gallery experience. Shows here will stay on view for months, rather than weeks. And while you're free to snap pictures and post them on your social media feeds, the gallery doesn't share its own images on its website — the idea is that you're meant to come in and have the experience yourself.

In the case of this show, that's a big deal. Entering 52 Walker on a blistering summer day, you're plunged into cool darkness, and calming electronic drone music plays softly in the background. The first thing you're likely to see is a wall label that says, "I Don't Believe in Trigger Warnings Anymore," which argues that making a disclaimer before sharing hurtful or offensive material online is dodging responsibility for the impact of whatever follows.

And here, a different kind of trigger warning: Many of the pieces in McClodden's show involve guns, firing-range targets and other intimations of violence. Seeing such things hung on walls and set on pedestals, you suddenly view what seemed like a calm environment a lot differently. It's not an easy show to experience, but it's one that really will make you think. It's on view through Oct. 8th.

Pariso, Dominique and Chris Stanton. "The Approval Matrix: Biden Droops, Bolten's Coups, Twitter Trolled (Not Sold)." *New York Magazine* (July 15, 2022) [online]

NEW YORK

THE APPROVAL MATRIX | JULY 15, 2022

Biden Droops, Bolten's Coups, Twitter Trolled (Not Sold)

| Compiled by Dominique Pariso and Chris Stanton

HIGHBROW

DESPICABLE

BRILLIANT

LOWBROW

Mask CONCEAL CARRY

1. GET INSIDE
2. STAY INSIDE
3. STAY TUNED

1. GET INSIDE
If most Democrats don't want Biden to run again, where does that leave us?

2. STAY INSIDE
Trump reportedly tried to call a witness in the January 6 hearings on the phone to, you know, hash things out.

3. STAY TUNED
The city drops bizarre PSA about nuclear-fallout preparedness ... but don't worry?

Possibly related: Jill Biden is really sorry for saying Latino communities are as "unique as the breakfast tacos" in San Antonio ...

... Definitely related: Inflation reaches a new multi-decade high.

John Bolton brags on national TV that he helped plan coups.

NYC has become the epicenter of monkeypox. Good luck getting a vaccine ...

While the latest "rona drop," BA.5, is super-contagious.

Two billionaire crypto hedge-fund managers apparently go on the lam, which is presumably an indicator that DeFi is trustworthy.

Shouldn't Twitter have known that Elon was just trolling it?

The Classical Theatre of Harlem's frolicsome *Twelfth Night*.

Ada Limón becomes the 24th poet laureate.

The Brooklyn Museum's Virgil Abloh and Duke Riley double-header.

Fire Island Pines—which has always been a pretty white space—honors Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera at the new Trailblazers Park.

Then try on "Chapeau" at Anton Kern Gallery's Walker Street Window.

The Atlantic has made its 165-year archive available online to subscribers.

Senator Josh Hawley gets schooled by law professor Khara M. Bridges during abortion hearing.

NASA unveils a Webb telescope photo of deep space, which looks an awful lot like that bus-seat upholstery.

Frederic Tuten's subtly intoxicating *The Bar* at Twilight.

While Abbott Elementary and Severance rack up the noms.

Cardi B defies gravity in her "Hot Shit" music video.

Jane Lynch will exit *Funny Girl* before Lea Michele takes the stage, so there will be no *Glee* reunion at the August Wilson Theatre.

Taika Waititi poked fun at the editing and special effects in his own *Thor* movie.

The final days may be at hand for Papaya King's original Upper East Side location.

Pachinko and *Reservation Dogs* are shut out at the Emmys ...

Earl's *Close: The Lost Archive of Earl McGrath* features unheard songs from Jim Carroll, Ultra Violet, David Johansen, and more.

Yankees fans fight one another even after their team beats the Reds.

European airports are a total merdeshow ...

... But at least if you finally get there, the euro is at a 20-year low to the dollar.

Federal authorities liberated 4,000 beagles from a breeding facility.

Netflix's *The Sea Beast* is a rip-roaring seafaring adventure flick.

Wait, you can have an ant infestation on the 25th floor?

The Big Ten shake-up could all but ruin what makes college football fun.

Television's favorite crew of vampires is back for a fourth season.

As *Where the Crawdads Sing* hits theaters, Delia Owens is still a person of interest in a Zambian murder case she denies having anything to do with.

Lana Del Rey debuts her new boyfriend with a bizarre photo in front of a jail, but at least he's not a cop?

Albuquerque is installing statues of local heroes Walter White and Jesse Pinkman.

Costco's CEO says he will not raise the price of its food-court hot dogs.

Bruce is set to take the E Street Band on the road next year for their first U.S. tour since 2016.

HIGHBROW

The Classical Theatre of Harlem's **frolicsome** *Twelfth Night*.



Ada Limón becomes the 24th **poet laureate**.

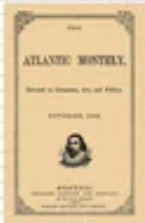
The Brooklyn Museum's Virgil Abloh and Duke Riley **double-header**.



Tiona Nekkia McClodden at 52 Walker gallery ...

MASK CONCEAL CARRY

Fire Island Pines— which has always been a pretty white space— **honors** Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera at the new Trailblazers Park.



The Atlantic has made its 165-year **archive** available online to subscribers.

... Then **try on** "Chapeau!" at Anton Kern Gallery's Walker Street Window.



BRILLIANT



Senator Josh Hawley gets **schooled** by law professor Khiara M. Bridges during abortion hearing.



Frederic Tuten's subtly **intoxicating** *The Bar at Twilight*.



NASA unveils a Webb **telescope** photo of deep space, which looks an awful lot like that bus-seat upholstery.

Photo: Richard Termine (Twelfth Night); Christopher Michel/Flickr (Limon); Courtesy of the Artist (Duke Riley); Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York (Tiona); The Atlantic (Archive); Image courtesy the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York (Chapeau); TM Davy (Fire Island); C-SPAN/Youtube (Hawley); NASA (Webb); Bellevue Literary Press (Tuten)

“MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY.” *Artforum* (July 6, 2022) [ill.] [online]

ARTFORUM

David Zwirner | 52 Walker Street MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY



DAVID ZWIRNER | 52 WALKER STREET

[52 Walker](#), [52walker.com](#)

Tue - Wed 10am to 6pm, Thu 10am to 8pm

MUST SEE

Tiona Nekkia McClodden

MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY

July 13 - October 8, 2022

[+myguide](#) [press release](#) [share](#)

52 Walker is pleased to announce its fourth exhibition, MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY, featuring the work of Philadelphia-based artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden (b. 1981). The artist will present new paintings, objects made of materials both organic and inorganic, and videos that together foreground her research into the limits of embodiment and exertion as well as her interest in gestures of concealment.

McClodden's expansive practice comprises film, installation, painting, and sculpture in addition to writing and curating. Encompassing the personal, the historical, and the mythic, her work considers the presence and absence of the black figure as well as the aesthetic strategies of illumination and opacity that subvert available modes of representation.