



NOWHERE DIFFERENTIABLE

SIMONS CENTER FOR GEOMETRY & PHYSICS UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 28 - FEBRUARY 28, 2013

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Curator/Stony Brook Professor Stephanie Dinkins is an interdisciplinary artist whose work explores race and social equity through a syncretic lens. Her art making and teaching practices are informed by an artistic heritage that extends from her grandmother, and other resourceful people who transform life's residue into functional objects, and the equally fluid adaptability of digital imagery. She earned her MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. She is an alumna of the Independent Studies Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art and Artist in the Marketplace Program of the Bronx Museum of Art. Stephanie Dinkins is the recipient of grants and support from: Puffin Foundation, Trust for Mutual Understanding, Lef Foundation, Approach Art Association and Residency Unlimited. Her work is exhibited internationally. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on the image and digital media at Stony Brook University.



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FOR GEOMETRY AND PHYSICS

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AFRICAN FRACTALS ~ AFROFUTURISM

CURATED BY STEPHANIE DINKINS

In his important book, *African Fractals*, Dr. Ron Eglash investigates fractals in African architecture, hairstyling, textiles, sculpture, religion, games, quantitative technologies, and symbolic systems. He asserts, “by looking at African material culture in the framework of the complexity theory, we can better understand the presence of fractal geometry as an African knowledge system.”

Cultural Critic Mark Dery coined the term AfroFuturism in 1994 by observing, “African-American culture is Afrofuturist at its heart... With trickster Elan, it retrofits, refunctions, and willfully misuses the technocommodities and science fictions generated by a dominant culture that has always been not only white but a wielder, as well, of instrumental technologies.” Alondra Nelson, Professor of Sociology and leading proponent of Afrofuturism, crystalized this idea in *Colorlines Magazine* where she stated, “neither a mantra nor a movement, Afrofuturism is a critical perspective that opens up the inquiry into the many overlaps between technoculture and black diasporic histories. Afrofuturism looks across popular culture . . . to find models of expression that transform spaces of alienation into novel forms of creative potential.”

Nowhere Differentiable gathers the work of five artists who explore and/or exemplify these concepts from various diasporic perspectives. Each artwork presented alludes to mathematical constructs while simultaneously transmitting calculations vital to the past, present, and future through storytelling and material culture. Nigerian artist Fatimah Tuggar uses old and new technologies as both medium and subject in her work to serve as metaphors for power dynamics. Bill Gaskins’ photographs document Americans who symbolize their sense of self and often their sense of an African or Black identity through their hair. Incorporating traditional and new media, Tim Portlock’s “Farm” is a computer-generated re-imagining of abandoned buildings within a five-mile radius of his house. “Untitled #55” is an example from Howardena Pindell’s long running series of paper punch paintings made of confetti-like disks dispersed over the picture plane with varying degrees of premeditation and randomness. Sonya Clark is an American artist of Caribbean parentage whose works speak to the replication of culture through familial rituals around hair and nurturing. Saya Woolfalk uses science fiction and fantasy to encourage reconsideration of societal issues, particularly concerning cultural difference, in a new light.

Each of these artists are part of long-running, innovative cultural and intellectual traditions that have the means and power to change and inspire but ought not be measured by ordinary methods alone. They, like the functions this exhibition is named for, are continuous everywhere and *Nowhere Differentiable*.

HOWARDENA PINDELL

Known for the wide variety of techniques and materials used in her artwork, Howardena Pindell explores texture, color, structures, and the process of making art. Her work goes beyond paint on canvas to include three-dimensional objects and even mutilated canvases that she stitches roughly back together. Her art is often political, addressing the issues of racism, feminism, violence, slavery, and exploitation. She has helped to redefine painting since the 1970s.

Pindell attended Boston University, graduating with a BFA in 1965, followed by an MFA from Yale University in 1967. After graduating from Yale she became a curatorial assistant at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and began to establish herself as an artist. Pindell's early works were mostly of urban scenes, but she soon began to produce abstracts and developed an interest in texture, form, and geometry. She has been described variously as having links with pointillism, minimalism, and process art. Pindell's interest in pointillism and chaos is evident in many of her canvases and drawings from the 1970s forward. In such works, exemplified by *Untitled #55*, she scatters hundreds of multi-colored clippings taken from a hole punch around the picture plane.

Pindell has exhibited her work almost constantly since the 1970s and has held fellowships and appointments at several major institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Foundation. Pindell has won many awards, including the Women's Caucus for Art award for Distinguished Contributions and Achievements in Arts. Her work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, the Harvard University Art Museums and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, among many others. Besides being a practicing artist she has worked as an exhibition curator and, since 1979, a professor at Stony Brook University.



UNTITLED # 55, 2010
8.75" x 10"
WATERCOLOR, PUNCHED PAPERS,
THREAD ON MUSEUM BOARD



WAVY STRAND, 2006
COMBS
5" H X 4" W X 10" D

SONYA CLARK

Sonya Clark was born in Washington, DC to a psychiatrist from Trinidad and a nurse from Jamaica. She gained an appreciation for craft, the value of the handmade, and the stories held in objects from her grandmother who was a professional tailor. Meanwhile, she grew up during the 1970s having her hair done in elaborate coiffures. The seed connecting textile techniques and hairdressing skills was planted early. Coming to know oneself and others through the rituals of hairdressing and hairstyling is a unique way of knowing. It is a cultural knowing, a spiritual knowing, a personal and private way of knowing. The Yoruba of Nigeria have a ritual called *imori* which translates as “knowing the head”. Caring for the heads and having our heads cared for through ritualized hairdressing connects African Americans to our cultural and spiritual lineages. Whether it is knowing that one has the same hair texture as a father or maternal grandmother or having a preference for a certain type of hairstyle beyond or inclusive of fashion trends, hair indicates who we are and how we are in the world.

Sonya Clark holds an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art and in 2010 was honored with their first Distinguished Mid-Career Alumni Award. She has a BFA from The Art Institute of Chicago, and a BA in psychology from Amherst College. Her work has been exhibited in over 250 museums and galleries in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, Australia, and throughout the USA. She has been able to pursue her studio practice because of generous honors and opportunities such as a 2011 United States Artist Fellowship, 2006 Pollock-Krasner Award, a 2006 Rockefeller Foundation Residency in Italy, a 2011 Art Matters Grant, 2005 Red Gate Residency in China, a Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship, a 2011 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Award, a 2012 Virginia Commission for the Arts Fellowship, a 2011 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, and a 2012 Civitella Ranieri Fellowship in Italy.

Since 2006, Sonya Clark has been a full professor and chair the Department of Craft/Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. Prior to her appointment at VCU, she was a Baldwin-Bascom Professor of Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she taught in Design Studies and received tenure with distinction.



FAI-FAIN GRAMOPHONE, 1996
RECORD PLAYER, RAFFIA DISKS
WITH LABEL,
ENTERTAINMENT CENTER
MUSIC BY BARMANI CHOGE
53"W X 132 1/2"H X 24"D

FATIMAH TUGGAR

Fatimah Tuggar is a multidisciplinary artist who uses technology as both medium and subject in her work to serve as metaphors for power dynamics. She combines, objects, images and sounds from diverse cultures, geographies and histories to comment on how media and technology diversely impact local and global realities. In northern Nigeria, where Tuggar grew up, vinyl records came into popularity at about the same time as another, somewhat similar looking object — “faifai,” which were circular, woven mats made of raffia grass and used for various household purposes. And so records came to be known as “faifain gramophones.” Featuring a spinning faifai in place of a record, Tuggar’s sculpture plays the rhythmic music of Barmani Choge, an all-female band from Tuggar’s home country who sing about the important role of women in society while making rhythms with kitchen utensils, pots and pans.

Tuggar’s work has been widely exhibited at international venues, in over twenty-five countries, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, US; Museum Kunst-Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; the 24th Biennial of Graphic Art, Ljubljana Slovenia; and Moscow, Istanbul, Kwangju and Bamako Biennials.

Tuggar’s art education covers three continents and a broader range of disciplines, traditions, processes, and materials. She attended the Blackheath School of Art in London, England, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Kansas City Art Institute, a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University and conducted postgraduate independent study at the Whitney Museum of American Art. She is currently a faculty member at the Department of Art at University of Memphis. Tuggar is the recipient of prestigious accolades, such as the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship; the W. A. Mellon Research Fellowship, awarded by the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute; and has produced commissioned works for several art institutions including Tempo Exhibition, Museum of Mordern Art, New York; In Space (Web Art) Grant, Art Production Fund, New York; Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark; Special Commission, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, and In the Public Realm, Public Art Fund, New York.

BILL GASKINS

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Bill Gaskins received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Tyler School of Art, a Master of Arts Degree from The Ohio State University, and a Master of Fine Arts Degree from the Maryland Institute, College of Art.

From a professional base in photography and arts writing, an academic foundation in fine art and the history of photography, and the perspective of a citizen, the work of Bill Gaskins explores questions about photography and the portrait in the 21st century. An entry point for the viewer is his fascination with the myths of photography and American culture and representations of African American people. His approach to photography as both producer and critical spectator has garnered attention through commissions, artist residencies, grants, public lectures, solo and group exhibitions, exhibition catalogs and books.

Images from *Good And Bad Hair: Photographs by Bill Gaskins* are this accomplished photographers contribution to *Nowhere Differentiable*. His breakthrough monograph on the role of hairstyling and photographic representation in African American culture(s) is also a reflection on the societal role of hair and personal identity that often highlights the transference of cultural geometries from Africa to the Americas.

As an artist, teacher, scholar, and essayist, Bill Gaskins' artwork, teaching, writing, lectures and workshops examine race and representation, photography & the portrait, the history of photography, contemporary art and the politics of visual culture, media literacy, art and design education, and the artist as citizen.

As a professor of art, Bill Gaskins has taught at The Ohio State University, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Missouri, the College of Art, Media & Technology and the College of Art and Design Theory and History at Parsons School of Design, and the graduate program in Media Studies in The New School for Public Engagement. Presently he is an Associate Professor in the College of Art, Architecture and Planning at Cornell University.



TAMARA AND TIREKA, EASTER SUNDAY,
BALTIMORE, MD, 1995
SILVER GELATIN PRINTS, 11" X 14"

TIM PORTLOCK

Tim Portlock was born in Chicago which inspired his lifelong interest in the dialogue between place and the formation of identity. Educated primarily as a traditional visual artist Portlock has worked as a community-based muralist as well as a studio painter. Portlock began experimenting with digital media platforms in the late '90s. He has since mastered a variety of tools, from gaming software to 3-D animation, and has used them to make art that investigates the social and economic impact of America's rapid de-industrialization. His work is created using digital technology and is informed by the western painting tradition. He creates large inkjet prints based on the empty and abandoned buildings that are typical to post-industrial cities. While the work appears photographic the imagery is actually constructed from computer simulations of real world buildings. He uses special effects software and computer game authoring tools to create his work. *Farm* is an example from "Here" a series of computer-generated prints Portlock based on the abandoned buildings within a five-mile radius of his house in Philadelphia, PA. The image presents a dystopic urban landscape blighted by industry yet still inhabited and being reclaimed by a painted reminder of agrarian technologies preserved and nurtured, quite literally, at home.

Portlock has been awarded a Pew Fellowship and has exhibited at Tate Modern, London; Los Angeles Center for Digital Art; the Ars Electronica Museum, Linz, Austria; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois as well as other venues in Asia, Europe and North America. He is currently a professor in the Integrated Media Arts Program at Hunter College.



FARM, 2011

54" x 72"

INKJET PRINT AND SPECIAL EFFECTS

SAYA WOOLFALK

Saya Woolfalk is a New York artist who uses science fiction and fantasy to re-imagine the world in multiple dimensions (sculpture, installation, painting, performance and video). Her work considers the idea that symbolic and ideological systems can be activated and re-imagined through collaboration, imaginative play and masquerade. To effect this re-imagining objects, bodies, and landscapes are constructed to immerse us in the logic of another place. In the tradition of the fable or folk story, she maps the desires and ideas of people to create narratives that attempt to be relevant to a contemporary audience. In her current project, she shifts focus away from the future to develop a narrative about a contemporary group, called Empathics, whose politicized collective action is informed by what seem to be contradictory positions of a semi-religious commitment to No Place, and the desire to understand the truth through reason and observation.

She has exhibited at MoMA PS1; Deitch Projects; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; Momenta Art; and Performa 09; and has been written about in Sculpture Magazine and on Art21's blog. With funding from the NEA, her solo exhibition, *The Institute of Empathy*, ran at Real Art Ways from Fall 2010 to Spring 2011. Her first solo museum show *The Empathics* is currently on view at the Montclair Art Museum. Some of her upcoming projects are a solo show for Third Streaming as well as inclusion in group exhibitions at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and the MCA San Diego. She is currently artist in residence at the Simon Center for Physics and Geometry at Stony Brook University.



VIDEO STILL, THE EMPATHICS, 2011
DIGITAL VIDEO, 5 MINUTES



SIMONSCENTER
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NOWHERE DIFFERENTIABLE EVENTS

FEBRUARY 12, 2013, 6 PM

LECTURE BY ETHNO-MATHEMATICIAN AND
AUTHOR OF AFRICAN FRACTALS, RON EGLASH, PROFESSOR,
RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE.
PRE-LECTURE RECEPTION AT THE SCGP GALLERY, 5:30 PM.

FEBRUARY 20, 2013, 6 PM

LECTURE BY ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE SAYA WOOLFALK*
PRE-LECTURE RECEPTION AT THE SCGP GALLERY, 5:30 PM.

*SAYA WOOLFALK WILL BE WORKING ON CAMPUS FROM JAN. 28 – MARCH 17, 2013.

FEBRUARY 21, 2013, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

RECEPTION IN CONJUNCTION WITH RACE & REPRESENTATION CONFERENCE.



Stony Brook University