

Press Release

Exhibition

Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses

January 21–April 11, 2021



DJ Screw in his home studio. Courtesy SoSouth Music Distribution. Photo by Ben DeSoto ©1995.

#SlowedandThrown
#atCAMH
@camhouston

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HOUSTON, TEXAS (January 11, 2021)—Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to present *Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses*, the first museum exhibition with a conceptual focus on the late Houston hip hop legend DJ Screw. The exhibition explores visual arts practices that parallel the musical methods of this innovative DJ and feature unconventional photography and new media works by artists with personal ties to Houston, including B. Anele, Rabéa Ballin, Tay Butler, Jimmy Castillo, Jamal Cyrus, Robert Hodge, Shana Hoehn, Tomashi Jackson, Ann Johnson, Devin Kenny, Liss LaFleur, Karen Navarro, Ayanna Jolivet McCloud, Sondra Perry, and Charisse Pearlina Weston. The exhibition opening coincides with the Museum's limited reopening for Museum Members on Thursday,

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
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Jimmy Castillo
Mendoza's Bakery, 2019
Digital inkjet print
20 x 30 inches
Courtesy the artist

January 21, 2021 and public reopening on January 22. The exhibition will remain on view through Sunday, April 11, 2021. The Museum will employ comprehensive COVID-19 safeguards to ensure the health of our staff and the public.

Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses is a two-part interdisciplinary exhibition orbiting around the legacy of the late Houston legend DJ Screw. He produced his namesake sound, “chopped and screwed,” by using two turntables to slow down and layer hip hop tempos. The hallmarks of this technique—reducing pitch, slowing tempo, distorting input, and chopping lyrics to produce new meanings—have become synonymous with Houston hip hop, earning DJ Screw the nickname “The Originator.” Despite his untimely death at age 29 in 2000, the DJ and leader of Houston’s Screwed Up Click continues to influence artistic genres around the world.

In their photo-adjacent practices, the participating visual artists appropriate, mash-up, collage, and mutate photographic inputs, in addition to slowing time. *Slowed and Thrown* contends that remixing “sampled” materials is a radical aesthetic act utilized by both artists and musicians. Through reconfigurations of sourced and original materials, the featured artists draw attention to inequities stemming from race, gender, and sexual orientation, suggesting new possibilities and alternative realities.



Tay Butler
SLAMA, 2020
Digital collage
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Born Robert Earl Davis, Jr. in Smithville, Texas, DJ Screw called Houston home for the last 19 years of his life. His connection to the city is evident in his mixtapes, which include lyrical references to parts of Houston, as well as collaborations with Houston-based rappers. “You can’t do Houston without Screwston. There’s no way around it,” said rapper E.S.G. This sentiment was echoed by Big Bubba, owner of Screwed Up Records and Tapes: “He was main street radio; he was the sound of Houston.” All of the participating visual artists in *Slowed and Thrown* are Houston-affiliated—either from or at some point based in the city. This tie to the city manifests in a strong sense of place evident in many of the artworks. Consider Jimmy Castillo’s photographs from his *Northside Corrido* series. Referencing the neighborhood where Castillo grew up, the artist said, “Without so many of the structures that housed our families and businesses, the context which gave the neighborhood a sense of identity and place begins to disappear. I mark-out places from memory, where things I remember have since disappeared—leaving only traces.” To address this transition and loss, Castillo performs for the camera by walking around the specter of each site, assembling between 30 and 60 images in Photoshop to create each work.

DJ culture centers around the recomposition of sound recordings, known as “sampling.” On the over 340 known mixtapes he created, DJ Screw distorted works by popular musical artists and layered inclusions of freestyles by numerous Houston-based rappers for his “chopped up” version of the original.

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DJ Screw grey tape, courtesy the Special Collections at the University of Houston Libraries.



Karen Navarro
Fragment, 2019
Archival inkjet print, wood, and epoxy
48 x 56 inches
Courtesy the artist and Foto Relevance, Houston, Texas

He re-imagined music by artists including Lil' Troy, Dr. Dre, Biggie, 2Pac, E-40, Kriss Kross, Ice Cube, and C-Bo. Rapper E.S.G. remembered, "People would pick their songs for their list, but Screw would also suggest songs to blend with it. He would tell you, 'Hey, I just got this new Ice Cube and Dre song. You heard of this?' His production [would] make you fall in love with it." Dr. Regina N. Bradley, scholar of African American culture continued this theme, "screw music is a sonic haunt, a restless specter of what a song was and what it could be."

Many participating artists have appropriated, or visually sampled, extant material. Sondra Perry's *TK (Suspicious Glorious Absence)* (2018) is an audio-video collage comprised of splices of home video footage taken with a body camera juxtaposed with distortions of found footage of racialized news clips, depictions of police brutality and protests, and advertisements for mass-surveillance technology. Perry exerts agency by controlling the narrative and context around the reproduction of these sourced clips. *Don't Worry Baby* (2020) is the newest video installation by Liss LaFleur. The projected figure slowly lip-syncs the chorus of The Beach Boys' 1964 pop song "Don't Worry Baby" as a looping serenade. The artist states, "With this work I am questioning: what happens when you inhabit other people's materials—specific to this song, queer womxn embodying harmonies originally written and performed by cis men, who were singing about their hetero loves?"

DJ Screw's mastery of "chopping"—emphasizing and layering instrumentals, melodies, and lyrics—produced original sounds. "He'd layer one record over another, dragging a finger alongside the turntable wheel to slow the speed until the two tracks melted into one song, toying with the phrasing of each to tease out the message," writer Lance Scott Walker explained. This additive production process allowed new openings into existing musical material. Many of the exhibiting artists' concerns with layering manifest in the form of collages. In Tomashi Jackson's video collage *Forever 21: The Essence of Innocence Suite* (2015), she weaves together painting, color studies, performance, archival information, and imagery from recent human rights abuses.

Serving as the physical and conceptual core of *Slowed and Throwned* is a nesting exhibition of DJ Screw archival materials mostly drawn from the Special Collection at University of Houston Libraries. Placing the curated archive in dialogue with the photo-based artworks demonstrates the resonances between DJ Screw's creative process and those of the exhibiting artists. Displayed in a gallery built to mirror the edifice of the original location of Screwed Up Records & Tapes on Cullen Boulevard, the archival exhibition is activated by a musical playlist compiled by E.S.G., rapper and member of the Screwed Up Click.

Slowed and Throwned is curated by Patricia Restrepo, Exhibitions Manager and Assistant Curator at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, alongside

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CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours beginning January 21, 2021 are Wednesday 12–6PM, Thursday 12–9PM, Friday 12–6PM, Saturday 12–6PM, and Sunday 12–6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit camh.org or call 713.284.8250.

guest curators Big Bubb, Owner of Screwed Up Records & Tapes; and E.S.G., rapper and member of the Screwed Up Click. The exhibition's research advisors are Julie Grob, Coordinator for Instruction and Curator of Houston Hip Hop Research Collection at the University of Houston Libraries, and Rocky Rockett, independent hip hop educator.

Exhibition Artists

B. Anele, Rabéa Ballin, Tay Butler, Jimmy Castillo, Jamal Cyrus, Robert Hodge, Shana Hoehn, Tomashi Jackson, Ann Johnson, Devin Kenny, Liss LaFleur, Karen Navarro, Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, Sondra Perry, and Charisse Pearlina Weston.

Publication

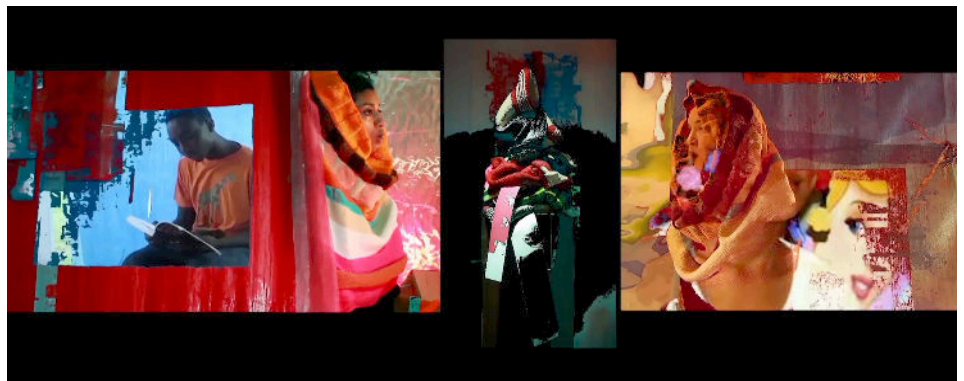
The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication featuring commissioned essays from Big Bubb, Dr. Regina N. Bradley, E.S.G., Ciarán Finlayson, Maco Faniel, Julie Grob, Devin Kenny, Patricia Restrepo, Lance Scott Walker, and Will-Lean. The publication will contain full-color reproductions of artworks, installation views, an exhibition checklist, and reproductions of archival material. The catalogue is designed by Houston-based designer Yoon Kim.

Support

Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Public Programs

Please visit camh.org for a complete list of Museum programs relating to this exhibition.



Tomashi Jackson, *Forever 21: The Essence of Innocence Suite*, 1: *Give Me the Reason (To Forgive)*(Texas Courtroom)(DC Classroom), 2: *Give Me the Reason (To Forget)*(Texas Courtroom), 3: *Give Me the Reason (Tell Me How)*(Detroit, Cleveland, Ferguson), 2015. Single-channel video collage: color, sound, 7:34 minutes, edition of 3. Courtesy Tilton Gallery New York, New York.