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**The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present the first comprehensive survey of performance art by black artists working from the perspective of the visual arts.**

*Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*  
November 17, 2012 – February 15, 2013

Opening Reception and Performances

Friday, November 16, 2012

Member Preview: 6-7PM

Public Reception: 7-9PM



Shaun El C. Leonardo, *El Conquistador vs. The Invisible Man*, 2006. Performance, 25 minutes. Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland. Photo: Jacek Sielski. Courtesy the artist and Praxis International Art.

HOUSTON, TX (November 12, 2012)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, the first comprehensive survey of performance art by black visual artists. While black performance has been largely contextualized as an extension of theater, visual artists have integrated performance into their work for over five decades, generating a repository of performance work that has gone largely unrecognized until now. *Radical Presence* provides a critical framework to discuss the history of black performance traditions within the visual arts beginning with the “happenings” of the early 1960s, throughout the 1980s, and into the

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present practices of contemporary artists. *Radical Presence* will feature video and photo documentation of performances, performance scores and installations, audience interactive works, as well as art works created as a result of performance actions. In addition, the exhibition will feature a live performance series scheduled throughout the run of the exhibition, including performances during the opening weekend of the exhibition by Terry Adkins, Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, Pope.L, and Tameka Norris.

The exhibition will feature work by three generations of artists including Derrick Adams, Terry Adkins, Papo Colo, Jamal Cyrus, Jean-Ulrick Désert, Theaster Gates, Zachary Fabri, Sherman Fleming, Coco Fusco, Girl [Chitra Ganesh + Simone Leigh], David Hammons, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Lyle Ashton Harris, Maren Hassinger, Wayne Hodge, Satch Hoyt, Ulysses S. Jenkins, Shaun El C. Leonardo, Kalup Linzy, Dave McKenzie, Jayson Musson aka Hennessy Youngman, Senga Nengudi, Tameka Norris, Lorraine O'Grady, Clifford Owens, Benjamin Patterson, Adam Pendleton, Adrian Piper, Pope.L, Rammellzee, Sur Rodney (Sur), Jacolby Satterwhite, Dread Scott, Xaviera Simmons, Danny Tisdale, and Carrie Mae Weems.

The history of performance art as a manifestation of radical shifts in social thought and artistic practice is well documented in publications like *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* by Paul Schimmel, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* by Sally Banes, as well as *Performance: Live Art Since 1960* (1998) by RoseLee Goldberg and her seminal book from 1979, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present*. Performance art practices in Latin America were also eloquently documented in the 2008 exhibition *Arte ≠ Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas, 1960-2000* at El Museo del Barrio, New York. Ironically, given the rich history of performance and its prevalence in black artistic practices since the 1960s, this tradition has largely gone unexamined save for a handful of publications including the exhibition catalogue *Art as a Verb* (1988) by Leslie King Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims.

To date, little scholarship exists that chronicles the rise and persistence of black performance traditions emerging from the framework of the visual arts save for a handful of publications and catalogues including the recently published *Now Dig This!: Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960-1980* by Kellie Jones. While the works created by these artists have previously been contextualized in terms of associations and movements ranging from Fluxus to Conceptual Art to the blanketed arena of contemporary art practice, in *Radical Presence* they will be presented along a trajectory providing general audiences and scholars alike a critical understanding of the significance and persistence of black performance as a stand-alone practice. *Radical Presence* is organized by Valerie Cassel Oliver, Senior Curator at CAMH.

## **PUBLICATION**

The fully illustrated catalogue that accompanies the exhibition *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* reflects the breadth and scope of the contributions of black artists to the field of performance art practice over the last 50+ years. The publication includes an essay by exhibition curator Valerie Cassel Oliver, as well as contributions by Franklin Sirmans, Department Head and Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Naomi Beckwith, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Yona Backer, Founding Partner and Executive Director, Third Streaming, New York; Tavia Nyong'o, Associate Professor of Performance Studies, New York University; and photographer/performance artist Clifford Owens. The catalogue also includes a chronology of black performance art since 1960; an exhibition checklist; color reproductions of featured works; a general bibliography; and artists' biographies.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

**All events are free and open to the public and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston unless otherwise noted. Performances for *Radical Presence* run throughout the course of the exhibition on view through February 15, 2013. For complete listings of performances and current information, please check [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org).**

### **Opening Reception and Performances**

#### **Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art**

**Friday, November 16**

**6-7PM: Member Preview**

**7-9PM: Public Reception**

Join us for the opening reception of *Radical Presence*, the first comprehensive survey of performance art by black artists working from the perspective of the visual arts. During the opening, Terry Adkins will perform *The Last Trumpet* (1995) and Pope.L will debut a new work, *Costuming the Body with Nothing* (2012). Onsite will be Monster PBJ and a cash bar. Derek Jones and Josh Zulu present music by Jaekim.

Terry Adkins, *The Last Trumpet*, 1995

Along with four musicians, Adkins will conduct and play his Akraphones—sculpturally designed instruments—creating a musical “invocation” for the exhibition’s opening. These 18-foot-tall, trumpet-like constructions emit a wide range of sounds from the melodic to dissonant that will reverberate throughout the space. The Akraphones will be activated for the performance and will remain in the space for the duration of the exhibition.

Terry Adkins (b. 1953) blurs the distinctions between artist, musician, and performer. Although his artistic practice is firmly rooted in cultural and historical traditions, which can be seen in his references to such figures as W.E.B. Du Bois, Bessie Smith, and John Coltrane, Adkins’ work remains largely abstract and lyrical.

Pope.L, *Costuming the Body with Nothing*, 2012 (debut)

*Costuming the Body with Nothing*, a new work by artist Pope.L, will debut during the opening reception for *Radical Presence* and will be repeated, unannounced, periodically during the duration of the exhibition. The action—an endurance work—is that of a figure walking through the gallery space and standing, arm extended into a void, until exhausted. The wall, which has an opening for the performer to insert his arm, will essentially act as a recorder of the performance. The residual of the performer’s body will, over time, register on the wall and give the viewer the clues needed to reconstruct and imagine this performative routine.

Pope.L (b. 1955) is an artist known for his irreverent performance art that strikes at the heart of contemporary sociopolitical concerns. He has eaten copies of *The Wall Street Journal*, crawled up and down Manhattan, given away money to strangers, and tied himself to a bank door as a means to investigate the varying racial dynamics in contemporary society, the price of capitalism, and the differences between the haves and the have-nots.

### **Performances: Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, and Tameka Norris**

**Saturday, November 17**

**2PM**

Join us for performances by artists Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, and Tameka Norris.

Senga Nengudi, *RSVP*, 1976-77

Maren Hassinger will activate Senga Nengudi's well-known work *RSVP* from 1976-77 during the opening weekend for *Radical Presence*. Nengudi will create an installation out of common nylon stockings that are stretched into a poetic sculptural form. In activating the work, Hassinger will move through the piece, pulling, stretching, and knotting the nylon, and in so doing, will create odd, flesh-toned bulges that become uncanny evocations of the body.

Senga Nengudi (b. 1943) started transforming ordinary objects into performative sculptures in the early 1970s. Working with nylon, sand, and other found materials, Nengudi transforms the ordinary beyond its subscribed function and into ritualistic artifacts. Nengudi has continued her interest in the intersection between body, object, and performance through, for example, her cross-cultural investigations of such ephemeral traditions as sand painting.

Maren Hassinger, *Women's Work*, 2006

Hassinger first performed *Women's Work* in 2006 at the Foundation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris. Newspaper in hand, Hassinger and her performers present to the audience a repetitive action that alludes to sewing, knitting, and other craft-based activities that are traditionally labeled as "women's work." These gestures are then amplified using microphones and speakers transforming the simple actions into a cacophonous sound work.

Maren Hassinger (b. 1947) is an artist who creates work across genres and media, including sculpture, video, performance, and installation-based art. Throughout her career Hassinger has continued to participate in the discourse surrounding the performativity of gender and race, making it clear that these conversations are necessary and relevant today.

Tameka Norris, *Untitled*, 2012

Norris' performance tests not only the artist's ability to tolerate pain but also the audience's ability to bear witness to this pain. In *Untitled*, Norris literally bleeds for art as she first cuts herself and then marks the walls in an action that gives new meaning to gesture painting.

Tameka Norris (b. 1979) utilizes a variety of media including performance, painting, video, photography, and installation to investigate such themes as the legacy of art history, the fictions of the past, and the contradictions inherent in contemporary society and culture.

**Performance: Jamal Cyrus**

**Thursday, November 29**

**6:30-7:30PM**

Jamal Cyrus will present a performance titled *Texas Fried Tenor* (2012). The performance is part of a larger series entitled *Learning To Work The Saxophone*, the title of which is taken from the refrain of the Steely Dan song "Deacon Blues." After listening to the song one thousand times on a road trip from Philadelphia to Houston, Cyrus became interested in the importance of the saxophone in American music, especially blues and jazz which are celebrated as America's original musical forms. In this context, the saxophone is not solely an instrument of artistic expression, but also one of social and spiritual transcendence. The dramatic account of "Deacon Blues" strikingly mirrors the history of the horn in American music—the struggles of those that invented its unique sounds. *Texas Fried Tenor* also serves as a meditation on the musical legacy and lineage of Texas Saxophonists.

Houston-based artist Jamal Cyrus (b. 1973) borrows from revisionist approaches within American history, particularly studies dealing with the formulation of black political movements. Cyrus' work acts as a document of questioning, meditation, and commemoration.

### **EXHIBITION SUPPORT**

*Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* is supported by generous grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Exhibitions in the Brown Foundation Gallery at CAMH have been made possible by the patrons, benefactors and donors to the Museum's Major Exhibition Fund: Major Patron - Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Faye Sarofim, and Michael Zilkha. Patrons - Mr. and Mrs. I. H. Kempner III and Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim. Benefactors - Baker Botts L.L.P. / Anne and David Kirkland, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Louise D. Jamail, KPMG, LLP, Beverly and Howard Robinson, Andrew Schirrmeister III, Leigh and Reggie Smith, and Mr. Wallace Wilson. Donors - Anonymous, Bank of Texas, Bergner and Johnson Design, Jereann Chaney, City Kitchen, Susie and Sanford Criner, Elizabeth Howard Crowell, Dillon Kyle Architecture, Sara Dodd-Spickelmier and Keith Spickelmier, Ruth Dreessen and Thomas Van Laan, Marita and J.B. Fairbanks, Jo and Jim Furr, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Brenda and William Goldberg, King & Spalding L.L.P., Marley Lott, Judy and Scott Nyquist, Belinda Phelps and Randy Howard, Phillips de Pury & Company, Lauren Rottet, David I. Saperstein, Scurlock Foundation, Susan Vaughan Foundation, Inc., and Karen and Harry Susman.

### **EDUCATION SUPPORT**

The Museum receives support for its education programs from: Anonymous, Dillon Kyle Architecture, Louise D. Jamail, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Robert and Pearl Wallis Knox Foundation, Leticia Loya, Elisabeth McCabe, M.D. Anderson Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment, Andrew R. McFarland, Mark and Mary Ann Miller, Texas Commission on the Arts, Texas Women for the Arts, Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Martha Claire Tompkins, and Elizabeth Satel Young.

Teen Council is supported by Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Texas Women for the Arts, and Texas Commission on the Arts.

### **GENERAL SUPPORT**

Funding for the Museum's operations through the Fund for the Future is made possible by generous grants from Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Anonymous, Jereann Chaney, Sara Dodd-Spickelmier and Keith Spickelmier, Jo and Jim Furr, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Brenda and William Goldberg, Marley Lott, Leticia Loya and Faye Sarofim.

CAMH's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members, and donors. The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston receives partial operating support from the Houston Endowment, the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and The Wortham Foundation, Inc. CAMH also thanks its artist benefactors for their support including Ricci Albenda, Anonymous, McArthur Binion, Brendan Cass, Mel Chin, Leonardo Drew, Tim Gardner, Robert Gober, Wayne Gonzales, Oliver Herring, Jim Hodges, Michael Joo, Kurt Kauper, Jon Kessler, Terence Koh, Sean Landers, Zoe Leonard, Marilyn Minter, Donald Moffett, Ernesto Neto, Roxy Paine, Laurie Simmons, Josh Smith, Marc Swanson, and William Wegman.

United is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

### **CAMH MISSION**

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a leading destination to experience innovative art. CAMH actively encourages public engagement with its exhibitions through its educational programs, publications, and online presence.

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### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The 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 are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM-7PM, Thursday 10AM-9PM, Saturday 10AM-6PM, and Sunday 12PM-6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org) or call 713 284 8250.