

LOSSLESS



August 3 – September 8
Pearlstein Gallery

Razan AlSalah
Kevin Jerome Everson
ja'tovia gary
Roni Nicole Henderson
Kahlil Joseph
Terence Nance
Norvis Junior
Sosena Solomon

Cover Image
Kahlil Joseph

Title Illustration
Andrea Pippins

Guide Layout
Maori Karmael Holmes
Cesali Renn

LOSSLESS

Curated by Maori Karmael Holmes

August 3 – September 8
Leonard Pearlstein Gallery

In conjunction with the
2017 BlackStar Film Festival

AN ECTSTATIC EXPERIENCE

j'atovia gary, 2015 (credit: Constance Mensh)



ABOUT THE SHOW

Lossless is an exploration of Black and Brown bodies as a site of compression, considering the ways that labor, illusion, loss, lineage, and personhood are imagined and re-constructed.

Chiefly featuring BlackStar alumni filmmakers who have dismantled and reassembled conventions of cinema and video art to create new experiences with the moving image. Featured are works in installation, video, 16mm, online space, and 3-D environments, by Razan AlSalah, Kevin Jerome Everson, ja'tovia gary, Roni Nicole Henderson, Kahlil Joseph, Terence Nance, and Sosena Solomon.

The exhibition will also include a performance by Terence Nance and Norvis Junior of 18 Black Girls Ages 1-18 Who Have Arrived at the Singularity and are Thus Spiritual Machines: \$8 in an edition of \$97,000,000,000,000 on August 3.

The exhibition's title refers to the common term in audio production but is also reflecting upon ways to discuss absence in stories of trauma and nostalgia and additionally considering manifestations of resistance.

Lossless is organized by Maori Karmael Holmes in conjunction with the 6th Annual BlackStar Film Festival. The exhibit was made possible with production assistance from Leah Appleton, Derek Rigby, Farrah Rahaman, Liz Barr, Nicole Myles, and Mecca Henry.

Significant support is provided by Pearlstein Gallery.

Generous support is provided by Wyncote Foundation, Barra Foundation, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice, Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia, and Lomax Family Foundation.

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PEARLSTEIN GALLERY

The Leonard Pearlstein Gallery is committed to exhibiting novel and experimental art in all contemporary mediums including digital, video, sculpture, photography, graphics, and fashion design. Relocated to a larger space in the Westphal College of Media Arts & Design's renovated URBN Annex the Pearlstein Gallery has over 3,500 square feet and invites the public to enjoy our exhibits free of charge.

Founded in 1986, Gallery relocated to its third and current location in Drexel's URBN Annex at 3401 Filbert Street at the end of 2011. Since re-opening in 2012 the Gallery has continued its commitment to exhibiting regional and experimental art in all contemporary mediums including digital, video, sculpture, photography, graphics, and fashion design. Recent exhibitions include *Bill Walton: artist to artist*, *World Press Photo 2015*, *Chakaia Booker: Are We There Yet?*, *Ray Bartkus: Story Lines*, and *The Fox Historic Costume Collection Highlights: Immortal Beauty*. The gallery has also featured performances by Leah Stein Dance Company, The Philly Pigeon, *Passión y Arte*, and held collaborative projects with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pentimenti Gallery and FringeArts.

STAFF

Gallery Director
Orlando Pelliccia

Exhibitions and Programs Coordinator
Leah Appleton

BLACKSTAR FILM FESTIVAL

The BlackStar Film Festival is an annual celebration of the visual and storytelling traditions of the African diaspora and of global indigenous communities, showcasing films by black people from around the world.

Over the four days of the festival, BlackStar will host approximately 60 films from 5 continents, panel discussions and workshops with fellow esteemed artists and advancers, a youth program and awards ceremony. The theme of this year's festival is *resistance*, examining political and social uprisings around the world and in the U.S., from the upheaval of the 1960s to the Los Angeles riots in the 1990s to the uprising in Ferguson and the current moment of unrest.

EXHIBITION STAFF

Artistic Director and Curator
Maori Karmael Holmes

Program Assistant
Farrah Rahaman

Administrative Coordinator
Liz Barr

Preparator and Assistant Designer
Derek Rigby

Intern
Mecca Henry



DOUBLE GOLD
Sosena Solomon, 2017 (credit: Constance Mensh)



“We need images of tomorrow, and our people need them more than most.”

—Samuel R. Delaney,
The Necessity of Tomorrow(s), 1978

SOUL SURVIVAL AND POSTMILLENNIAL BLACK FOLK: MYTH, REALITY AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

LI SUMPTER, PH.D.

In the fight to save *all life* that matters, the imagination is the final battleground for humanity's soul survival. When it comes to the survival of the souls of black folk, the black radical imagination is fertile ground for seeds of resistance and rebirth. The undying strength and resilience of the black psyche keeps the black body alive and moving forward against all odds and degrees of aggression. In these volatile and uncertain times, actions of peace and justice can unexpectedly explode like bombs in the face of old, oppressive systems. Resistance ignites when the powers that uphold dysfunctional systems refuse to recalibrate with the new realities of our ever-changing world. Right now, the whole world is on fire.

Built to benefit from the loopholes of this country's constitution, government law and corporate industry are designed to keep black life—by way of our bodies *and* minds—controlled and confined. From plantations to prison cells, to drug wars and dead-end schools, black folk have been fighting against forces of structural violence for centuries. Still, we resist, bearing internal trauma and external pressures. But, the relentless weight of the world has a way of yielding cultural change and artistic excellence. The black artist has always been a Way

Finder in dark times withstanding unimaginable stress while bringing ensouled creations of glittering light and hope to the people like diamonds from coal.

Given what we have had to overcome, as an exceptionally creative and inventive people, we have collectively made a bona fide art of survival. Our modus operandi has had to be mind over matter. We have discovered how to “get out” by turning inward to the safe spaces of our solitude and the infinite depths of our black genius that knows no bounds. This alchemy of separating psyche and spirit from flesh and bone to bear bodily harm and social injustice gave birth to the black aesthetic of soul survival. This aesthetic is a signature style and magical sensibility all our own, traceable in our works of creative resistance across multiple artistic disciplines. It is the dance between grit and grace. It is the Blues. Hip Hop. Blaxploitation. Afrofuturism. It’s Basquiat and the Black Dandy. It is *Lemonade*, *13th* and *Moonlight*. When the soul fights for freedom, our wildest dreams and artistic expressions become secret weapons of spiritual warfare.

Meanwhile, on the earthly plane, the black body continues to serve as corporal messenger/medium of harsh realities and inconvenient truths. For the patriarchal world of white supremacy, the black body as messenger/medium speaks to the Jungian Shadow of Whiteness and its own immoral darkness coming home to roost. As the struggle continues into the 21st century, innovative weapons and zones of combat come into play for a new black resistance. In today’s media-based world, the notion that the *medium is the message* is amplified to a quantum level including a multiverse of platforms and digital interfaces we have yet to fully explore or understand. One thing we do know, the media image, particularly *film*—the moving image—can be a game-changing power-tool for postmillennial liberation.

The appeal of today’s ever-advancing and accessible technologies is hyper connectivity, virtual escape and the ability to *empower* the user. The infectious impact of the Viral Video can ignite a contagion of community unrest, immortalize a single life and alter a nation’s history all in an instant. Whether an anonymous avatar trolling behind closed doors or a social media

movement that spills offline into the streets—voice, access, and impact are amplified 10-fold by the pseudo-sentience of The Network. Memorable hash tags like #HandsUpDontShoot and #ICantBreathe can conjure vivid images of brutality and racial injustice upon sight for the average media consumer. With #BlackLivesMatter at the heart of this algorithm, visible patterns in posts and tweets reflect the cultural pathology of a society sick with inequity and violence.

To recognize the individual mind as Ground Zero in the struggle for survival is to know the power of image and aesthetics to shift consciousness, shape reality and liberate the soul. The soul of a people and the spirit of a generation are reflected in its cultural myths and symbols. Generations indigenous to digital space have given rise to the Power of One (one voice, one image, one idea) to catalyze peaceful protest *and* trigger unapologetic outrage on a worldwide scale. The most vital symbols and recurring images within a visual landscape define what resonates the deepest or *matters* most in the moment carrying the dominant beliefs of the cultural collective. Contemporary media in its many forms—art, film, video, memes, and even hash tags—are encoded with these same symbols and reflect the signs of the times.

A new mythology of black rebellion is emerging through the collective narrative of our daily media transmissions. Archetypal heroes and villains are on the rise like recurring waves across the sea of contemporary art and iconography. Old worlds are going up in a blaze of discontent as new realities of division and self-determination are being built from their ashes. Like all human creations—and their human creators—media also has a dark side. Mainstream media culture is a space dominated by images of fear and terror, exploitation and misrepresentation. The onslaught of negative images projected on the nightly news and across countless entertainment and information platforms casts a shadow on the collective imagination. This is particularly true for the imaginations of the black and brown people of this planet. This shadow is heavy with a long, dark history of greed and conquest. This shadow has eclipsed the vision quests of our ancestors and stolen the fruits of their hard labor and intellect.

To win this epic war, to reclaim the future of our own highest

vision, we have to fight the shadows with the light. We have to fight fire with fire, image with image. If image shapes reality, the visual lexicon of contemporary black media is a Technicolor tarot deck to be shuffled and read on any given day. Symbols and synchronicities in the nation's headlines and our personal timelines hold meaning. Divination is kindred to many belief systems of the African Diaspora offering a means of visioning our path and ultimate destiny. The visual lexicon of survival akin to black communities, locally and globally, not only speaks to the state of black life past and present, it prophesizes our possible fates in the afrofuture. As Samuel Delaney warns, "Without an image of tomorrow, one is trapped by blind history, economics, and politics beyond our control. One is tied up in a web, in a net with no clear way to struggle free".

But, all images are not created equal. All images do not have the power to *transform* the viewer and reality. Not all songs can set the caged bird free. The thing about art (and visual imagery, in general), beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The value and meaning we give to an image or cinematic work is shaped by individual perception and cultural projections. This goes for other human constructs like Truth, Freedom, Race, Justice, God, Reality and Time. The core of these ideas shapeshifts depending on cultural/historical context and individual perspective. The image that frees one mind from the prison of *The Matrix* may be the one that threatens to oppress the next. Artists—whether they accept it, or not—influence the reality of the cultural collective. They do this with the power of revolutionary ideas embedded in the images they create and project onto the world. Artists are visionaries. Change Agents. World Builders. Myth Makers.

This particularly applies to filmmakers who carry the power to reach the masses via the Big Screen, social movements, and the endless array of media platforms that shape our everyday experience. With such power comes equal responsibility. Black artists—those who want to see the liberation of the black soul from a legacy of pain and trauma, those who want to see our most luminous dreams for the future take flight—must own this charge. Rather than a responsibility, consider the creation of black art and images an *opportunity*. Consider it a *vocation*, a *calling* to cultivate hope and positive change for our people and

the world. In an apocalyptic age when the souls of black folk are under genocidal attack, black artists have the weapons and tools within their reach to combat The System. They can change how we see ourselves, value our lives, and ultimately, perceive reality. To break the mental and physical chains of systemic violence and the psychic spells of self-destructive representations that continue to endanger us, black people need black artists. We need black artists to be mindful creators and soulful media-makers of black images (and stories) intended for popular consumption and critical interpretation.

We are what we eat. As a culture of mass media consumers with an unhealthy appetite for violence and destruction, we must consciously and creatively resist the gluttonous gorge of The Feed. Social media alone serves up a dizzying onslaught of fear-based images and ideas, straight with no filter. Often unconsciously, our minds ingest shadow archetypes and toxic tropes that poison our dreams. Woke black folk don't allow images of coons and mammies, sambos and jezebels, pimps and prostitutes, gangstas and thugs, dope dealers and super predators to define who we are or shape our future trajectory. We must tell our own untold stories and restore stolen legacies about black inventors, artists, scientists, farmers, engineers, revolutionaries, presidents, musicians, poets, kings, queens, astronauts and super heroes. These are the black stars that illuminate our lineage like the belt of Orion. This is how we manifest a destiny of our own design. This is how we ensure the revolution will be televised, posted, tweeted, painted, screened and sung about by the next generation. This is how we fight back in the name of self-love, #blackjoy and the soul survival of black folk everywhere. In this postmillennial world of ubiquitous, inevitable suffering, our resistance—no matter its art form or platform—is never, ever futile.



MOTHER'S RETURN
Roni Nicole Henderson, 2017 (credit: Constance Mensh)



RAZAN ALSALAH

Razan AlSalah is a Lebanese-Palestinian media artist and cinematographer living and working between Beirut, Philadelphia and New York. Working as a cinematographer, she's often thinking about how the image is an extension of the camera-body moving in space; on the other side of this same coin, within her expanded-cinema practice, is the process of

mapping an image in place and connecting it to the viewer's body. Razan's work is in the permanent collection of the Sursock Museum in Beirut and has been exhibited in Beirut, Dubai, Philadelphia and New York. She is a Fulbright scholar and MFA candidate at Temple University

razanalsalah.com



YOUR FATHER WAS BORN A 100 YEARS OLD, AND SO WAS THE NAKBA

أبوكي خلق عمره ١٠٠ سنة، زي النكبة

Palestinians are being forced out of their homes everyday. The largest exodus, what Palestinians call Nakba or catastrophe, occurred on May 15, 1948, 3 years after my father was born on William Stanton Street. William Stanton was a British colonel of the British Mandate in Palestine. Today, the street is called Shivat Tsiyon Street, the street of Liberation. 'One colonial power made way to another – what liberation?'

grandma asks. Today, Palestinian refugees, my family included, are denied their Right to Return. My only access to my grandmother's land is Google maps street view. Sometimes I wonder how grandma would've reacted if I would've shown her, her hometown 7aifa on Street View, which is today the only way I can see Palestine.



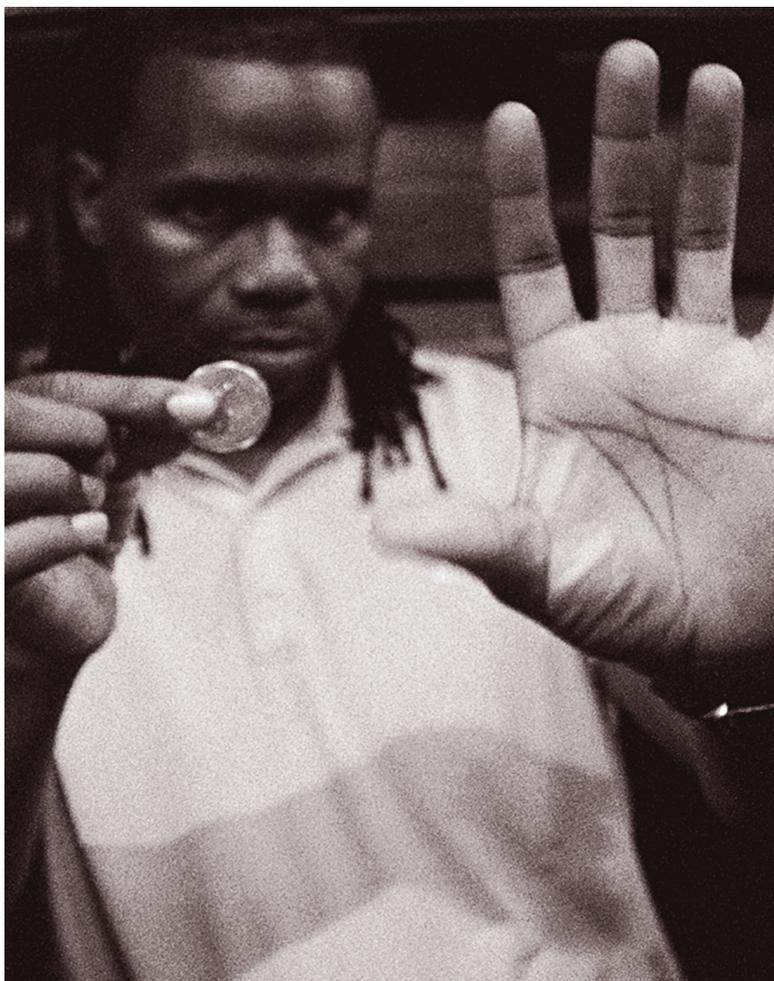
KEVIN JEROME EVERSON

Kevin Jerome Everson (b.1965) was born and raised in Mansfield, Ohio. He has a MFA from Ohio University and a BFA from the University of Akron. He is Professor of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Everson was awarded the 2012 Alpert Award for Film/Video; his films has been the subject of mid-career retrospectives at the Viennale (2014); *Visions du Reel*, Nyon, Switzerland (2012), The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2011) and Centre Pompidou, Paris in 2009. His work has been featured at the 2008, 2012 and 2017 Whitney Biennials and the 2013 Sharjah Biennial. Upcoming museum retrospectives include Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Seoul, Korea (Feb. 2017) and Tate Modern, London, UK (Fall 2017). Recent solo museum exhibitions include SECCA (Southeastern Center for the Arts) Winston-Salem, NC and the Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA and inclusion in the "How to Be Human" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio. Everson's paintings, sculptures, and photographs--and films, including nine features (*Spicebush*, 2005; *Cinnamon*, 2006; *The Golden Age of Fish*, 2008; *Erie*, 2010; *Quality Control* 2011; *The Island of St. Matthews*, 2013; *Park Lanes*, 2015; *8903 Empire*, 2016 and the recently completed *Tonsler Park*, 2017) and over 130 short form works--have been exhibited internationally at film festivals including Sundance, NYFF, Toronto, Venice, Rotterdam, Berlin, Ann Arbor, Oberhausen; cinemas, galleries, museums and public and private art institutions. He recently collaborated with the Scribe Video Center on a commission for the film *Eason* (2016).



THREE QUARTERS

Three Quarters features two magicians in Philadelphia practicing their slight of hand tricks.



JA'TOVIA GARY

Ja'Tovia Gary is a filmmaker and visual artist originally from Dallas, Texas currently living and working in Brooklyn, New York. She earned her MFA in Social Documentary Filmmaking from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Her work has screened at festivals, cinemas, and institutions worldwide including Frameline LGBTQ

Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, The Whitney Museum, Anthology Film Archives, Atlanta Film Festival, the Schomburg Center, MoMa PS1, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum, New Orleans Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival and elsewhere.



AN ECSTATIC EXPERIENCE

A meditative invocation on transcendence as a means of restoration.



RONI NICOLE HENDERSON

"I want these images to move you, as I am moved by you"

In moving pictures I has grown from a desire to literally move about the world, capture it's miracles and project them onto the collective memory. As a filmmaker, Roni Nicole Henderson makes fiction, fine art, experimental, documentary and with prayer, feature-length narrative films in the very near future. As a photographer, she delights in fashion + fine art, documenting artists and

everyday folk, especially during major life initiations. As a fine artist, she projects this work in odd places so as to inject impulses to heal the self into our environment, impulses that inspire change and growth. Having earned an M.F.A. from the Savannah College of Art and Design, Roni Nicole desires to continue her professional work as a fine artist in the gallery, museum and especially the public spheres.



MOTHER'S RETURN

"During labor, death circles the bed 9 times." "Mother's Return" is a 3D video shrine projecting the cyclical journey of birth, decline and rebirth. The space provides offerings to a mother in transient spaces, with mirrors as means to reflect on what dies in order for us to live. Mother's

Return illustrates that there is honor in both a broken heart and a courageous act of sacrifice. There is honor in Her. This installation will lay that honor at her feet and draw threads to connect the ancient in us to the fragile, strengthening both.



KAHLIL JOSEPH

Kahlil Joseph is an American artist and filmmaker working in Los Angeles. His previous work includes *Until the Quiet Comes*, which received widespread critical acclaim and won the Grand Jury Prize for Short Films at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. The following year, the film was included in Kara Walker's celebrated exhibit, *Ruffneck Constructivists*, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. Joseph's first solo major museum show, *Double Conscience*, featured his visually and sonically dynamic double-channel film, *m.A.A.d.*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. In 2016, *m.A.A.d.*

was included in Art Basel's Unlimited exhibition in Switzerland and the popular group show, *The Infinite Mix*, at the Southbank Centre in London. Concurrently, Joseph was Emmy and Grammy nominated for his direction of Beyoncé's feature length album film, *Lemonade*. Joseph is a recipient of the 2016 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and 2017 Artadia Award. Currently, Joseph serves as Vice President of the board at The Underground Museum, a vanguard and pioneering independent art museum, exhibition space and community hub in Los Angeles.



PROCESS

Process, a new film by Kahlil Joseph, is a dynamic music film in collaboration with Sampha for his debut album by the same name. Both broad and specific, the film traces Sampha's personal family history in order to access the larger narrative of African immigration to Britain, resonant with so many. A passage that complicates identity, custom, and even one's own understanding of the world and cultural norms. Born in Britain, raised in Morden, outside London, and first generation from Sierra Leone, Sampha's life is the example, inseparable from either. The film takes place in Morden and Freetown, investigating the fundamental

duality of his identity. In turn, the film transcends any singular story. Juxtaposed are the inherent confrontations—cultural, social, geological—of the origin culture and that which is discovered abroad. Trees, clothing, faces and spaces are distinct though they name the same ideas—home, football, mother. Time is manipulated as the film moves between two countries, across generations, seamlessly. One wonders if all these moments might take place simultaneously. Deeply spiritual, the film pursues the essence of Sampha's late mother, Binty Sisay, as well as the universal notion of process that loss demands of us all.



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18 BLACK GIRLS AGES 1-18 WHO HAVE ARRIVED AT THE SINGULARITY AND ARE THUS SPIRITUAL MACHINES: \$8 IN AN EDITION OF \$97,000,000,000,000

TERENCE NANCE
& NORVIS JUNIOR

The above is a performance during which I google the phrase "1 year old black boy" ascending in age to the age of 18. I allow Google's "popular searches" algorithm to predict what comes after the phrase and peruse the results based on what Google thinks I want to search for in a Black boy. The algorithm generates results based on the most popular searches so it can be theorized that the Black boys that the algorithm predicts are the Black boys we are searching for. This performance will take place at random intervals until there are 97 quadrillion editions. Over the course of several performances the results will change and transform as the Black boys we all search for and the circumstances they live in do the same. In addition to this piece I will document another performance entitled: "18 Black Boys Ages 1 - 18 Who Have Arrived at the Singularity and are Thus Spiritual Machines" This parallel performance will also be performed in an edition of \$97,000,000,000,000.99.

PERFORMANCE

Thursday, August 3, 2017 • 7:00pm

TERENCE NANCE

Terence Nance is an artist born and raised in Dallas, Texas. His first feature film, *AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF HER BEAUTY*, premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. The film has since been released theatrically in the US, UK, France, and South Africa and was named to both the New York Times and New Yorkers top 10 lists for best films of 2013. Terence is also a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and his most recent films

SWIMMING IN YOUR SKIN AGAIN, and *UNIVITILLEN* premiered at Sundance 2016 and New York Film Festival 2016 respectively. At Sundance 2017 Terence will premiere his performance piece *18 BLACK BOYS AGES 1-18 WHO HAVE ARRIVED AT THE SINGULARITY AND ARE THUS SPIRITUAL MACHINES*. Terence is currently working on a pilot for HBO called *RANDOM ACTS OF FLYNESS*



BLACKOUT: JOHN BURRIS SPEAKS

The words of this American Civil Rights Attorney echo through this eerie visual litany. In the wake of the murder of Eric Garner and Mike Brown by the hands of the police, John Burris implicates us all in the struggle to defend and protect black lives. "The lives that have been lost are important lives and they should not have been lost in vain," he says. "Do something."

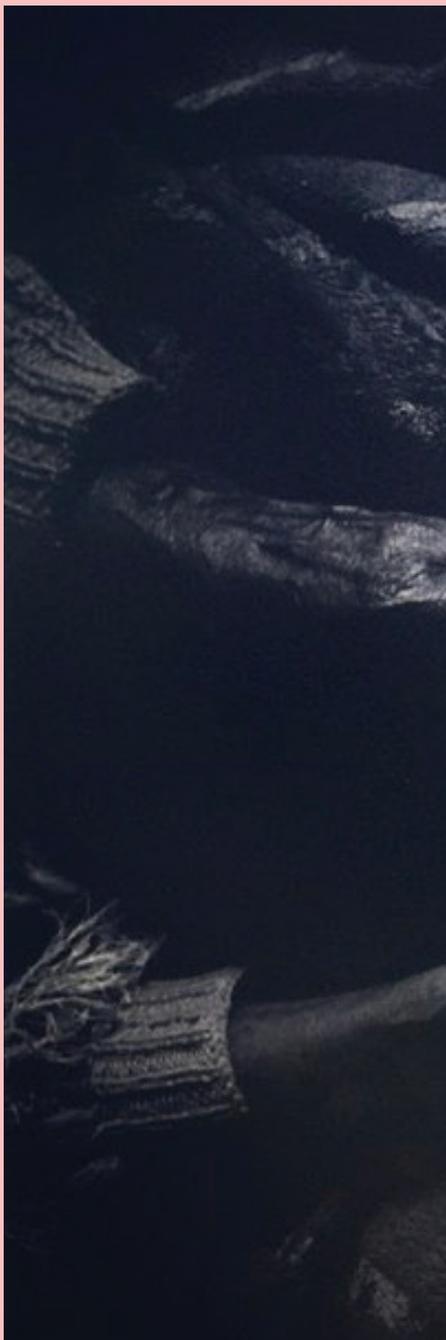


SOSENA SOLOMON

Sosena Solomon is an award winning social documentary film and multimedia visual artist from Ethiopia. Intuitively selecting subjects and stories, she is particularly interested in spaces of transition and change, acting as a cultural preservationist. Her work, whether presented as a film or an immersive 3-dimensional experience, explores cross sections of various subcultures and communities in flux, carefully teasing out cultural nuances and capturing personal narratives via arresting visual storytelling and cinéma vérité stylings. Sosena has worked for many years in the commercial and nonprofit sectors and has worked as a Director and Cinematographer on many short film projects including "Sole", a documentary on sneaker culture that premiered on PBS affiliate MINDTV, and "MERKATO", filmed on location in one of Africa's largest open-air markets and exhibited internationally as an audio, visual, and sensory installation. Sosena earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Social Documentary Film from The School of Visual Arts in New York, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Television Production from Temple University. She is a recipient of The Leeway Foundation Art and Change grant (2013) and the Transformation Award (2014). Sosena is a freelancer currently lecturing in the Fine Arts Department at University of Pennsylvania's School of Design and in the Media Studies and Production Department at Temple University's School of Media and Communication (SMC). She has previously lectured at University of the Arts, Philadelphia.



DOUBLE GOLD
Sosena Solomon, 2017







PROCESS
Kahlil Joseph, 2017 (credit: Constance Mensh)



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Gallery Hours Tue-Sun 12-5

Free and open to the public

BlackStar Film Festival
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The 6th Annual BlackStar Film Festival takes place August 3-6, 2017.



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Leonard
Pearlstein Gallery

Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design