

WE
HAVE
PEACH

Artists:
Keren Alfred
Zoe Butler
Sonya Dyer
Fields Harrington
Anina Major
Sherae Rimpsey
Nastassja E. Swift

Curated by Studio AGD

Opening reception:
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 6-8 pm
with performances at 7 pm
by Zoe Butler and Sherae Rimpsey

We Have Peach

Usdan Gallery
Bennington College
February 25-April 26, 2025

We Have Reach is an exhibition of visual and performance art that considers avenues of the body in space, particularly how the Black feminine has been restricted or exploited or expelled or compelled in relationship to taking up space. Studio AGD conceptualized this project as a tangent of our unrealized curation *Something of the Worlds Within* (1), for which in many ways we meditated on the Black interior being, especially in proximity or response to her oppressor. With this subsequent project, we seek to facilitate conversation about the friction, endurance, and possibility of an empowered and expansive Black femme figure within her exterior environment. Exhibition themes include the extent of the body across time and space, fugitive movement and fugitive stillness, exploitative fecundity, and the longing of the Black feminine body and consciousness for heaven and home.

In her artist's book *FULLJOY* (2022), Keren Alfred challenges us to consider the freedom of centering our own joy in our creative process. 'Can I just make art about flowers?' is a prompt that considers the capacity of joy to extend us up and out, engaging with expansive possibilities that can stretch us to the stars—despite, despite, despite. Alfred began crafting *space paper!*—the material of her visual works—as a way to process Black murder. She was seeking an escape within the process of paper making, with outer space being as far away as she could go. Alfred's first *space paper!* series, *wistful & BOLD* (2022), depicts outer space in its many articulations of color and clarity. Together with her second *space paper!* series, *on earth as in heaven* (2024), Alfred invokes the expansive space of one's imagination as seamless with the space we see when we look up and out, and reminds us that the range of our states of being can inhabit the body all at once.

We are prompted to think of the interior body's relationship to outer space via the works of Sonya Dyer and fields harrington. harrington's *Untitled (Volumetric Surface Render Of The Nuclear Envelope Of One HeLa Cell)* (2023) depicts one HeLa cell—a cell from the oldest human cell line, beginning with Henrietta Lacks's cancerous tumor in 1951. In Dyer's *Hailing Frequencies Open* series—which includes the two-channel film *Action>Potential* (2023) and the hanging sculpture *Andromeda Mission: Anarcha Prototype II* (2019)—Dyer addresses this invasion on the flesh and interior body. She uses the phrase "dark fecundity" to describe the exploitation of the Black femme body's purportedly endless reproductive capacity, as endured by Lacks, Anarcha Westcott, and other Black womxn subjected to scientific racism. Dyer and harrington both communicate the HeLa cell's resilience, its ability to multiply and, in harrington's words, its "deathlessness."

Sherae Rimpsey's drawings *corpulent things tend to motion, open, lift* (*Aporia snippet 746*) or *Jet. Held. Split.* (2024) also consider how the body moves under restriction; in Rimpsey's words: split, shifting, floating, constant.

Nastassja E. Swift's *Sack* series—which includes *and the light would shine through, and we could remember their faces* (2022), *we have to fight, although we have to cry* (2023), and *so, pack light* (2023)—alludes to the bent back of a spent body. From afar, the sacks reveal a posture of exhaustion, but up close we glimpse the tiny faces that pepper the sacks, which may represent the infinite pieces of our interior selves, intuition made evident, taking shape.

In contrast to the restriction of bodies, Zoe Butler's *The Story Of The Ole Higue* (2024)—a work that includes video, performance and photography—uses Caribbean folklore to remind us that to be alive is to be in flux. The Ole Higue was a being who evaded the supposed limits of the body by shedding her skin at night and moving as light. In addition to complicating the perceived boundaries of embodiment, her story warns us of the conditions that might inhibit our return to ourselves. Another effort against such restriction manifests in Swift's *Passage, when momma lets my braids flow down my back* (2021). The gorgeously crafted wool sculpture unapologetically subverts convention, audacious and attention snatching. She is likely one of the first pieces the viewer encounters when entering the gallery, her grounded presence complemented by Dyer's *Anarcha* floating nearby.

Anina Major's *These Boots Were Made for Walking* is a meditation on the agency of destruction. The ceramic shards, a primary material of creation, are a shattered history. Who or what shattered this piece which was once whole, and why? This Black femme body protected by boots moves organically over the remnants of a past. We don't see her expression, but her movement tells us that perhaps she is in a contemplative play space, imagining what can be, claiming ownership over the ruins.

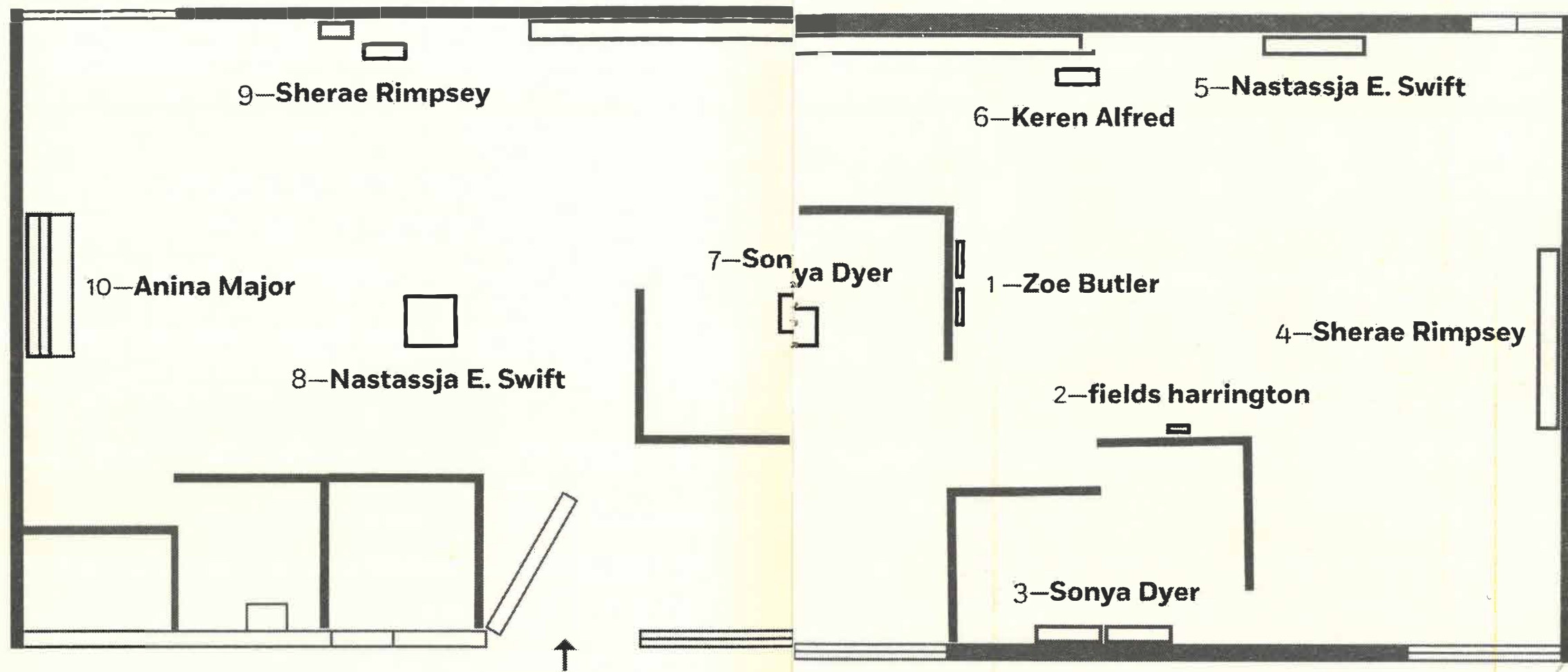
As you navigate the space you are welcomed by the resounding voice of a Black woman singing praises from a listening place. Sherar Rimpsey's *_what is it about particulate?* (2024) features footage of Jennifer Holliday singing "His Eye is on the Sparrow," and can be heard from every corner. The release of energy that is using one's voice, from that holy internal space that when made external is alchemic / a penetrative voice that will remind you of your edges. Within the walls of the exhibition is a multi-sensory experience, asking you to listen intentionally, come close, stay back, walk light.

—Folasade Adesanya, Studio AGD

Endnote:

(1) *Something of the Worlds Within* was commissioned as a section on Afrofuturism for the *We the Future* exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, in Essen, Germany, in 2023. Museum administrators cancelled Studio AGD's participation because of pro-Palestinian views expressed on Studio AGD member Anaïs Duplan's Instagram feed, sparking outrage from the international art community, support for Duplan, and accusations of censorship.

Exhibition Guide





1— Zoe Butler

First Embrace, 2024
Expanded photograph

Illuminative Caress, 2024
Expanded photograph

During the exhibition opening, Butler will present *Conversations and Constellations: The Story Of The Ole Higue*, a computer-animated projection and performative reading.

Butler is a new media performance artist who uses abstraction to explore the relationship between material culture and embodiment. Butler's recent work engages with personal and museum archives to explore artifacts that resist histories of domination. Her work often discusses the way that power sculpts our visual and lived realities, using mediums that range from computer-animated films to wearable technology-assisted performance.

Her recent work takes an interest in the deterioration of objects over time; whether reflected in the decay of family VHS tapes or the erosion of slave ship wreckage. Butler is a 2023-24 Fulbright Research Fellow, affiliated with The University of the West Indies, Saint Augustine. Her ongoing project *Conversations and Constellations* is a body of creative research exploring Caribbean oral traditions, and the histories from which they emerge, to encourage the continued exchange of storytelling.

2— Fields Harrington

Untitled (Volumetric Surface Render Of The Nuclear Envelope Of One Hela Cell), 2023
Privacy filter, dye sublimation on Aluminum

harrington is a multimedia artist investigating the political, social, historical, and economic forces shaping the production of empirical knowledge, especially within science. His work critiques how ideologies—such as racism and the enduring financial logic of slavery—have shaped scientific practices that uphold systems of oppression. By revealing intersections between knowledge production and the abstraction of power, harrington challenges the construction, transmission, and weaponization of knowledge.

harrington has a BFA from University of North Texas and an MFA from University of Pennsylvania. He participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program. He has had solo exhibitions at David Salkin Gallery, KAJE, Petrline, and Y2K Group, and exhibited in group shows at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Galerie Thomas Schulte, Parsons School of Design, 52-07 Flushing Avenue, and Automat Gallery. harrington was a L.A.B. researcher-in-residence at The Kitchen in collaboration with The School for Poetic Computation, and held a Site to be Seen research residency at RAIR.

3 + 7— Sonya Dyer

3—
Action>Potential, 2023
Two-channel moving image
16 minutes

7—
Andromeda Mission: Anarcha Prototype II, 2019
Fibreglass, polyurethane foam, PVC, foamboard, MDF,
mild steel, aluminium, Black 2.0 acrylic paint

Supported using public funding by the National Lottery
through Arts Council England

Dyer is an artist from London, working primarily in moving image and sculpture. She was a finalist for the Arts Foundation Futures Award 2021, and is an alum of the Whitney Museum of American Art: Independent Study Program. Dyer's practice explores where the center is located in fictional narratives of the future. She is interested in how subjectivities and alliances are formed across cultures and temporalities, creating radical futures through unexpected connections.

Recent exhibitions include *Action>Potential* (2024), Alchemy Festival of Film and Arts, Scotland; *The Ready Room* (2024), Primary, Nottingham, UK; *Three Parent Child* (2023), Somerset House, London, UK; *The London Open*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK; *Whitstable Biennial* (2022), UK; *Directions: Forward*, Karst Gallery (2021), UK; *Thirteen Ways of Seeing*, Herbert Museum and Art Galleries (2021), UK; Art Night London (2021); and *Rewriting The Future* (2019), Site Gallery, UK.

4 + 9— Sherae Rimpsey

4—
_what is it about particulate?, 2024
Text, video (re-shot and re-edited footage)
4 minutes, 12 seconds

During the exhibition opening, Rimpsey will perform her text
_what is it about particulate?

9—
corpulent things tend to motion, open, lift (Aporia snippet 746) or Jet. Held. Split., 2024
Oil stick, graphite, colored pencil on paper
Two from a series of 143 drawings

Rimpsey has exhibited internationally at Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw; Zentral Bibliothek in Zurich; National Library of Buenos Aires as contributor to Luis Camnitzer's *El Ultimo Libro—The Last Book*; and Akademie Schloss Solitude, in Stuttgart. She has presented drawing, writing, film, performance, and sound works at Kentler International Drawing Space, Brooklyn; Gallery Joe, Philadelphia; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland; and various venues in Chicago.

Rimpsey contributed sound and writing to Matt Mehlan's *SLOW DANCES* project and performed in *Carnival of the Animals* with Every house has a door. She is featured with Clifford Owens on Kamau Amu Patton's *Second Mind / Alto Age*, commissioned by the Pulitzer Arts Foundation for the exhibition *Terry Adkins: Resounding*. She has published poetry in the Oyez Review, Collected, and Homonym Journal and critical essays in ART PAPERS. Her first book of poetry, *neon neon*, was published by Shinkoyo Artist Pool. Rimpsey holds a BFA in Technology & Integrated Media from Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA in Writing from School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

5 + 8—

Nastassja E. Swift

5—

and the light would shine through, and we could remember their faces, 2022

Wool, fabric, wood

we have to fight, although we have to cry
a quote from the Sonia Sanchez poem, "Morning Song
and Evening Walk," 2023

Wool, velvet, leather, wood, batting

so, pack light, 2023

Mixed textiles, wool, handwoven tapestry, batting

8—

Passage, when momma lets my braids flow down my back, 2021

Wool, synthetic braiding hair, wood, plaster, resin, satin

Swift redefines portraiture through her use of wool to address geographical histories, ancestry, ritual, and community. She was the 2024 Textile Society of America Brandford/Elliott Award-ee. Other awards include Center for Craft Research Fund Artist Fellowship (2023); VMFA Fellowship; Dr. Doris Derby Award; Art Matters Fellowship Award; inaugural Black Box Press Foundation Art as Activism Grant; and Virginia Commission of the Arts Fellowship. In 2022, she was Distinguished Fellow at Penland School of Craft and awarded a Public Arts Commission in Richmond, VA.

Swift has exhibited at venues including VCUQatar; Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, UK; Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore; Virginia MoCA; Boston University Art Galleries; University of Florida; SCAD Museum of Art; and Ball State University. Residencies include Vermont Studio Center, Wassaic Project, SPACES in Cleveland, and MASS MoCA. Her work has been featured in publications including the Legacy zine series celebrating the Harlem Renaissance, presented by the New York Times and U.S. Bank.

6—

Keren Alfred

wistful and BOLD, 2022

Ink on handmade paper

Nine sheets, each 18 x 24 inches

on earth as in heaven, 2025

Instax print on handmade paper

Eight sheets, each 8 x 10 inches

FULLJOY, 2022

artist's book, edition of 35

Alfred is an artist and environmentalist. Born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, she often says that her interest in the environment is in her blood. She received an MFA in Book Arts at the University of Iowa's Center for the Book, where she specialized in papermaking, letterpress printing, and calligraphy. Her artwork builds on her environmental background and explores aspects of her identity as a Black woman from the Caribbean learning to resist and heal from oppressive systems. Her work is in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library of the New York Botanical Garden, as well as several private collections. Her hope is to create art that cultivates joy, growth, and care.

10— Anina Major

These Boots Were Made for Walking, 2024
Video with sound
5 minutes, 59 seconds

A Bennington faculty member, Major is a visual artist from the Bahamas. Her decision to establish a home contrary to the location in which she was born and raised motivates her to investigate the relationship between self and place as a site of negotiation. By utilizing the craft vernacular to reclaim experiences and relocate displaced objects, her practice exists at the intersection of nostalgia and identity. She holds an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design and has received numerous awards and residencies, including the Armory Show 2024 Pommery Prize, the 2023 Joan Mitchell Fellowship, and the EKWC, Centre-of-excellence for ceramics international artist-in-residency. Major's work has been exhibited in The Bahamas, Europe, and the United States, with a permanent display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. Her work is in permanent collections including the National Gallery of The Bahamas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, RISD Museum, and Perez Art Museum of Miami. Her work has been featured in the *New York Times* and *Forbes* and published in Phaidon Press *Great Women Sculptors*.

We Have Reach is curated by Studio AGD, a collaboration of poet Folasade Adesanya, new media performance artist Zoe Butler, and Bennington literature faculty and poet Anaïs Duplan, '14.

The exhibition presentation at Bennington is organized by Usdan Gallery Director and Curator Anne Thompson and Deputy Director John Umphlett. For installation support, thank you to technical instructor in sculpture Olivia Saporito and Usdan Gallery student crew members. For help with technology, huge thanks to John Crowe and Curt Wells.

The font *Void*, selected by Studio AGD for exhibition materials, was designed by Malte Bentzen in 2022 for the type foundry Optimo. "Drawing inspiration from the sensation of floating in space and being pulled by gravitational forces . . . Void . . . is suspended between past and future; its blobby shapes have a magnetic fluidity that suggests otherworldiness." (Opimo)

This brochure is Riso-printed with black, pink, and yellow inks.
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We
Have
Reached
Film screening
and closing
celebration
Tues., April 15,
7-9 pm
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