

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLOCK PARTY

Lizania Cruz, Kenturah Davis, Kearra Amaya Gopee,
Kahlil Robert Irving, Alex Jackson, Devin N. Morris,
Kenny Rivero, Shikeith, Vaughn Spann

Curated by Tess Sol Schwab
July 14 – August 25, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION:
Saturday, July 14, 2018, 5 -8 pm
DJ set by April Hunt
BBQ by Chef Omar Tate



Kahlil Robert Irving, *Street Block: Lost/ Found/ Chance*, 2017, collograph and collaged found objects, 42.25 x 40 inches

Jenkins Johnson Projects presents *Block Party*, a group exhibition featuring works by **Lizania Cruz, Kenturah Davis, Kearra Amaya Gopee, Kahlil Robert Irving, Alex Jackson, Devin N. Morris, Kenny Rivero, Shikeith** and **Vaughn Spann**, curated by Project Space Director, **Tess Sol Schwab**. Taking inspiration from the numerous block parties that enliven our neighborhood in the summer, the exhibition takes a more critical look at the importance of these community gatherings. Not just a simple get

together, block parties strengthen community ties and often function as a town hall to discuss larger issues affecting the neighborhood including violence, immigration, sexuality and race. The exhibition also marks the Project Space's first year in Prospect Lefferts Gardens and our continuing commitment to the community. The festive opening will include a DJ set by **April Hunt** and BBQ by **Chef Omar Tate**, as part of his *Reclamation Project* exploring the history of African American migration through food.

The exhibition figuratively and literally begins in the street, with works by **Khalil Robert Irving**. His *Street Prints* are made from the detritus of city life including crushed cans, playing cards, and cigarette butts. They reflect both the beauty and the grit of the American city, as well as its continually changing nature. Irving is currently an Artist in Residence at Art Omi, New York and his work is in the collections of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art and the JP Morgan Chase Art Collection. The street also serves as the stage for the works of **Kenny Rivero**. Autobiographical in nature, his works reference Rivero's childhood in the NYC neighborhood of Washington Heights. His sidewalks, street corners and foreboding alleyways are often populated with disembodied legs, floating heads and small fires, alluding to a violence played out in our cities. Rivero will also create a site-specific installation in the Project Space's jewel box which incorporates his work, *Jugettes*, made from discarded dominos, broken beer bottles, and sunflower scenes, remnants of a party and a memorial to connections made. Rivero is a Yale MFA graduate and studied at the Skowhegen School of Painting and Sculpture. He currently has a solo exhibition at the Delaware Contemporary Art Museum.

Racial and sexual identity are explored in the works of **Shikeith** and **Devin N. Morris**. Growing up in Philadelphia, Shikeith often observed and mirrored the policing of masculinity which is ever present for black and queer youth. Anything considered feminine or homosexual was gravely rejected and persecuted. His photography dismantles the oppressive aspects of black masculinity while expanding existing notions and making room for alternative options. 2018 Yale MFA graduate, Shikeith has presented at MoMA and the Philadelphia Art Museum. He currently is in a group show at Aperture, *The Way We Live Now*.



Shikeith, *The Language Must Not Sweat*, 2018, pigment print, 20 x 30 inches



Devin N. Morris, *Playing Roles on TV: Wife, Mother, Grandmother*, 2018, acrylic, colored paper, colored pencil, oil pastel, silk, and leather on paper, 22 x 30 inches, signed lower right

The mixed media collages of **Devin N. Morris** reimagine the social boundaries imposed on black and LGBTQ Americans within surreal landscapes and elaborately constructed environments. These imaginary domestic spaces are rooted in the familiar reference commonly found household materials and fabrics. Gestures of kindness are inspired by his experiences growing up black in Baltimore and his later experiences navigating the world as a queer man. Morris was recently in *The Aesthetics of Matter*, the first NYC curatorial project by Deux Femmes Noires: Mickalene Thomas and Racquel Chevremont. His 2017 solo show at Terrault Contemporary was listed in *Artforum* as the “Best of 2017”, and he was named by *Time Magazine* in 2017 as one of “12 African American Photographers You Should Follow.” Morris is the founder of 3 Dot Zine, which is an annual publication that serves as a forum for marginalized concerns and recently hosted Brown Paper Zine & Small Press Fair with the Studio Museum in Harlem.

An investigation of who belongs and a discourse on representation are found in the work of **Alex Jackson** and **Kenturah Davis**. Through a lexicon of characters, beings, objects, and spaces, Jackson attempts to depict the flesh's relationship to architecture and the natural environment as one entangled within the past, present, and future. Jackson is a 2017 Yale MFA graduate, a recipient of a 2015 Skowhegan School of Art residency and he has appeared on the cover of *New American Paintings*. For **Kenturah Davis**, the figures she creates are composed from written text. In this performative act, she strips away color and instead focuses on the construction of our personal and collective identities. Using text as a point of departure, she explores the fundamental role that language has in shaping how we understand ourselves and the world around us. Recently, Davis was commissioned by LA Metro to create a large scale site-specific work that will be permanently installed on the new Crenshaw/LAX rail line. Davis earned her BA from Occidental College and is a 2018 Yale MFA graduate.



Kenturah Davis, *Mantse (from Infinity Series)*, 2016, hand-written text of graphite on paper, 30 x 26 inches



Lizania Cruz, *We The News* 2018, Newsstand carrying zines and snacks and beverages from the Caribbean and African countries represented in the zines

Questions of belonging are brought to the political sphere in the work of **Lizania Cruz** and **Kearra Amaya Gopee** who explore issues of immigration. Cruz, through her participatory project, *We the News*, documents, publishes, and distributes the stories of Black immigrants through zines and products in a public newsstand. This newsstand will appear outside on August 25th along with programming that includes a workshop, readings, and dance performance. During the exhibition, Cruz will present a wall activation where participants are invited to share solidarity by completing a written affirmation. Cruz was a 2017-2018 Create Change Artist in Residence at Laundromat Project. Her projects have been featured in *Hyperallergic*, *Fusion News*, and *KQED Arts*. **Kearra Amaya Gopee** deals with the many facets of identity, nationality and immigration that are implicit in the relationships of Trinidad and Tobago, the US, and European colonial history. In her installation, *Artifact #1: Tiger Balm*, she recreates her grandmother's bureau through the careful placement of personal ephemera: family photos, medicine bottles, various salves, makeup, and Tiger Balm, a Chinese ointment that has long been used in Caribbean homes for general healing purposes. Through the installation she explores personal history, the theft of her mother and her passports by her father which prevented her re-entry into the United States and reflects upon the metaphorical state of visibility /invisibility and presence/absence inhabited by immigrant and migrant people in the

United States. Gopee is a current resident at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and has shown at the New Museum and the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute.

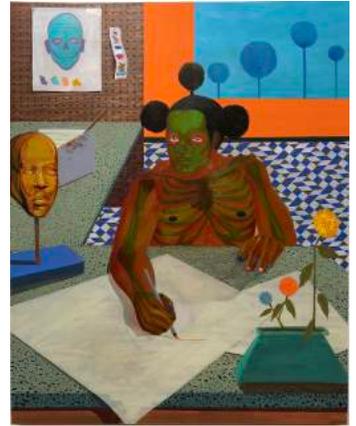
The importance of family and everyday materials are underlined in the work of **Vaughn Spann**. Influenced by his grandparents growing up, Spann spent his childhood learning the craft of working with his hands and becoming a maker. Everyone in his family knew how to sew and this skill was passed down. Spann reimagines towels, t-shirts, yarn, spray paint, clay, and other objects of the everyday and transforms them into abstract works rich with color and texture. Spann seeks to contribute to the dialogue of black experience that was once written out of Art History Books. He is a recent Yale MFA graduate and a recipient of the 2017 Alice Kimball Traveling Fellowship and has shown at the Reginald Lewis Museum in Baltimore and Newark Museum. His work currently appears on the cover of *New American Paintings*.



Vaughn Spann, *Here Comes the Storm*, 2018, terrycloth, polymer paint, oil pastel, paper on canvas, 38 x 38 inches



Kearra Gopee, *Artifact #1: Tiger Balm*, 2017, single channel video, bureau, archival images, raspberry pie, plants, visa applications, paper, dimensions variable

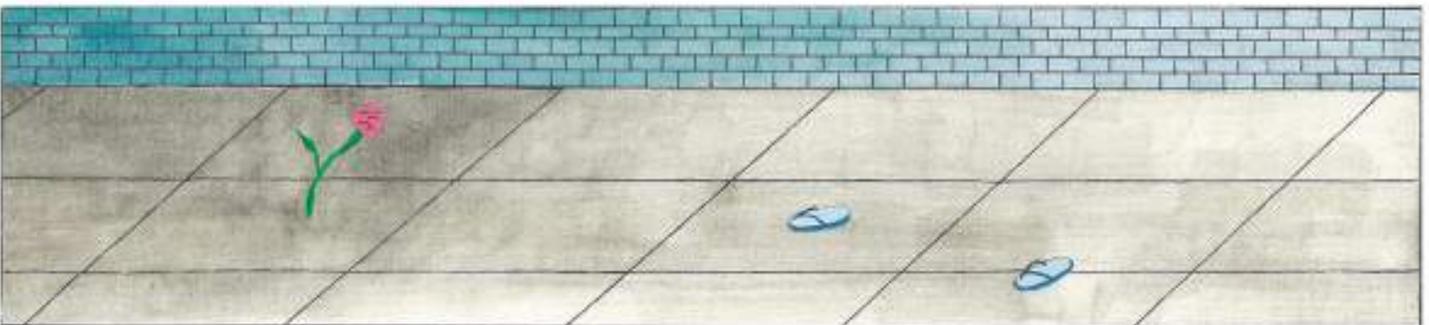


Alex Jackson, *Topiary*, 2018, oil on panel, 48 x 60 inches

ABOUT JENKINS JOHNSON PROJECTS

The mission of Jenkins Johnson Projects is to enhance the cultural environment of its community, encourage collaboration, and provide a space for active dialogue. The space welcomes a rotation of guest curators who present exhibitions of international contemporary artists working across disciplines. Upcoming projects include: *Least Orthodox Goddess IV* curated by **Jasmine Wahi**; *Basil Kincaid, Caroline Kent and Essau McGhee* curated by **Larry Ossei-Mensah**; **Enrico Riley**; and **Rico Gatson**.

Founded in 2017, Jenkins Johnson Projects is the first gallery of its kind in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. It engages the local community and celebrates the vibrancy of the neighborhood and greater Brooklyn area. The space is located across the street from Prospect Park at 207 Ocean Avenue in a turn of the century Limestone building, in the Ocean on the Park Historic District. It is on the subway lines B, Q, and S (Franklin Avenue Shuttle) at Prospect Park Station. It is in close proximity to the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the Brooklyn Public Library. Jenkins Johnson Projects provides an alternate setting for intimate interactions with art and artists.



Kenny Rivero, *Ropa Vieja 2*, 2018, gouache on paper, 3 x 11 inches