Retrogarde
November 11, 2016–January 1, 2017

RELATED EVENTS
Opening Reception with Artist Performance:
Friday, November 11, 2016, 6–8pm
Logan Center Gallery
Artist Talk:
Saturday, November 12, 2016, 2pm
Logan Center Screening Room
Gallery Hours:
Tue–Sat, 9am–9pm
Sun, 11am–9pm

Logan Center Exhibitions presents an international group exhibition exploring contemporary artists working with avant-garde strategies, histories, and archives

Logan Center Exhibitions is pleased to present Retrogarde, an international group exhibition exploring contemporary artists’ recuperation and appropriation of avant-garde strategies, histories, and archives in their work. On view at the Logan Center Gallery from November 11, 2016 through January 1, 2017, this exhibition features works across video, installation, painting, and sound by artists Caroline Bergvall, Brendan Fernandes, Samson Kambalu, Matthew Metzger, Catherine Sullivan, and Samson Young.

“Responding to the yearlong campus-wide initiative Concrete Happenings, Retrogarde challenges us to rethink avant-garde traditions and their relationship with contemporary practice,” says Yesomi Umolu, Logan Center Exhibitions Curator. “The artworks on view in this exhibition demonstrate that these radical histories—which have now entered the canon—continue to inspire and provide space for further interrogation.”

Conceptually and formally, the works on view adopt a series of recognizable avant-garde forms—fusing play with the profane; detourning language, space, and matter; and working through performative actions and interventions—to address the politics of everyday life.

Chicago-based artist Matthew Metzger renders stills from video documentation of Yvonne Rainer’s seminal 1966 performance of Trio A into two abstract canvases, each stretched to the exact size of one of Philip Guston’s last abstract paintings. In these works the artist addresses the tussle between figuration and abstraction in the history of painting, while also exposing the philosophical divide between painting and performance. In a two-channel video installation Catherine Sullivan restages performative actions by key Fluxus figures including Joseph Beuys, Robert Filliou, and Wolf Vostell within a theatrical production of a seventeenth-century Jacobean drama. In conflating these distinct traditions, Sullivan deconstructs the tropes of performance and
asserts an avant-gardist commitment to a polyphony of form and meaning.

Across a collection of films from his Nyau Cinema series, Samson Kambalu brings into convergence the aesthetics of early European cinema and a myriad of influences including the urban interventions of the Situationist International, the scatological rants of Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, American spiritualism, and masquerade practices from South East Africa. Kambalu’s work connects the shared impulse for play and improvisation across these cultural forms. Also on view is the artist’s interactive piece *Holy Balls* (2016), which invites visitors to play with soccer balls covered with pages from the Bible, simultaneously engaging them in an act of sacrilege and free-spirited expression.

This possibility of spontaneous action in the gallery is further accentuated by Brendan Fernandes's series of wall-mounted posters. Informed by his training as a ballet dancer and prompted by a desire to resist western notions of the ideal body, the artist’s graphic and text-based scores call for queer, self-defined bodies to engage in movement. This questioning of the politics behind the codified practices of classical dance is mirrored in sound artist and composer Samson Young’s exploration of sound. Adapting the methodologies of the musical avant-garde, Young translates military strategies into musical notations that are inscribed into large granite pieces. Overlaid onto these surfaces is the Franz Fanon quote, “To speak a language is to take on the world.” Here the artist addresses the emergence of radical aural practices during moments of conflict as well as the relationship between language and power.

Drawing on ancient narratives of seafaring and issues of migration, exile and transnationalism, poet and writer Caroline Bergvall’s multimedia installation *Drift* (2014) breaks down the representational tools of image, sound, and text. Creating a mimetic experience of flight in the gallery, this immersive work resists the capture of language and the body into a single recognizable form.

*Retrogarde* highlights the continued relevance of avant-garde approaches to art production today. The exhibiting artists’ attitude towards this lineage is not one of blind veneration but rather pervasive disobedience, echoing the transgressive actions of their predecessors. Consequently, the exhibition infuses other viewpoints, narratives, and contexts to open up our collective reading of avant-garde traditions.

This exhibition is part of *Concrete Happenings*—a series of exhibitions, screenings, and symposia at the University of Chicago that mark the return of Wolf Vostell’s landmark sculpture *Concrete Traffic* (1970) to public view following a major conservation effort.

*Retrogarde* is presented by Logan Center Exhibitions and curated by Yesomi Umolu, Exhibitions Curator.

The exhibition will be on view November 11, 2016 until January 1, 2017 at Logan Center Gallery, located at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th St. in Chicago. Exhibitions are always free and open to the public.

For more information and related programming, visit arts.uchicago.edu/logan-
center/logan-center-exhibitions, like Logan Center Exhibitions on Facebook or follow Logan Center Exhibitions on Instagram.

RELATED EVENTS

Opening Reception and Performance
November 11, 2016, 6–8pm
Logan Center Gallery | 915 E. 60th St.
Please join us to celebrate the opening of Retrogarde. Exhibiting artist Caroline Bergvall will deliver a selection of readings during the reception.

Artist Talk with Samson Kambalu and Jennifer Wild
November 12, 2016, 2pm | Logan Center Screening room
Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts | 915 E. 60th St.

A conversation with artist Samson Kambalu and University of Chicago Associate Professor Jennifer Wild (Department of Cinema and Media Studies), moderated by Yesomi Umolu, Logan Center Exhibitions Curator. The discussion will address alternative readings of avant-garde art and cinema in Kambalu’s and Wild's artistic and scholarly work, respectively.

This event is presented by Logan Center Exhibitions and the Counter Cinema/Counter Media Project at the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality.

ABOUT YESOMI UMOLU, LOGAN CENTER EXHIBITIONS CURATOR

Yesomi Umolu is Exhibitions Curator at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago, where she is also a lecturer in the humanities division. Specializing in global contemporary art and spatial practices, Umolu recently curated So-called Utopias (2015) at the Logan Center Gallery. Prior to joining the Logan, Umolu was Assistant Curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at MSU where she curated Material Effects: Contemporary Art from West Africa and the Diaspora (2015-6), John Akomfrah: Imaginary Possessions (2014), and The Land Grant: Forest Law (2014) with Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares. Umolu was previously Curatorial Fellow for Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis where she curated The Museum of Non Participation: The New Deal (2013) featuring works by Karen Mirza and Brad Butler.

Umolu has held curatorial positions at the 8th edition of the European biennial for contemporary art Manifesta and the Serpentine Gallery, London. Her writing has appeared in numerous catalogues and journals, including Art in America, Afterimage: The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism and the Studio Museum in Harlem’s Studio magazine. Umolu received an MA with honors in Architectural Design from the University of Edinburgh and an MA with Distinction in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London. She is a 2016 recipient of an Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Fellowship.
ABOUT LOGAN CENTER EXHIBITIONS

Logan Center Exhibitions presents international contemporary art programming at the Logan Center Gallery and throughout the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago. Reflecting the spirit of inquiry at the university, Logan Center Exhibitions focuses on open, collaborative, and process-based approaches to cultural production.

Working closely with artists, students, scholars, and community members, Logan Center Exhibitions presents innovative exhibitions by emerging and established artists; supports ambitious new commissions and research projects; disseminates knowledge through publications; and facilitates connections through talks and other public programs.

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