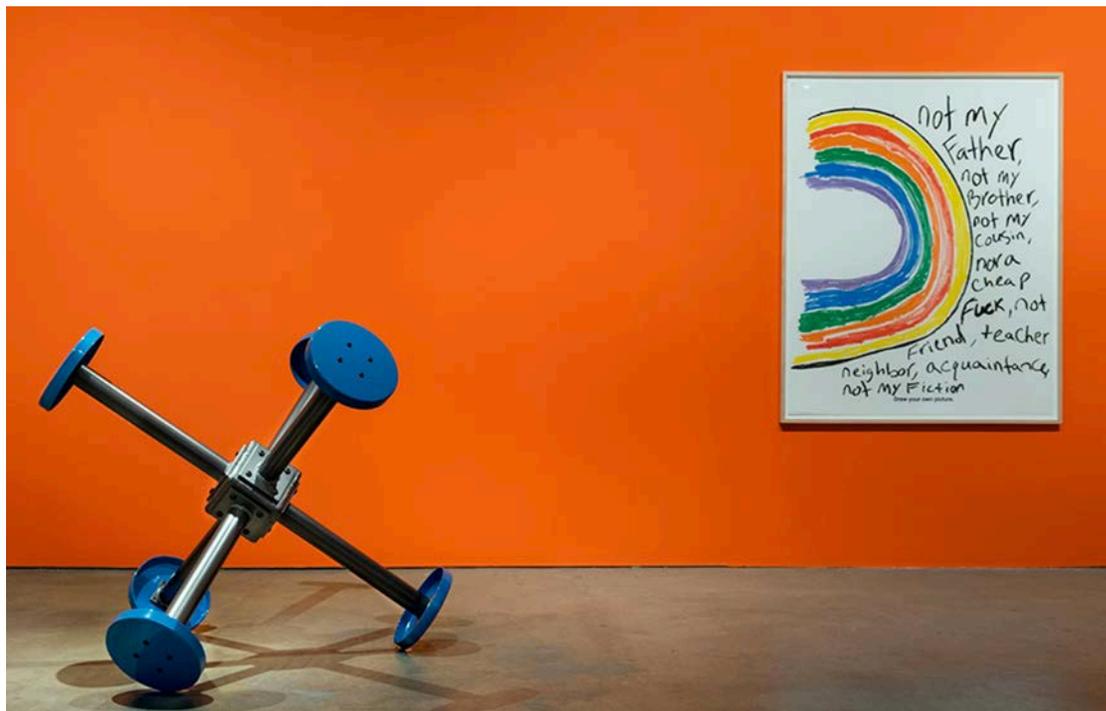


MIT List Visual Arts Center

## PRESS RELEASE



The MIT List Visual Arts Center presents *Colored People Time: Mundane Futures, Quotidian Pasts, and Banal Presents*.

**Opening Reception: Thursday, February 6, 6:30-8:30 PM**  
Free and open to the public.

**Cambridge, MA, January 13, 2020**--The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to present *Colored People Time (CPT)*, a powerful, thought-provoking, group exhibition structured in three distinct chapters—*Mundane Futures, Quotidian Pasts, and Banal Presents*. The exhibition's sequential framework roots itself within a malleable and fluid concept of time and builds new narratives and public discourse around the everyday experiences of black people in the United States. *Colored People Time* was organized by Meg Onli, Andrea B. Laporte Associate Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania and will be on view February 7–April 12, 2020.

"*CPT* builds on my ongoing curatorial investigation of how black Americans use language as a tool to navigate a society marked by inequality and racism. The title of the exhibition is drawn from the vernacular phrase 'Colored People's Time,' which is simultaneously perceived as a joke within the black community and as a performance that allows an individual to exist within a temporality created by themselves. The phrase comes to function as a linguistic tool for people of color to control their own temporality even when placed within the construct of Western time." —Meg Onli

Each chapter of [Colored People Time](#) makes unexpected connections between contemporary art, historical objects, and archival materials fostering innovative dialogue between the Penn Museum's African Collection and a wide range of media and new commissions created by emerging and established artists, including Aria Dean, Kevin Jerome Everson, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Carolyn Lazard, Dave McKenzie, Cameron Rowland, Martine Syms, and Sable Elyse Smith.

Chapter one, *Mundane Futures*, provides an opportunity to consider the future of black cultural production through the perspectives of artists Aria Dean, Jerome Everson, Dave McKenzie, and Martine Syms.

Martine Syms' *The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto* (2013), reimagines the future of black aesthetic both within the context of our current reality and as an extension of our past. Dave McKenzie's *Futuro* (2016), a large-scale photographic work depicting black hands mirroring white hands holding a bedpan, offers an equally amusing and sobering representation of the future.

**Other highlights include:**

An hour-long video from "Notes on Blaccelerationism" (2017), a critical essay originally developed by Aria Dean for *E-Flux* that explores aesthetic and philosophical trends in black cultural production; the film marks the audiovisual manifestation of her artistic practice that evolved out of the essay.

*IFO* (2017) by Kevin Jerome Everson, a 16mm film which weaves together the story of three suspected UFO sightings in Ohio through footage shot through the lens of the everyday, presenting ideas associated with our future as an extension of our current reality.

An image of Henrietta Lacks' 'Immortal' cells, which were taken without consent from the recently deceased woman in 1951 for medical research. The photograph is jointly owned by the National Institutes of Health and Getty Images, and its presentation raises profound questions around ownership over a person, the critical connection between a black body and our future, and the implications around the science fiction concept of eternal life.

Two historic texts: Sutton Griggs' 1899 black dystopian novel *Imperium in Imperio*, and *The Ten-Point Program* published in the 1972 issue of *The Black Panther*, contextualize the mundane future within the past, creating a tangible link that ties the concept to the history of blackness in America.

Chapter two, *Quotidian Pasts*, examines the complexities of collecting and displaying African objects. Co-curated with anthropologist Monique Scott, *Quotidian Pasts* is presented in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and brings together their historic collection of African art and objects, letters, and archival photographs with contemporary artwork, facilitating a critical and globally relevant dialogue around how museums currently value, communicate, and exhibit these pieces. Objects and archival materials on loan from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology collection will be displayed inside the Museum's historic display cases and positioned around a new commission from artist Matthew Angelo Harrison.

*Banal Presents*, the third and final chapter in the exhibition series stages a conversation between the artists Carolyn Lazard, Cameron Rowland, and Sable Elyse Smith. Carolyn Lazard's *Pre-Existing Condition* (2019) delves into the history of medical experiments that were conducted between 1951 and 1974 on incarcerated people at Holmesburg Prison in Philadelphia. Sable Elyse Smith's *Coloring Book 33* (2019) and *Pivot I* (2019) utilize the vernacular of correctional facilities through the appropriation of coloring books and furniture found in visitation rooms. Smith's reconstructions of these seemingly



mundane materials point not only to the violence of mass incarceration, but particularly the trauma that is endured by children who come into daily contact with this institution.

The artists in this exhibition — and we, as viewers — occupy a current moment haunted by what the Professor Saidiya Hartman has termed the “afterlife” of slavery. *Banal Presents* locates the present as the space where we bend the relationship between the past and the future within the enduring presence of slavery’s racialized violence that permeates every aspect of our society.

*Colored People Time* is organized by Meg Onli, Andrea B. Laporte Associate Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. *Quotidian Past*s is co-curated with Monique Scott, Director of Museum Studies, Bryn Mawr College.

### Exhibition Support

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Image credit:

Left: Sable Elyse Smith, *Pivot I*, 2019, powder coated aluminum.

Courtesy the artist and JTT, New York

Right: Sable Elyse Smith, *Coloring Book 33*, 2019, screen printing ink and oil stick on paper.

Courtesy the artist, Cal Siegel, and JTT, New York

Installation view: *Colored People Time: Banal Presents*, September 13 – December 22, 2019

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