

MIT List Visual Arts Center

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT



The MIT List Visual Arts Center presents *List Projects 21: Rami George*, the artist's first institutional solo exhibition.

Working in installation and video, and with found images and texts, Rami George uses autobiography and personal memories to reveal broader untold histories.

Cambridge, MA, February 14, 2020—The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to announce [*List Projects 21: Rami George*](#), the artist's first institutional solo presentation. Working in installation and video, and with found images and texts, Rami George uses autobiography to reveal broader untold histories. Personal memories function as points of entry through which the artist reappraises enduring civic and social issues, whether delving into the legacies of the Lebanese Civil War or queer and familial histories in the United States. Accessing various cultural inheritances through first-hand narratives or archival research, George's work draws on multiple perspectives to illustrate a radiating network of events and relationships that connect the past and the present and link individual and collective experiences.

At the List Center, George presents a new body of work within an architectural intervention that extends their inquiry into their family's entanglement with the Samaritan Foundation, a New Age spiritual cult that was active in the 1990s in Oklahoma, and Wyoming. George's mother became engrossed in the group's doctrine, and in 1993 took her two children from their home in

Somerville, Massachusetts to join the Samaritan Foundation commune in an abandoned prison in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Loosely based on the floorplan for the Seminar Room in the Foundation's encampment in this prison—known locally as the Black Jail—the exhibition's architecture delineates a room-within-a-room, and suggests a space of psychic interiority in which manifold ideologies and memories coalesce.

Delving into the Samaritan Foundation's troubled history, George's works bear witness to how, by choice or by circumstance, those within and adjacent to this community were affected by events that correspond with and exceed the artist's own memories. Their new video essay weaves together an interview with the artist's father with imagery culled from his personal records, and a new group of works on paper assemble visual materials generated by the Samaritan Foundation with family photographs and other ephemera. In an earlier video essay also on view, *Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993)* (2015), an unseen narrator reads a report on the Samaritan Foundation published in an Oklahoma newspaper on that date, while still images of the stories, photographs, and advertisements elsewhere in the day's paper furnish the visual narrative, presenting the local paper as both an enduring chronicle of events and a banal theater of the everyday.

As they integrate Samaritan Foundations teachings, legal documents, and recollections from the artist's father, George's new works look beyond, and complicate, the artist's early memories as well as media-driven narratives of the group's activities. Resisting the notion of a single authoritative account of events or a coherent and objective truth, George invites larger questions around the social formations of so-called intentional communities, and probes how trauma, idealism, and a desire for refuge or belonging circulate within these groups and might motivate those affiliated with them.

Rami George (b. 1989, Somerville, MA) lives and works in Philadelphia. Their work has been presented in group exhibitions and screenings at Anthology Film Archives, New York; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow; the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York; Grand Union, Birmingham; the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; LUX, London; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; and others. George received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania.

List Projects 21: Rami George is organized by Selby Nimrod, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Exhibition Support

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Image credit:

Rami George, *Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993)* (still), 2015.

HD video, color, sound, 5:00 min.

Image courtesy the artist. © Rami George

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