Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye

web.archive.org/web/20230605211139/http://blogs.rochester.edu/hartnett/crystal-z-campbell-from-the-corner-of-my-eye/

from the corner of my eye was the first retrospective of video works of artist, filmmaker, and writer Crystal Z Campbell. Campbell's multidisciplinary artistic practice traces how the relationality between ideas and forms emerge through embodied creative research. Historical events interlace with intimate experiences unearthing fictional narratives, silenced memories, and shared histories. Rupturing public experiences of historical memory through lived experiences of selfhood, Campbell imagines a new understanding of social relations, and questions the institutional forensics of witnessing. Their films draw from the margins of archival documents, moving between personal anecdotes and cultural gestures, to reassess narratives and collective histories.

from the corner of my eye included several short video works by Campbell, a live performative reading, and a new collaborative writing piece.

Shown: Crystal Z Campbell, Video still from Viewfinder, 2020

Viewfinder, filmed in Sweden*,* (2020) depicts a punctual action that transcends history drawing a parallel between everyday gestures, belonging, and memory. Campbell layers their own historical fabulations and memories over footage from a 35 mm film found at the legendary Slave Theatre in Brooklyn in *Gorilla Means War* (2017), and over images from the demolition of the failed housing project of Pruit Igoe, in St. Louis in *Futures for Failures* (2011).

Shown: Crystal Z Campbell, Installation view from Go-Rilla Means War, 2017

While these two films respond to residential segregation or gentrification, *A Meditation on Nature in the Absence of an Eclipse* (2017) deals with streams of environmental racism using stock footage. In *A Dark Love Story for Clowns* (2009) Campbell combines a fictional story by William Faulkner with the Yoruban ere ibeji memorial figures for deceased twins. *Witness* (2010) punctuates the importance of deep listening over the relentless imposition of visual violence.

from the corner of my eye suggests that the scars of history are palpable in the minutiae that surround personal experience. Campbell's work seeks active justice beyond public recognition, through the silenced histories that remain present in the traces of their aftermath.

Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye was curated by Almudena Escobar López, Graduate Director of Hartnett Gallery. Alongside *from the corner of my eye*, there is a forthcoming publication on the works featuring writings by Campbell and Escobar López, edited by Julie Niemi, independent curator, editor, and writer.

press

José Sarmiento Hinojosa, "Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye @ Hartnett Gallery," *Desistfilm,* March 19, 2021.

screening room

- *Viewfinder* & *A Meditation on Nature in the Absence of an Eclipse* (March 1-March 10, 2021)
- *Gorilla Means War* & *Futures for Failures* (March 11 – March 15, 2021)
- *Witness* & *A Dark Love Story For Clowns* (March 16 – March 20)
- All on view (through March 22, 2021)

performative reading

On Monday, March 15th at 8pm (EST), the Hartnett Gallery hosted a performative reading by Campbell followed by a conversation with Julie Niemi, and Almudena Escobar López.

Shown: Crystal Z Campbell, Video still from Viewfinder, 2020

about the artist

Crystal Z Campbell is a multidisciplinary artist, experimental filmmaker, and writer of African-American, Filipino, and Chinese descents. Campbell finds complexity in the public secret, or a fragment of information which is known by many, but perhaps undertold or unspoken. Campbell engages with sonic, material, and archival traces of the witness through film/video, live performance, installation, sound, painting, and writing. Honors and awards include the Pollock-Krasner Award; MAP Fund; MacDowell; Rijksakademie; Whitney ISP; Franklin Furnace; Tulsa Artist Fellowship, and Flaherty Film Seminar. Exhibitions include the Drawing Center (US), Nest (NL), ICA-Philadelphia (US), REDCAT (US), Artissima (IT), Studio Museum of Harlem (US), SFMOMA (US), and SculptureCenter (US), amongst others. Campbell's writing has been featured in World Literature Today, Monday Journal, GARAGE, and Hyperallergic. Campbell is a Harvard Radcliffe Film Study Center & David and Roberta Logie Fellow (2020-2021) living and working in Oklahoma. Campbell is founder of the virtual programming platform archiveacts.com.

Hartnett Gallery is funded by the University of Rochester Students' Association and the venture fund from the office of the President of the University of Rochester. *from the corner of my eye* is also supported by the Art and Art History Department of the University of Rochester, the Film and Media Studies Department of the University of Rochester, the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies (VCS), and the University Committee for Interdisciplinary Studies.

collaborative text

written by Crystal Z Campbell and Almudena Escobar López as a sneak preview of the forthcoming publication edited by Julie Niemi.

from the corner of my eye, I hear a silent roar
with my own hands I see the dirtiness of a future materializing
what happened
when I stare at the projector. I taste the persistent square of light
inside my retina
I look again and the light makes my hands,
my feet and my arms disappear
from the corner of my eye, I smell the wood under
your feet
thought that hole
in the water
that metal sound
brings back the darkness of that particular
year
where things
turned upside down
at the ocean
the stone weights too much from my arms to your arms
a horse running in circles,
red from the outside, noticeable from the inside
like that persistent light

every day I climb the same stairs, expanding my body
towards the stars
I see beer where others see blood
I smell blood where others see leaves of time

inside a vitrine made of leather, there is a self contained
spheric image where things happen in
tandem with the dreams of some
from the corner of my eye
I feel your hands around the glass, thinking about those
eyes, those ears and the persistent light
that fills the room
there is an elephant wearing a shoe that doesn't fit.

From the corner of my eye, my glasses form negative space between my resting face. This is the space of the side-eye which depending on who receives it, might consider it mockery or derision.

I am not interested in this space as a tool for derision.
I want to think of this space as something productive, in its periphery.

Each pair of new lenses, beckons me to look forward, weakening my periphery. How would it change my world, if I let my eye rest towards the side?

What in the blurry landscape of center focus, have I missed?

A woman navigates me toward a boulder known in Sweden as a site of folklore. Folklore are stories and narrations whispered, spoken, and remembered by the people.

By what people? We arrive. The only car there. We are not alone. Finally, we enter a narrow passageway of two cliffs sandwiched together by a boulder.

In the scratchy black and white photos, I imagined these two cliffs holding up this boulder. Keeping it from falling.

But here, walking under it, with my side eye calibrating the distance between the two cliffs, I wonder if this boulder is actually holding up these cliffs.

Or is this a co-dependent relationship?

The people have told me, that once this boulder falls, the last person on earth will perish. Over a series of frames, I can remove this point of speculation.

NEWS

The Hartnett Gallery
201 Wilson Commons
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY 14627

hartnett gallery

HARTNETT GALLERY PRESENTS
Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye
On view, March 1–22, 2021, virtual Hartnett Gallery

Shown: Crystal Z Campbell, Video still from *A Dark Love Story For Clowns,* 2020

Rochester, NY, February 19, 2021—Hartnett Gallery presents *Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye,* opening March 1, 2021, the first retrospective of video works of artist, filmmaker, and writer Crystal Z Campbell. Campbell's multidisciplinary artistic practice traces how the relationality between ideas and forms emerge through embodied creative research. Rupturing public experiences of historical memory through lived experiences of selfhood, Campbell imagines a new understanding of social relations, and questions the institutional forensics of witnessing.

from the corner of my eye features several short video works by Campbell from 2009 to the present, a live performative reading, and a new collaborative writing piece by Campbell and Almudena Escobar López. The selection of films examine Campbell's archival investigations interlacing personal experiences, silenced memories, and shared histories.

Viewfinder, filmed in Sweden*,* (2020) depicts a punctual action that transcends history drawing a parallel between everyday gestures, belonging, and memory. Campbell layers her own historical fabulations and memories over footage from a 35 mm film found at the legendary Slave Theatre in Brooklyn in *Gorilla Means War* (2017), and over images from the demolition of the failed housing project of Pruit Igoe, in St. Louis in *Futures for Failures* (2011).

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Crystal Z Campbell: from the corner of my eye is curated by Almudena Escobar López, Graduate Director of Hartnett Gallery. Alongside *from the corner of my eye*, there is a forthcoming publication on the works featuring writings by Campbell and Escobar López, edited by Julie Niemi, independent curator, editor, and writer. On March 15th at 8pm (EST), the Hartnett Gallery will host a performative reading by Campbell followed by a conversation with Julie Niemi, and Almudena Escobar López. To receive the link to the webinar, please register in advance at Hartnett's website.

About the artist

Crystal Z Campbell is a multidisciplinary artist, experimental filmmaker, and writer of African-American, Filipino, and Chinese descents. Campbell finds complexity in the public secret, or a fragment of information which is known by many, but perhaps undertold or unspoken. Campbell engages with sonic, material, and archival traces of the witness through film/video, live performance, installation, sound, painting and writing. Honors and awards include the Pollock-Krasner Award; MAP Fund; MacDowell; Rijksakademie; Whitney ISP; Franklin Furnace; Tulsa Artist Fellowship, and Flaherty Film Seminar. Exhibitions include the Drawing Center (US), Nest (NL), ICA-Philadelphia (US), REDCAT (US), Artissima (IT), Studio Museum of Harlem (US), SFMOMA (US), and SculptureCenter (US), amongst others. Campbell's writing has been featured in *World Literature Today*, *Monday Journal*, *GARAGE*, and *Hyperallergic*. Campbell is a Harvard Radcliffe Film Study Center & David and Roberta Logie Fellow (2020-2021) living and working in Oklahoma. Campbell is founder of the virtual programming platform archiveacts.com.

About Hartnett Gallery

The University of Rochester's Hartnett Gallery is a student-supported, professional art gallery. Hartnett schedules and presents 5 to 7 exhibitions each academic year. These vary from solo shows to group exhibitions featuring local, state, national, and international artists, with an undergraduate juried exhibition held each year. A wide variety of media and genres are shown, including sculpture, photography, painting, video, and installation work, as well as curatorial and community projects. On occasion, Hartnett Gallery also plans exhibitions in conjunction with local institutions such as the Memorial Art Gallery and the Visual Studies Workshop. Hartnett Gallery is funded by the University of Rochester Students' Association and the venture fund from the office of the President of the University of Rochester. *from the corner of my eye* is supported by the Art and Art History Department of the University of Rochester.

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