

MEDIA RELEASE

The Studio Museum in Harlem
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HARLEM

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This Fall, the Studio Museum presents *The Shadows Took Shape*, an exhibition with more than 60 works by 29 artists examining Afrofuturism from a global perspective



Left: **Cyrus Kabiru**, *Nairobi Baboon* (from C-Stunners series), 2012. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Amunga Eshuchi. Right: **The Otolith Group**, *Hydra Decapita* (film still), 2010. Courtesy the artists

New York, NY, July 9, 2013—This fall, The Studio Museum in Harlem is thrilled to present *The Shadows Took Shape*, a dynamic interdisciplinary exhibition exploring contemporary art through the lens of Afrofuturist aesthetics. Coined in 1994 by writer Mark Dery in his essay “Black to the Future,” the term “Afrofuturism” refers to a creative and intellectual genre that emerged as a strategy to explore science fiction, fantasy, magical realism and pan-Africanism. With roots in the avant-garde musical stylings of sonic innovator **Sun Ra** (born Herman Poole Blount, 1914–1993), Afrofuturism has been used by artists, writers and theorists as a way to prophesize the future, redefine the present and reconceptualize the past. *The Shadows Took Shape* will be one of the few major museum exhibitions to explore the ways in which this form of creative expression has been adopted internationally and highlight the range of work made over the past twenty-five years.

On view at The Studio Museum in Harlem from **November 14, 2013 to March 9, 2014**, the exhibition draws its title from an obscure Sun Ra poem and a posthumously released series of

recordings. Providing an apt metaphor for the long shadow cast by Sun Ra and others, the exhibition will feature more than sixty works of art, including ten new commissions, charting the evolution of Afrofuturist tendencies by an international selection of established and emerging practitioners. These works span not only personal themes of identity and self-determination in the African-American community, but also persistent concerns of techno-culture, geographies, utopias and dystopias, as well as universal preoccupations with time and space.



Left: **Cristina De Middel**, *Untitled* (from the series "The Afonauts"), 2007. Courtesy the artist. Right: **Wanuri Kahiu**, *Pumzi* (film still), 2009. Courtesy the artist.

The twenty-nine artists featured in *The Shadows Took Shape* work in a wide variety of media, including photography, video, painting, drawing, sculpture and multimedia installation. In her new video created for *The Shadows Took Shape*, **Wangechi Mutu** explores female figures in legend or lore portrayed to conflate sexuality and danger. The video explores the East African myth of *nguva*, which shares similarities to the Drexciya myth of a black Atlantis and the Western myths of sirens or mermaids. Exhibiting in New York for the first time, Nairobi-based artist **Cyrus Kabiru** will debut wearable works of art called C-STUNNERS. Operating within the realms of eyewear, fashion and sculpture, each armature oscillates between steampunk aesthetics and the fantastical inventions of postapocalyptic science fiction. Palestinian artist **Larissa Sansour** presents the politics of displacement through the lens of science fiction. Sansour is interested in a subject's sense of place and the potential erosion of identity in occupied or divided territories. Lima-, Miami- and New York-based artist **William Cordova** collaborated with Nyeema Morgan and Otabenga Jones & Associates to construct a new work inspired by his recent monumental sculpture *lando, landu (yawar mallku)* (2011). The structure exemplifies Cordova's interest in architecture specific to a particular context and the act of translation via displacement. Also on view in *The Shadows Took Shape* are British artist and filmmaker **John Akomfrah**'s *The Last Angel of History* (1995) and *Memory Room 451* (1997). The former examines the legacy of black speculative fiction through interviews and the latter employs an experimental, expressionistic visual approach, positing time travel and dream logic as gateways to other worlds and temporalities.

Organized by Studio Museum Assistant Curator **Naima J. Keith** and London-based independent curator **Zoe Whitley**, *The Shadows Took Shape* reflects the collaborative vision and individual voices of two curators and continues the Studio Museum's commitment to reimagining and redefining exhibitions of contemporary art. *The Shadows Took Shape* will also include a schedule of screenings, lectures and public programs integral to the exhibition, to be announced in Fall 2013.

Participating Artists

Derrick Adams (born 1970, Baltimore, MD; lives and works in New York, NY)

John Akomfrah (born 1957, Accra, Ghana; lives and works in London, England)

Laylah Ali (born 1968, Buffalo, NY; lives and works in Boston, MA)

Edgar Arceneaux (born 1972, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Sanford Biggers (born 1970, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in New York, NY)

Edgar Cleijne + Ellen Gallagher

Edgar Cleijne (born 1963, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and New York, NY)

Ellen Gallagher (born 1965, Providence, RI; lives and works in New York, NY, and Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

William Cordova (in collaboration with Nyeema Morgan and Otabenga Jones & Associates) (born 1969, Lima, Peru; lives and works in Lima, Peru; Miami, FL; and New York, NY)

Cristina De Middel (born 1975, Alicante, Spain; lives and works in London, England)

Khaled Hafez (born 1963, Cairo, Egypt; lives and works in Cairo, Egypt)

Trenton Doyle Hancock (born 1974, Oklahoma City, OK ; lives and works in Houston, TX)

Kira Lynn Harris (born 1963, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in New York, NY)

Kiluanji Kia Henda (born 1979, Luanda, Angola; lives and works in Luanda, Angola, and Lisbon, Portugal)

Wayne Hodge (born 1976, Roanoke, VA; lives and works in New York, NY)

David Huffman (born 1963, Berkeley, CA; lives and works in Berkeley, CA)

Cyrus Kabiru (born 1974, Nairobi, Kenya; lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya)

Wanuri Kahiu (born 1980, Nairobi, Kenya; lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya)

Hew Locke (born 1959, Edinburgh, Scotland; lives and works in London, England)

Mehreen Murtaza (born 1986, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

Wangechi Mutu (born 1972, Nairobi, Kenya; lives and works in New York, NY)

Harold Offeh (born 1977, Accra, Ghana; lives and works in London, England)

The Otolith Group (founded 2002)

Anjalika Sagar (born 1968, London, England; lives and works in London, England)

Kodwo Eshun (born 1966, London, England; lives and works in London, England)

Robert Pruitt (born 1975, Houston, TX; lives and works in Houston, TX)

Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount, 1914, Birmingham, AL; died 1993, Birmingham, AL)

RAMM:ΣLL:ZΣΣ (born 1960, Far Rockaway, NY; died 2010, New York, NY)

Lili Reynaud-Dewar (born 1975, La Rochelle, France; lives and works in Paris, France)

Larissa Sansour (born 1973, Jerusalem; lives and works in London, England, and Copenhagen, Denmark)

Cauleen Smith (born 1967, Riverside, CA; lives and works in Chicago, IL)

William Villalongo (born 1975, Hollywood, FL; lives and works in New York, NY)

Saya Woolfalk (born 1979, Gifu, Japan; lives and works in New York, NY)

Accompanying the exhibition will be a 160-page, fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, with twenty-nine artist entries and essays by the exhibition's curators and an introduction by Studio Museum Director and Chief Curator **Thelma Golden**. Additionally, newly commissioned essays by foremost scholars and writers **Tegan Bristow**; **Samuel R. Delany**; **Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky, That Subliminal Kid**; **Kodwo Eshun**; and **Alondra Nelson** make this publication a critical contribution to the continued scholarship of Afrofuturism and contemporary art. The publication is designed by **Kimberly Varella** of **Content Object**, Los Angeles.

Also on view November 13, 2013–March 9, 2014

In addition to *The Shadows Took Shape*, the Studio Museum will present ***Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art***, traveling from the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston to both the Studio Museum and the Grey Art Gallery at New York University.

About The Studio Museum in Harlem

Founded in 1968, The Studio Museum in Harlem is a contemporary art museum that focuses on the work of artists of African descent locally, nationally and globally, as well as work that has been inspired and influenced by African-American culture. The Museum is committed to serving as a unique resource in the local community, and in national and international arenas, by making artworks and exhibitions concrete and personal for each viewer.

Hours and Admission

The Studio Museum is open Thursdays and Fridays, noon–9 pm; Saturdays, 10 am–6 pm; and Sundays, noon–6 pm. The Museum is closed to the public but available for school and group tours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Museum admission is by suggested donation: \$7 for adults; \$3 for students (with valid identification) and seniors; and free for children 12 and under. Sundays are free at the Studio Museum, thanks to generous support from Target. For more information, visit studiomuseum.org.

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