

# *Confinement Politics of Space and Bodies*

Symposium  
February 29–March 1, 2020



The group exhibition *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies*, on view until March 1<sup>st</sup> at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (CAC), centers around the safety provided by restricted spaces, while also evoking constriction and restriction. It discusses the effects of institutional systems of confinement and approaches notions of mobility and movement. In conjunction with the University of Cincinnati, the CAC is proposing a two-day symposium the last weekend of the exhibition devoted to this ambiguous notion of “confinement.” This event will allow an in-depth conversation between film scholars, faculty, students, exhibited artists and the general audience and aims to raise and possibly answer questions of established narratives: ownership over bodies and mapping out confinement through stories of resistance and surrender.

The program consists of three panels, during which invited scholars and faculty will be conversing with artists from *Confinement*, along with guests and visitors. For the first time, the walls of *Géographie*, the cell installation at the center of the exhibition, which remained closed throughout its duration, will be open to the public, and film screenings will be organized inside of the artwork. Through this process of revelation, the CAC offers an inside-view of the room, which saw the confinement of three dancers.



Top right: Tehching Hsieh, *Elements from "One Year Performance"*, 1978–79, courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Bottom left: Myriam Mihindou, *Reliques d'un corps domestique*, series, 2000, courtesy of Galerie Maïa Muller, Paris

## Symposium speakers

**Confinement artists:** Samir Ramdani, Myriam Mihindou, Matthew Keller (performer and dancer for *Geographie*, a piece by les gens d'Uterpan)

**Filmmakers:** Ya'Ke Smith, 2019 Duncanson Artist in Residence, Taft Museum of Art

**Faculty:** Michael Gott, Film and Media Studies and Romance Languages (University of Cincinnati); Mareike Lange & Svea Bräunert, German Studies and Film and Media Studies (UC); Cassandra L. Jones, Africana Studies (UC); J. A. Carter, Sociology (UC); Elisabeth D. Hodges, French and Italian Languages (Miami University); Alison Levine, Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities (University of Virginia); James P. Buchanan, Executive Director, The Edward B. Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, Xavier University, Cincinnati

**Activist:** Jessica Frank, Program Manager, Anti-Death Penalty and Peace & Nonviolence, Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, Cincinnati

**CAC Curator of Lens-Based Arts:** Valentine Umansky

## Symposium themes & questions

How do systems of confinement affect bodies?

What is the modernist narrative on mobility, urban planning, confinement and ownership?

What specific bodies are the target of institutional confinement strategies?

How does art and film specifically approach this problematic notion?

*Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies* is organized by Valentine Umansky, and supported by Gale & Dave Beckett; Jim Cheng; the FACE Foundation / Etant Donnés and the ADAGP. It includes works by Nancy Brooks Brody, Bea Camacho, Nicolas Daubanes, Stephen Foster, Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet (les gens d'Uterpan), Krista Franklin, Tehching Hsieh, Graciela Iturbide, Bronwyn Katz, Myriam Mihindou, Bruce Nauman, John Outterbridge, Irving Penn, Mathieu Pernot, Catherine Poncin, Samir Ramdani, Till Roeskens, James Rosenquist

The symposium is organized with support from the Taft Research Center and the Center for Film and Media Studies, University of Cincinnati

## Pairing 1: Saturday, February 29

### Institutional and Industrial Complexes: Confinement, a Governmental Construction?

**Screening:** Ya'Ke Smith, *Brother*, 2019 (13'28") and Harun Farocki, *Prison Images*, 2000 (60')  
**Speakers:** Ya'Ke Smith, Jessica Frank, James P. Buchanan, Svea Bräunert  
**Moderator:** Mareike Lange

**10–10:15AM:** Introduction of the symposium by **Valentine Umansky**

**10:15–11:15AM:** *Prison Images* is a video collage composed of found footage from films, documentaries and surveillance cameras, in which Farocki presents his look at new control technologies, personal identification devices, electronic ankle bracelets and tracking devices.

**11:15–11:45AM:** **Ya'Ke Smith**, the 2019 Duncanson Artist in Residence at the Taft Museum of Art, is best known for his pioneering role in the advancement of African American film. He directed *WOLF*, which premiered at the 2012 SXSW Film Festival and recently completed *Brother*, which tells "the story of two young boys whose friendship is put to the test when one of their brother's returns home from a long prison stint."

**11:45AM–12:45PM:** Conversation

**12:45PM:** Tour of *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies* by Valentine Umansky

## Pairing 2: Sunday, March 1

### Shielding and Confinement: An Aesthetic of Intimacy

**Screening:** Mati Diop, *Atlantics*, 2019 (104'), winner of the 2019 Cannes Festival Grand Prix  
**Speakers:** Elisabeth Hodges, Matthew Keller, Alison Levine, Myriam Mihindou  
**Moderator:** Valentine Umansky

**11AM–12:40PM:** *Atlantics* is set in Dakar, where a futuristic-looking tower is set to open. Its construction workers, unpaid for months, decide to leave the country by sea, in search of a brighter future. After the men's departure, a terrible fever spreads over the city...

**12:40–1:30PM:** Conversation

**Myriam Mihindou**, whose photographic works are part of *Confinement*, grew up in Gabon. Suffering from aphasia, a disorder of spoken and written language, she was encouraged to direct her plastic exploration in nature through ritualized actions. Highly autobiographical, her creative processes probe memory, identity, the social, political and spiritual.

**Alison Levine's** book *Vivre Ici* invites the reader on a journey through the landscape of contemporary French documentary film. The films she explores are connected by an attention to space and place.

**Elisabeth Hodges'** most recent research focuses on film with published articles on *The Wire* and on Godard's JLG/JLG. She is currently writing a book, *The Poetics of Drift in Contemporary Art Film*, and an article on Godard's Silences in *The Image Book* (2018).

**Matthew Keller** is a movement artist, dancer, teacher, and choreographer, and performed inside the walls of *Geographie*, a piece by les gens d'Uterpan, which is included in *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies*.

## Pairing 3: Sunday, March 1

### The In-Between: Filming and Photographing the Edgeland

**Screening:** Samir Ramdani, *Black Diamond*, 2014 (41') and Geneviève Dulude-De Celles, *A Colony*, 2019 (102")  
**Speakers:** J. A. Carter, Cassandra Jones, Alison Levine, Samir Ramdani  
**Moderator:** Michael Gott

**2:30–2:40PM:** Introduction of the panel by **Michael Gott**

**2:40–4:25PM:** *A Colony* sees an insecure Canadian teen caught between social conformity and her own uniqueness.

**4:25–4:40PM:** Break

**4:40–5:20PM:** *Black Diamond* tells the story of Kevin, a young man from South Central, a working-class neighborhood of L.A., who has two problems: he's deeply affected by art and he "has a rapper in his head."

**5:20–6:30PM:** Conversation

**Cassandra L. Jones** is an Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her research focuses on Afrofuturism and her thesis was devoted to the work of author Octavia E. Butler.

**J. A. Carter** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at UC Blue Ash whose research specializes on bodies and gender/sexuality.

**Samir Ramdani's** work oscillates between photography, cinema and video, and discusses notions of minority, discrimination, domination, symbolic and social spaces.