EDUCATOR GUIDE

Ecologies of Elsewhere
February 10 – August 6, 2023
Not For Public Use or Dissemination
Welcome!

Dear Educators,

We are delighted for you join us at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). This resource is a companion to Ecologies of Elsewhere, a group exhibition that will be on view from February 10 - August 6, 2023 on the 4th and 5th floor galleries.

This group exhibition brings together 16 artists and collectives engaging with installation, video, photography, painting, and performance offering a range of approaches to the subject of identity through the lens of the natural environment. Collectively this group of international artists explore the themes of history, oppression, freedom, and hope intertwined with the inseparable subjects of climate change, discrimination, and race.

Note: The exhibit does contain works with mature content, limited to the 5th floor galleries. While we think art can provide a platform for visitors of all ages to explore challenging topics, we recognize that this work may be mature for some of our younger visitors given the subject nature. The curators of the exhibition thoughtfully selected the participating artists and works in order to address important contemporary issues through a lens of ecology and plant life. Keeping that in mind, this resource was written to present teachers of grades K-12 with lessons appropriate for the classroom.

In this resource, the educator will be asked to challenge themselves and their students on the assumptions about the histories and narratives of BIPOC individuals. While not exhaustive, like the artworks themselves, the resources and readings presented are meant to pique a curiosity and start a conversation. We invite you to explore, reflect, and immerse yourselves in the dialogs and experiences that can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy!
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Ecologies of Elsewhere is a multi-disciplinary group exhibition that takes interdependence as a point of departure. The idea of elsewhere serves as a communal, historical, material, and speculative site from which to engage questions about ecology. Considering the confluence of histories of empire, capitalist extractivism, and climate change, as well as the healing and medicinal qualities of plants, the artists compel us to rethink our societal ecological relationships. Attuning to ecology as an everyday practice allows us to consider how kitchen rituals, our grandmother’s gardens, fermentation, and oral traditions shift what we have come to understand as knowledge. Specifically, Ecologies of Elsewhere centers Black, Indigenous, and diasporic perspectives. It explores how these knowledge systems have always existed and highlights how they continue to inspire our relationships in a multispecies world. Plants are considered our oldest teachers. The long-term and ongoing effects of slavery, colonialism, and environmental harm are deeply intertwined. With the forced movement of people came the movement of seeds, plants, and crops. The Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and the histories of botany and medicine are closely connected as enslaved Africans brought botanical and medicinal substances and epistemologies to the Americas. Exploring the healing qualities of plants is an important mode of orientation and way of remembering. As the struggle for land ownership and movements against the exploitation of natural resources continues, we recognize that many of the undercurrents within environmental justice are held up by feminist, queer, and two-spirited Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. The artists shed light on other kinds of knowledge formations, whether informed by ancestral connections to plants, queer erotic desire, or magic realism. Plants and flowers are deeply performative, sensual, and ceremonial. Imaginations of elsewhere are also about disrupting the boundaries between human and non-human worlds and the intimate and environmental world. What happens when we understand plants as witnesses, historical agents, multispecies narrators, and storytellers? As we grapple with the possibilities of another world, Ecologies of Elsewhere offers a space for contemplation and sensuous ecological awareness.
Vocabulary and Keywords

Afrofuturism
Amalgamation
Apartheid
BIPOC
Botany
Colonialism
Communal
Diaspora
Displaced
Ecology
Epistemology
Extractivism
Global South
Imperialism
Indigenous
Infrastructure
Knowledge System
Magical Realism
Middle Passage
Repository
Resources
Semiotics
Transatlantic
Transnational
Transient
Underground Railroad
Utopia
Winti

Technical Vocabulary

Aesthetic
Cyanotype
Themes

Marginalization - the impact that marginalization has had on various communities and the ability to tell histories and stories related to those communities

Diasporic Identity - the worldwide spread of African cultures (whether by enslavement, colonization, or asylum) and the resulting cultures and identities, as well as how the artists comment on or present those identities

Colonization - the varying impacts that colonization has had on people, their relationship to land, power, and history

Connection to Land/Plants - the ways in which BIPOC folks have had, have, and will have, relationships to land and plants

Theme/Artist Connections

Marginalization - All

Diasporic Identity - Firelei Báez, Eric Gyamfi, Kapwani Kiwanga, Lisandro Suriel, Ilze Wolff, Michaela Yearwood-Dan

Colonization - Sammy Baloji, Firelei Báez, Torkwase Dyson, Eric Gyamfi, Emily Hanako Momohara, Rashid Johsnon, Lisando Suriel, Michaela Yearwood-Dan

Connection to Land/Plants - All
CAC PRE-TOUR INFORMATION

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER HISTORY

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, “Why not start something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I’ll help you.”

By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollack and Rita Rentschler raised $5000 (about $93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their “office” consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NY Times called the structure, “the best new building since the Cold War.”

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to “open their minds” to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC’s 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid’s first American building, and is the first American museum building designed by a woman.

Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC’s former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint, and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.
Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis.

Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine’s “100 Most Powerful Women,” and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World,” and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.
TOUR RULES AND GUIDELINES

- Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
- We require that must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.
- No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
- Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
- Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
- Walk throughout all galleries—no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMODATIONS

- Our facility is ADA compliant, and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
- Hearing protection is available upon request.
- Fidgets are available upon request.
- Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
- Large text is available upon request.
- Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Quiet Room on the 6th floor.
- For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at sturner@cincycac.org
PRE- AND POST-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

These discussions can occur during or after viewing.

- Ecology is the study of organisms and how they interact with the environment around them. How do the artists present the idea of ecology?
- The title of the show, Ecologies of Elsewhere, gives us the impression that there is more than one ecology presented. Can you think of different examples shown by the artists?
- What are the ways in which plants are used in the exhibition? What role do they play?
- How do the artists in the exhibition each relate the connection to the earth/land/plants? Why is that connection so important?
- Is a museum a place where you expect to find living plants? Why or why not? What does the exhibit space have in common with other places where you may experience plants in a “natural” habitat?
- Why do you think the curators chose the word “elsewhere?” How do various artists think about different times and places?
LESSON PLAN IDEAS

• Many of the artists in the exhibit are influenced by imagined fantasy worlds. Using this concept as inspiration, create a new plant “species” and imagine its importance in an ecosystem.
  o Create imagined plants with any type of art material, craft supply, recycled item, or everyday object. Have a variety of choices on hand for students to choose from.
  o After creating an imagined plant, communicate information about it through the use of a plant tag, label, or stake. In a plant market, this tag often includes: a photo or drawing of a fully mature version of the plant, the plant’s name or nicknames it may be known by, care instructions, and a typical life cycle.
  o Imagine the plant as part of an ecosystem. What benefits does the plant provide to humans? Animals and insects?

• Artists like Firelei Báez and Lisandro Suriel explore mythology, folklore, and indigenous religions to subvert and expand underrepresented narratives in colonial histories.
  o What is a myth and how does mythology play different roles in art? How does mythology compare to other storytelling traditions such as folklore? Faith-based and religious texts?
  o Explore the use of bodies depicted in each artist’s works. What stories are the figures telling in each of the artists’ works? How does the medium chosen by the artist affect the message or story that is being told?
  o How does each artist go about subverting historical facts or “truths”?  
  o For an extension: create, or recreate, a mythological character. What does this character stand for and how are they represented? Compare finished work with one or more classmates and discuss what each person's character symbolizes or is responsible for.

• The detailed jungle paintings by artist Abel Rodriguez were created from his personal memory and experience living and working around the Amazon rainforest. However, Rodriguez does not consider himself to be an “artist” in the traditional definition:
  o Read this interview about Rodriguez via Artsy.
  o How are Indigenous artists changing and subverting colonized narratives of relationships between art, land, and institutions? How are the concepts of displacement represented in Rodriguez’ works? How do the themes of migration and exile show up in the works of artists throughout the exhibit?
  o Are the paintings of Rodriguez fine art or folk art? Why or why not? Have students research other indigenous artists in cultures across the world.
  o As an extension, invite students to sketch/illustrate a natural place that is meaningful to them.
• Artists like Michaela Yearwood-Dan are known for exploring their identity through the use of abstract figuration, bold, exuberant color palettes, and incorporating symbolism specific to nature, mythology, and science fiction. Guide students in creating a self portrait in the style of these artists.
  o First ask students to define portrait versus self-portrait. What do these styles of art tell us about the subject or focus of an artwork? Consider how people sometimes want to show a different image of themselves in public – or an image – versus in private – or an identity.
  o Read the article “Investigating Identity” from MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) Learning website: https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/investigating-identity/intersecting-identities/
  o What is important to you? How would you describe yourself? Write ten words that are central to your identity. These words can be anything, including social categories such as ethnicity and gender, adjectives describing your personality, issues, or beliefs you care about, and your favorite pastimes and activities.

**More Lesson Plan Resources**

The Plants Around Us: A Science and Art Lesson via Education World
https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/plants-science-and-art.shtml

George Washington Carver - The Artist: The Plant Doctor via National Park Service

Quick and Easy Cyanotype Art for Kids via Masterpiece Society
https://masterpiecesociety.com/cyanotype-art/
ARTISTS, WORKS, & WALL TEXT

MADEYOULOOK (Established 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa), with Malik Wilkins (b. 2000, Cincinnati; lives and works in Cincinnati)
Website: http://www.made-you-look.net/
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/madeyoulookcltv/

Ejaradini, 2018/23
Cedar, vinyl, and plants (during growing season)
Courtesy of the artists

Ejaradini is an ongoing project by South African arts collaborative MADEYOULOOK. Since 2018, the installation considers township gardens as sites of creativity and belonging in South African cities that have historically perceived Black people as transient and precarious. MADEYOULOOK meditates on township gardens and how they allow for personalized labor, care, and communion with plant life and the land. A consequence of labor migration, forced removals, and relocation/displacement projects that result in diminished access to land or landlessness for people of color, township gardens are often a source of food, pleasure, and refuge for those who plant and maintain them. Ejaradini invites us to contend with legacies of colonialism that extend beyond the botanical and broadens our understanding of how we might inherit and radicalize other colonial structures such as art museums. In the current iteration of the garden, with the assistance of Cincinnati-based researcher Malik Wilkins, MADEYOULOOK incorporates research of histories of Black gardening and agricultural practices in Johannesburg, Nottingham in the UK, as well as Ohio and Kentucky.

To summarize:
• Collaborative between Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho of Johannesburg
• Focus on Black practices that have either been historically overlooked or deemed inconsequential—encourage new insight onto histories and oral traditions, Black love, urban public space, hierarchies of knowledge creation and dissemination, and land and relationships with plant life
• Will be programmed throughout the run of the exhibition and work with Black agriculturalists.
Lisandro Suriel (b. 1990 Cole Bay, Sint Maarten; lives and works in Sint Maarten)
Website: https://www.lisandrosuriel.com/
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/lisandrosuriel/?hl=en

Ghost Island, 2018/23
Color video, with sound
5 min., 51 sec.
Courtesy of the artist

Birth of Paradise: The New World, 2018
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Chitapo: The Black Siren, 2019
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Cotton Jinn: Sarobei, 2020
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Apparition: Mama Winti, 2018
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Kiss of The Asema, 2019
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Ẹlẹ́ Agbára - The Wind at The Crossroads, 2022
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Alala the Dreamer, 2019
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Myths and Sages of West India, 2015
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Central to Lisandro Suriel’s Ghost Island series are ideas related to mythology, spectrality, and hauntology. The artist deconstructs New World imagination within the West Indies, specifically in Saint Martin. In these works, Ghost Island features as an island where time collapses and collides between Old and New World temporalities. Drawing on magic realism, Suriel blurs
the distinctions between reality and fiction. Each work contains references to the natural and spiritual world that are part of West-Indian mythologies, such as cotton, palms, moonlight, the water, and Mama Winti apparitions (Winti refers to the name of an Afro-Surinamese religion rooted in Akan belief systems and to the name of different spirits existing within this system). Suriel’s lens shows us how ecology is deeply embedded in this spectral ancestral setting. Water is often used to shift the vantage point of the viewer. The artist is especially interested in how photography as a medium opens layered conversations about ghosts, haunting, and other portals of imagination in the afterlives of slavery and colonialism.

To summarize:

• Grappling with connection to slavery—acknowledging that history but wanting to move beyond that legacy and reestablish the stories and identities beyond it
• Inspired by the magic and mystery of nature (Magic Realism: blurring lines between reality and fantasy)
• Winti is a religion that derived from Suriname–wintis are spirits that were created by Anana, the creator of the universe. There is also a strong belief in the veneration of the ancestors. Spirits inhabit nature and are found everywhere.

Ilze Wolff (b. 1980, Cape Town; lives and works in Cape Town)
Website: https://www.wolffarchitects.co.za/
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/ilzewolff/?hl=en

Summer Flowers, 2021
Color video, with sound
23 min.
Courtesy of Wolff Architects, with permission from the Bessie Head Heritage Trust and the Khama III Memorial Museum, Serowe

Summer Flowers is an homage to the work and life of South African seed collector, gardener, writer, and political activist Bessie Head, who went into self-imposed exile in Serowe village in neighboring Botswana in 1964. The work focuses on Head’s home and garden, Rainclouds, which she designed and occupied from 1969 until her death in 1986. Summer Flowers extends themes of migration, community, cohabitation, as well as traditional agricultural practices that are present in Head’s first novel, When Rain Clouds Gather. Head saw a direct link between politics, colonial interference, land and gardening practices, going so far as to help establish the Boiteko communal gardening project that aimed to withhold African and traditional agricultural practices that were being stifled and suffocated by fast
growing and ubiquitous Western influences. In *Summer Flowers*, Wolff reorients discourse of South African gardening practices that are erroneously discussed independent from the colonial histories of the land on which the gardening occurs.

To summarize:
- Wolff is a writer and architect; this work focuses on writer and activist Bessie Head
- Bessie Head was a fiction and non-fiction writer. She was of mixed race in Apartheid South Africa. Sought asylum in Botswana in 1964.

**Rashid Johnson** (b. 1977, Chicago, Illinois; lives and works in New York)

Social Media: [https://www.instagram.com/rashidjohnson/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/rashidjohnson/?hl=en)

*Untitled Stranger*, 2017
Black steel, plants, ceramic, grow lights, shea butter, spray enamel, books, black soap, and wax
Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth © Rashid Johnson

In this large-scale installation, Rashid Johnson explores ideas related to escape and being a stranger or outsider. The artist is inspired by writer James Baldwin’s 1953 essay “Stranger in the Village,” in which Baldwin describes his experiences of being Black in Leukerbad, a small village in Switzerland. The use of steel structures enforces ideas about barriers, while the plants, pots, shea butter, and other materials placed within the structure invite viewers to walk around in order to view them. The plants used in the installation are tropical plants; however, they have been sourced locally. In this sense, the plants become a signifier of being ‘out of place’ and lead to larger questions about what produces a ‘stranger’ or ‘outsider.’ The use of black soap and shea butter speak to the healing and medicinal properties of plants and is a reminder of the interconnected relationship between the forced movement of plants and people during the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

To summarize:
- Steel grid includes tropical plants in ceramic pots made by the artist, shea butter, soap, as well as a selection of books, which include Albert Camus’ *The Stranger*, *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty and *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* by Harold Cruse
  - Camus: French character is a stranger in his society; Beatty: satire about race in America; Cruse: rejection of Black assimilation, advocated for Black culture
• Johnson influenced by writer James Baldwin’s essay, “Stranger in the Village” which discusses his experiences in Switzerland and makes connections to how he was a stranger in America—it is also a critique that argues that white Americans must accept history and acknowledge privilege.

**Michaela Yearwood-Dan** (b. 1994, London, UK; lives and works in London, UK)
Social Media: [https://www.instagram.com/artistandgal/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/artistandgal/?hl=en)

*Easier to Bare*, 2022  
Oil, ink, and pastel on canvas  
Collection of Iris and Adam Singer

*A Million Miles Away*, 2022  
Oil and pastel on canvas  
The Friedman Family Collection

The works *Easier to Bare* and *A Million Miles Away* are reflective of Michaela Yearwood-Dan’s continued exploration of self, navigated through an abstract lens. Using a combination of techniques including floral textures and motifs creating a luscious aesthetic, the works draw from a range of personal defining signifiers related to femininity, queerness, and Blackness. Interplaying these themes sporadically throughout the work, and incorporating her own and borrowed lyrical text in the work, Yearwood-Dan aims to move away from narrow or linear representations of race, gender, and sexuality. The artist weaves in reflections on love, loss, and socio-political conditions. Both paintings are full of semi-abstract, seductive, colorful swirls that offer notable movement in which the viewer becomes absorbed. Yearwood-Dan’s compositions invite viewers to be submerged in sensual pinks, deep sea turquoise, and hints of green, creating rich textures full of imagination.

To summarize:
• Caribbean and English artist–consideration of diasporic identity and blending of botanicals from the Caribbean and Black, urban fashion
**Torkwase Dyson** (b. 1973, Chicago, Illinois; lives and works in Beacon, New York)
Website: [https://www.torkwasedyson.com/](https://www.torkwasedyson.com/)
Social Media:

*Way Over There Inside Me (Ocean as a super throughway #6)*, 2019
Graphic, acrylic, charcoal and ink on canvas
Collection of Charles W. Banta

Torkwase Dyson’s *Way Over There Inside Me (Ocean as a super throughway #6)* is part of a larger series called *Black Compositional Thought (15 Paintings for the Plantationoscene)*, originally produced for the New Orleans Museum of Art. This series of six works makes use of minimal shapes, thick textures of graphite, acrylic, charcoal, and ink over washes of deep blue paint. The artist uses abstract lines, forms, shapes, and edges inspired by the design systems of architecture, water infrastructure, and the oil and gas industry. These larger systems speak directly to the ways in which ecology has been, and continues to be, racialized and how they hold on to the ongoing legacies of plantation economies. Dyson’s rich theoretical framework of *Black Compositional Thought* considers how Black people inhabit geography and how their relationship to land is structured by environmental and infrastructural issues, often referred to as the “plantationoscene.”

To summarize:

- Shapes and forms are influenced by infrastructure systems that are impacted by systemic racism and how the legacy of the plantation economy resulted in lasting impact on Black communities and their relationship to land

**Rachel Youn** (b. 1994, Abington, Pennsylvania; lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut)
Gather, 2020/23
Website: [https://rachelyoun.com/](https://rachelyoun.com/)
Social Media: [https://www.instagram.com/rachelyoun/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/rachelyoun/?hl=en)

Massagers, artificial plants, and speakers, with sound
Courtesy of the artist and HAIR+NAILS, Minneapolis
Gather brings together Rachel Youn’s interest in spirituality, sculpture, and inanimate materials. Inspired by lively church gatherings and the dance floor, the artist explores the possibilities and tensions between these two worlds. By incorporating Korean gospel music in the soundtrack, the artist refers to their upbringing in intense evangelical church services. Contemplating how to reconcile queerness in these spaces, the artist reflects on the similarities between feeling liberated in church vis-à-vis the dance floor. Using artificial plants with personal massagers, the artist considers larger themes related to comfort, intimacy, and touch. The massagers are sourced second-hand as they are often disregarded after use or replaced. The artist directly grapples with the somewhat tender and tragic condition of these objects by giving them a new life. Youn’s sculptures are seen rhythmically swaying and swinging, which might also be understood as a form of worship.

To summarize:

- Massagers are meant to evoke empathy—discarded and unwanted; flowers are artificial
- Sculptures are like people (flaws, humor, tragic)

**Abel Rodríguez** (b. 1941, Cahuinarí region, Colombia; lives and work in Bogotá, Colombia)
Artist Bio: kadist.org/people/abel-rodriguez/

*Tierra firme III*, 2020
Ink on paper
Collection of Ron Henderson

*Mónte firme*, 2020
Ink on paper
For Abel Rodríguez, drawing is closely related to the plant wisdoms passed down in oral traditions. Each of the drawings are highly detailed and offer densely layered shades of green with a purple tree here and there. These botanical illustrations are drawn from memory and speak to the ancestral ways in which the artist relates to plants in the wider ecological system of the Amazon. Rodríguez, whose Indigenous name is Mogaje Guihu, is a plant-name-giver—a term referencing someone who holds the knowledge of hundreds of flora species, including their anatomical features, and their wider ecological relations with different animal species. Rodríguez is intimately familiar with the medicinal properties of each plant and how to create plant-based remedies from them. Drawing, for the artist, is a way to document other forms of knowledge systems and a mode of speaking to the trees and plants.

To summarize:
- Self-taught artist who creates because he loves plants—deep knowledge and experience with them, specifically the forests in Columbia around the Amazon

**Firelei Báez** (b. 1981, Santiago De Los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; lives and works in New York, New York)
Everything I know about love I invented (Titus’ atlas of Hamilton County), 2023
Digital print
Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York

For Firelei Báez, painting becomes a means of giving form to memory. Many of her works tap into oceanic imagery to suggest the broader history of Black diaspora and the Middle Passage—a part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade that brought enslaved people from Africa to the Americas. These references are in relationship to philosopher Édouard Glissant’s theory of the ocean as a connector and a repository of physical memory. This image is a response to the Afrofuturist mythology developed by Drexciya, a Detroit-based electronic music duo. In the 1990’s, sleeve notes accompanying their techno albums described an underwater nation called Drexciya populated by a new generation of water-breathing humans: the unborn children of pregnant African women who were thrown off slave ships and had adapted to breathe fluid within their mothers’ wombs. The underlying map over which these floating figures are illustrated shows a map of Farmers’ College in College Hill, Cincinnati, Ohio in 1860. This map covered part of the Underground Railroad, a network of people, places, and routes that made it possible for enslaved people to escape to the North and Canada.

To summarize:
● https://hamiltonavenueroadtofreedom.org/?page_id=330
● Born to Dominican mother and a father of Haitian descent; concerned with Black diaspora and resulting layers of identity
● Connection to Afrofuturist myth and local connection of the Farmer’s College on Hamilton Avenue, which was a key point in the Underground Railroad
Kapwani Kiwanga (b. 1978, Hamilton, Canada; lives and works in Paris, France)
Website: http://kapwanikiwanga.org/

Semence, 2020
Ceramic
Courtesy of Kapwani Kiwanga and Goodman Gallery

Kapwani Kiwanga’s work investigates the history of botany and its relationship to forced migration, slavery, and refusal. *Semence*, which translates to grain or seed in French, reflects on botanical migrations that are a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In the installation, Kiwanga focuses on how African or red rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) was introduced to the Americas. It is said that enslaved women from West Africa braided grains of rice in their hair after being forcefully removed from their land between the 16th and 18th centuries. After escaping detection by slave owners, the seeds would be planted upon arrival in the Americas and provided a source of nourishment to the women and their families. The installation comprises over 8500 ceramic replicas of *Oryza glaberrima* seeds that are placed in heaps of seven, 10 cm apart, to resemble paddy farming.

Landscape Twice Removed: Keiskamma, 2017
Sound
1 min., 30 sec.
Courtesy of Kapwani Kiwanga and Goodman Gallery

Ownership and access to landscapes is contentious in previously colonized areas. Colonial powers often assumed an incorrect *terra nullius*, where the land belonged to no one. In the rare event that inhabitants of the land are acknowledged, assumptions are made about their inability to appreciate and understand its properties and its beauty. English language colonial-era poetry often reflects, in highly romanticized prose, this erasure of indigenous peoples and their relationship to the land. Through a series of sound pieces titled *Landscape Twice Removed*, Canadian/French artist Kapwani Kiwanga offers a poetic reclamation of the relationship to land and to the landscape itself. In *Landscape Twice Removed: Keiskamma*, Kiwanga reflects on the poetry of several such writers, including George E Bugler’s *Keiskamma*, a mesmerized and romantic recitation of the mountainous climates of South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province. By translating Burger’s poem and having it recited in isiXhosa, the language of the displaced inhabitants of the area, Kiwanga examines how translations through the power of language determines our relationship to our environment and shapes our gestures.
To summarize:

- Rice relates to survival and displacement, as does the sound work
- Colonial/Imperialist powers did not recognize that land was “owned” before they got there
- Language in the audio is isiXhosa, used by people indigenous to Keiskamma in South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province
- Artist is driven by research, recovering stories and histories and retelling them

**Eric Gyamfi** (b. 1990, Accra, Ghana; lives and works in Accra, Ghana)
Artist Biography: [https://pridephoto.org/photographer/eric-gyamfi/](https://pridephoto.org/photographer/eric-gyamfi/)
Social Media: [https://gyamfieric.tumblr.com/](https://gyamfieric.tumblr.com/)

*Teak Atlas: From where do we begin?, 2022/23*
Cyanotype and teak emulsions on rayon batiste cotton
Courtesy of the artist

Eric Gyamfi has an interest in photography as a medium. In his practice, he seeks pathways and strategies that can be enabled through the photographic medium and process, and uses photography to both investigate and represent the world. Using cyanotype—one of the oldest photographic printing processes—Gyamfi often emulsifies plant pigments onto materials such as fabric and glass. In *Teak Atlas: From where do we begin?*, he pays attention to the materiality of teak and the aesthetic potential of its chemistry as it interacts with cotton fabric. He achieves this through different methodologies of bleaching, leaf pigment extraction, and collaboration with the brilliance of sun.

To summarize:
- Considers plant like people in the forced displacement for power and monetary gain

*S Survival Manual 2, 2016*
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Zheng Bo’s *Survival Manuals* is an ongoing series, begun in 2015, that delves into the world of wild edible plants and questions of survival. In *Survival Manual 2*, the artist hand copied the book *Taiwan’s Wild Edible Plants*, which was published in 1945 by Japanese colonial forces occupying Taiwan. The publication came out five months before Japan’s surrender in WWII. The artist makes a connection between plants, survival, and larger themes pertaining to control and political climate. The work is a reminder of the long use of
wild, edible plants as a means of survival, especially under duress. The preface of the manual states, “At this critical moment of the sacred war, the survival of the empire depends on winning the war on food.”

To summarize:
- Daoist thought places value on all living things and seeks harmony with nature; engaged in environmental commentary
- Consider history of Ecosexuality and consider where lines blur—love of earth and plants can take many forms (defined by Annie Sprinkle and artist Beth Stephens to refer to those for whom “the Earth is our lover,” rather than a resource to be exploited)
- Ferns are nonbinary and their marginalization in Taiwan by colonialist powers is likened to the marginalization of queer folk
- Consider broader range of sexuality in humans as we do in plants and animals
- Pteridophilia is a made up word (love of ferns); latin for the fern and love
- Connections between occupier and power and irony of the Japanese teaching the Taiwanese about native plants
- Connection and relationship between people and plants

Lorena Molina (b. 1985, El Salvador; lives and works in Houston, Texas and Cincinnati, Ohio)
Website: https://www.lorenamolina.com/
Link Tree: https://linktr.ee/beingmoli

Lorena Molina’s constellation of videos and photographs is an amalgamation of moments from several bodies of work made between 2016 and 2022. Stemming from the series This must be the place (2020), How Blue (2019), and El Playón (2018), the works reflect Molina’s longstanding preoccupation with issues of ecologies, spatial inequalities, land and landlessness, and displacement that is a result of forced migration. Using different fruits and plants, such as recurring imagery of corn, gloomy landscapes, and raspberries, Molina evokes
different emotions of home, belonging, and rootedness. She meditates on violent encounters with the land, including El Playón, the site of the San Salvador volcanic eruption of 1658 to 1671, and a dumping site for the right-wing paramilitary death squad during the Salvadoran Civil War of 1979 to 1992. In the photographs, Molina confronts us with the limitations of keeping personal/domestic gardens due to limited access to land and how these limitations influence and necessitate economic gardening practices. By incorporating images of fabric in her photographs, Molina engages the contentious history of exploitation and abuse that is inherently embedded in the textile industry and in Salvadoran politics and histories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Untitled, 2016</strong></td>
<td>Color video, with sound</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 min., 5 sec.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was left, 2018</td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>El Playón, 2018</strong></td>
<td>Color video, with sound</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 min., 45 sec.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tía’s Garden, 2017</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trying to bring the tall grass with me, 2022</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2022</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was pregnant with wishful thinking, 2017</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Untitled, 2022</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sauquoit, 2022</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<td><strong>Fluctuación, 2022</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Playón, 2017</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ofrenda, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entre Palmas, 2018</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch at David’s, 2018</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick Chicken, 2017</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Limón de la Finca de mi papa, 2018</strong></td>
<td>Chromogenic print</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courtesy of the artist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscas, 2017</td>
<td>Archival inkjet print</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Geese, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Plumas que dejó el zorro, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Sourcing the corn, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Papa Picking Loroco, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Tía, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Araña, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Guineos, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Trying to bring the tall grass with me, 2022
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2022
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Fluctuación, 2022
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Offrenda, 2020
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Lunch at David’s, 2018
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Limón de la Finca de mi papa, 2018
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Tías Garden, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

I was pregnant with wishful thinking, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Sauquiot, 2022
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

El Playon, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Entre Palmas, 2018
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Sick Chicken, 2017
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Moscas, 2017
Archival inkjet print          Courtesy of the artist  
Geese, 2017                     Tia, 2017             
Archival inkjet print           Archival inkjet print  
Geese, 2017                     Courtesy of the artist  
Plumas que dejo el zorro, 2017  Araña, 2017            
Archival inkjet print           Archival inkjet print  
Sourcing the corn, 2017          Guineos, 2017         
Archival inkjet print           Archival inkjet print  
Sourcing the corn, 2017          Archival inkjet print  
Guineos, 2017                   Courtesy of the artist  
Papa Picking Loroco, 2017        Untitled, 2017        
Archival inkjet print           Archival inkjet print  
Papa Picking Loroco, 2017        Courtesy of the artist  

To summarize: 
• Molina considers how land is used and controlled in El Salvador 
• Utilizes the colors of the land and foliage 
• Retells histories of Salvadoran Civil War and other notable events that lead to present 

Emily Hanako Momohara (b. 1974, Seattle; lives and works in Cincinnati) 
Website: https://ehmomohara.com/  
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/ehmomohara/?hl=en 

In Transit, 2018/23 (exhibition copy)  
Pigment prints, wood, and clock, with gold paint  
Courtesy of the artist, original artwork in the collection of the Okinawa Prefectural Museum 
and Art Museum
For Emily Hanako Momohara, immigration, identity, food, and labor are closely intertwined with the contested histories of pineapple plantations in Hawaii. Bringing together personal and larger reflections on immigration, Momohara’s work speaks to the ongoing impact of food production within a larger ecological framework. In Transit references these histories by way of Momohara’s own family narratives—the artist’s great-grandparents left a famine-entrenched Okinawa, Japan for Hawaii, USA. Pineapples were long considered exotic and were shipped around the world as a luxury good. The histories of pineapple plantations and their working conditions are bound up with US imperialism. In using imagery related to agriculture and migration, Momohara critically charts how exotic fruits like pineapples become symbolic of the complex geographic and social paths that many immigrants take.

**Semiotics of a Pineapple Upside Down Cake, 2018**
Color video, with sound
10 min., 40 sec.
Courtesy of the artist

In *Semiotics of a Pineapple Upside Down Cake* (2018), Emily Hanako Momohara grapples with the imperial violence and colonialism tied to pineapple fruit plantations in Hawaii. The work is inspired by Martha Rosler’s performance-based video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), which offers an important critique of the role of housewives. Momohara intentionally features a white woman in her cooking demonstration to make a connection between the export of pineapples as a luxury fruit and white, middle-class, domestic kitchens. In her apron, the viewer sees the moving images of plantation workers. By drawing on Rosler’s work, Momohara extends these critiques into a transnational framework firmly rooted in US imperialism.

To summarize:
- Both works deal with capitalistic and imperialistic impacts of pineapple plantations in Hawaii, where Momohara’s family worked after fleeing from famine in Okinawa.
Las Nietas de Nonó (mulowayi iyaye nonó, b. 1979, Puerto Rico and mapenzi chibale nonó, b. 1982, Puerto Rico)
Website: https://www.lasnietasdenono.com/
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/lasnietasdenono/?hl=en

FOODTOPIA: después de todo territorio, 2020-21
Color video, with sound
27 min., 54 sec.
Courtesy of the artists

In this ongoing multi-media project, Las Nietas de Nonó grapple with larger themes related to food, displacement, and memory. In particular, the artists address the over-industrialization of food in the Caribbean. The film is set in the Blasina stream, a natural space threatened by development and water extraction near the home of the artists in San Antón, Puerto Rico. Filmed during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the work asks broader questions about our relationship with nature and survival. For Las Nietas de Nonó, food is central to fostering holistic and spiritual relationships within Afro-diasporic communities. While walking through abandoned buildings and streams filled with debris, harvesting wild fruits, and hunting an invasive species of iguana, Las Nietas de Nonó speak to utopian and dystopian conditions of life on an island colony.

To summarize:
- “The afro-diasporic siblings, mulowayi and mapenzi are Las Nietas de Nonó”
- “Las Nietas de Nonó are sisters Lydela (1979) and Michel (1982). They live in Barrio San Antón, a half-rural, half-industrial working-class neighborhood of Carolina, Puerto Rico. Their autobiographical work is framed within the socioeconomic and geographical context of the exclusion and eviction of Black communities in Puerto Rico, which includes racial and class discrimination, mass incarceration, drug trafficking, obstetric violence, and the cycle of poverty. Their practice also highlights circumstances and elements that are present in their neighborhood: the expansion of ancestral knowledge, the exchange of produce grown in the neighborhood, and the reuse of materials found in the area to create artistic projects.”

Screening in the Black Box
Sammy Baloji (b. 1978, Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo; lives and works in Lubumbashi and Brussels), produced in collaboration with Phillip de Boeck
Artist Bio: https://peabody.harvard.edu/sammy-baloji
Social Media: https://www.instagram.com/baloji/?hl=en

Pungulime, 2016
Color video, with sound
16 min., 9 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and Iman Fares, Paris, as a part of Suturing the City: living together in Congo’s urban worlds. London: Autograph, 2016.

Sammy Baloji’s Pungulime is an exercise in oral storytelling and traditional forms of archiving histories and accessing knowledge. The video reveals the role of large western conglomerates in the destruction of African environments and ecologies. It recounts the forced migration of the Sanga inhabitants from Pungulime in the Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of Congo and is a testament to the correlation between destroyed ecologies and shattered communities. Home to the world’s largest deposit of copper and cobalt, Pungulime—referred to as Fungulime by Belgian colonialists who struggled with its pronunciation—has been a site of disruptive extractivism and ecological devastation, most recently by the American Tenke Fungurume Mining Consortium (TFM) that owns the mountains and its minerals. In the video, the sound of heavy machinery ravaging the earth offers an unsettling soundtrack to the excavation and destruction of whole kingdoms and communities.
RESOURCES

Read

Stranger in the Village: Full Text, by James Baldwin - via Jan Van Eyck Academie
https://www.janvaneyck.nl/site/assets/files/2312/baldwin.pdf

Black Body: Rereading James Baldwin’s “Stranger in the Village” – via The New Yorker
https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/black-body-re-reading-james-baldwins-stranger-village

Why photographer Lisandro Suriel is asking: ‘Do you believe in ghosts?’ – via Shado Magazine

From Outside In: Rashid Johnson Has Plied His Status as an Art Star to Effect the Kinds of Change He Wants to See – via ARTnews

Michaela Yearwood-Dan - via Flaunt Magazine

Studio Visit: Artist Michaela Yearwood-Dan on How She Taps Into the Creative Power of Background Noise and a Bit of Rest – via artnet

In the studio with… Torkwase Dyson – via Apollo Magazine

Torkwase Dyson Seeks Black Liberation Through Geometry - via Hyperallergic
https://hyperallergic.com/786093/torkwase-dyson-seeks-black-liberation-through-geometry/

The Art of Failure: An Interview with Rachel Youn – via Berlin Art Link

Massagers Meet Mosh Pits: An Interview with Rachel Youn – via Sixty Inches From Center Collective

The Indigenous Colombian Elder Painting Ancestral Knowledge From Memory – via Elephant Magazine
How I became an artist: Kapwani Kiwanga - via Art Basel

'I’m Proposing Many Ways of Seeing’: Artist Kapwani Kiwanga on Unearthing Buried Histories to Imagine the World Anew - via Artnet
https://news.artnet.com/art-world/kapwani-kiwanga-interview-1901953

Plants, poisons and power: the art of Kapwani Kiwanga - via Financial Times
https://www.ft.com/content/8bb96d8a-dbc3-4822-bc61-86c74d90613b

An Interview With Ghana’s Boundary-Pushing Photographer, Eric Gyamfi - via Culture Trip

Interview: Eric Gyamfi- via Nataal Magazine
https://nataal.com/eric-gyamfi

Zheng Bo: How to Live on Planet Earth - via Ocula Magazine
https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/zheng-bo/

Art as Multispecies Vibrancy - via Zheng Bo’s website
http://zhengbo.org/texts/2020_ZB.pdf

Las Nietas de Nonó: Day-to-Day Utopias - via Museum of Modern Art (MoMa)
https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/716

Mass incarceration touched their family. Las Nietas de Nonó tackle its legacy in performance - via The Los Angeles Times

Listen

Garden of Others a research podcast on black lives and gardens created during MADEYOULOOK’s digital residency during the covid lockdowns of 2020-2021 - via the artists’ website
http://www.made-you-look.net/writing/2022/10/13/gardens-of-others

AAPI Heritage Month is a time for solidarity amid anti-Asian attacks feat. Emily Momohara - via WVXU Cincinnati/NPR

A story of resilience and patriotism after Japanese internment feat. Emily Momohara - via KUOW/NPR
Watch

African Mobilities 2.0: architecture and importance of a black curriculum - via YouTube
https://youtu.be/99bYwmveASM

Ghost Island and Lisandro Suriel visual channel - via Vimeo
https://vimeo.com/user19181659

The Negro and the American Promise: an interview with James Baldwin - via WGBH/PBS Archives
https://www.pbs.org/video/race-problem-sw2bgt/

Rashid Johnson makes the elite art world more inclusive - via CNN

Summer Flowers: Bessie Head, directed by Ilze Wolff - via Wolff Architects on Vimeo
https://vimeo.com/537268366

A Spotlight On: Michaela Yearwood-Dan - via Vimeo
https://vimeo.com/645326111

Narrative Materiality: Dawoud Bey and Torkwase Dyson In Conversation - via Whitney Museum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQASmdbEAZQ

18 Questions with Rachel Youn - via Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis
https://camstl.org/video/18-questions-with-rachel-youn/

A Colombian painter surprises with his powerful memory - via CGTN America YouTube Channel
https://youtu.be/2ODKUsB1Q08

Abel Rodríguez en ‘Nombrar lo innombrable: conversaciones sobre arte y verdad’ - via Comision de la Verdad (Spanish language; go to video settings for English closed captions)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVCcySC90Ts
Exploring Connections Booklists

Afrofuturism Fiction Suggestions for Kids, Teens & Adults via The New York Public Library
https://www.nypl.org/blog/2021/02/24/afrofuturism-fiction-recommendations

AfroLatin@ Children’s Literature, Education, and the Black Diaspora via The Horn Book

BIPOC Authors on Nature, Environmental Justice Booklist: For Kids via University of Colorado
https://libguides.colorado.edu/BIPOC-nature/kids

19 Top Books for Tween and Teen Climate Activists via School Library Journal

Suggested Reading List: African Diaspora Writers in the U.S. via African American Read-in at Penn State
https://sites.psu.edu/aareadin/suggested-reading-list-african-diaspora-writers-in-the-u-s/
LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Standards
http://www.corestandards.org/

Ohio Common Core Links
http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards
http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards

Kentucky Common Core Links
https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx
https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf

Indiana Standards Links
https://www.doe.in.gov/standards
https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change
http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives