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**TWO BOLD, NEW EXHIBITIONS FROM NOMADIC EXPLORERS SAYA
WOOLFALK AND PAMELA PHATSIMO SUNSTRUM**
July 12 – October 27, 2019

CINCINNATI, May 2019 —This July, the Contemporary Arts Center will present a duo of exhibitions that invite the viewer on a journey through space, time and identity from artists Saya Woolfalk and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum respectively titled, *A Cabinet of Anticipation* and *All my seven faces*. Together, the exhibitions will cover the bi-level expanse of our second floor galleries, showcasing over 40 exploratory works. “Both Sunstrum and Woolfalk’s imaginative works conjure up future possibilities of existence by transcending normative boundaries of culture, species and gender” describes CAC Director, Raphaela Platow. “They also postulate that the integration of scientific thinking with mythology, storytelling and ancient wisdom allows for a more holistic understanding of humanity. The CAC’s aim of promoting ‘Open Minds’, is exemplified by the selection of these two exhibitions, which explore the world of tomorrow by opening doors for imagination.”

SAYA WOOLFALK: *A Cabinet of Anticipation*
Co-curated by Steven Matijcio & Valentine Umansky

Saya Woolfalk’s (b. 1979) work incorporates African American, European American, and Japanese cultural influences, while alluding to science fiction, feminist theory, mythology, anthropology, archaeology, Eastern religion and fashion.

In *A Cabinet of Anticipation*, Woolfalk tells the story of the Empathics, botanic/humanoid beings who possess the extraordinary ability to cross species and fuse cultures. The gallery will feel like walking into the dark of night. Deep blue walls filled with immersive and intricate constellations of projection and wall-mounted sculptures will surround the visitor. Some projections will extend to the gallery floor surrounded by the freestanding sculptural

characters of Woolfalk's creation. Much of the work in the exhibition opens up possibilities for future human narratives and the acceleration of post-humanism.

"Offering a response to contemporary feelings of isolation, resulting from and heightened by technology and our separation from a nature-centered mode of living, Saya's *Cabinet of Anticipation* characterizes possible futures as already existing," says Valentine Umansky, CAC Curator of Lens-Based Arts. "The rituals she orchestrates, secular rather than devout, allow us to imagine a plausible version of humanity 2.0 through the coalescence of human and plant realms."

PAMELA PHATSIMO SUNSTRUM: *All my seven faces*

Curated by Valentine Umansky

Botswana-born, Toronto-based artist, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (b. 1980) is interested in the overlap between mythology and science. She uses video, animation, and avatars named Asme ("as me") to explore surprising parallels across modern science and ancient texts. *All my seven faces* will feature over 20 works including a new, large scale mural to create a re-imagining of her own life/timeline.

By design, the exhibition will conjure a transformative space that evokes the impression of traveling through a tunnel. Visual nods to elements of Tswana home adornment traditions as well as sand embankments along the perimeter of the gallery where the walls meet the floor will heighten this sense of passage and location. The visitor's journey through the exhibition culminates in a new mural on a grand-scale that responds to Zaha Hadid's architecture like never before. The mural presents a pair of Asme in the midst of traditional housing leading into futuristic constructions and civilization, the overall shape of which forms an arch between where the artist is from and what the future holds.

"Pamela's work considers imagination as a radical, contemporary praxis, one which, through thought, enables radical alterity within a reality, often perceived as fixed and univocal," says Valentine Umansky, CAC Curator of Lens-Based Arts.

This mid-career survey will present the largest display of works by Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum to date, and will be accompanied by the launch of the first monograph devoted to the artist's work.

ARTIST BIOS:

Saya Woolfalk (b. 1979; Gifu City, Japan,) is a New York-based artist sharing Asian, African-American and European-American heritage. This transnational upbringing informs her multi-disciplinary work that travels the seductive, if unsettling, possibilities of cultural hybridity. Marrying totemic iconography with psychedelic surrealism, science fiction and fantasy, Woolfalk imagines a fictional race of women able to alter their genetic make-up and merge with the natural world. Her mythical society of “Empathics” and “Chimabots” opens up possibilities for future human narratives and exacerbates a contemporary drive towards post-humanism. Alternatively crafting sculptures, paintings, textiles, works on paper, photographs, collages or videos, Saya’s chimeras widen the longitude and latitude of an imagined, parallel world and posits a very plausible 2.0 version of humanity.

She has exhibited at museums, galleries, and alternative spaces throughout Asia and the United States including solo exhibitions at the Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ (2012); the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA (2014); SCAD Museum, Savannah, GA (2016); Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY (2016); Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE (2016); the Mead Museum of Art, Amherst, MA (2017) and group shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem; MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY; the Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA., the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, among many others.

Works by the artist are in the permanent collections of major institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Mead Art Museum, the Weatherspoon Art Museum; the Newark Museum; the Chrysler Museum of Art; and the Seattle Art Museum where her major multimedia installation, commissioned and acquired by the Museum, is on extended view. Solo exhibitions of works by Saya Woolfalk are also currently on view at the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO (through September 1, 2019) and the Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI (through August 18, 2019).

Woolfalk is the recipient of numerous honors, awards, and commissions. She has delivered public lectures at museums and universities throughout the United States including a recent TEDx Talk. She is represented by Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York.

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (b. 1980, Mochudi, Botswana) is an artist, currently based out of Toronto, Canada and Johannesburg, South Africa, whose multidisciplinary work deals with recurring themes of nomadism, identity and human connection and alludes to mythology, geology and theories on the nature of the universe. Her drawings present narrative landscapes that are, at once, futuristic and ancient—shifting between representational and fantastical depictions of volcanic, subterranean, cosmological and precipitous landscapes. Sunstrum spent her childhood in different parts of Africa and southeast Asia. She received a BA from the

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in International Studies with a concentration in Transnational Cultures in 2004 and an MFA from the Mt. Royal School of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2007. She later lived in Baltimore Maryland as an artist in residence at the Baltimore Creative Alliance, while also teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Sunstrum was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Visual Art & Art History of York University in 2017.

Recent exhibitions and performances include: Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa; The Wiels, Brussels, Belgium (2019); Kunsthaus Zürich (2019); The Nest, The Hague (2019); Michaelis School for the Arts at the University of Cape Town (2018); Artpace, San Antonio, TX, USA (2018); Cape Town Art Fair (2018); The Phillips Museum of Arts, Lancaster (2018); Interlochen Centre for the Arts, Interlochen (2016); NMMU Bird Street Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth (2016); Tiwani Contemporary, London (2016); VANSA, Johannesburg (2015); Brundyn Gallery, Cape Town (2014); FRAC Pays de Loire, France (2013); the Havana Biennial (2012); and MoCADA, New York (2011).

Contemporary Arts Center (CAC):

The CAC's mission is to provide the opportunity for all people to discover the dynamic relationship between art and life. Only one year after our founding in 1939, the CAC hosted one of the first Midwest exhibitions of Picasso's *Guernica* and in 1963 presented one of the first exhibitions of Pop Art, featuring Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jim Dine. The CAC's 1975 exhibition *Video Art* featured important work by Nam June Paik and representing the United States at the Sao Paulo Biennale. In 1990 the CAC presented (and successfully defended) Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition *The Perfect Moment* which became a lightning rod in the culture wars as then CAC Director Dennis Barrie was acquitted on charges of obscenity. In 2004 the CAC organized *Beautiful Losers*— the first museum survey to spotlight a loose-knit group of American artists who were influenced by popular underground subcultures of the 1990s. In 2010 and 2011, the CAC presented an extensive exploration of Shepard Fairey's 20-year career, followed by *Keith Haring 1978-1982*, a historic exhibit of rarely exhibited early work from this iconic artist. More recent highlights have involved the first solo U.S. museum presentations of artists such as Anri Sala, J.R., Michael Sailstorfer, Atul Dodiya and Albano Afonso.

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