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SEP 12–NOV 15, 2020

NINE LIVES

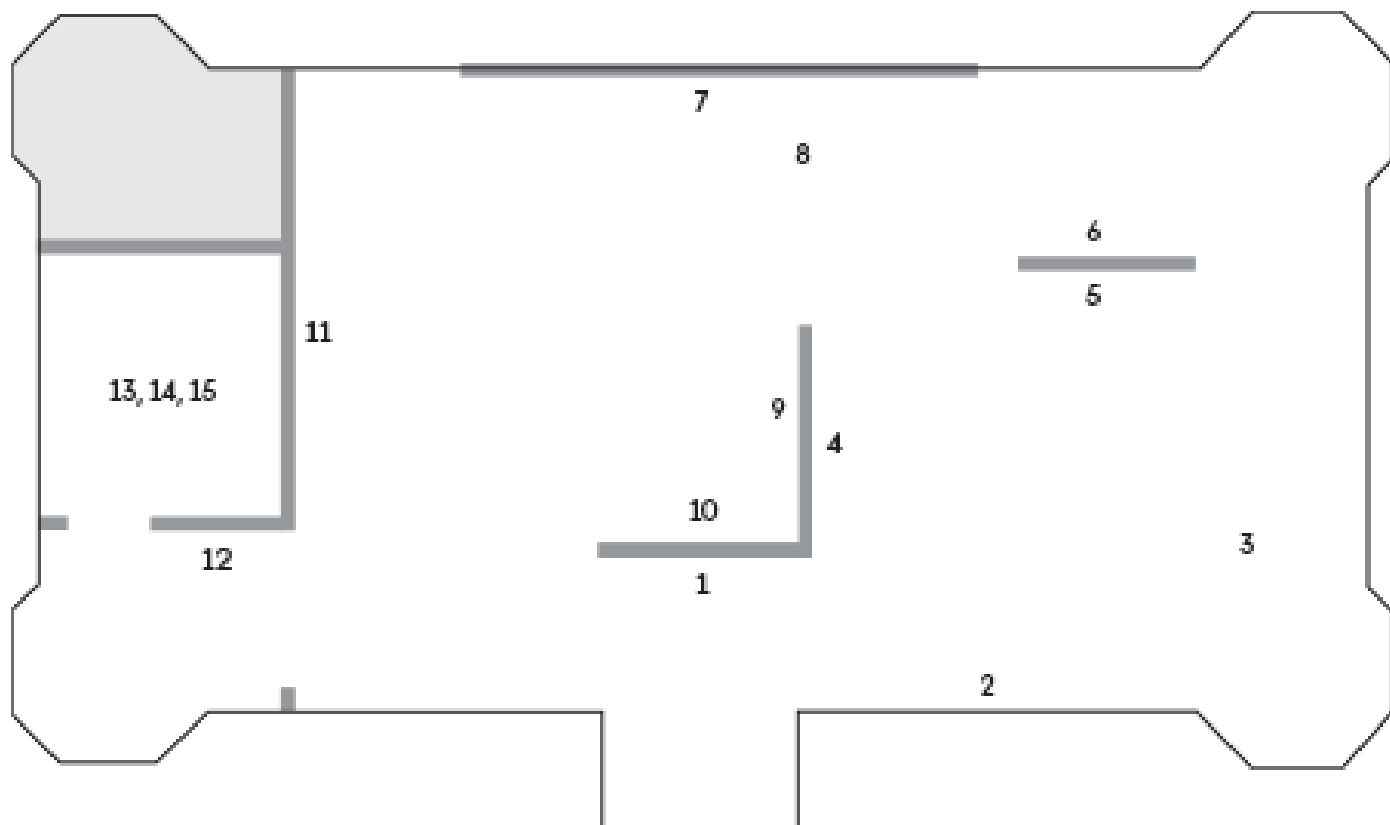
MARWA ARSANIOS, RAVEN CHACON, BETHANY COLLINS,
TAMAR GUIMARÃES, KAPWANI KIWANGA, HƯƠNG NGÔ,
ALIZA NISENBAUM, ALISON O'DANIEL, TOYIN OJIH ODUTOLA,
ELLE PÉREZ, CHARLOTTE PRODGER

Nine Lives takes shape around a diverse set of protagonists, as if this exhibition were a collection of short stories or personal essays told from different points of view. These figures—whether real or imagined—come forward in the artworks, which offer intimate but imperfect access to their respective lives. Each work holds the residual impression of a moment, a journey, an effort, or a thought, with varying degrees of legibility. As these individuals quietly occupy everyday settings or navigate more extraordinary circumstances, larger dimensions also begin to emerge. While a notion of the self remains central to the exhibition, this self always moves in relation to society and history, with an ongoing tension between public and private experience.

Motifs of reading, writing, and translating appear throughout the exhibition. These take familiar forms, such as books, newspapers, and documents from archives, but the artists are also thinking about these kinds of activities in more expansive ways: how textiles can also be texts, for example, or how a musical score is waiting to be enacted. In bringing the work of eleven artists together, *Nine Lives* is weighing how stories are told, where they can be found, and what their effects might be, both on a collective scale and within individual lives. Not all stories are told in the present tense and many follow us from the past, as they are carried on through language and held in our bodies. As such, some of the artists in *Nine Lives* also consider how traces of the past are interpreted or understood; they are developing new appraisals of history, as it is felt here and now.

This exhibition is part of the Feminist Art Coalition, an expansive platform for projects inspired by feminist thought and experience that will unfold at museums around the country beginning in the fall of 2020. Informed by this backdrop, *Nine Lives* echoes various feminist legacies, especially artists and filmmakers who have explored what it is for women to tell their own stories or to make space for narratives otherwise obstructed or unwritten. As feminist dialogues continue to evolve, *Nine Lives* embraces how they have expanded to include greater multiplicities, geographies, and gender identities.

Curated by Karsten Lund and Caroline Picard



1. Toyin Ojih Odutola

In the Drawing Room, 2018

Pastel, charcoal, and pencil on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

This portrait is from a series of drawings depicting members of a fictional aristocratic Nigerian family. Through these figures Odutola imagines a world without the destructive histories of colonialism and slavery. (In an earlier exhibition, the artist signed the press release as “Deputy Private Secretary of the Amara Palace,” taking on the role of family functionary, which she says “freed her from the distraction of the story being somehow about me.”) For *Nine Lives*, Ojih Odutola has decided to show a single drawing, offering an intimate glimpse of one character as the larger context momentarily recedes.

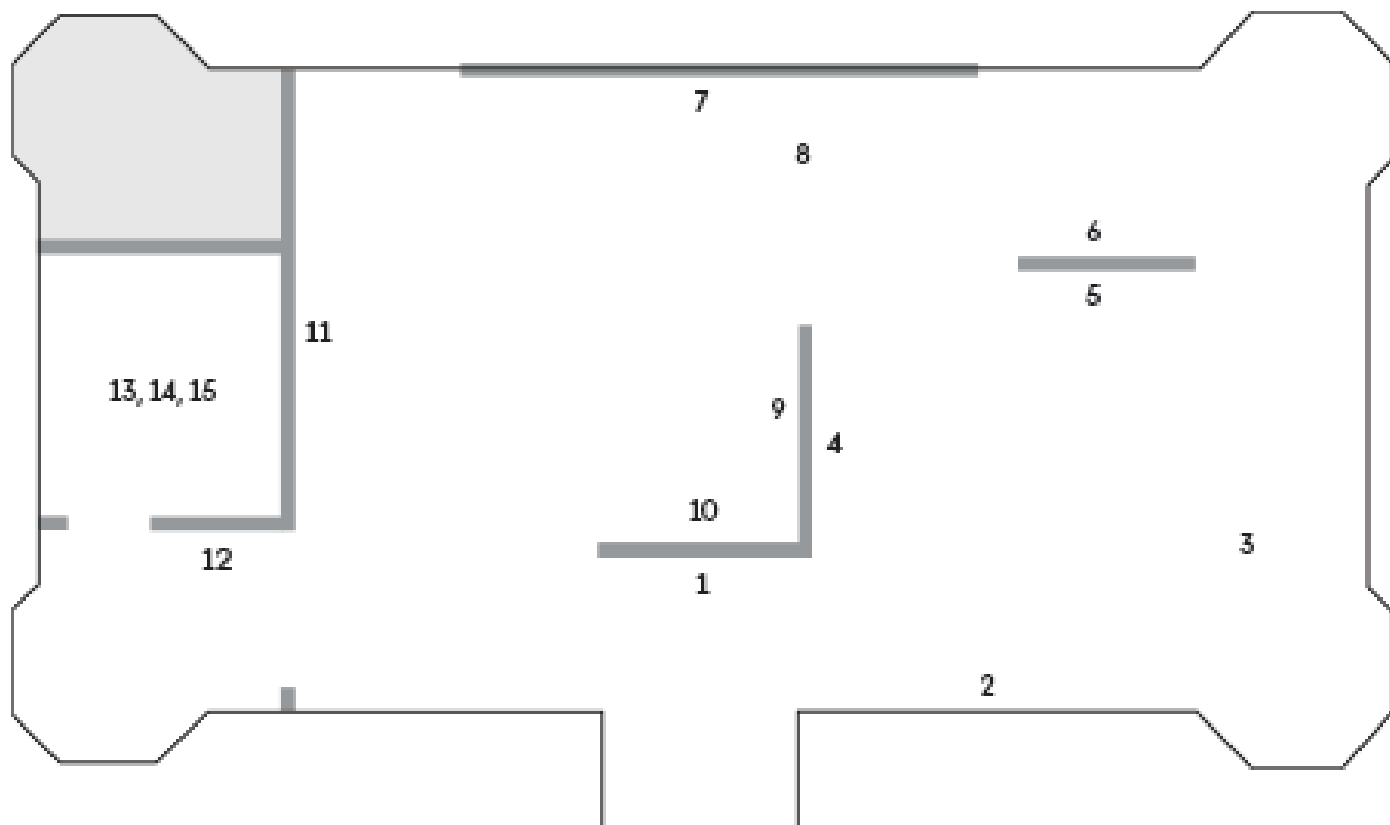
2. Bethany Collins

The Odyssey: 2001 / 2017, 2020

Graphite and toner on Somerset paper

Courtesy of the artist and PATRON, Chicago

This pair of drawings replicates the same page from two different translations of *The Odyssey*, published in 2000 and 2017, respectively. The more recent of the two is by Emily Wilson—the first woman to translate *The Odyssey* into English—whose interpretation of Homer’s text underlines Odysseus’s interiority and quietly works against longstanding biases in earlier editions. Collins recreates the printed pages by hand, as large graphite drawings, before rubbing away the text to leave a single phrase behind.



3, 4. Raven Chacon
American Ledger, no. 3, 2020

Polyester flag and newsprint broadsheets
Courtesy of the artist

In an ongoing series of original musical compositions, *American Ledger*, Raven Chacon responds to the nation's contested history and the places where each work is commissioned, in this case Chicago. Here, he dedicates a new musical score—taking the form of a large flag—and a printed newspaper to Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), a prominent journalist, suffragist, and anti-lynching activist. The newspaper includes instructions for performing the score; it also bridges past and present, as Well's writing from a century ago appears alongside a list of police murders in 2020.

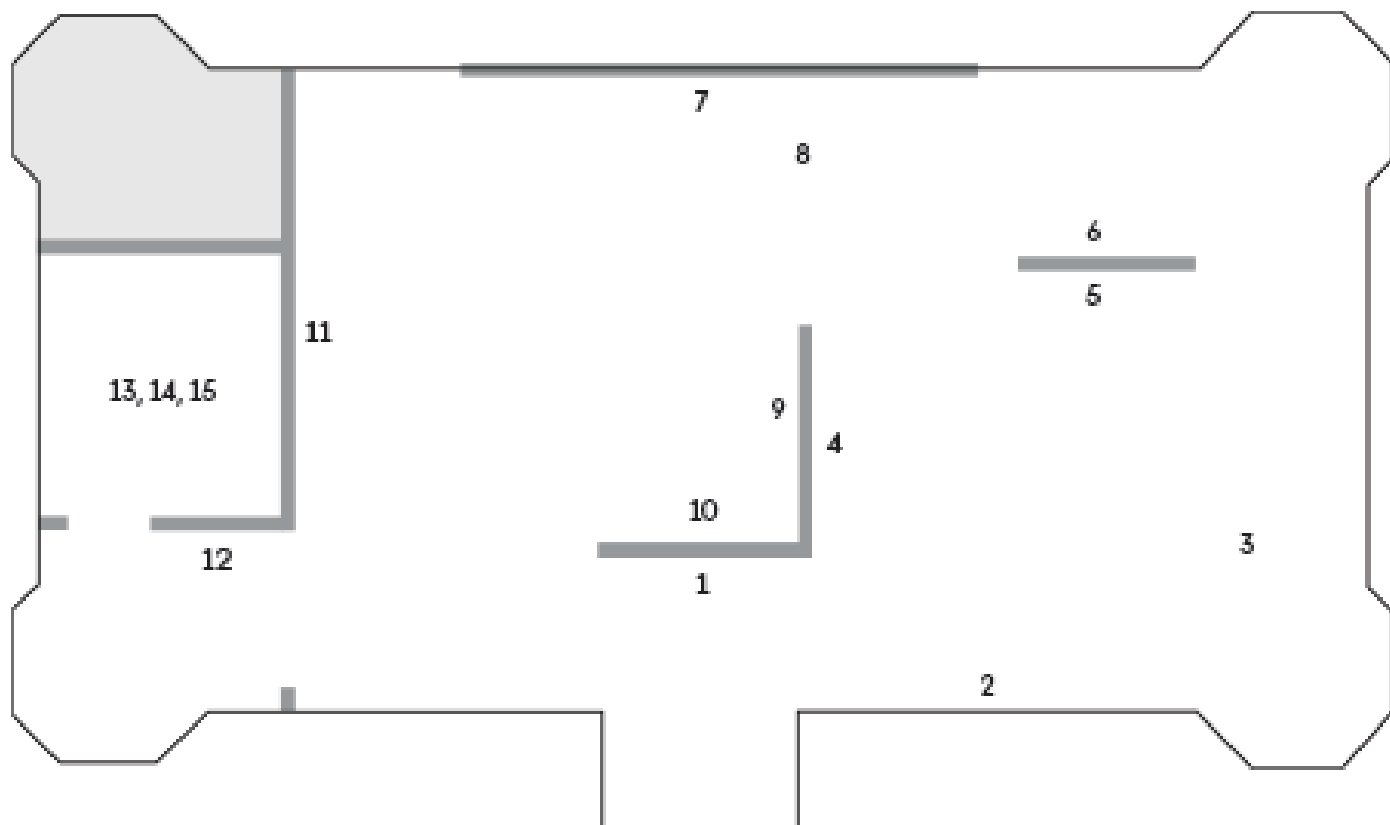
5. Aliza Nisenbaum

Kayhan Reading the New York Times (Resistance Begins at Home), 2017

Oil on linen

Collection of Holly and Albert Baril, Los Angeles

Aliza Nisenbaum spends hours with the subject of each of her portraits, painting them from life, often as they sit in their living rooms. Many of the people she paints are immigrants to the US, and Nisenbaum notes that “to pay attention to someone can be a political act.” In this painting of Kayhan, a writer who leads theater workshops with immigrants, recent newspapers cover the floor, bringing the specter of outside events into the more private sphere of her home.



6. Elle Pérez

Mae at Riis, 2020

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the artist and Canal 47, New York

10. Elle Pérez

Mae (three days after), 2019

Archival pigment print

Collection of Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins

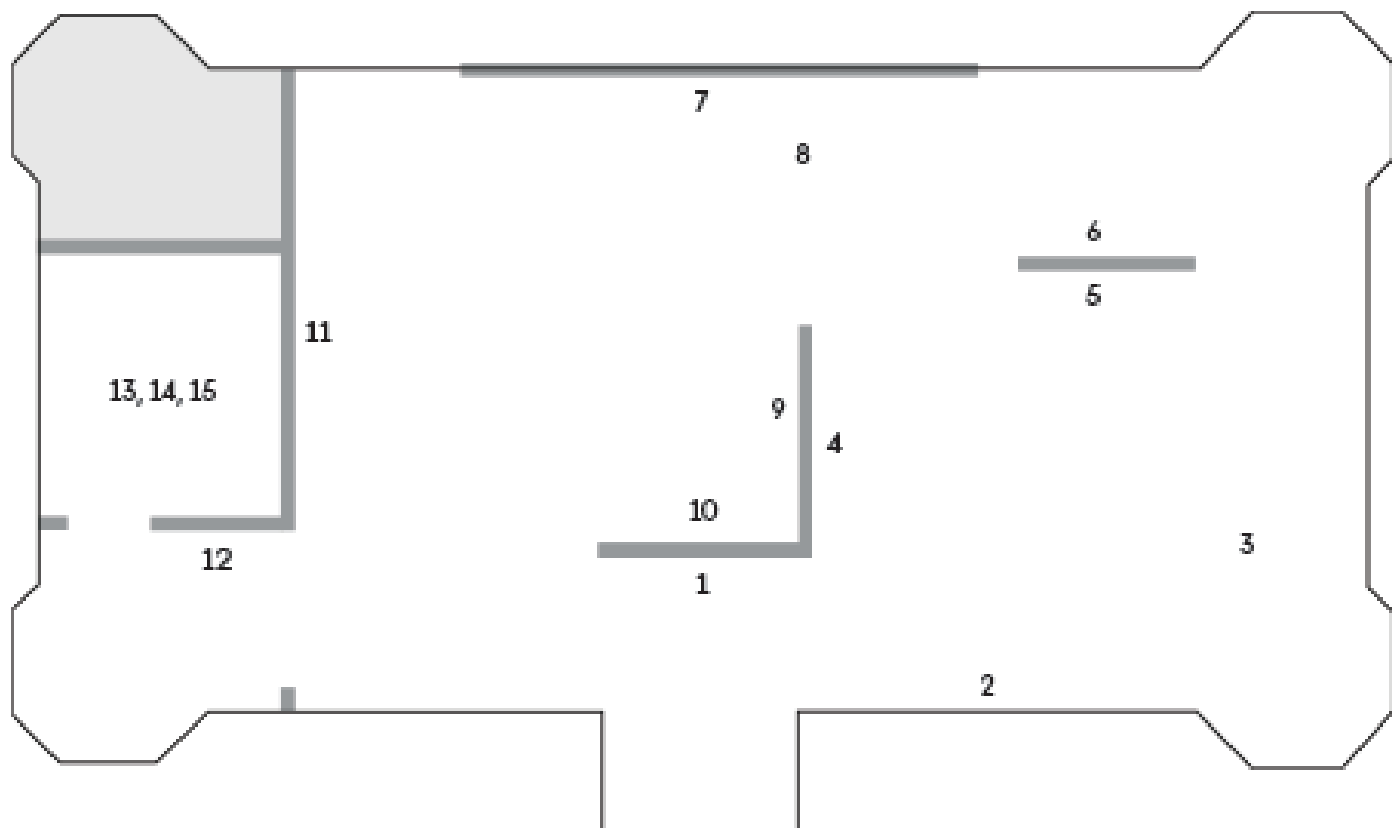
12. Elle Pérez

Mae and flowers, 2015 / 2020

Digital gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist and Canal 47, New York

Elle Pérez's three photographs in *Nine Lives* feature one person, Maisie Mattia, at different points in her life: the first portrait was taken in 2015, the second in 2019, and the latest from this August. This trio is accompanied by a group of writings by Mattia herself. Rather than imposing a linear trajectory upon these portraits, both Mattia and Pérez have said, they are interested in what remains constant between the images, which are installed apart from one another like "islands in time."



7, 8. Hương Ngô

It was her handwriting that ultimately gave her away, 2020

Invisible ink on paper, framed relief prints with graphite, light box with printed duratrans, custom teak vitrine, laser cut onion-skin paper, books, Xerox with graphite
 Courtesy of the artist

This new installation continues a body of work that Ngô is developing around Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai, a woman celebrated for her role in Vietnam’s anticolonial movement even as she remains a spectral presence in historical records. For *Nine Lives*, Ngô presents a series of letters, (some reproduced with invisible ink), to and from Minh Khai, illustrating the ways in which she and her cohorts self-censored. These are shown alongside excerpts of a book ostensibly written by Minh Khai and a historian’s analysis of its true authorship.

9. Kapwani Kiwanga

Repository, 2020

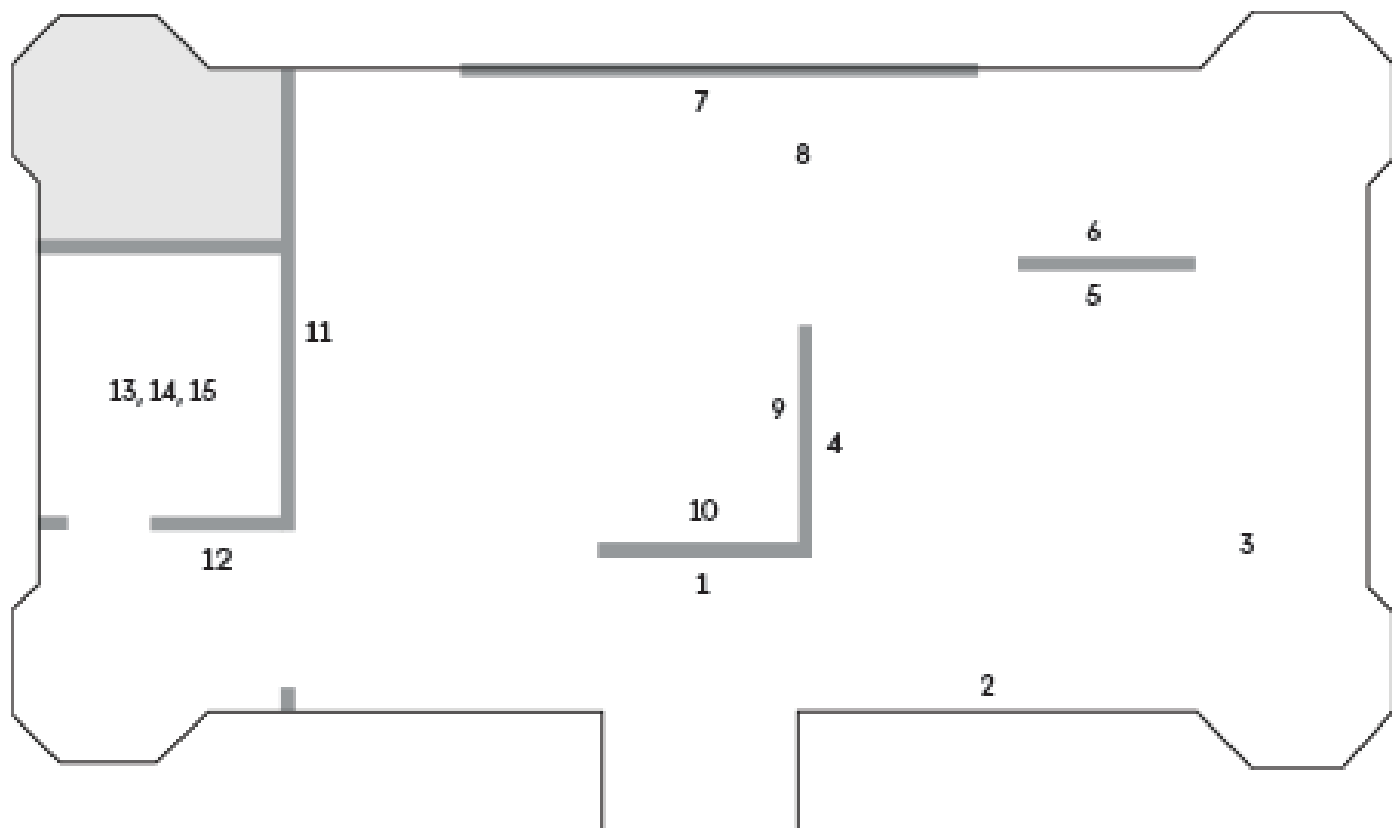
Weaving, glass

Tapestry production: John Paul Morabito

Glass production: Ignite Glass Studios

Courtesy of the artist

This newly commissioned tapestry contains small grains of rice—made of ghostly transparent glass—that are tucked within the patterned weaving. Kiwanga was inspired to develop this work after researching the introduction of rice into the US and Suriname via the slave trade, and stories about women enslaved in West Africa who concealed grains of rice in their hair or their clothes in order to become self-sufficient once they escaped. As Kiwanga says, “This hidden rice becomes an invisible seed bank of sorts for possible future communities.”



11. Alison O’Daniel

The Tuba Thieves: The Drums, 2013-ongoing

Written, directed, edited by Alison O’Daniel. Starring Nyke Prince. Produced by Rachel Nederveld, Cinematography by Judy Phu 5-channel HD video (looped), acoustic underlayment
 Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles

This video installation features six short videos that play on five screens in varying combinations, creating a shifting, almost musical, visual composition. Throughout, the camera follows Nyke Prince, a deaf drummer in Los Angeles, alone in her studio, setting up her kit, organizing the space, and texting or video chatting with friends. This series of filmic vignettes comprise one chapter from *The Tuba Thieves*, a larger ongoing film that O’Daniel is making episodically with various collaborators.

13. Tamar Guimarães

O Ensaio | The Rehearsal, 2018

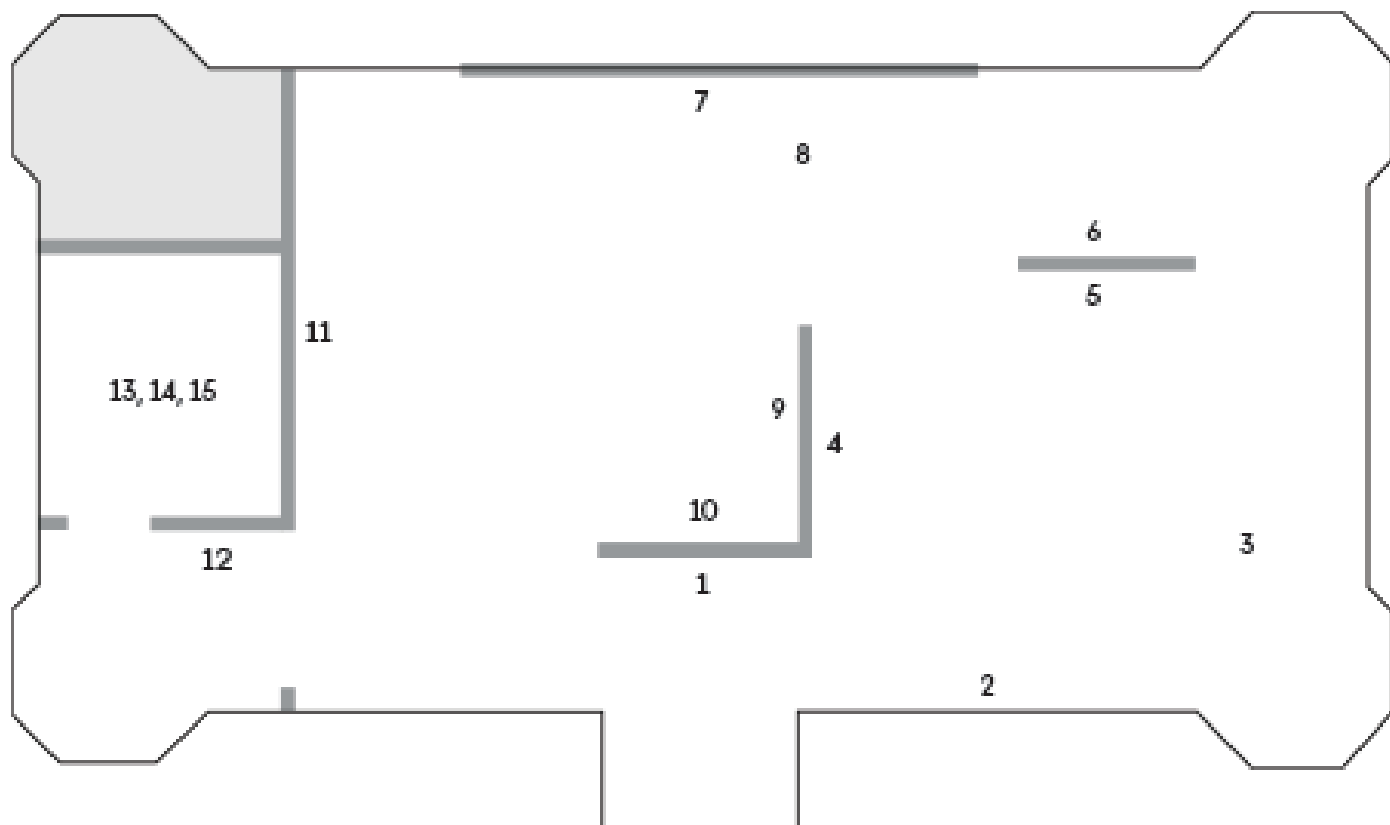
HD video (51 min, 29 sec)

Courtesy of the artist, Fortes D’Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro; and Dan Gunn, London

O Ensaio / The Rehearsal stages a dramatic adaptation of *The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas*, a satirical 19th-century novel by Machado de Assis that critiqued Brazilian society. At the center of the film is a woman named Isa, who directs the play and faces difficulties from various people as they respond to her gender, race, youth, or some combination of the three. The film was partially shot at São Paulo’s Ibirapuera pavilion, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, and features professional and nonprofessional actors.

Screening times: 12pm, 2pm, 4pm

Also viewable online at renaissancesociety.org



14. Marwa Arsanios

Have you ever killed a bear? or Becoming Jamila, 2013-2014

HD video (26 min, 19 sec)

Courtesy of the artist and mor charpentier, Paris

In this protean portrait of the Algerian freedom fighter Jamila Bouhired, the artist steps forwards as an ambivalent narrator who unravels her fascination with this radical figure. Arsanios draws out the many ways Bouhired's image has been used— from her representation in the 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers* to her assimilation by ideological state propaganda as an anti-colonialist symbol. As the video unfolds, this lead to reflections on the history of marginalized feminist projects and leftist political struggles.

Screening times: 1pm, 3pm, 5pm

Also viewable online at renaissancesociety.org

15. Charlotte Prodger

Bridgit, 2016

HD video (32 min)

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens

Prodger's video *Bridgit* was entirely shot on an iPhone, creating a lyric-essay film that moves across interior and exterior landscapes. In her voice-over, Prodger talks about her own experience within different social contexts, including the medical system in the UK, but the work has a much broader view of time that includes echoes of prehistory. It takes its title, *Bridgit*, from the eponymous Neolithic deity, who also went by other many names depending on her life stage and point in time.

Screening times: approx. 1:30pm, 3:30pm, 5:30pm