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THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
MARCH-JULY 2025



Photo: Wakaliga Uganda, © Frederic Noy/Panos Pictures.

WAKALIGA UGANDA IF UGANDA WAS AMERICA

Wakaliga Uganda, also known as Ramon Film Productions, is a Kampala-based film studio founded in 2005 by Isaac Godfrey Geoffrey Nabwana (Nabwana IGG), affectionately dubbed “Uganda’s Tarantino.” Operating on ultra-low budgets—often under \$200—Wakaliga creates action films that combine handmade props, untrained actors, and raw storytelling to craft a cinematic universe as inventive as it is self-aware. Cult classics like *Who Killed Captain Alex?* and *Bad Black* refract Hollywood’s hyper-violence through a distinctly Ugandan lens, offering playful yet incisive critiques of global power dynamics. More than a film studio, Wakaliga Uganda is a community hub, providing a space for local martial artists, actors, and technicians—many of them teenagers—to hone their craft. At the Renaissance Society—marking their first exhibition in the United States—Wakaliga Uganda will premiere *If Uganda Was America*, a speculative satire that flips geopolitical hierarchies, alongside a curated selection of their films. Presented within a site-specific installation designed by studio 2050+, the exhibition captures Wakaliga’s project beyond their DIY ethos.

SAT, MAR 1, 4–7PM
Opening reception

EVENTS

FILM SCREENING

ACTION!
DOCUMENTARY
DOUBLE FEATURETHU, APR 3, 7PM
LOGAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS,
SCREENING ROOM
915 60TH ST

This documentary double feature offers a rare look behind the scenes at the DIY studios of two enterprising filmmakers, one in Uganda and the other in Tunisia—each of them putting their own wild spin on 1980s-style action flicks. *Once Upon a Time in Uganda!* (2021) introduces us to writer-director Isaac Nabwana, the driving force behind Wakaliga Uganda, and tracks his unlikely partnership with Alan “Ssali” Hofmanis, an American producer and super-fan who moved to Kampala to join him. In *VHS - Kahloucha* (2006), documentarian Nejib Belkadhi trails amateur Tunisian filmmaker Moncef Kahloucha as he makes his latest feature, *Tarzan of the Arabs*, with the help of the people around him.

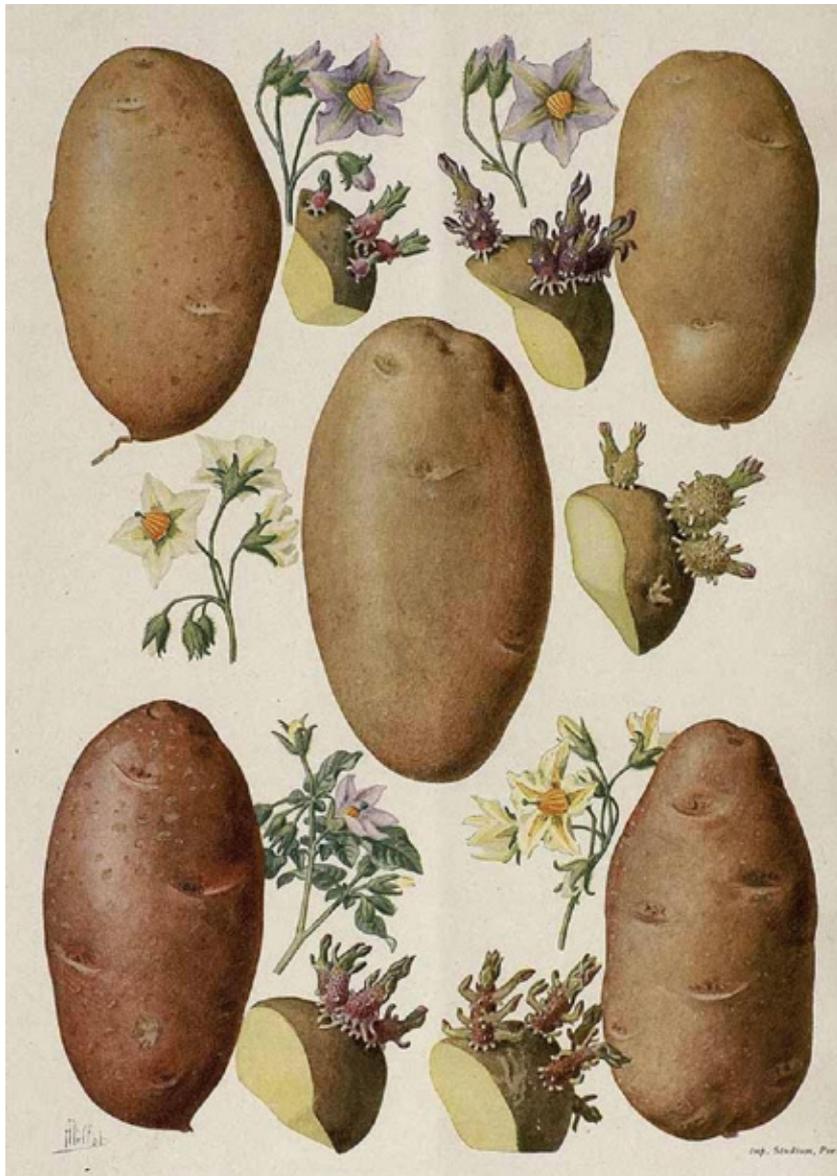
DISCUSSION

GRASSROOTS
FILMMAKING AND
AFRICAN CINEMAFRI, APR 18, 6PM
SWIFT HALL, 3RD FLOOR
1025 E 58TH ST

On the occasion of Wakaliga Uganda’s exhibition at the Renaissance Society, join us for an expansive discussion with novelist and scholar Akin Adesokan and other participants to be announced. In his multidisciplinary work, Adesokan has explored conceptual patterns in Nollywood and African cinema and the cultural consequences of globalization, among many other subjects. While reflecting on Wakaliga Uganda’s movies and methods, this evening program considers the Kampala-based film collective’s work in relation to larger movements in African cinema and grassroots filmmaking.

This program includes on-site live captioning.





A. Millot, *Pomme de Terres Potagères*, revue horticole, 16 January 1918, no. 1.

XIMENA GARRIDO-LECCA GERMINATIONS

Originating in extensive research and culminating in material sculptures or installations, Ximena Garrido-Lecca's work foregrounds indigenous knowledge systems and artisanal traditions along with modern technological infrastructures. Often grounded in the specific histories of Peru, where she was born, her body of work also tracks how extractive industry and related economic paradigms have taken on increasingly global dimensions.

For a new large-scale project at the Renaissance Society, *Germinations*, Garrido-Lecca continues her research into plants originally domesticated by Andean and Mesoamerican cultures and their subsequent global dissemination. Taking center stage here is *solanum tuberosum*, a tuber known in many places as the potato. Domesticated more than 8,000 years ago in the Altiplano region, the potato has been a pillar in the lives of Andean communities, where it is grown as a source of sustenance and attributed symbolic and spiritual value. Today, more than 4,000 potato varieties have been adapted to different altitudes and climatic conditions around the world.

In Chicago, Garrido-Lecca unveils an installation inspired by Andean cosmovision, the planting and harvesting of potatoes as ritual events, and a unit of measurement known as the *papacancha*, which unites space, time, and climate. Throughout its various elements, *Germinations* draws on the Andean concept of *Pacha*, a word with

diverse interrelated meanings, which evokes, among other things, a cyclical and simultaneous dimension in which past, present, and future occur.

SAT, MAY 17, 4-7PM

Opening reception

With artist talk at 4pm

This program includes on-site live captioning.



Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *-lalia*, featuring Giulia Termino, Vilnius Biennial of Performance Art, 2023.
Photo by Andrej Vasilenko.

INTERMISSIONS

DOROTA GAWĘDA & EGLĖ KULBOKAITĖ

SAT, MAY 3, 7PM
SUN, MAY 4, 4PM

In their performance *-lalia*, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė conjure a legendary figure from Slavic folklore, the demonic *Pohudnica*. Posing a metaphor for contemporary anxieties related to ecological and social unease, this work is a hybrid combination of physical presence, text, and video. As a lone performer haunts the Renaissance Society's gallery space, she is simultaneously live streamed in a cinema screening room one floor below. This structure requires audience members to choose where to be, meaning one can only grasp fragments of the live act and its virtual double, and never the performance as a whole. Continually evolving as it is staged in new surroundings, *-lalia* takes a new form at the Renaissance Society, following past performances at the Lithuanian National Drama Theater in Vilnius, a cultural center in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and a traditional *Stube* at the Museo Civico in Bolzano, Italy featured in Pasolini's 1971 *Decameron*, and most recently at the iconic Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich, birthplace of the Dada Movement.

Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė are an artist duo based between Basel, Switzerland and Paris, France. They are the founders of Young Girl Reading Group (2013-2021). Their work spans performance, sculpture, painting, installation, and video.

Launched in 2017, Intermissions is an ongoing programming series devoted to performance and other inventive time-based works, staged in the Renaissance Society's empty gallery in between exhibitions. This recurring platform features two artists every year, supporting a wide variety of live projects.

CONCERTS

MARIAM REZAEI & PAT THOMAS

SAT, FEB 22, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL
1025 E 58TH ST

Experimental turntablist Mariam Rezaei employs specially-prepared samples and a range of techniques, including free juggling, turntable sines, needle dripping, and needle weaving. One of the greatest pianists the UK has produced, Pat Thomas works across jazz, modern composition, funk, and beyond, and has also produced a wildly inventive series of albums as an electronic musician. These two are radical composers unbound by genre. Informed by jazz, free improvisation, dub, footwork, avant-garde electronics, noise, and chamber music, they create a new kind of electro-acoustic music. This performance in Bond Chapel marks their U.S. debut as a duo.

Co-presented by the Renaissance Society and Frequency Festival Chicago.

LUCY RAILTON

SAT, MAR 15, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL
1025 E 58TH ST

British cellist and composer Lucy Railton presents a visceral live set drawing on music from her album *Corner Dancer*, released on UK record label Modern Love, bridging experimental electronic and electroacoustic practices with the conventions of new music. Employing a deep consideration of sound and its properties, the work implements cello and antiquated string instruments, analog and digital synthesizers, drum machines and voice, and explores alternate tuning systems, psychoacoustic phenomena, and timbral control.

VALENTINA MAGALETTI

FRI, MAY 9, 8PM
IDA NOYES HALL, CLOISTER CLUB
1212 E 59TH ST

Valentina Magaletti is an Italian-born, London-based drummer, percussionist, and composer with a diverse and exploratory approach to music. Her work combines traditional percussion with experimental techniques, incorporating vibes, marimba, contact microphones, and found objects in investigations of texture and timbre driven by her distinctively twisted beats. This will be the artist's first solo performance in Chicago.

Co-presented by the Renaissance Society and Lampo.

The 2024-2025 Music Series is generously sponsored by a grant from the University of Chicago Women's Board.

PUBLICATIONS



ARIA DEAN: ABATTOIR, U.S.A.!

This new publication is a multifaceted reflection on Aria Dean's film *Abattoir, U.S.A.!*, which depicts the interior of an empty slaughterhouse using new digital technologies. Produced for the artist's exhibition at the Renaissance Society in 2023, the project draws on Dean's own research into industrial architecture and teases out philosophical considerations about modern society's relationship with death. The book documents the exhibition, lends insight into Dean's research process, and features new essays by film scholar Erika Balsom and by Dean herself. It also includes a quasi-fictional text by Keller Easterling and transcripts of two conversations: one between Dean and film historian Bruce Jenkins, discussing *Abattoir, U.S.A.!* in the context of past avant-garde films, and another where Dean discusses the film's technical production with digital animator Filip Kostic, composer Evan Zierk, and Michael Connor, director of the media art organization Rhizome.

Hardcover, 144 pages
Designed by David Khan-Giordano

All proceeds from editions and merchandise sales directly support Ren programs through the generosity of participating artists. For more, visit store.renaissancesociety.org.

EDITIONS



NEÏL BELOUFA

Growth Objects, 2024

Edition of 20 unique works
Visit the website for additional options.
\$2,000
10% off for Ren members
at the \$500 level or above



The Renaissance Society limited edition embroidered baseball hat
One size
\$35
10% off for Ren members

SAVE THE DATE



WED, APR 23, 2025

REN BEN 2025
BY MARIEM BENNANI
7-10PM

SUPPORTERS

Major annual support for the Renaissance Society is provided by the Mellon Foundation.

Renaissance Society programs are supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Annual support is provided by The Provost's Discretionary Fund at the University of Chicago.

The 2024-2025 Music Series is generously sponsored by a grant from the University of Chicago Women's Board.

All Renaissance Society publications are made possible by The Mansueto Foundation Publications Program.

MEMBERSHIP

Supporters of the Renaissance Society value our independence and dedication to fostering ambitious artistic expression in all its forms. Our members share a belief in art's power to reflect, challenge, and inspire contemporary thought. Whether you attend our programs regularly or engage with them from afar, your financial contribution invests in our work, making it accessible to all. Thank you for your trust and ongoing support.

Not a member yet? Join us with a \$5 monthly donation to receive a members-only artist-designed gift and enjoy other great benefits.

renaissancesociety.org/membership

VISITING INFORMATION

All exhibitions and events take place at the Renaissance Society unless otherwise noted.

All are free, open to the public.

Follow us on Instagram: @RenSoc

Open Hours

Wed-Fri: 12-6pm
Sat and Sun: 10am-6pm

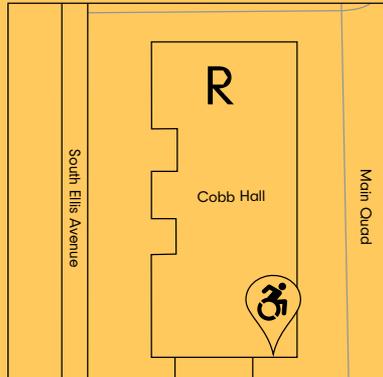
The Renaissance Society
5811 S Ellis Ave
Cobb Hall, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60657

renaissancesociety.org

773 702 8670

info@renaissancesociety.org

Closed Mondays, Tuesdays,
and between exhibitions.



Group visits

We are pleased to welcome visits from schools, universities, and other groups, and our library and archives are open to researchers by appointment. Please contact us to arrange a visit.

Accessibility

The Renaissance Society gallery is located on the fourth floor of Cobb Hall, reachable by elevator. The building is accessible from sidewalk level via platform lift (marked on the map below). One gender-neutral, wheelchair accessible restroom is available on every floor. Service animals are welcome, and large-print gallery texts and portable seating are available upon request at the front desk.

Physical accessibility details for off-site event spaces may vary. Please check individual event pages on our website for specifics. Further accessibility information is available online at renaissancesociety.org/visit.

CART: most artist talks and lectures feature onsite live captioning.

For access inquiries, requests, or feedback, please contact Michael Harrison by email at maharrison@renaissancesociety.org.

CALENDAR

SAT, FEB 22, 8PM	Concert: <i>Mariam Rezaei & Pat Thomas</i>	PG 10
SAT, MAR 1, 4PM	Opening reception: <i>Wakaliga Uganda, If Uganda Was America</i>	PG 3
SAT, MAR 15, 8PM	Concert: <i>Lucy Railton</i>	PG 10
THU, APRIL 3, 7PM	Film Screening: <i>Action! Documentary Double Feature</i>	PG 4
FRI, APR 18, 6PM	Discussion: <i>Grassroots Filmmaking and African Cinema</i>	PG 4
WED, APR 23	RENBEN 2025: Meriem Bennani	PG 12
SAT, MAY 3, 7PM	Intermissions: <i>Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaite</i>	PG 9
SUN, MAY 4, 4PM	Intermissions: <i>Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaite</i>	PG 9
FRI, MAY 9, 8PM	Concert: <i>Valentina Magaletti</i>	PG 10
SAT, MAY 17, 4PM	Opening reception and artist talk: <i>Ximena Garrido-Lecca, Germinations</i>	PG 7

