

*between a rock  
and a soft place*

Holly Bass | Adjoa J. Burrowes  
Deborah R. Grayson | Katie O'Keefe | Britt Sankofa





*between a rock and a soft place*

Mary B. Howard Invitational

On View December 10, 2022–February 26, 2023

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## Introduction

Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) presents *between a rock and a soft place*, a group exhibition reframing the concept of rest as more than a reward for work, but as a practice in itself.

Bringing together the work of five contemporary artists, *between a rock and soft place* opens a conversation about negotiating societal structures that stand between the subject and a life of ease. Who gets rest and when? What is truly restorative? What permissions do we allow for ourselves to slow down, and how?

Through the use of printmaking, textiles, performance, video, or installation, each artist considers what rest could provide while exploring the liminal space between experiences of pain and ability, waking and sleeping, autonomy and ownership of self, or utility and joy.

In 2021 an online movement of Black women began reclaiming the permission to live a life of ease, the soft life. This exhibition affirms the importance of rest as a vehicle to a soft life – a place where one can lay their burdens down and just be.

*between a rock and a soft place* is the 2023 iteration of Tephra ICA's Mary B. Howard Invitational Exhibition, a biennial group exhibition featuring the work of five regional contemporary artists. For each iteration of the show, Tephra ICA works with a guest curator to produce the exhibition through an open call for artists. This program values exhibition-making as a meaningful collaboration between artist and curator and a generative process for the development and public presentation of innovative new work. The Invitational is named in memory of Mary B. Howard, an artist, long-time board member, and staunch supporter of Tephra ICA.

*This exhibition is funded in part by ArtsFairfax.*



## ***Reflecting on Rest***

by Guest Curator Deirdre Darden

Like many, the pandemic and a subsequent forced hiatus from work and life compelled me to rest. With no glaring alarms or impending deadlines, and the added weekly benefit of unemployment, I realized that my mind calmed down, my shoulders let go of my ears, and finally my hips led me into a yogi squat. These feelings of relief and being able to choose what to throw my stress behind, gave a new surge to my life. I realized that this was rest; and furthermore, that rest was the essential missing piece of my curatorial practice. As independent curators and artists, we're always thinking of what's next, how to make it, and what is going to keep us afloat. It's a cyclical life that leaves little time for reprieve or reflection.

It was during this shift in my work that Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art invited me to be the guest curator for the 2023 Mary B. Howard Invitational. When creating a theme for the open call, I sifted through my running list of exhibition ideas and finally settled on the idea of rest. As a curator, I view exhibitions as a medium for exploring topics relevant to contemporary life. Nothing felt more urgent than to address rest. The world had gone through a collective trauma bond and needed a break. Through research I found contemporary artists have started to adjust their treatment of subject matters to reflect the need to see people—especially Black people, disabled people, and other marginalized folks—at ease. This exhibition joins this movement and insists that art about rest is not just a pandemic trend. This is the art of the rest revolution.

The Mary B. Howard Invitational is a unique exhibition, in that the artists are funded to create new work for the show with curatorial support and encouragement. This year, we began the process with two questions: What would your artwork look like if you were well rested? How could you conceive of your practice if all your needs were met? The five selected artists responded to this prompt with a shared understanding of rest as a necessity. In this resulting exhibition, *between a rock and a soft place*, each artist defines rest on their own terms and provides the visuals to a progressing culture of rest, boundaries, and freedoms; “the soft life.”

Rest is  
a wave rushing over me  
a deep sigh of relief  
a paid bill  
joy  
peace  
quenching a thirst  
a faraway deadline  
a neck adjustment  
thick love  
permission  
freedom  
the counter to oppression  
a cool breeze  
a piece of ripe fruit  
delicate  
a good stretch  
not just a reward  
a finished book  
a "just got home" text  
a full fridge  
a dark chocolate pb cup  
an unfurrowed brow  
day 3 hair  
a morning with no alarm  
an affirmation, that works  
a good hormone day  
eating without pain  
a fresh made bed  
a whole fried fish  
setting boundaries  
an investment  
the balm  
a familiar laugh  
a tight squeeze  
restoration

— Deirdre Darden





Left: Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)  
Right: Holly Bass, *Still Life, with Flowers (for Laure)* (video still), 2022



Soft life or soft place doesn't serve as an antonym for hard life. Instead, it describes a shift in a person's mindset about what they prioritize. It is a movement towards a life where self-care really means self-value. Where you don't have to hesitate before taking a pause; pausing is actually encouraged. A place where, as the exhibition prompts suggest, one feels rested enough to tackle that next piece or can advance one's practice because one's needs are met. As described by Jennimai Nguyen, "The term "soft life" originated in the Nigerian influencer community to describe wanting to live a life of comfort and low stress [...] It's not antiwork. It's about drawing boundaries."<sup>1</sup> It's about needs that go past necessity and into pillars of support that make our internal negotiations around rest easier to handle. Where you don't neglect yourself or your art and instead honor your needs with tenderness. A soft place is the landing pad for rest.

While these artists came to the topic of rest with different inspirations there is one thematic throughline between their works: agency. Agency here follows the common definition of action or intervention, especially such as to produce a particular effect. Then goes further to exhibit rest as a force for change that would afford rest to those that have been systematically excluded.

The reclined female figure is a constant in art history. Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) is often referenced as the first instance in which a female nude figure is given power, agency, and choice. *Olympia*, laying down, confronts the viewers head on, daring them to say something about her nudity or her arrested pose. While this empowerment may have seemed revolutionary in Manet's time, in our current century critical attention turns more to the other woman in the painting, a Black maid named Laure; and what a revolution it would be to allow this other subject to rest. In her video performance *Still life, with Flowers (for Laure)*, Holly Bass flips the script and puts herself, a Black woman, on the bed. She sleeps on a couch, resisting the notion that Black women are forces of work and domesticity, whose only value is to labor on behalf of others. The flower's Laure holds for *Olympia* in Manet's painting, are instead offered to Bass. A confirmation that she, the Black woman, is deserving of "her flowers" meaning her achievements, her accomplishments, and her triumphs and should be granted rest.

The recurring nude female figure in Katie O'Keefe's works are also a specific self-representation.

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1. Nguyen, Jennimai. "The Soft Life and Quiet Quitting: How One Led to the Other." *Mashable*, 6 Oct. 2022. <https://mashable.com/article/soft-life-quiet-quitting-trend>.

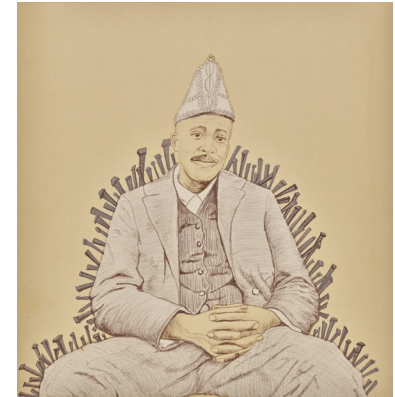
Her autobiographical series operates in the legacy of Manet's *Olympia*, and like Holly Bass's video, the work rejects nudity as a means of pleasure for the male gaze. Alternatively, O'Keefe illustrates her own body's vulnerability. In *Entwined Repose* she depicts the postures, cycles of movement, and tossing and turning that occurs when trying to surrender to the exhaustion and pain that comes from living with chronic illness. Stillness is not easy. Her figure is full and subtly transparent and through embroidery she alludes to a hypersensitive nervous system and the internal flow of pain which reigns over her journey towards rest. These sewn self-portraits are beautiful depictions that do not exist to promote beauty; rather, it is the process of making them that gives her control over her own body.

Agency and grace are major forces behind Deborah R. Grayson's ongoing portrait series. She began this work with documentation-style photographs taken by doctors inside segregated mental hospitals during the early 20th century, such as Crownsville Hospital for the Colored Insane in Crownsville, MD. The photos serve as source material for her images and evoke early anthropology, phrenology, and other scientific practices developed to uphold racism. The cruel irony of these care centers is that the prescription for "insanity" was often more physical labor. Those committed to these facilities experienced a variation of slavery through forced labor and were further traumatized.<sup>2</sup> Grayson's work does not dwell on the subjects' historical circumstances, instead her portraits allow us to dream about their internal lives. Bravely, Grayson looks past these images and into the eyes and soul of each person she depicts. From this empathic connection, she builds their world anew and imagines for them the opportunity for true rest, healing, and care. How would their lives, their smiles, their posture, their love have changed with actual rest? What could they have been or had if only they were given a break, instead of broken?

Adjoa J. Burrowes, like many, went back to the earth for her rest over the pandemic. Becoming more active at her community garden led her to develop connections with other women who were gardening to cope. Once reconnected to the earth physically, she began to contemplate the history of black hands and soil; the legacy of growing whether for ourselves, or for other's profit; and how we are stewards of the earth and know how to make something out of nothing to sustain life. Burrowes' exploration of gardening expands the

**“Don’t be a hard rock when you really are a gem.”**

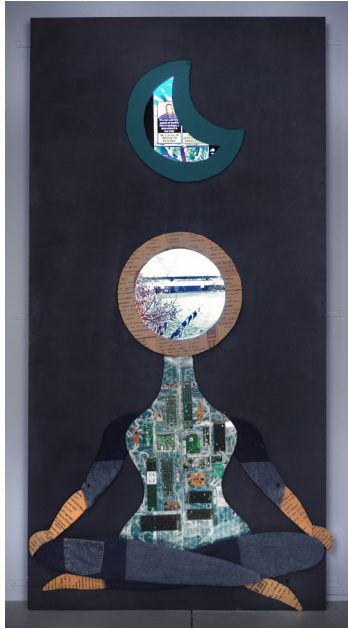
-Lauryn Hill, *Doo-Wop (That Thing)*



Deborah R. Grayson, *Tribe Healer*, 2022

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2. Peterson, Britt. "A Virginia mental institution for Black patients, opened after the Civil War, yields a trove of disturbing records". *The Washington Post*, 29 March 2021. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/black-asylum-files-reveal-racism/2021/03/26/ebfb2eda-6d78-11eb-9ead-673168d5b874\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/black-asylum-files-reveal-racism/2021/03/26/ebfb2eda-6d78-11eb-9ead-673168d5b874_story.html)



Britt Sankofa  
*WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE, 2022*

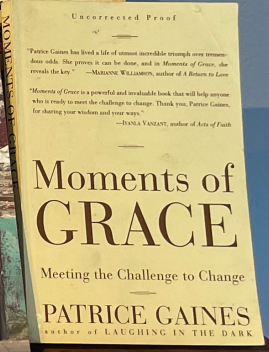
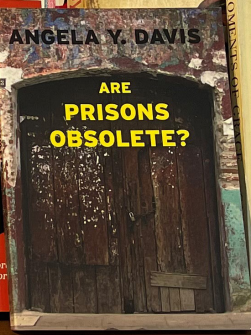
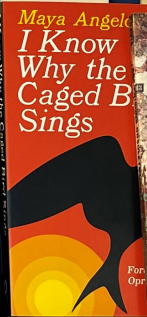
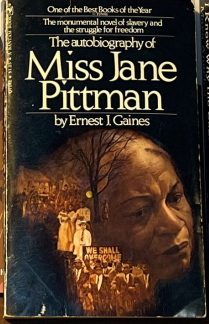
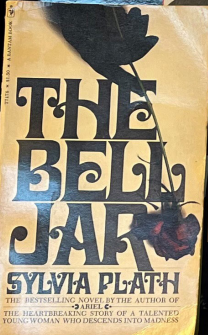
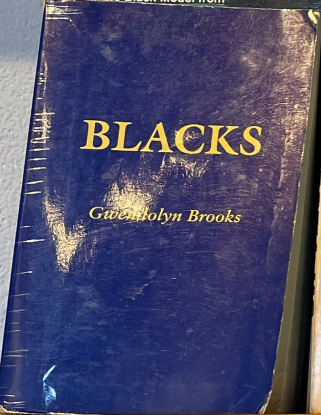
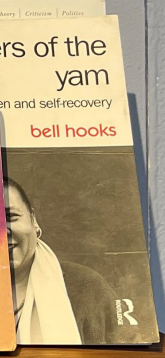
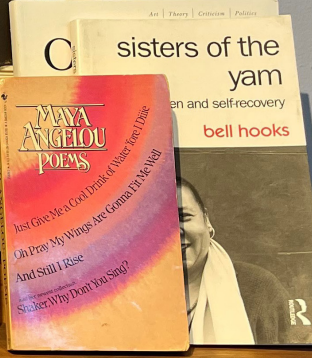
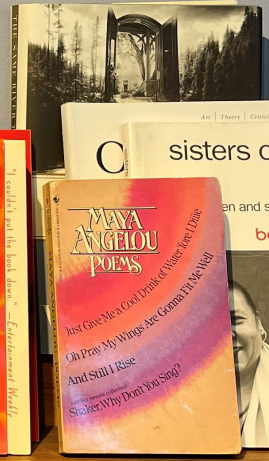
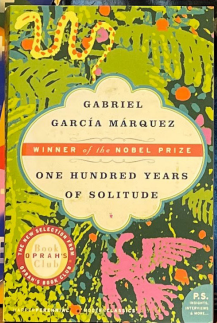
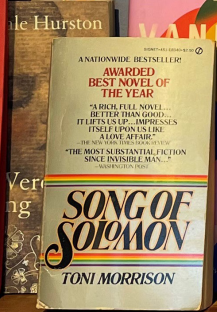
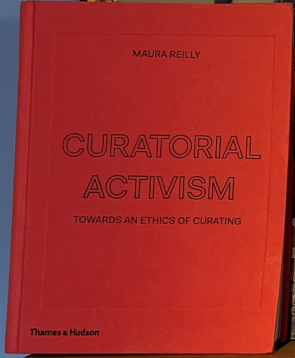
meaning of a resting place. Her vivid garden imagery reminds us that we can source from the earth to heal us, protect us, and provide for us. In *Garden Cloak*, she abstracts the leaves of the tomato plants and paints them on a canvas that gets wrapped around an actual tomato cage. She's able to illustrate the safe zone, an almost fully enclosed cocoon, that a garden provides.

Britt Sankofa incorporates storytelling in her signature video installation style, making visual the oral traditions that have shaped her love for art and creating atmospheres. In her installation, *WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE & THEORY*, she takes us through the barriers to rest that she encounters when relying heavily on her iPhone to organize her day. Alarms of when to sleep or not, videos that are meant to aid relaxation, and settings that may keep the notifications at bay are juxtaposed behind a quilted figure in *siddhasana*, also known as *accomplished pose*. We're able to see exactly the distractions, and the internal scroll that comes up for her when trying to rest.

Through this exhibition, I've learned that rest is political. It can be debated, awarded, taken, forgotten, forgiven, and should be trusted. As The Nap Ministry, an organization founded by artist and theologian Tricia Hersey in 2016 puts it, "Rest is resistance".<sup>3</sup> As I see it, it's a resistance to tropes of laziness and selfishness, and rest is the best opposition to oppression. Rest as a subject provides a necessary explosion to the valorized canon of trauma art. Art about rest will bring change – change to the size and scale an artist may employ. Change to their confidence to tackle new materials and their ability to explore new themes. Change to the work, bringing an ease to both the creative process and the end result, as depicted by the aesthetics of this exhibition. It allows us to recharge and then reframe. Rest is love and we must rest before it's too late. Reclaiming rest as power is what brings you from underneath the rock and into the soft place.

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3. The Nap Ministry is an organization self-described as: "the originators of the 'rest as resistance' and 'rest as reparations' frameworks, and [we] create sacred spaces where the liberatory, restorative, and disruptive power of rest can take hold." <https://thenapministry.com/>



**“I am a girl who dreams of leisure, always have. Reverie has always been necessary to my existence. I have needed long hours where I am stretched out, wearing silks, satins and cashmeres, just alone with myself, embraced by the beauty around me...this solitary space is sometimes a place where dreams and visions enter and sometimes a place where nothing happens. Yet it is as necessary to active work as water is to growing things...it is this stillness, this quietude, needed for the continued nurturance of any devotion to artistic practice — to one’s work — that remains a space women (irrespective of race, class, nationality, etc.) struggle to find in our lives.”**

- bell hooks, *Art of My Mind*

## Holly Bass

Holly Bass is a multidisciplinary performance and visual artist, writer, and director. Her work explores the unspoken and invisible social codes surrounding gender, class, and race. She is a 2020–2022 Live Feed Resident Artist at New York Live Arts and a 2021–22 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow. She studied modern dance (under Viola Farber) and creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College before earning her Master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Her work has been presented at spaces such as the National Portrait Gallery, the Seattle Art Museum, Art Basel Miami Beach (Project Miami Fair), and the 2022 Venice Biennale as part of Simone Leigh's *Loophole of Retreat*. Her visual artwork includes photography, installation, video, and performance. A Cave Canem Fellow, she has published poems in numerous journals and anthologies. She is currently the National Director for Turnaround Arts at the Kennedy Center, a program which uses the arts strategically to transform schools facing severe inequities.

## Project Statement

A traditional still life in painting or photography features a collection of inanimate objects, arranged by the artist. This digital video features the artist, a Black woman, arranging herself on a couch, taking a few minutes to be still—a still life. Moments after lying down, she gives herself a bouquet of flowers in a gesture at once referencing art history while rejecting Black subjectivity. The parenthetical phrase in the title references art model Laure [last name unknown], best known as the maid in Manet's painting *Olympia*, and notably one of few Black art models working in Europe at the time. In her groundbreaking essay "Olympia's Maid," Lorraine O'Grady writes "To name ourselves rather than be named we must first see ourselves." In this video, the artist invites the viewer to simply watch the subject at rest, to see her, not as she performs an action or does anything notable—but simply exists.



## **Adjoa J. Burrowes**

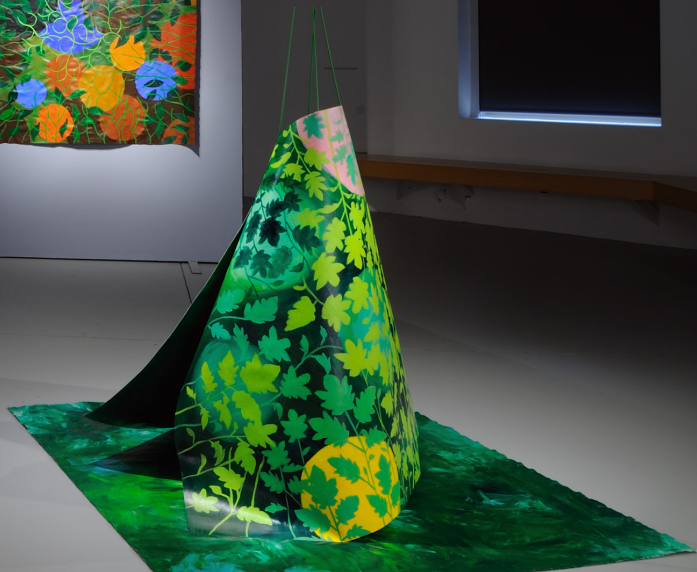
Adjoa J. Burrowes, based in Fairfax county, works across printmaking, sculpture, and painting. Her work frequently includes themes of personal and cultural identity and visual narratives relating to the angst of contemporary life, in an increasingly dangerous social and political landscape.

Burrowes has studied with contemporary artists in Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and she has presented her work in the Virgin Islands, Mexico, the Netherlands, and France. Burrowes earned a BFA in Printmaking from Howard University and an MA in Art Education at Corcoran College of Arts and Design at The George Washington University.

Burrowes has designed and implemented art workshops and residencies for cultural institutions throughout the nation including the John F. Kennedy Center, National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the National Civil Rights Museum. Her mixed media collages, prints, and sculptural installations have been exhibited throughout the United States. Her works on paper are included in collections at the Pyramid Atlantic Art Center, Brooklyn Art Library, Banneker Douglass Museum of Culture and History, The Southside Community Art Center, Art Colle Museum of Collage in Plemet, France, and the Verbeke Foundation in Belgium.

Installation view featuring work by Adjoa J. Burrowes. Suspended: *Earth, I Thank You*, 2022;  
Floor: *Garden Cloak*, 2022; Wall: *Soil Sanctuary*, 2022





## Project Statement

Black Americans' relationship to the earth has been a tumultuous one since our feet first touched the soil as enslaved Africans. The land we were forced to till and toil for others' profit was back-breaking and cruel. America benefited from our agricultural knowledge brought from Africa that fueled the economy of this nation. Enslaved Africans managed to keep their own meager plots to survive and feed their families and community and to grow botanicals to heal their wounds. Recent times have witnessed an upsurge of Black gardening, especially since Covid when people were motivated to grow their own herbs and vegetables. In my body of work I visually explore the concept of the garden as a resting point and place of restoration for the spirit and soul.

I interviewed three Black women about their garden practices, plant choices, and the role the garden played in times of stress or crisis. Two of the gardeners had plots in a shared community garden in Reston, VA. One grew flowers and plants that reminded her of her childhood in the Dominican Republic and the fond memories she had as a child in her grandmother's garden. The other had roots in North Carolina and grew okra, collards and tomatoes that she shared freely with friends in the community. The third gardener, a Liberian immigrant, had a modest garden on her patio at home in Herndon with many varieties of peppers that she used in spicy Liberian dishes. She spoke of her impressive display of 12 varieties of mint one year. All talked about the positive, uplifting effect the garden had on their psyche and the simple joy of working with hands in soil to yield a wholesome harvest. My monotypes were carefully printed from plant matter generously given to me by two of the women. My two-sided painting *Earth, I Thank You* was titled from a poem of that name written by Harlem Renaissance poet, educator, activist, and gardener Anne Spencer, born in 1882 on a Virginia farm.

- Adjoa J. Burrowes



Who has the freedom to rest?  
The audacity to stop  
To pause  
Quiet their beating chest

Who gets the time to rest?  
To make a bed a home  
To release  
Treat pain as a guest

Who gets left alone  
To digest  
To destress  
To nest  
To request  
a mess

Lest we forget  
Breonna was asleep

-Deirdre Darden



## **Deborah R. Grayson, PhD**

Deborah R. Grayson examines historical archives to trace Black women's life-stories, using vernacular, ethnographic and medical photographs from the early 20th century as source material. Moving between figuration and abstraction, the historical and the intergalactic, the spiritual and the profane, Grayson uses printmaking (e.g. photolithography, woodcut, screen print) and drawing to re/animate the rich but neglected and sometimes quiet stories of Black women's lives. Born in Washington, DC and raised in Montgomery County, Maryland, Grayson completed a BA at the University of Maryland, College Park and an MA and PhD at Michigan State University. Her work is frequently curated into group shows in DC including at The Washington Project for the Arts, the Library of Congress and the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery among many others. In addition to her studio work Deborah Grayson is an independent scholar and facilitator.



## **Project Statement**

The three images created for this exhibition are part of a larger body of work about the interior lives of Black people and how they actively live – not always burdened or trapped by the expectation of resistance – but actively live in their lives just by being. The use of portraiture is intentional in this body of work. Through portraiture I am able to explore a kind of peace and a kind of quiet that is expressive, full, active – that captures the nuance, beauty, and dimensionality of Black lives – which often gets drowned out by the necessity of always having to say truly obvious and basic things like Black lives matter. What would happen if as their basic needs are being met, there is a greater recognition of the spaces Black people inhabit that are quiet, contemplative, reflective, mundane? Kevin Quashie tells us that there is heft and history in everyday moments. The freedom then to wonder and to wander into interior spaces – to explore these moments and to center them – provides a more expansive way to represent the fullness of the matters of Black life.

- Deborah R. Grayson





## **Katie O'Keefe**

Katie O'Keefe was raised in Hudson Valley, New York and is currently based in Baltimore, Maryland where she is a resident artist of the City Arts live/work space in Station North, Baltimore.

From the age of 14, Katie has been dealing with Chronic Lyme and her experience with this illness has greatly impacted her creative work. Initially trained in painting and drawing, she shifted her practice to adapt when Lyme temporarily limited her dexterity. She then discovered the joys and sensuality of working with thread.

She received her BFA in Fiber Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art and studied textiles abroad in Turkey. While in New York she interned at Dieu Donn  Papermill, where she learned the intricate processes of handmade paper. Between 2020 and 2021, Katie was awarded the opportunity to study multiple small scale metal smithing techniques at the Baltimore Jewelry Center where she focused on interconnecting the skilled crafts of metal and embroidery. Katie has notably exhibited her work at School 33 Art Center, Towson University, Stevenson University, Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center, and most recently presented her first solo show at Gallery CA.



## **Project Statement**

When confronted with the notion of 'Rest' as an idea, I found myself conflicted. What was spurring this feeling of hesitation towards rest? Rest is generally thought of as being a state of inaction, yet for me it takes a significant amount of effort for me to settle my body into restorative Rest. Laying still, in bed, my body wakes up to the wear and tear I have forced her through during the day, but ignored out of fear and necessity. In my piece *Entwined Repose* I sought to capture the history of movement as I toss and turn, searching for a place of comfort. In the act of accepting rest, I find strength in vulnerability.

-Katie O'Keefe



This is a good follow up to [taking the colored exit]  
Because after i did  
[rest] is what i encountered  
Its just like the water

- After *Water*, Lauryn Hill

Dont defer your dream  
Become the syrupy sweet  
explode in the sun

- After *Harlem*, Langston Hughes

Rest radically  
Consider the other side  
After suffering  
if this is how you got over, then where r u now?

Make use of the balm  
Rest is a friend of my mind  
Coming back to life

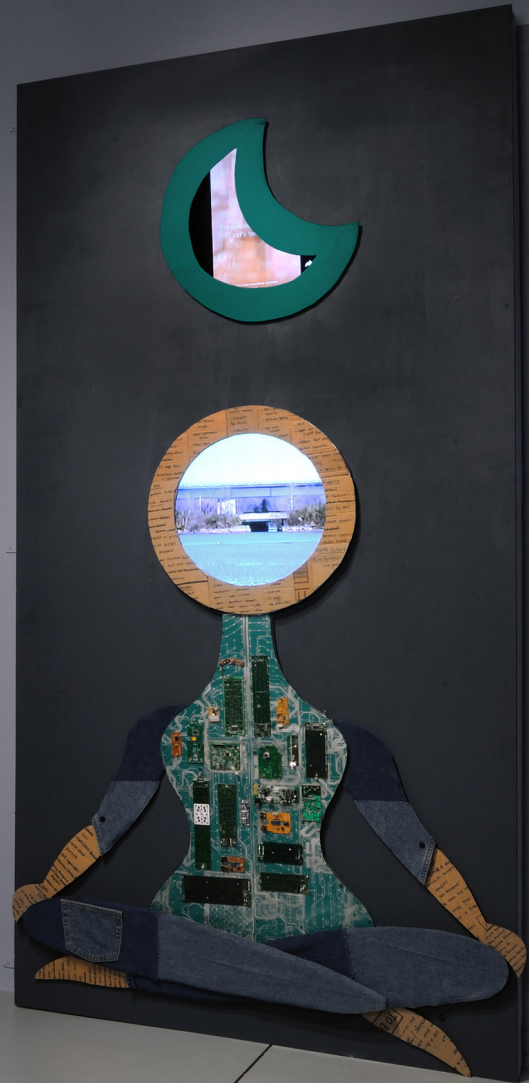
- After Toni Morrison

## **Britt Sankofa**

Britt Sankofa is a filmmaker and installation artist from Washington, DC whose mission is to carry on the storytelling tradition of her African American heritage with non-traditional mediums, particularly film and video art. Using original and archival sounds and footage, Sankofa pieces together non-linear narratives of multiple genres, including documentary, surrealism, animation, and live performance. Content often deals with family and cultural histories, societal expectations of gender, and the media's impact on identity. Her collage-style approach to filmmaking is heavily inspired by quilting arts, another important format of the Black storytelling tradition.

Sankofa's work has been featured at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, National Museum for Women in the Arts, Afrikana Film Festival, Virginia Film Festival, and Hamiltonian Artists Gallery.





## Project Statement

*WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE & THEORY* is a reflection on my difficult relationship with rest and modern technology's impact. My devices have the ability to foster (i.e. yoga videos, music, affirmations, etc.) or inhibit (i.e. alarms, emails, social media content) true relaxation. I was inspired by a conversation with an elder in October 2021, days after the 6-hour Facebook/Instagram outage that rocked the globe: "It's not just you young folks attached to your phones; Grandma and Grandpa need it for Bible Study, too."

*WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE* is a more literal interpretation of water's effect on electronics and our devices' effect on our psyche. The 'DO NOT DISTURB' feature, usually symbolized by a crescent moon, helps provide a sense of peace and freedom from societal pressures to remain accessible and in-the-know at all times. However, this temporary solution is challenged by a more permanent option: liberating oneself from the device entirely. The figure sits in *siddhasana*, meaning *accomplished pose* and is considered to be the ideal yoga posture for meditation and grounding. As our physical bodies evolve to overcompensate for personal technologies (i.e. 'tech neck', workplace ergonomics, 'blue light eye'), I thought of how mankind's relationship to water can represent a device's inevitable demise. Something as commonplace as bathing or swimming could cause a glitchy screen or distorted microphone; or, in a sense, a rebellion or cultural revolution.

*WATER DAMAGE: THEORY* is a performance of a meditation session plagued by internal and external interruptions. Viewers are encouraged to maintain eye contact with the subject and try to follow her breathing pattern on the audio loop amidst the glitches, noise, and mind chatter. Like in *WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE*, the subject is sitting in *siddhasana* or *accomplished pose*. It is a common misconception that this pose is comfortable for every person, and the subject must maintain this pose for 10 minutes.

- Britt Sankofa



ART

Research notes  
Interviews  
Creative writing  
Journaling  
Sketching  
Collage  
Photography  
Video  
Podcasting  
Blogging  
Social media  
Networking  
Teaching  
Mentoring  
Public speaking  
Writing grants  
Fundraising  
Partnerships  
Marketing  
Community outreach  
Collaboration  
Cross-disciplinary work  
Interdisciplinary work  
Transdisciplinary work  
Open access  
Creative commons  
Open source  
Open data  
Open education  
Open science  
Open innovation  
Open business  
Open government  
Open justice  
Open health  
Open energy  
Open environment  
Open culture  
Open society  
Open world  
Open future

SCHEDULE

Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday  
Saturday  
Sunday  
Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday  
Saturday  
Sunday

TO DO

Research  
Writing  
Teaching  
Mentoring  
Public speaking  
Writing grants  
Fundraising  
Partnerships  
Marketing  
Community outreach  
Collaboration  
Cross-disciplinary work  
Interdisciplinary work  
Transdisciplinary work  
Open access  
Creative commons  
Open source  
Open data  
Open education  
Open science  
Open innovation  
Open business  
Open government  
Open justice  
Open health  
Open energy  
Open environment  
Open culture  
Open society  
Open world  
Open future

TO DO

Research  
Writing  
Teaching  
Mentoring  
Public speaking  
Writing grants  
Fundraising  
Partnerships  
Marketing  
Community outreach  
Collaboration  
Cross-disciplinary work  
Interdisciplinary work  
Transdisciplinary work  
Open access  
Creative commons  
Open source  
Open data  
Open education  
Open science  
Open innovation  
Open business  
Open government  
Open justice  
Open health  
Open energy  
Open environment  
Open culture  
Open society  
Open world  
Open future



## Biography

Deirdre Darden is an emerging curator born and raised around art in Washington, DC. She began her curatorial practice in 2014 with Black Artists of DC. Since then she has exhibited and collaborated with contemporary artists from DC, Baltimore, and New York and organized panel discussions and artist talks touching on themes of race, womanhood, societal pressures, and art's ultimate power.

Shows include *Black Lives / White Light* (2015), *Pressure Points* (2016), and *Lest We Forget* (2016). In 2018, Darden received a curatorial grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities to curate *We Got Next: Young Contemporaries*. She has consulted for the art fair Art on the Vine and as a curator at Eaton Workshop. Currently she is prioritizing rest during the pandemic(s) and working on projects from home, including curating public art for 11th Street Bridge Park. In 2022, she joined the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities as a Public Art Coordinator.

## Exhibition Checklist

### Holly Bass

*Still Life, with Flowers (for Laure), 2022*

Digital video

06:05

### Adjoa J. Burrowes

*Garden Imprints 1-6, 2022*

Oil based ink on paper

15 x 18 inches

*Garden Cloak, 2022*

Acrylic on cotton canvas and paper, wire

56 x 52 x 52 inches

*Soil Sanctuary, 2022*

Acrylic on cotton canvas

53 x 53 inches

*Earth, I Thank You, 2022*

Acrylic on archival paper, double sided

42 x 56 inches

### Deborah R. Grayson

*Harriet, 2022*

Lithograph

25 x 35 inches

*Tribe Healer, Tribe Warriors, 2022*

Four color serigraph

15 x 22 inches

*Tribe Healer, 2022*

Three color lithograph

18.5 x 18 inches

### Katie O'Keefe

*Transposed, 2021*

Tulle fabric and thread on hand pulled abaca paper  
embedded with repurposed studio threads

19 x 17 inches

*Convalescence, 2022*

Tulle fabric and thread on hand pulled abaca paper  
embedded with repurposed studio threads

32 x 52 inches

*Entwined Repose, 2022*

Tulle fabric and thread; sewn.

60 x 84 inches

### Britt Sankofa

*WATER DAMAGE: PRACTICE, 2022*

Installation with wood, mixed media, and two-  
channel video

8 x 4 feet, 10:00

*WATER DAMAGE THEORY, 2022*

Installation with video and audio

08:00

All artworks courtesy of the artist

## Acknowledgements

Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) is committed to promoting innovative contemporary art and thinking. Leading with curiosity and care, we are a catalyst, generator, and advocate for visual and interdisciplinary arts.

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Front cover: Adjoa J. Burrowes, *Garden Cloak*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.





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