

KUNSTHALL STAVANGER

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Justin Allen, *Explain Totality (version 3)*, 2018

LEAN

March 4 – April 25, 2021

Kunsthall Stavanger is proud to announce the opening of *LEAN*, curated by Legacy Russell, Associate Curator, Exhibitions, The Studio Museum in Harlem. *LEAN* was originally commissioned by Performa, New York, as an online exhibition that is currently streaming until March 31, 2021 on Radical Broadcast, Performa's online channel at performa-arts.org.

First imagined and shown as a digital exhibition for Performa's Radical Broadcast, *LEAN* is now migrating for the first time to a physical format at Kunsthall Stavanger. Now sited in physical space, *LEAN* brings together in the galleries nine moving image works by an intergenerational group of

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seven artists: **Justin Allen, Jen Everett, Devin Kenny, Kalup Linzy, Rene Matić, Sadé Mica, and Leilah Weinraub.** Through movement, sound, and film, these artists congregate and confer toward the concept of “lean” as a Black vernacular and proposition of queer poetics. The works presented explore the intimacies of familial relationships and enact bodily interventions in public and private space, offering a radical proposal for new and exciting architectures while challenging Eurocentric constructs of site and time.

As part of this new presentation of the show, *LEAN* also welcomes to its roster an eighth artist—emerging artist **Krista Gay**—whose work will be featured on Kunsthall Stavanger’s website for the duration of the exhibition, paying homage to the digital format of *LEAN* as it was originally presented online and intended to be experienced remotely. Gay’s work will allow audiences to further engage *LEAN* on-screen at home around the globe.

In her exhibition essay Russell proposes:

“...to lean represents a gesture that forces an impossibility of physics: a falling without collapse, an epic draping that never meets the floor but instead floats, an image that defies imagination. When the sites we travel through are designed to surveil us, dictating how our bodies should move and feel, we who lean enact essential spatial and emotional labor, protective enclosures that break and remake space, decolonize time, remix memory, reformat care.”

Russell’s exhibition celebrates a rising and intersectional generation of Black and queer artists creating radical work using performance and digital media as their medium. Russell’s ongoing research, writing, and curatorial practice considers in part the digitally networked existence of contemporary artists in their presence across the global ‘stage’ of the Internet. Russell’s critically acclaimed book *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (Verso Books, 2020), stands at the intersection of art history, popular culture, Internet culture, and movement research. Russell engages with the vast, unhindered space of the Internet as a site for performance, both of art and life, and the inevitable dissolution of the two—in particular she considers the languages and gestures that have formed in the Internet’s short history. Most importantly, Russell’s exhibition *LEAN* considers circulation of blackness and queerness as a driving force within the digital realm.

Russell observes: *“Performance belongs to, and is so deeply shaped by, the histories of Black and queer people. The dancehall, the bar, the church, the ballroom, these are physical spaces, genesis points for Black and queer choreographies and sonic expansions; in a networked age, these*

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spaces have taken new shape and form on the Internet. This exhibition takes us to that meeting point."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Justin Allen is a writer and performer whose recent work with performance responds to, and interacts with, the history of hardcore punk, celebrating Black contributions to this genre. In Allen's performance *Explain Totality (version 3)*, 2018, the artist moves across the floor of Judson Memorial Church, to a live and pre-recorded narration of the artist himself. Allen's isolated gestures—skanking, windmills, the limber and stretch of his legs—score the movements found within, or as entry to, the collective act of moshing. The artist's narration reflects on race and class within the histories of suburban development and his own lived experience as a child raised in an American suburb.

Jen Everett is an artist whose work includes photography, text, installation, and time-based media. Everett's *Happy New Year*, 2018, takes viewers into the artist's family life in Detroit, Michigan in the 1980s, using home video shot by the artist's father at an impromptu New Year's gathering at Everett's childhood home. Everett alters the footage to reveal intimate portraits of each of the four Black women pictured, relatives sharing space but equally worlds apart in how they distinctly engage or refuse the frame.

The durational video work *Lean (20hz 'dando repeat barline rmx)*, 2020, by interdisciplinary artist, writer, and musician **Devin Kenny**, takes its title from the classical music term *ritardando*—referred to colloquially here as "'dando"—meaning to slow the tempo of sound. The piece celebrates mixtape and deejay culture as a love song to Houston, where the artist lived previously and acts as a wayward homage to the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Apollo 13 mission, known as a "successful failure".

Krista Gay is an interdisciplinary artist whose work engages, as Gay puts it, "video archives sourced via cyberspace". With a practice spanning text, sound, photography, and moving image, Gay's critique of Black womanhood in the media—and, via extension, Black femme sexuality—cites the troubled binary assignment of Black femmes being either exalted and abject, worshipped or desecrated. The artist's two recent video works, respectively titled *BLACK PUSSY* (2020) and *BLKPUSSY_error* (2021), reflect on the images of Black femininity, Black womanhood, and Black women, as transmitted through the networked landscape of the Internet as a complicated site, landscape, and ontology.

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Kalup Linzy is known for his fictional fantasy dramas that fuse fashion and pop culture to critique ideas of race, sexuality, class, and gender—presents *Art Jobs and Lullabies, Video Suite 1*, 2015, which consists of Linzy performing a cast of different diva-like characters in a collection of melodramatic 80s and 90s R&B-style music videos. These feature original songs that extend Linzy's 2014 album [of the same name](#). Linzy's work *KK Queens Survey*, 2005, humorously lampoons the contemporary art world with Linzy performing the 'role' of a New York artist who, while in her studio, receives a telesurvey call where she's asked a series of increasingly outrageous questions about her participation in the art world and her creative work therein.

The film *Brown Girl in the Art World III*, 2019, shows interdisciplinary artist **Rene Matić** dancing in front of an abandoned pub in the historically working-class English town of Skegness. A voice-over by the artist plays, presenting an art school critique from her University, at which Matić discussed recent work with a group of fifteen students, eleven of whom were white. The artist cites her ongoing study of dance as an exploration of emancipated Black expression set against the economy of Black entertainment under the white gaze.

Multi-media and musical artist **Sadé Mica's** work engages textiles, film, sound, and performance in an exploration of how movement is policed by the environment, and how the queer Black body can be both freed and restricted simultaneously within the landscape of the British countryside. In *With me Mam in Malham*, 2019, Mica, with her mother, pose and pause in sync, in the provincial village of Malham, England, on a flooded road in the rural countryside. During *Posturin'*, 2018, Mica makes direct eye-contact with the camera in a self-portrait in which they stand in front of a blank canvas pinned to a white-wall, arms crossed, as if having their picture taken. As the artist poses, a one can hear a lyric poem as narrated by the artist themselves, reflecting on the shaping of a non-binary selfhood.

Leilah Weinraub is a filmmaker, conceptual artist, and former CEO of the fashion brand Hood by Air's work champions unacknowledged tastemakers, particularly those belonging to queer, autonomous communities of color, whose creative output is often plundered by mass culture and whose stories are rarely told on their own terms. Weinraub began shooting *SHAKEDOWN*, 2018, at the age of 23, accumulating over 400 hours of footage across six years. In this film Weinraub documents performances in a club of the same name that caters specifically to Black lesbians in the Mid-City neighborhood of Los Angeles.

ABOUT LEGACY RUSSELL

Legacy Russell is a curator and writer. Born and raised in New York City, she is the Associate Curator of Exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Russell holds an MRes with Distinction in

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Art History from Goldsmiths, University of London with a focus in Visual Culture. Her academic, curatorial, and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfhood, internet idolatry, and new media ritual. Russell's written work, interviews, and essays have been published internationally.

Curated exhibitions and projects include *LEAN* (2020) featuring Justin Allen, Jen Everett, Devin Kenny, Kalup Linzy, Rene Matić, Sadé Mica, and Leilah Weinraub for Performa's Radical Broadcast; *This Longing Vessel : Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2019-20* featuring E. Jane, Elliot Reed, and Naudline Pierre (2020); *Projects: Garrett Bradley* (2020) and *Projects 110 : Michael Armitage* (2019), organized with Thelma Golden and The Studio Museum in Harlem at MoMA; *Dozie Kanu : Function* (2019), *Chloë Bass : Wayfinding* (2019), and *Radical Reading Room* (2019) at The Studio Museum in Harlem. She is the recipient of the Thoma Foundation 2019 Arts Writing Award in Digital Art, a 2020 Rauschenberg Residency Fellow, and a recipient of the 2021 Creative Capital Award. Her first book *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020) is published by Verso Books. Her second book, *BLACK MEME*, is forthcoming via Verso Books. www.legacyrussell.com | IG: [@ellerustle](https://www.instagram.com/ellerustle)

ABOUT KUNSTHALL STAVANGER

Kunsthall Stavanger is a contemporary art institution in Stavanger, Norway that serves as a platform for the production, exhibition, and distribution of artworks that are part of a large international discourse. We collaborate with artists and guest curators to develop solo and group exhibitions with the goal of creating transformative experiences and in-depth audience engagement.

www.kunsthallstavanger.no IG [@kunsthall_stavanger](https://www.instagram.com/kunsthall_stavanger)

WATCH LEAN ONLINE

Kirsta Gay's work *BLACK PUSSY* (2020) and *BLKPUSSY_error* (2021) can be viewed on Kunsthall Stavanger's website www.kunsthallstavanger.no during the entirety of the exhibition period March 4 – April 25, 2021.

The full program runs on a loop for 24 hours on Performa's Radical Broadcast Channel, www.performa-arts.org. Each work screens multiple times daily until 31 March 2021. Return to the site frequently, and enjoy the opportunity to view films in different sequences and within your own timetable. Note that all times are based on your own time zone; in other words, according to the clock on your computer screen.

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ABOUT PERFORMA

Founded in 2004 by art historian and curator RoseLee Goldberg, Performa has expanded the possibilities for visual artists working in performance, providing essential curatorial and production support, which has raised the bar in terms of expectations of the form. Since 2005, Performa has presented a three-week international Performa Biennial of live performance featuring these new commissions at venues across New York City every other year. For more information about Performa, visit www.performa-arts.org or follow [@PerformaNYC](https://www.instagram.com/PerformaNYC) on Instagram and Twitter.

ABOUT THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

Founded in 1968 by a diverse group of artists, community activists, and philanthropists, The Studio Museum in Harlem is internationally known for its catalytic role in promoting the work of artists of African descent and championing Black culture. The Studio Museum is preparing to construct a new home at its longtime location on Manhattan's West 125th Street. Designed by Adjaye Associates in collaboration with Cooper Robertson, the 82,000-square foot facility will be the first created expressly for the Museum's program and will better serve a growing and diverse audience. For more information on the Studio Museum, visit studiomuseum.org or follow [@studiomuseum](https://www.instagram.com/studiomuseum) on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

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