

**OXY ARTS Presents**  
***Kenturah Davis: Dark Illumination***

February 9-April 29, 2023  
Opening Reception: Feb. 9, 6-8 p.m.  
Press Preview: Feb. 9, 5 p.m.

*For the culmination of her residency at OXY ARTS, Occidental College, and in her first institutional exhibition in Los Angeles, Kenturah Davis presents a solo show of work that illuminates the significance of shadows in our sensory experience.*



Left: Kenturah Davis, *In Praise of Shadows*, 2019. Photo: Dawn Blackman.  
Right: Photo of Kenturah Davis, courtesy of the artist.

**(January 18, 2023 – Los Angeles, CA) – OXY ARTS**, Occidental College's public art space rooted in social justice and community engagement, is pleased to announce ***Kenturah Davis: Dark Illumination***, a solo exhibition by **Kenturah Davis**, an artist working in Los Angeles and Accra (Ghana) whose work oscillates between various facets of portraiture and design. Using text as a point of departure, Davis explores the fundamental role that language has in shaping how we understand ourselves and the world around us.

In *Dark Illumination*, her first solo institutional exhibition in Los Angeles, Davis draws inspiration from Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's classic text, *In Praise of Shadows*. Using photography, printmaking, installation and hybrid sculptural forms, Davis experiments with various modalities that interrogate the nature of the contingent relationship between shadow and light, and contemplates the premise that shadows and darkness do not just produce conditions that conceal, but that they can also reveal and illuminate. Davis'

practice extends to questions and explorations that help unpack social and cultural conventions and hierarchies, and considers ideas rooted in philosophy, physics, literature and anthropology.

Davis' work was recently highlighted in the Smithsonian exhibition, [Portrait of a Nation: 2022 Honorees](#), honoring contemporary Americans who have made significant contributions across diverse fields. Davis was commissioned to produce the portrait of acclaimed filmmaker Ava DuVernay. Davis' work can also be seen in the public sphere along the recently opened L.A. Metro K Line. [Sonder](#) is a multi-panel piece sited at the above-ground Inglewood station stop.

*Dark Illumination* is the culmination of Davis' term as the **2022 Wanlass Artist in Residence** at OXY ARTS—the only college residency in the country where the artist is invited to develop a completely original curriculum based on their practice and interests. The exhibition is on view **February 9-April 29, 2023** in Los Angeles.

Following the exhibition, OXY ARTS will publish a catalog that will be released at the end of 2023.

### **Related Programming**

Kenturah Davis in Conversation with [Ian F. Blair](#)  
February 21, 6 p.m.

[Jonathan Richards](#) and Ensemble in Concert  
March 23, 6 p.m.

Screening of *Maborosi (Phantom Light)* (1995)  
April 6, 6 p.m.

Incense Presentation with Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony  
with [Persephenie](#) and [Nesamet Abegaze](#)  
April 27, 6 p.m.

### **About Kenturah Davis:**

Kenturah Davis lives and works in Los Angeles and Accra. The artist earned her BA from Occidental College and MFA from Yale University School of Art.

Solo exhibitions include apropos of air, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2021); (a)Float, (a)Fall, (a)Dance, (a)Death, Jeffrey Deitch, New York (2021); Everything That Cannot Be Known, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art (2020); Kenturah Davis + Desmond Lewis, Crosstown Arts in coordination with Seed Space, Memphis (2019); Blur in the Interest of Precision, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2019); Narratives and Meditations, Papillion, Los Angeles (2014); sonder, Papillion, Los Angeles (2013); euphemisms, Curve Line Space Gallery, Los Angeles (2011).

Recent institutional exhibitions include California Biennial 2022, organized by Elizabeth Armstrong and Essence Harden, Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa (2022); Our House: Selections from MOCA's Collection, organized by Bennett Simpson and Mia Locks, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2022); Currents and Constellations, curated by Kee Jo Lee, Cleveland Museum of Art (2022); The Phoenix Project: Continuing the Dialogue from 1992, Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles (2022); Black American Portraits, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) (2022); Plumb Line: Charles White and the Contemporary, curated by Essence Harden and Leigh Raiford, California African American

Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles (2019); and Afrocosmologies: American Reflections, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2019).

Other notable institutional exhibitions include: Must Risk Delight, organized in collaboration with the 56th Venice Biennale (2015); Linked in Tradition, Inspiring in Vision: A Selection of Works by African American Women Artists, Robert and Frances Museum of Art, San Bernardino (2017); Black Joy, Yale University, New Haven (2016); We Must Risk Delight, the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia, Venice Biennale (2015); The Silence of Ordinary Things, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles (2015); i:23: The Yokohama Triennial, Yokohama, Japan (2014); An American Water Margin, Ucity Museum, Guangzhou, China (2014); Mass Attack, Torrance Art Museum (2013); and Mis-Design, Ian Potter Museum, Melbourne, Australia (2011).

The Los Angeles Metro Rail commissioned a large-scale, site-specific work by Davis that is now permanently installed on the new Crenshaw/LAX, K Line station. Other public projects include Four Women, a commissioned mural by Alliance Francaise to commemorate International Women's Day, in Accra, and Metamorphose, comprised of five portraits commissioned by architect Elliott Barnes, featured in Barnes' installation at the Lâ Exposition AD Interieurs, Paris, France.

The artist was an inaugural artist fellow at NXTHVN in New Haven, founded by Titus Kaphar and Jonathan Brand and a DAMLI fellow at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Davis is the current Wanlass Artist in Residence at Occidental College and an inaugural cohort for Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab, by Theaster Gates and Prada.

#### **About the Wanlass Artist in Residence:**

The Wanlass Artist in Residence is Occidental's year-long residency program that allows an artist to investigate aspects of their practice and share it with the College campus-wide. The program encourages cross-campus collaboration and thoughtful sustained interaction between artists and students. The Wanlass Artist in Residence Program is made possible by generous support from the Kathryn Caine Wanlass Charitable Foundation. Past artists have included **EJ Hill**, **Carolina Caycedo**, **Shizu Saldamando**, **Candice Lin**, **Kenyatta A. C. Hinkle**, **rafa esparza**, **CamLab**, **Lucky Dragons**, and **Liz Collins**. Watch the video commemorating 10 years of the Wanlass Residency [here](#).

#### **About OXY ARTS:**

OXY ARTS is Occidental College's public art center rooted in social justice and community engagement. We are a vital public space for discovery, engagement and learning at the intersection of art, culture, and social movements. Located in the heart of the Highland Park neighborhood in Northeast Los Angeles, we are committed to facilitating projects that hold space for complex ideas and dialogue, spark curiosity, and invest in artists and community growth. You are welcome here.

We recognize that OXY ARTS occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Tongva people.

#### **OXY ARTS | Occidental College**

4757 York Blvd. | Los Angeles, CA 90042

[Website](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

#### **Gallery Hours:**

Monday - Saturday — 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

#### **Press Contact:**

Adelaide Zou

[azou@oxy.edu](mailto:azou@oxy.edu)