Visual Arts Center

The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Art and Art History
College of Fine Arts

Press Release
Exhibition Announcement

Zalika Azim: Blood Memories (or a going to ground)
October 23, 2025–March 7, 2026



Zalika Azim, still from *Blood Memories (or a going to ground),* 2023. Single-channel video, 17:07 min. Courtesy of the artist.

Zalika Azim uses multiple forms—photography, sculpture, performance, printmaking and sound—to recontextualize established narratives surrounding Black movement and placemaking. Bringing together new and recent works made during residencies in New York, Austin, and Omaha, *Blood Memories (or a going to ground)* grapples with questions of belonging by proposing an examination of the spaces between departure and arrival. For Azim, these interstitial spaces are not simply physical gaps to be traversed; rather, they represent a speculative phenomenon that connects personal and collective histories across time.

Anchored by a series of works that examine movement as a form of embodied archiving, the exhibition considers gesture as an act of resistance against visible and invisible adversaries that enact Black erasure. In Azim's installation *Score I (Studies for Gravity)* (2022) as well as the multimedia installation for which this exhibition is named, *Blood Memories (or a going to ground)* (2023/25), bodies explore endurance, repetition, and slowness; they attempt to defy gravity's hold, forging a vocabulary for reimagining liberatory action. In her series *Photographs Not Taken* (2022–), Azim recounts histories of Black settlement and migration through text vignettes, demonstrating how oral tradition, memory, and embodied knowledge have served as a means to expand the constellation of Black histories and communicate narratives that follow intersecting and often conflicting timelines.



Zalika Azim, *After everything, and before somewhere else,* 2025 Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.

Commissioned by the Visual Arts Center in conjunction with the 2023–24 St. Elmo Arts Residency Fellowship and 2025 Every Page Foundation Artist Residency, Austin, TX

Blood Memories (or a going to ground) also includes a series of site-specific sculptures and photographs that connect histories of Black placemaking in Austin's freedmen towns to the contemporary conditions that reflect and inform Black life in Central Texas and throughout the United States. These newly commissioned works offer a local context for matters of displacement, legacy, and cultural imagination that inspire Azim's practice. Together, Azim's work proposes strategies to counter historical forces of dispossession and systemic attempts to erase Black communities, offering pathways for creating and reclaiming spaces of belonging.

Blood Memories (or a going to ground) represents Azim's first solo exhibition at a university arts center and is the culmination of

two Visual Arts Center-sponsored artist residencies, The St. Elmo Arts Residency and the VAC Every Page Foundation Artist Residency.

Zalika Azim: Blood Memories (or a going to ground) is organized by Max Fields, VAC Director.

Presenting support for *Zalika Azim: Blood Memories (or a going to ground)* is provided by the Every Page Foundation and the St. Elmo Arts Residency.

About the artist

Zalika Azim (b. 1990, Brooklyn, NY) is an interdisciplinary artist and educator with ancestral roots in Aiken, South Carolina, and Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Her conceptual practice explores the tensions between personal and collective narratives—both known and indecipherable—in order to explore black migration, movement, and belonging. With a longstanding interest in the poetics of Black embodied knowledge, her work is rooted in archival research and experimental fieldwork, encompassing a variety of media, including photography, works on paper, sculpture, video, and sound.

Azim has presented solo exhibitions at Baxter Street at The Camera Club of New York and Soho20 Gallery. Her work has been included in national group exhibitions, such as Prospect New Orleans P.6, New Orleans, LA; The Delaware Contemporary, Wilmington, DE; Island Gallery, New York, NY; MASS Gallery, Austin, TX; Center for Black Visual Culture, New York, NY; Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI; Gagosian, New York, NY; Welancora Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; and Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MA. She has completed residencies at Pioneer Works, EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Pratt>FORWARD, McColl Center, NXTHVN, BRIC, and Baxter Street at The Camera Club of New York. In 2024, she was named the NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow for Interdisciplinary Work and the 2025 New York City Artadia Awardee. Azim earned her BFA in Photography & Imaging and a BA in Social and Cultural Analysis from New York University, and an MFA in Photography from the University of California Los Angeles. She was the recipient of the 2023–24 St. Elmo Arts Residency Fellowship at The University of Texas at Austin.