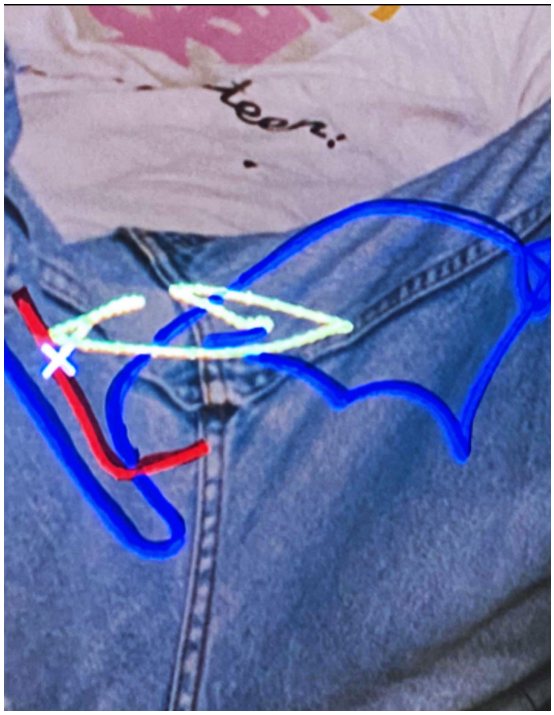
Tiona Nekkia McClodden:
MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY

July 13–October 8, 2022
52 Walker Street, New York

Press preview and walkthrough led by
Tiona Nekkia McClodden:
Wednesday, July 13, 3–4 PM

To attend the press preview,
RSVP to press@52walker.com.



In the artist's studio, 2022
© Tiona Nekkia McClodden
Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York

52 Walker is pleased to announce its fourth exhibition, *MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY*, featuring the work of Philadelphia-based artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden. McClodden will present new paintings, objects made of materials both organic and inorganic, and videos that together foreground her research into the limits of embodiment and exertion as well as her interest in gestures of concealment.

McClodden's expansive practice comprises film, installation, painting, and sculpture in addition to writing and curating. Encompassing the personal, the historical, and the mythic, her work considers the presence and absence of the black figure as well as the aesthetic strategies of illumination and opacity that subvert available modes of representation.

Installed under custom lighting, the works in *MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY* evince a variable blackness, realizing and dissolving figures and forms that are not immediately visible to the viewer. In her work McClodden has engaged with "masking" and its many meanings and guises, as well as "unmasking," in which, as an autistic adult, she attempts to unlearn an assimilationist tendency to suppress one's true self in order to appear neurotypical. This relates closely to "concealing," a purposeful act of obstruction that, along with "carrying," suggests associations with firearms regulation in the United States. "Carrying" also touches on deeper psychological aspects regarding trauma and burden that are threaded through the works.

MASK / CONCEAL / CARRY pivots around the concept of "training to failure," which, in the context of repeated weight-training exercises, proposes the pushing of one's body beyond its corporeal limits, to the point of temporary muscular breakdown, in order to build muscle. McClodden, who weight trains herself, transmits this idea into her work, communicating a core awareness of the body as it corresponds to the fragile boundaries of the psyche and the spectrum of pain and pleasure that is revealed in these recurrent efforts.

McClodden connects "training to failure" with "dry fire training," the practice of shooting without ammunition to improve one's aim. For the ten ballistic bullet trace paintings, the first the artist has produced, she devises a conceptual framework that extracts data from her own dry firing. Target drawings composed on gessoed Belgian linen hang on a shooting rail system and feature stenciled words, conveying the idea of language as an initiator of violence. Mass-manufactured shooting targets make their appearance in one of McClodden's video works.

The *Figures* series comprises reliefs of objects such as pistols and the components of an AR15-style rifle, which are contoured in vacuum-pressed Kydex and genuine leather. Playing with the numerous definitions of "mask" and "conceal," McClodden has created a luxurious chain-mail facial covering from gold and silver that juxtaposes the beautiful with the martial. The mask complements McClodden's figures, as do new cast bronzes that are imagined or based on existing paraphernalia. Like the plundered Benin Bronzes, from which McClodden has taken inspiration, these spectral silhouettes suggest not only their forebears but also the figures who wield them and their narrative possibilities.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden (b. 1981; Blytheville, Arkansas) presently lives and works in Philadelphia. In 2018, McClodden was a resident of the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in Madison, Maine.

McClodden recently presented a new work, *Achaba de Ogún* (2022), at Art Basel Parcours 2022 with Mitchell-Innes & Nash. She is included in the group exhibition *The Condition of Being Addressable* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, which opened in June 2022 and runs concurrently with her presentation at 52 Walker. Her multidisciplinary solo exhibition *The Trace of an Implied Presence*, at The Shed, New York, which is coproduced in partnership with Nike, will open in August 2022. Her 2017 work *The Brad Johnson Tape, X - On Subjugation*, which was recently acquired by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, will be featured in the museum's second-floor collection galleries opening in early August 2022.

In 2021, McClodden organized *Be Alarmed: The Black Americana Epic, Movement III–The Triple Deities*, a multimedia installation and performance that is the third part of her *Be Alarmed* series, in Philadelphia. Solo exhibitions by the artist have been presented at Company Gallery, New York (2019); Performance Space, New York (2018); and Recess, New York (2018), among others.

Work by the artist has been included in major group exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide. In 2021, McClodden participated in *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*, curated by Okwui Enwezor and presented at the New Museum, New York. The artist was selected to participate in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, and from the seventy-five artists exhibited was named the recipient of the Bucksbaum Award. Other significant group presentations have taken place at venues such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2021); Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2019); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2017 and 2011); and the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago (2017).

McClodden's interdisciplinary practice encompasses writing and curatorial work. She is the founder and director of the exhibition space and library Conceptual Fade, Philadelphia. In 2019, the artist produced the monograph *Se Te Subió El Santo* (*Are You in a Trance?*) as an exploration of the self. Writing by McClodden has also appeared in publications such as *Artforum* (2018), *Cultured* (2018), and *Triple Canopy* (2019).

McClodden is presently a Princeton Arts Fellow at Princeton University, New Jersey, and is a recipient of the 2022 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. In 2019, she was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. She has previously been the recipient of other prestigious awards and fellowships, such as the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2018); Magnum Foundation Fund, New York (2018); Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, Tiffany Foundation, New York (2017);

and the Pew Fellowship, The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia (2016), among several others.

The artist is represented by Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Work by McClodden is held in public collections such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Rennie Museum, Vancouver.

For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the July 13 press preview, contact press@52walker.com