

Kai Matsumiya proudly welcomes Steffani Jemison's debut solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition will delve into several aspects of Jemison's repertoire but with emphasis on her newest body of work inspired by the marks found on notes in the pocket of Ricky McCormick, presented alongside a related body of work titled "Same Time". The exhibition will run concurrently with her presentation at the 2019 Whitney Biennial.

In 1999, two encrypted notes were found in the pocket of Ricky McCormick of St. Louis, Missouri. Were they shorthand? Drawings? A form of graffiti? Or perhaps the index of a divine medium, the graphic transcription of speaking in tongues? The FBI publicly released the mysterious marks to the public after cryptographers failed to translate what could be crucial pieces of evidence in McCormick's murder, a case which has befuddled the agency to this day.

McCormick's markings provide the point of departure for Jemison's works: she isolates fascinating moments of each note, enlarges, and then further manipulates them. The tools she employs artistically overlap with those of forensics, encouraging us to find meaning in its mysteries, semantic or otherwise. Using the artificial intelligence algorithm built into imaging software programs, she extends the glyphs or marks to fill the frames as articulations of entire microcosms. In some cases the algorithm was re-performed multiple times to produce layered versions of the image, including repetitions, rotations, fades, and blurs that are then printed with black monochrome inkjet on tempered glass. Another group of prints use what appear to be the letters WLD, which could be interpreted as "would", "wild", or even "world". While one work resembles a labyrinthine maze, another appears in the form of a body.

Work from the "Same Time" series will also be displayed, inspired by the multifarious circumstances and history of the African-American vernacular in relationship to signs, symbols, and marks. For example, one source of inspiration comes from "Hamptonese", the private language constructed by James Hampton with its own complex codes and grammar, and which also has yet to be deciphered.

Reflecting on her own engagement with literacy, the black vernacular, universal semantics, and mark making Jemison writes --

"I have made a mark, and I do not know whether I am drawing or writing. I am thinking about marks and how they collect on a surface. I have accumulated marks, and I believe that this accumulation is at once a drawing, a text, and an archive. I am thinking, as I am so often thinking, about the proximity of writing to drawing. I am also thinking about how archives are always already

oriented towards the future. What is the archive but that which awaits activation? I am wondering about the ways in which drawings are active, are records of activity, are anticipatory. I am wondering about the difference between acting, recording. Action, and awaiting activation... I am thinking about what happens when writing is decoupled from communication, or when it is deliberately encoded. I am thinking about automatic drawing and speaking in tongues and spirit writing”.

Steffani Jemison lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent solo exhibitions and commissioned performances include *Jeu de Paume* (2017), *CAPC Bordeaux* (2017), *MASS MoCA* (2017), *Nottingham Contemporary* (2017), and the *Museum of Modern Art* (2015). Her work is in the public collections of the *Museum of Modern Art*, the *Whitney Museum*, the *Brooklyn Museum*, the *Studio Museum in Harlem*, and *Kadist*.

In addition to the *Whitney Biennial 2019*, Jemison’s work is included in the touring group exhibition *Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem* (May 24 - August 18, 2019; *Gibbes Museum of Art*, Charleston, SC) as well as *Screen Acts: Women in Film and Video* (April 5, 2019 - June 30, 2019; *San Jose Museum of Art*). Her work *Maniac Chase* will be screened at *mumok cinema*, *Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien* on May 15, 2019 (Vienna, AT). She will present new and recent work in *Steffani Jemison: New Videos* (June 22 - September 29, 2019, *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam, NL), and a new video commission will premiere in *Steffani Jemison and Samson Young: Decoders/Recorders* (July 6, 2019 - September 1, 2019, *De Appel*, Amsterdam, NL).

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