



Abbey Williams | Fugue
May 23 – September 20, 2026
Opening Reception: May 23rd, 3 – 5 pm

Rockland, ME – The Center for Maine Contemporary Art (“CMCA”) is thrilled to announce Abbey Williams’s first solo exhibition in Maine, *Fugue*. Organized by CMCA Curator Grant Wahlquist and accompanied by an illustrated publication with a contribution by Dr. Michael B. Gillespie, the exhibition runs from May 23 – September 20, 2026. An opening reception will occur on Saturday, May 23rd, from 3 – 5 pm.

Fugue is a highly musical rumination on our charged historical moment. A five-channel video installation displayed on horizontal monitors in freestanding black pedestals, Williams has reedited and “remixed” the work since its 2025 premiere in Basel for its American debut at CMCA—a recursive practice central to her process. Over the course of its nearly eight-minute run time, *Fugue* montages overhead shots of the artist flipping through oversized photobooks of classical architecture, her hands pawing at or caressing marble statues and columns as if they were living flesh. The work eventually pivots to images of the artist’s hands painting on the surface of monitors that she ultimately shatters with a hammer, creating illuminated fissures akin to lightning that she also dangerously caresses. Throughout, Williams intersperses imagery from antiquity with canonical works of popular media, from *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Network*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to footage of performers Grace Jones and H.R. of hardcore band Bad Brains.

Williams deploys the Greco-Roman column as both icon and emblem of “Western civilization,” but also as a surrogate body—upright, load-bearing, idealized, and destined to fall. She further expands on this association by breaking it both pictorially and sculpturally; she smashes its image, and the five pedestals vary in height in a physical echo of the silhouette of a fallen column among ruins. The black rectangular pedestals also recall redactions, a motif the artist has returned to in multiple works.

Williams’s invocation of the history of “the West” is a symbolic amplification of a through line in her work as a whole: the intersectional experience of Black womanhood. *Fugue* analogizes collapsing columns and architecture—the smashing of screens, the process of *ruination*—with the personal process of aging. It responds with a mixture of grief and punk repudiation to a society that still prioritizes a mode of beauty connected with whiteness, youth, and fertility. This punk spirit is further charged by a collaged score of music sampling Throbbing Gristle, Sonic/Ciccone Youth, Lena Lovich, Black Flag, Childish Gambino, and an intentionally unsettling cacophony of noise. Williams insists on continuing to desire despite the inevitable complications of physical decline. Her use of images of figures like Elizabeth Taylor and Faye Dunaway, who defiantly worked “past their prime” and refused to “age gracefully,” is a testament to endurance, to legacies undiminished by time but instead sharpened by it.

Williams’s introduction of smeared, erased, and retraced black pigment adds a painterly and radical dimension to *Fugue*, extending her interest in rendering blackness—which is



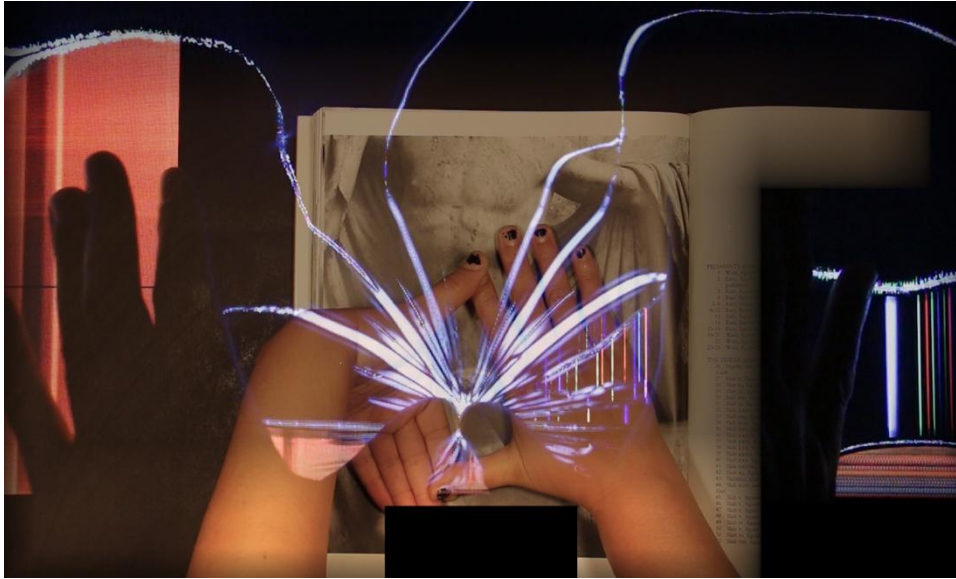
to say Blackness—the opposite of an erasure, a redaction, or a ground, but instead as a marker of presence and possibility. The gesture of treating the screen as support for painterly mark making also collapses the distance between media, setting the backlit surface of the video screen and traditional painterly supports (canvas, paper) on equal footing. Williams’s filming the surface of shattering screens similarly collapses the distinction between digital and analogue processes. The image never fully settles; it remains in a state of becoming, caught in the act of a body thinking through touch, accumulation, and loss. Its final segment serves as a bittersweet coda, producing an atmosphere at once mournful and insurgent.

A fugue is a composition in which multiple voices imitate, recapitulate, and transform a singular theme; it is also a psychological state of dissociation, loss of identity, or amnesia. Williams draws on both meanings, turning the rigor of the form into a site for holding and understanding the disorientation of our present world and selves. Aligning the collapsing column and all its connotations with the exhausted body, Williams embraces “ruination” as a site for radical agency. Through touch and the act of breaking, she recasts the undoing of the world as a catalyst for defiant vitality and persistent desire.

Fugue was made, in part, in residence at Surf Point in York, Maine. This exhibition was made possible by the generous support of donors to the Suzette McAvoy Exhibition Fund.

About the Artist

Abbey Williams (b. 1971) received her BFA from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, her MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Her solo exhibitions include A.I.R. Gallery, Broadway, the Philadelphia Art Alliance, Sargent’s Daughters, Bellwether Gallery, and Foxy Production. Her work has also been exhibited at venues including the Baltimore Museum of Art, Tate Britain, the Schirn Kunsthalle, the Anthology Film Archives, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the Hammer Museum, Artists Space, the Museo Reina Sofia, MoMA PS1, and Art in General. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Abbey Williams

Fugue, 2026 (detail)

Five channel digital video installation, color, sound

TRT: 7:34

Ed. 3 + 2 AP

Courtesy of the artist, Broadway, New York, and the Center for Maine Contemporary Art

About CMCA | cmcanow.org

Located in downtown Rockland, Maine, CMCA is a contemporary arts institution presenting year-round exhibitions and educational programs for all ages.

- Location: 21 Winter Street, Rockland, ME, 04841.
- Winter Hours (Nov. 1 – May 24): Wednesday - Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, Sunday 12 to 5 pm.
- Summer Hours (May 26 – Oct. 31): Monday - Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Sunday 12 to 5 pm.
- Closed Federal holidays.

Admission is \$10; seniors 65+ and students with ID are \$8; children under 18 are free; CMCA members are free. For more information, please contact Grant Wahlquist (gwahlquist@cmcanow.org, 207.245.5732).