

ARIEL RENÉ JACKSON

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*A WELCOMING PLACE*



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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JANUARY 18 – MARCH 3, 2022

AUSTIN, TEXAS

## WHAT IS A WELCOMING DAY?

*for Ariel René Jackson*

Cindy Elizabeth was born in an Austin hospital that no longer exists. She has always been in Austin, except for when she cleared out to college.

Through interviews, Jackson gives a sense of Austin's Black community: the housing eventualities of Black families, beginning with buying homes within a community, trying to start their lives.

The history of environmental racism is the history of being rejected, shunted, not just as a body, but as a community.

"What would you say to newcomers?" A note on speaking: it's tough to know how to frame knowledge meant for ears and eyes that haven't experienced what you have. How could you know what you've experienced anyway?

Suspecting what is different about my life versus someone else's life, wishing to make sense of that difference in any way a young mind can. That early making-sense of my environment becomes how I make sense of all of the environments, of all over the place, the world's geography.

The making of a model citizen of a public, a place. I appreciate Jackson's gaze, peering from behind the city's model. Ariel René Jackson makes the model of Austin we see fully formed.

Many people who have been in Austin for their entire existences, plus a couple of people who are fresher transplants. As we discover Austin from their perspectives.

Another man, been twenty years in Austin. "Why did you decide to stay?" Businesses change, weather changes; larger systems-level tendencies stay the same, like environmental racism, which has hurt the property values. A chronicle of gentrification that is familiar to Black people across the nation. A familiarity impossible to describe decently.

Can we agree on what change is? Can we change our own community and the way our community is judged by the government, the encircling culture? What does a welcoming place seem like? To be welcomed as a somebody or a community? (A cluster hire of 100 Black workers.) What does it mean to be holding as a place, to become even more welcoming over the years? "How have things changed?"

What does it signify to grow up in a space, to have every experience of life linked back to the same topography? A place keeps both good and bad memory. If you spend all your life in that place, it holds legacies in-between good and bad, too.

"Tell me a good memory." We might think of the overlapping of archival images as a responsibility to get up into the body's senses.

I appreciate the languaging of the video, which seems to linger in the vocabulary of meme culture: a finite experience made to fractal outwards, expand, rotate. The dancing image-spheres moving across the video screen. Black people shown running around a prison yard, perhaps, or playing baseball, a meteorological office. A sculptural, meteorological contraption we may as yet understand, or ever understand, but

where we to study it further, we might. What is a welcoming day? Weather balloons signal a climatological process: trying to find out what welcomes us. We see the artist engaged in technological study. Various large gauges for surveilling life, for gathering particulars; a rotating satellite aimed at the sky. Monitoring the sky and other cosmic bodies, projecting astrally and onto someone else's life. A balloon sent up into the sky with scientific intentions. The balloon bears on up into the sky. A position, an aerial position, that might observe all of these Austinite lives erupting. Then, the balloon is sucked back to the ground, like a kite retracted.

It's profound to have hope, says one interview subject, not to fall perfectly into cynicism. The community's cynicism as to whether protesting leads to the sense of life being better than it was before.

The economy and the environment in a feedback loop of dereliction. Violences that are physical, intellectual, emotional. The social relations we experienced in school, formative, as what happened at home. The police's presence within the school, so that nowhere was out of danger. Long, early childhood ghosts of schools and schooling, involving desegregation and being a Black student in a bitter environment.

"What does a welcoming place look like?" Like a lack of money for infrastructure?

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Anaïs Duplan is a trans poet, curator, and artist.

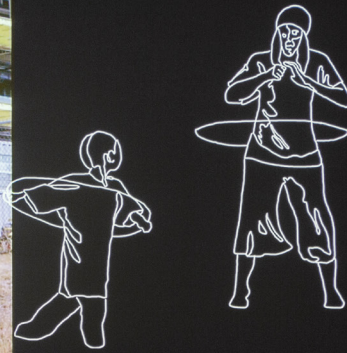
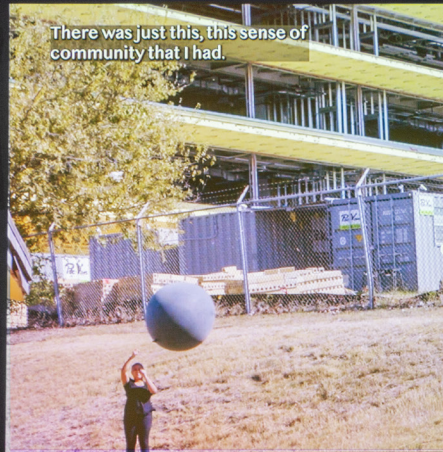
A Welcoming Place is co-commissioned by Women & Their Work and Yorkshire Sculpture International with additional support from Black Art Matters ATX, Black Spatial Relics Micro Grant, and Six Square.



*A Welcoming Place Model*, 2021, wood, styrofoam, chocolate loam, adhesives, burlap, resin, 24.75 x 51.25 x 57"

Cover Panel: *A Welcoming Place*, 2020-2022, installation view, digital video, 29 minutes 23 seconds





*A Welcoming Place*, 2020-2022, digital video, 29 minutes 23 seconds. Includes six interviews: Cindy Elizabeth, Michael J. Love, Vladimir Mejia, David Zarzoza Mercado, Deborah Roberts, and John Yancey. Videographer: Aya (b. hannah alpert), Production Assistant: David Zarzoza Mercado. Featured Artwork: *Rhapsody Mural* (2003) designed and led by John Yancey. Music Credits: *As Life Turns Around* by Magnus Ringblom Quartet, *Goner* by Hara Noda, *Free Breathing* by Joseph Beg, *Summertime Nights* by More than Family, and *To Be Still* by Lotus (all songs via Epidemic Sound). Footage Credits: *Meteorological Radio-Sonde Balloon* (1956), *Weather: Friend or Foe* (1955), *Black History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed* from @BlvckVrchives (1968), *The Black Athlete* (1980). References: Mapping Inequality ([dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/)), Texas Archive of The Moving Image ([texasarchive.org](https://texasarchive.org/)), African American Home Movie Archive ([aahma.org](https://aahma.org/)). Film Locations (in no order): Barton Creek, Red Bud Isle, 11th Street, Yellow Jacket Stadium, parks throughout East Austin.

# Ariel René Jackson

## EDUCATION

- 2019 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME
- 2019 MFA, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2018 Royal College of Art Exchange Program, London, UK
- 2013 BFA, The Cooper Union for the Achievement of Science and Art, New York, NY

## SELECT EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Descendance*, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA  
*Doubt & Imagination*, Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, TX
- 2020 *Make America What America Must Become*, Contemporary Arts Center (CAC), New Orleans, LA  
*Dear Future...*, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO  
*Another Country*, Terrault Gallery, Baltimore, MD
- 2019 *Screen Series*, New Museum, New York, NY  
*L O O M S*, Sweet Pass Sculpture Park, Dallas, TX  
*In Practice: Other Objects*, Sculpture Center, New York, NY
- 2018 *A Recounting: Data, Disinformation & Blackness*, Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
*Original Language*, CUE Art Foundation, New York, NY  
*Constructing the Break*, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, LA  
*Out of Easy Reach*, Depaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL
- 2017 *Ariel Jackson: The Origin of the Blues*, RISD Museum, Providence, RI
- 2016 *The Blues Data Crop: The Gains and Loss of Black Farmers in America*, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY  
*Focus: Ariel Jackson*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Harlem, NY
- 2015 *The Black Fantastic*, The Schomburg Center, Harlem, NY  
*Bronx Biennial*, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY
- 2013 *American Beauty*, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, NY  
*Culture, History + Video*, The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD), Detroit, MI

## RESIDENCIES | FELLOWSHIPS | AWARDS

- 2019 *Momentary AIR Program*, Crystal Bridges Museum, Bentonville, AR  
*IdeasCity New Orleans*, New Museum, New Orleans, LA
- 2018 *Royal College Exchange Award*, UT Austin Department of Art & Art History, London, UK

- 2017 *The Shandaken Project*, Storm King, Vales Gate, NY  
*Thread Residency*, Albers Foundation, Sinthian, Senegal
- 2016 *Van Lier Visual Artist Fellowship*, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY  
*Keyholder Residency Program*, Lower East Side Printshop, New York, NY
- 2015 *BHQFU Residency Program*, Bruce High Quality Foundation University, New York, NY
- 2014 *Artist in the Marketplace (AIM Fellowship)*, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY

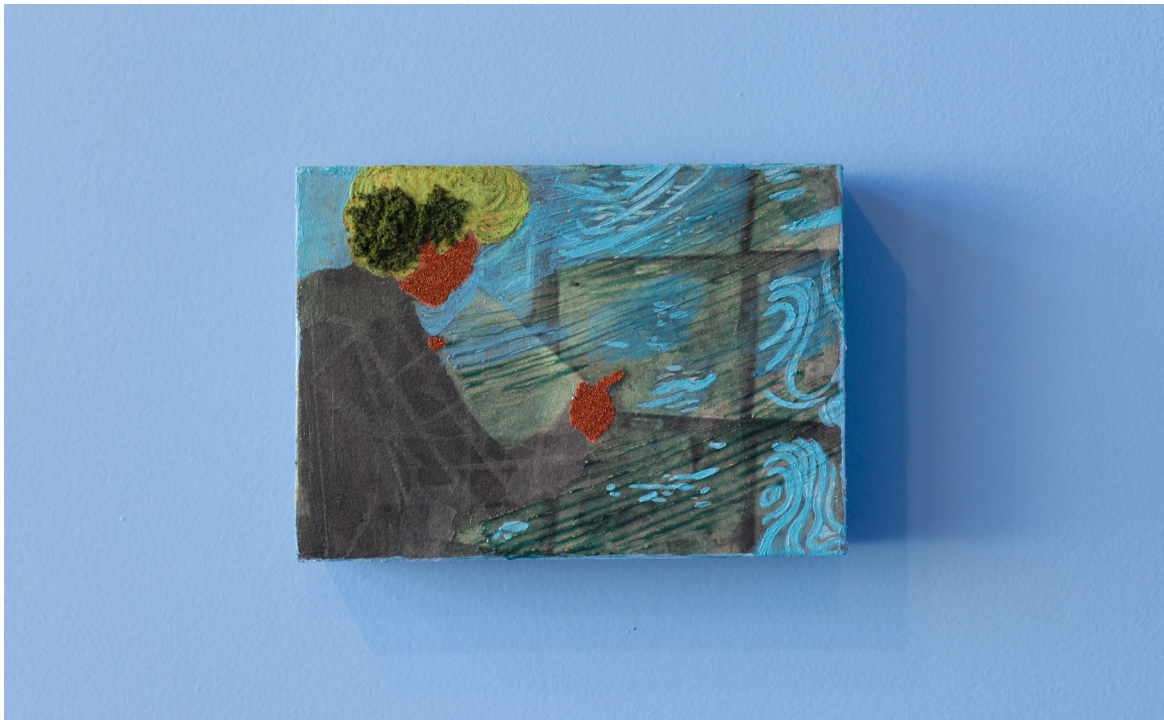
## SELECT SCREENINGS | PERFORMANCES | INSTALLATIONS

- 2018 *All I See Is Blue*, performance, CUE Art Foundation, New York, NY
- 2018 *Cage Match Project VIII: Color Composition*, installation, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
- 2016 *Let It Be Known*, screening, REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA

## PRESS | PUBLICATION

- 2022 Agresta, Michael. "Do Black and Hispanic People Feel Welcome in Austin? An Artist Surveys the City's Racial Climate." *Texas Monthly*, January 31, 2022.  
van Ryzin, Jeanne Claire. "With 'A Welcoming Place,' Ariel René Jackson captures poetic narratives of Black and Brown Austinites", *Sightlines*, January 28, 2022.
- 2021 Schedeen, Kaila. "Ariel René Jackson and Michael J. Love imagine a Black futurist family archive" *Sightlines*, December 1, 2021.
- 2019 Cotter, Sean J. Patrick. "First Look: Ariel René Jackson", *Art in America*, February 1, 2019.
- 2018 Jones, Ladi' Sasha. "Cogitations on Surviving Language", *Original Language*, CUE Art Foundation, 2018.  
Glenn, Allison M. *Out of Easy Reach*, The University of Chicago Press, 2018.  
Grunthaner, Jeffery. "Original Language at CUE Art Foundation", *Art Fuse*, October 5, 2018.  
Jackson, Ariel René. "Monuments for a New Era", *The New York Times*, August 10, 2018.
- 2016 Glenn, Allison M., "Abstracting the City: 'Crescent Elsewhere' at the Black Cinema House", *Pelican Bomb*, October 3, 2016.
- 2015 Villaseñor, María Christina. "Spectral Projections: Color, Race & Abstraction in the Moving Image." *Abstract Video: the moving image in contemporary art*, University of California Press, 2015.
- 2014 Cotter, Holland. "American Beauty", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2014.





*Black traditions of forecasting, Still 5 of many, 2022 gouache paint, iron ore, soft plastic, mediums, archival inkjet on panel, 7 x 5 x 1.75"*

## WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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Photographs by Alexandra Vanderhider  
courtesy of Women & Their Work

This project is supported in part by the  
National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work is a visual and performing arts organization located in Austin that serves as a catalyst for new ideas in contemporary art. Since 1978, Women & Their Work has created significant opportunities for artists and audiences to experience contemporary art through ambitious exhibitions, commissions of new work, performances and programs that inform audiences of all ages. We have actively developed the careers of more than 1,900 women artists, presenting 328 visual art exhibitions, 155 music, dance and theater events, 30 spoken word and literary performances, 16 film festivals and 765 programs & education workshops with the goal of ensuring that diverse women artists are equitably represented in all forms of art. Women & Their Work helps meet an important need in Texas providing exhibition and performance opportunities and helping to attract critical attention to the work produced here; it is the only organization of its kind in the region and one of the few organizations in the United States that dedicates itself to the

work of women artists. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *ArtForum*, and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2020, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art acquired the 43-year archive of Women & Their Work ensuring that our entire history of the work of women artists and our website will be preserved in perpetuity.



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