
THE SHED Press Release

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Kiyan Williams's "Notes on Digging," a New Work Demonstrating the Use of Soil as a Salve for Historical and Contemporary Violence, Premieres on Sunday, July 12 at 6 PM EST

The Seventh Installment of The Shed's *Up Close* Online Series



Detail of *Reaching Towards Warmer Suns* (Richmond) by Kiyan Williams, 2020

New York, NY, July 6, 2020 - Artist **Kiyan Williams** premieres their new project ***Notes on Digging*** as the seventh commission of The Shed's ***Up Close*** online series on Sunday, July 12 at 6 pm EST on The Shed's IGTV channel on [Instagram \(@theshedny\)](https://www.instagram.com/theshedny).

For several years, artist Kiyan Williams has transformed their need to dig in and make art out of the earth into a ritual of care that has grounded them during the recent uprisings against anti-Black and anti-Black trans violence, all set against the backdrop of the government's much-criticized response to the COVID-19 crisis. Williams's video *Notes on Digging* explores how connecting with the earth helps the artist recover from this racialized and gendered violence. In a format similar to a video diary, Williams shares the process of researching and installing a new artwork called *Reaching Towards Warmer Suns* (2020), a set of sculptures resembling long arms with upstretched hands that are made of earth and rise up out of the banks of the James River in Virginia.

As a form of care, Williams finds refuge in touching, digging, and creating with soil; for the artist, who lives in Brooklyn and was based in Richmond for a year as part of a fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University, soil is a salve. “Soil,” as Williams notes of the earth that makes up the riverbanks, “is silent witness to the historical and ongoing dispossession of Black people in America.” Williams’s artwork asks how the legacy of chattel slavery and racial apartheid continues to haunt the present, and how soil might be a site of recovery and transformation.

In summer 2019 as part of The Shed’s group exhibition *Open Call*, Williams presented *Meditation on the Making of America*, a site-specific portrait of America and the exploitation of Black people and land, also made of soil. This work is currently in the permanent collection at the Hirshhorn Museum

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kiyan Williams is a multidisciplinary artist from Newark, New Jersey, who works fluidly across sculpture, performance, and video. In recent works, Williams uses soil as material and metaphor to unearth Afro-diasporic and queer subjectivity. Williams earned a BA with honors from Stanford University and an MFA in visual art from Columbia University. Their work has been exhibited at SculptureCenter, the Jewish Museum, Brooklyn Museum, and The Shed and is in private and public collections including at the Hirshhorn Museum. Williams’s honors and awards include the Astraea Foundation Global Arts Fund and Stanford Arts Award. Williams was previously an artist fellow at Leslie-Lohman Museum and is an alum of the EMERGENYC fellowship at the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics at NYU. Williams is the recipient of the 2019 / 2020 Fountainhead Fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University, where they were on faculty in the Sculpture and Extended Media Department. This fall they will present their first public sculpture, *Reaching Towards Warmer Suns*, in the *Monuments Now* exhibition at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York.

ABOUT UP CLOSE

The Shed is committed to expanding the scope of how a cultural institution can serve audiences, artists, and supporters, a mission that is even more critical while distanced from one another. To creatively engage artists and audiences in this moment of great uncertainty and upheaval, every other Sunday at 6 pm, *Up Close* presents intimate performances, spoken word, dance parties, multimedia experimentations, conversations, and other forms of original content that explore what it means to make art right now.

New works have included a socially distanced vocal performance by **The HawtPlates**, dynamic street dancing within the confines of home by **Reggie ‘Regg Roc’ Gray** and the **D.R.E.A.M. Ring**, and a collaborative music-ritual created by **Troy Anthony** and **Jerome Ellis**. **Nova Cypress Black**, **Tasha Dougé**, and **Gabriel Ramirez**, teaching artists from The Shed’s *DIS OBEY* program for young writers and activists, premiered *What Connects?*, a collection of poems and artwork. **DJ April Hunt** and **Rashaad Newsome** with **Legendary Monster Mon_Teese** and **Precious** celebrated Black queer sonic, visual, and performative traditions with *Go Off! Joy in Defiance*, and **Justin Allen**, **Yulan Grant**, and **S*an D. Henry-Smith** improvised live on the Zoom video conferencing platform in *Call*.

Artists in future installments include **Tomás Saraceno** on July 26 and **Tony Cokes** on Sundays throughout August. Additional artists to be announced.

Up Close is organized by Solana Chehtman, Director of Civic Programs, with Adeze Wilford and Alessandra Gómez, Curatorial Assistants; Justin Wong, Civic Programs Coordinator; and Lily Wan, Digital Content Producer. The Shed’s multidisciplinary commissioning program is developed by Artistic Director and CEO Alex Poots with the senior program team, including Emma Enderby, Chief Curator; Tamara McCaw, Chief Civic Program Officer; Madani Younis, Chief Executive Producer; and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Senior Program Advisor.

ABOUT THE SHED

Located on Manhattan’s west side, The Shed commissions original works of art, across all disciplines, for all audiences. From hip hop to classical music, painting and sculpture to literature, film to theater and dance, The Shed brings together leading and emerging artists and thinkers from all disciplines under one roof. The building—a remarkable movable structure designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Lead Architect, and Rockwell Group, Collaborating Architect—physically transforms to support artists’ most ambitious ideas. Committed to nurturing artistic invention and bringing creative experiences to the broadest possible audiences, The Shed, led by Artistic Director and CEO Alex Poots, is a 21st-century space of and for New York City.
