
THE SHED Press Release

THE **BLOOMBERG** BUILDING
545 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001

The Shed Presents
Tiona Nekkia McClodden: The Trace of an Implied Presence

August 3 – December 11, 2022

Opening reception: August 3, 6 – 8 pm

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Dancer Leslie Cuyjet in Tiona Nekkia McClodden's *The Trace of An Implied Presence*, 2021. Multichannel HD video, color, sound, running times variable. © Tiona Nekkia McClodden, 2022. Courtesy the artist.

New York, NY – The Shed is pleased to present **Tiona Nekkia McClodden's** *The Trace of an Implied Presence*, on view through December 11, 2022.

The Trace of an Implied Presence meditates on the living history and influence of contemporary Black dance in the United States. The exhibition centers on a multichannel video installation inspired by the artist's research into the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 1983 landmark festival [Dance Black America](#), a dynamic presentation of American dance that featured legendary Black dancers, choreographers, scholars, and dance companies. In The Shed's Level 2 Gallery, the installation features four individual dance floors that function as stages for projected images of archival dance footage, film portraits of key figures involved with the festival, and the artist's own documentation of the [Philly Bop](#), a Black social dance from Philadelphia.

Approaching her research in [BAM's Hamm Archives](#) as a conversation with the materials she discovered and those who have come before her, McClodden began a dialogue with Mikki Shepard, the lead curator who programmed and produced the festival and appears in each of the four film portraits. Along with Patricia Kerr Ross (now deceased), Shepard organized the weekend celebration of 300 years of African American dance with performances, workshops, and panels, all centering Blackness and the African diaspora. The multichannel video installation in *The Trace of an Implied Presence* showcases four different forms of dance featured

within this presentation, which have been specifically selected as representations of what dance is today as performed by Black performers.

The gallery is demarcated by four illuminated square dance floors, each composed of distinctive materials that respond to the specific needs of different forms of dance: a Marley floor for modern and concert dance and a wood floor for tap dance, for example. Hovering above each floor is a screen with a projected film portrait of the singular figures or groups McClodden has collaborated with, including Shepard, scholar and tap dancer Michael J. Love, dancer and choreographer [Leslie Cuyjet](#), the Rod Rodgers Dance Company, and dancers Audrey and June Donaldson, a couple upholding the legacy of the Philly Bop. Visitors to the exhibition—whether novices or professionals—are invited to make use of these floors and document themselves performing at any time during the show.

Continuing McClodden’s ongoing work of exploring ideas belonging to the African diaspora across multiple disciplines and approaches, *The Trace of an Implied Presence* weaves together film, performance, sculpture, and sound in a single space. The work amplifies the powerful presence of movement and dance history as a thriving, living record that persists beyond the archive onto the stage and into the street.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a free publication featuring a text by McClodden as well as newly commissioned essays by writers selected by the artist: poet and dancer Harmony Holiday and scholars Jasmine E. Johnson and Samantha N. Sheppard, who together examine the history of Black dance and the nuance of physical and movement-based awareness on the dancer’s body as a living record.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of in-gallery dance performances by McClodden’s collaborators as well as a conversation between cultural worker, producer, and presenter Mikki Shepard and the artist and a reading and book launch with Harmony Holiday.

The exhibition is organized by Tiona Nekkia McClodden and co-produced by The Shed and Nike.

The Shed’s multidisciplinary commissioning program is conceived by Artistic Director and CEO Alex Poots with the senior program team, including Andria Hickey, Chief Curator; Tamara McCaw, Chief Civic Program Officer; Madani Younis, Chief Executive Producer; and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Senior Program Advisor.

Schedule of Events

All events take place in the Level 2 Gallery unless otherwise noted.

Friday, August 5 at 6:30 pm

Opening conversation: Mikki Shepard and Tiona Nekkia McClodden

Cultural worker, producer, and presenter Mikki Shepard has been a vital collaborator for McClodden throughout the making of this new work. Together they will discuss the legacy of Dance Black America, the materiality of the archive, cultural production, and its reverberations in the Black dance community today.

Saturday, August 6 at 4pm

Harmony Holiday: *Maafa* Book Release and Reading

Celebrating the release of her new book *Maafa* (Fence Books), poet Harmony Holiday will present a reading of this work within the space of the exhibition *The Trace of An Implied Presence* in The Shed's Level 2 Gallery. Titled after the Swahili word for catastrophe, *Maafa* is an epic poem about reparations and the female body. Through her skilled use of language, Holiday undoes the erasure of trauma and Black femininity, presenting death as a road to life on a unique hero's journey. The reading is followed by a book signing in The Shed's lobby at McNally Jackson.

Saturday, August 27 at 4 pm

Philly Bop Dance Class: Audrey and June Donaldson

Audrey and June Donaldson, two well-known dancers within the East Coast bop and social dance community, present the Philly Bop, a Black social dance and the official dance of Philadelphia. This class is open to all levels of dancers and participation.

Saturday, September 10 at 4 pm

Dance performance: Michael J. Love

Calls To (/About) 'Elsewhere'

Interdisciplinary tap dance artist Michael J. Love uses *Calls To (/About) 'Elsewhere'* to catalog a series of recent phone conversations with close friends and loved ones. By pairing these voice recordings with improvised movement, a curated house music playlist, and sampled bits of popular media, Love engages in a process of "rhythm dreaming" a space of Black liberation, prosperity, and joy. *Calls To (/About) 'Elsewhere'* is a portion of an evening-length tap dance work that Love is currently developing during his time as a '21 – '23 Princeton University Arts Fellow.

Saturday, October 22 at 4 pm

Dance performance: Leslie Cuyjet

Leslie Cuyjet is a performer, choreographer, and writer. She is mostly known for her work as a performer collaborating with a range of artists that include Will Rawls, Juliana F. May, Cynthia Oliver, Jane Comfort, David Gordon, Anohni, NARCISSISTER, Kim Brandt, Niall Jones, and a canary torsi/Yanira Castro among many others. Her own work interrogates those experiences as a performer in various experimental and postmodern forms through the lens of a Black body. She examines personal and dance histories to guide an ongoing interdisciplinary dance and performance.

Saturday, November 12 at 4 pm

Dance performance: Rod Rodgers Dance Company

Rod Rodgers Dance Company, known as RRDC, is a modern-based company located in the heart of the East Village on Fourth Arts Block. The company's repertoire (which features work created by Rod Rodgers himself, and current artistic director, Kim Grier-Martinez) ranges from thought-provoking experimental work to celebratory jazz ballets, all the while using dance theater as a tool for dramatic social commentary. Their repertoire is trademarked by the company's signature contemporary series titled "Rhythm Dances," recognized as unique in the field of modern dance.

Please visit shed.org for more details on each of the events.

Ticketing

Tickets for *Tiona Nekkia McClodden: The Trace of an Implied Presence* will be available at theshed.org or by calling (646) 455-3494. The exhibition is on view Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 11 am to 8 pm and Sunday and Wednesday from 11 am to 6 pm. Admission in August is free but advance tickets are recommended. The exhibition will be off view September 16 – 27. Additional information on The Shed's health and safety policies and how to plan a visit is available at www.theshed.org/visit.

About Tiona Nekkia McClodden

Tiona Nekkia McClodden is a visual artist, filmmaker, and curator whose interdisciplinary approach traverses documentary film, experimental video, photography, sculpture, and sound installations. Her work addresses and critiques issues at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and social commentary, exploring shared ideas, values, and beliefs within the African diaspora, or what she calls "Black mentifact." Her works have shown in major exhibitions, including most recently in *Prospect 2021*, New Orleans; *New Grit: Art & Philly Now* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Owkui Enwezor's *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America* at the New Museum, New York. Other presentations of her work have been on view at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and MoMA PS1, New York. Work by McClodden is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Rennie Museum, Vancouver.

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Nike and The Shed Partnership

The multiyear partnership between Nike, Inc. and The Shed honors a shared belief that art and sport can expand human potential. Nike, Inc. and The Shed are dedicated to expanding human performance and are committed to artistic creativity, empowerment, diversity, and risk-taking. During this partnership Nike, Inc. will collaborate in relevant programming connected to The Shed's annual program. This summer's partner programming includes the dance and DJ sets on The Shed's Plaza and Tiona Nekkia McClodden's exhibition, *The Trace of an Implied Presence*.

About Nike, Inc.

Nike, Inc., based near Beaverton, Oregon, is the world's leading designer, marketer, and distributor of authentic athletic footwear, apparel, equipment, and accessories for a wide variety of sports and fitness activities. Converse, a wholly owned Nike, Inc. subsidiary brand, designs, markets, and distributes athletic lifestyle footwear, apparel, and accessories. For more information, visit news.nike.com and follow @NIKE.

About The Shed

The Shed is a new cultural institution of and for the 21st century. We produce and welcome innovative art and ideas, across all forms of creativity, to build a shared understanding of our rapidly changing world and a more equitable society. In our highly adaptable building on Manhattan's west side, The Shed brings together established and emerging artists to create new work in fields ranging from pop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to dance. We seek opportunities to collaborate with cultural peers and community organizations, work with like-minded partners, and provide unique spaces for private events. As an independent nonprofit that values invention, equity, and generosity, we are committed to advancing art forms, addressing the urgent issues of our time, and making our work impactful, sustainable, and relevant to the local community, the cultural sector, New York City, and beyond.