

**NEW**  
**235 BOWERY**  
**NEW YORK NY**  
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**MUSEUM**

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**NEW MUSEUM'S SUMMER LINEUP FEATURES EXHIBITIONS  
AND PROJECTS BY DIEDRICK BRACKENS  
MELANIE CREAN, SHAUN LEONARDO, AND SABLE ELYSE SMITH  
AND SYDNEY SHEN**

**New York, NY...**The New Museum is pleased to present its exhibition lineup for Summer 2019. Joining solo presentations across the Museum's three main floors by **Mika Rottenberg**, **Marta Minujín**, and **Lubaina Himid**, **Diedrick Brackens** presents an installation of hand-woven textiles for his first New York solo museum presentation in the Lobby Gallery; artists-in-residence **Melanie Crean**, **Shaun Leonardo**, and **Sable Elyse Smith** debut a new video installation on the Fifth Floor for the Museum's fourth annual Summer Art and Social Justice residency and exhibition, *Mirror/Echo/Tilt*; and a new installation by **Sydney Shen** is on view in the Museum's Storefront Window.



Diedrick Brackens, *the cup is a cloud*, 2018.  
Cotton yarn, acrylic yarn, and mirrors, 74 x 78  
in (188 x 198.1 cm). Courtesy the artist

**Diedrick Brackens: darling divined**  
**June 4–September 8, 2019**  
**Lobby Gallery**

Diedrick Brackens (b. 1989, Mexia, TX) constructs intricately woven textiles that speak to the complexities of black and queer identity in the United States. Interlacing diverse traditions—including West African weaving, European tapestries, and quilting from the American south—Brackens creates figurative narratives and cosmographic abstractions that lyrically merge commemoration, allegory, and lived experience. He foregrounds the loaded associations of cotton, which is enmeshed in the history of the transatlantic slave trade. Through a meticulous and mindful process, Brackens inscribes his weavings with symbolic materials and figures that probe the tangled threads of American history.

For “darling divined,” his first solo museum exhibition in New York, Brackens presents a selection of new and recent weavings in the Lobby Gallery. Their titles draw from poetry and literature by writers such as Essex Hemphill (1957–1995), a poet and activist known for openly addressing race, sexuality, the rise of HIV/AIDS, and other issues affecting the queer African-American community. This body of work was inspired by Hemphill’s poems, particularly “The Father, Son and Unholy

Ghosts” (1996), which speaks to the intricacies of familial relationships and the radical gesture of birthing one’s own identity. Brackens’s large-scale tapestries portray moments of intimacy, generosity, and affection between coupled beings, whether they be animals, lovers, relatives, or friends.

This exhibition is curated by Margot Norton, Curator, and Francesca Altamura, Curatorial Assistant.

**Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, Sable Elyse Smith: Mirror/Echo/Tilt**  
**June 18–October 6, 2019**  
**Fifth Floor**

*Mirror/Echo/Tilt* is a performance and pedagogical project created by artists Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, and Sable Elyse Smith to examine the language and gestures used to describe experiences of arrest and incarceration. Culminating a four-year collaboration between the artists, the exhibition premieres a multichannel video installation that depicts performances they developed with participants in intensive workshops and filmed largely in decommissioned prisons, empty courthouses, and other psychically charged architectural spaces in New York City.



Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, Sable Elyse Smith, *Mirror/Echo/Tilt*, 2019. Digital photograph, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artists

Drawing on principles from speculative fiction, somatic movement, cognitive psychology, and radical theater, the artists and participants use visual storytelling to reframe their experiences and open up new possibilities for resisting systems of control. Fragmented, doubled, and slowed movements de-familiarize mainstream narratives about carcerality. The project’s title, *Mirror/Echo/Tilt*, is inspired by Miguel de Cervantes’s famous novel *Don Quixote* (1605–15), which was written from prison. Much like Cervantes’s novel, *Mirror/Echo/Tilt* complicates the boundary between fiction and reality, and explores how radically shifting the way we tell stories can challenge dominant power structures.

The project also takes the form of a living curriculum practiced with court-involved youth, formerly incarcerated adults, and individuals otherwise vulnerable to the justice system. The curriculum focuses on undoing the language around culturally embedded conceptions of criminality and will serve as an open resource that lives beyond the artists and the exhibition.

*Mirror/Echo/Tilt* is the New Museum’s fourth annual Summer Art and Social Justice residency and exhibition. It features private workshops for community partners, public forums and readings, and a resource room with visions for justice contributed by visitors and facilitated by the New Museum Teen Apprentice Program, a summer youth employment program.

This exhibition is curated by Emily Mello, Associate Director of Education, and Sara O’Keeffe, Associate Curator.



“Sydney Shen: Onion Master,” 2019. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. Photo: Charles Benton

**Sydney Shen: Onion Master**  
**April 30–September 1, 2019**  
**Storefront Window**

Sydney Shen (b. 1989, Woodbridge, NJ) creates sculptures and installations that evoke a sense of abject dread. Informed by a range of historical and contemporary sources—including Peking opera, supernatural horror fiction, and the darkest recesses of the web—Shen frankensteins organic and synthetic materials such as Chinese and Western medicinal aromatics, 3-D-printed plastic, and biological specimens to produce uncanny environments.

“Onion Master” reimagines an arcade claw machine with a bizarre prize: artificial onions. The lowly vegetable emits tear-inducing gas when sliced, to tragicomic effect. Scattered alongside the onions, solar-powered toys—which the artist sees as captive performers—are encased within clear acrylic balls. Shen has lined the window with lyrical excerpts from a song by English Renaissance musician John Dowland, whose compositions often ruminate on melancholy. Combining the spirit of an amusement park with morbid cues from funeral parlors, the installation highlights the macabre within carnivalesque and Gothic imagery. The claw machine, also known as a skill crane, is at once enticing and deceptively difficult; it is designed to give the false impression that a player will be able to claim the prize. Shen’s design amplifies this frustration, offering a game with no way to play and no prize to collect. “Onion Master” presents a Sisyphean task—in the end, no one wins.

“Sydney Shen: Onion Master” joins a new series of window installations that relaunches a program the New Museum originally mounted in the 1980s.

This project is curated by Francesca Altamura, Curatorial Assistant.

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**ABOUT NEW MUSEUM**

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

## **SUPPORT**

### **Diedrick Brackens: darling devined**

Support is provided by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund.

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### **Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, Sable Elyse Smith: Mirror/Echo/Tilt**

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The Research & Residencies Council of the New Museum

Additional support is provided by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund.

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### **Sydney Shen: Onion Master**

This project is made possible with support provided by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund.