

Screens Series: Ariel René Jackson

Working across sculpture, video, and performance, Ariel René Jackson (b. 1991, Monroe, Louisiana) explores land as a site of negotiation, bearing vestiges of slavery and colonialism as well as offering the potential for recovery, restoration, and growth.

In *Here's Hoping a.k.a. The Blues* (2013), Jackson's alter ego Confuserella describes a fictional world comprised of four colors. During a voiceover paired with claymation sequences and collaged newsreel footage, she explains how the blues—defined broadly as a genre of music, a mood, and a color—persist despite tribulations with the other colors. Borrowing from the conventions of early PBS documentaries and radical children's television programming, the series details a world similar to our own and peppered with zany sci-fi elements. In the seminal 1994 text “Black to the Future,” musician and writer Greg Tate argued that between the abduction of people from Africa and the horror of American racial violence, “being Black in America is a science fiction experience.” Nodding to Tate's proposition, American history emerges in the video's most colorful moments: as clay swirls, Confuserella details a levee break that allowed the blues to flood in. As she outlines how the blues attempted to stamp out all of the other colors, which are now in need of protection, the video cuts to footage of an environmental conservationist arguing for protected land dedicated solely for endangered species.

Jackson's most recent videos on view here—*The Future is a Constant Wake* (2019) and *Its Extended Remnant* (2019)—center soil and farm tools as tools to access to knowledge from the past. The opening line of *The Future is a Constant Wake* speculates on all that could be borne from sustained engagement with the important work of ancestors. Developed in collaboration with choreographer Michael J. Love, the video proposes a somatic way of forging connection with the past through touch and movement. Through this process, Jackson argues “palimpsests of previous systems will be a guide to seeing ourselves released” and move us to “futures that our bodies will inhabit, again.” She reminds us that the English word *remember* contains the word *member*, shorthand for a person, animal, plant, or limb that is a part of a complex structure. Etymologically, the Latin roots of *remember* and *member* reinscribe a mind-body divide—*remember* is derived from *memor*, meaning to be mindful, while *member* comes from *membrum*, or body part—a distinction that Jackson makes a powerful case for reworking. Only then, she argues, can the material legacies of the past be fully reckoned with, bringing us to a “point past pain and just upon bliss.”

“Screens Series: Ariel René Jackson” continues the New Museum's Screens Series, a platform for the presentation of new video works by emerging contemporary artists, and is organized by Sara O'Keeffe, Associate Curator.

Ariel René Jackson (b. 1991, Monroe, Louisiana) grew up between New Orleans and Mamou, Louisiana, and currently lives and works in Austin, Texas. Her work has been shown at the SculptureCenter (2019); CUE Art Foundation (2018); Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans (2018); Depaul Art Museum (2018); the Studio Museum in Harlem (2016), and the RISD Museum (2017).

Ariel René Jackson

Here's Hoping a.k.a. The Blues, 2016

Video, sound, color; 3:19 min

Blue-American Gods, 2017

Video, sound, color; 2:23 min

All courtesy the artist

Ariel René Jackson and Michael J. Love

The Future is a Constant Wake, 2019

Video, sound, color; 6:12 min

Courtesy the artist

Ariel René Jackson

Its Extended Remnant, 2019

Video, sound, color; 4:30 min

Courtesy the artist
