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Museum as Hub Features an Exhibition of Black Periodicals in a Reading Room and Discussion Space by Steffani Jemison and Jamal Cyrus Followed by a Winter Exhibition by Beirut Art Center

“Museum as Hub: Steffani Jemison and Jamal Cyrus: Alpha’s Bet Is Not Over Yet!”

October 12 – December 4, 2011

Fifth Floor

“Museum as Hub: Alpha’s Bet Is Not Over Yet” is an exhibition, reading room, and discussion space inspired by the energy and politics of radical, independent Black periodicals published during the first half of the twentieth century. Borne out of “Book Club” (2010), a think tank and reading group organized by artists Steffani Jemison and Jamal Cyrus for Project Row Houses, Houston, “Alpha’s Bet” investigates approaches to language, the written word, self-education, and democratic distributions of knowledge. The project draws upon two hundred years of dialogues that span the spiritual, pedagogic, visionary, and populist. These perspectives are reflected in the exhibition’s title that paraphrases theorist and artist Rammellzee (1960-2010), who argued that language as a social agreement is not a passive vessel or known quantity but rather possesses the potential to reimagine structures of power.

The centerpiece of the project is an interactive newsstand display featuring complete reproductions of more than 500 issues of Black periodicals published between 1902 and 1940, including *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*; *The Messenger: World’s Greatest Negro Monthly*; *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*; and *The Crusader*. The installation is designed to encourage browsing of the materials and provides space for both concentrated reading and conversation.

Expanding upon ideas explored in the periodicals on display, Jemison and Cyrus have invited artists to create posters inspired by the American Library Association’s READ campaign. Contributing artists include: Regina Agu, Firelei Báez, Jamal Cyrus, Nathaniel Donnett, Chitra Ganesh, Tia-Simone Gardner, Steffani Jemison, Nikki Pressley, Robert Pruitt and Autumn Knight, Bobby Ray, Martine Syms, and Ginger



Chitra Ganesh, *Kaleidoscopic*, 2011. Wide-format Print. Courtesy the artist

Bobby Ray, *Ice Letters*, 2011. Wide-format Print. Courtesy the artist



Brooks Takahashi. These posters are joined by a collection of contemporary chapbooks, zines, and self-published volumes, which explore the potential of the publication form today, offering perspectives by: Terry Adkins, Adebukola Bodunrin, Nsenga Knight, David Leggett, Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, Eliza Myrie, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Mitchell Squire, Martine Syms, Gregory Tate, and LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs.

As part of the exhibition, Jemison and Cyrus have invited artists and writers to **read selections** in the gallery on **October 20, November 10, November 17, and December 1**, during the New Museum's free Thursday evenings. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to suggest passages from the presented materials for public readings.

The project is accompanied by an illustrated publication that borrows the form of a reader—a compendium of essays, interviews, and selections from the periodicals and posters on display. Edited by Steffani Jemison and designed by Nikki Presley, *The Reader* includes contributions from Adebukola Bodunrin, Jamal Cyrus, Egie Ighile, Mitchell Jackson, Steffani Jemison, Ryan Inouye, Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts/The Freedwoman's Bureau, Ethan Swan, and Greg Tate.

"Museum as Hub: Steffani Jemison and Jamal Cyrus: Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet!" is co-organized by Ryan Inouye, Curatorial Assistant and Ethan Swan, Education Associate.

Read an interview with Steffani Jemison and Jamal Cyrus [here](#) to delve deeper into some of the ideas they explore in their project.

Related Public Programs

Note: All programs will take place on the 5th floor and are free of charge, unless otherwise noted.

Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet: Public Reading with Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts author of *Harlem is Nowhere*, and Hilton Als theatre critic for the *The New Yorker*
Thursday, October 20, 2011 7 p.m.

Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet: *Book Club Book*: Reading and Book Launch
Thursday, November 17, 2011 7 p.m.

Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet: Public Reading with Jamal Cyrus and Friends
Thursday, November 10, 2011 7 p.m.

Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet: Public Reading with Steffani Jemison and Friends
Thursday, December 1, 2011 7 p.m.

Alpha's Bet Is Not Over Yet: An Evening with *Transition*
Thursday, December 8, 2011, 7 p.m.

Transition is a unique forum for fresh perspectives on global issues, literature and art, cultures and people, with an emphasis on Africa and the Diaspora. Founded in 1961, in Uganda, by the late Rajat Neogy, *Transition's* current series carries on the original's tough-minded, far-reaching criticism, both cultural and political. On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, editors, and contributors will consider the potential of this radical Black periodical by reflecting on its past with an evening of readings. This event will take place in the New Museum Theater.

“Museum as Hub: Due to unforeseen events...”

December 14, 2011 – February 5, 2012

Fifth Floor

“Due to unforeseen events...” is a multipart project that includes an exhibition, Beirut Art Center’s *Mediatheque*, and a series of public performances and screenings. Examining issues that are relevant to contemporary art practice and the recent history and politics of Lebanon, the project addresses the relation between art and public space, the critical reception of artwork, and questions of censorship. In the Museum as Hub, Beirut Art Center presents an exhibition that examines specific cases in which the production or presentation of artworks in Lebanon were altered from their original idea, raising unexpected questions and unfolding new meaning in the process. The exhibition includes descriptions of each case in addition to new commissions, in which artists are invited to respond to the alteration of their work, using archival documentation as well as new texts, images, and objects. “Due to unforeseen events...” features works by Ziad Abillama, Tony Chakar, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Rabih Mroué, and Kirsten Scheid.

In the resource center, Beirut Art Center presents their *Mediatheque*, a digital archive that offers public access to works—including video, image, sound, and text—by an expanding number of artists working in Arab countries as well as Iran, Turkey, and Armenia. The *Mediatheque* also includes a selection of events presented at Beirut Art Center.

“Museum as Hub: Due to Unforseen Events...” is organized by guest curators Sandra Dagher and Lamia Joreige for Beirut Art Center.

About Museum as Hub

The Museum as Hub is a laboratory for art and ideas that supports activities and experimentation; explores artistic, curatorial, and institutional practice; and serves as an important resource for the public to learn about contemporary art from around the world. Both a network of relationships and an actual physical site located in the fifth-floor New Museum Education Center, Museum as Hub is conceived as a flexible, social space designed to engage audiences through multimedia workstations, exhibition areas, screenings, symposia, and events.

Exhibition Support

Museum as Hub and public programs are made possible, in part, through the support of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts. Curatorial travel and research has been underwritten by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Asian Cultural Council. Endowment support is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Skadden, Arps Education Programs Fund, and the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Fund for Education Programs at the New Museum. Education and public programs are made possible by a generous grant from Goldman Sachs Gives at the recommendation of David and Hermine Heller.

About the New Museum

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum was conceived as 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, dedicated building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of ongoing experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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