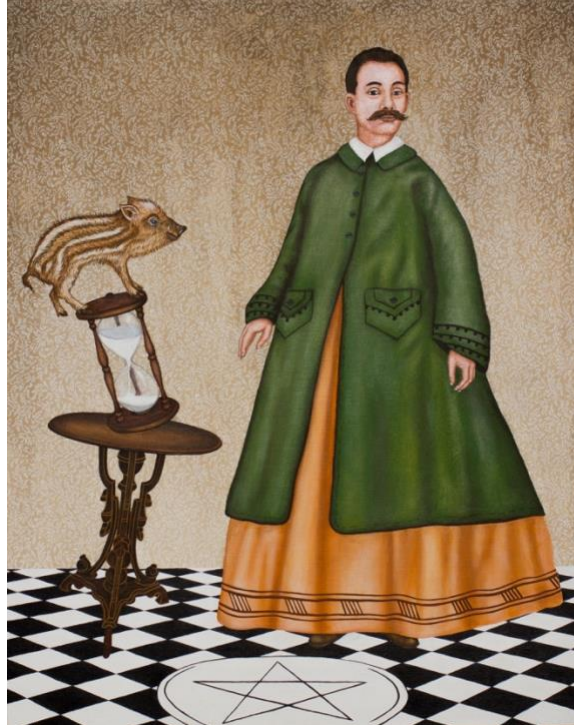


The Ambiguities of Blackness

May 1–June 12, 2021



Lezley Saar, *The Silent Woman*, 2015.

**Curated by California Black Voices Project Grantee,
Dr. Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins**

Featuring

April Banks | Lավialle Campbell | Karen Hampton |
Raymond Holbert | David Huffman | Lauren McIntosh | Lezley Saar

April 14, 2021, San Francisco, CA – Minnesota Street Project Foundation announces, *The Ambiguities of Blackness*, the first of five exhibitions by the inaugural grantees of the [California Black Voices Project](#), to take place between 2021-2022. Curated by grantee Dr. Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, *The Ambiguities of Blackness* will be presented at 1275 Minnesota Street Project in the Atrium and on Adjacent, the Project’s virtual space. California Black Voices Project grantees Indira Allegra, Rashaad Newsome, Toni Scott, and Leila Weefur will curate upcoming exhibitions. “Minnesota Street Project Foundation believes in a more equitable future and is dedicated to provide opportunities for under-represented voices and perspectives to be

shared, experienced, and amplified,” Deborah Rappaport, Founder, Minnesota Street Project Foundation.

Opening on May 1, 2021, *The Ambiguities of Blackness* examines *who* and *what* defines “Black art.” The answer’s complexity is the central point of the exhibition, asserting that no one artist or singular work could possibly define the whole of the Black experience. The seven artists featured in the exhibition explore and reveal complex personal and shared poetic notions of blackness. Their artwork’s materiality is as diverse as their notions of blackness while embracing other aspects of their lives.

“Black people are not culturally and ancestrally monolithic,” says Dr. LeFalle-Collins. “Many of us know this, but forget it when looking at artwork by Black artists. Due to the nature of Black enslavement, our experiences are multidimensional, embracing many nuanced stories, ethnic histories and notions, and varying perspectives as we explore and carve out our sense of place in the world. After all, being Black does not mean that you live in a bubble of blackness.”

The featured works in *The Ambiguities of Blackness* include the colorful, abstracted paintings of **David Huffman** that evoke the political exploration of identity through basketball. Huffman takes the machismo out of the game with his printed pastel nets, compositions, creating light-filled spaces where imaginary floating bodies can "get some air," physically and momentarily in that ethereal space. **Karen Hampton’s** conceptual fiber art considers the power of African spirits' psychic energy, a healing action, connected through the act of weaving, which she believes is her “true art,” using natural organic threads to connect with her ancestors. **Lezley Saar’s** portraits suggest that the women pictured hold their own power from gender-bending women to those who exude privilege. All are engaged in their own thoughts, often in magical realms and otherworldly spaces.

LeFalle-Collins further invites visitors to the exhibition to reflect on the definition of “Black art,” noting, “Viewers, collectors, curators, and writers often champion representational blackness where the Black figure defines "Black art." Currently, we are in a period of heightened focus on Black artists and the Black figure. This exhibition includes and moves beyond that imagery.”

Artist, **Raymond Holbert** began photographing underwater swimmers in 2016, often incorporating them with his graphic designs. These photographs depict exhilarating water bodies as joyful and water as healing rather than places of fear for many Black people. **April Banks** explores the art of looking and the observer as the observed. She inserts herself in other time periods and global spaces, fantasizing about herself in other lives. Influenced by French antiques, **Lauren McIntosh** creates "a place of her own," displaying the pleasures of object love, especially with Edenic symbolism and calligraphic designs painted in blues and gold. Flowers are central to her paintings and prints, but she often focuses on figures, sometimes with embedded histories. **Lavialle Campbell’s** quilted textiles speak to injustice and tragedy, but also rise above that sorrow in her bright right red cotton quilted textiles, accentuated with reproductions of Kente cloth, a textile of the Ashanti and Ewe peoples of Ghana and Togo.

“As an art historian,” LeFalle-Collins states, “I feel a sense of *déjà vu*. Figurative works by New Negro artists in the 1930s such as artists as Jacob Lawrence, Lois Mailou Jones, and Aaron Douglas enhanced recognition of Black cultural and intellectual achievements. During the 1960s and 1970s, Betye Saar, Romare Bearden, David Hammons, and Faith Ringgold captured audiences with images fostering Black identity and liberation. In both periods, the figurative portrayals were more readily collected by white and Black institutions than works by abstractionists or conceptual artists like Mildred Thompson, Jack Whitten, Arthur Monroe, or Alma Thomas.”

“It is not that the artists featured in *The Ambiguities of Blackness* are not interested in any of the issues that inspired others to include the Black figure,” continues LeFalle-Collins. “Their focus leans heavily into materiality, free-flowing creative expression, or intellectual, conceptual pursuits that do not necessarily display Blackness. In the past, as now, some rejected race as a factor in judging or accepting their work, wanting it viewed on its artistic merit. In a perfect world, this type of merit might be possible, but it is not the reality. Race still matters.”

The Ambiguities of Blackness opens on May 1, 2021 and runs through June 12, 2021. The exhibition is free and open to the public at 1275 Minnesota Street Project in the Atrium or online. For information on the Project’s social distancing requirements and hours of operation visit: <http://minnesotastreetproject.com>

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Closing Day Event for *The Ambiguities of Blackness*

**Tea Afar
June 13, 2021**

Experience Tea Afar, an afternoon nomadic storytelling event produced by featured exhibition artist, April Banks. Banks conceived Tea Afar as a collaborative transmedia project that shares Banks’ travel experiences with a community in a shared space—through the lens of Banks’ conceptual art practice. Each Tea Afar event is a unique and one-time only experience. For more information visit: <http://minnesotastreetproject.com>

Where: 1275 Minnesota Street Project Atrium
When: Sunday, June 13, 2021

About Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins

Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, Ph.D., mixes scholarship with public engagement through cultural, social, and political storytelling. LeFalle-Collins was the Curator of Visual Arts at the California



African American Museum in Los Angeles from 1984-1990. Her roster includes *1960s: A Cultural Reawakening*, *Novae: William H. Johnson and Bob Thompson*, and *The Portrayal of the Black Musician in American Art*.

In 1990 the independent LeFalleCuratorial was established in Oakland, California. LeFalle-Collins has curated exhibitions for the California African American Museum (CAAM), Museum of the African Diaspora San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, USIA biennials in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Johannesburg, South Africa, and a binational in El Centro, Tijuana, Mexico. Throughout her career she has worked with numerous notable artists including Mildred Howard, Sargent Claude Johnson, John Outterbridge, Noah Purifoy, and Betye Saar.

About California Black Voices Project

[California Black Voices Project](#) is a grant-making program of the Minnesota Street Project Foundation for Black artists and curators working in California. Five grantees were selected through a jury composed of four prominent art world professionals. Each grantee receives \$10,000, and an exhibition presented at Minnesota Street Project, as well as virtually on MSP Adjacent.

Upcoming 2021–2022 exhibitions are currently in development with California Black Voices Project inaugural grantees Indira Allegra, Rashaad Newsome, Toni Scott, and Leila Weefur. For information visit: <https://minnesotastreetproject.org/california-black-voices-project>

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About Minnesota Street Project Foundation

Established in 2019, [Minnesota Street Project Foundation](#) embarks on initiatives to further develop the diversity and vibrancy of arts-related culture within and beyond the Project's model. The Minnesota Street Project Foundation is dedicated to the realization of a thriving, sustainable arts community in the Bay Area.

Through collaboration, the Foundation advances educational and civic programming and provides direct financial support to artist and arts organizations. The Foundation commits to fostering relationships with local, national, and international businesses, individuals, and institutions to support the evolving landscape of art practice and patronage. For more information on supporting expanded programming, please visit [Minnesota Street Project Foundation](#).

Minnesota Street Project Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.

Photo Caption: Lezley Saar, *The Silent Woman*, 2015. Acrylic on fabric on panel
20 x 16 in. Courtesy of Artist and Walter Maciel Gallery.