

## **HAIR @ Ely**

This is a collective of women artists exploring hair through conversation, process, and discovery culminating in a collaborative group exhibit at the Ely Center of Contemporary Art in New Haven, CT from January 13 - February 20, 2022.

Artists Sherese Francis, Alana Ladson, Candace Leslie, Jennifer McCandless, Abigail Simon, Megan Shaughnessy, Yvonne Shortt, and Christine Tyler came together in a virtual space every week beginning in November 2021 to discuss their work and create a space for artistic discovery. In addition, they will be making space together in the gallery and audience members will witness the transformation between artists as they engage in creativity.

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### **Yvonne Shortt**

Yvonne Shortt is focused on using materials to create transformative experiences for herself. These transformative experiences lead to behavioral shifts in the artist. Ms. Shortt reflects these behaviors outward, creating shifts in the viewers of her work. The viewers in turn reflect these behaviors into their communities; little by little the world is transformed.

Ms. Shortt's work is also about transforming static gallery spaces into places where artists are in process. Thus, the gallery becomes a place not only for the object, but the human being. The current exhibition is based on the framework Ms. Shortt and Daria Dorosh created as part of the Research and Development Committee they founded at A.I.R Gallery in Brooklyn, New York.

In Ms. Shortt's current piece, *Material Investigations at the Ely*, Ms Shortt investigates hair and cultural mindsets using rope, repetition, various other materials, and historical context. This piece will be in progress for its duration at the Ely.

### **Christine Lee Tyler**

Christine Lee Tyler is a multidisciplinary DC and New York-based artist working in video, 2D and 3D realms. Her practice addresses the mundanity and impermanence of existence through a female lens. She works with painting, ceramics, digital art, video and collage. Her process involves utilizing patterns in a repetitive manner to drive the discourse of repression found in domestication.

She received her MFA from Brooklyn College in 2019 and BFA from the School of Visual Arts. She is currently the Art Department Chair and Instructor for Pallotti College Preparatory School outside of Washington DC.

Christine has recently been interviewed by BTR Today Podcast and published in Woven Tale Press, Washington Post and Art En Pause. She has been included in both solo and group shows nationally and internationally and been a recipient of fellows worldwide.

### **Sherese Francis**

Sherese Francis is an Alkymist of the I-Magination and expresses her(e)self through poetry, interdisciplinary arts, workshop facilitation, editing, and literary curation. Her(e) work takes inspiration from her Afro-Caribbean heritage (Barbados and Dominica), and studies in Afrofuturism and Black Speculative Arts, mythology and etymology.

Some of her(e) work has been published in Furious Flower, Obsidian Lit, Rootwork Journal, Spoken Black Girl, The Operating System, Cosmonauts Avenue, No Dear, Apex Magazine, Bone Bouquet, African Voices, Newtown Literary, and Free Verse. Additionally, Sherese has published three chapbooks, Lucy's Bone Scrolls (Three Legged Elephant), Variations on Sett/ling Seed/ling (Harlequin Creature), and Recycling a Why That Rules Over My Sacred Sight (DoubleCross Press). In 2020, her(e) poem "SAME Nobody" was chosen as a finalist for the Furious Flower poetry prize and her(e) manuscript, *PollyNation: The Seminary of Self*, was chosen as a finalist for the CAAPP Book Prize. The following year, her(e) poem, "SomNuh/Mbulist (Patois Possession)" won The Caribbean Writer's Vincent Cooper Literary Prize.

Besides publications, Sherese has had her(e) work featured in various exhibitions and showcases from The Lit Exhibit, NY Live Arts, Queens Public Library, York College Arts Gallery, King Manor Museum, WorksOnWater, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, Jamaica Flux, Baxter St Camera Club, Bliss On Bliss, Maleza Proyectos, and The Rubenstein Art Center.

### **Candace Leslie**

Candace Leslie is a visual artist exploring the symbiotic relationships evident in motherhood, haircare and the manifold forms of blackness. As self-taught oil painter and collage artist born and raised in Columbus, GA, she cultivated a strong appreciation for plant life, natural elements and fable and folklore.

Utilizing a hybrid practice combining gritty, gnarled texture and multi-layered brushstroke techniques with transformative chroma, Candace paints upon various surfaces, including wood panel, framed canvases and long, linen strips.

The current exhibition mounts her exploration of nurturing aspects of haircare and rite of passing on cultural knowledge of this symbiotic nurturing transmitted across generations through women and children, showcased inside surreal, folkloric settings.

Candace's work has been included in the West Harlem Arts: Resilience exhibition and was a recipient of the Davis Projects for Peace Grant through JumpstArt NYC.

### **Abigail Simon**

Abigail Simon is an artist and curator actively researching how to dismantle flawed social systems and neutralize toxic histories. Through experimentation with materials, technologies, language, traditional crafts and radical spiritual practices she challenges the claustrophobic aesthetic/values of the present in order to conjure the compassionate future in which her essential optimism is justified.

Her videos, films, photo-based works and installations have been shown at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, The International Center of Photography, Governor's Island, The Snug Harbor Cultural Center, The EFA Gallery, Chashama, Baxter Street at CCNY, LACE in Los Angeles, The Ace Hotel and The AIR Gallery and other independent spaces around the globe. She received her MFA in Advanced Photographic Studies from Bard College in 2006, and is currently ABD for her Phd in Media Philosophy from the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland. She has taught at ITP at Tisch School Of The Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, The International Center of Photography, The Pacific Northwest College of Art and Pratt Institute and was a teaching artist at RUSH Arts in the New York City Public Schools. She is a vegan and a 500 hour yoga teacher and lives in upstate New York.

### **Megan Shaughnessy**

Megan Shaughnessy (she/her/hers) has been a visual artist for over 20 years, exhibiting in both the US and internationally. She received a BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York City and an MA in Photographic Studies from Norwich University of the Arts (NUCA) in the UK. From 2005-2009 she was an invited guest lecturer at NUCA and was also part of an artistic collaboration with fellow artist, Emma Shipton-Smith.

Megan started working with hair after the birth of her first child. In 2018 she cut off all her hair and used it to create a series of self-portraits that opened up a dialogue around biased notions of hair, particularly concerning gender roles and identity within modern society. Recently, Megan curated a virtual exhibition entitled *Strand* for the Ely Center of Contemporary Art (ECOCA). *Strand* is a celebration of the power and significance of all hair including facial, crown, and body hair. The artists showcased in this exhibition highlight the connection hair has to personal, gender, culture, social, and racial identities.

Megan moved to the New Haven, CT area over five years ago and has been actively involved in the artistic community working at the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, exhibiting her artwork, writing a children's storybook, collaborating on creative projects, and sitting on the Curatorial & Community Engagement Committee at ECOCA.

### **Alana Ladson**

Alana Ladson is an illustrator and character designer who loves to read, write, and draw. She earned her B.A. at St. John's University and is currently working in the arts. Her experiences are rooted in the arts, education and advocacy– she loves working with youth, making art and sharing what her students call “sage-wisdom”. Alana is currently a board member for Connecticut Arts Alliance. She has exhibited her work through exhibits and events at the New Haven Free Public Library, The Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut, Yale Peabody Museum, Koffee, and more. Alana also has an art business, Alana Ladson Art, where she creates art prints, enamel pins, and stickers of positive and empowering images of people of color. She is currently creating paintings and illustrating new works and looking to write and illustrate her own children's book. You can find her illustration work at [alanaladsonart.com](http://alanaladsonart.com).

### **Jennifer McCandless**

Jennifer received her BFA in Sculpture from Otis/Parsons School of Art and Design and her MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has taught Ceramics and Sculpture at Wayne State University and The Loomis Chaffee School. She is currently Art Department Chair, Curator and Director of the Mercy Gallery and a Nichols Fellow in Art at Loomis Chaffee in CT. Jennifer has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Michigan Council for the Arts Individual Artist Grant, The Palmer Fellowship 2011-2015, MASS MoCA Assets for Artists grant, the Watershed Kiln God, the Millay Colony and Skowhegan full fellowships. Her extensive exhibition history includes shows at the National Sculpture Society, the Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit, The Lemberg Gallery, the Housatonic Museum, the John Sly Ely Museum, the Elmhurst Art Museum, Hyde Park Art Center, The Frederick Meijer Museum of Sculpture and the American Museum of Ceramic Art. She has also exhibited in the

Miami (X Contemporary) and NYC (Superfine) art fairs 2015-17. Jennifer is represented by A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, NY and Soapbox Arts in Burlington, VT. In 2021, Jennifer exhibited her work at A.P.E. Gallery in Northampton Mass in a two-person exhibition with Nanette Vonnegut entitled *Seeing Red/Feeling Blue*, was artist in residence at Cha North, NY and had a solo exhibit entitled *Living Among the Humans* at Soapbox Arts, September 8- October 30 as well as *Paint* at the Silvermine Gallery, New Canaan, CT.