



STRANGER
IN A
STRANGER
LAND
YOU'LL
WONDER IF
THEY ARE
TALKING
ABOUT
YOU



12	11	5	8	
1				
7	9	2	6	4



Dave McKenzie was born in 1977 in Kingston, Jamaica. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Selected solo exhibitions include the Wien Lukatsch in Berlin (2015); the Aspen Art Museum in Aspen, Colorado (2010); REDCAT in Los Angeles, California (2008); and The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, Massachusetts (2007). Selected group exhibitions include the *Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City (2014); *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, Texas (traveling to the Grey Art Gallery in New York City, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota); *Blues for Smoke* at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, and Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio (2013); *The Ungovernables, 2012 New Museum Triennial* at the New Museum in New York City (2012); *At Home/Nat at Home: Works From the Collection of Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg* at the CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2010); *The Absolutely Other* at The Kitchen in New York City (2010); *30 Seconds Off an Inch* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2009); and *Prospect. I New Orleans International Biennial* in New Orleans, Louisiana (2008).

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Awards and honors include the Gorham P. Stevens/Jacob H. Lazarus-Metropolitan Museum of Art Rome Prize (2014); the Guna S. Mundheim Visual Arts Fellowship, The American Academy in Berlin (2011); the USA Rockefeller Fellowship, United States Artists (2009); The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2005); and Artist in Residence, The Studio Museum in Harlem (2003). McKenzie received a B.F.A. in printmaking from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2000.

THEY DON'T
KNOW IF YOU
ARE
LAUGHING
OR CRYING
AND THEY
DON'T
CARE

Dave McKenzie
AN INTERMISSION

FEBRUARY 2 – APRIL 1, 2017 | UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



Exhibition Checklist

1. *An Intermission (Anything)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
6 x 10 feet
2. *An Intermission (BB)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet
3. *An Intermission (Don't Care)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet (cover image)
4. *An Intermission (Eve)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet
5. *An Intermission (No)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet
6. *An Intermission (Said Before)*, 2016
Printed vinyl
10 x 6 feet
7. *An Intermission (Search)*, 2016
Printed vinyl
6 x 10 feet
8. *An Intermission (Seven)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet
9. *An Intermission (Stranger)*, 2016
Dye sub print on knitted polyester
10 x 6 feet
10. *An Intermission (The Vapors)*, 2016
Printed vinyl
10 x 6 feet
11. *An Intermission (Watching)*, 2016
Printed vinyl
10 x 6 feet
12. *An Intermission (White Bread)*, 2016
Printed vinyl
6 x 10 feet
13. *Toe Drips Into the Sun*, 2015
Video, 3:31 minutes; color; no sound
14. *Old Man/Sarcophagus*, 2013
Video, 3:53 minutes; color; sound
15. *Camera*, 2012
Video, 4:55 minutes; color; sound
16. *The Beautiful One Has Come*, 2012
Video, 5:48 minutes; color; sound
17. *Present Tense*, 2007
Video, 19:3 minutes; color; sound

All works courtesy the artist, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, and Barbara Wien Gallery, Berlin

Dave McKenzie

An e-mail interview with Corinna Ripps Schaming, associate director/curator

Corinna Ripps Schaming: When we first started talking about this exhibit, you were thinking about the "residue" of your 2016 text-based performance, in which you used prototyped sneakers, and also about how you might use the "gesture" of "slow writing" as a methodology for future works. And then the election happened. How has this political moment reshaped your initial thoughts for the show?

Dave McKenzie: It's becoming a cliché to say that the election turned everything upside down, but I know from the many conversations that I have had with family, friends, colleagues, and students that many of us feel the need to interject and push back against an ideology of division and retreat. So many of us, both collectively and individually, are looking to re-assess, re-imagine, speak out, protest, and support one another, and generally find ways of acting and showing our ethics within a fraught and dangerous moment. The fact that *An Intermission* will open shortly after this country's transition of power means, at least for me, that it can be a way to think about the recent past and also the yet-to-be.

CRS: The timing of the show does add a special resonance. That, and the site itself, both support the potentialities for broad civic discourse. We are a public university, our students come from all over the world, and there's a solid history of on-campus social protest, as evidenced by the University Library's Department of Special Collections & Archives' "Campus Unrest Collection, 1967–1972." Add to that the fact that the museum as a physical space is totally open, its stairway and high ceilings suggesting aspirational promise. Are any of these factors significant to your current thinking about the project?

DM: The whole site is important—the architecture of the space, the surrounding campus, and a public university with a diverse student body. These are all things I am trying to think about as material. One analogy for the show is a slide carousel. Perhaps this analogy is the result of the images I am using, or of the pedagogical/storytelling nature of a slide projector. I keep thinking about loading images into one object so that they are projected onto the surface of another.

CRS: Are you still thinking about vinyl banners as your mode of address?

DM: Yes. Some of my thinking about banners as a form goes back to a work I made in 2012. *Declaration* consisted of text-based banners flown by plane over the Bass Museum of Art in Miami. Each banner was a marriage proposal that featured unisex names, so the genders of the speaker and addressee could be read in a variety of ways. In 2012, marriage equality was not yet the law of the land, and Florida was a particularly hostile place for those seeking equal access. In making the work I was reminded that not all of us have access to the public or collective imagination, let alone the law. So even the simple act of declaring love publicly becomes a political act by understanding and imagining those who are excluded.

When I was last at the University Art Museum I noticed several banners hanging on campus, and for some strange reason they struck me, and I decided to use banners as a form of address—though not only or necessarily vinyl. More than anything I'm attracted to the form of the banners and to the potential for them to be like a lot of things, and yet not just one thing.

CRS: How many banners are you thinking about? Will they be suspended or taut? Opaque or translucent? Same or varying in size? Black and white, color, or both?

DM: I am planning to produce around twelve banners that will be hung vertically and horizontally throughout the space. Right now I'm working with a standard scale of 10 feet by 6 feet, but the banners will certainly vary in terms of imagery, text, transparency, and visual language.

CRS: The banner is a potent form with so many associations—as you say, it's not just one thing. Banners are heraldic and common. Lots of constituencies use them to promote their causes: crusaders, revolutionaries, fascists, sports enthusiasts. I think some of the banners you saw in the Campus Center were for fraternity fundraisers. In thinking about your choice of mediums, one thread that emerges is the use of familiar and often slightly antiquated forms—the slide show, the piñata, the mask, the parade float, the banner. These are not benign choices. There's a subtle aggression at play that hits us where we live. How do you measure whether or not your work is hitting its mark? Does the mark change over time?

DM: You're right when you point to all the different constituencies that have used the form to promote their cause or brand their movement, not to mention all the companies and institutions that make use of them. I am interested in something concrete, but also in the productively inscrutable. An example of this might be *Watch the Sky (Aspen)*, 2010. The work was a large inflatable that was shown during the Fourth of July parade in Aspen, Colorado. The inflatable was made to be vaguely in my likeness, but through a number of decisions and coincidences it ended up looking like no one in particular. So, as we guided the float through the town, people naturally began to ask, "Who is that?" Not being able to place the figure, they began to imagine appropriate black bodies that might have made sense. Maybe the banners might do something similar—you'll see the image and imagine all the things that might have led to its creation. So in that way, I imagine them changing over time.

CRS: I wanted to come back to your slide carousel analogy as a means of projecting images and ideas onto a public space. Since as of this writing, I've only seen one banner, could you address your methods and sources of images and texts more specifically, or cite another example of how the overlaps come together?

DM: It is probably all a little idiosyncratic. The images are mostly found, and the texts are simply things that the images seem to suggest to me. For example, one banner is a black and white image of a crotch—more jeans advertisement than anything—and it's accompanied by the text, "BECAUSE THEY WILL SEARCH & SEARCH & SEARCH FOR OTHER PHOTOS OF YOU." The person in the photo remains unidentified, so while one reading may seem to point to the salacious, I believe that it can actually refer to other things. I think about how certain images were used to convey something nefarious and threatening about Trayvon Martin or Michael Brown, or how hacked images of actresses have been traded back and forth online like currency.

CRS: What are you reading and sourcing as you work on this project? Do you have certain texts that you circle back to?

DM: Obviously I am reading the news—although I will admit to having just come off a brief self-imposed moratorium. Two books that I've been going back to again and again are Krys Lee's *How I Became a North Korean* and Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*. Another book that I often return to is Vilém Flusser's *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. All the books are obviously different, but I think a line can be drawn that would connect fiction, non-fiction, and theory, especially in terms of representation and image creation.

CRS: To pause, to hold up, and to wrestle with questions that may have no answers or solutions is a perspective that you share with Ta-Nehisi Coates. Is this an accurate observation? How does one react in a moment when there are no clear-cut answers?

DM: It's true that I tend to favor examining the situations that have no obvious solutions; perhaps this is because I firmly believe that coming up with useful answers is a community project that begins with individuals trying to articulate and make visible their particular perspectives.

CRS: Do you see your banners as a provocation to act?

DM: I see the banners as possibilities—images and texts that relate to the moment but are also missing something. Maybe this something can be seen as a provocation to act, especially—as I have been reminding myself—since any number of actions may be necessary, from the practical and concrete to the speculative and ambiguous.

December 2016



Dave McKenzie **AN INTERMISSION**

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An Intermission (The Vapors), 2016, printed vinyl, 10 x 6 feet. Courtesy the artist, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, and Barbara Wien Gallery, Berlin