



**S O U N D**

*S i l e n c e + R e s i s t a n c e*

**O F F**

*Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions*

*January 8 - March 15, 2020*

*Curated by Abigail Raphael Collins*

*Text by Samira Yamin*

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*Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz*

*Nikita Gale*

*Lawrence Abu Hamdan*

*Sharon Hayes*

*Baseera Kahn*

*Kameelah Janan Rasheed*

*Aliza Shvarts*



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## **Curator's Introduction**

*Abigail Raphael Collins*

*SOUND OFF: Silence + Resistance* takes up silence as a tool for political resistance. The work by each artist and activist in the exhibition engages silence as a way to honor the inarticulate, defy demands of production, prioritize deep listening, and refuse to incriminate. Rather than negate the importance of speaking up, speaking truth to power, or raising our voices, this exhibition treats silence as a powerful tool of resistance *alongside* speech.

Listening is central to almost every work in this exhibition, and it's been central to the process of curating it. In the work I make as an artist I explore gaps and silences carved out by political trauma. Alongside that solo work I wanted think in tandem with other artists about the power of silence as a tool for collective action. Curating work at the intersection of protest and silence is a way to listen to other artists and activists about how we can uphold silence together to shift entrenched power systems.

I approached each work with these questions: How does silent protest function in tandem with sounding? How are they interdependent? How is honoring interiority a political act? How is the right to opacity linked to the right to inaudibility? What does an intersectional feminist refusal to speak sound like?

Each work answers and refuses an answer. Each artist and activist found a different way to transform *being silenced* into *wielding silence*, melting down a weapon used against them to forge a new tool.



Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz  
*Silent*, 2016  
Installation with HD, 7 min  
Performance: Aérea Negrot

**Samira Yamin**

*Silence, Wielded*

When *SOUND OFF: Silence + Resistance* opened in January 2020, we were staring down the barrel of an upcoming election season sure to be equally, if not more, clamorous than the last, amidst a cacophony of global anxieties – climate change, migrant crises and stock market volatility, to name a few. The show opened, in fact, not five days after the assassination, by American drone strike, of Iranian major general Qasem Soleimani that might have set a course for war between the two countries. As the political theater ramped up in those early months, the exhibition wondered aloud whether silence was more than a type of protest, or a retreat from the noise. When, for instance, is silence an intervention? When is it *resistance*?

\* \* \*

I write now a year later, through the lens of what was then only a looming possibility but is presently a very real pandemic, looking back at an exhibition about sound that closed on the very day Gavin Newsome announced widespread closures across the state. It's hard not to imagine the gallery speakers and projectors powering down and taking the whole city with them. The weeks that followed were marked by an eerie, anxious quiet, punctured in the summer months by uprisings over the lynchings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Streets previously empty for fear of infection, contagion, were reactivated in anger. The danger in gathering, and the choice to do so nevertheless, only underscores the urgency of justice, the absurdity of having to choose one life-or-death emergency over another. The silence that had represented safety, care, altruism even, suddenly came to represent the opposite – erasure, violence, apathy – recalled, instead, Act Up's imperative in the face of the AIDS epidemic: Silence = Death. In this case: Say their names.

This is exactly the dichotomy the exhibition confronts: the assumption of sound as powerful, energetic, present, and of silence as meek, meager, empty; the definition of silence by negation, by that which it is *not*. This is the space of the pervasive ethos equating speaking up with speaking out: a system that is founded on volume, bombast, excess, where sound is a currency of power – to deploy or dampen it, to eavesdrop, to make speak – and to silence is to disempower. But what of silence claimed, wielded? Not the master's tools – censorship, erasure, repression – appropriated, but undermined – withholding, evasion, protection, meditation, study. Taken up, silence is a resistance to the very system that seeks to define it as absence, as lack.

In *SOUND OFF: Silence + Resistance*, artist-curator Abigail Raphael Collins culls works from seven artists whose practices engage silence and sound as modes of action and attention. The impetus for Collins, a video and installation artist whose own work often entails unscripted dialogue and interviews, is a study of the pauses, the stutters inherent in conversation, in curiosity and discovery, in disagreement and contention. Collins's curatorial impulse is an extension of the study and observation that is foundational to her broader practice. Here, as in her experimental documentaries, Collins puts forth questions, propositions, then attends to their unfolding.

For the artists in *SOUND OFF*, silence is a deliberate, active state, a subject and a device. To be clear: the exhibition is not silent. Silence here is distinctly not absence. If anything, the works make visible the architecture and the materiality of sound in their attempts to control it: built rooms, carpeting, curtains, sound-proofing materials, speakers placed just so or color-matched in an attempt to disappear. Some of the works – Sharon Hayes's *Parole* and Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's *Silent* – take up space, are assertive in their particularity. Aliza Shvarts's QR Codes (*Sibboleth*) are so small they could easily be missed but come with a "WARNING: This piece makes use of loud sound and binaural beats."

As a whole, the exhibition requires participation of the visitor, activates the body. This is not a show that traces the perimeter at a steady pace. One must bend over, move a heavy curtain, let the eyes adjust to darkness, take out a phone to scan a QR code (then choose to press play), lean into speakers, or even take off their shoes to experience these works. This is not to mention the exhibition's cumulative run-time of 87 minutes. Some works might even appear standoffish or more trouble than they're worth. As a collection, however, the works resist passivity, each demanding its own particular mode of engagement as they deploy various tactics to undermine the systems within which they operate.

At the heart of the space is **Sharon Hayes's** four-channel video installation, *Parole* (2010), composed of free-standing plywood walls into which three flatscreen monitors and a rear-projection screen are built, sound proofing materials and multiple standing speakers. Named for Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the lived experience of language, *Parole* follows an androgynous Listener whose mic and headphones transmit all the work's audio components: a palimpsest of recordings, interviews, street performances, a dancer's movements, a university lecture, the entire duration of a kettle of water coming to boil, then whistling. Seemingly disparate, the audio sources revolve thematically around a dissolution of boundaries and come together materially as they are internalized by the central figure, whose pervasive headphones represent not only a mechanics but, more importantly, the intentionality of listening. The camera often closely frames, rests on, our protagonist's face as they

silently attend to each utterance. In an early scene, the Listener stares intently (mic in hand) into the eyes of a queer performer reenacting Anna Rüling's 1904 speech, *What Interest Does the Women's Movement Have in Solving the Homosexual Problem?*, in which she asserts that "homosexuality is a natural bridge between man and woman," and therefore presents not a problem but an opportunity to "gain rights and recognition, and to eliminate the injustice which condemns them [both] on this earth." The intensity of the Listener's gaze seems at first to unsettle the performer, but neither is deterred, and when the Listener begins to walk backward, the speaker, in a moment of mutual recognition, raises their voice so as to still be heard, maintaining the chain of interdependence that is communication.



An excerpt from James Baldwin's 1974 lecture at UC Berkeley, heard via tape recording through the Listener's headphones, speaks more pointedly to the function of silence in dissolution. For Baldwin, this happens during his time as an American ex-patriot in France, where he "could speak to no one because I spoke no French – yeah, but no one wanted to speak to *me* [audience laughs, Baldwin chuckles] – I dropped into a silence in which I heard for the first time, really heard and then began to try to deal with, the beat of the language of the people that had produced me." This "beat" is the structures of and within language, what Saussure calls *langue*. For both Baldwin and Rüling, justice is founded on radical structural change beginning with hierarchical systems of differentiation embedded in language. But this dissolution takes place at the level of *parole*, wherein the individual is both the subject and the point of intervention.

Artist duo **Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's** protagonist, the Venezuelan musician Aérea Negrot, takes up a silence of a more confrontational sort. Installed in a room exaggerating the gallery's artifice through white carpeting, and requiring the removal of shoes to preserve it, *Silent* (2016) begins with an interpretation of John Cage's 4'33" by Negrot on a rotating stage in Oranienplatz, a public square in Berlin. Per Cage's score, Negrot, a singer, stands with a collection of ten microphones, not singing, though very much communicating, at times flirtatiously, at others rejecting eye contact, laughing to herself, smoking a cigarette, drinking water, gesturing off camera, but always returning her gaze to the viewer, in the all-white room. As in *Parole*, the visible microphones are the source of the audio, in this case capturing the sounds of the plaza – birds, people, cars – and of Negrot, herself – the crinkle of the plastic water bottle, the tapping of her finger on a mic, the rustle of her sequined dress – as her attention visibly shifts from the camera to the plaza to her interiority, back and forth fluidly,

though performatively, before settling into a meditative space that brings her to tears.

Negrot's interpretation of 4'33" is followed by a song addressed to a "President," whose "profile is vague," and the "visitor." Here, the confrontation takes a more specific form: demand. To the President, Negrot articulates a need for recognition of non-binary gender identities in the form of "make-up, underwear and hormones!" To the visitor, however, Negrot folds the arts as an institution into the larger structures of war and genocide: "What is the difference between museum, artwork and enemy?" While it's unclear to whom the antagonism applies – is the museum the enemy of the visitor, or the state? – the blunt equation points back to the white wall, white carpeting, markers of an institutional structure that depends on its own preservation, the removing of one's shoes a silent agreement to the terms of engagement.

Returning to Hayes' *Parole*, in an academic lecture attended by the Listener, the writer Lauren Berlant speaks to her theory of sentimentality as a space "in which people assume that their emotions express their true feelings and that other people should have an obligation to hold those feelings and recognize them, that what they're seeking in recognition is a fundamentally emotional thing." Berlant goes on to describe love through the lens of sentimentality as a space where one "holds what's in you as a kind of precious thing... One way to think about love is, since you often fall in love with someone before you know them, is two people coming together, or people coming to the world, with the intention to recognize each other and the intention to get that feeling together."

In the light of Berlant's "sentimentality," the Listener comes to embody love, the ever-present microphone and headphones markers of intention and our protagonist's silent, but attentive, gaze that of recognition. The Listener is our model, as viewers; the custom of silence within art spaces is redefined as an intention toward recognition, toward love. This identification is especially striking when taken to the all-white room of Boudry and Lorenz's *Silent*, where one can easily imagine the Listener's microphone among the collection. A chain of interdependence emerges between Negrot, silently demanding recognition, and the Listener, silently giving it.

*Silent* ends where it began, ten microphones in front of a white wall that falls away to reveal Oranienplatz, only this time there is no performer. We now confront two absences. Aérea Negrot's physical absence reiterates the richness of her silent communication, that silence is distinctly not absence. But there is a more insidious absence that might go entirely unrecognized to the non-Berliner. While the public square is generally a locus for public address, Oranienplatz specifically was the site of a pro-immigration protest encampment from October 2012 to April 2014 in which occupants demanded asylum: residency beyond designated refugee camps, and the right to work and study in Germany. The occupation finally ended with promises of

government housing, but that most of the activists' applications were denied is the erasure embedded in the otherwise typical sounds of the plaza – the birds, the people, the cars – sounds that signify absence.

This is the silence to which **Aliza Shvarts's** *Sibboleth* (2016) refers, that of ideology, the hand that guides but depends on its own invisibility. The pristine white walls of the gallery framing a calm public square is a voice that doesn't have to say, "there is nothing to see here." *Sibboleth* is a series of five QR codes in place of didactics that, when scanned, bring up audio files describing the nature of art spaces and viewership, and their relationships to the larger structures of patriarchy and capitalism. Where wall texts and audio tours are typically entry points to work, expand upon and contextualize it, Shvarts's iterations challenge the viewer at every turn. They're inconspicuous, require a smart phone and internet connectivity, "all of which presume an access to knowledge and resources... that goes unmarked but is nonetheless embedded" in the code. The QR code, a cypher, "is not an exercise in information, but access," is symbolic of the inherent hostilities foundational to cultural capital by way of infrastructure, architecture or exhibition design that controls one's movement through the space. "They call and your body responds," says Shvarts. "The silence of the call, its indiscernibility, is the mark of its efficacy."

The broader code here is the ideological conceit of the arts as cultural institution. I'm reminded of the time my grandmother ran her hand across a Mark Rothko painting out of amazement, and in response to the ruckus she caused turned to me and said, "but I can touch your aunt's paintings at home." But the museum is neither the public space of the square, nor the privacy of one's home. The institution is a closed system whose capital is wholly dependent on exclusivity articulated through coded language and reinforced by codes of conduct – amazement, say, but contained. As Shvarts's address to the Listener/Visitor points out: "The voice of the gallery space must be constantly trimmed, kept in check, kept clear of sentiment and deep theory, of political advocacy and personal stake. Properly marshalled, this voice produces feelings of trustworthiness and believability, effects of a universal knowledge experienced as truth."

Though *Sibboleth* addresses the same visitor as Negrot, the use of the QR code complicates the public/ private dichotomy. While the work requires a sort of access that limits its reach to a specific audience, the files do live on the internet, a public, and as such can be taken out of the gallery for private listening, sustained study. The files are essentially a digital "take-away," can be shared, distributed, experienced ad infinitum. What begins as a 2-inch by 2-inch black and white sticker that one might miss altogether, that points directly to that which is invisibly operating on the visitor, becomes the one thing that has the potential to breach the boundaries of the gallery. It is code, taken up.

**Kameelah Janan Rasheed** takes up not the code but coding, which presents

an opportunity for carving out a space of protective opacity, a cover for subversion, a refusal to be legible, knowable – read controllable – by systems of power, including the gallery. In *Particularly Evasive*, a lecture and workshop performed live, once, Rasheed meditated on evasion as a historical practice in defiance of the systems that have exploited, violated, the Black body, mind and spirit, pointing to Zora Neale Hurston, who, in her 1935 anthropological collection, *Mules and Men* (1935), writes, "[t]he Negro in spite of his open-faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive [...] All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind."

As in Hurston's collection that brings together oral histories, sermons and songs from Black American folk traditions, Rasheed's broader practice is one of collecting artifacts, first from her personal life, then sources ranging from institutions to flea markets, family members to visitors, which are then shown as part of growing, iterative installations called *No Assembly Required*. The archive, when shown, is organized in a non-liner, unstructured layout, in direct contrast to the pseudo-scientific, colonial pursuit of defining a culture, a people, by anthropological means. Where anthropology seeks to know, to define and to fix, the ever-expanding archive has no organizing principle in either its method or its exhibition. What amasses over time, instead, is, like history itself, both complex and complicated.

The vulnerability of being knowable, known, is articulated too in the Biblical allegory that gives Shvarts's work its name:

Shibboleth is a code word that, through its variations in pronunciation, demarcates belonging. In the Bible's Book of Judges, after the armies of Gilead defeated those of Ephraim, the surviving Ephraimites tried to cross the River Jordan, back into their homeland to live unnoticed among their conquerors. It was difficult to tell who was a Gileadean and who was an Ephraimite, so the armies of Gilead invented a test: before they were allowed to cross the river, each suspected survivor was asked to say the word shibboleth, which in Hebrew translates to the part of a plant that bears the edible grain. The Ephraimite dialect had no "sh" sound, so those who pronounced the word as sibboleth were identified as Ephraimites and killed... Even in metaphor, the Shibboleth has mortal stakes, for to be on the wrong side of value is to risk access to sustenance, to perish at the periphery.

In the hands of the Gileadean army, the code seeks to identify, to root out, the Other. To evade, then, to invoke one's "right to remain silent," is not only a refusal to incriminate, to give oneself away, but to defy the system altogether.

Rasheed's text-based wall installation, pulled from *Editions Michel Obultra2* (2019), is a series of collaged inkjet prints and vinyl. Footnotes, numbered lines and what appears to be a distorted photocopy point to having been appropriated from unnamed sources. A single-stroke drawing could be an enlarged notation or the index of an intuitive gesture. Like the folkloric Trickster who uses intellect and secrecy to outwit, elude and escape, Rasheed's prints are coded and illegible to the uninitiated viewer. Even the artist's website is password-protected, undermining the expectation of art, of the artist, to be ever-present and accessible to the viewer, or that the work should cater, bend, to posterity. Rather, Rasheed occasionally places something outside the door of her mind, giving us something to play with. We can see the work, examine the archive and attend the lectures, but we cannot, may not, read her mind.

**Baseera Khan's** *Acoustic Sound Blanket* (2017) stands as a monument to both opacity and quietude, where noise and silence are evoked, rather than pictured. Worn during performances for both the public and the camera, the *Acoustic Sound Blankets* are made of felted industrial sound-insulation blankets, altered with a hole framed in custom gold silk embroidery in the middle. The patterns, reminiscent of designs on the covers of Qurans, have been in Khan's family for generations, marking births, marriages and deaths.

In documentation from the 2017 Women's March at Washington Square Park in New York City, protesters pose with an unknown figure draped in the sound blanket, but the embroidered frame is collapsed, closed; no face is visible. Like Aérea Negrot in Berlin's Oranienplatz, the wearer is silent but visible, yet cloaked and unidentifiable. When activated, the blanket is reminiscent of a burqa or niqab, a protective, personal space both carved and transported by and for the wearer. In the public square, the presence of such a figure is even more vociferous than protest chants. The embroidered opening at the center, however, lends the sculpture a more subversive potential function, exploiting the Orientalist fascination with modesty and ornamentation in Islam to gain access, as in the covert operations carried out by women in the Algerian War for Independence. The hole at the center is not a rupture but an orchestrated breach point for a face, or a hand, with the possibility of denying or granting access to another, or to venture out at will.

The use of acoustic materiality in protective gestures is also found in **Nikita Gale's** *Three-Dimensional Rest* (2019). The intimate sculptures, which derive their name and shape from the musical notation indicating quiet or pause, are a series of five rectangles carved out of the gallery walls and filled in – stuffed – with terrycloth dipped in concrete. The work is suggestive of an ad hoc effort at dampening sound, which is then undermined through the use of concrete. The once absorbent material is rendered not only useless for soundproofing, but actually more reverberant than the drywall in which it's embedded. Rather than

reinforce the system, further insulating the space from the outside world, these "rests," puncture the walls only to create a further logistical problem for an exhibition already working against LACE's single large gallery, its round walls and recessed ceiling.

The work is not, then, a sincere attempt at functional soundproofing but, rather, memorializing, making concrete, literally, small-scale, accessible gestures toward reinforcing protective boundaries. Rather than resting on pedestals to perform as venerated art-objects, the *Three-Dimensional Rests* carve a space for themselves inside the institutional architecture. No longer a vertical plinth but a literal frame, the wall is opened, infiltrated then occupied by icons to the makeshift and the provisional, the humble and the resourceful.

Where for Sharon Hayes the dissolution of boundaries enables a chain of interdependence, for Rasheed, Khan and Gale boundaries are built and reinforced as a means of undermining or subverting the exclusionary tactics of a state, a culture overtly hostile to the Black and Brown female body. Covert, protective spaces are vital, necessary. For Gale and Khan, the materiality of sound-proofing marks a protective boundary around the self, forging a space within which quietude and privacy are safe from both outside noise and ears. For Rasheed that boundary is enacted within language and representation. In each case, the distinction between inside and outside is not only delineated, but made overt, visible. These silences are to be known, though not necessarily to be understood, by those on the outside. The fact of the marked space is the subversion itself. But it's not that the space isn't permeable, it's that the boundaries are in the control of their makers.

Many of these tactics come together in **Lawrence Abu Hamdan's** *Rubber Coated Steel* (2016), where silence is both harrowing and honorific. The 20-minute video, installed in an all-black room, makes public the transcript and exhibits of an evidentiary hearing in the trial of an Israeli border police officer accused in the shooting deaths of two unarmed Palestinian teenagers, Nadeem Nawara and Mohammad Abu Daher. Set in an enclosed shooting range – gouges where bullets have struck the sound insulation visible along the walls – Abu Hamdan, who was the forensic audio analyst in the case, juxtaposes the transcript of his own testimony against audio-ballistic visualizations suspended on target retrievers.

The trial testimony and evidence come to reveal a number of ways Israeli soldiers weaponize sound and silence against Palestinians, including deafening sound bombs and the Ruger Rifle, whose bullets travel below the speed of sound, generating a ricochet but no gunshot. In the deaths of Nawara and Abu Daher, audio captured by CNN cameras is visualized, exposing the Israeli Defense Force's use of rifles outfitted with rubber-bullet adapters to disguise the sounds of live ammunition. Because the

tactic exploits the physiological and neurological limitations of the human ear and brain (“Defence: I hear no difference in the sound of the two gunshots”), Abu Hamdan’s forensic analysis bypasses the problem altogether, suspending the sounds of individual gunshots in time and space as visual evidence. As such, the disguise is undermined, revealing another breach: that of the US-Israeli Arms Agreement.

Aside from an introductory statement and the video credits (both of which are typically written, but in this case are spoken), the sounds of the shooting range – a continuous, high pitched whirr, the soft scraping whoosh as images emerge from and retreat back into darkness, and the thud as they reach the back wall – are the video’s only audio component. All the evidence, whether text or image, is visualized, requiring quiet, sustained attention. Like the audio-ballistic images that allow for study and analysis, the choice to use only visualized evidence suggests that the video paused on any frame would not forfeit information but allow for more intense scrutiny of it.

But silence here has another function, one that is, as Lauren Berlant suggests, sentimental, loving. Sitting in silent attention on a bench in a dark room, watching, studying the evidence as it sweeps in and out of view is an act of mourning, of reverence, for the young Nawara and Abu Daher. While Abu Hamdan’s forensic analysis brings about the sort of justice that resides in legal systems and international tribunals, it is the simple act of allowing the silence to stand that embodies recognition of the young men whose lives were taken, whose silences sit in stark contrast against the institutional sounds of the firing range. In making the evidence public, the work does not speak for or over them. That they cannot speak for themselves is never obscured.

*SOUND OFF: Silence + Resistance* is not simply a collection of works centered on a theme. It is a proposal, a study of silence as a rich, active state; a vast and expansive space; a complex mode of engagement, participation and performance. And, like any other tool, wielded, it presents an opportunity for intervention into, as James Baldwin suggests, the “beats” of the systems that make us. It is both the state of quietude that makes careful listening possible, and the spaces between that give shape to, punctuate, the structure. It is moments of pause, of rest, made and taken; a shrouded hand pressing against that of ideology; a deep stare and an attentive gaze; communication and concealment; withholding and release. It is expectation undermined, desire rejected, and intention directed. Silence is yet to be. And that is certainly not nothing.

*January 2021*

# NEGRO SILENT PROTEST PARADE

124 WEST 136th STREET, N. Y.

REV. CHAS. D. MARTIN, D. D., Secretary  
124 West 136th St., N. Y.

REV. WILLIAM C. BISHOP, D. D., Pres.

## To The People of African Descent:

July 14th, 1917

Dear Friend:

There will be 10,000 Negroes in line at 1 o'clock Saturday, July 28th, on 59th St. and Fifth Ave. to 23rd Street and Madison Square where the procession will end.

### WHERE TO ASSEMBLE

The Children of the various Sunday Schools, Public Schools and Families will assemble on 57th St. between 1th and 5th Aves. the WOMEN on 56th St. and MEN on 55th west of Fifth Ave. We must assemble not later than 12 o'clock.

### ORDER OF MARCH

The Children will lead the parade followed by the Women in white, while the Men will bring up the rear. The laborer, the professional man — all classes of the Race — will march on foot to the beating of muffled drums. The native born, the foreign born, united by the ties of blood and color, all owing allegiance to the Mother of races will parade slowly with the flags of America, England, Haiti and Liberia.

### YOU MUST BE IN LINE

The Children will lead the parade followed by the Women in white, while the Men will bring up the rear. The laborer, the professional man — all classes of the Race — will march on foot to the beating of muffled drums. The native born, the foreign born, united by the ties of blood and color, all owing allegiance to the Mother of races will parade slowly with the flags of America, England, Haiti and Liberia.

### WHY DO WE MARCH?

We march because by the Grace of God and the force of truth, the dangerous, hampering walls of prejudice and inhuman injustices must fall.  
We march because we want to make impossible a repetition of Waco, Memphis and East St. Louis, by raising the conscience of the country and bring the murderers of our brothers, sisters and innocent children to justice.  
We march because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts.  
We march because we are thoroughly opposed to Jim-crow Cars etc., Segregation, Discrimination, Disfranchisement, LYNCHING and the host of evils that are forced on us. It is time that the Spirit of Christ should be manifested in the making and execution of laws.  
We march because we want our children to live in a better land and enjoy fairer conditions than have been their lot.  
We march in memory of our butchered dead, the massacre of the honest toilers who were removing the reproach of laziness and thriftlessness hurled at the entire race. They died to prove our worthiness to live. We live in spite of death shadowing us and ours. We prosper in the face of the most unwarranted and illegal oppression.  
We march because the growing consciousness and solidarity of race coupled with sorrow and discrimination have made us one: a union that may never be dissolved in spite of shallow-brained planters, scheming politicians and political tricksters who secure a fleeting popularity and uncertain financial support by promoting the disunion of a people who ought to consider themselves as one.  
Be in line on Saturday and show that you have not become callous to the wrongs of your race. May God bless you and every parader.

Yours in righteous indignation,  
REV. CHAS. MARTIN, Secy



*[Small, illegible text block, likely a caption or additional information related to the photograph above.]*



***Silent Protest Historical Research***  
*Eve Arballo, Tess Carota and LACE Intern*  
*Dorothee Saillard*

This collection of archival images and texts of silent protest was curated by Eve Arballo and Tess Carota, with the help of LACE intern Dorothee Saillard. It brings together documentation of historical and contemporary protests, as well as critical and speculative texts about silence and resistance. While by no means an exhaustive exploration, these curators researched throughout the duration of the exhibition and added information to the vitrine over the course of the exhibition, culminating in a bibliography (p. 64-66) of sources and texts and an archive hosted on the LACE website.





**1917 Silent Parade in New York City (pictured left)**

On July 1, 1917 in East St. Louis, Illinois, a white mob set fire to the black section of the city. At least 39 black residents were killed, hundreds more injured, and thousands left without a home. In Waco, Texas and Memphis, Tennessee, the lynchings that took place between 1916 and 1917 added to the anger and grief. The NAACP organized a Silent Protest Parade to take place on July 28, 1917. On this day in New York, between 10,000 and 15,000 black men, women, and children marched in silence down Fifth avenue. Their tactic was silence, but the message rang clear: anti-black violence is unjust and un-American. The Silent Protest Parade of 1917 was the first of its kind to take place in New York and was the second widely documented public demonstration of African Americans demanding civil rights.

**Journalists in Hong Kong (pictured right)**

In early November of 2019, in the midst of the still ongoing Hong Kong protests, six journalists sat in the front row at a weekly press conference in silence. Each of the six wore a safety helmet, a symbol of solidarity with the protesters with Chinese characters on the front combined to read “investigate police violence, stop police lies.” The journalists, acting in response to the arrest of and violence towards media staffers, ignored the repeated requests of the police to remove their helmets. After twenty minutes of not speaking, the press conference was ended entirely.

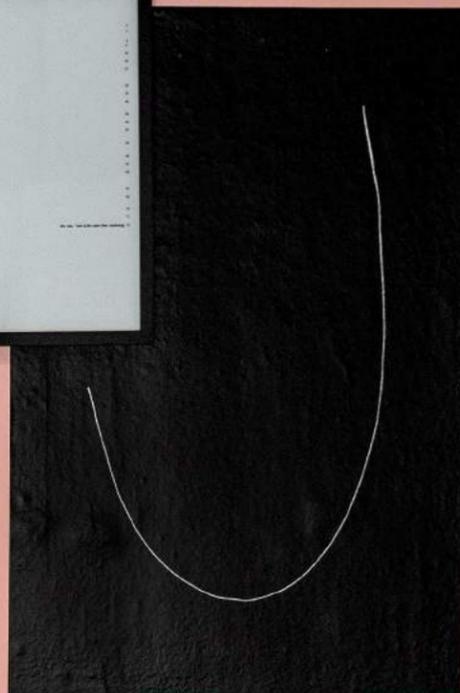
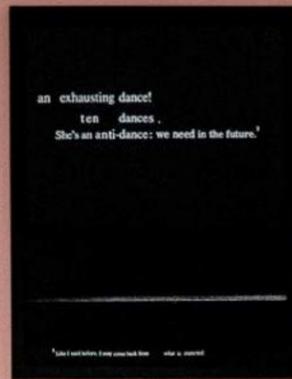
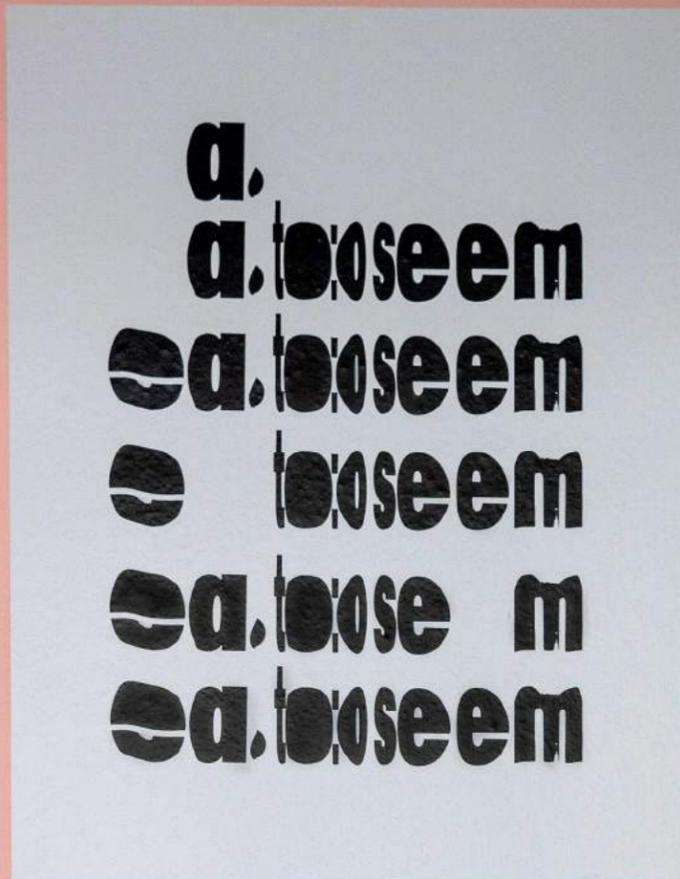


**Colin Kaepernick (pictured left)**

On September 1, 2016, Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid knelt during the National Anthem to protest police brutality and racism. Two weeks prior Kaepernick had sat on the bench while the National Anthem played, catching the attention of his teammate Eric Reid. Wanting to show solidarity, Reid discussed how he could get involved with Kaepernick and use their highly visible platform as NFL players to make an impact. After much consideration, the two chose to kneel, suggesting grief in the wake of a tragedy. It was after this act that Kaepernick's protest gained national attention and a backlash began. The gesture inspired over 200 NFL players to kneel in 2017.

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**Kameelah Janan Rasheed**

*Excerpts from Editions Michel Obultra Box, 2019*

In *Poetics of Relation* Eduard Glissant, a postcolonial writer and philosopher, describes the right to opacity as the idea that people should not need to be fully transparent, fully legible, fully audible in order to be respected. Rather than “grasping” someone, he advocates releasing that grip and honoring their right to opacity. For someone to become fully clear to us, it means we’ve pulled them into our own paradigm to comprehend them, overlooking and undermining the complexity of their own paradigm.

Kameelah Janan Rasheed’s installation asks viewers to look closely at texts Rasheed has culled and altered from archives to think about the generative possibilities of mistranslation, misreading, and the right to opacity. This installation is just one iteration of an artwork comprising four prints that can be arranged in multiple ways. By activating archives as a malleable site for learning and unlearning, Rasheed keeps this malleability in motion with a work that can’t be pinned down into only one permanent arrangement.

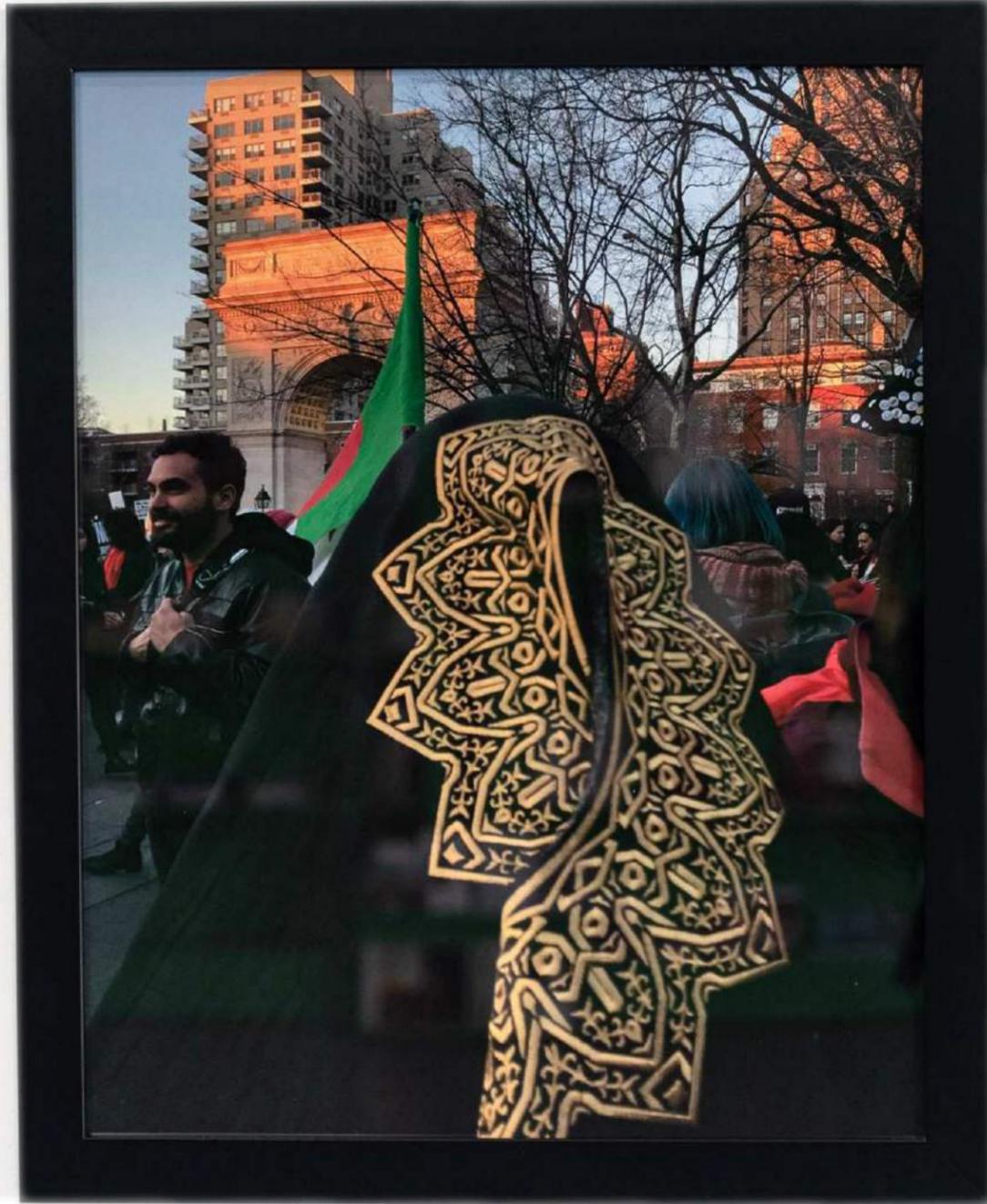
Rasheed’s ideas about the right to opacity and mistranslation were further explored in her workshop at LACE called “Particularly Evasive”. Held in February 2020, the workshop explored historical and contemporary examples of evasiveness as counter-surveillance through a lecture followed by a collective performance with participants.

***Particularly Evasive:  
Workshop by Kameelah Janan Rasheed***

In Zora Neale Hurston's anthropological collection, *Mules and Men* (1935) she writes, "[t]he Negro in spite of his open faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive [...] All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind from him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind."

This workshop, which took place on on February 29, 2020, explored historical and contemporary examples of evasiveness as counter-surveillance through a short lecture followed by a collective performance with participants.





Baseera Khan  
*Acoustic Sound Blanket, profile view, Documentation 04, 2017*  
Inkjet print  
At the 2017 Woman's March at Washington Square Park, New York City



Baseera Khan  
*Acoustic Sound Blanket, No! in the Name of Humanity Documentation 01, 2017*  
Inkjet print  
At the 2017 Woman's March at Washington Square Park, New York City

**Baseera Khan**

*Acoustic Sound Blanket, 2017*

This work takes two forms in the exhibition: a hanging sculpture and documentation of that sculpture in use as its own silent protest during the 2017 Women's March in Washington Square Park. On the wall it hangs just inches from the ground, ready for use again at any moment. But its use is not solely utilitarian, not only to protect the wearer from rubber bullets, tear gas, and racial profiling at protests. It also asks us to contemplate what protection can look like for Muslim BIPOC femme communities, and what honoring opacity, silence and a right to interiority could look like. The intricate gold embroidery around the opening reminds us that this self protection is never only utilitarian, but also sacred.



Baseera Khan  
*Acoustic Sound Blanket, AP, 2017*  
Felt, silk, cotton, gold custom thread embroidering, cut out 90 x 85 inches

**Sharon Hayes**  
*Parole, 2010*

*Parole* is a four-channel video installation composed of semi-autonomous video “scenes” that accumulate to form a narrative without a story. Focused on a central character who records sound but never speaks, *Parole* teases out multiple relationships between politics and desire, intimacy and estrangement, speaking and listening, voice and body.

The video installation is composed of footage of performed events in New York, London, Frankfurt, and Istanbul, as well as staged footage of this sound recorder in various private and semi-public locations.



Sharon Hayes  
*Parole, 2010*  
Four-channel video installation plywood, projection, monitors  
Dimensions variable, HD, color, sound  
36 min





**Sharon Hayes**  
*Parole, 2010*  
**Production Credits**

**Sound Recorder:** *Becca Blackwell*

**Speakers (office):** *Gladys Girabantu, Lea Robinson, Peggy Shaw, Elizabeth Whitney, Nikki Zialcita*

**Speaker (classroom):** *Lauren Berlant\**

**Speakers (public performances)\*\*:**

**Frankfurt:** *Sharon Hayes, Cornelia Kaus, Marie-Jolin Köster*

**London:** *Sharon Hayes*

**Istanbul:** *Gizem Aksu, Seyhan Arman, Tuna Erdem, Barış Ger, Sanem İlçe, Sema Semih, Aybike Esin Tumluer*

**New York:** *Oliverio Rodriguez*

**Dancer:** *Nikki Zialcita*

*\*Lauren Berlant's lecture was written and developed by Berlant.*

*\*Performance texts were written by Sharon Hayes.*

*Additional textual material includes: James Baldwin, from his lecture at UC Berkeley, April 1974.*

**Directors of Photography:** *Ava Berkofsky (office, apartment, dance studio); Yoni Goldstein & Meredith*

*Ziekle (classroom), George Lyon (X-Initiative)*

**Assistant Camera:** *Ruthie Doyle (office, apartment, dance studio) Additional*

**Camera Operators:** *Jason Hall, Özcan Vardar, Javier Bosques*

**Art Director:** *Abigail Collins (office, apartment, dance studio)*

**Grip:** *Karl R. Lee*

**Production Assistants:** *Yael Frank, Feliz Solomon*

**Technical Consultant:** *Harold Batista*

**Sound Mixer:** *Chad Birmingham*

**Choreographers:** *Nikki Zialcita, Mary Tateossian*

**Installation Architect:** *Nanna Wülfing*

**Additional Script Material:** *Leanne Chen-Keenan, Hye Young Chyun, Maggie McBrien, and Anam Sethi*

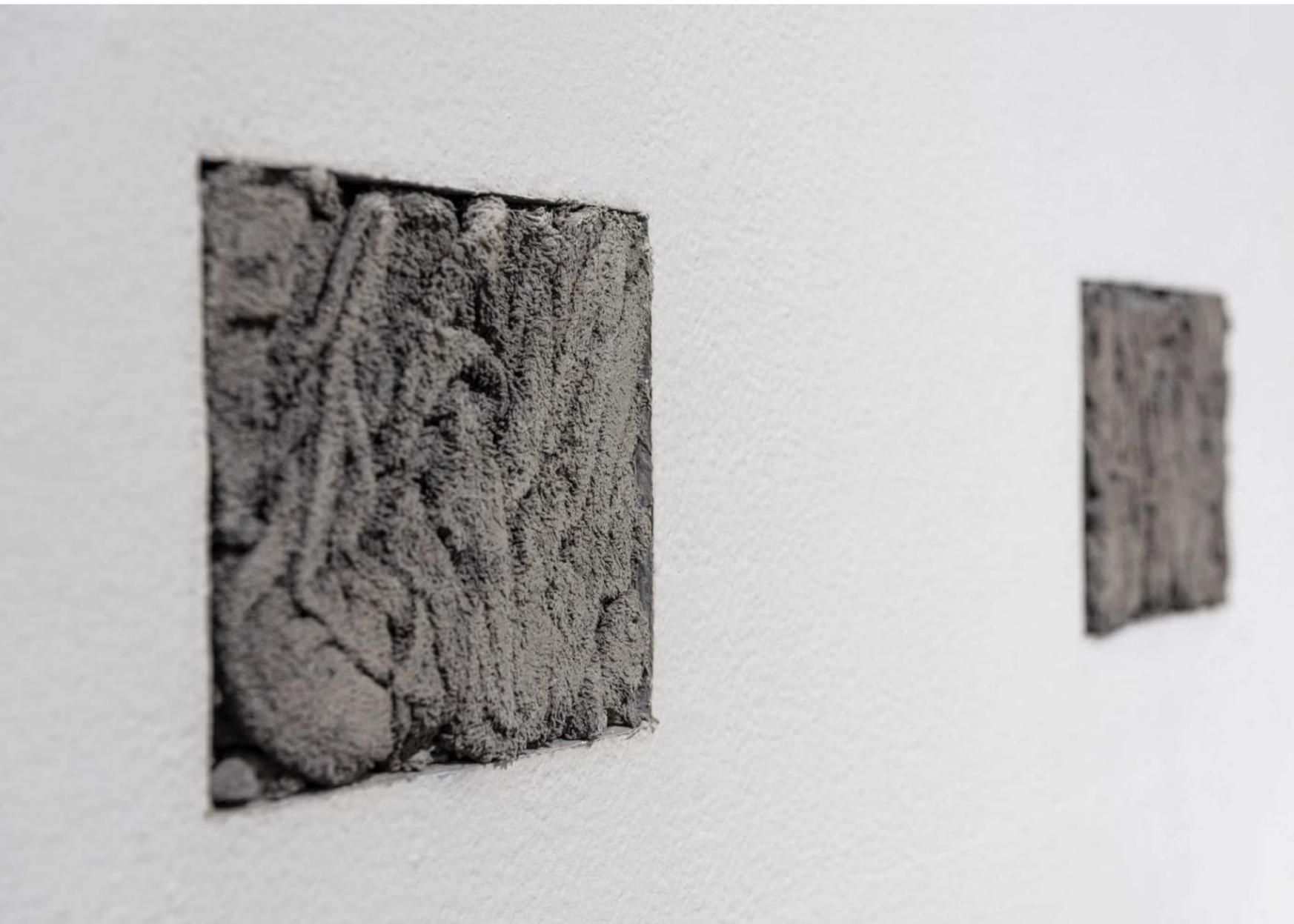
*Interior Locations generously donated by La MaMa ETC, Yvonne Rainer and Martha Gever, and Abigail Collins.*

**Special thanks:** *Brooke O'Harra, Andrea Geyer, Hans Kuzmich, Matthew Buckingham and Jane Anderson.*



Sharon Hayes  
*Parole*, 2010  
Four-channel video installation plywood, projection, monitors  
Dimensions variable, HD, color, sound  
36 min





**Nikita Gale**

*THREE DIMENSIONAL REST, 2019*

The walls in the gallery have been punctured and plugged with terrycloth concrete “rests” which transform the ambient neutral flat surface of the wall into a frame. In the case of architecture, walls, sidewalks, and streets act as ambient and abundant divisions of space most often being formed from concrete or another comparable material.

Terrycloth is a material that absorbs both moisture and sound and is often used in DIY scenarios where the absorption of high levels of ambient noise is needed to create a quieter atmosphere. It’s a material that gestures toward the improvisational and ad hoc attitude of creative practices that exist outside of the mainstream.

In Western musical notation, the “rest” is a rectangular symbol that indicates a pause (or rest) in playing for the performer or voice in a composition; during a rest, the performer, while not playing, is performing a silence that ultimately frames the sounds produced around it. Silence is not nothing, and while it is “an invention of the hearing” (Ilya Kaminsky), is also relative, and in most cases, the rest that calls for the silence of one performer makes room for another performer to be recognized.

Nikita Gale  
*THREE DIMENSIONAL REST, 2019*  
Edition of 5  
Concrete, terrycloth

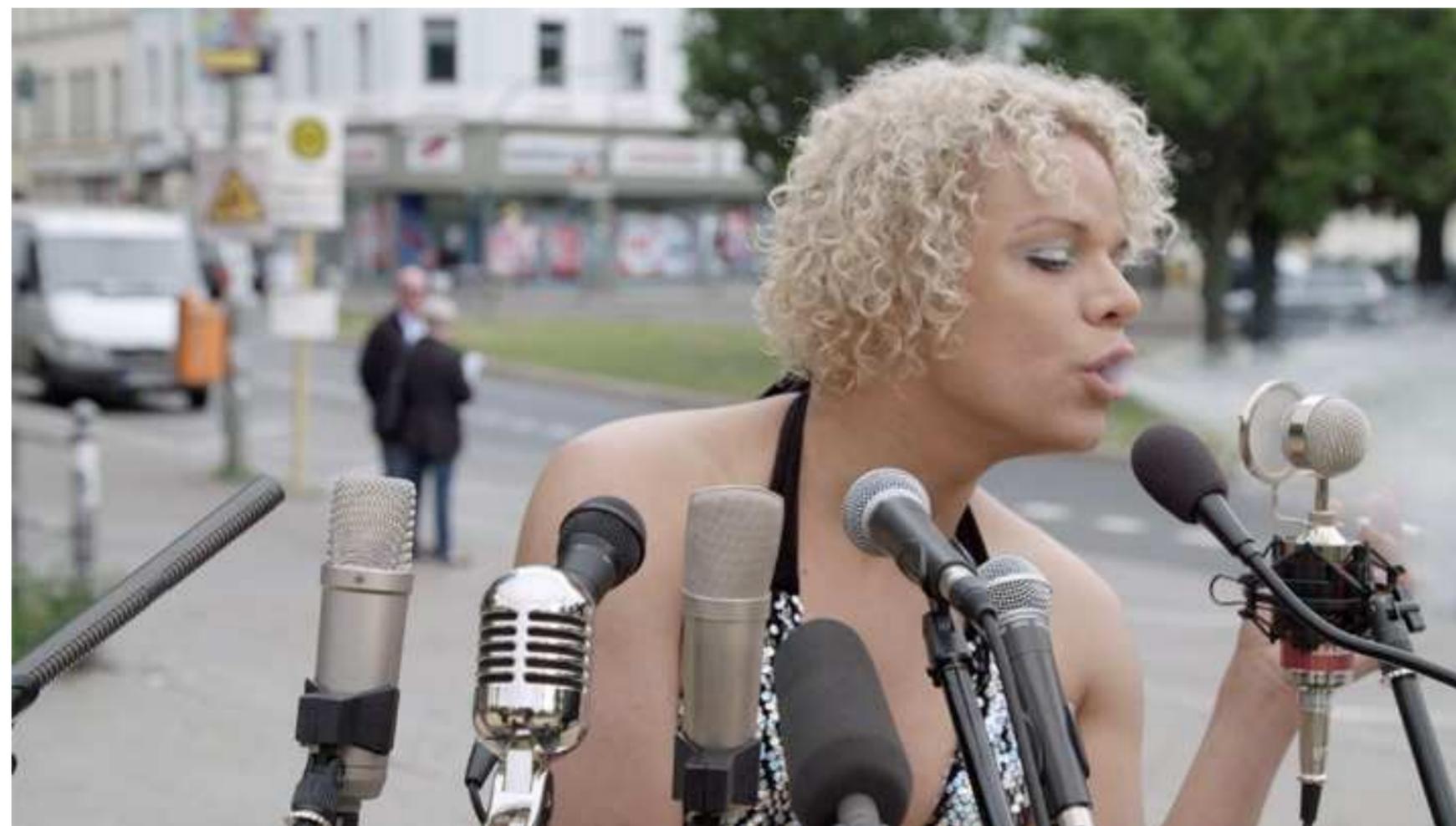


Nikita Gale  
*THREE DIMENSIONAL REST*, 2019 Edition of 5  
Concrete, terrycloth

**Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz**  
*Silent*, 2016

*Silent* starts with an interpretation of John Cage's score 4' 33" from 1952. The score is conceived for any instrument and instructs its performer(s) not to play their instrument(s) during the entire duration of the three parts of 30'', 2'23'' and 1'40''.

The musician Aerea Negrot performs the score on a rotating stage, placed on Oranienplatz, a public square in Berlin where a refugee protest camp took place between 2012 and 2014. In a second part of the film she performs a song, which has been composed for the film. *Silent* has been described either as a violent experience, as in being silenced, or as a powerful performative act of resistance, as it has been carried out by various disobedience movements around the world. *Silent* asks how both moments are intertwined. It focuses on the performance of a silent act, which might allow for agency, strength and even pleasure without erasing the traces of violence and vulnerability. The film suggests a dialogue between being silent and sounding rather than seeing them as mutually exclusive.



Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz  
*Silent*, 2016  
Installation with HD, 7 min  
Performance: Aerea Negrot



Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz  
*Silent*, 2016  
Installation with HD, 7 min  
Performance: Aérea Negrot



**Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz**

*Silent*, 2016

**Production Credits**

Performer: Ae'rea Negrot

Music: Miguel Toro and Ae'rea Negrot

Director of Photography: Bernadette Paassen

Sound: Felix Andriessens

Make-up: Nuria de Lario

Color Correction: Matthias Behrens (Waveline)

Sound Design: Rashad Becker

**Song text:**

Dear President,

Your profile is vague,

You have no arms, no hair, no legs, and no sex

Your enemy is your lover

I need make-up, underwear and hormones!

Dear visitor,

Are you optimistic,

When our country is at war?

Is freedom more masculine than genocide?

Is a lie more feminine than allies?

What is the difference between terror, horror, and war?

What is the difference between museum, artwork, and enemy?

It sounds all the same to me!

Pauline Boudry + Renate Lorenz

*Silent*, 2016

Installation with HD, 7 min

Performance: Aérea Negrot



**Lawrence Abu Hamdan**  
*Rubber Coated Steel*, 2016

In May 2014, Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank (Palestine) shot and killed two teenagers, Nadeem Nawara and Mohamad Abu Daher. The human rights organization Defence for Children International contacted Forensic Architecture, a Goldsmiths College-based agency that undertakes advanced architectural and media research. They worked with Abu Hamdan to investigate the incident. The case hinged upon an audio-ballistic analysis of the recorded gunshots to determine whether the soldiers had used rubber bullets, as they asserted, or broken the law by firing live ammunition at the two unarmed teenagers.

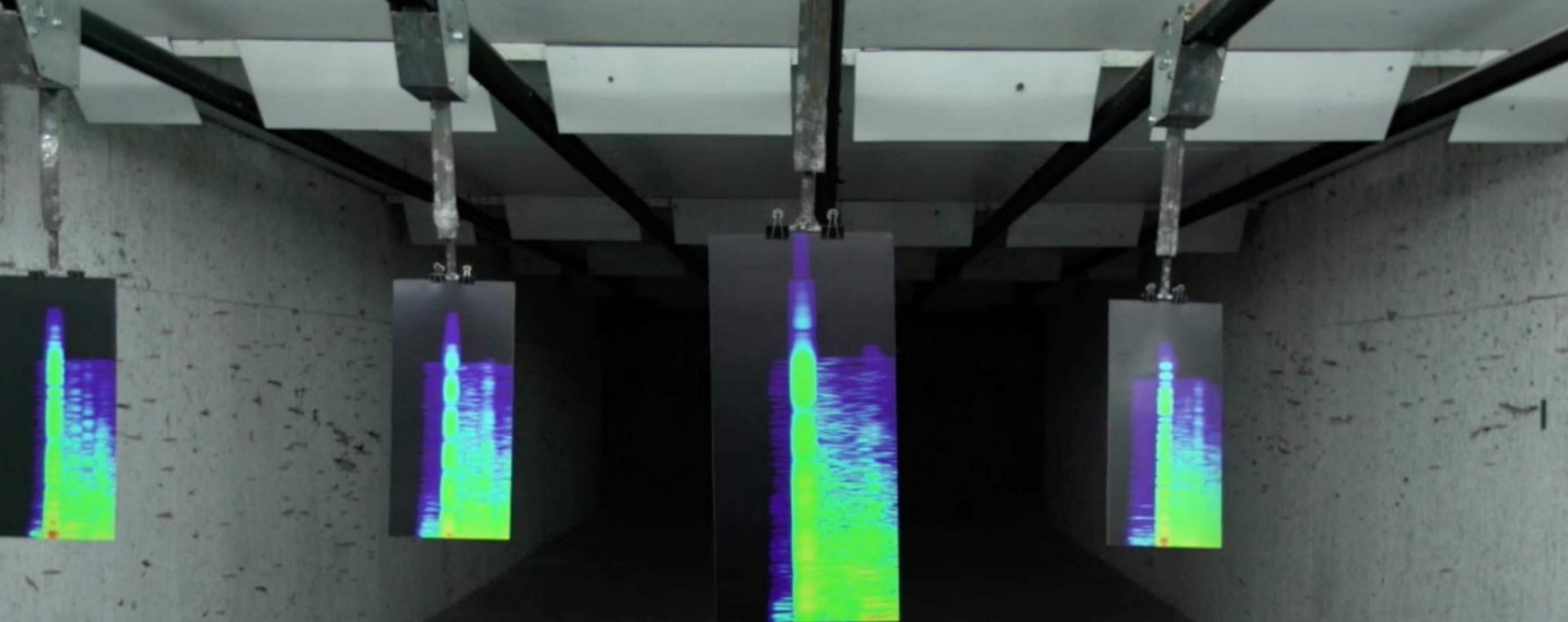
A detailed acoustic analysis, for which Abu Hamdan used special techniques designed to visualize the sound frequencies, established that they had fired live rounds, and moreover had tried to disguise these fatal shots to make them sound as if they were rubber bullets.

These visualizations later became the crucial piece of evidence that was picked up by the news channel CNN and other international news agencies, forcing Israel to renounce its original denial. The investigation was also presented before the U. S. Congress as an example of Israel's contravention of the American-Israeli arms agreement.

A little over a year after Abu Hamdan completed his report, he returns to the case of Abu Daher and Nawara in his exhibition Earshot. Expanding on the original body of evidence, he has created an installation encompassing sound, photographic prints, and a video to reflect more broadly on the aesthetics of evidence and the politics of sound and silence.

The video, *Rubber Coated Steel*, is the main part of the installation commissioned by Portikus and acts as a tribunal for these serial killing sounds.

The video tribunal does not preside over the voices of the victims but rather seeks to amplify their silence, fundamentally questioning the ways in which rights are being heard today.



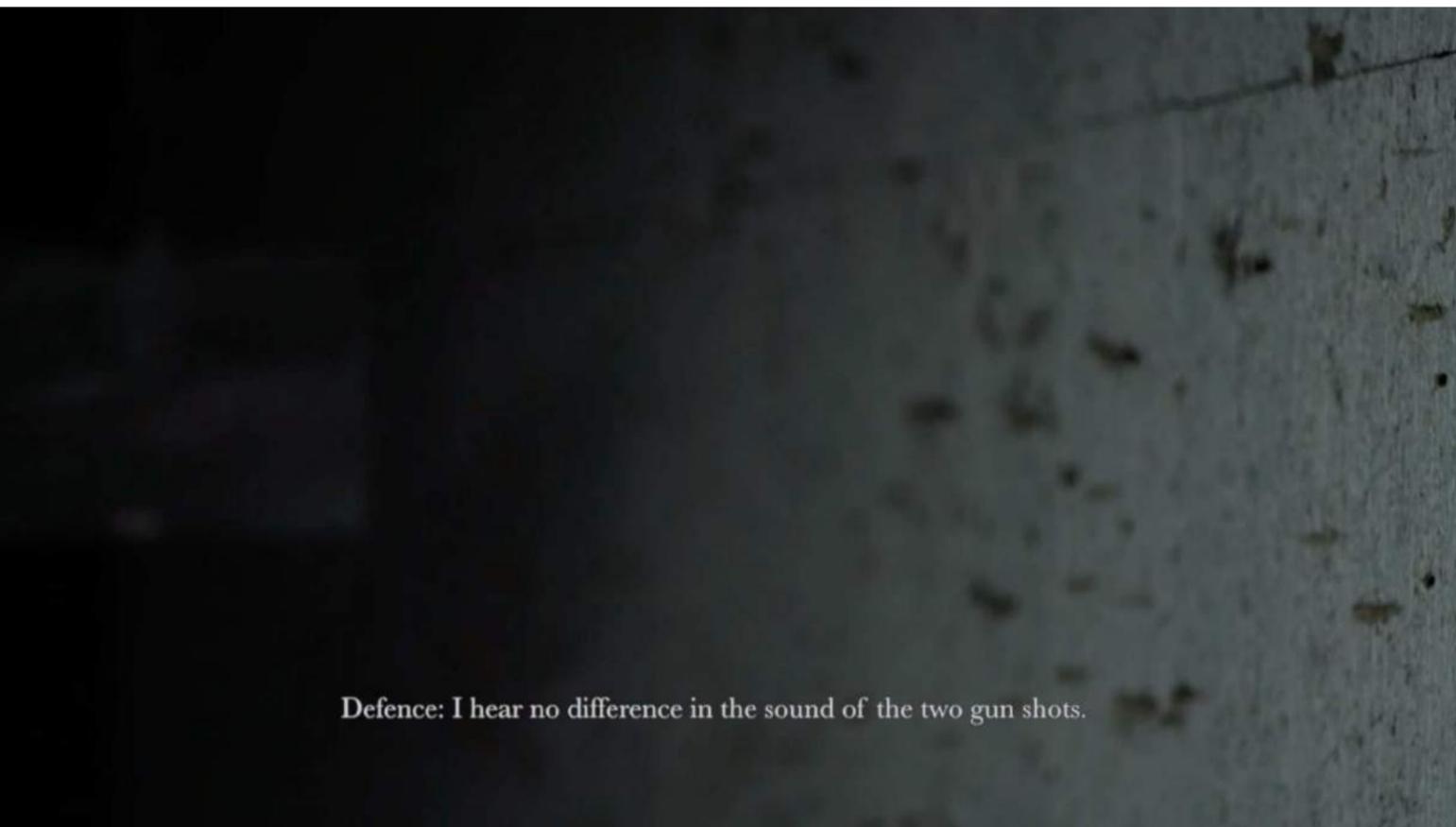
Prosecution: They also captured the sound of 4 other gun shots.



Judge: These are sounds?



Prosecution: Yes your honour, and we have the sound of this shot recorded by the CNN news crew.



Defence: I hear no difference in the sound of the two gun shots.



Defence: Objection! Your honour the family has invoked their right to silence



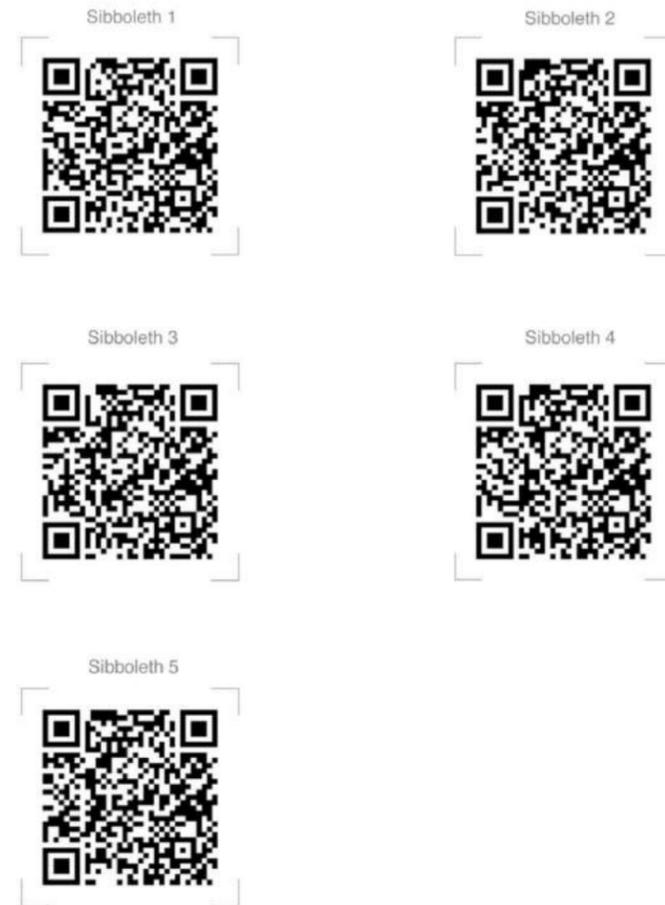
Nikita Gale  
*THREE DIMENSIONAL REST*, 2019  
Edition of 5  
Concrete, terrycloth

Aliza Shvarts  
*Sibboleth*, 2016  
Interactive sound installation via 5 2"x2" QR codes  
22:51min

**Aliza Shvarts**  
*Sibboleth, 2016*

Using the technology of QR code—which has begun to replace traditional wall labels in contemporary galleries and museums— this work intervenes in the structure of knowledge production within the exhibition space. The piece consists of six QR codes which gallery-goers are invited to scan with their smartphones. Instead of a traditional audio-tour, listeners hear a narration of the space that employs the low bass frequencies of heavy metal music and binaural-beat inducing sound waves (which produce a sonic effect in the brain of the listener).

Using sonic materiality as a critical tool, the work makes audible the disciplining force of “taste” and aesthetic value, which weighs heavily on the seeming neutrality of exhibition spaces and their didactic texts.



**Please scan QR codes using your smartphone camera. Or, download a free QR code reader app from Google Play or the Apple Store. You must listen with headphones.**

**WARNING: This piece makes use of loud sound and binaural beats. You should not listen to binaural beats if you are under 18, pregnant, wear a pace maker, have a heart condition, or are prone to seizures.**



***"Between the pure silence and the pure noise of power, between the rational voice and the guttural growl, a third tone emerges, one that moves the body in sympathetic syncopation."***

Aliza Shvarts  
*Sibboleth*, 2016  
Interactive sound installation via 5 2"x2" QR codes, 22:51min

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"The Negro Silent Protest Parade": <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/forward/text4/silentprotest.pdf>

1917 Suite | The NAACP's Silent Parade: <https://blackbird.vcu.edu/v16n2/gallery/1917/silent-page.shtml>

Newsreel footage: <https://vimeo.com/199562750>

Tommie Smith and John Carlos at 1968 Olympics:

Original LIFE magazine article: <https://books.google.com/books?id=FUkEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA63-IA4&dq=john+carlos&hl=en&ppis=c&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEWjj4fGP0fTIAhUmHzQIH7ACUQ6AEWAHoECAYQAq#v=onepage&q=john%20carlos&f=false>

Lip sewing on Greece/Macedonia border 2015

"Refugee crisis: Stranded Iranian asylum seekers sew their mouths shut in protest at Greek-Macedonian border": <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-stranded-iranian-asylum-seekers-sew-their-mouths-shut-in-protest-at-greek-macedonian-a6745281.html>

Alice Paul, Silent Sentinels

"Alice Paul": <https://www.nationalwomensparty.org/alice-paul>  
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Video footage: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_3QN\\_nR79c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_3QN_nR79c)

## Artist Biographies

**Pauline Boudry** and **Renate Lorenz** have been working together in Berlin since 2007. They produce objects and installations that choreograph the tension between visibility and opacity. Their films capture performances in front of the camera, upsetting normative historical narratives and conventions of spectatorship, as figures and actions across time are staged, layered and re-imagined. Boudry/Lorenz's most recent installation and film work, *Moving Backwards* premiered in 2019 at the Swiss Pavillion of the 58th Venice Biennale. Recent solo exhibitions also have include *Ongoing experiments with strangeness*, Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin (2019), *Telepathic Improvisation* at the Centre Culturel Suisse Paris (2018), *Everybody talks about the weather...* Participant Inc., New York (2017) and CAMH Houston (2017).

**Nikita Gale** is an artist living and working in Los Angeles, California and holds a BA in Anthropology with an emphasis in Archaeological Studies from Yale University and earned an MFA in New Genres at UCLA. Gale's practice is often structured by long-term obsessions with specific objects and the ways these objects gesture towards particular social and political histories. Gale uses ubiquitous consumer technologies as frameworks to consider how individuals potentially reproduce their relationships to objects within their relationships to psychic space and political, social, and economic systems. For Gale, the term "reproduction" is as much a mechanical, technical process as it is a process rooted in sex, biology and the organic.

**Lawrence Abu Hamdan** is a "Private Ear". His interest with sound and its intersection with politics originate from his background as a touring musician and facilitator of DIY music. The artists audio investigations has been used as evidence at the UK Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and as advocacy for organisations such as Amnesty International and Defence for Children International together with fellow researchers from Forensic Architecture. Abu Hamdan received his PhD in 2017 from Goldsmiths College London.

**Sharon Hayes** engages multiple mediums—video, performance, and installation—in ongoing investigation into specific intersections between history, politics and speech. Hayes' work is concerned with developing new representational strategies that interrogate the present political moment as a moment that reaches simultaneously backward and forward;

a moment that is never wholly its own but rather one that is full of multiple past moments and the speculations of multiple futures. From this ground, Hayes addresses political events or movements from the 1960s through the 1990s. Her focus on the sphere of the near-past is influenced by the potent imbrication of private and public urgencies that she experienced in her foundational encounters with feminism and AIDS activism.

**Baseera Khan** is a New York based visual and performance artist whose practice explores conditions of displacement, assimilation, and fluidity, all of which produce collaged identities. The core of their ideas center upon how the body is affected through surveillance and otherness, especially within capitalist-driven societies. Khan engenders installations and performances with their subjectivity through a decolonized, feminist perspective.

**Kameelah Janan Rasheed** is a Brooklyn-based learner from East Palo Alto, CA. In her work, she inquiries about the deeply intertwined spiritual, socio-political, ecological, and cognitive processes of learning/unlearning. Rasheed makes her inquiries visible through an ecosystem of iterative and provisional projects including sprawling, Xerox-based "architecturally-scaled collages" (frieze magazine, winter 2018); publications; public works; prints; digital archives; lecture-performances; library interventions; poems/poetic gestures; and other forms yet to be determined.

**Aliza Shvarts** is an artist and writer who takes a queer and feminist approach to reproductive labor and language. Her current work focuses on testimony and the circulation of speech in the digital age. She received her BA from Yale University and PhD in Performance Studies, NYU. Shvarts was a 2014 recipient of the Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, a 2014-2015 Helena Rubinstein Fellow in Critical Studies at the Whitney Independent Study Program, a 2017 Critical Writing Fellow at Recess Art, and a Joan Tisch Teaching Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2015-2019). She has two upcoming solo exhibitions in New York: *Purported* at Art in General (February 2020), which will explore the last decade of her practice; and *Potfuch* at A.I.R (July 2020), which is the culmination of her 2019-20 Artist Fellowship there.

## ***Curators / Writer Biographies***

**Eve Arballois** based in Brooklyn, NY. She received her MA in curatorial studies from the University of Southern California in May 2020 and her undergraduate degree in French from Marlboro College in 2017. Recently, she participated in the UTA Artist's Space virtual exhibition In Cahoots. She currently works at the Brooklyn Public Library and as a freelance research assistant.

**Abigail Raphael Collins** is an interdisciplinary artist working primarily with video and video installation. Her work borrows from documentary and conceptual practices to reconsider relationships between media and systemic violence through a queer feminist lens. She received her MFA from UCLA in 2015 and her BFA from Cooper Union in 2009. Recent exhibitions have been at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Pasadena Armory, Marathon Screenings, Angels Gate Cultural Center, PØST, Torrance Art Museum, and Yeosu International Art Festival. She is the recipient of an FCA grant, Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship, UCIRA grant. Abigail is a former resident at Shandanken at Storm King, and Seoul Art Space Geumcheon.

**Samira Yamin** received an MFA from UC Irvine and BAs in Art and Sociology from UCLA. She has had solo exhibitions at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Santa Monica Museum of Art (now ICA LA) and PATRON Gallery, and has been included in numerous group exhibitions including at the Craft and Folk Art Museum (now Craft Contemporary), the Camera Club of New York, Metropolitan State University in Denver, and San Francisco State University. A recipient of grants from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the California Community Foundation and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Yamin has been an artist in residence at the Rauschenberg Residency, Headlands Center for the Arts, Penumbra Foundation, and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program. She lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

## ***A c k n o w l e d g m e n t s***

*Enormous thanks to LACE Exhibitions Manager Andrew Freire who facilitated this exhibition with endless grace, innovation, and determination.*

*Thank you to LACE Director Sarah Russin, curator Daniela Lieja Quinantar, Communications Coordinator Brennen Perry, and new Exhibitions Manager Juan Silverio for all your care in stewarding the show from proposal to closing.*

*Thank you to the LACE interns who worked on every element of every piece.*

*Thank you to Samira Yamin for enduring countless global and personal crises during the writing process and walking out the other side with a text that honors these works and this exhibition with such depth and precision.*

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Cover Image: Baseera Khan, *Acoustic Sound Blanket*, AP, 2017

