



Recess Presents:

Wonder Room

A Session by Allison Janae Hamilton

May 27 – July 9, 2017

Public Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 12-6pm;

Thursday, 2-8pm

Events:

Film Screening: *Homecoming* and *Dirt and Deeds in Mississippi*: June 17, 3-5pm

"Deep in the Quiet Wood": Song Circle with Imani Uzuri: June 21, 6-8pm

Book Club with Shantrelle P. Lewis: June 22, 5-7pm

Open House Reception: July 6, 6-8pm

Sunday Dinner: July 9, 3-6pm (*Registration required*)

Front Porch Soundscape Arranged by Matthew D. Morrison: Ongoing

1.
I am nobody:
A red sinking autumn sun
Took my name away.

3.
Keep straight down this
block,
Then turn right where you
will find
A peach tree blooming.

5.
I give permission
For this slow spring rain to
soak
The violet beds.

22.
With a twitching nose
A dog reads a telegram
On a wet tree trunk.

308.
A sleepless spring night:
Yearning for what I never had
And for what never was.

— Richard Wright (1960)

On May 27, Allison Janae Hamilton will begin work on *Wonder Room*, a project that will transform Recess into a hybrid of a treehouse, resource lounge, imaginative think tank, and community environment. The installation—which will be activated by imagery from the natural world; plants, animal matter, and other organic artifacts; reading materials; and curated sounds—will offer opportunities for visitors to immerse themselves in a constructed, multi-faceted landscape and to explore the social implications of geographic space.

Wonder Room responds to the trope in the Western poetry canon of wonder or contemplation serving as a vehicle for personal or spiritual transformation within the natural landscape. However, drawing from the last four centuries of African-American nature poetry, the project circumvents the contemplative form attributed to the romantics and transcendentalists by instead using wonder as a means of thinking through the social and political concerns associated with landscape today—particularly those relating to environmental justice, displacement, and sustainability. Many of the sights, sounds, and imagery featured in the installation space come from Hamilton’s home regions within the rural American south. By infusing Recess’s Soho storefront with these materials, *Wonder Room* creates a deliberate play between the gallery’s urban surroundings and the project’s rural imagery. In this way, *Wonder Room* points to the impact that migration has on our relationships to landscape and the complexities of addressing rural space within an urban context.

Throughout the Session, the installation will act as the backdrop to a series of programs, including a film screening, song circle, book club discussion, and communal Sunday supper. Across these events, *Wonder Room* will accrue distinct resonances as it variously functions as the site of aesthetic experimentation, discursive exploration, and social exchanges.

Allison Janae Hamilton: Wonder Room is part of Recess’s signature program, Session, which invites artists to use Recess’s public platform to combine productive studio space with dynamic exhibition opportunities. Sessions remain open to the public from the first day of the artist’s project through the last, encouraging sustained dialogue between artists and audiences. Due to the process-based nature of Session, projects undergo constant revision and the above proposal is subject to change; consult the project website, recessart.org/allisonjanaehamilton, for accruing information on the Session’s developments.

The entrance to Recess is up four steps. During all events and public hours you may request ramp access using the buzzer to the left of the door. The bathroom is all-gender and ADA approved with three grab bars. We will do our best to accommodate requests for ASL interpretation or captioning. If you have specific access questions or needs please email info@recessactivities.org.

About the Artist:

Allison Janae Hamilton (b.1984) is a visual artist working in photography, video, sculpture, installation, and taxidermy. Born in Kentucky and raised in Florida, she now lives and works in New York City. She has exhibited at museums and institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (Washington, DC), The Jewish Museum (New York, NY), Fundación Botín (Santander, Spain), The Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago, IL), and the Tacoma Art Museum (Tacoma, WA). Her artwork has appeared in the Brighton Photo Biennial and the Istanbul Design Biennial. Hamilton was a 2013-2014 Fellow at the Whitney Independent Study Program, sponsored by the Whitney Museum of American Art. She has been awarded artist residencies at Recess (New York, NY), Fundación Botín (Santander, Spain), the School of Visual Arts (New York, NY) and the Rush Arts Foundation (New York, NY). Hamilton received her PhD in American Studies from New York University and her MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University. Her artwork has appeared in publications such as *Transition Magazine*, *Women and Performance*, *Arte Al Limite*, *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and *Artforum*.



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