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Thanks, we appreciate you!
Last week, six Seattle cultural institutions announced Murmurations, a citywide arts collaboration that will run all summer long, with some projects continuing into the fall.

Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Henry Art Gallery, On the Boards, Northwest Film Forum, Frye Art Museum, and Velocity Dance Center are organizing the venture. Together they will debut a series of exhibitions, artist talks, performances, movie screenings, and the like, all co-presented for the city as it gets back into the swing of things.

While Murmurations’ events don’t necessarily hem to a particular theme, they represent a cross-disciplinary, collaborative approach to getting Seattle’s art scenes back on their feet. The name of the series, which refers to the flight pattern of starlings that move as one unit, reflects its intentions and spirit. Like starlings, the arts organizations in the city are all delicately interconnected, and they feel their collective survival depends on working together.

The project started back in June, when Shamim Momin, Nina Bozicnik, and Mita Mahato from The Henry reached out to the five other arts organizations for a biweekly phone call. Momin told me the informal Zoom meetings were initially more about brainstorming and
sharing ideas on navigating their respective institutions through the seemingly endless pandemic. It was just as much about moral support, too, something desperately needed during this time of deep uncertainty.

But as their conversations continued, Momin said that the interdisciplinary crosstalk fomented a lot of ideas. “We developed this giant spreadsheet actually at the beginning and realized we had so many things that we could do,” said Momin. “But the only way to actually achieve them would be to figure out where we could partner and who could support who and how we could collaborate.”
And so, Murmurations was born. Rather than a discrete event like a festival, Momin says they wanted a series of events over a longer period to highlight a “new way of working” between arts organizations in the city. Materially, that looks like sharing costs and spaces—like The Henry’s and OtB’s drive-in series. But it also looks like sharing knowledge bases, audiences, and existing series—practices that did not exist before the pandemic.
“Ultimately, perhaps the biggest takeaway is essentially that rising tides lift all boats, and the more that we can cooperate to maintain a vibrant arts ecosystem in Seattle, the better it is for us all,” wrote Frye’s chief curator Amanda Donnan in an email. “I think that is a shift away from a model in which we are supposed to hold our cards close to our vests and compete for audiences, funding, and press.”

An upcoming collaborative show by multidisciplinary artist James Allister Sprang came from On the Boards artistic director Rachel Cook and Jacob Lawrence Gallery director Emily Zimmerman’s shared affinity for Sprang. Both had separate ideas to bring Sprang to the city, but once they got wind of each other's plans they decided to work together on the show. Along with NWFF, the institutions can bring their separate audiences—film, performance, visual art—and use their shared resources to highlight the work of an artist they admire.

"That’s what the Seattle arts ecosystem needs more of—it needs more collaboration and more cross-disciplinary conversations," said Cook. "I think that we are greater when we are in conversation together than we are as isolated, siloed institutions."

You can check out the entire list of their 13 planned programs here. Murmurations will continue to solidify dates and add events to the series, which you can follow along on its Facebook page. I’ve pulled a couple of events for you to track as you start to pencil in your summer plans.

James Allister Sprang's "Aquifer of the Hum"
Presented by Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Northwest Film Forum, and On the Boards

Next weekend, Philadelphia-based artist James Allister Sprang will debut "Aquifer of the Hum," a newly-commissioned 10 minute "sound meditation." It will screen in conjunction with his previous 40-minute soundscape "Aquifer of the Ducts," which features synths, dance, and layered tape recordings. Both sound pieces invite listeners to listen deeply—a "radical action that allows us to slow down, turn inward, and heal," says Sprang—and become present in their bodies. Developed in conjunction with NWFF's and the Jake's Lux Aeterna project, "Aquifer of the Hum" and "Aquifer of the Ducts" will have six screenings, playing three times a day. After each screening, Sprang and NWFF executive director Vivian Hua will host a Q&A. Reserve your seats here.

May 15 -16 at the Merrill Theater at On the Boards

The Engine Room Residencies in Gary Simmons: The Engine Room
Presented by Henry Art Gallery and LANGSTON
Starting this month, both Henry Art Gallery and LANGSTON are bringing Seattle-area musicians into the gallery space. The Engine Room Residencies is an activation of Gary Simmon's show *The Engine Room* at The Henry, which "examines the way in which we attempt to reconstruct the past via personal and collective memory." Using his piece "Garage Band"—a life-sized reconstruction of a suburban garage, covered in old show posters and replete with working speakers—musicians are given free rein to rehearse, record, write, and do as they please during their time in the space. This month's residents are The Black Tones—you can view them **IRL on May 16, from 1 pm - 4 pm.** June will bring theeee Ishmael Butler of Shabazz Palaces and Digable Planets, and July will see a "build-a-band residency" that will revive the "Jambalaya," an improvisational jam session.

*May-July 2021 at Henry Art Gallery*

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*Black Refractions Drive-In Screenings*

*Presented by the Frye Art Museum and On the Boards, programmed by Black Cinema Collective*

Later this month, the Frye Art Museum opens *Black Refractions: Highlights from the Studio Museum in Harlem,* a touring exhibition of work by nearly eighty Black artists from the vaunted collection of the Studio Museum. In conjunction with the show, On the Boards will host a weeklong drive-in film screening curated by the Seattle-based Black Cinema Collective. Films will "include works from artists both in and beyond the exhibition." More details to be announced soon.

*July 2021 at On the Boards*

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Jasmyne Keimig

Jasmyne Keimig is a staff writer at The Stranger, covering visual arts, music, film, queer stuff, stickers, and culture. She also writes half of Unstreamable, a weekly column about films you can’t find on major streaming services. She cries easily at movies.
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