



155 Gibbs Street, Rockville, MD 20850, 301-315-8200, www.visartscenter.org

Gallery Hours: Wednesday, Thursday 12 – 4 PM, Friday 12 – 8 PM, Saturday & Sunday 12 – 4 PM

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Esteban del Valle, *Wearing Hats Indoors*, 2016, Color pencil, gouache, acrylic, ink, and flashe paint on paper, 21.5 x 29.5 inches

QUESTIONING POWER AT VISARTS

Antoine Williams: *gods of the gaps*, Gibbs Street Gallery, February 24 – March 26, 2017

Esteban Del Valle: *Unsettling*, Kaplan Gallery, February 24 – March 26, 2017

Estefaní Mercedes: *1,000 Yellow Dahlias*, Common Ground Gallery, February 17 – March 19, 2017

Shané K. Gooding: *To See or Not to See*, Concourse Gallery, February 17 – March 19, 2017

Reception and Artist Talks: Friday, February 24, 7 – 9 PM

All Galleries (1st and 2nd floor)

Performances: Friday, February 24, 7 - 9 PM

Artist Concourse and Studios

Heloisa Escudero, *Everyone is a VIP*, 7 – 9 PM

Sandra Atkinson, *Etched*, 8:45 PM

Light Switch Dance Theatre Trio, *Luscious/Insanity*

Rhizome DC in partnership with VisArts: Friday, February 24, 9 – 11 PM

In(Site) Project Space (2nd floor)

Featuring: Keir Nueringer, Creative Music Workshop Players

Tickets: \$10.00 online <https://www.visartsatrockville.org/more/?p=2192493> or \$15.00 at the door.

Exhibitions and events are always free and open to the public except when noted. \$5.00 suggested donation.

Rockville, MD- Contemporary artists are particularly effective at igniting discussion, stimulating debate, and grappling with rapidly shifting cultural conditions. Given the intensity of the current socio-political climate, VisArts presents four solo exhibitions, music, performance, and participatory events that question the dynamics of power. The featured artists shed light on the relations of power that shape identity, perception, leadership, and action. With thoughtful urgency and diverse means, they are meeting the challenge of the times and opening up space for dialogue.

Esteban del Valle uses a mix of painting, drawing, sculpture, video, and political cartoon exhibition to grapple with the push and pull of power. Del Valle amps up the scale of his work to monumental, wall sized narratives where politics unfold in everyday life. Smaller mixed media paintings reference hot button issues and attitudes that continue to reverberate from the past U.S. presidential election: migration, displacement, drama, bad manners, lies, and vitriol. Vibrant, acidic color and dripping paint engulf, dissolve, and bind characters in shallow settings packed with symbolism. Del Valle presses his characters into claustrophobic frames where they shout, grimace, and point fingers. Politics and iconic American rituals from Thanksgiving to TV dinners to home improvement merge in an unsettling blend of nostalgia, historical amnesia, and emotion. Home sweet home is a hot mess.

In a mixed-media installation of paintings, drawings, and collage, **Antoine Williams** creates a mythology of loosely autobiographical humanoid beings that personify the complexities of perception in relation to race, class, and masculinity. His art practice investigates how the use, repetition, and reproduction of words, expressions, and images relate to cultural and institutional benefits and inequities. The signs that interest Williams are associated with the Black body within the American psyche. Inspired by the Amiri Baraka poem “Something in the Way of Things”, the beings he creates live in the intangible spaces that exist between the nuances of class and race. They are both born of and perpetuate the actions and thought processes due to social reproduction. They exist in an abstracted purgatory.

Estefaní Mercedes proves that even failed attempts to send messages to “the powerful” can offer perspective on political and social dominance. Through ethical imagining, ornamental activism, speculative poetics, and radical gift giving, Estefaní Mercedes stages public interventions. In her solo exhibition at VisArts, Mercedes re-presents through video and photography her recent performance, *1,000 Yellow Dahlias*. This performance involved Mercedes’ attempt to deliver “thank you notes” from 1,000 different immigrants in New York City to Trump Tower. The performance went viral and was picked up by both the right wing media and Latin American art newspapers.

Shané K. Gooding’s *To See or Not to See* is a three channel video, that pokes at the hyper-visibility of Black men as a collective and at the same time the invisibility of Black men as individuals in American society. The project primarily follows four separate men- Jonathan Davis, Paul Henry Foote, Frankiem Mitchell, and Bruce Wilson. In conjunction with “video gazes” there are vignettes of documentary footage that share the day-to-day lives of the men and offer a piece of their journey, their truth, their visibility, and their individuality.

At the free reception from 7 – 9 PM on Friday, February 24, the public is invited to answer the question “What is Power?” and create a wall of powerful definitions. In each of the galleries, the solo artists discuss their exhibitions. **Heloisa Escudero’s** *Everyone is a VIP* performance encourages participants to assess their personal value. Dancer and founder/artistic director of **Light Switch Dance Theatre (LSDT)** **Sandra C. Atkinson** performs *Etched*, a solo performance that deals with the objectification of the Black female body. A trio from LSDT performs *Luscious/Insanity* a piece that deals with language and emotional reaction. From 9 – 11 PM, **Rhizome DC**, in partnership with VisArts, presents a line-up of musicians who defy boundaries with free jazz improvisation, non-traditional instruments, and intentional experimentation. **Keir Neuringer** and **Creative Music Workshop Players** open up possibility in unconventional acoustic sets with socially conscientious roots.



Left: Esteban del Valle, *The Weeping Candidate*, 2016, ink, acrylic, and collage on paper, 8 x 11.5 inches



Right: Antoine Williams, *The Ain't Gots no. II (For Freddie Gray)*, detail, 2016, wheat-paste, wood, seat belt straps, plastic, on sheet-roc, 72 x 72 inches



Left: Estefaní Mercedes, *1,000 Yellow Dahlias*, online discussion, screenvideo, 2 min 25 sec



Right: Shané K. Gooding, *To See or Not To See*, 2016, video still

About the artists:

Esteban del Valle is an interdisciplinary artist born in Chicago, Illinois in 1984. He completed his M.F.A. in painting at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009, where he received a Presidential Scholarship and the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship. His work investigates the performance of leadership, the role of the artist as a public figure, and the effects of class and privilege on institutions in the form of paintings, murals, sculpture, and video art. He has exhibited internationally, working with galleries and organizations such as Urban Nation, Berlin, Germany; Fundacion-Taller Silvano Lora, Santo Domingo; Sumter County Gallery of Art, Sumter, South Carolina; and Superchief

Gallery, New York, New York. Del Valle has been the recipient of several visual arts residencies and fellowships including the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Fine Arts Work Center, and Smack Mellon Artist Studio Program. Most recently, he completed a summer residency at Chulitna Lodge in Lake Clark, Alaska, and received a fellowship from the Arts Student League in New York. Del Valle executes mural projects internationally, and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. <http://www.estebandelvalle.com>

Antoine Williams Antoine Williams grew up in a small rural community in eastern North Carolina, midway between Fayetteville and Laurinburg. The realities of race and class that he experienced there became the foundation – the bass line – of his work, upon which he builds fantastical imagery and complex mythologies, influenced by the imaginative realms of science fiction and larger-than-life narratives in hip hop. Williams is a graduate of University of North Carolina (UNC) at Charlotte with a B.F.A. in Art and concentration in Illustration. He also holds a M.F.A. in Studio Art from the UNC at Chapel Hill. In 2005, alongside three other UNC Charlotte students, he founded the God City Art Collective, which unites art and activism through community-based murals, concerts and after school programs. Recent exhibitions include Sumter County Gallery of Art, Sumter, South Carolina, Columbia Museum of Art, The Art Space in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. He is an assistant professor of art at Guilford College. <http://rawgoods.org/home.html>

Estefaní Mercedes is an Argentinian/American Artist whose practice moves between Performance, Social Practice, and Social Sculpture. Mercedes was born in San Francisco and obtained a B.A. from Smith College. She is currently enrolled in an Art + Law Program, and has participated in the following residencies: SAAS-FEE Summer Institute of Art, SOMA Summer, Largo Das Artes, La Ira de Dios and L.P.E.P. Mercedes was a recipient of the 2014 Ellen Battel Norfolk Scholarship from Yale University and has exhibited her work in the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Switzerland.

Shané K. Gooding is a photographer and video artist telling stories about the human experience. Part of her work is deeply personal and reflects on home and identity. Another part of her work also analyzes and probes the image constructions and representations of race and visibility in mass media. Her interest is in creating imagery that illuminates those and the personal journeys of those blown out of sight. Gooding was educated at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, majoring in Film and Television. She began interning, working, and writing in the film and television industry with production companies like DreamWorks and Miramax. She received her Masters degree from Howard University in Mass Communications and Media Studies. She received her Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for Photography. Her work has been exhibited at the Center for Fine Art of Photography, Art Expo Chicago, Filter Photo, South Side Community Arts Center in Chicago, and Smack Mellon Gallery in New York. She has also co-produced a documentary for PBS. <http://www.shanekgooding.com>

Light Switch Dance Theatre (est. June 2013) is a sites- specific project based contemporary dance company dedicated to multi-disciplinary performances in non-traditional spaces. **Sandra C. Atkinson**, MA (Founder/Artistic Director) creates work in a collaborative manner inspired by the human condition, social justice, matters for science & technology and art of all mediums. LSDT strives to provide performances to the general public making any place a performance space. www.lightswitchdance.wix.com

Heloisa Escudero obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Massachusetts College of Art and a Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute. She holds American, Italian, and Brazilian citizenships. She is interested in conceptually based art that is both tactile and interactive. Her recent art projects focus on art that emphasizes the participation of the viewer. In 2007 she moved to Sweden where she built the first Back Pack Gallery Sculpture Units and started the *BackPack Gallery Project*. In 2010 she relocated to New York City where she collaborated with DJ Spooky (Paul D. Miller) in the project *Terra Nova: Sinfonia Antarctica* exhibited at the New York Photo Festival in 2012. She exhibited at the popular urban park, The Highline, in New York. Her current studio is in Arlington, Virginia. Escudero also works at the Hirshhorn Museum as an Exhibit Specialist. <http://www.heloisaescudero.com/>

RhizomeDC is a nonprofit DIY arts space dedicated to providing a home in the Washington D.C. area for experimental works of all kinds, including music, film, poetry, performance art, theater and more. Recently called “the city’s most vital venue for underground jazz and experimental music” by the Washington Post, Rhizome presents both local and touring artists who push the boundaries of musical expression, continually redefining for audiences what music can be. www.rhizomcdc.org

RhizomeDC, in partnership with VisArts, is proud to present:

Keir Neuringer is a Philadelphia-based saxophonist and composer whose work is underpinned by interdisciplinary approaches and socio-political contextualizations. He is best known for a personal and intensely physical saxophone technique, revealed through long form solo improvisations, as well as collaborations with a multitude of world-renowned and underground practitioners in jazz, avant-garde, noise, classical, theater, and dance disciplines. He has travelled extensively to present his work, appeared on numerous festival stages, and given workshops throughout Europe and North America.

Keir trained as a composer and saxophonist in the U.S., spent two years on a Fulbright research grant in Krakow, and then moved to The Hague, where he lived for eight years, curating performative audiovisual art and earning a masters degree from the experimental ArtScience Institute. Originally from New York State, he settled in Philadelphia in 2012, where he lives with his family and is a member of the Books Through Bars Collective.

"...with Neuringer's music...mortal purpose is a given." (Bill Meyer, September 2014 issue of Wire Magazine)

<http://www.keirneuringer.com/>

Creative Music Workshop Players is an evolving collective of improvisers convened in early 2015 and comprised of stalwarts of D.C.'s experimental music scene including Luke Stewart, Layne Garrett, Nate Scheible, Phong Tran, Patrick Cain, and others. Individually and in various groupings CMW Players have played almost everywhere in the D.C. area, including Source Festival, the Kennedy Center, Sonic Circuits Festival of Experimental Music, DC Jazz Festival, Goethe Institut, Capital Fringe Festival, the Freer Gallery, the Embassy of Indonesia, Dance Place, etc.

<https://soundcloud.com/boxwallastan/sets/creative-music-workshop/s-Zc9ua>

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About VisArts: VisArts is a nonprofit arts center dedicated to transforming individuals and communities through the visual arts.

VisArts is located three blocks from the Rockville Metro station at 155 Gibbs Street, Rockville, Maryland. For information, please visit www.visartscenter.org or call 301-315-8200.

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For information, images or to arrange an interview or preview of the exhibition, please contact Susan Main at (301) 315-8200 ext. 110 or smain@visartscenter.org

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