

Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas at Austin Announces Fall 2023 Exhibitions

The Visual Arts Center's 2023–2024 season features group exhibitions *A Well-trained Eye* and *If we are here...*, and a solo exhibition by artist-in-residence Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, all opening September 22, 2023.



Alicia Kopf, *Speculative Intimacy*, 2018. HD video, color, sound. 2:20 min. Courtesy of the artist.

Austin, TX (August 24, 2023) — The Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas presents its fall 2023 exhibitions. *A Well-trained Eye*, a group exhibition, examines how technology is shaping our vision as we are teaching computers how to see. A solo exhibition by artist-in-residence Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork features a new multi-part installation incorporating sound and sculpture. *If we are here...* explores where and when we find ourselves from Black feminist perspectives.

A Well-trained Eye

September 22, 2023 – March 2, 2024



Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman, Still from *im here to learn so :))))))*, 2017. Four-channel HD video installation, color, sound. 27:33 min. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artists.

A Well-trained Eye features 13 contemporary artists who explore the possibilities, limitations, and responsibilities that come with instructing both humans and computers how to see. The exhibition considers the potential to classify and surveil that we have coded into our AI technologies, looking closely at the biases that underlie data collection and analysis. Encompassing different media—drawing, photography, video, and installation—the artworks on view examine the reciprocal relationship between human and computer vision; they interrogate how technical systems increasingly mediate our relationship with ourselves, the environment, and to one another, fundamentally shaping the way we see. Rather than simply denouncing or blindly celebrating these technological developments, the artists in the exhibition compel us to challenge the possibilities of what these tools are capable of, and what a deeper creative collaboration *with* AI might look like.

By establishing a parallel between training algorithms and the human process of learning to see, *A Well-trained Eye* reflects on how the developers of artificial intelligence have ingrained their worldviews in their creations, including certain principles, associations and aesthetic preferences. At a pressing time when machine

learning tools are reconfiguring not just the economy, but also how we value academic learning, labor, privacy, and the quality of our interpersonal relationships, this exhibition thinks critically about the categories and value systems driving these new technologies, inviting us to unlearn some of our own ways of seeing.

With **American Artist, Zach Blas, Jim Campbell, Ronnie Clarke, Danielle Dean, Esther Hovers, Alicia Kopf, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Trevor Paglen, Macarena Ruiz Tagle, Jason Salavon, Jemima Wyman, and Canek Zapata.**

A Well-trained Eye is organized by Maria Emilia Fernandez, former assistant curator. Lead support for the exhibition provided by the Jedel Family Foundation and the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation. Additional support provided by Suzanne Deal Booth and Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The press kit is accessible [here](#).

Artist-in-Residence: Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork

September 22 – December 2, 2023



Installation view, Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, *Variations in Mass #3*, 2020. Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork combines sound and objects to test the boundaries of experiential connection. Gork's installations facilitate embodied experiences, casting the viewer as an active participant of a choreographic interplay comprised of sculptural and sonic forms. Using evocative materials such as human hair, felt, acoustic foam, and latex, Gork's works often move, change shape, expand and contract while emitting sounds gathered from the surrounding environment. The specific features of a site are integral to the fabric of the work—footsteps, conversations, room acoustics, and other ambient sounds are recorded, remixed, and played on speakers as an interactive sound composition. The output is often a beguiling cacophony; a multi-layered feedback loop that continues to evolve over time.

At the Visual Arts Center (VAC), a new inflatable sculpture modeled after a Japanese lantern from the artist's personal collection will fill the interior of the VAC's largest gallery, incorporating sounds collected from the VAC's courtyard. Together, the sounds of blowers, of flowing water, of visitors, and of the VAC's interior space will transform the gallery into an interactive indoor sonic garden.

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork is organized by MacKenzie Stevens, former director, and Melissa Fandos, 2023–2024 VAC curatorial fellow. Major support for this project generously provided by the Kaleta A. Doolin Foundation.

The Artist-in-Residence program at the Visual Arts Center (VAC) is supported by the VAC Artist-in-Residence Endowed Fund.

The press kit is accessible [here](#)

If we are here...

September 22, 2023 – March 9, 2024



Tsedaye Makonnen, *Astral Sea II*, 2020. Textile and mirrored acrylic.
Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the unfulfilled promise of the “racial reckoning” of 2020, the dissolution of *Roe v. Wade*, and the unfolding climate crisis, the current moment feels increasingly dystopian. *If we are here...* considers the sense of impending apocalypse in its philosophical, political, and personal dimensions through the work of 5 artists. Their practices explore different approaches to where and when we find ourselves from Black feminist perspectives. In *The Distraction of Symbolism*, Jamaican artist **Deborah Anzinger** overlays the natural bounty of Jamaica, named “the land of wood and water” by its first inhabitants, and the risk and precarity of Jamaican life and ecology. **Autumn Knight’s** *Disappointment* explores sitting with disappointment and discontent, not only as a motor of political engagement but as something essentially human and valid in and of itself. **Tsedaye Makonnen’s** *Astral Sea IV* embodies the beauty in aspirations, and grief. Spring artists-in-residence, **Las Nietas de Nonó** insist that there is always creative potential, even in conditions of inhumane confinement.

Black feminist approaches shape the exhibition’s content and form, and the project will evolve over its six-month run with artist residencies, research trips, and lectures by the exhibition artists.



If we are here... is organized by Nicole Smythe-Johnson, 2022-2023 VAC curatorial fellow, with assistance from Melissa Fandos, 2023-2024 VAC curatorial fellow. Lead support for this exhibition is provided by the College of Fine Arts. Additional support provided by the Art Galleries at Black Studies, the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies, and the College of Liberal Arts GRIDS Initiative.

The press kit is accessible [here](#).

About the Visual Arts Center

Nestled in The University of Texas at Austin's College of Fine Arts, the Visual Arts Center is a 13,000 square-foot gallery that organizes solo and group exhibitions with internationally recognized artists who have had limited visibility within Texas. The VAC's artist-in-residence program offers emerging artists an opportunity to engage with students and faculty at UT Austin, to utilize campus resources, and realize an exhibition of their work at the culmination of their residency. For many of the artists-in-residence, this exhibition has been the first solo presentation of their work in Texas.

The 2023 – 2024 exhibition program continues the VAC's mission to provide a platform for artists, curators, and educators to experiment, test ideas, and take risks and to spark generative conversations about art and contemporary society.

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Reopening September 22, 2023

Hours: 12:00–5:00 pm, Tuesday – Saturday

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