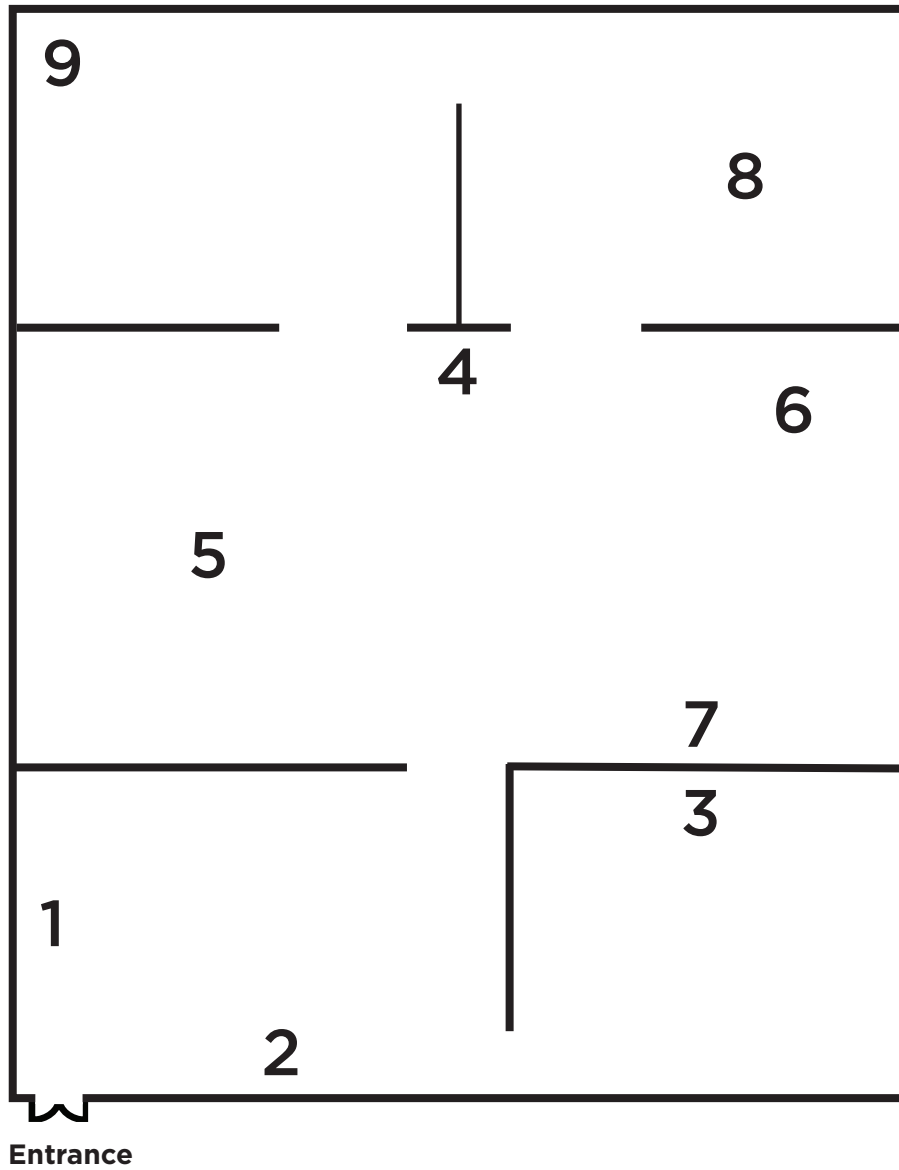


Jessica Karuhanga: *Blue as the insides* Accessible Labels



1



2



3



4



5



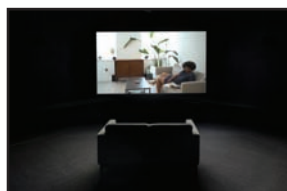
6



7



8



9



1. *Black Hollyhock Presents the Revolution Will Not*

2012

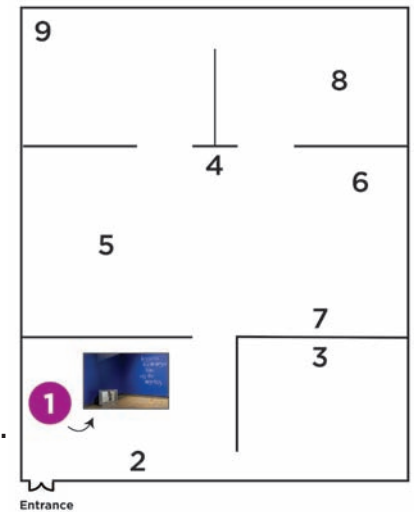
Single-channel video

12:10 mins.

The oldest work in the exhibition features a sort of alter-ego of the artist named Black Hollyhock. The looping video captures Hollyhock's labour as she grinds and scrapes at a white studio wall. This is the action that happens between the making of artwork: after the end and before the beginning. It is a quotidian labour that is often left unseen. Documenting this sort of action has a long history in both video and performance art histories: Joan Jonas and Bruce Nauman similarly documented their working lives in their work. Here, though, the effort is ultimately a failure as the wall is never fully resolved, never returned to a pristine white surface. Instead, the artist's labored breath, a semiotic response to the scraping sounds, betrays an effort with apparently no product, like the process has glitched somewhere along the way before returning back to the beginning.

Gil Scott Heron's *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* plays quietly in the background. As the poem tells us, real change and revolution will not be something that you can see from your couch. It is something that requires active participation and deep change. It requires hard work and sometimes it might feel like arriving at the beginning again. The sound of the video, like a gestural mark through space, carries throughout the gallery as a constant reminder of the work left to be done.

How often do you think about the space of the artist's studio and the labour that happens around the creation of art? How can one protect against losing aspects of oneself in the effort to find one's place within contemporary art institutions, like scraping marks off of our identities to fit expectations?



2. ALL OF ME

2017

sound

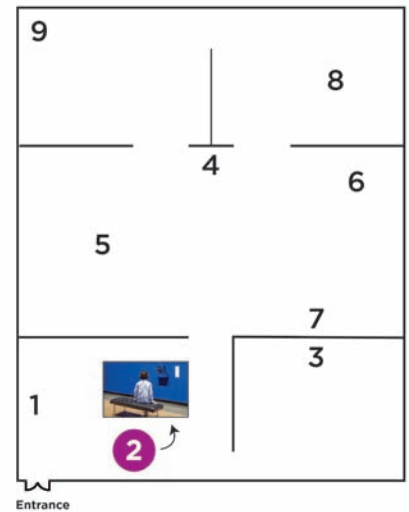
23:30 mins.

Musical Composition: Jessica Karuhanga

Musical Engineering: Emilio Portal

*People ask me all the time
what kind of stories do you want to tell...
and I say, exhume those bodies
exhume those stories
the stories of the people who dreamed big
and never saw those dreams to fruition;
people who fell in love
and lost...
that celebrates what it means
to live a life*

Viola Davis, 2017 Oscars, Best Supporting Actress



In many ways, **ALL OF ME** is a sister piece for you feel me. Where the latter asks about a more basic connection and capacity between two or more people, the former is more holistic. Instead of asking do you see me it asks do you see all of me. For Karuhanga, seeing is about love. It is about a recognition, an embrace, an effort to account for all of the things that make a person an individual. It accounts for all that it means to live a life the way that we want to.

The soundtrack weaves together blues, gospel, R&B and popular music motifs alongside spoken word stories of desire, loss and reverie. Reverie is understood as an introspective state of wandering around one's own thoughts, like a sort of daydream infused with memory and projection. Sharing the stories of Black reverie is an incredibly vulnerable and powerful act. How we peer into these private spaces highlights the spaces between love and the things that we each carry within us through the world.

What do you explore in your own private reveries? Do larger external social politics impact the tone and timbre of these private spaces?

3. *Body and Soul*

2019 (2012)

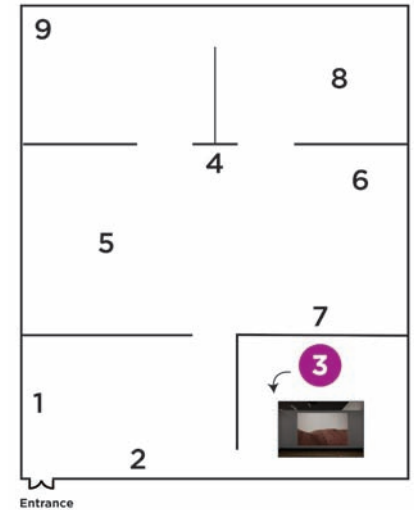
Single-channel video with sound

02:06 mins.

Courtesy of Jessica Karuhanga

Editor: Serene Husni

Centered on Karuhanga's own body, *Body and Soul* explores societal fascination with colour, surface and skin. Here, flesh becomes an equal representative component (a synecdoche) for race as a sign of social difference. The topography of the artist's body, laid out like a gently rolling landscape, invites an intimate consideration of Blackness and breath. It stands in contrast to the white wall of the artist's bedroom and the white wall of the gallery, making a further connection toward legacies of medicalized bodies in supposedly neutral institutional spaces.



The title, a reference to one of the most iconic jazz standards that was, in part, made popular by Billie Holiday in the 1930s, includes two components. While body becomes a charged site grounding the sociality of race, there is still the unaccounted-for soul at heart, the soul that Langston Hughes wrote about in 1920 as being *deep like the rivers*. Finding it in a close reading of Holiday's lyrics, there is redemption for the conflicted body: *My heart is sad and lonely; For you I sigh, for you dear only; Why haven't you seen it; I'm all for you body and soul.*

If we think of the lines, marks and shapes of our own bodies as a landscape or topography, where might travelers arrive by following them? What stories, histories and memories are carried by your body and soul?

4. *you feel me*

2021

sound

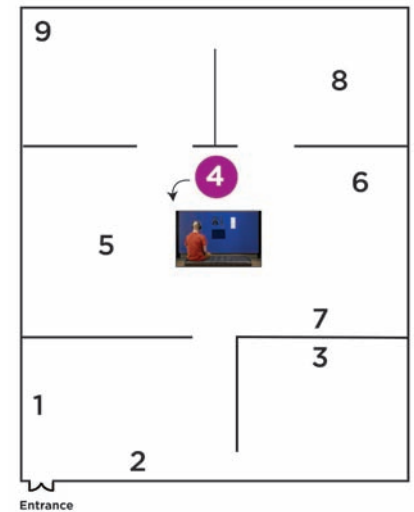
36:07 mins.

Musical Composition: Jessica Karuhanga and
Emilio Portal

Musical Production: Emilio Portal

Musical Engineering: Emilio Portal

Sound Description: Charles Eppley



Supported by the Toronto Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts

*Slowly, surely, I walk away from
That old desperate and tainted love
Caught up in the maze of love
That crazy craze of love
Thought it was good
Thought it was real
Thought it was
But it wasn't love*

What is love? What is required to feel love, to find love, to love?
you feel me is, in part, a sonic exploration of Black expression that asks listeners about their capacity to love Black life.

The title of the work asks *do you get it?* Do you and me vibe? Do you understand what is being said? Do you agree? Can you handle this? It draws on the history of blues music, with particular interest in songs of unrequited love that continue to be incorporated into contemporary R&B and Pop music today. It is a space of aural, visual and haptic witnessing. These are sounds of desire; they look to find the edges or limits of our collective love beyond hollow virtual signaling.

If cultural objects are not universally accessible terrains, how are certain objects able to speak more immediately to some audiences than others? Can the impossibility of translating internal feelings (you feel me?) be a space of hope? How is it that individuals that are often hyper-visible are also often rendered invisible?

5. *through a brass channel*

2017

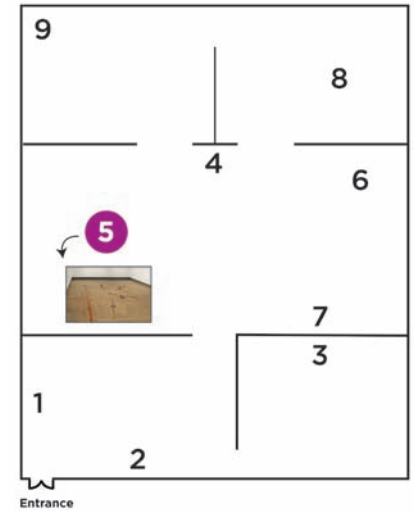
copper pipe, brass bangle, stone

Courtesy of the Artist

This sculptural installation is an archival trace of past relations. Previously, these components were used as props within a performance installation. Performers brought personally meaningful objects as conduits for connection, instruments, structures and comforts. The readymade materials invoke themes of nostalgia and aspirational futures as restrained gestures transformed them beyond their original utility into instruments of nearly unlimited possibility.

There are three components to these sculptures. At the base is a masonry stone from the wall of a building. The intermediary piece is a brass bangle from the jewelry collection of Karuhanga's father who used to bring bangles like this to trade shows of African artefacts and objects. Here, the bangle is a beautiful, beloved object of adornment. But they can also be a reminder of shackles and the capitalistic model of their common exchange additionally situates them as a form of currency. In this way they evoke darker aspects of Black history including subjection to human trafficking and police brutality. The copper pipe on top is literally and metaphorically a conduit or channel, but instead of liquid or gas it now corrals a different sort of sustaining life force.

Can the objects that we care for, adorn and sustain ourselves with, also be materials that bind, restrain and Other us? How are these systemic structures subverted into tools of alliance, solidarity and strength?



6. *Kiss the Sky*

2017

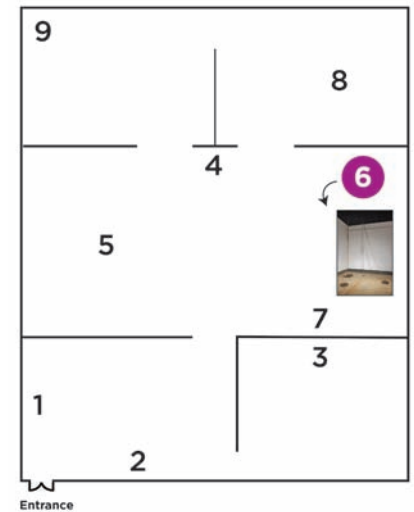
tar, asphalt, manila rope, stone

Courtesy of the Artist

Kiss the Sky distills a number of competing stories and material citations. It is soaring as it reaches up towards the ceiling and anchored as it rests easily on the ground. It embodies a kinetic rising and reminds us of the gravity that continues to pull down on our bodies. It is a haunted elegy and a wistful dream.

The manila rope is made from the Banana plant. Believed to have originated up to 10,000 years ago, the banana plant is thought to have been the world's first fruit. The rope is also reminiscent of nooses or knots that might be used to anchor a ship or a boat. On its own the association could be innocuous, but here the inference points us toward the transatlantic slave trade, or, more recently, global food trade corridors. In fact, many historians believe that Arabian slave traders gave the banana its popular name. Grounding the work further is the asphalt. Often used to fill the void of a pothole, here it is its own positive form and not a negative cast. It again brings us back to the fall of our feet, the pull of gravity as we walk and the feeling that we might ourselves be sinking. And yet we turn to follow the rope up, like a trace of hope and the possibility of our future relations. As Jimi Hendrix wrote: *Latel***y things they don't seem the same; Actin' funny, but I don't know why; Excuse me, while I kiss the sky.**

**How do you pull yourself up when you feel like you're sinking?
Does the weight of gravity get you down, or give you the
confidence of your connection to Mother Earth?**



7. *no other findings*

2021

Single-channel video

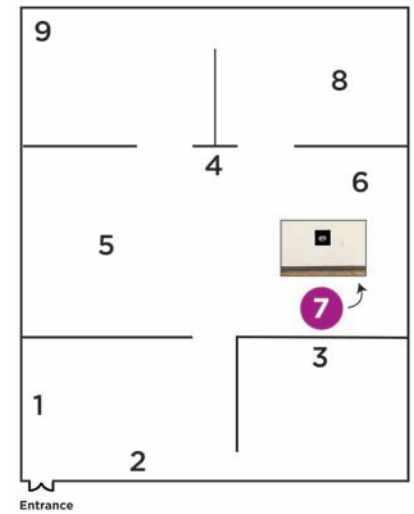
01:15 mins.

Shot and edited by Jessica Karuhanga

Where *Body and Soul* looked at the surface of the body, *no other findings* goes inside. The video was produced using a series of calibration scans of Karuhanga's body by a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine. As they track the development of the artist's chronic illness and genetic condition, these scans contain deeply personal information about an otherwise invisible internal world.

Though they are actually full of information, the images reveal little to those who are not familiar with how to read medical imaging of the body. This gap in cognition complicates the evidentiary function of the images as context is lost between recorder and receiver. Like the slow breathing in *Body and Soul*, here the pacing of images is like a gently ebbing wave pattern lapping at the edge of the sea, creating a meditative space to consider questions of visibility.

What happens when illness cannot be easily seen? How do we account for things (bodies, conditions, contestations) that move in and out of visibility over time?



8. *Blue as the insides*

2021

Single-channel video with sound

15:18 mins.

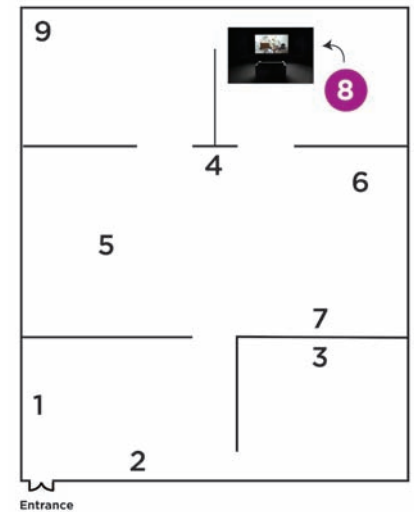
Director: Jessica Karuhanga

Director of Photography: Manolo Lugo

Assistant Camera: Jessica Karuhanga

Editor: Meeka McLean

Featuring Ahlam Hassan



Supported by the Ontario Arts Council

This film ultimately considers the impossibility of translating our unique internal spaces and the empathic capacities that guide our interactions with one another. It frames a Black woman in isolation and her descent (or ascent) into a world of her own making. With this woman, moving in relation to her environment, inside and outside of windows and partitions, we are alone together. Alone, as the screen is a clear delineation between her world and ours; and together with a persistent closeness as viewers peer in on private reveries and sanctified rituals of daily life.

The subject constantly averts her gaze away from the camera. Concurrently, this passivity renders her available for scrutiny and personal projection, whilst also distilling the quiet confidence that can exist when removed from the performative needs of public life. Viewers become aware of their own voyeuristic observation. The presentation of this subject is a carefully controlled spectacle of her body that ultimately coheres a relationship between her self and her social environment. As she removes herself from a domestic environment and enters a natural one, there is a powerful reclamation of autonomy, personal strength and cultural pride that is subtly encoded in the unfiltered ways that we carry our bodies through the world.

What daily habits and rituals have you developed or inherited? What do these daily rituals say about you? How do you nurture the strength to be who you are in the world, to hold space for your own body, and to reconcile the difference between who we are in private and who we are when performing for others?

9. *being who you are there is no other*

2018

2-channel video with sound

15:00 mins.

Director: Jessica Karuhanga

Cinematography: Serene Husni

Assistant Cameras: Aaditya Aggarwal, Xin Liu

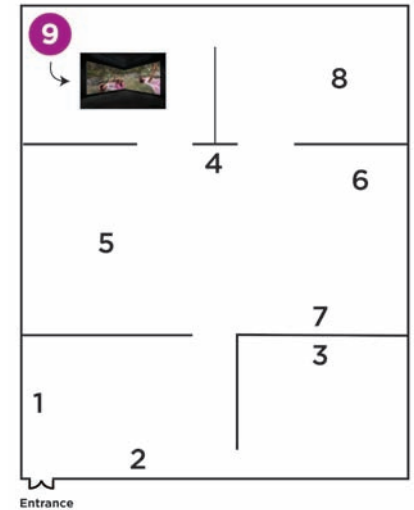
Editor: Serene Husni

Musical Composition I: Cormac Culkeen, Dave Grenon

Musical Composition II: Jessica Karuhanga

Musical Engineering: Erik Culp

Featuring Ahlam Hassan and Jessica Karuhanga



Karuhanga's art practice is an expression through both body and mind. Body and mind (or soul) are at once object and base, subject and material. The body can become a landscape as well as a representation of individuals inhabiting those landscapes. But what lands are these and whose bodies are represented or removed from their depiction?

Growing up in a post-industrial border town in south-western Ontario, Karuhanga developed a unique relationship to land and health (of body and environment). This two-channel video is a meditation on the imagination of the Canadian landscape as understood through the movement and centering of Black femme bodies. By placing herself in the regional landscape of her youth, Karuhanga populates a land that is often seen as being absent of blackness. She holds ground to experience, witness and revel in the beauty of wilderness while exploring themes of the wild. After all, the only one we have is our own-***being who you are there is no other.***

When was the last time that you took a moment to revel in the wild of the world? How do you understand your own bodies relationship to wilderness?