

DRMA RADICAL BROADCAST



Still from Sadé Mica, "Posterin". 2018. Commissioned by Tate Collective/

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DECEMBER 1, 2020 - FEBRUARY 28, 2021

LEAN CURATED BY LEGACY RUSSELL, ASSOCIATE CURATOR, EXHIBITIONS, THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

TEXT BY LEGACY RUSSELL:

lean /lĕn/

verb: be in or move into a sloping position.

noun: a deviation from the perpendicular; an inclination.

"I prefer no curves at all, unless they be the // : This angle the cryptographic slant into figurative space is toward a poetics of internal excess[.]" —Ronaldo V. Wilson[1]

This exhibition *LEAN* brings together seven artists—Justin Allen, Jen Everett, Devin Kenny, Kalup Linzy, Rene Matic, Sadé Mica, and Leilah Weinraub—who, through movement, sound, and film, collectively congregate and confer toward *lean as a* Black vernacular and queer poetic proposition. Across these seven artists and their work shown here as part of Performa's Radical Broadcast, *lean is* an intimacy, collaboration, intergenerational conviviality.

Kemi Adeyemi observes: "[A] white ruling class [is] obsessed with, the verticality and perpendicularity of the 90° angle." [2] Thus expansiveness of the *lean here* across these pages extends far beyond its definition of origin, an active refusal of a 90° that is, as Adeyemi notes, "distinctly gendered and racialized". As a lexicon, *lean is* a suture, and a song; it throws shade, and makes it. Its constellation is far-reaching and galactic while still somehow dense, sensual and sticky. It is a visual axis and a line-break. Spiritual, it is what our hands do when they pray.

Lean holds us and holds us up, and as a 1972 Bill Withers reminds us, "We all need somebody to lean on . . ." [3]. // *Lean is* the bounce, dissent, and sway of Dem Franchize Boyz on base, an entire club on an early-aughts dance floor snapping back to their "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It" [4]. // *Lean is* the very essence and energy of the *contrapposto*, a classicised angularity made whole and holy by the blend, blur, and limens of a luminous blackness and queerness. // *Lean is* the birth of drag ballroom competitions in 1920s Harlem and the 1990s genesis of Atlanta trap, bound in decadent conversation and entanglement across dancefloors and decades. // *Lean is* the exact radical repatriation that emancipates these canonized slants back into the world where they belong and, beyond the freeze of carrara marble, makes them move. // *Lean is* the sonic re/negotiation of sound in what is chopped and screwed as a hall-haunting alongside of, and in remix with, the innovations and technologies found in the notes and lines of Julius Eastman, Alice Coltrane, and Nina Simone. // *Lean is* all at once a complex interdependence, codependency, community and kinship, a rhizomatic set of mathematical possibilities that break from the static and pose in lyrical abstraction.

Thus, to *lean* represents a gesture that forces an impossibility of physics: a falling without collapse, an epic draping that never meets the floor but instead floats, an image that defies imagination. When the sites we travel through are designed to surveil us, dictating how our bodies should move and feel, we who *lean enact* essential spatial and emotional labor, protective enclosures that break and remake space, decolonize time, remix memory, reformat care. As Harmony Holiday notes: "Now we have to thank the catastrophe for imbuing us with the stamina to reach ourselves at these endless slants[.]" [5] *Leaning scores* and slants with urgency, a performative and political proposal for new worlds to be dreamt up and built, and new ways of reading, listening, becoming, being.

Forever reaching somewhere between the horizon and the sky, this *LEAN* here and the artists therein offer windows into a networked architecture, an endless form of communication, a call awaiting a response, gorgeous glyphs of desire. — Legacy Russell

PROGRAM

SHOWTIMES: 9AM - 10AM, 6PM - 7PM, 3AM - 4AM

Devin Kenny, Lean (20hz 'dando repeat barline rmx), 2020. Video 44 minutes, 48 seconds.

SHOWTIMES: 10AM - 11AM, 7PM - 8PM, 4AM - 5AM

Jen Everett, Happy New Year, 2018. Video 54 seconds.

SHOWTIMES: 11AM - 12PM, 8PM - 9PM, 5AM - 6AM

Justin Allen, Documentation of performance, Explain Totality (version 3), Movement Research at the Judson Church, October 22, 2018. Video 11 minutes, 11 seconds.

SHOWTIMES: 12PM - 1PM, 9PM - 10PM, 6AM - 7AM

Kalup Linzy, Art Jobs and Lullabies, Video Suite 1, 2015. Video 20 minutes, 20 seconds. Courtesy the artist and David Castillo.

SHOWTIMES: 12PM - 1PM, 9PM - 10PM, 6AM - 7AM

Kalup Linzy, KK Queens Survey, 2005. Video 7 minutes, 20 seconds. Courtesy the artist and David Castillo.

SHOWTIMES: 1PM - 2PM, 10PM - 11PM, 7AM - 8AM

Rene Matić, Brown Girl in the Art World III, 2019. Video 11 minutes, 01 second.

SHOWTIMES: 2PM - 3PM, 11PM - 12AM, 8AM - 9AM

Sadé Mica, With me Mam in Malham, 2019. Video 57 seconds. Commissioned by Tate Collective.

Sadé Mica (b. 1995, New Moston, Greater Manchester, England; Lives and works in Manchester, England) [they/them] is a multimedia artist and musician whose work engages textiles, film, sound, and performance in an exploration of how their movement is policed by the environment and how the queer and Black body can be both freed and restricted simultaneously within the landscape of the British countryside. As an ongoing part of their practice, Mica travels to bucolic locations on their own, setting up a tripod and performing to the camera, subtle scenes set to intervene within a pastoral frame. In Mica's video work "With me Mam in Malham" (2019) the artist films themselves with their mother in the historic English village of Malham, a popular trekking destination. In a collaboration across kin, Mica and their mother mimic one another in gesture and form, striking and holding positions improvised and choreographed in response to the site. As they bend back, lean forward, and crouch to the ground, each becomes an extension of the lush verdure that surrounds them, a confluence between organic forms that transmits and transforms the energy of the natural landscape. In their video work "Posturin" (2018) Mica poses as if having their picture taken, standing in their studio space, arms crossed and engaging the gaze of the camera directly. The voice overlaid is Mica themselves, a lyric poem said in whisper. Here the artist reflects on the act of chest binding, the compression of breast tissue with a clothing item known as a binder intended to give the appearance of a flat chest. Used by non-binary or trans-identified people, chest binders are meant to be body-affirming and empowering. Mica, wearing a binder themselves, navigates a vulnerable internal monologue, reflecting on the shaping of a non-binary selfhood and what radical refusals can be enacted in the presence of breasts, versus the absence of them. The artist muses, "There's calculation in the movements / Can't be one step ahead when the weight is even more / To bind is to restrict . . . to not, is to—resist? Forgive, let *femme* exist."

Biography

Sadé Mica lives and works in Manchester, UK. Their practice is rooted in exploring the self. The self in relation to gender and performance; how the world around them affects their relationship to their queerness and the body they inhabit. How movement is policed by environment and us and how fraught the control we have of our perception is when thrust outside of solitary environments. They explore how their body is freed and restricted, liberating themselves, their limbs in the British countryside, posturing against vast landscapes foreign to them, capturing the stillness of their form and thoughtful movements as well as those more chaotic and less considered. They use textiles to eschew the expectation of stealth bestowed upon trans people and their bodies and embrace unmasking the performative nature of gender, placing the onus upon those who aren't aware of the sacrifices made to find peace within one's body in the way that they are.

Recent exhibitions include: Natural Encounters - Leeds Art Gallery (2020); To The Unknown - Somerset House Studios (2020); Found In Translation - Trans Vegas Digital (2020); GENDERS - Science Gallery, London (2020); It Teks Time solo show - Outpost, Norwich (2020); GIVIN U COY GIVIN U SMIZE - IMT Gallery, London (2020).

SHOWTIMES: 2PM - 3PM, 11PM - 12AM, 8AM - 9AM

Sadé Mica, Posturin, 2018. Video 1 minute 1 second. Commissioned by Tate Collective.

SHOWTIMES: 3PM - 6PM, 12AM - 3AM

Leilah Weinraub, SHAKEDOWN, 2018. Video 1 hour, 10 minutes, 59

seconds

Leilah Weinraub (b. 1979, Los Angeles, California; Lives and works Los Angeles, California) [she/her] is an artist, film director, and CEO and co-founder of Hood by Air, the New York-based fashion collective known for luxury streetwear. As a filmmaker, Weinraub has documented such unacknowledged tastemakers, particularly those belonging to queer, autonomous communities of color whose creative output is often plundered by mass culture and whose stories are rarely told on their own terms. "SHAKEDOWN" (2018) is a feature-length documentary film that Weinraub began shooting in 2002 at the age of twenty-three. "SHAKEDOWN" premiered at the 2018 Berlinale and subsequently became the first non-pornographic film to be released on Pornhub. The film draws its name from Shakedown, a Los Angeles-based lesbian strip club, catering specifically to Black lesbians. Weinraub began her work at Shakedown as a house photographer but when faced with the limitations of still imagery transitioned into moving image. Over the course of the six years that followed, Weinraub shot 400 hours of footage, intimately following the lives of a handful of regular dancers, whom Weinraub in the film's credits cites as "The Shakedown Angels"—Dallas, Egypt, Foxy, Blaze, Sunshine, Jamaika, and the club's "mother" Miss Mahogany, a performer of 33 years—to name just a few. Weinraub's portrait of Shakedown as a generative safe space of creative exploration reveals an empowered and radical architecture, a space for and by Black women aimed to hold and house queer intimacies and kinships in new shapes and forms. At Shakedown, the dancers don avatars of themselves, a range on the stage seized and possible that gives wings to Black womanhood as gorgeous, complex, and expansive. Weinraub presents a necessary intervention and expansion of Black feminism, refusing the confines of "respectability politics" and countering the gaze, erotic, and misogyny of a straight, white imagination, flipping the script on questions of power, economy, self-determination, and control. As Dallas reminds those in the room before the beat drops: "If you're straight, you don't need to be in the front."

Biography

Leilah Weinraub is an artist and film director that lives between Los Angeles and New York. Since premiering in the 2018 Berlin Biennial and at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, Weinraub's film SHAKEDOWN has toured internationally to various institutions, including MoMA PS1, New York; MOCA, Los Angeles; CAAM, Los Angeles; ICA, London; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, as well as multiple film festivals. As CEO and co-founder of Hood by Air, the New York-based fashion collective known for luxury streetwear, Weinraub radicalized fashion by championing what she calls "modern people": the rising class of consumers who subvert traditional markers of race, class, and gender and revel in freedom, lawlessness, and spectacle. As a filmmaker, Weinraub has documented such unacknowledged tastemakers, particularly those belonging to queer, autonomous communities of color whose creative output is often plundered by mass culture and whose stories are rarely told on their own terms.

Biography: Legacy Russell [she/her; they/them]

Legacy Russell is a curator and writer. Born and raised in New York City, she is the Associate Curator of Exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Russell holds an MRes with Distinction in Art History from Goldsmiths, University of London with a focus in Visual Culture. Her academic, curatorial, and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfhood, internet idolatry, and new media ritual. Curated exhibitions and projects include *This Longing Vessel: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2019-20* at MoMA PS1 featuring the work of E. Jane, Elliot Reed, and Naudline Pierre (2020); *Projects: Garrett Bradley* (2020) and *Projects 110: Michael Armitage* (2019), organized with Thelma Golden and The Studio Museum in Harlem at MoMA (2019); *Dozie Kanu: Function* (2019), *Chloë Bass: Wayfinding* (2019), and *Radical Reading Room* (2019) at The Studio Museum in Harlem; and *MOOD: Studio Museum Artists in Residence 2018-19* at MoMA PS1. Russell's written work, interviews, and essays have been published internationally. She is the recipient of the Thoma Foundation 2019 Arts Writing Award in Digital Art and a 2020 Rauschenberg Residency Fellow. Her first book *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020) is published by Verso Books.

Website: www.legacyrussell.com (<https://www.legacyrussell.com>) | **Instagram:** @ellerustle

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[1] Wilson, Ronaldo V. *Poems of the Black Object*. "VERGELIOIAN SPACE V: CALIBAN X", p. 49. Future



[2] Adeyemi, Kemi. "Beyond 90°: The Angularities of Black/Queer/Women/Lean: Kemi Adeyemi (29.1)." *Women & Performance, Women & Performance*, 26 Feb. 2019, www.womenandperformance.org/bonus-articles-1/29-1/adeyemi.

[3] Reference to a song by Bill Withers titled "Lean on Me" (1972).

[4] Reference to a song by Dem Franchize Boyz "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It" (2006).

[5] Holiday, Harmony. "The Black Catatonic Scream ." *Triple Canopy*, 2020, www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/the-black-catatonic-scream.