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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Homorientalism*

**June 23 – August 6, 2023**

**Opening Reception: Thurs. June 23, 6-8 PM**

**Performance during opening reception:**

***A Matter of Wholeness* by Hector Canonge, 7 PM**



Maya Jeffereis, *Silhouettes Remain*, 2022. Single channel video installation (color, sound), edition 1/5, TRT 10 min. Courtesy of the Artist.

**Public Programs:**

**Curator-Led Tour**

**Sat. July 1, 1 PM**

## *Homorientalism*

The group exhibition, *Homorientalism*, brings together the work of nine artists turning to the visual repertoires of orientalism to excavate the mixing of gender, race, sexuality, and empire. Returning to archives and lost desires, this exhibition hopes to make sense of the residue of Western imperialism in queer lives and after-lives of the twenty-first century. This exhibition is guest-curated by Noor Bhangu and features work by artists: Damien Ajavon, Aika Akhmetova, Hector Canonge, Jin-Yong Choi, Banyu Huang, Maya Jefferies, Jongbum Kim, Zahra Pars, and Sa'dia Rehman.

While homosexuality was not altogether absent from the cultural canons of the West, Western erotics were primarily confined to “heterosexual love” until the late nineteenth century, when, according to Foucault, the homosexual was born as a species. In the Age of Discovery, the homoerotics of the non-Western world were translated to Western audiences through the lens of Orientalism, what Edward Said later theorized as the fictions of exaggerated difference between the deviant Oriental *others* and the superior Western *self*. During the aggressive colonization of the nineteenth century, the West pathologized the sexual economies of brown and black bodies to cast them outside the path of human progress. The result of these ventures has resulted in homophobias and transphobias at home alongside racisms in the diaspora, which continue to restrict and threaten the lives of the queer postcolony.

Built on the concepts of homonationalism, homocolonialism, and homocapitalism, as offered by theorists Jasbir Puar, Andrew Gayed, and Rahul Rao, this exhibition seeks to thrust the study of sexuality through Orientalism as both a historical and ongoing process. As evidenced by the photographic and literary archives of the colonial period, the moralizing and civilizational labors of Orientalism had a curious libidinal element, which remixed racial anxiety of the other with sexual desire. In the twenty-first century, artists are not only appropriating these materials in their counter-archival processes, but also questioning the claims of representation itself.

The geographical reach of homorientalism cannot be fully articulated without a relational approach to its historical violences and contemporary residues. Therefore, this group exhibition features work by artists touching diverse locales, histories, and sexuality, guiding Oriental peripheries together to illuminate the entanglement of gender, sexuality, race, and empire.

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## BIO

**Noor Bhangu** is a curator and scholar, whose practice employs cross-cultural encounters to interrogate issues of diaspora and indigeneity in post- and settler-colonial contexts. Through curatorial intervention, she hopes to involve politics of history, memory and materiality to problematize dominant histories and strategies of presentation. Bhangu completed her BA in the History of Art and her MA in Cultural Studies: Curatorial Practices. Her curatorial practice includes projects: Not the Camera, But the Filming Cabinet (2018), womenofcolour@soagallery (2018), Digitalia (2019-2020), Ornament and Crime (2022), and the excess is ritual (2023). In 2018, she began her PhD in Communication and Culture. Noor is currently based in Oslo, Norway.

**Damien Ajavon** is an Afropean textile artist born in Paris with Senegalese and Togolese roots; Damien Ajavon's work explores the manipulation of textile fibers by hand. Their creative process is influenced by the interaction between visual and tactile experiences, and they use their African and Western influences to tell stories through textiles. Damien's work is driven by their desire to search for their identity, blackness, queerness, and relationship to home, origin, and spirit. They have gained significant international exposure across Europe, Africa, and North America. They have just completed their Master's in Textile at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.. They have learned various skills such as hemp weaving, cashmere dyeing, feather work in Italy, digital knitting, Manjak traditional weaving, felting hats, and creating accessories in Quebec. Damien's artwork has been exhibited in several group exhibitions and artist residencies across North America, Europe, and Africa, and their work has even been included in the Oslo commune public collection. Their practice is deeply rooted in their heritage, influenced by African and Western cultures and the queer community. Damien's work with textiles is a tool to create culturally representative pieces, merging generations of African craftsmanship with their diasporic and transoceanic knowledge and experiences. Their work is a testament to their strong desire to merge cultures and create something new and beautiful.

**Aika Akhmetova** is an artist based between New York and Almaty. Akhmetova studied Painting at Rhode Island School of Design and holds an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University. Their practice consists of installation, video, sculpture, and text-based work exploring intimate corners of being. Coming from a complex cultural background Akhmetova has absorbed the fading heritage of the Post Soviet generation in Kazakhstan along with processes followed by the expansion of late capitalism and secular education. They currently have a solo installation at Ortega y Gasset Projects on view and had a solo exhibition at A.I.R. Gallery in 2021 and participated in group shows across the US, Central Asia and Europe. Akhmetova was an AIM fellow at The Bronx Museum of the Arts in 2022 and currently an artist in residence at LMCC Arts Center on Governors Island.

**Hector Canonge** is an American artist of Catalan and Bolivian descent, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His work in Performance Art, Social Practice, Multimedia Production and Installation treats notions of identity, gender roles, migration politics, and neo-de-colonizing discourse. Through his investigation of somatic expression, he has developed a corporeal theory for the practice of Performance Art presenting it in workshops and conferences around the world. Challenging the white box settings of a gallery or a

museum, or intervening directly in public spaces, his performances mediate movement, endurance, and ritualistic processes. His performances, films and media installations have been presented and exhibited in the United States, Latin America, Europe and Asia. Canonge is the founding director and curator of the performance art festivals: ITINERANT in New York City, LATITUDES in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, and AUSTRAL in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is responsible for the international initiatives and platforms: ARterial Performance Lab (South America), PERFORMEANDO (New York-Berlin), and NEXUS (Miami). In 2020, during the pandemic, Canonge launched the virtual world-wide program, CHRONICLES of CONFINEMENT, featuring artists from various countries in the five continents. In 2022, Canonge launched and curated PAUSA, Performance Art USA, the new seasonal platform for live art and its various modalities of presentation.

**Jin-Yong Choi** is a New York-based artist born in South Korea. Choi received his BFA at Kookmin University in Seoul, South Korea and MFA at Pratt Institute in New York. He creates artwork inspired by his own apocalyptic fiction, exploring the intersections of culture, religion, and identity in a hopeless world. He aims to create and release haptic desire in sculptures using tactile and visually appealing materials that engage the viewer on multiple levels. He juxtaposes digital and non-digital images, and natural objects with man-made objects to create pieces that offer a unique material experience that can only be experienced in the real world. Choi's artwork has been shown in galleries and museums in South Korea and the U.S., including Seoul Museum of Art in Seoul, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL) in NY, Shin Gallery in NY, A.I.R Gallery in NY, Wassaic Project in NY. He has participated in the Artist Residency Program at Sculpture Space in Utica and ChaNorth in Pine Plains, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Art Center Residency Program, NY. He earned the Stutzman Foundation MFA Fellowships and won the Gold Prize from AHL – T&W Foundation Contemporary Visual Art Awards.

Born in Beijing, **Banyi Huang** 黄半衣 (they/them) is an artist, writer, and designer based in Brooklyn, New York. With a background in art history, their interdisciplinary practice combines animation, digital fabrication, and writing to explore queer reenactments of Chinese mythology, folklore, and spiritual practices. Through the creation of digital-ambient environments and talismanic ritual devices, they address themes of shame, alienation, and intergenerational wounds within the Asian diaspora, aiming to create a feedback loop of healing, unblocking, and recursive transformation. Their work has been shown at The Soto Velez Clemente Center (New York), Special Special (New York), Artist's Space (New York), and the Flat Earth Film Festival (Seydisfjördur, Iceland). Banyi has contributed writings to the Brooklyn Rail, Hyperallergic, Spike Art, ArtAsiaPacific, Artforum China, Performa Magazine, Frieze Magazine, and has realized curatorial projects at the Musée des Arts Asiatiques (Nice, France), PRACTICE Yonkers (New York), Assembly Room (New York), Center for Performance Research (New York).

**Maya Jeffereis** is an artist working video, performance, and installation whose work seeks to expand upon overlooked histories and archival gaps through counter and personal narratives, offering both critical perspectives and speculative possibilities. Jeffereis' work has been presented in the United States and internationally, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Brooklyn Museum,

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The Noguchi Museum, and Queens Museum, among others. Jeffereis has been an artist-in-residence at Lower Manhattan Cultural Center (LMCC), Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity, and Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. She is a recipient of the A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship and Cisneros Initiative for Latin American Art. She is currently a 2023 The Bronx Museum of the Arts AIM fellow and an artist-in-residence at The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts SHIFT Program. She teaches art, art history, and Asian American Studies at Parsons School of Design and Hunter College. She earned an MFA from Hunter College and BA and BFA from the University of Washington.

**Jongbum Kim** is a New York-based artist, who explores the ideas of gender and multicultural communities through the medium of cloth. With a strong belief in seeing the world and experiencing it firsthand, Jongbum's designs are filled with color and symbolism, both literal and figurative, engaging the viewer and provoking them to respond. He strives to create paintings and fiber artwork that are an expression of his personal voice and life's journey.

**Zahra Pars** (born 1974, Tehran, Iran) is a painter and photographer, who lives and works in New York City. Her paintings, both representational and abstract, explore contrasts: East versus West, femininity versus masculinity, and handmade versus machine made. As an immigrant from an authoritarian regime, she is acutely aware of what can and cannot be said, and is interested in creating work that has a plurality of meanings, without an explicit political agenda. Her work has recently been exhibited at the Staten Island Museum, the Schweinfurth Art Center, Ejecta Projects, the Textile Arts Center, 440 Gallery, Richard Meir's 1 GAP Gallery, and the Tandon Digital Media Center at New York University. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Art Practice and Art History from the University of California, Berkeley, and has also pursued graduate studies in Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

**Sa'dia Rehman** (they/them) is a multidisciplinary artist and educator. In 2023, Rehman had their first major solo show at the Wexner Center for the Arts. In 2022 Rehman delivered a keynote address with Pulitzer Prize winning poet Natalie Diaz regarding the Global Imagination of Racial Justice at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Rehman was selected and exhibited as an Artist to Watch in 2021 by and at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In the last five years, Rehman was awarded residencies at the Film/Video Studio at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Art Omi, Abrons Art Center, Asian American Arts Alliance, Edward Albee Foundation, Vermont Studio Center, and NARS Foundation. Recently, their work was featured in the Brooklyn Rail, The Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts, Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas, Colonize This! Young Women of Color On Today's Feminism, Breakthru Radio and HyperAllergic.

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