
olivia mcgilchrist / dart 504 final presentation / april 2015

Jonkonnu / Gens inconnus

is there an-other future?

“You do not stand in one place to watch a masquerade”

-An Igbo saying

quote taken from

Clifford, J (2002) *Histories of the Tribal and the Modern* in: Pinder, K (ed) *Race-ing Art History*. Routledge. London

masking as method



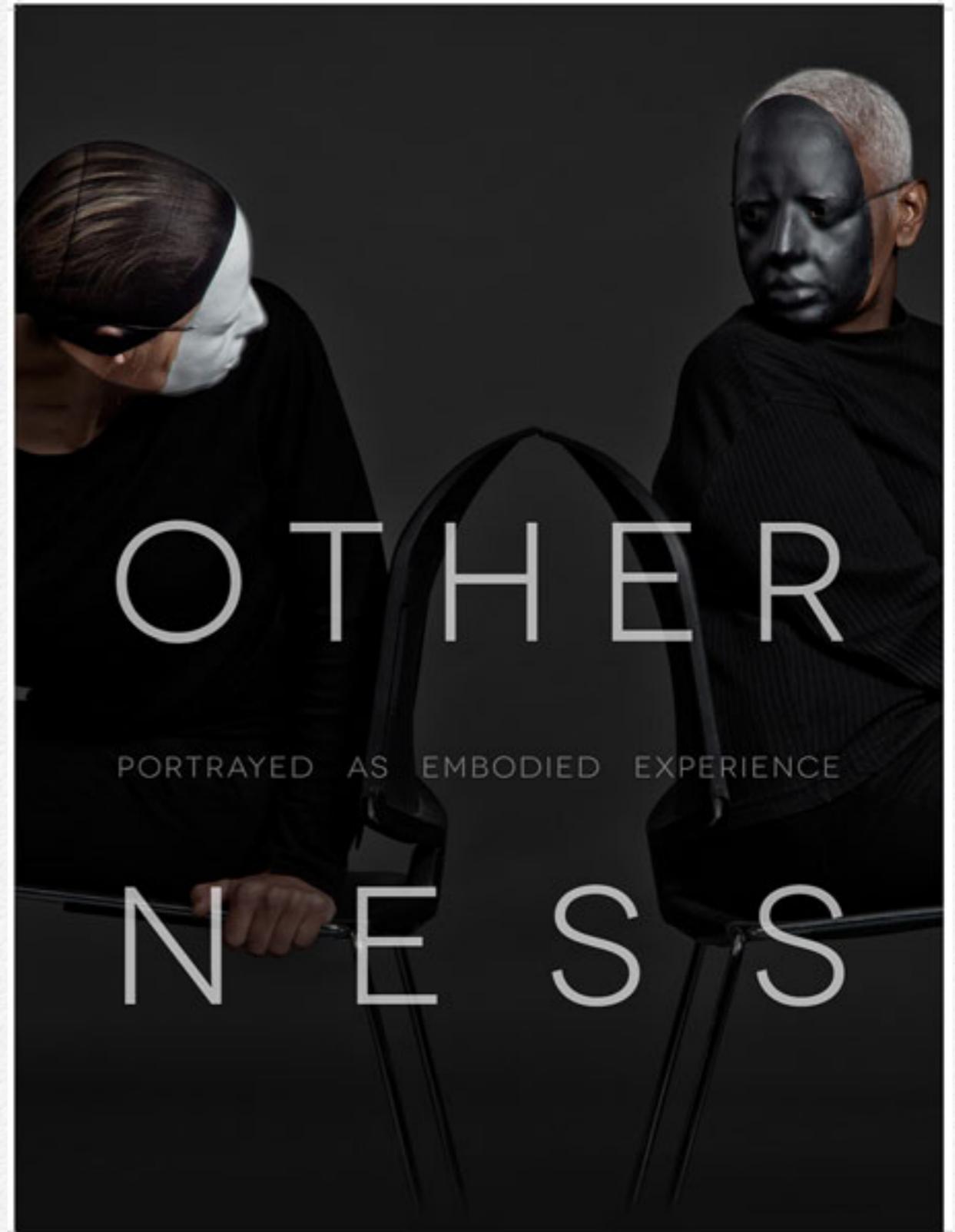
installation experiment, november 2014

The iconic qualities of the mask, and masking as method to position both the self and the other, have taken centre stage in my creative practice, and will serve as a frame for the articulation of my research question and methodology. I will visualize the main themes of my practice as a set of real and metaphorical masks through which to understand my project.



otherness portrayed as embodied experience

manifesto: poster



otherness portrayed as embodied experience

manifesto: sound installation with masks



defining the final project: going back to Jamaica



why Jonkonnu?

collaborating with a local band in recording their performance through the streets of Kingston, with the performers taking turns in wearing a GoPro camera.



Across the Caribbean, Jonkonnu was a festival created by the enslaved themselves; as a gesture of resistance. Although its practice is slowly dying, its power remains, albeit Jamaica's current economic hardship, as it faces the harshest IMF-imposed austerity policies in the world in 2015.



Going back to Jamaica after the first part of the course, forced me to reconsider my approach to masking and the performative.

I mainly investigated the iconic qualities of Jamaican artist M'Bala's elaborate masks within the tropical landscape through a set of photographs, then digitally manipulated.





Jonkonnu in contemporary Jamaica
in every-day life settings







“I.M Belissario wrote that the term Jonkonnu was a derivation of gens inconnus meaning “unknown folks” in reference to the masked dancers.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JONKONNU IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN UNITED STATES

Lesa R. Broadhead and John R. Crawford

Cape Fear Library Research Archives, March 1990



re-staging Belissario's images
performing with the masks

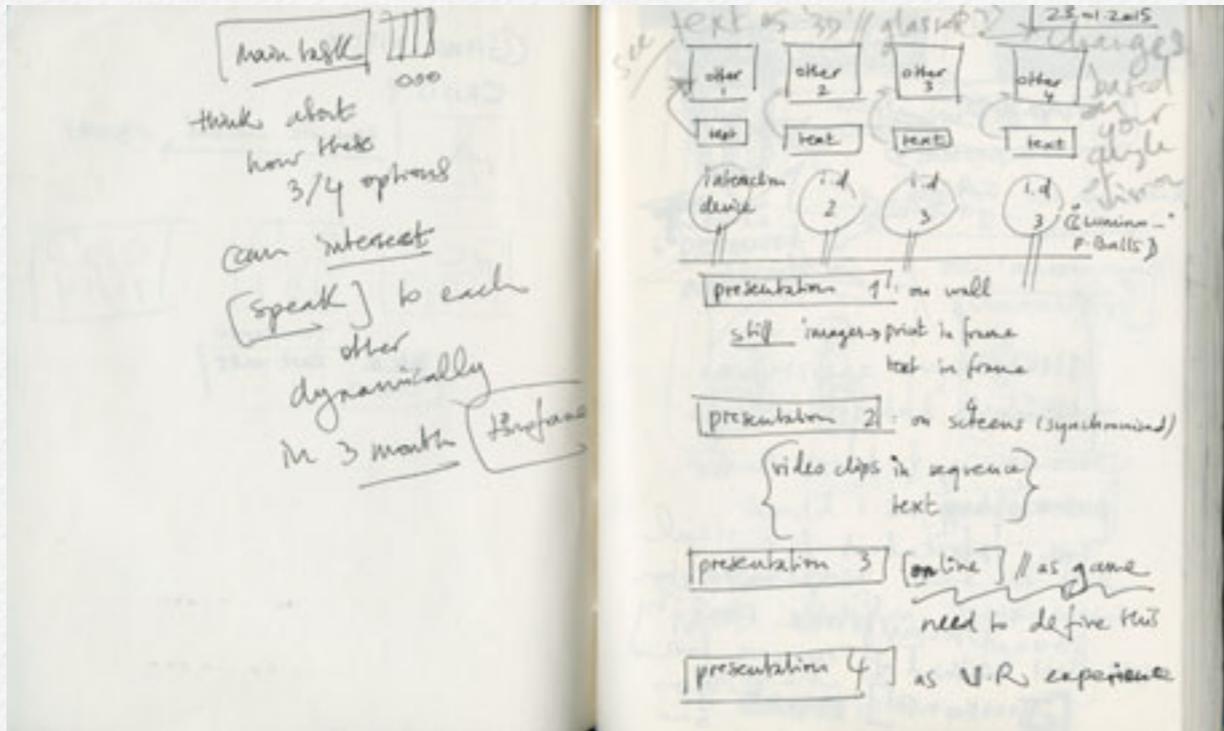




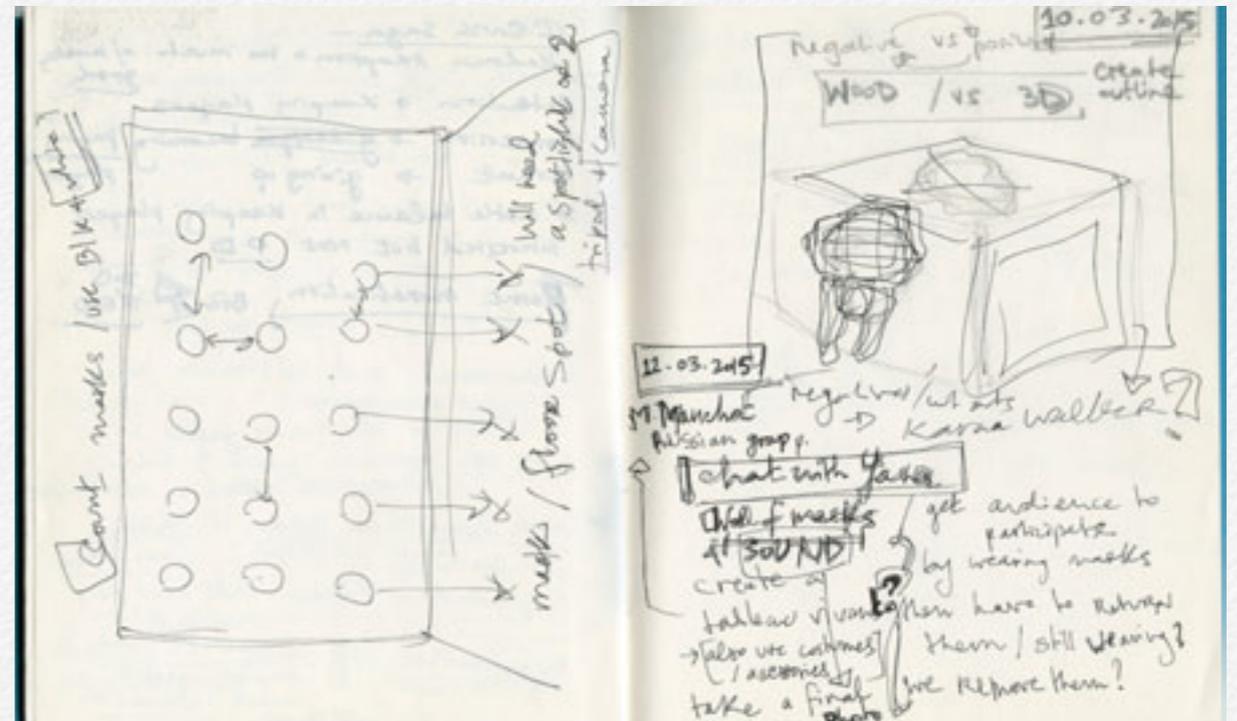
re-staging Belissario's images
in collaboration with Ayana Evans
as a live public performance

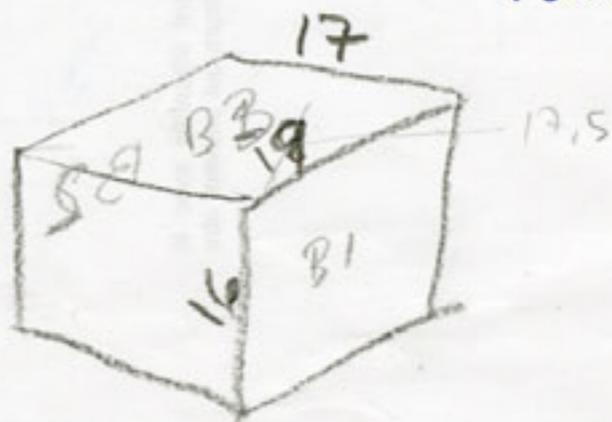
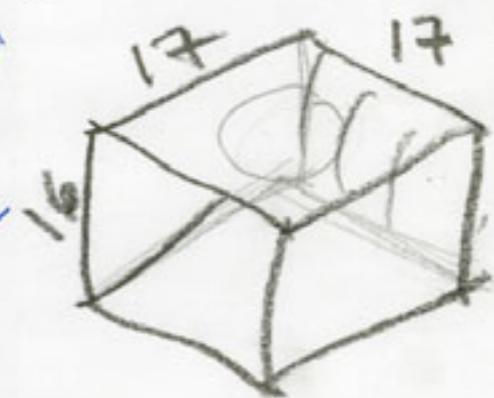
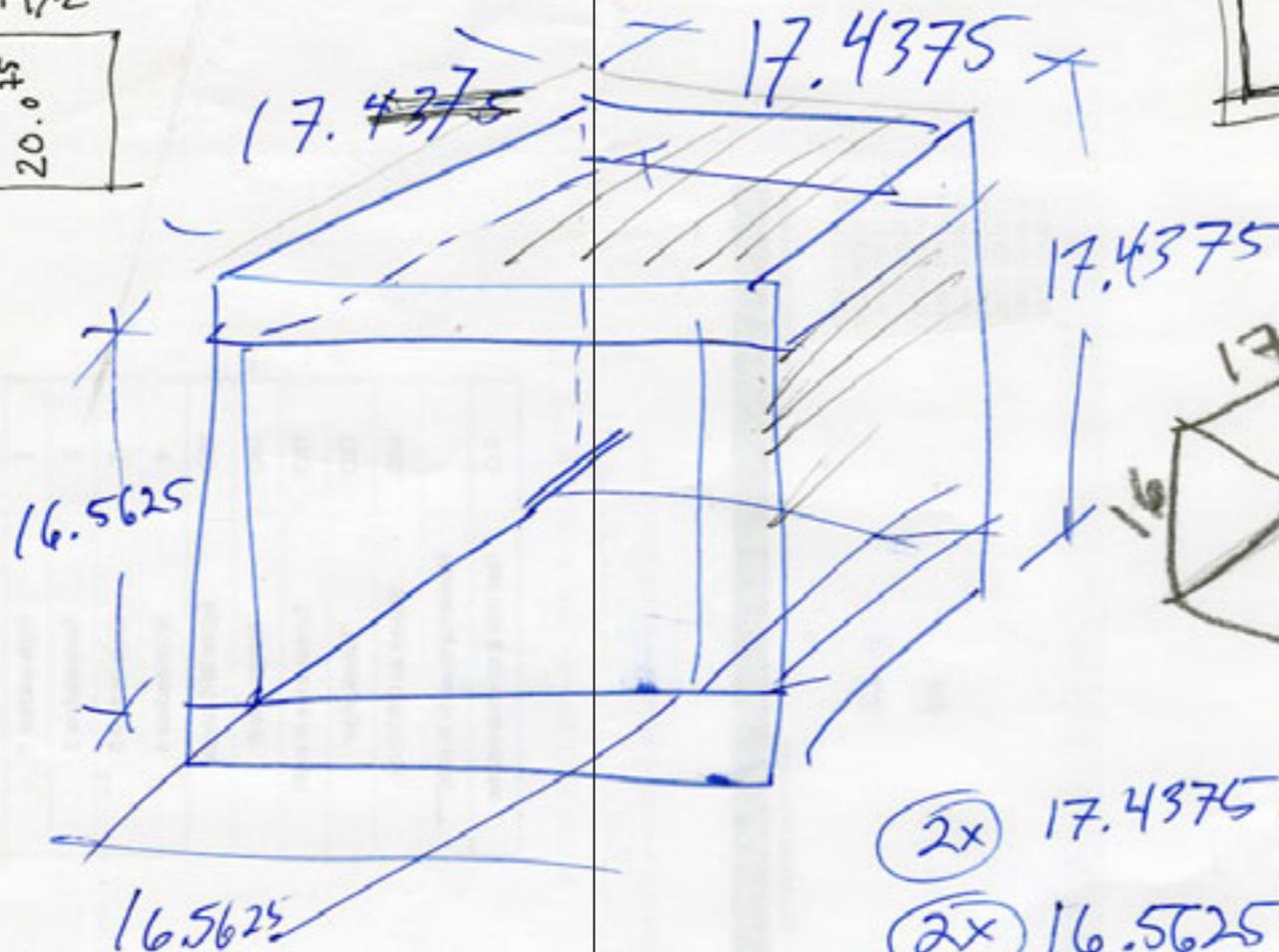
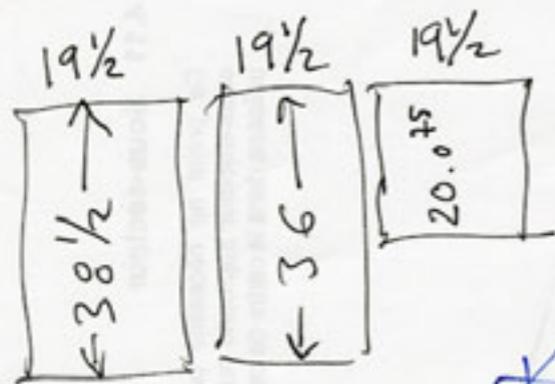






“In certain parts of the Americas colonized by the English and built with the labour of Africans and their descendants, the holiday season at the end of the year was once – and in some areas still is – celebrated by parading bands of masqueraders whose danced processions created an ambiguous, highly charged space of their own. (..)



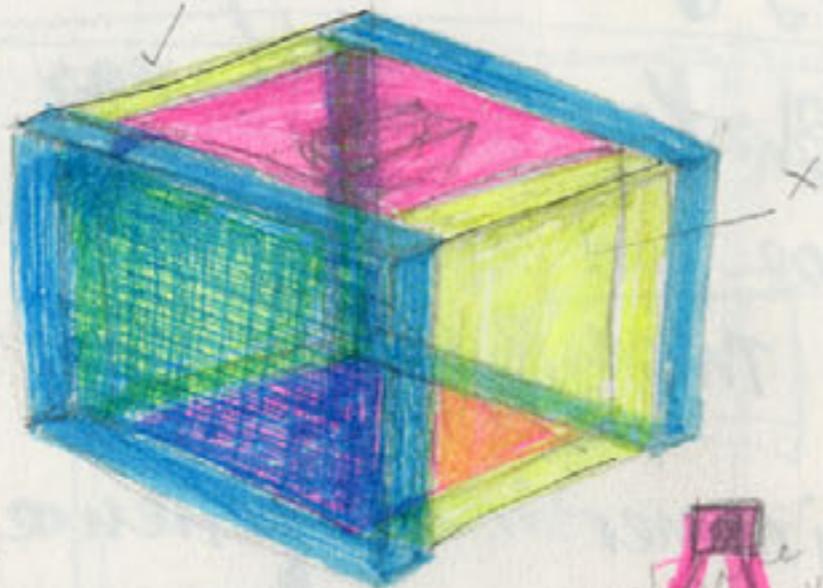


0.75

- ②x $17.4375'' \times 17.4375''$
- ②x $16.5625'' \times 17.4375''$
- ①x $16.5625'' \times 16.5625''$

check A or B design for speakers.

Sizes → Blue x2 → Largest
Yellow x1 → medium
Pink x2 → smallest



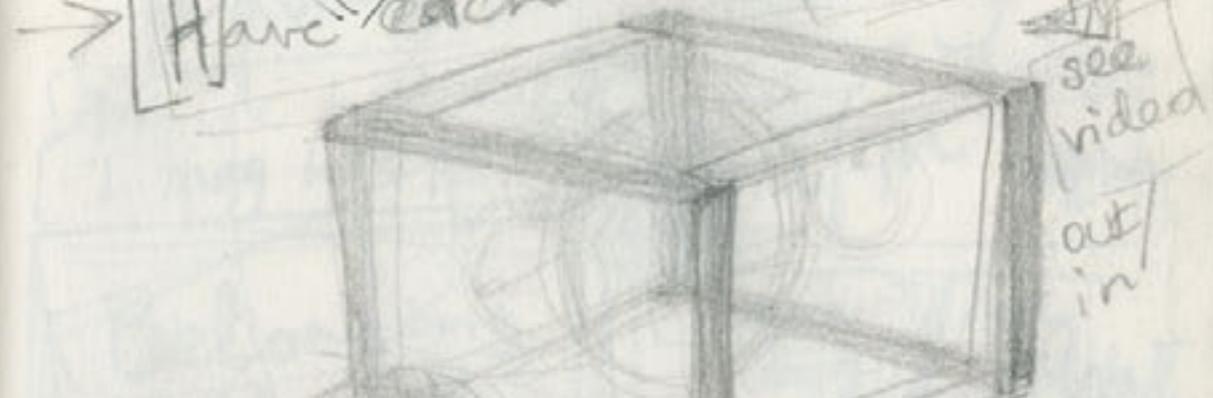
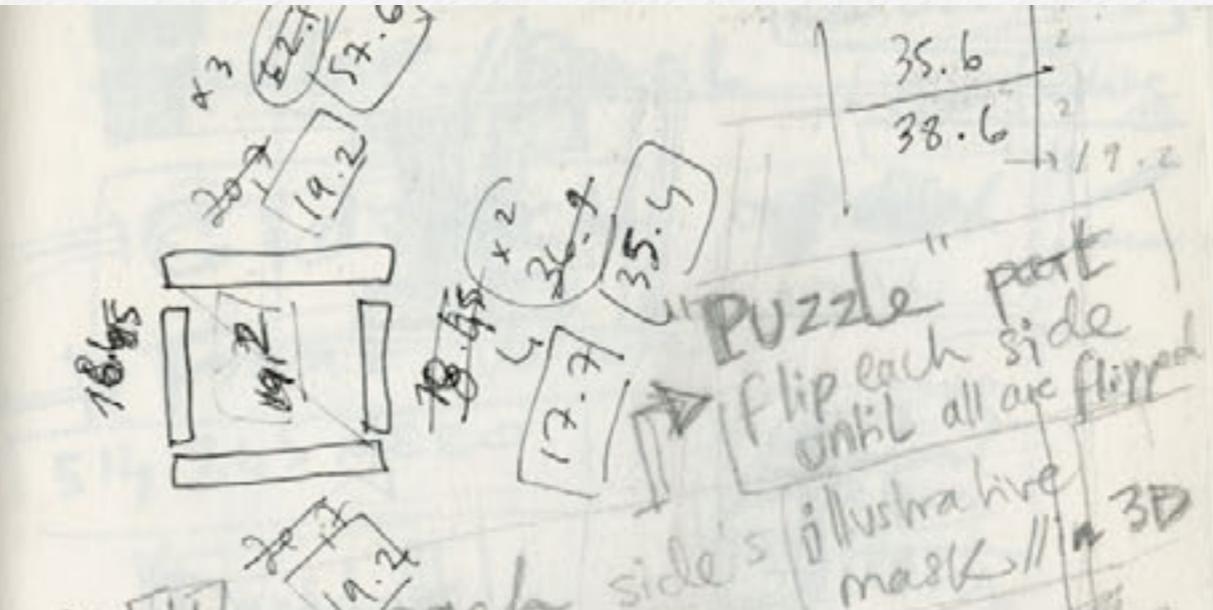
in 3D

→ make cube with colors/symbols matching outside of box

test box design with easy material cardboard



make a pin?



see video out/in

adjustable create mask housing think of cables

! Camera / has to see user

(..) The loud drumming and singing, “wild” dancing, and “extravagant” costumes topped with horned animal masks and towering headdresses overloaded the senses of these white on-lookers, and suggested to them something inscrutably and dangerously African, even when certain European elements could be recognized within the unfamiliar mix (..)

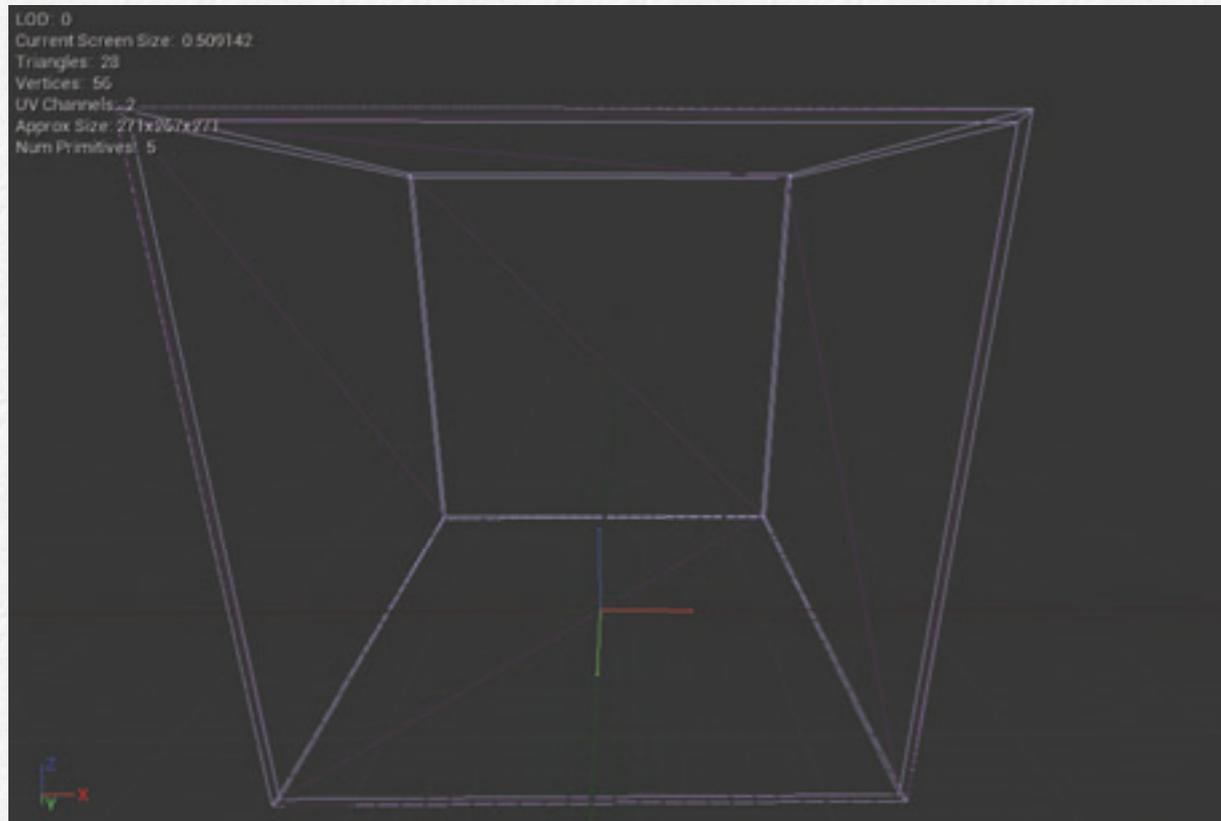


Over time it was accepted by the ruling whites, who came to view it as a necessary evil – a kind of safety valve through which the simmering tensions on slave plantations could be periodically released and kept from exploding.

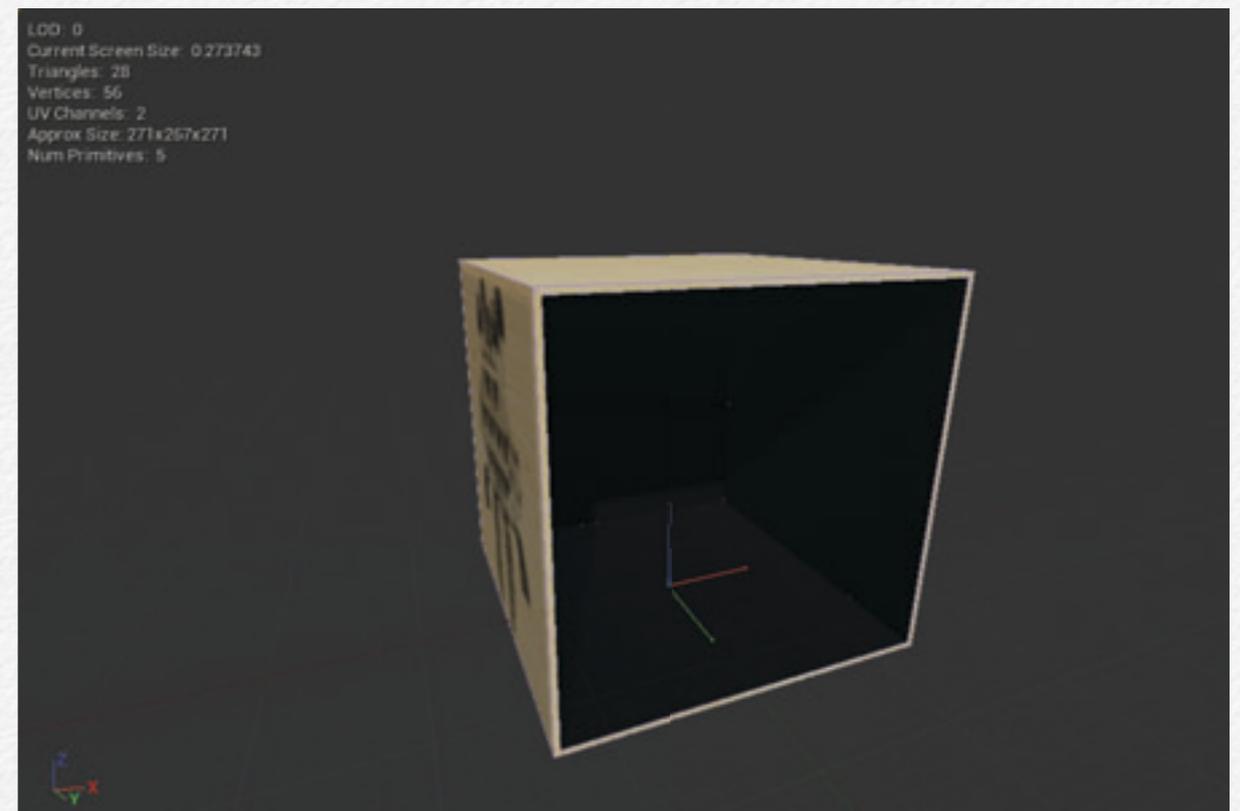


In certain parts of the Caribbean and Central America, variants of this enigmatic festival are still practiced. Indeed, this Christmas and New Year's festival, known as Jankunu (John Canoe, Jonkonnu, Junkanoo, John Kuner) has, for some, become a powerful symbol of a surviving African "spirit" in the English-speaking Americas."

Kenneth Bilby, SURVIVING SECULARIZATION: MASKING THE SPIRIT IN THE JANKUNU (JOHN CANOE) FESTIVALS OF THE CARIBBEAN *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 84, no. 3-4 (2010)



As the viewer puts on the Rift, she / he enters a 3D space which mimics the wooden box in which he/she took possession of the headset, and chooses to watch the performance captured by one of the dancers or by me, the artist.



On the gallery floor, a cube-shaped pine box with decorative engravings houses an Oculus Rift virtual reality headset in which the viewer interacts with 3x3min videos of traditional Jamaica Carnival 'Jonkonnu' performers from both sides of the mask.





masking as method: Charles Campbell

Actor Boy extensions (2010-present)





masking as method: Anton Vidokle & Pelin Tan
2084: a science fiction show (2014)



masking as method: Simon Starling

Project for a Masquerade (2011)

サイモン・スターリング
仮面劇のためのプロジェクト(ヒロシマ)

2011年1月22日(土)–4月10日(日)
休館日: 月曜日(ただし、3月21日(月・祝)は開館、翌22日は休館)
開館時間: 10:00–17:00(入場は開館の30分前まで)

Hiroshima MOCA

展覧会概要
アーティスト
作品
イベント
アクセス
ドキュメント





The impossible image: Richard Mosse

The Enclave (2013-14)



I refer to 'The Enclave' (2013); Irish artist Richard Mosse's 6 screen video installation with sound by Ben Frost. Working in war-torn RDC, he most pertinently uses beauty to portray human suffering in the 'third world', thus creating an ethical problem in the viewer's mind, who must now think about the act of perception.









final presentation

testing the Rift with the wooden box



I refer to Jamaican scholar Stuart Hall's delineation of post-colonial identity, which he sees "as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."

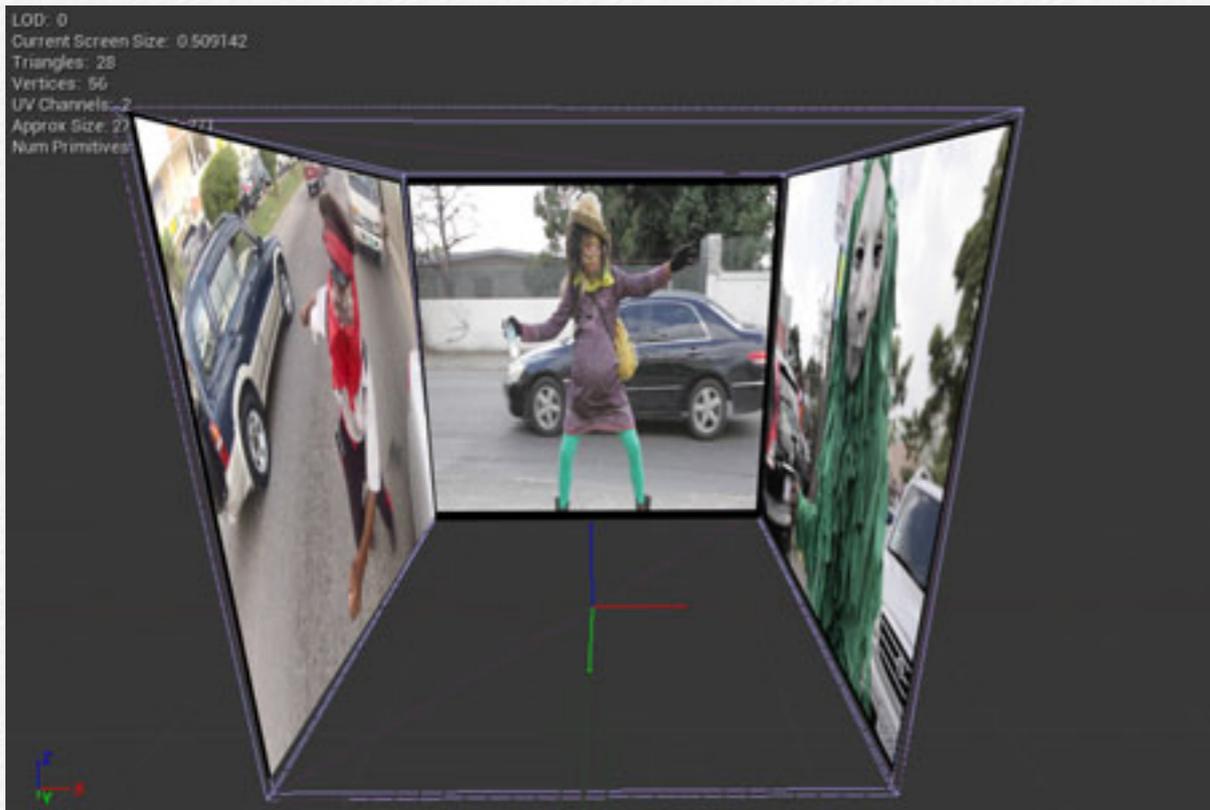


Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Rutherford, J. (1990) Identity, Community, Culture, Difference. Laurence and Wishart. London.



final presentation

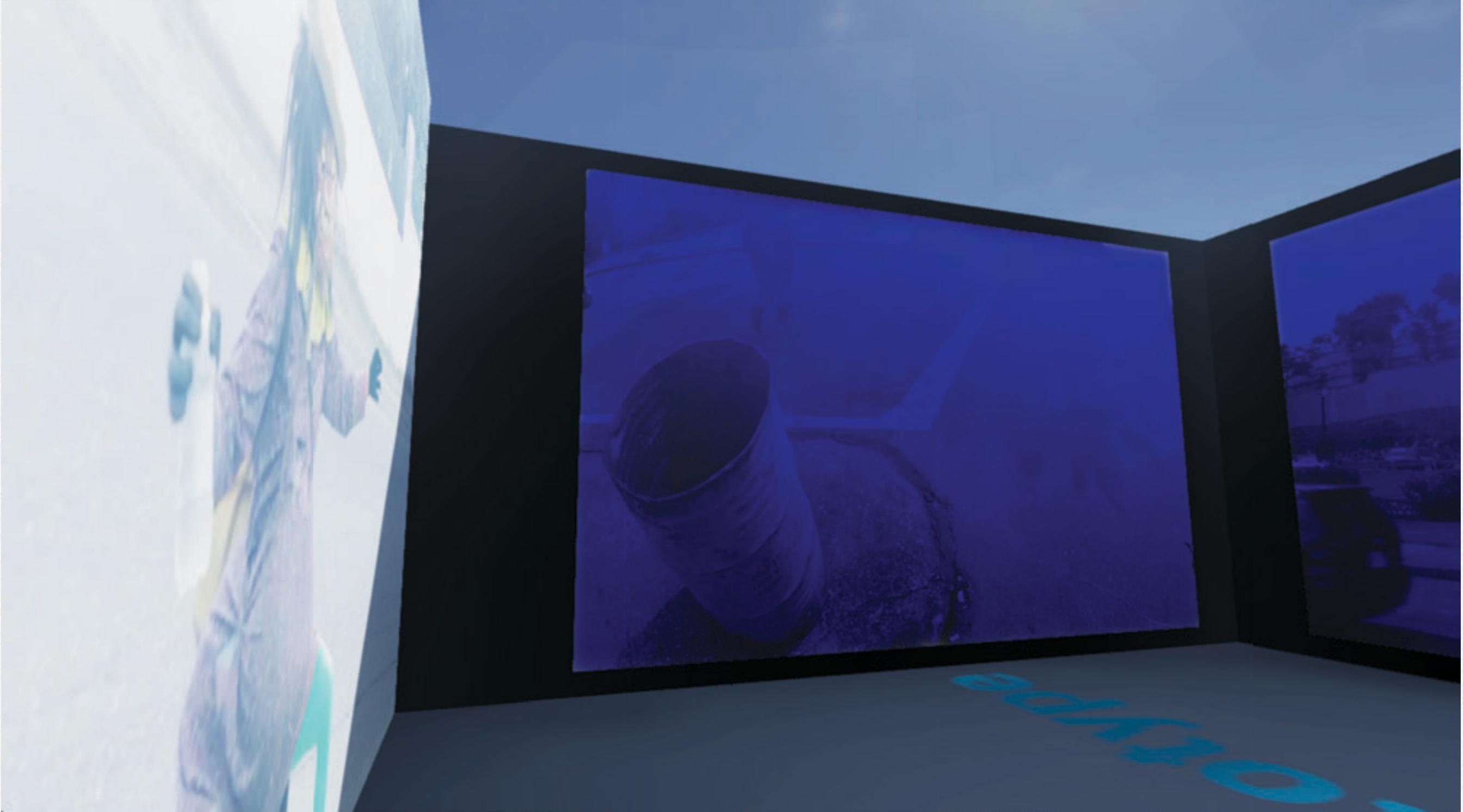
testing video 'screens' in 3D space



I refer to Barbadian writer Kamau Brathwaite's 'tidalectics'; an "alternative" historiography to linear models of colonial progress".

Elizabeth DeLoughrey quoted in Llenín-Figueroa C.B.(2012), Imagined Islands: A Caribbean Tidalectics. Duke University.





Wrote to
HYPERA

8 hours ago

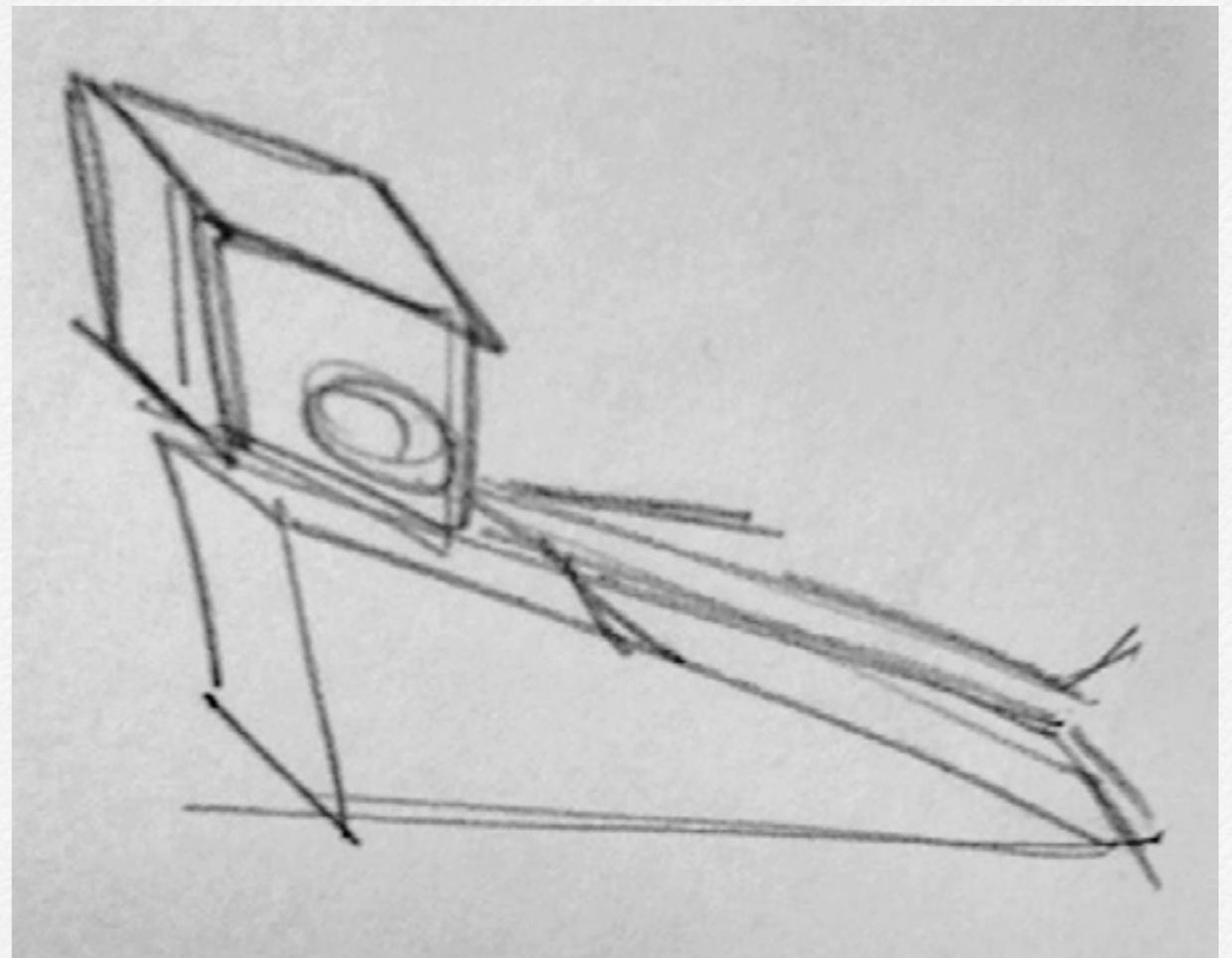
We're graphic designers

The address I sent you is not for

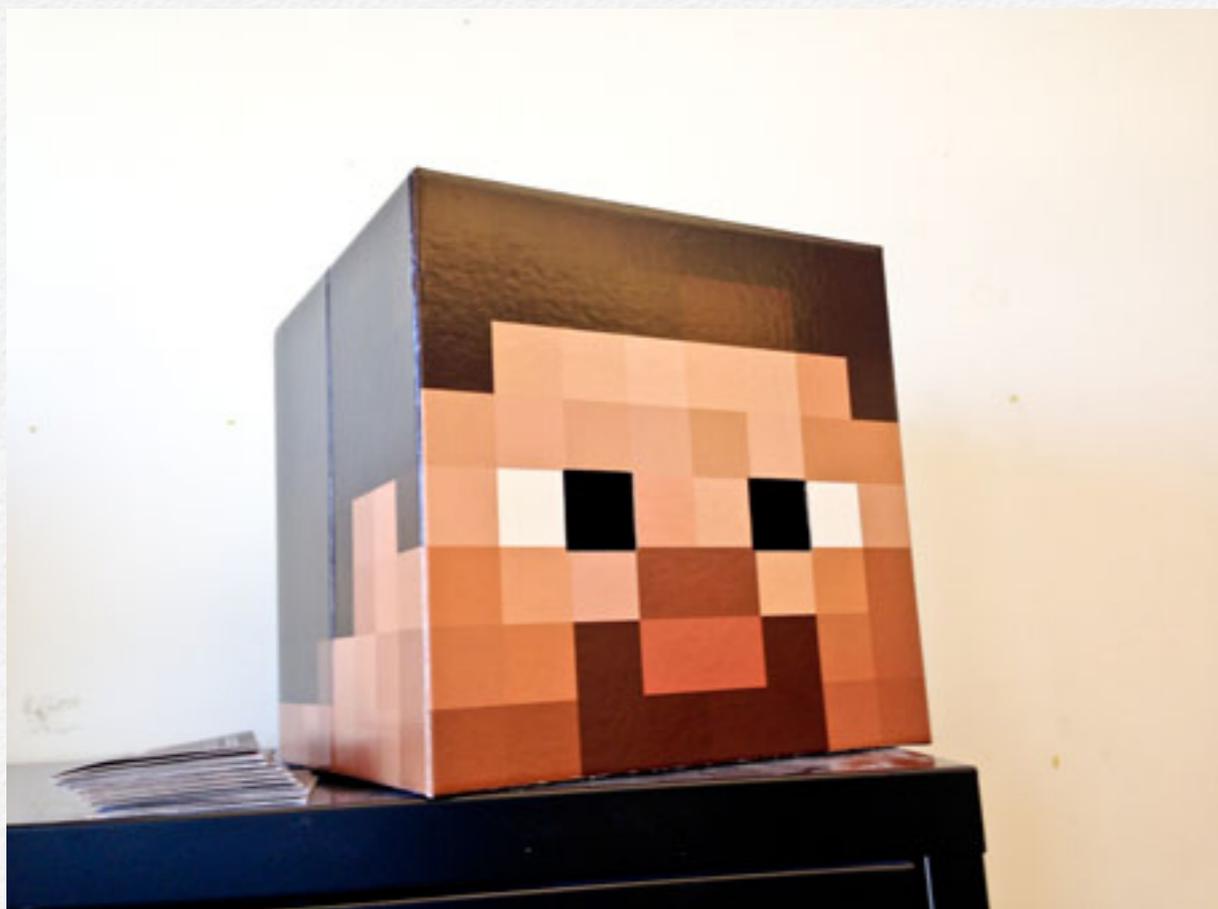
-text



‘Jonkonnu / Gens inconnus’ makes a relational notion of ‘otherness’ available, activated through the viewer's interaction with the work. The deconstruction and reconstruction of identities will be suggested but not consumed.



future boxes





Name

Olivia McGilchrist

Title

‘Jonkonnu / Gens inconnus’

Materials

3x 3min. video sequences with sound, ocu-
lus rift, headphones, wooden box, seating

Website

www.oliviamcgilchrist.com

**“ The story must be told. There must
be no lies”**

Trinh Minh-ha, Women-Native-Other