

/Richard-Jonathan Nelson/

in

/room/



Curatorial Note:

What is revealed through a repeated gesture, sustained over time?

In *Waiting at the Shoreline for Them to a.k.a Me*, the direction of the waves (or maybe clouds) is shifting. Tides push against one another and overlap. Are we on the water or in the sky? Perhaps under the ocean, in a subspace.

Layers of colorful flowers move, their petals opening and closing repeatedly and quickly. Are the petals closing in response to nightfall, opening to welcome daybreak? Are we witnessing days and nights compressed, petals moving to the passing of whole seasons, years and lives within seconds? We are in a different timescale.

An abstract shape appears among the flowers. Moving forward, the cloaked figure is gesturing with hands: large, with long fingernails that come to a sharp point, decorated with jewels. Over and over, the figure fades, dissolves and returns as plants and colorful shapes move to cover it, then retreat. Over and over the hands gesture. They do not stop their looped motion. Is the figure inviting us, speaking to us? Or asking us (pleading with us) to refrain from entering? The gestures become persistent and urgent even as their movement and pace remain the same. The tide swells, churning grays and blues cover the figure. The sounds fade.

- Maxine Schoefer-Wulf

Artist Note:

How does the urgent belief of boundless chronological possibility run counter to the inherent cultural limitations connected to Black bodies? What does the weight and speed of time feel like when it is filtered through an ocean of unfulfillable expectation? Do the flowers that float at its shores ever bloom? Do they ever die? Or do the bodies suspended in these temporal sublunary waters offer warning of and relief from expectation?

- Richard-Jonathan Nelson

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Richard-Jonathan Nelson is a multi-disciplinary artist who uses textiles, video, and digital manipulation to create alternative worlds of speculative identity. His work is multi-layered, chromatically intense and mixes images of the natural world with reference to hoodoo, queer culture, and Afro-Futurism. He uses his constructed worlds to examine the overlapping spheres of culturally perceived identity and the emotional memory of what it means to be a queer black man, thereby creating a limbic space free from the weighted expected western cultural reality, where it is possible to examine the unspoken ways systems of power persist.

Born in Savannah, Georgia (1987) and working in Oakland, CA Nelson received his MFA from California College of the Arts in 2017. His work has been exhibited at Southern Exposure, Embark Gallery, Root Division in San Francisco, and Aggregate Space in Oakland. He will be in residence at MASS MoCA this May.