



**The U.S. Pavilion, Commissioned by ICA Boston, Reveals New Details About
Loophole of Retreat: Venice This October 7-9**

**An Extension of *Simone Leigh: Sovereignty*,
The Convening Features Talks, Readings, Film Screenings, and Performances By Leading
Black Women Intellectuals From Around the World**

(Boston, MA—September 22, 2022)—The U.S. Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia announced new details about the work being presented at *Loophole of Retreat: Venice*, a convening of Black women intellectuals and creatives from around the world that will take place Oct. 7–9 at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. An extension of the exhibition *Simone Leigh: Sovereignty*, commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the three-day gathering will present talks, readings, film screenings, and performances by today’s leading thinkers, artists, writers, filmmakers, performers, poets, and activists. To share the experience of *Loophole of Retreat: Venice* with a wide audience, sessions will be streamed live on the [U.S. Pavilion website](#).

In total there will be 60 different presentations featuring the unique perspectives and talents of the esteemed group of participants. The symposium is guided by a set of key directives put forth by artist **Simone Leigh** and symposium curator **Rashida Bumbray** with curatorial advisors **Saidiya Hartman**, University Professor, Columbia University, and **Tina M. Campt**, Owen F. Walker Professor of Humanities and Modern Culture and Media, Brown University. The directives include: maroonage (independent communities of resistance), manual (done or performed with the hands), magical realism (Black cultural production that disrupts Western progressivist history), medicine (approaches to physical, spiritual, natural, and supernatural ailments), and sovereignty (self-determination). More details about the directives can be found [here](#).

“*Loophole* promises to be a watershed moment in the field of global Black feminist thought which will nurture the intergenerational and interdisciplinary connections and between Black women thinkers and makers working in the Global South and its diasporas,” said Rashida Bumbray. “As each engages with the others and the ideas guiding the symposium, we anticipate new cross-pollinations of thinking, some which may bear collaborative fruit immediately and others which we hope will bear fruit over many years.”

Loophole of Retreat: Venice sessions include, among others:

American performance artist and poet **Holly Bass** will present a newly expanded version of her durational performance *American Woman*, which presents an embodied portrait of Black women workers, from unnamed field hands to the second-highest office in the land. With an audio collage of popular music, oral histories, and speeches by Shirley Chisholm, Fannie Lou Hamer, Angela Davis, Stacey Abrams, and others, *American Woman* distills and amplifies a century of Black women’s largely unheralded contributions to American life using the artist’s own body as a living archive and testament to their labor.

The interdisciplinary creative practice **Black Quantum Futurism**, formed by Camae Ayewa and Rasheedah Phillips, will present a performance incorporating projected images and an original score. Weaving quantum physics, Afro-Diasporian concepts of temporality, space, image, ritual, and sound to create tools and technologies for Black temporal agency and spatial liberation, Black Quantum Futurism uncovers counter-histories and Afro-diasporic mythologies, and centers Black quantum womanist futures.

Artist **Lorraine O'Grady** will screen her newest film, *Greetings and Theses (or The Knight's First Adventure)*, which features The Knight, or Lancela Palm-and-Steel, the artist's first new performance persona in 40 years. She is the avatar of Mlle Bourgeoise Noire, picking up where MBN left off. But now instead of wearing 180 pairs of white gloves, she wears 40 pounds of plated steel surmounted by an 8-pound miniature palm.

Franco-Reunionnese activist, curator, and writer **Françoise Vergès** will speak about the state of permanent war waged since the advent of modernity against Black, indigenous, and all peoples of color, the cruelty that is a constant feature of anti-Black racism but which is compounded now with climate disaster and the resurgence of fascism, and the need for the creation of refuges and sanctuaries.

South African dancer and choreographer **Nelisiwe Xaba** will present a performance entitled *Sakhozi says "NON" to the Venus*, which weaves together the artist's own biography with that of Sarah Baartman, a South African woman from the Khoikhoi tribe, who had been displayed in the 19th century circuses and exhibition shows across London and Paris under the pseudonym Hottentot Venus. Addressing issues of exotic voyeurism and xenophobia, the piece features a woman who travels to Europe and is allowed to stay only if she becomes a museum artefact.

Detroit-based filmmaker **dream hampton** will present *Freshwater*, a short film about her disappearing Black city, flooded basements, and the fluid nature of memory.

American scholar **Zakiyyah Iman Jackson** will present a talk entitled *Prefiguration: Blackness and Perception* that will explore the ways in which the history of blackness has been powered by the conflation of function and figuration in ways both searing and sublime. This talk will tarry with the function of anticipation and its consequence for figuring racialized gender.

Stella Nyanzi, a medical anthropologist, social justice activist, artist published and practiced in poetry, and opposition politician from Uganda but currently living in Germany, will present a talk exploring the themes of maroonage and sovereignty through the lens of her own political exile from Uganda, tracing the process of regaining and reclaiming freedom for creative critique and dissidence.

São Tomé-based poet, performer, and art educator **Raquel Lima** will present an experimental talk, shaped by her experience with Black movements in Portugal, to introduce intrasectionality as a concept under construction and a self-analysis tool for a political therapy that envisions autonomous organization and the rights for life, justice and peace against a system that oppresses racially. The objective is to seek ancestral views of social and political organizations that embrace ethics of care and self-care. This talk is dedicated to several actions of Black women in the scope of the anti-racist struggles in Portugal, by organizing it as a timeless collective body manifested through the five natural elements—water, fire, earth, air, and ether.

American filmmaker **Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich** will screen *Spit on the Broom*, a surrealist documentary that explores the margins of the history of the African American women's group the United Order of Tents, a clandestine organization of Black women organized in the 1840s during the height of the Underground Railroad. The film uses excerpts from the public record, newspaper articles related to the Tents from over the course of 100 years, and a visual tapestry of fable and myth as a way to make visible a clandestine history while respecting its secrets.

French scholar **Maboula Soumohoro** and American scholar and translator **Kaiama L. Glover** will jointly offer a presentation entitled *Trans(Re)lation: Blackness as Journey*. This intervention will explore the possibilities emerging from the practice of translation, understood as a fundamental condition of Afro-diasporic exchange, circulation, and conversation.

For more information, visit simoneleighvenice2022.org.

LOOPHOLE OF RETREAT: VENICE PARTICIPANTS

Vanessa Agard-Jones (New York)
Mistura Allison (London & Milan)
Deborah Anzinger (Kingston)
Firelei Báez (New York)
Holly Bass (Washington, DC)
Black Quantum Futurism (Philadelphia)
Phoebe Boswell (London)
Rizvana Bradley (San Francisco)
Dionne Brand (Toronto)
Tarana Burke (Harlem, New York)
Tina Campt (New York)
Cecily (Washington, DC)
Aimee Meredith Cox (New York)
Javiela Evangelista (New York)
Ayana Evans (New York)
Denise Ferreira da Silva (Vancouver)
Ja'Tovia Monique Gary (Dallas)
aracelis girmay (Brooklyn)
Kaiama L. Glover (New York)
dream hampton (Detroit)
Saidiya Hartman (New York)
Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich (New York)
Leslie Hewitt (Houston and New York)
Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (Los Angeles)
Sandra Jackson-Dumont (Los Angeles)
Zara Julius (Johannesburg)
Lauren Kelley (New York and Houston)
Bouchra Khalili (Berlin and Paris)
Grada Kilomba (Berlin)
Daniella Rose King (London)
Autumn Knight (New York)
Negarra A. Kudumu (Seattle)
Las Nietas de Nonó (San Antón, Carolina, Puerto Rico)
Diane Lima (Salvador/São Paulo, Brazil)
Raquel Lima (São Tomé, São Tomé e Príncipe)
Gail Lewis (London)
Canisia Lubrin (Whitby, Canada)
Jessica Lynne (New York)
Tsedaye Makonnen (Washington, DC and London)
Nomaduma Rosa Masilela (Berlin)
Paloma McGregor (New York and St. Croix, USVI)
Maaza Mengiste (New York)
Nontsikelelo Mutiti (New Haven)
Kettly Noël (Bamako, Mali and Port-au-Prince, Haïti)
Stella Nyanzi (Munich)
Lorraine O'Grady (New York)

Okwui Okpokwasili (New York)
Senam Okudzeto (Basel, Switzerland)
Janaína Oliveira (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
Oluremi C. Onabanjo (New York)
Olumide Popoola (London [of German-Nigerian background])
Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts (Dutchess County, New York)
Annette Lane Harrison Richter (Washington, DC)
Legacy Russell (New York)
Christina Sharpe (Toronto)
Lisa Marie Simmons (Lake Garda, Italy)
Maboula Soumahoro (Paris)
Tourmaline (New York)
Françoise Vergès (Paris)
Alberta Whittle (Glasgow)
Mabel O. Wilson (New York)
Nelisiwe Xaba (Johannesburg)

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

Simone Leigh (b. 1967, Chicago, IL) has created an expansive body of work in sculpture, video, and performance over the past two decades that centers Black femme interiority. Inflected by Black feminist theory, Leigh's practice intervenes imaginatively to fill gaps in the historical record by proposing new hybridities. Leigh's sculptural works join forms derived from vernacular architecture and the female body, rendering them via materials and processes associated with the artistic traditions of Africa and the African diaspora. The collaborative ethos that characterizes Leigh's videos and public programs pays homage to a long history of Black female collectivity, communality, and care. In 2019, Leigh was the first artist commissioned for the High Line Plinth, New York. Recent exhibitions include *The Hugo Boss Prize 2018: Simone Leigh, Loophole of Retreat* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2019); the 2019 Whitney Biennial; *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon* (2017) at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; *Psychic Friends Network* (2016) at Tate Exchange, Tate Modern, London; Hammer Projects: *Simone Leigh* (2016–17) at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; *inHarlem: Simone Leigh* (2016–17), a public installation presented by The Studio Museum in Harlem at Marcus Garvey Park, New York; *The Waiting Room* (2016) at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; and *Free People's Medical Clinic* (2014), a project commissioned by Creative Time. Leigh's work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; Cleveland Museum of Art; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the ICA/Boston, among others.

The works that comprise Leigh's exhibition for the U.S. Pavilion will be featured in her first museum survey exhibition at the ICA in 2023, which will subsequently tour to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. (Fall/Winter 2023/24), and a joint presentation at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and California African American Museum (CAAM) in Spring/Summer 2024 in Los Angeles, CA. The exhibition will be accompanied by the first comprehensive monograph dedicated to Leigh's work.

Rashida Bumbray is a curator and choreographer. She began her curatorial career in 2001 at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, where she coordinated major exhibitions including *Frequency* (2005) and *Freestyle* (2001). As associate curator at The Kitchen, New York, (2006-2012), Bumbray organized critically acclaimed exhibitions and commissions by artists including Simone Leigh, Leslie Hewitt, Adam Pendleton, Lauren Kelley, Jamal Cyrus, Elodie Pong, and Kyle Abraham among many others. Bumbray was guest curator of Creative Time's public art exhibition *Funk, God, Jazz and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn* (2014).

Most recently, as Director of Culture and Art at the Open Society Foundations, Bumbray spearheaded the development of the foundations' first global program dedicated to advancing diverse artistic

practices and strengthening locally-led cultural spaces around the world. Under her leadership, Open Society Foundations became one of the leading arts funders focused on the Global South and supporting socially engaged artists and cultural producers in diverse disciplines.

Bumbray is also an accomplished choreographer whose practice draws from traditional African American vernacular and folk forms. Her performances have been presented by Tate Modern, London; the New Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harlem Stage, and SummerStage, all in New York; and Project Row Houses, Houston.

ABOUT SIMONE LEIGH: SOVEREIGNTY

Simone Leigh: Sovereignty features a new body of work made for the United States Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022, commissioned by the ICA in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. *Sovereignty* commingles disparate histories and narratives, including those related to ritual performances of the Baga peoples in Guinea, early Black American material culture from the Edgefield District in South Carolina, and the landmark 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition. With a series of bronzes and ceramics both outside and inside the Pavilion, Leigh intervenes imaginatively to fill gaps in the historical record by proposing new hybridities. *Simone Leigh: Sovereignty* is co-commissioned by Jill Medvedow, Ellen Matilda Poss Director, and Eva Respini, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and Barbara Lee Chief Curator, at the ICA. Learn more at simoneleighvenice2022.org.

ABOUT THE ICA/BOSTON

Since its founding in 1936, the ICA has shared the pleasures of reflection, inspiration, imagination, and provocation that contemporary art offers with its audiences. A museum at the intersection of contemporary art and civic life, the ICA has advanced a bold vision for amplifying the artist's voice and expanding the museum's role as educator, incubator, and convener. Its exhibitions, performances, and educational programs provide access to the breadth and diversity of contemporary art, artists, and the creative process, inviting audiences of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the excitement of new art and ideas. The ICA is located at 25 Harbor Shore Drive, Boston, MA, 02210. For more information, call 617-478-3100 or visit our website at icaboston.org. Follow the ICA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Established in 1895, La Biennale di Venezia is acknowledged today as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions. La Biennale stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends and organizes events in its specific sectors of Arts (1895), Architecture (1980), Cinema (1932), Dance (1999), Music (1930), and Theatre (1934), alongside research and training activities. The International Art Exhibition is considered the most prestigious contemporary art exhibition in the world, introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors to exciting new art every two years. The 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (April 23–November 27, 2022) is directed by Cecilia Alemani.

ABOUT THE U.S. PAVILION

The United States Pavilion, a building in the neoclassical style in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice, opened on May 4, 1930. Since 1986, the U.S. Pavilion has been owned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and managed by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, which works closely with the U.S. Department of State and exhibition curators to install and maintain all official U.S. exhibitions presented in the Pavilion. Every two years, museum curators from across the country detail their visions for the U.S. Pavilion in proposals that are reviewed by the National Endowment for the Arts' Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions (FACIE), a group comprising curators, museum directors, and artists, who then submit their recommendations to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Past exhibitions can be viewed on the Peggy Guggenheim Collection's website at <https://www.guggenheim-venice.it/>.

ABOUT THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional, and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us, like religion, politics, language, and ethnicity, and geography. ECA programs build connections that engage and empower people and motivate them to become leaders and thinkers, to develop new skills, and to find connections that will create positive change in their communities. For more information, please visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/us>.

SPONSORS



Simone Leigh: Sovereignty is presented by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston in partnership with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.

With warmest thanks, the ICA gratefully acknowledges the following philanthropic partners for their magnificent support.



**FORD
FOUNDATION**



Major support is provided by the Ford Foundation and the Mellon Foundation.



Lead corporate support is provided by eu2be.



**WAGNER
FOUNDATION**

Generous support is provided by:

Bloomberg Philanthropies
Paul and Catherine Buttenwieser
The Girlfriend Fund
Wagner Foundation



Visionary
Initiatives
in Art.

Goldman
Sachs

**oneMILLION
BLACK WOMEN**

**LAMBENT
FOUNDATION**

Leadership gifts are provided by:

Amy and David Abrams
Stephanie Formica Connaughton and John Connaughton
Bridgitt and Bruce Evans
James and Audrey Foster
Goldman Sachs *One Million Black Women*
Agnes Gund
Jodi and Hal Hess
Sue Hostetler Wrigley and Beau Wrigley
Barbara and Amos Hostetter
Lambent Foundation
Brigette Lau Collection
Kristen and Kent Lucken
Tristin and Martin Mannion
Ted Pappendick and Erica Gervais Pappendick
Gina and Stuart Peterson
Helen and Charles Schwab
Terra Foundation for American Art
VIA Art Fund

Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Essential support is also provided by:

Suzanne Deal Booth
Kate and Chuck Brizius
Richard Chang
Karen and Brian Conway
Steven Corkin and Dan Maddalena
Federico Martin Castro Debernardi
Jennifer Epstein and Bill Keravuori
Esta Gordon Epstein and Robert Epstein
Negin and Oliver Ewald
Alison and John Ferring
Helen Frankenthaler Foundation
Glenn and Amanda Fuhrman
Vivien and Alan Hassenfeld and the Hassenfeld Family Foundation
Peggy J. Koenig and Family
The Holly Peterson Foundation
David and Leslie Puth with Mark and Marie Schwartz

Cindy and Howard Rachofsky
Leslie Riedel and Scott Friend
Kim Sinatra
Tobias and Kristin Welo
Lise and Jeffrey Wilks
Kelly Williams and Andrew Forsyth
Jill and Nick Woodman
Nicole Zatlun and Jason Weiner
Marilyn Lyng and Dan O'Connell
Komal Shah and Gaurav Garg Foundation
Kate and Ajay Agarwal
Eunhak Bae and Robert Kwak
Jeremiah Schneider Joseph
Barbara H. Lloyd
Cynthia and John Reed
Anonymous donors