

face_{value}

Exploring the Inter-subjectivity of Mixed-Race Identity Through the Works of
Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist

by

Heidi McKenzie

A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in
Criticism and Curatorial Practice

Gallery 1313
1313 Queen Street West, Toronto
February 19 to March 2, 2014

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
April, 2014

© Heidi McKenzie, 2014

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize OCAD University to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

I further authorize OCAD University to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. H. King", written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

face_{value}

Heidi McKenzie
Master of Fine Arts, Criticism and Curatorial Practice
OCAD University, 2014

The central premise of this thesis exhibition project addresses the notion of inter-subjectivity as it pertains to the self-portraiture of three mixed-race artists of Afro-Caribbean and Euro-white heritage: Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist. The project explores this inter-subjectivity by troubling the black/white race binary within the specificities of the artists' geographies and the curated work. It also assesses the positionalities of the Toronto audience's mixed reception of the work. The scope of the project encompasses the exhibition *Face Value*; a self-published exhibition catalogue; a reflective curatorial essay; an online community outreach resource; an artist panel produced in partnership with *The State of Blackness* conference; an onsite curator's talk; and an exhibition report that details the process, methodology, and key learnings, contextualizes the work of the artists, and incorporates a literature review of the primary theoretical concepts that inform the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first and foremost thank the artists, Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist for believing in the project, and for giving so generously of their lives and life experiences.

This thesis exhibition would not have been possible without the partnership support of *The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation* conference; a generous gift from Dr. Kenneth Montague of Wedge Curatorial Projects; assistance from OCAD University Student Union Student Grants Program; as well as the numerous contributions from over sixty individuals who participated in the online crowd-raising campaign that brought both the exhibition and the catalogue to fruition. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Ontario Government Scholarship program.

As performance theorist Diana Taylor points out, “the production of knowledge is always a collective effort, a series of back-and-forth conversations that produce multiple results.”¹ To this end, I would like to acknowledge the pivotal role that my thesis defence played, the conversation, input and subsequent mentoring that resulted in the final reflective version of my curatorial essay (that is an expanded version of the self-published catalogue essay). Special thanks to my principal advisor, Professor Dot Tuer, Ph.D., OCAD University, and my secondary advisor Andrea Fatona, Ph.D., OCAD University, for showing me that I have so much more to learn; thanks also to my external advisors Professor Camille Isaacs, Ph.D., OCAD University and Michelle Jacques, Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Victoria, and to the Graduate Program Director at OCAD University, Professor Michael Prokopow, Ph.D. I would also like to acknowledge the support and guidance of Professors Rosemary Donegan, Betty Julian, Caroline Langill, Lynne Milgram, and Barbara Rauch.

Lastly, I would like to recognize the unending support of my husband, Ali Kazimi.

¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (London: Duke University Press, 2003), xx.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I: CURATORIAL THESIS ESSAY

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND RECEPTION OF THE EXHIBITION FACE VALUE	1
NOTES	25
LIST OF WORKS	28
FIGURES	29

PART II: CURATORIAL THESIS REPORT

A. CURATORIAL PROCESS & DEVELOPMENT	37
B. EXHIBITION LOGISTICS & PLANNING	56
C. ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES	64
NOTES	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
APPENDICES	
A. CATALOGUE ESSAY: THE INTER-SUBJECTIVITY OF MIXED-RACE IDENTITY IN THE EXHIBITION <i>FACE VALUE</i> AND NOTES	75
B. PHOTOGRAPHS OF INSTALLED EXHIBITION	89
C. INSTALLATION PLANNING MOCK-UPS	94
D. THE FUNDING PROCESS	96
E. MARKETING & PROMOTION	100
F. ONLINE PROJECT & FORUM	111
G. ARTIST INFORMATION	115
H. ETHICS REVIEW BOARD	129

Accompanying Material

The following accompanying material is included in the inside back pouch of the bound copy of this thesis: *Face Value* exhibition catalogue (ISBN 978-0-9937288-0-8); *Face Value* brochure, 8:32 minute video *The Artists Speak*. Anyone requesting the material may view it in the OCAD Library or pay to have it copied for personal use.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. *Something in Between*, Jordan Clarke, 2011
oil on canvas, 30" x 36"
- Figure 2. *White Façade*, Jordan Clarke, 2010
oil on canvas, 18" x 24"
- Figure 3. *Nothing is Just Black or White*, Jordan Clarke, 2008
oil on canvas, 30" x 40"
- Figure 4. *I am not tragically colored (after Zora Neale Hurston)*,
Erika DeFreitas, 2013-2014
archival digital prints 20" x 30" each; plexiglass 5" x 8" each
- Figure 5. *The McGilchrists*, circa 1910, Kingston, Jamaica
archival inkjet print, from scan of the original image, 6" x 8"
- Figure 6. *(whitey) Discovery Bay*, 2013
archival canvas print, 84" x 59", edition of 1
- Figure 7. *Ernestine and Me*, (video still), Olivia McGilchrist, 2012
- Figure 8. *Beauty Beach*, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3
- Figure 9. *Bamboo Avenue*, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3
- Figure 10. *White River*, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

PART I: CURATORIAL THESIS ESSAY

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND RECEPTION OF THE EXHIBITION *FACE VALUE*

The exhibition *Face Value*, which was installed at Gallery 1313 in Toronto between February 19 and March 2, 2014, explored the complexities of mixed-race identity through the works of Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist. I chose these artists for their shared engagement in self-portraiture and their deployment of the trope of the mask as a mechanism to narrate their experiences as women of mixed Afro-Caribbean/European heritage. In the research I undertook for this exhibition, I considered how the conceptualization of mixed race is a complex terrain that ushers in issues of intellectual genealogies and the contestation of theoretical terms that ascribe dimensions of racial and cultural mixing such as creolization, hybridity, *mestizaje*, biracialism, cross-breeding, and *métissage*. While these terms informed my theoretical framing of *Face Value*, for my curatorial premise I focused on the performative aspect of the inter-subjectivity of mixed race, drawing on the work of performance theorist Diana Taylor to highlight how each artist sought to trouble the social construction and cultural perceptions of racial binaries of whiteness or blackness.

As it pertains to mixed race, Diana Taylor theorizes inter-subjectivity as a double-coded neither/nor subjectivity¹ embedded in Caribbean discourse, most notably in Martinique philosopher Édouard Glissant's concept of creolization and Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturation. Glissant's

concept of creolization pivots on a poetic and philosophical exploration of how the mixing of peoples in the Caribbean was formed by the colonial dynamics of domination and subalternity, and mastery and servitude tied to the violences of slavery.² By theorizing how these dynamics engendered a cultural hybridity that is manifested in language and gesture, oral history and the poetics of memory, Glissant offers a way forward and a way out of thinking about racial mixing as biologically determined by emphasizing processes of cultural transformation. Ortiz's coining of transculturation in the 1940s sought to counter the then pervasive anthropological concept of acculturation, in which it was assumed that colonized peoples adapted to and were absorbed by the more dominant culture of the colonizer. In contrast to this paradigm of cultural loss, transculturation emphasized the mixing of cultures in which the simultaneous violent displacement of the colonized's original culture and the imposition of a dominant culture of colonization leads to the creation of new and distinct hybrid culture.³

As Taylor reminds us, "the very notion of racial identity enters the American stage as the product of these complex complicities [knowledge, memory and history] of archival and embodied systems."⁴ She also notes that the mixed-race person can act as an "Intermediary"⁵ to unravel the way in which images of cultural mixing carry their own histories and carry forward these complex histories.⁶ Taylor positions the role of the Intermediary as one embodying the processes of creolization and transculturation. In so doing, she emphasizes that the Intermediary represents more than a racial mix: "she performs the continuity among past, present, and future and

brings the memory of the past into the present even as she makes visible the future.”⁷ The act of making visible the future is what underlies the violent process of cultural transformation.

While Taylor’s writing centres on the historical process of *mestizaje* in Mexico, she notes that contemporary black cultural theorists similarly conceive of a theory of subjectivity as “decentered and uprooted in conjunction with theories stemming from their postcolonial and diasporic experience.”⁸ Furthermore, Taylor’s *Intermediary* embodies deep prejudice on the part of the “white father” who represents the Western gaze as well as colonized’s memories of cultural oppression and resistance. The centrality of the *Intermediary* in Taylor’s work on mixed-race subjectivity as embodying two subject positions (the White father and the non-White mother) theorizes a process of inter-subjectivity that is necessarily double-coded.

In relation to Taylor’s notion of the double-coding of mixed-race inter-subjectivity as rooted in the history of the Americas, and of the role of the intermediary in performing this inter-subjectivity, my curatorial thematic of “face value”⁹ was framed by the following questions. In light of the complex historical legacies of mixed-race inter-subjectivity, can there ever be an absolute congruence of understanding between the person being seen and the person doing the seeing? Does the way someone appears accurately reflect that person’s identity within a biracial or mixed-race context? How do artists who perform mixed-race subjectivities serve as cultural intermediaries for the negotiation and unsettling of racial binaries?

The works in the exhibition addressed these questions through the representation of embodied positionalities of mixed race that are contingent on the specificity of each artist's cultural background and upbringing. Jordan Clarke is a visual artist of Bajan-Canadian heritage whose self-portraits documented a three-year process in which she produced paintings that represent herself in relation to her understanding of how others perceive the way she looks. Erika DeFreitas is a conceptual artist of Guyanese-Portuguese and Afro-Trinidadian heritage who uses language, photography and gesture to unsettle racial categorizations. Olivia McGilchrist is a photographer and video artist of French and Jamaican-Swiss heritage who interrogates the binaries of whiteness and blackness in the context of relocating from London, England to her grandfather's home in Kingston, Jamaica in 2011. Through their use of self-portraiture and the trope of the mask, each artist performs as well as portrays their cultural identity as mixed race. In curating these artists together, I was particularly interested in how the trope of the mask – real or imagined – functioned as a focal point of the artists' self-reflexive inquiry that served to underscore the double-play of inter-subjectivity inherent in mixed race.

What became clear through the diversity of viewer responses to the exhibition was that the performing of mixed-race subjectivity in the context of Toronto, and in relation to the specificities of the artists' backgrounds, is inextricable from the historical legacies and constructions of a black/white racial binary, in which the face value of self-identifying or being "seen" as black or white is embedded in the difficult and multifaceted histories of slavery, colonialism and racism in the Caribbean and in

Canada.¹⁰ In order to reflect on the issues raised by the reception of the exhibition concerning the complexity and specificity of Afro-Caribbean and Euro-white mixed-race identity, this essay considers how the inter-subjectivity of mixed race was both performed by the artists and interpreted by viewers. In so doing, it incorporates my reflections on my curatorial strategies in relation to a heated audience debate about my curation of the exhibition, and specifically about my inclusion of the work of Olivia McGilchrist, that took place during a SSHRC-funded conference, *The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation*, which was organized by OCADU professor Andrea Fatona.¹¹

Face Value opened the eve of the conference and many of the participating delegates attended the exhibition's opening reception, as well as the subsequent panel that I co-moderated, in which McGilchrist and DeFreitas participated. While the audience reception of *Face Value* was as diverse as the viewers themselves, in the context of the conference, criticism of the exhibition focused on my inclusion of McGilchrist as a white-identified artist and the interpretation of McGilchrist's works as a covert rendering of the colonizer's power through her whiteness in relation to Clarke and DeFreitas' evocation of their experiences of colonialism, as told and re-imagined through their blackness. In order to address and reflect on this criticism, what follows below is an analysis that expands on the published catalogue text that accompanied the exhibition. I examined how each artists' exhibited works functioned to both perform their identity and destabilize racialized stereotypes; include a concluding summary that reflects on how and why McGilchrist's work became the

flashpoint for the exhibition; and offer an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of my curatorial approach to the thematic of mixed-race.

§

Jordan Clarke

I initially thought of the mask as a superficial layer of identity - something that can be placed on me by others. I wanted to be seen a specific way, I wanted to be black, full black. Now I have mixed feelings, I'm kind of almost proudly stating that I'm mixed-race but at the same time saying that I am just something in between, whatever that is, I'm not sure. In the end, I leave my uncertainty behind and remove the masks altogether.

— Jordan Clarke¹²

Jordan Clarke performs her understanding of self through the media of painting. The three of her paintings included in the exhibition, *Nothing is Just Black or White* (2008), *White Façade* (2010), and *Something in Between* (2011) are drawn from a fourteen-part series that span the time period from the earliest to the latest works in the series. These self-portraits mirror and invert philosopher and psychiatrist Franz Fanon's figurative use of the mask as articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*.¹³ Fanon believed that the body was always represented from without, and that the black body is understood as "pure representation" from the Westerner's point of view without agency or discursive depth of character.¹⁴ As a person of mixed race himself, Fanon interprets identity to be both dependent on, and to exceed, face value, that is, to supersede experience. While Fanon has been critiqued for what feminist social activist bell hooks characterizes as a "homosocial understanding of race,"¹⁵ he remains useful to think through the visual structure of the black/white race binary,

and in particular in relation to Clarke's work as an artist who is less interested in gender than the gaze, and whose use of the mask suggests for many a Fanon-like imagescape.

The interchangeability between white and black masks in Clarke's series speaks to the equivocality of her internalized awareness of how she is perceived by others in relation to her sense of self as a black woman. For while Clarke identifies as biracial of mixed Caribbean / Euro-Canadian descent, she most strongly aligns herself with the black community in Toronto. Clarke, through her self-portraiture, provides a visualization of Fanon's sensation in his text of raging against "the strictly epidermal identity bestowed upon blacks in colonized and metropolitan spaces which is different from the corporeal schema normally reserved for whites."¹⁶ As a second-generation Caribbean woman of mixed race living in Toronto, Clarke believes that she cannot escape the instability of the black/white binary of race in which she is located. In her words, "the uncertainty of my cultural roots makes me question my identity, of me being biracial. I'm not ever going to be one or the other [black or white]. I'll always be dancing between the two."¹⁷ Her use of masks both affirms her own sense of conflicted identity and challenges the way others see her as neither black nor white, but 'something in between.'¹⁸

Clarke created *Nothing is Just Black or White* in response to a call to participate in the Caribbean-Canadian exhibition, *Mask*, produced by the Association of African Canadian Artists installed at Metro Centre in Toronto in 2008. In this painting, the artist's pose is casual; legs half-crossed, she assumes a direct, full frontal and seated

posture on a nondescript brown fabric set against a lighter backdrop. She leans back, resting her body weight on both hands behind her. She wears a simple white tank top and green shorts. Her shoulder-length, tightly curled hair is loose and extends to either side of her body in its fullness.

Nothing is Just Black or White represents Clarke's first attempt to address what Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa terms *un choque*, or cultural collision, caused by the coming together of "two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference."¹⁹ For Clarke, this *choque* began early in her childhood. She was raised as a single child, her Bajan-Canadian father absent from an early age. Her mother, several generations white Canadian, made concerted efforts to provide opportunities for her daughter to engage with her Bajan roots. Clarke considers that she has always 'looked' mixed-race, and that as a consequence, she found that she was not accepted in the black community, nor was she able to claim her identity as 'black' within her predominantly white family and peer-group. In high school, she was excluded from Black History Month events on the basis of not being 'black enough.' Consequently, much of Clarke's adolescence was devoted to negotiating her identity, or as she puts it, "dancing between two worlds."²⁰

Having no direct cultural or experiential ties to the Caribbean annual festival of Carnival or its Toronto manifestation, Caribana, that celebrate cultural identity largely through the use of mask and masquerade, Clarke responds viscerally to the theme of the mask by illustrating it in a literal way: she paints a black mask onto the surface of her face, almost as if it were blackface make-up applied directly onto her

skin. This allusion, whether conscious or unconscious, has the potential to infer an interpretation of the work that relates to the racist historical practice of the minstrel or vaudeville show that was prevalent in the Americas up until the mid to late 20th century. In this practice, the white man painted a black mask on his face with coal, grease or shoe-polish as a caricature of the stereotypical ‘happy-go-lucky darky of the slave plantation.’²¹ In Clarke’s application of a blackened face, there is no exaggerated minstrel’s grin that attenuates her proximity to the reference. Her expression is serious in tone, at once defiant and defeated. By evoking this racist cultural practice, Clarke’s work may be seen to function in the way in which Taylor ascribes the role of the cultural intermediary: to enable the transmission of cultural memory, archive and practices, in which collective memories rely on social frameworks (the behavioural practices that define ethnicity) to enable their transmission.²² In this sense Clarke’s suggestive use of ‘blackface’ performs specific violent and complex histories that “continually unravel into the future.”²³

In the painting *White Façade*, Clarke wears a white mask and dances between her two worlds. Here again, the mask is depicted as if it were make-up applied directly to her face. She paints herself from the waist up, standing with her arms crossed, elbows clasped on either side, clutching her bosom and partially revealing cleavage under a scant black spaghetti-strap tank top. The backdrop is neutral in mottled, beige tones that capture the shadow of her body in the bottom half of the painting. Her expression is sombre, and she turns her head at an angle to the left and looks up and off into the distance. The overall effect is a jarring inversion of the

previous work, *Nothing is Just Black or White*. According to Clarke, the white mask in *White Façade* speaks to her feeling that some people in the black community attempt to “superimpose”²⁴ whiteness on her. It also references the term ‘white-washing,’ which is used to describe a minority person who has assimilated within white Western society, or who tries to ‘act white.’²⁵ Clarke perceives the prescriptive term, whitewashing, and the figurative masking of black face as derogatory and hurtful. In this painting, she cannot meet her viewers’ gaze face-on.

The third painting in the exhibition, *Something in Between*, graphically depicts the artist’s view of the push/pull of her two worlds: the white and the black masks symbolize how these worlds collide yet never seem to fuse together. *Something in Between* was created after the first two works in the exhibition, and was one of the later works to be completed in the series. In this painting, Clarke paints three versions of herself: in white mask, eyes closed, arms folded on the left; in black mask on the right, eyes fixed straight ahead at ninety degrees, with her hands on her hips; and unmasked in the centre, looking out and holding her hands behind her back. She positions ‘her-selves’ standing shoulder-to-shoulder and back-to-back with each other. The partial views reveal two thirds of the three selves from just below the hips. The work is painted on an ochre orange backdrop and the bodies themselves seem to be roughly sketched in with the detail of colour absent from the picture and only apparent in the masks themselves. The self-image portrayed in the middle of the two masked selves gazes directly at the viewer. This look implies an affective resolution: the artist’s determined stance appears to project confrontational scrutiny.

In this instance the artist returns the viewers' proverbial gaze, and asks them to acknowledge what they might find uncomfortable to admit – that there is a form of racial voyeurism that can take place in the everyday first impression of an anonymous visual encounter.

§

Erika DeFreitas

For the most part, I see my use of the term 'tragically' to be sarcastic...in the sense that there is no tragedy in my skin colour/race/presence. In fact I am very proud of who I am and my ancestors. I see it to be tragic that there are those out there who deem my skin colour/race/presence to be tragic.

— Erika DeFreitas²⁶

Whereas Clarke uses the mask in both a literal and figurative way to highlight the dynamics of inter-subjectivity, DeFreitas' mask is imagined. In her work, *I Am Not Tragically Colored (after Zora Neale Hurston)*, nine framed photographs of the artist are hung in the gallery adjacent to one another. Each self-portrait denotes one syllable of the phrase inspired by American anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston, "I am not tragically colored."²⁷ In every image the artist is holding a 7" x 5" piece of plexiglass over her mouth and pressing her lips into the glass as she mouths the words of the phrase. The photographs are printed larger than life, 20" x 30" in order to emphasize the consequent degree of distortion in the subject's face. Installed, the work spanned just over twenty linear feet of the gallery's south wall. Facing frontally, DeFreitas commands the viewer's gaze directly. As in Clarke's work, the artist's stance is intended to be confrontational. She is wearing a simple white tank top. Her

long curly hair falls loosely over her shoulders. The image captures her from just above the waist on a blue-white background. Under each of the framed portraits, an 8” x 5” plexiglass is mounted with the corresponding syllable etched onto its surface. The lettering is etched in Times New Roman – a common and unscripted serif font. The effect of the etching on the plexiglass produces white lettering on a transparent surface. The use of white is specific in both form and function: the white on a clear background makes the words difficult to read at a distance, thus requiring the viewer to consider the work at close range in order to decode the truncated syllables.

While the text infers absence through negation (I am *not* tragically colored), the emphasis on gesture affirms presence. The text signals to the viewers what *not* to assume about the artist, whereas the exaggerated nature of the artist’s performative acts in the photographs invites viewers to draw their own conclusions about the subject they see before them. In effect, DeFreitas is mediating that response by offering up the double-coded fragmentary subjectivity inherent in her mixed identity. She sets up a deliberate shift in the inter-subjectivity of her work in relation to the viewer by complicating the dynamic between her self-representation and the way she may be understood. DeFreitas’ answers the question of congruence between the person being seen and the one actively doing the looking by suggesting that it is impossible to pinpoint a definitive response. The physicality of the act impedes the delivery of the phrase to its intended audience, while at the same time heightening the performative role of gesture over text. As a consequence of the primacy of

gesture, the viewers' affective response becomes disoriented, and the work in its totality disables the viewer's ability to 'fix' DeFreitas' as a racialized body.

While it may be tempting to interpret the plexiglass as the conceptual mask, DeFreitas asks the viewer to consider how the words of the text she mouths are the mask that can hide, cover, and alter the way she is perceived. Drawn from Hurston's autobiography, these words affirm the author's sense of dignity and pride:

I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.²⁸

In turn, DeFreitas' work mirrors its unapologetic nature — both women declare their worth to be equal to any other human being regardless of race or skin-tone — while at the same time she does not ascribe to Hurston's worldview with regard to the “sobbing school of Negrohood,” noting that this can and continues to be interpreted as insulting or demeaning to many.²⁹ Instead, she draws inspiration from black feminist theorist bell hooks' assertion that “our words are not without meaning. They are an action — a resistance.”³⁰ In the artist's words, “the glass is not a barrier, it is a vehicle for enunciation. It's almost as if I'm trying to scream the statement visually.”³¹ The resulting gestures symbolize a struggle between language and its embodiment, racial preconceptions and self-determination.

By virtue of DeFreitas' mixed heritage she elicits an absence/presence dichotomy of race — an absence of either being black or being white at a cultural

level, yet a presence of blackness at a physical visual register that overrides her whiteness. By focusing on race as a social construct, the artist invites her viewers to grapple with a corollary notion – that skin-colour, and the various gradations of skin-tone between black and white, are meaningless criteria for assessing an individual's worth or intrinsic value. In her words, "I am the embodiment of the blurring of the boundaries of the two binaries of race. I am that physical reminder that these essentialist notions we tend to have of race aren't true."³²

What is important to note is that DeFreitas embodies colonial histories within an urban Canadian landscape that was formed within the political alchemy of multiculturalism (as does Clarke). In Toronto, Clarke and DeFreitas, when they are seen as black, become both ethnicized and racialized. Multiculturalism sets up yet another binary, that of 'the Canadian' (whites of European descent) and 'the other' (persons of colour, aboriginal and/or immigrant).³³ DeFreitas' work, *I Am Not Tragically Colored* pushes against the concepts of nationhood that multiculturalism represents. That is, within the context of what cultural theorist Leanne Taylor frames as "the multiracial movement," DeFreitas' work challenges the multicultural celebration of hyphenated ethnicity *and* Canada's maintenance of an imperialist ideology of white supremacy – a racist ideology that is also patriarchal and does not question that part of the national fabric that continues to cast an exoticized gaze on the other. When the work is considered as a whole, ultimately the mask – conceptual or imagined – recedes: through the work, DeFreitas calls upon her viewers to see beyond the 'tragedy' of her colour and embrace who she is beyond face value.

Olivia McGilchrist

At face value I'm a white female...if I was in another non-white dominant part of the world, I'd feel the same, but here I feel infinitely connected to the land and the sea and the history. The primordial thing that bothers me is the very clear history: we come here, take over, dominate, and you still have to suffer for however long to get over all of this horror.

— Olivia McGilchrist³⁴

While both Clarke and DeFreitas were born in Toronto, identify as biracial, yet place themselves definitively within the black community, McGilchrist identifies as a white woman of mixed Caribbean and European heritage who was born in and currently resides in the Caribbean. She 'reads' white, and her self-understanding was constructed as a white woman. Her mother is French, and her father was light-skinned Jamaican and presumably mixed, though never acknowledged as such by the family. McGilchrist left Jamaica at the age of three, and spent her formative years in France and the United Kingdom. In 2011, at the age of thirty, she returned to Jamaica and took possession of her grandfather's house in Kingston. It was there that she discovered a family portrait in the closet that depicts her paternal great-grandfather with a black partner and their three children. With no living relatives on her father's side with whom to confirm the family's lineage, McGilchrist traced her great grandmother's name through the national archives. While there is a possibility that the photograph may be that of an 'unofficial family,' the artist believes that the discovered photograph depicts Ernestine, the woman whose name is documented in the registry. The discovery of this picture has proven to have a catalyzing effect on

McGilchrist and has propelled the artist to ‘trouble’ her whiteness through her art. A copy of the found photograph, exhibited for the first time in *Face Value*, provides the backdrop for the 10-minute video installation, *Ernestine and Me* (2012) that is showcased in the exhibition.

In each of McGilchrist’s works presented in *Face Value*, she stages herself wearing a white mask. McGilchrist names the character she becomes by placing the mask over her face Whitey. Whitey is a character that was born out of the artist’s move back to Jamaica. Upon her arrival, the local population started calling her for what they took her to be on the street at face value. Her nickname becomes a crucial tool in her exploration and her process of interrogating her recently destabilized cultural identity as a white Jamaican. By donning the mask, McGilchrist becomes an actor, performing her story and at once altering the dynamic of her uncovered intersubjectivity as having mixed-race heritage. The mask is an allusion to the historic early 19th-century John Canoe (or Jonkonnu). As McGilchrist explains it, Jonkonnu was one of a set of black male actors who dressed in costume, at times in a white mask, and paraded about town in parody of his plantation owner for one day of the year.³⁵ This ritual has morphed into modern-day Carnival or Mardi Gras in the Caribbean and American South.³⁶ McGilchrist’s willful appropriation of the slaves’ ritual is intended to unsettle normative discourse around the African slave trade and power dynamics between the white settler and the black slave. McGilchrist knows that her whiteness works to her advantage and that “representation can only occur within relationships of power.”³⁷ At the same time, what McGilchrist is performing

in the exhibited works is the fact that she *feels* that she doesn't fit in either a predominantly white landscape (such as London where she completed her studies) or a predominantly black Jamaican society. She admits that, "had I not been born here and not seen non-white people in the first three years of my life, I might not always have felt somehow estranged in a white-majority European setting. But I do find it confusing to be in a place where there are only white people."³⁸ In the artist's words she "can't pretend that everything is fine...It's not fine. I'm not comfortable here. I'm not settled when I feel that there's still a dominant society that doesn't like blacks or allow equal rights and access to black people."³⁹ Race theorist George Lipsitz makes the poignant point that "not all people who are white consciously embrace the white spatial imaginary, and not all whites profit equally from their whiteness, but all whites benefit from the association of whiteness with privilege and the neighborhood effects of spaces defined by their racial demography."⁴⁰

Diana Taylor talks about the "is/as" of performance, that is, the difference between the static categorization of what performance is "as being" and the active sense of performativity as becoming.⁴¹ McGilchrist is motivated by the fluidity and evolution of her cultural identity. As Taylor points out, "the intermediary exists in a constant state of transformation."⁴² If we valorize McGilchrist's mixed identity, we can see this axiom reflected in the artist's words, "I'm constantly yearning – if it doesn't make sense, let me just try and work it out with concepts with race, otherness, let's try and redefine what I thought was being Jamaican or being black or

being white – and question being white in a black country.”⁴³ In this sense, McGilchrist *is* actively performing the evolution of her identity.

In *(whitey) Discovery Bay* (2013), the artist stands on the prow of a red fishing boat that is anchored close to shore, in the full sun of the Caribbean Sea. She wears Whitey’s white mask, and a plain black evening dress. The skyscape’s volatility is matched by the intensity of the azure seascape. *(whitey) Discovery Bay* is an 84” x 59” photograph printed on canvas. The image is steeped in metaphor: the setting is Discovery Bay, where Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica in 1494. McGilchrist invokes the violence of the Middle Passage, the slave trade and Britain’s colonization. Moreover, the boat, on which the artist is perched, constitutes a powerful metonymic device. She presents herself as arriving on the prow of a boat – and this boat, though not of the scale and proportions of a slaver boat, is stained red. The mimetic allusion to the violence and commodification of the African slave body is palpable. The viewers are being asked to see themselves as implicated in colonial fantasies, a device, according to Taylor, that is central to the performative role of interrogating the colonial legacies of racism.⁴⁴ Taylor points out that “from the moment Columbus purported to ‘observe’ and ‘describe’ native bodies, racialized identities sprang from discursive and performance systems of presentation and representation.”⁴⁵ The disjuncture here is that McGilchrist is not racialized, but instead interrogates the position of the colonizer. By placing herself in this specific setting – as a white woman arriving on a boat, wearing a white mask, and evoking a colonial context –

McGilchrist disrupts the expected racial and gender typecasting in the tableau. As a consequence, she heightens the subjectivity of her own whiteness.

In the 10-minute video installation, close-ups of the found family portrait literally frame McGilchrist's portrayal of herself in relation to a series of contemporary Jamaicans from a variety of racial and social backgrounds. The cast of locals in the video encircles Whitey: they mock, probe and examine the character as a cultural object. Notably hair is often a visual marker of race and its management integral to the black woman's visual identity. In *Ernestine and Me*, the artist's straight bleached blond hair stands out as a marker of her whiteness, a synecdoche for her white privilege. During one of the video's tableaux, two black women, garbed in what might be construed as dance-hall apparel, braid Whitey's hair. Through this performative gesture, the artist calls into question the privilege ascribed to her by virtue of her phenotype. She also asks her viewers to consider themselves as possible characters in the scenario being played out, and experience what they might feel, assume, or presume in response to her appearance within the context of her Jamaican identity.

McGilchrist's multi-media installation also includes three photographs that feature 'frozen poses' of McGilchrist and a local Jamaican in contemporary garb, set against the pixelated backdrop of three 1950s Jamaican postcards: *Beauty Beach*, *Bamboo Avenue*, and *White River*. In these images that accompany the video projection, the artist entangles whiteness and the mask with nostalgia and the idealized public imaginary of Jamaica's tourist-driven economy. By repositioning herself within the

public imaginary of Jamaica, she is asking her viewers to consider what is the difference between ‘them’ and me beyond the colour of our skins? Her answer is to juxtapose her own positionality as white against the reality of contemporary Jamaica, fraught with its difficult inter-racial dynamics and economic disparity, to locate herself within, and not outside of a history of colonialism.

Conclusion

Geography matters in the representations of mixed race that this exhibition was hinged upon. As the feminist race theorist Radhika Mohanram reminds us, “the concept of race has always been articulated according to the geographical distributions of people...the inequitable power relationships between various spaces and places are rearticulated as the inequitable power relations between races.”⁴⁶ It follows that what constitutes whiteness and blackness in Canada is very different than what constitutes whiteness and blackness in the Caribbean. Furthermore, how skin-colour is received and/or perceived by the viewing audience at face value has the capacity to vary radically, not only from individual to individual, but also collectively, formed by shared colonial and postcolonial histories rooted in location.

In this respect, while specific questions around inter-subjectivity framed my curatorial discussion of the artists’ works in the published catalogue essay written before the exhibition was mounted, other questions emerged from the reception of the exhibition, most saliently: what does it mean for a Jamaican-born artist who codes as white to trouble blackness in Jamaica, and as a corollary, what are the

repercussions of presenting that artist's work in Toronto? And, what are the consequences of curating a white Jamaican artist alongside two Canadian-born artists of Caribbean descent who trouble blackness in the plurality of Toronto? Even though the exhibition took place in Gallery 1313 in Toronto, in what might arguably be one of the most racially and culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Canada, the reality is that the local art scene continues to be defined within a white patriarchal paradigm, regardless of the current demographics that indicate 47% of Torontonians self-identify as visible minorities.⁴⁷ In this respect, the postcolonial experience of being a visible minority in Toronto became central to how the exhibition was received and understood by a local audience. The issues brought to bear by presenting two visibly black Canadian artists with one visibly white Jamaican artist in the same show revealed how racial binaries, and the power dynamics they encompass, are central to the artists' performance of mixed-race identity and intersubjectivity. If Clarke and DeFreitas are "seen" as black artists and not as mixed-race or biracial artists within a Toronto context, what may have been at the crux of some Toronto viewers' discomfort with McGilchrist's art in *Face Value* was the fact that she is white and thus could be read as asserting presence and visibility that rendered absent and invisible the postcolonial positionality of being identified as black in Canada.

For a Toronto audience, Clarke and DeFreitas' blackness represented, however obliquely, the violent histories of the Middle Passage, in that as second-generation Canadian immigrants of African-Caribbean heritage both artists are

doubly deterritorialized and uprooted. I realized in retrospect that positioning their representations of mixed race as the imaginative and performative re-telling of their identity exemplified a process of transculturation specific to Toronto – created in Toronto and viewed in Toronto. By way of contrast, McGilchrist identifies as white and moves easily from the metropole location of her upbringing and the postcolony where she was born, embodying power dynamics arising from a different historical trajectory. This proved to be a core point of contention in the audience discussion that followed the *The State of Blackness*' panel in which McGilchrist participated. Of the registered 280 public attendees for the conference, I estimated that 80% of those in attendance were visible minorities, and of that group over 75% were of African descent. By including McGilchrist on a panel in the context of a conference that was examining black positionalities, I knew that her presence would raise issues of what it means to claim a mixed-race position as a visibly white artist. What I did not know was how profoundly shaken I would be by the public outcry and dialogue that ensued at *The State of Blackness* regarding the ethics of my curatorial decisions to present a white Jamaican-born artist with two black-identified Toronto artists. The outcry that transpired is documented.⁴⁸ What remains hitherto undocumented are the shifts that have transpired inside of me. It has taken me two months to begin to process what happened, not on an objective “who said what and why” basis, but with regard to what I can only describe as a birthing of a feminist, politicized race consciousness within myself. Curating *Face Value* has fundamentally shifted the way in which I see the world. My eyes were opened to decades of unconscious framing of

race as essentialized phenomena within the context of my own life as a mixed-race (Indo-Caribbean/Euro-American) person who grew up in a predominantly white, middle-class, Canadian community. I can never be ‘inside’ the experience of what it is to live and experience the persistent racism towards black people in contemporary Western society. Notably, Taylor frames the experience of the racialized body eloquently: “for all its different deployments – cultural, aesthetic, political – the history of colonial violence, dominance, rape, and desire never quite frees itself of the gendered and racialized bodies that live it.”⁴⁹ But through the process of curating works by racialized artists who embody these fraught histories and live them on a daily basis, what I can begin to interrogate are the racialized histories and subjectivities that I embody as mixed race person.

The productive work of this curatorial thesis project revealed to me that it is a very different undertaking to look at, write about and theorize art than it is to place it in the public realm for scrutiny and consumption, and that it is part of the curatorial process to take responsibility for both my curatorial decisions, and to learn from them. I did not anticipate the potentially explosive audience response to mounting a show about mixed race that included two local Toronto-born artists of Afro-Caribbean descent and one who was Jamaican-born and who visibly fell outside the spectrum of a racialized artist. In reflecting on the responses to the exhibition, I have come to understand how profoundly the inter-subjectivity of mixed race in the context of both Toronto and the Caribbean evokes and troubles the binaries of blackness and whiteness. I have also come to understand that this dimension of

inter-subjectivity cannot be dis-entangled from the performativity of cultural identities. In the end, the artists in this exhibition did indeed function as cultural intermediaries, both embodying and troubling the racialized divide of whiteness and blackness. In the performance of their identities, they brought to the fore, in Taylor's words, "the memory of the past into the present."⁵⁰ Their masks served to reveal the complexities embedded in the meeting of past histories, the politics of the present, as they made visible the potential for future shifts in mixed-race subjectivity.

In closing, it bears repeating that race matters, and it matters a great deal. Given my own history as mixed race, this was not the beginning of my engagement with the ambiguities integral to mixed-race identity, but it was the beginning of my curatorial journey to seek to unsettle and reflect on the complexity of mixed-race inter-subjectivity, and envision art as a potent vehicle for social change and dialogue. If even a few viewers engaged in a deeper understanding of mixed-race inter-subjectivity after having seen and responded to the art in *Face Value* and/or experienced the controversial debate surrounding McGilchrist's work in *The State of Blackness*, then I feel that my curatorial efforts had merit. In this respect, I hope I have contributed in small measure to the ongoing dialogue about mixed-race in Toronto, and to have created a moment in time, that when revisited, provides a site to further discussion about the fraught terrain of curating the difficult issues of race, mixed race and identity that I as the curator of *Face Value* have begun my own journey of thinking about and reflecting upon.

NOTES

1. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (London: Duke University Press, 2003) 96.
2. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992).
3. Taylor, 104.
4. Taylor, 93.
5. Diana Taylor bases Chapter 3 of her 2003 cited text, “Memory as Cultural Practice: Mestizaje, Hybridity, and Transculturation” on the a biracial character she calls “The Intermediary” from Mexican play-write Emlio Carballido’s 1965 work, *I, Too, Speak of the Rose*.
6. Taylor, 93.
7. Taylor, 87.
8. Taylor, 102.
9. The term ‘face value’ is generally associated with the financial industry. It defines the parameters of the value printed on the face of a stock, bond or other financial instrument or document. In the context of this essay it is used as an idiom to infer the apparent value as opposed to real worth of something or someone.
10. Charmaine Nelson, “Sugar Cane, Slaves and Ships: Colonialism, Geography and Power in Nineteenth-Century Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica” ed. Ana Lucia Araujo, *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery* (New Castle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2009).
11. *The State of Blackness: Production to Presentation* brought together artists, curators, academics, students, and multiple publics to engage in dialogue and, in effect, problematize the histories, current situation, and future state of black diasporic artistic practice and representation in Canada. The conference addressed and sought to shed light on the dearth of cultural production and in turn, presentation activities by black artists who because of racial difference have historically been at the margins of traditional visions of the Canadian nation and its art production -- particularly within the past two decades. This was a two-part conference: part one comprised closed sessions onsite at OCADU, and part two involved public panels and a keynote at Harbourfront Centre on February 22, 2014. Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist were programmed into a panel discussion with Rema Tavares and Adbi Osman, moderated by the curator, Heidi McKenzie, and co-facilitator, Ellyn Walker. The panel was billed as “Revisiting Representations of the Female Black Body.”

-
12. Jordan Clarke, as interviewed by the curator, October 19, 2013.
 13. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in 1952 (New York, Grove Press, 1967).
 14. Radhika Mohanram, *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 26.
 15. K. Martial Frindéthié, *Francophone African Cinema: History, Culture, Politics and Theory*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co. Inc, 2009), 17.
 16. Mohanram, 26.
 17. Jordan Clarke, as interviewed by the curator, October 19, 2013.
 18. *Something in Between* is the title of one of Jordan Clarke's paintings as exhibited in *Face Value*, as well as the title she ascribes to her series of self-portraits.
 19. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: spinsters/aunt lute, 1987).
 20. Jordan Clarke, as interviewed by the curator, October 19, 2013.
 21. Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73.
 22. Taylor, 88.
 23. Taylor, 89.
 24. Jordan Clarke, in email communication with the curator, January 31, 2014.
 25. Michael K. Brown, et. al, *Whitewashing, Race: the Myth of a Color-blind Society*, (Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2003).
 26. Hurston, 153-155.
 27. Hurston, 153-155.
 28. Erika DeFreitas, February 22, 2014.
 29. Erika DeFreitas, February 22, 2014.
 30. bell hooks, *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1988), 28.
 31. Erika DeFreitas, as quoted during a panel presentation of "Revisiting Representations of the Female Black Body" at *The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation* conference at Harbourfront Centre, February 22, 2014.
 32. Erika DeFreitas, February 22, 2014.

-
33. Leanne Taylor, *Re-imagining mixed race: Explorations of multiracial discourse in Canada*. PhD dissertation, York University, 2008 (Library and Archives Canada, ISBN: 978049451786), 138.
34. Olivia McGilchrist, as interviewed by the curator, October 21, 2013.
35. Olivia McGilchrist, from video transcription of August 4, 2013 interview taping. Note that the white masked Jonkonnu is derived from a character called Actor Boy. Not all the characters of the Jonkonnu wore white masks. See the writing of Judith Bettelheim, a leading authority on Jonkonnu whose PhD dissertation from Yale University, 1979, "The Afro-Jamaican Jonkonnu Festival: Playing the Forces and Operating the Cloth." See also her 1988 comprehensive survey, *Caribbean Festival Arts* that she co-authored and edited with John Nunley, Seattle: the Saint Louis Art Museum and Washington Press, 250pp.
36. Judith, Bettelheim, "The Jonkonnu Festival: It's Relation to Caribbean and African Masquerades." *Jamaica Journal* 10:2, 3 &4 1976, 20-27.
37. Mohanram, 22.
38. Olivia McGilchrist, as interviewed by the curator, October 21, 2013.
39. Olivia McGilchrist, as interviewed by the curator, October 21, 2013.
40. George Lipsitz, "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape," *Landscape Journal*, 26:1-07, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p.13.
41. Taylor (2003) 73.
42. Taylor (2003) 90.
43. Olivia McGilchrist, as interviewed by the curator, October 21, 2013.
44. Taylor (2003) 86.
45. Taylor (2003) 93.
46. Mohanram, 3.
47. "Toronto's Racial Diversity" in City of Toronto website, http://www.toronto.ca/toronto_facts/diversity.htm, accessed on May 1, 2014.
48. The panel discussions that took place as part of *The State of Blackness* on Saturday, February 22, 2014 at Harbourfront Centre were videotaped. At the time of writing, selected segments had not yet been made available for public online streaming. However, selected segments are intended to be streamed online and retrievable through www.thestateofblackness.com.
49. Taylor (2003) 100.
50. Taylor (2003) 87.

LIST OF WORKS

Jordan Clarke, b. 1984, Toronto, Canada

Something in Between, 2011
oil on canvas, 30" x 36

White Façade, 2010
oil on canvas, 18" x 24"

Nothing is Just Black or White, 2008
oil on canvas, 30" x 40"
from the collection of Laurie Few

Erika DeFreitas, b. 1980, Toronto, Canada

I am not tragically colored (after Zora Neale Hurston), 2013-2014
archival digital prints 20" x 30" each; plexiglass 5" x 8" each

Olivia McGilchrist, b. 1981, Kingston, Jamaica

The McGilchrists, circa 1910, Kingston, Jamaica
archival inkjet print, from scan of the original image, 6" x 8"

(whitey) Discovery Bay, 2013
archival canvas print, 84" x 59", edition of 1

Ernestine and Me, 2012
10:00 min video, from the installation *Ernestine and Me*
sound credits: appropriated Jamaican classics, re-mixed by Andrew
Unknownz, at Hands and Hearts studio, Kingston, Jamaica. All owners retain
copyright to their respective works.

Beauty Beach, 2012
from the installation *Ernestine and Me*
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

Bamboo Avenue, 2012
from the installation *Ernestine and Me*
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

White River, 2012
from the installation *Ernestine and Me*
archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

FIGURES

Figure 1.



Something in Between, Jordan Clarke, 2011
oil on canvas, 30" x 36

Figure 2.



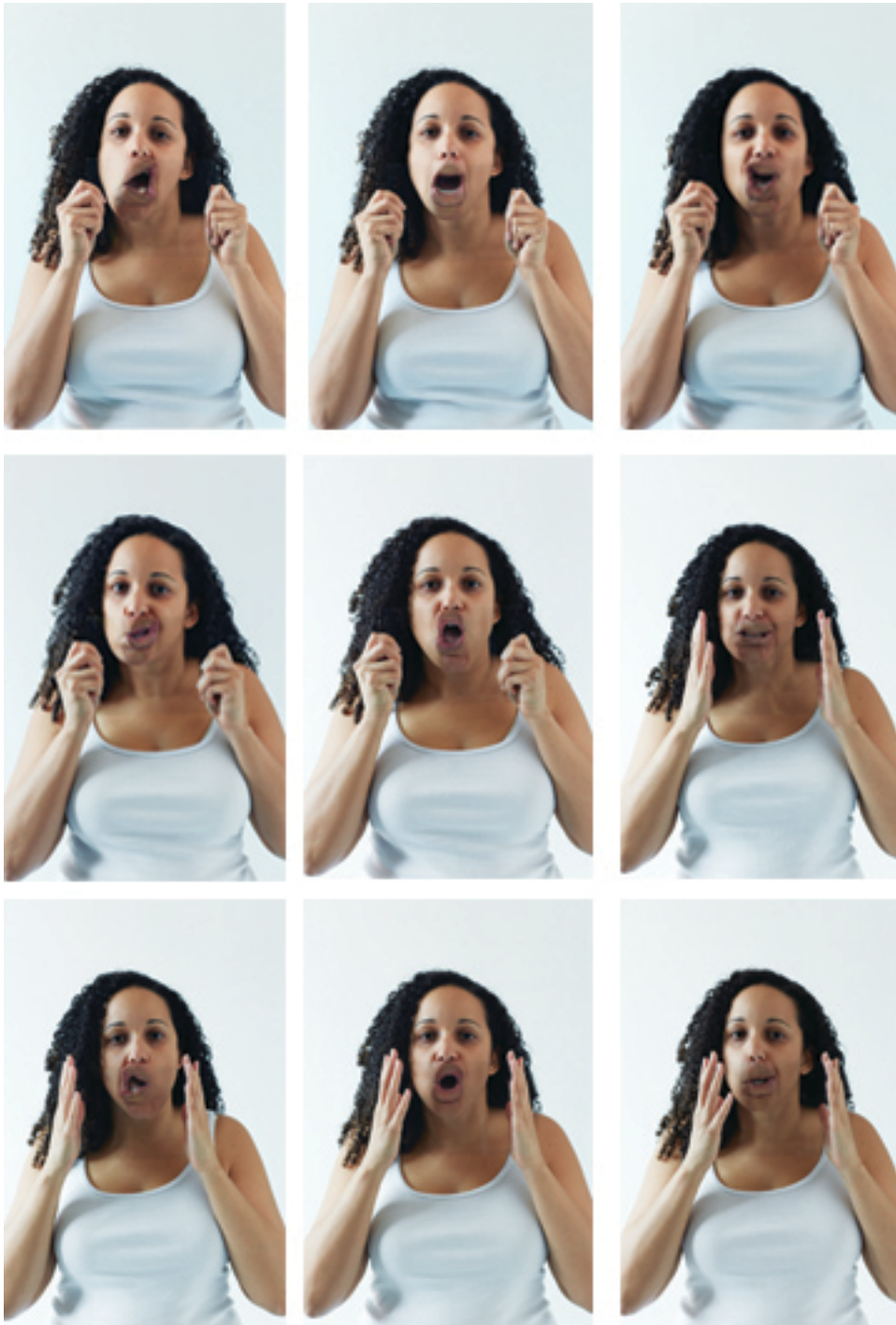
White Façade, Jordan Clarke, 2010
oil on canvas, 18" x 24"

Figure 3.



Nothing is Just Black or White, Jordan Clarke, 2008
oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

Figure 4.



I am not tragically colored (after Zora Neale Hurston), detail, Erika DeFreitas, 2013-2014
archival digital prints 20" x 30" each; plexiglass 5" x 8" each

Figure 5.



The McGilchrists, circa 1910, Kingston, Jamaica, photographer unknown
archival inkjet print, from scan of the original image, 6" x 8"

Figure 6.



(whitey) *Discovery Bay*, Olivia McGilchrist, 2013, archival canvas print, 84" x 59", edition of 1

Figure 7.



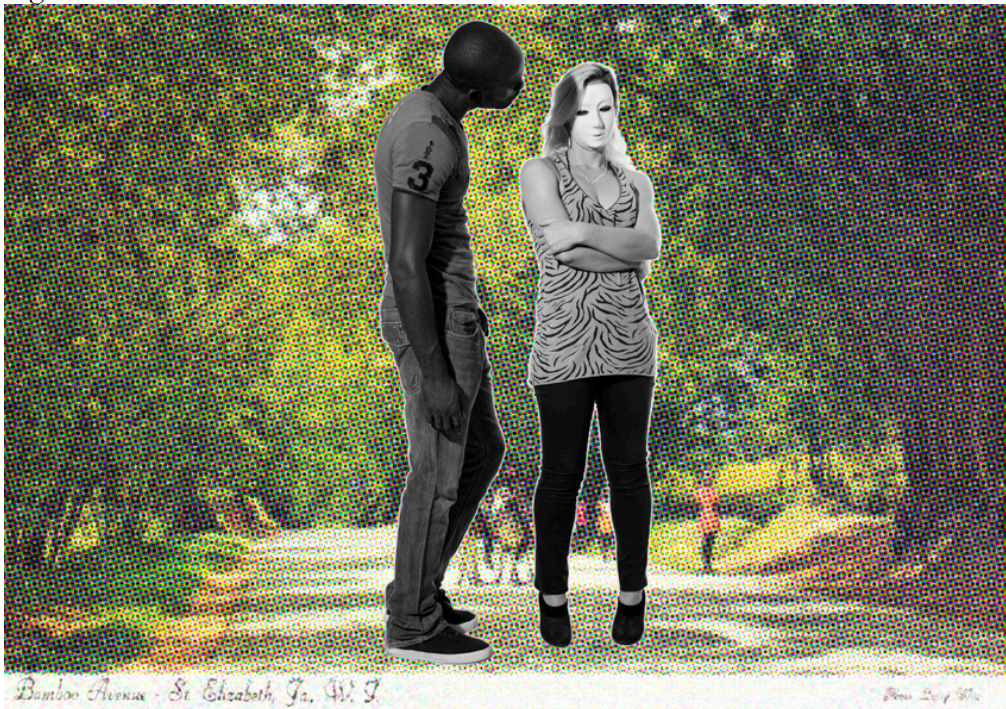
Ernestine and Me, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012, video still, from *Ernestine and Me* 10:00 min video

Figure 8.



Beauty Beach, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012, archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

Figure 9.



Bamboo Avenue, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012, archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

Figure 10.



White River, Olivia McGilchrist, 2012, archival print, 29" x 20", edition of 3

PART II: CURATORIAL THESIS REPORT

A. CURATORIAL PROCESS & DEVELOPMENT

Project Conception & Development of Curatorial Premise

My initial list of primary authors and writings included Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Lacan, with regard to the mirror, the gaze, and splitting; Stuart Hall on ‘identity as production’; bell hooks, Stuart Hall and Radhika Mohanram on the interpretation of Fanon and the positioning of the black female body; Fernando Ortiz and Diana Taylor on transculturation; Gloria Anzaldúa’s ‘choque culturelle’; Édouard Glissant and Antonio Benítez-Rojo on the Caribbean context; and Walter D. Mignolo’s writing on the postcolonial condition of the mixed race condition. Only three of these authors are referenced in my exhibition catalogue essay – Taylor, Anzaldúa and Fanon. However, a considerably more fleshed-out bibliography has informed the incubation and fruition of this curatorial project, and is addressed in the “Reflections on the Conceptualization and Reception of the Exhibition *Face Value*” curatorial thesis essay. Particular attention is paid to performance theorist Diana Taylor’s notion of double-coded inter-subjectivity as it pertains to the mixed race “Intermediary” as a vehicle for the transmission of memory and archive, and an troubling of the black/white race binary with respect to the exhibited works.

Having completed my literature review over the winter/spring of 2013, I organized the most prescient ideas into thematic clusters. The four key areas that emerged included: paradoxical space; the gaze; performing race; and challenging the public imaginaries (or stereotypes) of mixed-race identity. Corollary ideas that arose

during this process included notions of out of place; betwixt and between; inside/outside; splitting; passing; double consciousness; hyper-visibility versus invisibility; stereotyping and assumptions; the immobility of the black body versus the mobility of the white body; cloaking; transculturation; the masquerade; terra nullius; and regulatory fiction with regard to race.

When I came upon the writing of geographer Minelle Mahtani, her theory of the *mobility* of the paradoxical space that the mixed-race woman inhabits resonated with me, and I felt at the time resonated strongly with the works of all three of my exhibition artists. I developed my draft curatorial essay based on the one key idea of *the mobility of paradoxical space* that draws on Mahtani's research and observations.

Mahtani is a feminist geographer currently based at University of Toronto, Scarborough. She based her theory of the mobility of paradoxical space on geographer Gillian Rose's *paradoxical space*, which defines the inherent dualities at the crux of mixed-race identity. According to Rose, paradoxical spaces "imply radically heterogeneous geometries [that are] lived, experienced and felt."¹ Within a racialized context, these spaces move beyond spaces of resistance and create "entirely different geometries through which we can think power, knowledge, space and identity in critical, and hopefully, liberatory ways."² Rose's metaphor suggests the potential to challenge the public imaginaries of the mixed-race individual. Mahtani articulates these public imaginaries as historically bound to oppressive stigma and stereotyping where persistent common perceptions of mixed-race persons manifest as fractured, fractionalized, dysfunctional, and fixed in space – i.e., unable to move up the social

ladder or better themselves in a class-based societal structure.³ Associated with these stigma is the idea that the biracial individual's 'racial pollution' threatens the 'racial homogeneity.'⁴ I was interested in the fact that Mahtani highlights the possibility to shift the paradigm by mapping a feminist future where mixed-race women are not positioned as out of place, but rather as "constitutive of their own spatialities — spatialities which do not replicate chauvinistic or racist exclusions."⁵ I had revised my thesis argument to centre around the possibility of undermining or undoing the problematics of categorization that allows the mixed-race person to move outside the boundaries of racialized discourse – i.e. the mobility of paradoxical space.⁶

Following feedback from the December 9, 2013 OCADU thesis colloquium, I rejected the mobility of paradoxical space as my primary theoretical framework for the exhibition. The contention at play was not the possibility for change that Mahtani brought to her theory, rather it was the idea of paradoxical space itself. Rose formed her theory of paradoxical space within the specific societal alchemy of the early 1990s, at the height of the identity politics movement where women of colour within the feminist movement were struggling to find a foothold – and where women of mixed identity were possibly even more anxious to attach themselves to a label. In hindsight, the primary critique of paradoxical space is that rather than breaking down barriers to enable access and dispel race as a social construct, in effect, the term itself sets up yet another category of race. In so doing, the theory caused me to essentialize mixed race rather than work with it as a social construct. As sociologist, Barbara Ballis Lal points out in her writing on the transracial/transethnic, identity

essentialism rules out the concept of self-based identity based on a combination of identities representing a whole host of social bonds or biological indices. Moreover, ethnic identity and how it relates to culture are often misconstrued.⁷

By this stage in the process I had, in large part, settled the selection of artworks and was able to turn to the art itself in order to drive the curatorial premise, rather than attempting to fit the art ‘into’ the theory. Upon a more in-depth consideration of my interpretation of the works, I shifted my focus to the performative role that each of the artists undertook in their inquiry into self-understanding. I found the writing of Stuart Hall regarding the production of identity as constitutive of representation to resonate with not only the artworks but also the artists’ process of narrating their identities through the literal or metaphorical use of the mask.⁸ It was performance theorist, Diana Taylor’s writing on the performative coupled with the idea of inter-subjectivity, within the context of the production of art by mixed-race artists that spoke most directly to the work.

Taylor primarily addresses the specifics of the Latino-American hemisphere as it pertains to the “both/and” inter-subjectivity of the *mestizaje* (a person of mixed Latino/Caucasian heritage). She extends her theory to other mixed-race cultures and thereby introduces the “neither/nor inter-subjectivity.” Both “both/and” and “neither/nor” implicate a double-coded consciousness that moves beyond a fragmentary sense of subjectivity.⁹ The most relevant question raised by Taylor, for the purposes of my research, was “how does performance transmit cultural memory and identity?”¹⁰ Ultimately Taylor demonstrates that people participate in the

production and reproduction of knowledge and memory by performing it.

Furthermore, as Taylor notes, “in the culturally and socially constructed world of performance, the past, the present, the future, the ‘real,’ and the ‘imagined’ become common referents for performers and audiences.”¹¹ I found Taylor’s allusion to the shifting specters of presence that loop back and incorporate traces of the past within the present particularly relevant to both McGilchrist’s and DeFreitas’ work as they relate to collective racialized memories.

I also researched film theorist and historian, Kaja Silverman’s writing on inter-subjectivity in her book, *The Threshold of the Visible World*. Silverman asserts a new political aesthetic that plumbs the possibilities for looking beyond the restrictive mandates of the self. She moves beyond the cultural image-repertoire and provides a detailed account of the social and psychic forces that constrain us in the ways we look, see and identify. Although Silverman provides a solid framework for analysis of artworks with regard to inter-subjectivity, her work most specifically addresses film and cinema and does not implicate race as a factor. In this respect, my final focus for the exhibition was on Taylor’s notion of the “neither/nor double-coded subjectivity” as it specifically pertains to the mixed-race artist for the purposes of my curatorial essay. Choosing this framework allowed me to interconnect the artists’ deployment of the mask and flesh-out their individual circumstances and motivations that provided the impetus for the realization of their work. It also placed me somewhat outside of the sphere of identity politics and distanced me from my earlier

predilection for framing the exhibition within a Caribbean context. The impact and consequences of these decisions will be assessed in section C.

Selection of Artists

The idea for the curatorial theme emerged out of the exhibition, *Faces in Between*, presented by the 3MW artist collective at the Daniel's Spectrum during Black History Month in 2013. After seeing the show that profiled the art of three mixed-race Toronto-based women, I was profoundly moved by the work of Jordan Clarke. I approached Jordan and visited her at her Distillery District studio as part of my research for a term paper with Professor Caroline Langill.¹² The idea of building a project around masks and the ambiguities of mixed-race identity emerged out of this meeting. Professor Honor Ford-Smith of York University introduced me to the work of Olivia McGilchrist, whose work seemed to address my proposed theme, *Masked: Mirroring the Gaze*. McGilchrist readily agreed to be included in the exhibition. Clarke also agreed. I wanted to find a sculptural or performance artist to 'round out' the media to be presented. Professor Andrea Fatona suggested the conceptual work of Erika DeFreitas to me, and I subsequently visited Erika's studio and discussed her upcoming projects. Her plans fell in line with my proposed thesis. (See Selection of Artists' Works.) I decided to limit the exhibition to three artists in order to allow myself the latitude to focus on the quality of relationships with a limited number of artists, and to offer each artist maximum exposure to present multiple works.

Theme and Title Selection

The working title submitted with my applications to artist-run centres and the Ontario Arts Council during the early stages of seeking both funding and a venue was *Masked: Mirroring the Gaze*. This title incorporated the literal use of masks by all of the artists and, in retrospect, it captured the essence of the main theoretical premise of the exhibition: the inter-subjectivity of being seen as mixed-race. Various iterations of incorporating the words *face*, *mask*, *mirror*, *seen* and *being seen* were considered and informally tested with peer focus groups. These included *[Un]seen*, *face impressions*, *first impressions*, *the masked face*.

The decision to use *Face Value* as the title was somewhat instinctual – it just ‘fit’ – it made sense, it was catchy, and it contained a double-meaning in the play on its usage as an idiomatic phrase. I came upon the title upon a close re-read of the primary interviews with each of artists. The following is the excerpted quote from Olivia McGilchrist’s interview that I have chosen to include in the curatorial essay:

At face value I’m a white female. When I discovered that I had a great grandmother that was black – it caused me to rethink my Caribbean identity...if I was in another non-white dominant part of the world, I’d feel the same, but here I feel infinitely connected to the land and the sea and the history – the primordial thing that bothers me is the very clear history: we come here, take over, dominate, and you still have to suffer for however long to get over all of this horror.¹³

The term ‘face value’ is generally associated with the financial industry. It defines the parameters of the value printed on the face of a stock, bond or other financial instrument or document.¹⁴ It is also used as an idiom to infer the apparent value as opposed to real worth of something or someone. The term’s etymology dates back

over two millennia to Ancient Rome when rulers first had their likeness stamped onto coins to be used as currency independent of a gold or silver standard.¹⁵ In this way, debased currency could enable the ruler to increase the money supply without being tied to the intrinsic value of the metals. To take someone or something at face value gradually became an idiomatic way to express accepting something or someone based on how they appear without taking into account other possible hidden meanings or interpretations.

The play on words in the exhibition's title involves a play on the two-word idiomatic expression, face value. The expression evokes the idea that the way someone looks to someone else holds some form of visual currency or monetary worth, when in effect the worth is not monetary, it is intrinsic. Each individual's intrinsic value is intimately linked to their sense of identity, just as it is enmeshed with the reflective feedback they receive from the other's perceptions of who they might be. I feel that the title for the exhibition very succinctly sums up Taylor's theoretical notion of the "neither/nor double-coded subjectivity" which is central to the development of the curatorial essay, and upon reflection post-exhibition, it became clear that the title implicated a troubling of blackness and the black/white race binary as discussed in the expanded version of the curatorial essay.¹⁶

Community Outreach & Project Scope

I originally planned to engage the Franco-Caribbean communities in the project by virtue of the fact that I had one francophone artist and I am fluently

bilingual, and I was keen to draw in audiences that might not otherwise be gallery attenders. Although I met with the Alliance Française and they agreed to partner on the initiative in order to diversify their audience base, I was unable to bring this project to fruition due to a number of factors: time constraints; McGilchrist's feedback after having spoken as an invited guest in Montreal in a francophone setting about her work¹⁷; and the fact that my contact at Alliance Française, the former Director of Programming, Dominique Denis, left the organization in January 2014.

The other aspect of community outreach that I set in motion was a moderated public online forum on mixed-race identity. This component was built into the project in response to my articulated objective of supporting mixed-race communities. At the time of writing, only one person shared their story in the forum. I approached over fifty mixed-race artists through the *Mixed in Canada* forum and network of which I am a member,¹⁸ and I solicited the participation of a number of acquaintances with little or no active engagement. Assessment of this component will be addressed in section C of this report.

Research Methodology

During the course of this project, I employed a number of research methodologies including interviewing; field research; archival research; and dialogic curatorial practice. I conducted informal discussions with each artist in the spring of 2013 and formal recorded/transcribed 1.5-hour interviews with each artist in

October 2013 (Appendix G.2). I expanded my literature review of relevant theory. I worked directly in a dialogic manner with each artist to determine the final selection of works and invited the artists to be involved in the decision-making process for the installation planning (a process which was virtually undertaken with McGilchrist via photography, Skype and modeling). Concurrently I researched other pertinent exhibitions' catalogues, reviews and didactics, as well as other contemporary artists working with mixed-race identity – all of which informed the process and the outcomes. One of the consequences of employing a dialogic curatorial methodology with early career artists and myself, a first-time curator, was a “blind leading the blind” effect. I found myself having to double-back on some critical decisions and incorporate advice from my advisors. At times my equivocality allowed me to be swayed by the artist.¹⁹

Curator's Lens

I've been fascinated with the interplay that occurs within different societal contexts with regard to mixed-race identity for as long as I can remember. I have been working with mixed-race identity conceptually in my own sculpture studio practice since 2011. Like the artists I chose to curate in *Face Value*, I am a woman of mixed Caribbean/European heritage. My father is of South Asian descent and grew up in Trinidad. He came to Canada in 1954 at the age of 24 and met my mother whose family is of Irish/Scottish heritage. Unlike the artists in this show, I grew up in a small town in the Maritimes in the 1970s and 1980s where almost everyone else,

including my mother, was white. My father checked his cultural baggage at the border, and I grew up “BRASP” – Brown Anglo Saxon Protestant. My experience of this upbringing was further heightened by virtue of both my christened and my family name: Heather McKenzie. McKenzie has been in my father’s family for at least five generations, and although its origin remains mythologized, it is likely that it is simply the consequence of an indolent act on the part of a registrar in the West Indies who couldn’t get their mind around the Hindu name our family might have had. In an act of independence in order to distinguish myself from the other five Heather’s in my tiny subdivision all of about the same age, I renamed myself Heidi at the age of four – adopting a nickname my German neighbours had bestowed upon me.

Throughout the process of curating this exhibition, one of the most poignant moments of realization came early on in the interview phase with each artist: I realized that although *my* experience of mixed-race identity meant that part of me (the white part) was erased from the other’s perception of who I was, this was not the case with any of the artists I chose to work with. I had never experienced the undecipherability of ‘looking’ mixed-race. McGilchrist reads white, but the part of her that is not white was never a part of her formative years so she never felt that part of her was erased. When you see Clarke or DeFreitas you don’t see a white person and you may not necessarily see a black person. Nothing is erased. The simultaneity of both ethnicities seems to carry heightened presence. It’s impossible to neatly categorize either of these women based on race. With me, the fact that my life

partner is South Asian and grew up in India contributes to a more complete erasure of the part of me that is of European descent. The erasure of one part of one's ethnic heritage falls outside the scope of this research project, yet it provides rich material for future curatorial or artistic projects for my practice.

Selection of Works

Jordan Clarke

Choosing the exhibited works from the fourteen works in Clarke's *Masks* series was based on my personal and aesthetic preferences, as well as my desire to show contrasting works. *Nothing is Just Black or White* portrays Clarke in black mask. I chose *White Façade*, that portrays Clarke in a white mask by way of contrast as well as one of a set of orange ochre palette works in which Clarke represents multiple selves in the picture (*Something in Between*). The original intent was for Clarke to create at least one new work for the exhibition, however the practicality of this dissolved in the early fall when it became clear that the artist had focused her summer months on creating work for another exhibition.²⁰

Erika DeFreitas

The selection of DeFreitas' work was more involved. During my first meeting with the artist in her studio in the early spring of 2013, she had outlined her plans to create two works that happened to speak directly to the theme I had proposed, based loosely on illustrating the ambiguity of mixed-race identity. One of the two works DeFreitas had envisioned employed Crayola's 'multicultural pack' of

crayons and colours in large-scale contour drawings of herself, and the other piece was a textile work where she would embroider skin-toned threads onto self-portraits. When I visited the artist's studio in October in order to complete the primary interview, she disclosed to me that neither of these projects was in development. Instead she presented four alternatives – two of which were in development and one was described conceptually. The first work, literally mocked-up in multiple prints on the studio wall, ended up being the only work exhibited in *Face Value*. It was described to me at the time as a way of showing that words mask society's discomfort with race. The second work, also roughly mocked-up, was a graphic depiction of herself with her mother and an empty chair, where she planned to insert a hyphen into the work. This piece seemed to be strongly influenced by the Mahtani writings that I had shared with DeFreitas at her request.²¹ The third piece was a textile work inspired by a personal episode in her life where someone remarked, "Erika's the whitest black person I know."²² The artist had intended to create a silhouette of herself and embroider the text onto the self-portrait. The fourth work was a piece, also textile-based, and was to be an embroidered listing of race labels as found in Zora Neale Hurston's *Glossary of Harlem Slang*.²³

My initial impulse was to include all of the works. I realized that not only would this strategy 'crowd' the gallery – but that the first and third work did not fit with the other artists' work and might shift the focus of the exhibition. (Note that I remain interested in curating an exhibition relating to ideas surrounding skin-colour, shadeism and/or colourism. I hope to incorporate this work into a future show.)

Olivia McGilchrist

The work that first drew me to Olivia McGilchrist was her photographic essay, *My Dear Daddy* that was featured in *Transit: Location and Caribbeanness*.²⁴ McGilchrist sent me her work in progress, as well as clips from her video installation, *Ernestine and Me* that had recently won a prize at the National Biennale in Jamaica. I knew immediately upon viewing the video that I wanted to present this work. Upon reflection, I understand that the reason I was so drawn to it was that it evokes so strongly the notion of inter-subjectivity implicit in mixed-race identity.

In parallel to the process of selecting the artwork for my thesis exhibition, I was enrolled in Sherene Razack's OISE/UT course, *Race, Space and Citizenship*. I was tasked with selecting one work about which to write a 20-page research paper. McGilchrist had sent me approximately a dozen images of her newer works to consider. Most of these works used the land as a character in the performative act of becoming. McGilchrist persuaded me to focus on another image that she was more interested in developing, *Elles Arrivent!* In the end, I struggled with this image — both its content and its meaning. DeFreitas signaled her discomfort with being exhibited alongside this work, as did a number of students in Professor Razack's class who were vocally unsettled by the work. The work proved to be contentious in terms of race and identity politics. However, I believe one of the primary roles of art is to unsettle or destabilize. The overriding factor in the decision not to show this work was that it did not resonate with the other works: *Elles Arrivent!* did not directly address the theme of my show as it focused on the depiction of multiple local

Jamaican women, as opposed to the artist in self-portraiture. I decided to include the work's antecedent, the original photograph onto which the additional black characters in *Elles Arrivent!* were grafted, (*whitey*) *Discovery Bay* (2013). The artist had never exhibited this work, and through the use of my three-dimensional modeling in *Sketch Up*, I was able to demonstrate the power of the image were it to be presented at a sizeable scale. It was exhibited in *Face Value* measuring 84" x 59" and provided what I believed to be an impressive focal point for the exhibition (Appendix B).

With respect to "fleshing out" the presentation of *Ernestine and Me*, again based on the use of the modeling, I was able to determine that it would be impossible to mount the three adjacent photographs at the scale in which the video projection was originally installed.²⁵ This was mainly due to the lighting conditions in the gallery that would preclude viewing a video in the space while at the same time as having lighting levels congruent with viewing the static images. *Beauty Beach*, *Bamboo Ave*, and *White River* were originally inspired by post cards and I exhibited them at a 30" scale, again reliant on the 3D modeling as a visioning tool.

I feel that one of the most effective additions to the installation *Ernestine and Me* in the *Face Value* iteration was the inclusion of a framed copy of the original photograph that McGilchrist uses as a backdrop for the video installation. The artist literally discovered the photograph in her grandfather's closet. In the artist's eyes it confirms her partly African lineage. I felt that it worked well as source material in dialogue with the video, as well as a teaser to draw the viewer into the installation as a whole.

Artists' Work in Context

Jordan Clarke

Jordan Clarke works primarily in oil painting and the representation of the female black body. She graduated from OCADU with a BFA in 2007 and continued her studies at the Academy of Realist Art in Toronto until 2009. Her works prior to and since her 14-part *Mask* series (2008-2011) are created using photographs of models. Clarke has been actively showing her work either in solo or group shows almost exclusively within the black and/or Caribbean communities. She is also committed to advocating and working within the mixed-race or biracial communities of artists. *Nothing is Just Black or White* is published in *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, an anthology of poetry and visual art.²⁶ Clarke is a member of 3MW (three mixed-race women) artist collective with fellow Toronto-based artists Ilene Sova and Rema Tavares. As above-noted their exhibition, *Faces In Between* was pivotal in my decision to produce and curate *Face Value*.²⁷

Erika DeFreitas

Before I approached Erika DeFreitas her practice had shifted away from dealing with notions of race and identity and had found its expression in the central creative tenant around the push/pull tension between absence and presence, death and mourning. Much of her work is rooted in her relationship with her mother. DeFreitas graduated with a Masters in Visual Studies from the University of Toronto in 2008 and has been featured in group exhibitions since 2002. She is an active member of the photography community in Toronto, having participated in

Photorama at Gallery TPW three times since 2009. She has had three solo exhibitions, the most recent of which, *Death/Memorials/Births* was remounted at Centre3 for Print and Media Arts in Hamilton in 2013. DeFreitas does not seek out opportunities to present within a racialized context, however she has been curated in the past by African-American curator Sally Frator at the Houston Museum of African American Culture within the context of migration, transience and the diaspora,²⁸ as well as in a group show at Toronto's A Space gallery on the theme of passing in 2007.²⁹

Artists cited as influential to DeFreitas include Ed Pien and Aganetha Dyck. With respect to the work commissioned for *Face Value, I am Not Tragically Colored (After Zora Neale Hurston)* the artist found inspiration in the work of Ana Mendieta that employs a similar methodology of distorting one's face against glass and documenting the performative act. DeFreitas also counts the images of Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson as influential in the development of work.

Olivia McGilchrist

Olivia McGilchrist graduated with a Master of Arts Photography from the London College of Communication in 2010, at which point she relocated to her birth country of Jamaica. Prior to this move none of her work was directly self-referential. Since relocating to Jamaica, her work has centered on self-portraiture, as well as investigating representations of the female black body. Notably, *Ernestine and Me* is McGilchrist's first video work, and she has found a powerful voice within this media, and is continuing her work in this media in a series that highlights the real or

imagined ‘leading ladies’ of Jamaica’s past and present. Celebrated for her early achievements, McGilchrist is active within a Caribbean community of artists and boasts an extensive bibliography, numerous accolades and awards as well numerous group exhibitions and presentations at national and international biennales. *Face Value* was her Canadian exhibition debut. The mixed reception of her work in Toronto will be discussed in Section C of this report.

Face Value Within the Curatorial and Contemporary Art Landscapes

I set out to locate my exhibition within the canon of contemporary Canadian exhibitions that address the subjects of race, identity, diaspora, and migration within the context of national identity and belonging. I am interested in pursuing my career as a curator within the framework of exhibition as activism that challenges historical narratives within a post-colonial or decolonial setting. Perhaps one of the most influential exhibitions for me in terms of diversity of artistic media and impact of message was *The Cartographer’s Mistake: Southall and Other Places* – a solo show of the works of British-born Canadian of South Asian descent, Sarindar Dhaliwal.³⁰ I wanted to mirror the show’s sparse exhibition design that allowed the works to breathe in a relatively small venue, and the viewers to linger and spend time working through their interpretations of Dhaliwal’s conceptual art. Another show at A Space that I recalled in my planning process was Gita Hashemi’s self-curated solo exhibition, *Time Lapsed* that incorporated panel discussions and performances with

the exhibition project. I felt that both of the A Space exhibitions successfully incorporated both 2D and 3D visual art and/or video installation.

With respect to the inclusion of the artists' voice in video as didactic material for *Face Value*, I was inspired by *The C-Word*,³¹ a group exhibition at the Doris McCarthy Gallery that showcased responses of exhibiting artists on video on loop in the gallery that I felt heightened the overall understanding of the show. Then resident curator, Steve Loft's work in *Ghost Dance* at the Ryerson Image Centre in Toronto also informed my work. The exhibition design tactics bordered on subversive in their effort to destabilize the viewers' public imaginary of the aboriginal voice within an international context. Also, I found Loft's selective use of international artists, without feeling obligated to any unwritten moral compass of inclusivity, to be liberating.

From a conceptual perspective, the essays and visual documentation in the exhibition catalogue for *Revolutionizing Cultural Identity: Photography and the Changing Face of Immigration*, curated by Claude Baillargeon,³² were pivotal in affirming and contextualizing the key ideas that I researched during my literature review. This is an important text that documents works by Canadian and American mixed-race artists and captures their sense of alienation within nation-building in the Americas.

On a larger scale, the identity politics and inherent activism in re-writing our national (his)stories at the core of the Power Plant's *Beat Nation*³³ continues to be a source of inspiration. At the time of writing I am entertaining the possibility of taking the curatorial premise behind *Face Value* to a national scale and possibly

travelling an expanded exhibition across Canada in 2017 in honour of Canada's 150th birthday. This vision is still very much in its formative stage. I feel that the curatorial arena with which I have chosen to engage begs larger scale projects with maximum outreach and in-reach into all corners of Canadian society's class, race and economic strata.

B. EXHIBITION LOGISTICS & PLANNING

Venue Selection

My first choice for venue for the exhibition component was A Space Gallery in Toronto, based on their clearly articulated mandate of programming interdisciplinary contemporary art that engages social critique. The decision-making cycle for exhibiting in artist-run centres, based on the timelines involved with securing operating funding, tends to be fifteen months to two years. The curator, Vicky Moufawad-Paul encouraged me to apply regardless as she was interested in the project. At the same time I investigated a number of other venues, and found that Gallery 1313 was both interested in the project and willing to put it forward as their project grant request with the Ontario Arts Council. I submitted to and was turned down by the OCADU Student Gallery. I considered the option of exhibiting in the Graduate Gallery at OCADU, however I decided to move forward with a willing and supportive gallerist at Gallery 1313 and animate my skills and experience as a former professional fundraiser in the arts in order to bring the project to its fruition. The result of A Space's jury of my exhibition application was that although they were very

interested in the project, they had not yet adjusted their policy in order to facilitate work by student curators.

Funding Process

Once I had my venue confirmed I was able to develop a zero-based budget built on hard costs that were knowable within fairly tight parameters. The base-line budget for the full project, including the community outreach component and online forum was originally \$6,500. Exceptionally, my professional background includes over fifteen years as a professional fundraiser for the arts, and more recently, I have worked as a development consultant in the arts sector. I set out to find one donor. In March of 2013, prior to thesis proposal development, and having just confirmed my artist selection, I approached Scotiabank with a one-page proposal. The strategy was to leverage Scotiabank's investment in Caribbana and the Caribbean link with my exhibition. Although the proposal was well-received, the proposal was turned down based on the fact that I am a student, and if the bank were to support a student project, it would be precedent-setting and usher in an unwanted deluge of solicitations.

Gallery 1313 approached me to partner with them to prepare an Ontario Arts Council project grant for the exhibition in early June, 2013 for a deadline of June 17. I wrote the grant from China and it was submitted on behalf of Gallery 1313 with a request for \$6,450. Again, while the jury's feedback was positive, the

grant was not approved based on the fact that I was a student and ineligible. (Note that Gallery 1313 had cleared the eligibility prior to submitting.)

I next approached my personal TD Bank branch in Parkdale – literally steps from Gallery 1313, and was turned down. Determined to try and find one partner, I attempted to reach high-profile philanthropist, Michael Lee Chin. Chin himself is a proud Jamaican-Canadian of mixed Chinese, Black and White heritage. I had met and worked with Chin on his first major corporate gift to the Royal Ontario Museum that was the precursor for his later \$30 million naming of the Michael Lee Chin crystal. Regardless of deploying a number of tactics, I was unsuccessful.

Concurrently, I had approached Beam Global Inc., an international liquor marketing firm based in Liberty Village in West Toronto. I was spurred on by the success of Gallery 1313's executive director Phil Anderson in mounting two fully-funded exhibitions with the support of Beam. I was unsuccessful in securing partnership based on the fact that their corporate giving budget had already been allocated for the 2014 fiscal year.

In mid-December, I explored crowd funding through online media strategies as a vehicle for reaching my target of \$5000. This was a time-intensive endeavour that resulted in the raising of \$3000, from over 65 people with an average gift of \$50. The process also afforded me the opportunity to build on my relationships with the artists who each became more invested in the success of the exhibition as a result of being part of the benefit matrix for donors (Appendix D).

In parallel to working on my thesis, Professor Fatona hired me to work as the Project Coordinator for *The State of Blackness: Production to Presentation* (TSOB) conference.³⁴ It was sheer happenstance that the only time slot available at Gallery 1313 coincided with the conference, and I brokered both financial and programming partnership with TSOB. Olivia McGilchrist and Erika DeFreitas spoke as panelists for the public component of the conference on the Saturday following *Face Value*'s opening and the opening evening on Thursday became part of the conference's pre-programming – where all participants were invited to the VIP pre-reception on February 20, 2014.

Simultaneous to the fundraising, and through my work with TSOB, I was able to network with, meet, solicit and secure a gift from Dr. Kenneth Montague of Wedge Curatorial Projects that fully funded the CARFAC level artist fees for the exhibition. Dr. Montague selected a print of McGilchrist's as a benefit for his contribution. The added value outcome of this agreement is that McGilchrist met the donor and her work is now part of Montague's personal collection.

The Installation Process

The install was scheduled for the Tuesday before the opening. Erika DeFreitas was unable to install in person and hired an installer to ensure her work was properly and professionally mounted. Jordan Clarke installed her own work. Note that one of the two changes from the 3D Sketch Up that occurred during the installation was to switch the placement of *Nothing is Just Black or White* with *Something*

in Between. This was done for aesthetic reasons due to the synergies of how the sea-green colour palettes of *Nothing is Just Black or White* spoke to Olivia McGilchrist's large-scale canvas print, *Discovery Bay*. The other change was to mount *The McGilchrists* (the circa 1910 family photograph that depicts McGilchrist's great grandmother as black and comprises the backdrop for the video installation, *Ernestine and Me*) on the same wall as Clarke's paintings – 'behind' the pillar, close to the gallery's administrative area. I had originally conceived the placement of this image as spot-lit in the video projection room, however lighting issues were prohibitive.

The greatest learning curve and most difficult part of the install involved Olivia McGilchrist's video installation. The projector I had sourced did not have the proper stereo definition cables to accommodate McGilchrist's sound requirements. We were able to borrow another projector and I used parts of my personal surround sound system for the set up. This was the artist's first video project and only the second time it had been installed – the first time being at the National Biennale of Jamaica. Had I not had the resource of my life partner who is a professional filmmaker to assist with the install, the end result would have undoubtedly been less than ideal, but possibly passable. It took ten hours to do the video installation, the mount and cabling for the projector and sound system, and to finish the install with white duck tape and render the delivery of this piece at a similar calibre as the rest of the works. In the future, should I be working with video art, I will take greater care in the planning and install plan for the works.

The video *The Artists Speak* that showcases 3-minute clips of each artist was mounted on an iMac on a plinth with two headsets available for viewers (transcripts appended, Appendix G.2). I had produced the video interviews with the artists in November 2013 – and the content of their remarks (both those selected for the show and those ‘on the cutting room floor’) provided valuable source material for the development and writing of the curatorial essay. I was also able to use the clip versions of these artist statements as part of my crowd-raising campaign and my awareness raising campaign. As part of the process, I had myself filmed and had two versions of my comments edited, one that paralleled the artists’ statements, with a more personal narrative of how the exhibition theme resonated with myself, and the other a one-minute version that spoke solely to the curatorial premise itself. In the end, I decided to only show the one-minute version of myself speaking on the exhibition project website, and not to show any video footage of myself in the gallery. I felt that conceptually what I wanted to achieve was to offer the viewer added value and more in-depth understanding of each artist’s work. The didactic that was printed on 38” x 54” white foamcore. At approximately 250 words, it provided a strong and clear curator’s presence in and unto itself (Appendix E).

Marketing and Promotion

I hired two students who were part of the TSOB conference team to design both the exhibition poster and flyer. My original intention was to have a postcard. When I made the decision to produce the exhibition catalogue post-exhibition, I

moved to a flyer that allowed me to print a version of the curatorial exhibition didactic in the flyer and present images of each artist's work, and acknowledge supporting partners. Flyers were distributed at TSOB, at the opening and prior to the opening, as well as being onsite in the gallery as a hand-out. Twenty-five posters were posted on the OCADU campus – although only four OCADU students were in attendance at the exhibition opening. (Notably a larger draw from the OCADU community might have been expected if the timing had not been during Reading Week, and had the exhibition been on campus.)

I promoted the exhibition through my 500-strong email list, Facebook events, and through Akimbo listings and social media. I also worked with *Mixed in Canada* on Twitter outreach. I pitched a number of CBC Radio programmes and Metro Morning interviewed Erika DeFreitas post-opening on February 25. Terence Dick of *Akimblog* reviewed the exhibition online (Appendix E.4). The exhibition was also reviewed online on *Mixed Bag Mag* by journalist Leah Snyder (Appendix E.5) whom I met through *The State of Blackness* conference. *Face Value* received some international attention from press/media: it was reviewed on *Race Card* based in London, UK (Appendix E.7) and profiled on the online version of Caribbean publication, *ARC Magazine* (Appendix E.6). I also pitched the project/exhibition to three GTA Caribbean newspapers, to no avail. The exhibition was listed with a number of calendars, including SAVAC, the South Asian Visual Artist Collective, *Toronto Arts Online*, and the *Parkdale Villager*.

Opening Reception and Public Attendance

Face Value was positioned as the pre-conference event for The State of Blackness conference that hosted forty participants – all of whom were invited to the VIP pre-reception. I chose to host the event as a private rsvp only event in order to comply with LCBO Special Occasion Permit requirements. There were 170 rsvp's to the opening. The weather was inclement with slush and thunderstorms, and in the end just over 140 people were registered as having attended the opening reception.

The additional press from Metro Morning led to a grade 12 class from Parkdale Collegiate attending the exhibition as part of a class assignment on race and identity. Additionally, the panel discussion at Harbourfront Centre as part of *The State of Blackness* is estimated to have driven approximately 50-100 additional viewers. (200 exhibition flyers were picked up on-site.)

I was able to secure in-kind refreshments from Ducky's Roti and Caribbean Food (doubles and current rolls) and served 42 bottles of wine and two cases of beer to guests. I feel that the opening was a success, and it added to the event to have the artists present to engage with the public.

C: ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES

Thesis Project Objectives

The original exhibition objectives that I laid out in my thesis proposal were as follows:

1. To provide a supportive environment and public platform for the selected group of artists of mixed-race heritage to exhibit works that delve deeply into personal issues of identity.
2. To raise the profile of issues and identify stigma relating to mixed-race identity in Toronto;
3. To confront issues of race as they play out within both mainstream and Caribbean communities in the GTA, as they extend beyond the realm of the arts scene and into daily life;
4. To assist in building open and inclusive environment by providing open forums, both live and virtual, for the mixed-race community.

Sharing Our Stories: The Online Forum

I reached out to over 50 members of *Mixed in Canada* membership base as well as friends and colleagues of biracial or mixed identity. Those people I invited to participate in the online forum were reluctant if not unwilling to share their experiences in this public format. The one exception and my early adopter champion, is Marie Moliner (Appendix F.1). I feel that people are ultimately private and shy to ‘come out’ with their stories and an online forum was too public a space

to create a safe container for sharing. Many individuals felt compelled to tell me their stories verbally or by email. I also received a great deal of feedback from a number of parents and/or couples in mixed relationships as well as from parents of adopted children from other ethnic backgrounds than their own. The core messages contained within *Face Value* seemed to have resonated deeply across many communities. I maintain that there is a need to find a vehicle for sharing our stories that will work for a cross-section of communities at all levels. However, either a public online forum is the wrong vehicle, or the marketing efforts I was able to allocate to this aspect of the project were insufficient.

Caribbeanness in *Face Value*

With respect to the third objective that names Caribbeanness as a qualifier within the project, I feel that *Face Value* set out to be more about biracial identity than it was about ‘Caribbeanness.’ Of the two Toronto-born artists, DeFreitas is tangibly more informed by her Caribbean roots. Conversely, McGilchrist’s work, by virtue of the fact that it incorporates Jamaica’s landscape and its people into the frame, was singular insofar as her work’s emphasis on place shifted the universality of the exhibition. In hindsight, the exhibition did trouble blackness and delved into the nuances between national and racial identity.

Whereas Canada, and specifically Toronto, boasts one of the world’s most pluralist demographics, Jamaica is defined by its blackness. The decision to profile a white Jamaican woman working within a predominantly black Caribbean island provoked strong emotional response from a number of viewers. Similarly, the

decision to program McGilchrist on *The State of Blackness* panel incited criticism from the viewing audience.

The fact that all three artists in *Face Value* identify in part with the black community was a happenstance, not a curatorially-driven construct. I believe that *Face Value* would and could have been realized had one or more of the artists been mixed South Asian, South East Asian, Indigenous or any other ethnic mix. In this sense, in hindsight, there was a rupture between the ideas presented in *Face Value* and those intended to be troubled in *The State of Blackness*. By choosing to focus on inter-subjectivity as the primary curatorial premise of the published catalogue essay, I side-stepped the arena of identity politics with regard to Caribbean identity and more specifically Afro-Caribbean identity. However, by taking up blackness and the absence of blackness within the black/white race binary in the extended curatorial reflection essay, I was able to account for and position the Caribbeanness of all three artists.

McGilchrist's Work as Flashpoint

While McGilchrist's work is reportedly well received and documented in Jamaica and within a larger Caribbean context, audience and community members at *The State of Blackness* conference in Toronto expressed discomfort with the presented work at the panel "Revisiting Representation of the Female Black Body."³⁵ It's important to note that approximately 75% of the 280 people in attendance at Harbourfront Centre appeared to be from the black community. The discussion

during the public Q&A of that panel signaled that there were a number of people who felt strongly about some issues raised by both McGilchrist's work and the make-up of the panel itself. There were invariably a number of factors at play, including in my opinion the following:

1. The expectations of the audience were not congruent with the panel that was presented based on the title of the panel that was advertised. The audience members might have anticipated a historical overview of the representation of the female black body and a more analytic approach to its development from a contemporary standpoint whereas the panel presented four early career contemporary artists whose work depicts images of the female black body.
2. Olivia McGilchrist is white; Rema Tavares 'reads' white, although identifies as mixed black; Erika DeFreitas is light skinned, but identifies as black of mixed heritage; and Abdi Osman was the only 'dark skinned' black artist on the panel. As a consequence, audience members may not have felt that they were adequately reflected on stage. This was invariably amplified within the context of a conference on 'the state of blackness.'
3. Olivia McGilchrist's work is highly provocative and unsettling. She intentionally questions and destabilizes society's constructions of not only race but also class and gender. Within the context of Dr. Rinaldo Walcott's keynote remarks, (the premise of which was the primacy and urgency for the black communities in Canada to come together and form collectives), a

Canadian black audience may not have been ready to receive McGilchrist's work without more extensive contextualization. It is possible that many might have perceived her work to be appropriation, disenfranchising, and as such insulting.

4. McGilchrist's historical allusion to the 18th-century Jonkonnu character that evokes the slaves' parody of their plantation owners in masquerade sporting a white mask was not clearly highlighted as a creative driver for her work, although mentioned by the artist during her presentation. Nor was the artist's objectification on the streets of Jamaica as 'whitey' fully explained. This may have resulted in some audience members' vocal discomfort with the artist's use of the white mask.

Reflecting on the tensions between panelists, moderators and public that took place during the conference at Harbourfront Centre on February 22, I feel that the discord was a necessary and healthy part of the process of learning and unlearning for all of the people involved. Importantly, one of the conference participants was compelled to create a community forum for continuing the dialogue and discussion around many of the issues raised throughout the TSOB conference.³⁶

Generational Selection

I feel strongly that there is a 'coming of age' of biracial or multi-ethnic persons at this time in Canada. Although miscegenation is by no means a recent

phenomena, many of those from my generation were born, either directly or indirectly, as a result of Trudeau's changes to the Immigration Act in the late 1960s. It is now, in the early part of the 21st century, that a generation of mixed-race adults in their 30s and 40s are unequivocally affirming their presence on the Canadian landscape. Curiously, the feedback from the show has demonstrated to me that the generation of biracial young adults that are 25 or younger experience a radically different worldview of their identity. In general, their mixed heritage seems to be a 'non-issue.' I hope that *Face Value* is the beginning and not the end of many more conversations, inquiries, and art exhibitions/projects about race and identity within the Canadian landscape.

NOTES

1. Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993), 144.
2. Rose, 159.
3. Minelle Mahtani, “‘I’m a Blonde-haired, Blue-eyed Black Girl’: Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces Among Multi-ethnic Women in Toronto, Canada,” in *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race,’* ed. David Parker and Miri Song (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 175.
4. Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, “Re-Membering ‘Race’: On Gender, ‘Mixed Race’ and Family in the English-African Diaspora,” in *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’* ed. David Parker and Miri Song (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 43.
5. Minelle Mahatani, “Racial reMappings: the Potential of Paradoxical Space,” in *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol.8, No. 3. (London, UK: CarFax Publishing, 2001), 303.
6. Mahtani, “Racial reMappings,” 2001, 299.
7. Barabara Ballis Lal, “Learning to Do Ethnic Identity: The ‘Transracial/ Transethnic Adoptive Family as Site and Context,” in *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race,’* ed. David Parker and Miri Song (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 155.
8. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 392.
9. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 96.
10. Taylor, xvi.
11. Alberto Guevara, “Review: Diana Taylor – The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas,” in *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 60, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 240.
12. At the time I was researching exhibition practices and the seeming lack of artist collectives within the Caribbean community in Toronto for OCADU course, Issues in Exhibitions, Theory, and Practice, winter term, 2013.
13. Olivia McGilchrist, in Skype interview with the author, October 29th, 2013.
14. “face value” (online: Copyright 2014) in *World English Dictionary*, www.dictionary.com (accessed on February 25th, 2014).

-
15. Mark Cartwright, "Roman Coinage: Definition" (online; published November 27, 2003) in *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, http://www.ancient.eu.com/Roman_Coinage/ (accessed on March 12, 2014).
16. Taylor, 96.
17. Olivia McGilchrist participated in *La Société des Arts Technologiques* "Creative Immersion Symposium" held in Montreal, December 17th, 2013.
18. *Mixed in Canada* is an online space created by Rema Tavares, Toronto, where all mixed-race identified Canadians are invited to learn, share and be inspired. <http://mixed-me.ca>
19. An example of this would be the initial decision to exhibit Olivia McGilchrist's *Elles Arrivent!* that depicts five black women with the artist versus the more exhibit-appropriate work, (*whitey*) *Discovery Bay*, that is a self-portrait.
20. Jordan Clarke was featured in the group show, *Shades of You: the Complexion Complex*, at Brockton Collective, Toronto, December, 2013.
21. Erika DeFreitas noted in her October 27th, 2013 interview that she was influenced by Minelle Mahtani's "Interrogating the Hyphen-Nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and 'Mixed Race' Identities," 2002 and "Racial reMappings: the Potential of Paradoxical Space," 2001.
22. As noted by Erika DeFreitas during the October 27th, 2013 interview with the curator.
23. "Zora Neale Hurston's – Glossary of Harlem Slang: Slang terms circa 1930's," (online) on *aalbc.com – the #1 Site for African American Literature*, <http://aalbc.com/authors/harlemslang.htm> (accessed on March 12, 2014).
24. Olivia McGilchrist, "My Dear Daddy: Chapter 1 – a Photographic Essay" in *Transit: Location & Caribbeanness*, Volume 1, Issue 2, March 2012, pp.50-55.
25. *Ernestine and Me* was commissioned for Jamaica's 2012 National Biennial.
26. Adebé DeRango-Adem and Andrea Thompson, eds., *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*. (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2010).
27. *Faces In Between Recent Paintings by 3MW Collective* presented at Daniels Spectrum, Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre, Toronto, Ontario: February 1-28, 2013.
28. *Transitions*, Houston Museum of African American Culture, Houston, Texas, curated by Sally Frator, 2013.
29. 'Fleeting Face' at A Space Gallery in Toronto from June 15 to July 21, 2007.

30. *The Cartographer's Mistake: Southall and Other Places*, works by Sarindar Dhaliwal and essay by Michelle Jacques, was exhibited at A Space Gallery in Toronto from January 18 to February 23, 2013.

31. *The C-Word: A look at the role of craft in contemporary art*, curated by Richard Mongiat for the Doris McCarthy Gallery at UTSC, February 8 to April 4, 2012.

32. Claude Baillargeon, curator, *Revolutionizing Cultural Identity: Photography and the Changing Face of Immigration*, the Oakland University Art Gallery, Rochester, Michigan, March 8 to April 13, 2008.

33. *Beat Nation* was exhibited at The Power Plant, Toronto from December 15, 2012 to May 5, 2013. The exhibition was co-curated by Kathleen Ritter, Associate Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery and Tania Willard, a Secwepemc artist, designer and curator. *Beat Nation* travelled to Montreal and Vancouver as well as Toronto and its list of works and design took on different iterations in each venue.

34. *The State of Blackness: Production to Presentation* brought together artists, curators, academics, students, and multiple publics to engage in dialogue and, in effect, problematize the histories, current situation, and future state of black diasporic artistic practice and representation in Canada. The conference addressed and sought to shed light on the dearth of cultural production and in turn, presentation activities by black artists who because of racial difference have historically been at the margins of traditional visions of the Canadian nation and its art production -- particularly within the past two decades.

35. "Revisiting Representations of the Female Black Body" was programmed and moderated by Heidi McKenzie and Ellyn Walker with panelists Erika DeFreitas, Olivia McGilchrist, Abdi Osman and Rema Tavares for *The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation*, Saturday February 22, 2014, at Harboufront Centre.

36. At the time of writing TSOB conference volunteer, Ella Cooper was developing a public community forum on representations of the female black body slated to be held at Daniels Spectrum, Toronto.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: spinsters/aunt lute, 1987.
- Baillargeon, Claude. *Revolutionizing Cultural Identity: Photography and the Changing Face of Immigration*. The Oakland University Art Gallery, Rochester. Michigan: Allied Printing. March 8 to April 13, 2008.
- Ballis Lal, Barbara. "Learning to Do Ethnic Identity: The Transracial/Transethnic Adoptive Family as Site and Context." In *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'*, edited by David Parker and Miri Song. London: Pluto Press, 2001.
- Bannerji, Himani, ed. *Returning the Gaze*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island. The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Bettelheim, Judith, "The Jonkonnu Festival: It's Relation to Caribbean and African Masquerades". *Jamaica Journal* 10:2, 3 &4 1976: 20-27.
- Brown, Michael K. et. al, *Whitewashing, Race: the Myth of a Color-blind Society*. Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2003.
- Burns, Lorna. "Becoming –postcolonial, becoming-Caribbean: Édouard Glissant the poetics of creolization." In *Textual Practice* 23(1). London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2009.
- DeRango-Adem, Adebé and Andrea Thompson, ed. *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*. Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2010.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York, Grove Press, 1967.
- Frindéthié, K. Martial. *Francophone African Cinema: History, Culture, Politics and Theory*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co. Inc, 2009.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman. *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- hooks, bell. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, Boston: South End Press, 1990.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," in *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. Ed. by Alice Walker, New York: Feminist Press CUNY, 1979.
- Ifekwunigwe, Jayne O. "Re-Membering 'Race': On Gender, 'Mixed Race' and Family in the English-African Diaspora." In *Rethinking Mixed Race.* Ed. By David Parker and Miri Song. London: Pluto Press, 2001.

- Jade Norwood, Kimberly and Violeta Solonova Foreman. "The Ubiquitousness of Colorism: Then and Now." In *Color Matters: Skin Tone Bias and the Myth of a Post-Racial America*, ed. Kimberly Jade Norwood. 9-28. New York: Routledge Press, 2014.
- Mahtani, Minelle. "'I'm A Blonde-Haired, Blue-Eyed Black Girl': Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces Among Multi-ethnic Women in Toronto, Canada." In *Rethinking Mixed Race*, eds. David Parker and Miri Song, 173-190, London: Pluto. 2001.
- Mahtani, Minelle. "Interrogating the Hyphen-Nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and 'Mixed Race' Identities" *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 8(1): 67-90, 2002.
- Mahtani, Minelle. "Mixed Metaphors: Situating Mixed Race Identity," in Lee, Jo-Ann and John Lutz (eds), *Situating "Race" and Racisms in Space, Time and Theory*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 77-93, 2005.
- Mahatani, Minelle. "Racial reMappings: the Potential of Paradoxical Space," in *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol.8, No. 3. London, UK: CarFax Publishing, 2001.
- Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Mohanram, Radhika. *Black Body. Women, Colonialism and Space*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Moore, A. "Five Nations that Imported Europeans to Whiten the Population." In *Atlantic Black Star* online, March 10, 2014, <http://atlantablackstar.com/2014/03/10/5-black-nations-that-imported-europeans-to-whiten-the-population>, accessed on April 20, 2014.
- Nelson, Charmaine. "Sugar Cane, Slaves and Ships: Colonialism, Geography and Power in Nineteenth-Century Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica" ed. Ana Lucia Araujo, *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery*. New Castle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2009.
- Ortiz, Fernando. *Cuban Counterpoint*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Taylor, Leanne. *Re-imagining mixed race: Explorations of multiracial discourse in Canada*. PhD dissertation, York University, 2008 (Library and Archives Canada, ISBN: 978049451786).
- Silverman, Kaja. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. London: Psychology Press, 1996.

A . Catalogue Essay

THE INTER-SUBJECTIVITY OF MIXED-RACE IDENTITY IN THE EXHIBITION FACE VALUE

The exhibition *Face Value* explores the complexities of mixed-race identity through the works of Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist. These artists engage in self-portraiture and deploy the mask as a trope in order to narrate their experiences as women of mixed Caribbean/European heritage. The central premise of this exhibition is the notion of inter-subjectivity – the shared interplay between two individuals’ experiential worlds. As it pertains to the mixed-race artist, performance theorist Diana Taylor describes inter-subjectivity as a double-coded neither/nor subjectivity.¹ The artists’ use of the mask underscores this double-play of subjectivity. As a focal point, the mask facilitates the artists’ self-reflexive inquiry that embodies, interrogates, and performs mixed-race in order to destabilize racialized stereotypes. The use of masks, both literally and metaphorically, challenges society’s ideas of who these women might be, at face value.

Implicit in the exhibition are the following questions: can there ever be an absolute congruence of understanding between the person being seen and the person doing the seeing? And, does the way someone appears accurately reflect that person’s identity within a biracial or mixed-race context? Each artist’s response is contingent upon her unique cultural background and upbringing. Jordan Clarke is a visual artist of Bajan-Canadian heritage whose self-portraits documented a three-year process in which she produced paintings that represent herself in relation to her understanding of how others perceive the way she looks. Her use of masks both affirms her own

sense of identity and challenges the way others see her as neither black nor white, but ‘something in between.’ Erika DeFreitas is a conceptual artist of Guyanese-Portuguese and Afro-Trinidadian heritage who uses language, photography and gesture to subvert racial categorization. Her series of nine self-portraits enunciate Zora Neale Hurston’s phrase “I am not tragically colored.”² DeFreitas distorts these words by pressing her mouth against a plexiglass barrier. The resulting gestures symbolize a struggle between language and its embodiment, racial preconceptions and self-determination. Olivia McGilchrist is a photographer and video artist of French and Jamaican-Swiss heritage who relocated from London, England to her grandfather’s home in Kingston, Jamaica in 2011. McGilchrist’s photography and video installation focus on her sense of identity as a white woman born in Jamaica after recently discovering that her family has African ancestry. Embedding herself in the Jamaican landscape to evoke the ghosts of this unknown lineage, McGilchrist questions her complicity in the ongoing inequities of her native country.

§

I initially thought of the mask as a superficial layer of identity - something that can be placed on me by others. I wanted to be seen a specific way, I wanted to be black, full black. Now I have mixed feelings, I’m kind of almost proudly stating that I’m mixed-race but at the same time saying that I am just something in between, whatever that is, I’m not sure. In the end, I leave my uncertainty behind and remove the masks altogether.

— Jordan Clarke

Jordan Clarke performs her understanding of self through the media of painting. The three paintings in the exhibition, *Nothing is Just Black or White* (2008),

White Façade (2010), and *Something in Between* (2011) are drawn from a fourteen-part series of that span the time period from the earliest to the latest works in the series. These self-portraits mirror and invert philosopher and psychiatrist Franz Fanon's figurative use of the mask as articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*.³ As a person of mixed race himself, Fanon interprets identity to be both dependent on, and to exceed, face value. The interchangeability between white and black masks in Clarke's series speaks to the equivocality of her internalized awareness of how she is perceived by others in relation to her sense of self as a black woman. The landscape for this awareness invariably shifts dependent on the social context; Clarke processes her journey within her changing milieus, and communicates her identity to the viewer through her self-portraits.

Clarke created *Nothing is Just Black or White* in response to a call to participate in a Caribbean-Canadian exhibition based on the theme of mask. In this painting, the artist's pose is casual; legs half-crossed, she assumes a direct, full frontal and seated posture on a nondescript brown fabric set against a lighter backdrop. She leans back, resting her body weight on both hands behind her. She wears a simple white tank top and green shorts. Her shoulder-length, tightly curled hair is loose and extends to either side of her body in its fullness.

Having no direct cultural or experiential ties to the Caribbean annual festival of Carnival that celebrates cultural identity largely through the use of mask and masquerade, Clarke responds viscerally to the theme of the mask by illustrating it in a literal way: she paints a black mask onto the surface of her face, almost as if it were

blackface make-up applied directly onto her skin. This allusion, whether conscious or unconscious, has the potential to infer an interpretation of the work that relates to the racist historical practice of the minstrel or vaudeville show that was prevalent in the Americas up until the mid to late 20th century. In this practice, the white man painted a black mask on his face with coal, grease or shoe-polish as a caricature of the stereotypical ‘happy-go-lucky darky of the slave plantation.’⁴ In Clarke’s application of a blackened face, there is no exaggerated minstrel’s grin that attenuates her proximity to the reference. Her expression is serious in tone, at once defiant and defeated.

Nothing is Just Black or White represents Clarke’s first attempt to address what Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa terms *un choque*, or cultural collision, caused by the coming together of “two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference.”⁵ For Clarke, this *choque* began early in her childhood. She was raised as a single child, her Bajan-Canadian father absent from an early age. Her mother, several generations white Canadian, made concerted efforts to provide opportunities for her daughter to engage with her Bajan roots. Clarke considers that she has always ‘looked’ mixed-race. As a consequence, she found that she was not accepted in the black community, nor was she able to claim her identity as ‘black’ within her predominantly white family and peer-group. In high school, she was excluded from Black History Month events on the basis of not being ‘black enough.’ Consequently, much of Clarke’s adolescence was devoted to negotiating her identity, or as she puts it, “dancing between two worlds.”

In the painting *White Façade*, Clarke wears a white mask and dances between her two worlds. Here again, the mask is depicted as if it were make-up applied directly to her face. She paints herself from the waist up, standing with her arms crossed, elbows clasped on either side, clutching her bosom and partially revealing cleavage under a scant black spaghetti-strap tank top. The backdrop is neutral in mottled, beige tones that capture the shadow of her body in the bottom half of the painting. Her expression is sombre, and she turns her head at an angle to the left and looks up and off into the distance. The overall effect is a jarring inversion of the previous work, *Nothing is Just Black or White*. According to Clarke, the white mask in *White Façade* speaks to her feeling that some people in the black community attempt to “superimpose” whiteness on her. It also references the term ‘white-washing,’ which is used to describe a minority person who has assimilated within white western society, or who tries to ‘act white.’ Clarke perceives both the prescriptive term, white-washing, and the figurative masking of black face as derogatory and hurtful. In this painting, she cannot meet her viewers’ gaze face-on.

The third painting in the exhibition, *Something in Between*, graphically depicts the artist’s view of the push/pull of her two worlds: the white and the black masks symbolize how these worlds collide yet never seem to fuse together. One of the later works to be completed in the series, *Something in Between* was created after the first two works in the exhibition. Clarke paints three versions of herself: in white mask, eyes closed, arms folded on the left; in black mask on the right, eyes fixed straight ahead at ninety degrees, with her hands on her hips; and unmasked in the centre,

looking out and holding her hands behind her back. She positions ‘her-selves’ standing shoulder-to-shoulder and back-to-back with each other. The partial views reveal two thirds of the three selves from just below the hips. The work is painted on an ochre orange backdrop and the bodies themselves seem to be roughly sketched in with the detail of colour absent from the picture and only apparent in the masks themselves. The self-image portrayed in the middle of the two masked selves gazes directly at the viewer. This regard implies an affective resolution: the artist’s determined stance appears to project confrontational scrutiny. In this instance the artist returns the viewers’ proverbial gaze, and asks them to acknowledge what they might find uncomfortable to admit – that there is a form of ‘racial voyeurism’ that can take place in the everyday first impression of an anonymous visual encounter.

§

For the most part, I see my use of the term 'tragically' to be sarcastic...in the sense that there is no tragedy in my skin colour/race/presence. In fact I am very proud of who I am and my ancestors. I see it to be tragic that there are those out there who deem my skin colour/race/presence to be tragic.

— Erika DeFreitas

Whereas Clarke uses the mask in both a literal and figurative way to highlight the dynamics of inter-subjectivity, DeFreitas’ mask is imagined. In her work, *I Am Not Tragically Colored (after Zora Neale Hurston)*, nine framed photographs of the artist are hung in the gallery adjacent to one another. Each self-portrait denotes one syllable of the phrase inspired by American anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston, “I am not tragically colored.” In every image the artist is holding a 7” x 5” piece of plexiglass

over her mouth and pressing her lips into the glass as she mouths the words of the phrase. The photographs are printed larger than life, 20” x 30” in order to emphasize the consequent degree of distortion in the subject’s face. Installed, the work spans just over twenty linear feet. Facing frontally, DeFreitas commands the viewer’s gaze directly. As in Clarke’s work, the artist’s stance is intended to be confrontational. She is wearing a simple white tank top. Her long curly hair falls loosely over her shoulders. The image captures her from just above the waist on a blue-white background. Under each of the framed portraits, an 8” x 5” plexiglass is mounted with the corresponding syllable etched onto its surface. The lettering is etched in Times New Roman – a common and unscripted serif font. The effect of the etching on the plexiglass produces white lettering on a transparent surface. The use of white is specific in both form and function: the white on a clear background makes the words difficult to read at a distance, thus requiring the viewer to consider the work at close range in order to decode the truncated syllables.

The dichotomy between absence and presence is a central and recurring theme in DeFreitas’ work. While the text infers absence through negation (I am *not* tragically colored), the emphasis on gesture affirms presence. The text signals to the viewers what *not* to assume about the artist, whereas the exaggerated nature of the artist’s performative acts in the photographs invite viewers to draw their own conclusions about the subject they see before them. In the artist’s words, “the glass is not a barrier, it is a vehicle for enunciation. It’s almost as if I’m trying to scream the statement visually.” The physicality of this act impedes the delivery of the phrase to

its intended audience, while at the same time heightening the performative role of gesture over text. The text is drawn from the Hurston's autobiography:

I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.⁶

Hurston's citation affirms the author's sense of dignity and pride. DeFreitas' work mirrors its unapologetic nature: both women declare their worth to be equal to any other human being regardless of race or skin-tone. Notably, DeFreitas does not ascribe to Hurston's worldview of the "sobbing school of Negrohood" and notes that this can and continues to be interpreted as insulting or demeaning to many. At a conceptual level, the artist is interested in disrupting her viewers' preconceived notions about race. She draws inspiration from black feminist theorist bell hooks' assertion that "our words are not without meaning. They are an action – a resistance."⁷ By claiming the largest place of uninterrupted wall space in the gallery, DeFreitas claims her space and frames her body, thereby asserting her voice. By focusing on race as a social construct, the artist invites her viewers to grapple with a corollary notion – that skin-colour, and the various gradations of skin-tone between black and white, are meaningless criteria for assessing an individual's worth or intrinsic value. In her words, "I am the embodiment of the blurring of the boundaries of the two binaries of race. I am that physical reminder that these essentialist notions we tend to have of race aren't true."

DeFreitas' answer to the question of congruence between the person being seen and the one actively doing the looking suggests that it is impossible to pinpoint a definitive response. She sets up a deliberate shift in the inter-subjectivity of her work in relation to the viewer by complicating the dynamic between her self-representation and the way she may be understood. While it may be tempting to interpret the plexiglass as the conceptual mask, DeFreitas asks the viewer to consider that words themselves are the mask that can hide, cover, and alter the way she is perceived. As a consequence of the primacy of gesture over text, the viewers' affective response becomes disoriented, and the work in its totality disables the viewer's ability to 'fix' DeFreitas' race. When the work is considered as a whole, ultimately the mask – conceptual or imagined – recedes: through the work, DeFreitas calls upon her viewers to see beyond the 'tragedy' of her colour and embrace who she is beyond face value.⁸

§

At face value I'm a white female. When I discovered that I had a great grandmother that was black – it caused me to rethink my Caribbean identity...If I was in another non-white dominant part of the world, I'd feel the same, but here I feel infinitely connected to the land and the sea and the history – the primordial thing that bothers me is the very clear history: we come here, take over, dominate, and you still have to suffer for however long to get over all of this horror.

— Olivia McGilchrist

While both Clarke and DeFreitas were born in Toronto and identify as biracial, McGilchrist identifies as a white woman of mixed Caribbean and European

heritage. She ‘reads’ white, and her self-understanding was constructed as a white woman. Her mother is French, and her paternal grandfather was light-skinned Jamaican and presumably mixed, though never acknowledged as such by the family. McGilchrist left Jamaica at the age of three, and spent her formative years in France and the United Kingdom. In 2011, at the age of thirty, she returned to Jamaica and took possession of her grandfather’s house in Kingston. It was there that she discovered a family portrait in the closet that depicts her paternal great-grandfather with a black or partly black partner and their three children. With no living relatives on her father’s side with whom to confirm the family’s lineage, McGilchrist traced her great grandmother’s name through the national archives. While there is a possibility that the photograph may be that of an ‘unofficial family,’ the artist believes that the discovered photograph depicts Ernestine, the woman whose name is documented in the registry. The discovery of this picture has proven to have a catalyzing effect on McGilchrist and has propelled the artist to ‘trouble’ her identity through her art. A copy of the found photograph, exhibited for the first time in *Face Value*, provides the backdrop for the 10-minute video installation, *Ernestine and Me* (2012), that is showcased in the exhibition.

In each of McGilchrist’s works presented in *Face Value*, she stages herself as a cultural object by virtue of the fact that she is photographed wearing a white mask. Devoid of embellishment, the mask disallows a reading of her facial expressions. Through the masking, she highlights the various postural gestures communicated through the body in order to perform her identity. She names the character she

becomes by placing the mask over her face to become Whitey. Whitey is a character that was born out of the artist's move back to Jamaica. Upon her arrival, the local population started calling her for what they took her to be on the street at face value. Her nickname became her alter ego and a crucial tool in her exploration and her process of becoming. By donning the mask, McGilchrist becomes an actor, performing her story and at once altering the dynamic of inter-subjectivity between herself and the viewer. Although not readily apparent, this is achieved through the historic allusion to the early 19th-century John Canoe (or Jonkonnu). Jonkonnu was a black male actor who dressed in a white mask and paraded about town in parody of his plantation owner for one day of the year. This ritual has morphed into modern-day Carnival or Mardi Gras in the Caribbean and American South. McGilchrist's willful appropriation of the slaves' ritual is intended to provoke and unsettle normative discourse around the African slave trade and power dynamics between the white settler and the black slave.

In *(whitey) Discovery Bay* (2013), the artist stands on the prow of a red fishing boat that is anchored close to shore, in the full sun of the Caribbean sea. She wears Whitey's white mask, and a plain black evening dress. The skyscape's volatility is matched by the intensity of the azure seascape. *(whitey) Discovery Bay* is an 84" x 59" photograph printed on canvas. The image is steeped in metaphor: the setting is Discovery Bay, where Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica in 1494. McGilchrist invokes the violence of the Middle Passage, the slave trade and Britain's colonization. The viewers are being asked to see themselves as implicated in colonial fantasies, a

device, according to theorist Diana Taylor, that is central to the performative role of the non-white racialized artist.⁹ The disjuncture here is that McGilchrist is not racialized. She is mixed – both colonizer and colonized, and yet neither at the same time. By placing herself in this specific setting – as a white woman arriving on a boat, wearing a white mask, and evoking a colonial context – McGilchrist disrupts the expected racial and gender typecasting in the tableau. As a consequence, she heightens the subjectivity of her own whiteness.

In the 10-minute video installation, *Ernestine and Me*, close-ups of the found family portrait literally frame the McGilchrist's portrayal of herself in relation to a series of contemporary Jamaicans from a variety of racial and social backgrounds. The cast of locals in the video encircle Whitey: they mock, probe and examine the character as a cultural object. Through these performative acts, the artist calls into question her own privilege ascribed to her by virtue of her white skin. She also asks her viewers to consider themselves as possible characters in the scenario being played out, and experience what they might feel, assume, or presume in response to her appearance within the context of her Jamaican identity.

The work as a multi-media installation includes three 'frozen poses' of McGilchrist and a local Jamaican in contemporary garb, set against the pixelated backdrop of three 1950s Jamaican postcards: *Beauty Beach*, *Bamboo Avenue*, and *White River*. In these supplementary images, the artist teases the ideas of whiteness, the mask, nostalgia and the idealized public imaginary of Jamaica's tourist-driven economy. She pits this recent historic perspective against the purportedly more

harsh reality of contemporary Jamaica, fraught with its difficult inter-racial dynamics and economic disparity.

§

All three artists in *Face Value* perform and affirm the complexity of representation of mixed Caribbean and European cultural and ethnic heritage by plumbing the resonances of their inter-subjectivity through self-portraiture. The art, as storytelling, comprises each artist's locus of enunciation as empowered thirty-something year-old women who refuse the mask of race. Through their innovative yet provocative use of the mask, each artist manages to more fully engage the viewers' active interpretation of their narrative. Their art, whether painting, photography or video installation, challenges the premise of the 'neither/nor double-coded subjectivity' of mixed-race. As viewers, we begin to see, hear and understand who they feel they are on their terms, not ours.

NOTES

1. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (London: Duke University Press, 2003) 96.

2. Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," in *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, ed. Alice Walker, (New York: Feminist Press CUNY, 1979) 153-155.

3. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally published in 1952 (New York, Grove Press, 1967).

4. Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 73.

5. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: spinsters/aunt lute, 1987).

6. Hurston, 153-155.

7. bell hooks, *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1988) 28.

8. The term 'face value' is generally associated with the financial industry. It defines the parameters of the value printed on the face of a stock, bond or other financial instrument. In the context of this essay it is used as an idiom to infer the apparent value as opposed to real worth of something or someone.

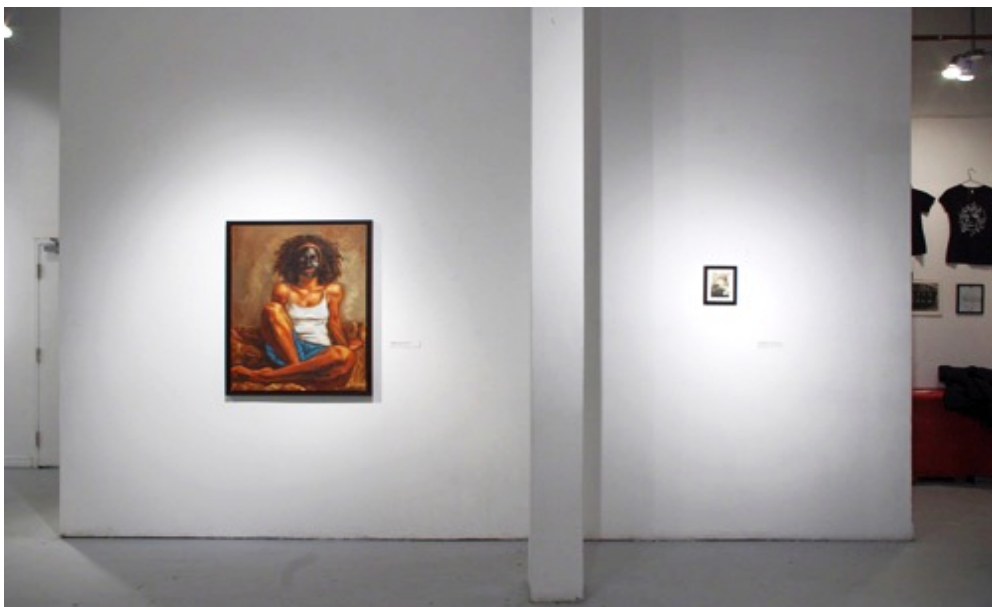
9. Taylor, 86.

NOTE: All of the quotes or citations attributed to the exhibiting artists are from research interviews conducted by the author in October, 2013; from email correspondence with the author; or from the panel presentations on February 22, 2014 from the OCAD University conference, The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation at Harbourfront Centre in which Erika DeFreitas and Olivia McGilchrist participated.

B. Photographs of Installed Exhibition



Didactic Panel, Jordan Clarke's *Something in Between*, 2011 (left), *White Façade*, (2010), Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



Jordan Clarke's *Nothing is Just Black or White*, 2008 (left), *The McGilchrists* (copy of circa 1910 original) Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



View of Erika DeFreitas' *I am not tragically colored (after Zora Neale Hurston)*, 2013-2014, Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



Olivia McGilchrist's (*whitey*) *Discovery Bay*, 2013 (left), *Beauty Beach*, 2012, *Bamboo Avenue*, 2012, *White River*, 2012. Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



View of Olivia McGilchrist's *Ernestine and Me* video installation, 2012, Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



East view of *Face Value* at Gallery 1313, Toronto. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



North/East view of *Face Value* at Gallery 1313. Photography: Ali Kazimi.

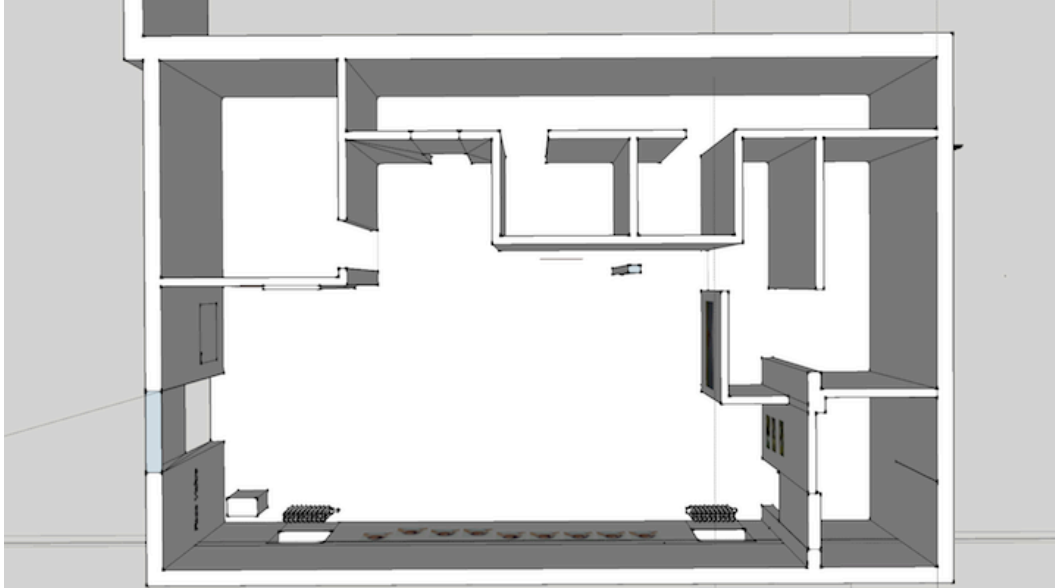


South/West view of *Face Value* at Gallery 1313. Photography: Ali Kazimi.



View of *The Artists Speak* video gallery didactic onsite at Gallery 1313, Toronto.
Photography: Ali Kazimi.

C. Installation Planning Mock-Ups



Aerial view of Gallery 1313



West view of Face Value Mock-up




North East view of Gallery 1313

D. The Funding Process: CSI Crowd-raising Campaign


ABOUT THE ARTISTS

[Jordan Clarke](#), Toronto



Jordan Clarke is a Toronto-born, Toronto based oil painter. Her mask series began in 2008 – and the painting, *Nothing is Black or White* was a direct response to a request to create a work based on the theme of the mask. This was the first time Jordan explored her sense of self, and how she viscerally experienced growing up in Toronto as the only black member of her family where she often felt like she was dancing between two cultures and not ever landing in any one at any given time. The work in the exhibition spans three years and sees Jordan through a journey of self-discovery where she literally sheds her mask and faces the viewer on her own terms.

[Erika DeFrietas](#), Toronto



from work in progress, 1 of 8, Erika DeFrietas, 2013

Erika is also Toronto-born, Toronto based, and she is a conceptual artist who works primarily with photography and textiles, embroidery and cross-stitching. Erika created two works specifically for **Face Value**. The series of self-portraits with her holding a glass in front of her lips, is a way of distorting and objectifying herself. She is struggling to quote the words of 20th century American anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston, "I am not tragically coloured." For Erika, words are the mask, and labeling is a way that society normalizes its sense of discomfort around race. The other work will be cross-stitched in white on white, and use the labels from Hurston's Harlem Slang Colour Scale. Erika invites her viewers to consider the fact that race is a social construct and it is far more than skin-deep.

and an invite to the VIP reception, and online and in print (catalogue listing) recognition.
7 backers

FOR \$150.00 OR MORE
LIMITED 8 of 10 available
Art Connoisseur – As a thank you for your generous support, you will receive a 8" x 12" archival quality print of featured conceptual artist, Erika DeFrietas' *Teleplasmic Study of Dollies (Angle. No. 7)* – in addition to your VIP reception invite, your autographed exhibition catalogue and your thanks online and in the catalogue.
2 backers

FOR \$300.00 OR MORE
LIMITED 4 of 5 available
Art Elite – You're not only supporting the project, you're in it! In recognition of your gift, you will be listed on the gallery walls as a donor for the run of the show, featured online and in print in the catalogue – AND – you receive a 12" x 10" print of Olivia McGilchrist's limited edition framed photomontage, *Eles Arrivent!* You also receive your own autographed copy of the exhibition catalogue as a permanent memory of the show and your part in it.
1 backer

[Olivia McGilchrist](#), Jamaica



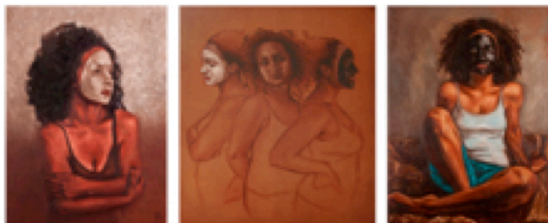
Ernestine and Me Still, video still, 2013

Olivia is five generations white Jamaican/French. She grew up in France and the UK, and recently returned to Kingston to live in her grandfather's house. Two years ago she found an old family photograph that documents the blackness of her father's family. Her new-found mixed identity has propelled her to create several series of work around her alter-ego character, *Whitey* – *Whitey* wears a white mask. *Whitey* is trying to work out where and who she is in relation to her land, her country, and the people that surround her. *Ernestine and Me* is a 11-minute video loop that sets that journey in motion. Here is a [3-minute clip from the video](#). The other work is a photo-montage installation, *Eles Arrivent!* That was shot in Discovery Bay, Jamaica, and places *Whitey* in the middle of a story that is all too familiar, yet somehow the story she's telling has a decided twist.

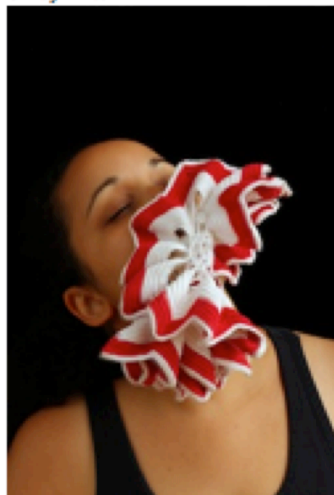
ABOUT THE REWARDS

Join the party! Any gift of \$50 or more gets you an invite to the VIP reception to meet and greet the artists on February 20th, as well as an autographed copy of the exhibition catalogue.

As a thank you for your \$75 donation, you will receive a set of three high quality greeting cards, printed on linen quality paper with envelopes that showcase three prints of Jordan Clarke's work as featured in *Face Value*. (in addition to your VIP reception invite and autographed exhibition catalogue).

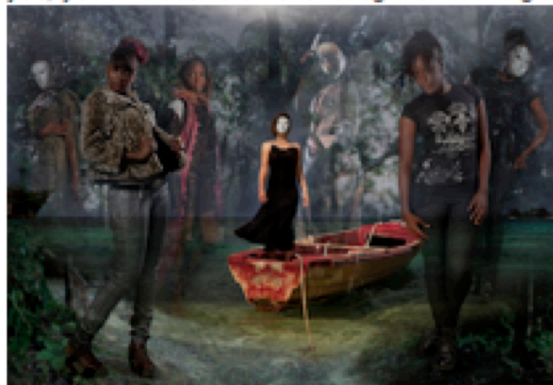


In recognition of your \$150 pledge you have the opportunity to own one of 10 archival digital prints of *A Teleplasmic Study with Dollies (Angle No. 7)* by Erika DeFreitas. 2010-2013. You will receive your unmounted 8" x 12" print at the opening or by mail.



A Teleplasmic Study with Dollies (Angle No. 7), Erika DeFreitas, 2010-2013

For \$300 you will receive a framed 12" x 10" limited edition of the featured photo-montage print, *Eles Arrivent!* (the edition is limited to 25) in addition to an autographed copy of the exhibition catalogue, an online and in print catalogue thank you, you will receive on-site recognition in the gallery during the run of the show.



Eles Arrivent! Olivia McGilchrist, 2013

“Face Value: Telling the Stories of Mixed Race Artists: a Project by Heidi McKenzie” on *Catalyst CSI*, <http://www.csicatalyst.org/projects/39-face-value-telling-stories-of-mixed-race-identity>, accessed on March 8, 2014.

D.1. The Funding Process: Ducky's Roti & Caribbean Food Proposal



Face Value is an exhibition of three female artists who are of mixed Caribbean and/or European heritage and who are working through their sense of self and the way they are seen in the world using self-portraits, masks, and painting, video, and photography.

Face Value opens **Thursday, February 20th** at Gallery 1313 and runs until March 2, 2014.

Request: In-kind donation of appetizer food for the opening reception – for 200 people (400 pieces).

Benefits:

Marketing/Sponsorship Logo and text recognition Opportunities:

- **Akimbo:** TWO BLASTS, end of January and mid-February with Ali's Roti logo - Akimbo dedicated arts consumers e-blast (8,500 reach), RSS feed (50,750 subscribers), online banner advertising (155,000 unique visits/month), social media 10,000+ reach + multiple tweets
- **online** forum for people of mixed-race to share their stories related to the exhibition
- flyers (1,000), poster
- social media presence with OCADU student/faculty distribution lists

Gallery Presence:

- Onsite flyers and pop-up table signage (anticipated audience artist, curators, high-income art consumers, Caribbean community 200+)
- Opportunity to serve product

Note that Gallery 1313 has been successful in attracting significant television and online press reporting - with their latest exhibition, *Rest In Peace Morgan Freeman* The Space Station did a television spot, and there was extensive blog reporting.

Cross-Promotion:

Also note that this project is opening a major cultural conference, "The State of Blackness: From Representation to Production" that will draw 60 artists, curators, educators from across Canada, and will present public panels and community outreach initiatives at **Harbourfront Centre** on Saturday February 21. **Face Value** and "The State of Blackness" will be cross-promoted. www.thestateofblackness.com

The conference hotel partner is The Gladstone and Face Value will be cross-promoted at **The Gladstone Hotel**.

Curator: Heidi McKenzie
416-538-3333
heidi.mckenzie@gmail.com

E. Marketing and Promotion: Didactic Panel

face_{value}

Jordan Clarke, b. 1984, Toronto, Canada

Erika DeFreitas, b. 1980, Toronto, Canada

Olivia McGilchrist, b. 1981, Kingston, Jamaica

The exhibition *Face Value* explores the complexities of mixed-race identity described by theorist Diana Taylor as “the double-coded neither/nor subjectivity.” The three artists featured in the exhibition engage in self-portraiture to narrate their experiences of being women of mixed Caribbean / European heritage. In the artists’ work, the mask is the focal point of self-reflexive inquiry, one that embodies, interrogates, and performs mixed-race in order to destabilize racialized stereotypes. The artists’ use of masks - both literally and metaphorically - challenges society’s ideas of who these women might be, at face value.

Jordan Clarke’s self-portraits span a three-year process in which she produces paintings that represent herself in relation to her understanding of how others perceive the way she looks. Her use of masks both affirms her own sense of identity and challenges the way others see her as neither black nor white, but ‘something in between.’

Erika DeFreitas uses language to subvert racial categorization. Her series of nine photographic self-portraits enunciate the American anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston’s phrase “I am not tragically colored.” DeFreitas distorts these words by pressing her mouth against a plexiglass barrier. The resulting gestures symbolize a struggle between language and its embodiment, racial preconceptions and self-determination.

Olivia McGilchrist’s photographs and video installation focus on her sense of identity as a white woman born in Jamaica who has recently discovered that her family has African ancestry. Embedding herself in the Jamaican landscape to evoke the ghosts of this unknown lineage, McGilchrist questions her complicity in the ongoing inequities of her native country.

Heidi McKenzie, Curator

Exhibition Partners



Dr. Kenneth Montague, Wedge Curatorial Projects

Judith Ann MacMillan

Face Value is a thesis exhibition mounted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of OCAD University’s MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice. Special thanks to Heidi McKenzie’s thesis advisors, Prof. Dot Tuer, Ph.D. and Prof. Andrea Fatona, Ph.D., OCAD University.

E.1. Marketing & Promotion: Exhibition Flyer

See “Additional Material” for hard copy of Exhibition Flyer.

E.2. Marketing & Promotion: Exhibition Poster

face value

1 Am Not Tragically Colored (after Zora Neale Hurston) detail, by Erika DeFreitas, 2013-2014, Photo Credit: Daniel Ehrenworth

FEB 19–MAR 2
Gallery 1313
Opening Reception:
Thurs Feb 20, 2014
7PM-9PM
BY RSVP ONLY TO FACEVALUEOPENING@GMAIL.COM

ARTISTS
Jordan Clarke, Toronto, Canada
Erika DeFreitas, Toronto, Canada
Olivia McGilchrist, Kingston, Jamaica

Curator, Heidi McKenzie

The way someone looks—at face value—isn't necessarily who they may be. The three artists in this exhibition are of mixed Caribbean and/or European ethnic heritage. They use the mask in either a literal or abstract manner to interrogate, explore or perform their cultural identities through self-portraiture in photography, painting and video art.

EXHIBITION PARTNERS
THE STATE OF BLACKNESS
OCADU STUDENT UNION

SPECIAL THANKS TO DR. KENNETH MONTAGUE

RECEPTION PARTNERS
A NEW'S ROOT
Gallery 1313

1313 Queen Street West Toronto
Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 1PM-6PM
facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com

Produced at 18" x 12" designed by Bianca Channer and Olayide Madamidola.

E.3. Marketing & Promotion: Akimbit Advertisement

CANADA'S ONLINE SOURCE FOR VISUAL ART INFORMATION
SUBSCRIBE TO

ABOUT

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 MAR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

THE NEXT 7 DAYS:
EVENTS (9) +
OPENINGS (14) +
DEADLINES (10) +
CLOSINGS (13)

DIRECTORY //

GALLERY TOURS //

EVENTS //

EXHIBITIONS //

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS //

JOBS //

LEARNING //

PUBLICATIONS //

HIT LIST //

AKIMBLOG //

ART + TECH //

BLOG //

AWARDS //

EXHIBITIONS

📅 📧 📱 📺 📷 📺 📺

DAYS:	TYPE:	CITY:	VENUE:	
1	Exhibitions	Toronto	Gallery 1313	FILTER

back (+)

face

value

FEB 19–MAR 2 | Gallery 1313

Opening Reception: Thursday, Feb 20, 2014 | 7-9PM

FACE VALUE at Gallery 1313
 Opening Reception: Thursday, February 20, 7-9pm
 By RSVP only at facevalueopening@gmail.com
 Exhibition Run: February 19 – March 2, 2014
 Curator's Talk: Saturday, March 1, 2pm

ARTISTS: Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas, Olivia McGilchrist

CURATOR: Heidi McKenzie

The exhibition Face Value explores the complexities of mixed-race identity described by theorist Diana Taylor as "the double-coded neither/nor subjectivity." The three artists featured in the exhibition engage in self-portraiture to narrate their experiences of being mixed race women of Caribbean / European descent. In the artists' work, the mask is the focal point of self-reflexive inquiry – one that embodies, interrogates, and performs mixed-race in order to destabilize racialized stereotypes. The artists' use of masks – both literally and metaphorically – challenges society's ideas of who these women might be, at face value.

Jordan Clarke's self-portraits span a three-year process in which she produces paintings that represent herself in relation to her understanding of how others perceive the way she looks. Her use of masks both affirms her own sense of identity and challenges the way others see her as neither black nor white, but 'something in between.'

Erika DeFreitas uses language to subvert racial categorization. Her series of nine self-portraits enunciate the American anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston's phrase "I am not tragically colored." DeFreitas distorts these words by pressing her mouth against a plexiglass barrier. The resulting gestures symbolize a struggle between language and its embodiment, racial preconceptions and self-determination.

Olivia McGilchrist's photography and video installation focus on her sense of identity as a white woman born in Jamaica who has recently discovered that her family has African ancestry. Embedding herself in the Jamaican landscape to evoke the ghosts of this unknown lineage, McGilchrist questions her complicity in the ongoing inequities of her native country.

Exhibition Partners: [The State of Blackness](#) conference; OCAD University Student Union; Dr. Kenneth Montague of Wedge Curatorial Projects.

CLIENT SERVICES

New Client?

- Email Services
- Mobile Services
- Web-based Services
- Social Media Services
- Advertising Services
- Book a Workshop

SUBSCRIBE ME

- EMAIL LIST
- CALENDAR
- RSS

Follow Us on Twitter

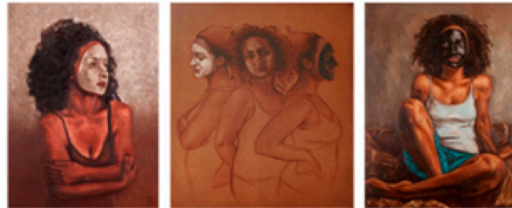
Loading tweets..

copyright ©2014

Call for submissions:
 @AtTheBarns
 seeks artists, designers + makers to participate in
 #BarnsArtMarket
<http://t.co/UfrQs2PpsY>
 #WychwoodBarns
 . @GoetheToronto
 screening of "Pool of Princesses"
 planned for March 13 is postponed to
 March 18, 6:30pm
<http://t.co/kisoLJIHtH>



copyright ©2014



Gallery 1313
 1313 Queen Street West (at Brock)
 Wednesdays – Sundays 1pm – 6pm
 416-536-6778
www.gallery1313.org
 RSVP to Opening at: facevalueopening@gmail.com

Contact:
 Heidi McKenzie
heidi@heidimckenzie.ca
www.facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BARNES HERITAGE OF WOODS ORIGINAL PROJECTS FOR HIS SUPPORT OF THE ARTIST FEES.



facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com

Thanks to Steam Whistle Brewing for their continued support of the arts.


photo credits top to bottom: *I Am Not Tragically Colored* (after Zora Neale Hurston) detail, by Erika DeFreitas, 2013-2014, photo credit: Daniel Ehrenworth; Olivia McGilchrist, *(whitey)* Discovery Bay, 2013, Photography on Canvas, 84" x 59"; Jordan Clarke, *White Façade*, 2010, Oil on Canvas, 18" x 24"; *Something in Between*, 2011, Oil on Canvas, 30" x 36"; *Nothing is Just Black or White*, 2008, Oil on Canvas, 30" x 40"

Posted on Akimbo on February 14th, 2014, <http://www.akimbo.ca/65105> (accessed March 12, 2014)

E.4. Marketing & Promotion: Akimblog Review

CANADA'S ONLINE SOURCE FOR VISUAL ART INFORMATION

akimbo




◀ 24 25 26 27 28 MAR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

THE NEXT 7 DAYS: EVENTS (9) + OPENINGS (14) + DEADLINES (10) + CLOSINGS (13)

DIRECTORY //
GALLERY TOURS //
EVENTS //
EXHIBITIONS //
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS //
JOBS //
LEARNING //
PUBLICATIONS //
HIT LIST //
AKIMBLOG //
ART + TECH BLOG //
AWARDS //

AKIMBLOG


VANCOUVER CALGARY WINNIPEG ONTARIO TORONTO MONTREAL HALIFAX ALL



TORONTO
TERENCE DICK
FACE VALUE AT GALLERY 1313 | JASON WRIGHT AT GALLERYWEST
February 25, 2014

Like 30

Being a child of the seventies and thus an undergrad of the late eighties/early nineties, I spent time in the trenches amongst those who struggle with the politics of identity. While I had yet to explore the art world, the standard retrospective pigeonhole for this era is to associate it with work also concerned with the trifecta of race, class, and gender. A quarter of a century later, my fellow fill-in-the-blank studies majors are slowly acquiring their tenure and the culture wars continue with new wrinkles like sexual identity changing the playing field. Being far from the so-called margins, I always had troubles with how to position myself, and every year, as Black History Month rolls around, I wonder what role, responsibility, and/or response I should have.



Erika DeFreitas, *I Am Not Tragically Colored* (after Zora Neale Hurston), 2013-2014 (photo: Daniel Ehrenworth)

Face Value, curated by Heidi McKenzie for Gallery 1313, doesn't provide any easy answers but, with its focus on mixed-race identity, "destabilizes racialized stereotypes" to move beyond the binaries of yesteryear into the shifting sands of today. Jordan Clarke's paintings depict the vagaries of perception simply and directly with masked self-portraits. Things get decidedly more complex with Olivia McGilchrist's similarly masked self-negotiating through photocollage and video the experience of a predominantly white identity in a black-associate culture like Jamaica. The interactions played out as a dance of projections and curiosity in *Ernestine and Me* will mean dramatically different things to different viewers and, as such, reveal more about race in a contemporary context (at least in a city like Toronto). Erika DeFreitas' self-distortion, on the other hand, directly engages the viewer, pushing (literally) against the frame in order to mess with expectations. The result is both grotesque and empowering. In the end, getting knocked off balance is probably the best reaction to have.

CLIENT SERVICES

New Client?

- Email Services
- Mobile Services
- Web-based Services
- Social Media Services
- Advertising Services
- Book a Workshop

SUBSCRIBE ME

EMAIL LIST
CALENDAR
RSS

Follow Us on Twitter

Loading tweets...

copyright ©2014

Akimblog Review, by Terence Dick, posted February 25, 2014,
<http://www.akimbo.ca/akimblog/?id=828>, accessed on March 11, 2014.

E.5. Marketing & Promotion: Mixed Bag Mag review

The screenshot shows the homepage of Mixed Bag Mag. The logo is on the left, and the tagline 'A MAGAZINE FOR THE 21st CENTURY' is on the right. Below the tagline is the main headline 'New Culture for a New World' and a sub-headline 'Curating content for 21st Century Minds'. A navigation bar includes 'Home', 'About', 'Gallery', and 'Contact'. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, there are social media icons for YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. The main content area features a video player with the title 'Heidi McKenzie, Curator of 'Face Value'' and a play button. Below the video player, there is a quote: 'What you see isn't necessarily who you are' and a paragraph of text. To the right of the text is a promotional image for the 'face value' exhibit, which includes the title, dates 'FEB 19-MAR 2', location 'Gallery 1313', and opening reception details. Below the promotional image is another video player with the title 'Olivia McGilchrist Artist Statement' and a play button.

mixed bag mag

A MAGAZINE FOR THE 21st CENTURY

New Culture for a New World

Curating content for 21st Century Minds

Featuring change agents & cultural provocateurs who recognize that as we share our diverse narratives we build bridges that close ideological gaps

Home About Gallery Contact

Search

TAG ARCHIVES: HEIDI MCKENZIE

Heidi McKenzie, Curator of 'Face Value' from Heidi McKenzie on Vimeo.

"What you see isn't necessarily who you are"

Corresponding with the conference is the exhibit *Face Value* by curator / artist **Heidi McKenzie**.

"The way people look, and the way they are looked at, has a profound effect on the person being seen. For the bi-racial or mixed-race person, the simple act of being seen by others can be fraught with tension and ambiguity. The familiar unconscious act of identifying and categorizing a person's race based on their face value slips beyond the concrete into the murkiness of the grey zone."

face value

FEB 19-MAR 2 | Gallery 1313

Opening Reception: Thursday, Feb 20, 2014 | 7-9PM

Olivia McGilchrist Artist Statement from Heidi McKenzie

Leah Snyder, "What you see isn't necessarily who you are," *Mixed Bag Mag*
<http://mixedbagmag.com/?s=face+value&submit=Search>

E.6. Marketing & Promotion: Arc Magazine

The screenshot shows the Arc Magazine website layout. At the top left is the 'ARC' logo with the tagline 'ART. RECOGNITION. CULTURE.' To its right is a featured image of a person's face and a 'facebook' logo. Further right is a box for 'ISSUE N°8' with the text 'featuring work by Christopher Cozier'. Below the logo is a navigation menu: HOME, ABOUT US, CONTRIBUTORS, SHOP, ARTISTS, SUBMIT, DISTRIBUTORS, CONTACT.

The main article is titled 'Face Value Exhibition at Gallery 1313'. It is dated 'Friday, February 21st, 2014' and categorized under 'Exhibitions, Updates'. Social media sharing buttons for Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are visible. The article text discusses the exhibition's focus on mixed-race identity and the use of masks by artists Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas, and Olivia McGilchrist. A large graphic below the text reads 'face value FEB 19–MAR 2 | Gallery 1313 Opening Reception: Thursday, Feb 20, 2014 | 7-9PM'. Below this graphic, the artists and curator are listed: 'ARTISTS: Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas, Olivia McGilchrist' and 'CURATOR: Heidi McKenzie'. Three short paragraphs describe each artist's work.

On the right side of the page, there is a vertical stack of images and logos. From top to bottom: a gallery view of the 'VOLTANK' exhibition (March 6-9, 2014 at 82MERQER, SOHO); a logo for '3BANOSVIDEOBRASIL'; a logo for 'northeleven'; a logo for 'aica' (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art); a logo for 'Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE'; a logo for 'Repeating Islands'; a logo for 'BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY'; a logo for 'BIAC MARTINIQUE'; and a logo for 'International Center of Photography ICP-Bard MFA'.



Jordan Clark, Nothing is Just Black or White, 2008, Oil on Canvas, 30" x 40"

Gallery 1313
1313 Queen Street West (at Brock)
Toronto, Canada
Wednesdays - Sundays 1pm - 6pm
416-536-6778

Contact: Heidi McKenzie, heid@heidmckenzie.ca

For more information, visit the [exhibition website](#).

BruiEdge
GALLERY

APPLY NOW



Artist Quotes:

Jordan Clarke, b. 1984, Toronto, Canada

I initially thought of the mask as a superficial layer of identity - something that can be placed on me by others. I wanted to be seen a specific way, I wanted to be black, full black. Now I have mixed feelings, I'm kind of almost proudly stating that I'm mixed race but at the same time saying that I am just something in between, whatever that is, I'm not sure. In the end, I leave my uncertainty behind and remove the masks altogether.



Erika DeFreitas, I am not tragically colored (after Zora Neale Hurston), detail, 2013-2014, 20" x 30" x 4

Erika DeFreitas, b. 1981, Toronto, Canada

There are times when other people will assume that I am from another culture or identity than what I identify as, and there is that feeling of not being who I am in the eyes of someone else, but not identifying with the other that they are assuming I am.

I know that mask means to conceal and to hide. When I was creating the work I was thinking of the mask, not being a literal mask, but how we use language to mask things.



Olivia McGilchrist, (whitey) Discovery Bay, 2013, Photography on Canvas, 84" x 59"

Olivia McGilchrist, b. 1981 Kingston, Jamaica

At face value I'm a white female. When I discovered that I had a great grandmother that was black - it caused me to rethink my Caribbean identity. If I was in another non-white dominant part of the world, I'd feel the same, but here I feel infinitely connected to the land and the sea and the history - the primordial thing that bothers me is the very clear history: we come here, take over, dominate, and you still have to suffer for however long to get over all of this horror.



Olivia McGilchrist, Ernestine and Me, 2013
video still

Share 142 Tweet 3 Email 0

“Face Value Exhibition at Gallery 1313,” *ARC Magazine*, Issue No. 8. Friday, February 21st, 2014, <http://mixedbagmag.com/?s=face+value&submit=Search> (accessed on March 12, 2014).

E.7. Marketing & Promotion: *Race Card* Online Review

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Race Card' website. At the top, there are navigation links for 'ABOUT', 'SUBMISSIONS', and 'CONTACT'. The 'Race Card' logo is prominently displayed in a pink and white stylized font. Below the logo, the tagline reads 'News and comment for a multi-ethnic Britain'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. A horizontal menu below the logo lists various categories: NEWS, ACTION, MULTIMEDIA, POLITICS, IDENTITY, CRIME, FINANCE, EDUCATION, CULTURE, HISTORY, and GLOBAL. The 'CULTURE' category is highlighted in pink.

The main content area features an article titled 'Taking biracial identity at more than face value' by ADMIN, published in CULTURE - IDENTITY on 12 MAR, 2014. The article's text discusses an exhibition in Toronto called 'Face Value', which explores mixed-race identity. It mentions three artists: Jordan Clarke, Erika DeFreitas, and Olivia McGilchrist. The article describes how the artists use self-portraiture and masks to challenge racialized stereotypes and society's ideas of identity.

On the left side of the page, there is a sidebar with several article teasers, including 'Challenging a culture of racial equivalence', 'Love and Colour', 'Hooked on Arab Stereotypes', 'Race relations and the Immigration Bill', and 'Challenging Whiteness'. Below these teasers are sections for 'LATEST POSTS' and 'RECENT COMMENTS', each listing recent articles and user feedback.

At the bottom of the article, there are three images: a painting of a woman's face, a photograph of a person in a boat on a beach, and a photograph of a woman in a white dress standing in a crowd.

“Taking biracial identity at more than face value” in *Race Card* published by Runnymede Publications, March 12, 2014. <http://mixedbagmag.com/?s=face+value&submit=Search> (accessed on March 12, 2014).

F. Online Project & Forum

face value

SEARCH ...

HOME ABOUT FACE VALUE THE ARTISTS YOUR STORY SUPPORTERS CONTACT

Jordan Clarke
Posted on 12/10/2013 · Leave a comment

LATEST ENTRIES

A multi-media exhibition featuring the work of Jordan Clarke, Erika Defreitas and Olivia McGilchrist
Posted on 01/06/2014 · Leave a comment

Face Value is a multi-media (painting, photography, video and textile art) exhibition of works by three mid-career female artists (two Toronto-based, one Jamaican) who are of mixed-race heritage and whose art depicts the societal and personal challenges of living with an ambiguous identity where what you see isn't necessarily who you are. The artists all use ... [Continue reading →](#)

WHAT YOU SEE ISN'T NECESSARILY WHO YOU ARE

The way people look, and the way they are looked at, has a profound effect on the person being seen. For the bi-racial or mixed-race person, the simple act of being seen by others can be fraught with tension and ambiguity. The familiar unconscious act of identifying and categorizing a person's race based on their face value slips beyond the concrete into the murkiness of the grey zone.

THE CURATOR

Heidi McKenzie is an emerging curator and this is her thesis project for her Masters in Fine Arts, Criticism and Curatorial Practice, at OCADU (Ontario College of Art and Design University). Visit Heidi's website at: <http://heidimckenzie.ca/>

Blog at WordPress.com. | The Sight Theme.

“Home: *Face Value*,” <http://facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com>, accessed on March 11, 2014.

facevalue

SEARCH

[HOME](#) [ABOUT FACE VALUE](#) [THE ARTISTS](#) [YOUR STORY](#) [SUPPORTERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

About Face Value



WHAT YOU SEE ISN'T NECESSARILY WHO YOU ARE

The way people look, and the way they are looked at, has a profound effect on the person being seen. For the bi-racial or mixed-race person, the simple act of being seen by others can be fraught with tension and ambiguity. The familiar unconscious act of identifying and categorizing a person's race based on their face value slips beyond the concrete into the murkiness of the grey zone.

THE CURATOR

Heidi McKenzie is an emerging curator and this is her thesis project for her Masters In Fine Arts, Criticism and Curatorial Practice, at OCADU (Ontario College of Art and Design University). Visit Heidi's website at: <http://heidimckenzie.ca/>

Opening Reception: Thursday February 20th, 7-9pm, Gallery 1313
[rsvp facevalueopening@gmail.com](mailto:facevalueopening@gmail.com)

Face Value is a multi-media (painting, photography, video and textile art) exhibition of works by three mid-career female artists (two Toronto-based, one Jamaican) who are of mixed-race heritage and whose art depicts the societal and personal challenges of living with an ambiguous identity where what you see isn't necessarily who you are. The artists all use masks, and tell their stories of race, place, and (un)belonging through self-portraiture.

Curated by Heidi McKenzie, the exhibition features the work of Jordan Clarke, Erika Defreitas, and Olivia McGilchrist. The exhibition runs from **Feb 20 - March 2, 2014** in order to open a related OCADU conference "[The State of Blackness: from Production to Representation](#)" that will draw over 60 artists, curators and academics from Canada and the United States. The public panels and keynote are at [Harbourfront Centre](#) and the artists in *Face Value* are participating in "The State of Blackness."

Share this:

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Google](#)

[★ Like](#)

Be the first to like this.

About *Face Value*, <http://facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com/about-face-value/> accessed on March 11, 2014.

F.1. Online Project & Forum: Marie's Story

facevalue

HOME	ABOUT FACE VALUE	THE ARTISTS	YOUR STORY	SUPPORTERS	CONTACT
----------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

Marie Moliner

I am a mongrel. At age 55, I can say that now with a degree of pride and humour which was not really the case before I moved to Toronto in 1980. Born in Montreal to European-born parents who met in Canada, my first five years were spent living in the state of Maryland (where at age 5, my claim to fame was to play barber and cut off a very blonde neighbour's hair...which I am confident I envied...) Shortly thereafter, with two new siblings in tow, we moved back to Canada, settling first in Quebec City and later in Sherbrooke.

My mother was born in "Eire" and speaks with a lovely Irish accent which belies her ethnic heritage as her parents were born in India. They immigrated to Waterford, Ireland in the early 1900's so that my grand-father could open a medical practice. The only Indian doctor in Ireland at the time, he was hugely popular and known as the "Black" doctor -which differentiated him from the Catholic doctor... and the Protestant doctor... My mother married my Spanish-born father who, having fled a dictatorship, determined that it was best to isolate us from Franco's legacy and did not teach us Spanish. (My Spanish grandparents were well educated, my grandmother wrote the Spanish version of the Oxford or Larousse dictionaries, and my grandfather was a physics professor)

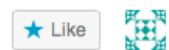
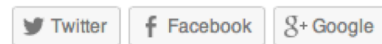
While my mother's Trinity College Dublin accent may have trumped her Indian features, shadeism hovered. I recall my grandmother, insisting that she was Portuguese (true in part given colonialism) an orphan (definitely true), and Goan (perhaps). This Indian-born grandmother, whose not-insignificant claim to fame was to live in good health until 113, encouraged my mother to powder her daughters' faces to make us more marriageable. I see now that this upbringing must have generated some identity issues for my mum who delighted in calling her 4 children "mongrels". Racism, or the more subtle shade-ism, was not a subject discussed in our home even though we 4 children stood out as 'different' from most of the neighbours. To this day my mother lives by the mantra that "sticks and stones will break your bones but names will never hurt you". This was used to vitiate any sense we might have had that our ethnicity or heritage was an issue or that our otherness was relevant.

So, while being the child of immigrants was part of my story, it was not until I took the Jane St. bus to my first Toronto apartment at 325 Driftwood Ave that I sensed that my story was more than one word (mongrel). As I looked around me, I saw faces that looked like mine, like my mother's, and certainly like my Irish-Indian aunts. Additionally, I understood the Spanish I heard on the bus since, at age 15 and thanks to a Spanish boyfriend, I had learned Spanish despite, or perhaps because of, my father. I had always had a sense that my mixed identity allowed me to make choices about who I 'really' was and where I was 'really' from. Indeed the choice I made most often, until I moved to Toronto, was to self-identify as Spanish. To be Spanish was a 'safe' identity and seemed to satisfy the curious and often white, friends and colleagues, about my somewhat 'exotic' colouring and features.

Yes, racism and shade-ism fluttered around the edges of my existence. Yes, I have felt singled out due to my face value. Indeed, I have been singled out for the good, for the uncomfortable, for the bad, and for the ugly and more often, now, for the amazing. When singled out for the good, it is because people see, in my face-value, a person they can relate to, and who can be helpful to them. In particular, Indian men and women immediately see my Indian-ness. I first noticed this when they would ask me for directions, or ask for the "Indian" law student at the clinic where I volunteered, or when Indian, Pakistani, and Sri-Lankan taxi-drivers want to talk. When my face value is singled out for the uncomfortable, it is usually because people jump to a wrong, and unimportant, conclusion. For example, when I was a Bencher (a member of the governing body of lawyers) older male lawyers, arriving at Law Society functions, would extend their hand to me...with their coat in it... as they presumed me to be the coat-check girl. When my face value is singled out for the bad, it is because like many people who do not look like they are part of the Toronto elite, my face-value deems me to be less competent and perhaps ignorable. At these times, my contribution is not valued and I sometimes I have my identity and intentions questioned repeatedly, and sometimes denounced, by both those who are whiter and darker. At its worst, face-value that is ugly underpins racial profiling and other exclusionary and systemic practices. When my face value has been singled out for the ugly it is because the viewer's assumptions are so individually flawed that they reveal systemic patterns of hate and violence: I have been spat on, called names, mistaken for a terrorist and arrested, in Oklahoma, because the police thought I was an illegal immigrant.

All told though, when I look back on these experiences, I can choose to dismiss their negative impact me. And, I can choose to focus on the positive essence of face-value. After all, I live in Toronto. Here, who we are and where we are from, is part of our street cred. Our face-value can be a joyful way to connect with new and interesting people, especially when premised on respect, curiosity and good intentions. So, I choose to honour the essence and awesome beauty of our diverse face-values. I choose to treasure the good face-value, to laugh at the uncomfortable face-value, to ignore the bad face-value, and to fight the ugly. Venceremos!

Share this:



One blogger likes this.

<http://facevaluebyheidimckenzie.wordpress.com/your-story/marie-moliners-story/>
accessed on March 11, 2014.

G. Artist Information: Biographies

Jordan Clarke

Jordan Clarke is a Toronto based artist. In addition to appearing in solo and group exhibitions in Ontario and abroad, Jordan's art has been published in the anthology *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, edited by Adebe DeRango-Adem and Andrea Thompson. Another of her paintings provided the cover art for *A Many-Splendored Thing*, poems by Peter Austin. Jordan is a member of 3MW (Three Mixed Women), a collective of three mixed-race artists. She is also a recipient of funding from the Ontario Arts Council. In 2008, Jordan studied at the Academy of Realist Art in Toronto, completing the Drawing curriculum. In 2007, she graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design, receiving a BFA. While attending OCAD, she was fortunate enough to participate in the off-campus studies program in Florence, Italy, 2005-2006. Web: jordanclarke.ca

Erika DeFreitas

Erika DeFreitas' artistic practice explores the influence of language, loss and culture on the formation of identity through performance, relational exchanges, photographic documentation and textile-based works. DeFreitas is a graduate of the MFA program in Visual Studies at the University of Toronto and has exhibited projects in artist-run centres in Canada and the United States. Recent and upcoming exhibition sites include Gallery TPW, A Space Gallery, Gallery 44, Propeller Centre for Visual Arts in Toronto, the Houston Museum of African American Culture, performances with the 7a*11d International Festival of Performance Art, and a residency at Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg. Web: erikadefreitas.com

Olivia McGilchrist

Olivia McGilchrist is a Jamaican-French visual artist who's alter-ego Whitey explores physical expressions of emotional states in the search for cultural identity. She troubles her post-colonial white Creole female identity by remapping it within the tropical picturesque through photographs, performances and multi-layered videos. Born in Kingston, Jamaica to a French mother and a Jamaican father. She grew up in France and was educated in the UK. In 2010 she completed her Master's in Photography at the London College of Communications and, in 2011, she returned to Kingston to work at the National Gallery of Jamaica (NGJ) and lecture in Photography and New Media at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. Her work has been shown in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada, Brazil, the U.S., the U.K., and France. Most recently she won the Trinidad & Tobago film festival and ARC Magazine New Media Prize, and was chosen by the NGJ as one of ten emerging artists on the island. Web: www.oliviamcgilchrist.com

F.1. Artist Information: Artist Statements

Jordan Clarke

As an artist, it is important for me to create with meaning and purpose. I'm interested in the politics of identity, specifically that of the black woman. My art explores and questions race and identity in relation to the portrayal of black women by society, with the intent of representing these women more accurately in positions of confidence, beauty, and influence.

As a woman of colour, I see the importance of providing a truthful voice regarding our place in society and our identity as expressed through our individual and collective experiences. I believe in empowerment through self-representation. It's important for me to present and give a voice to black women as collective body.

My most recent body of work "Something In-between" has become an important exploration of self. As a mixed-race woman, I have used my background to explore and question identity and all the contradictions that come with being mixed-race. How we perceive ourselves, as well as how we are perceived by others, is the underlying concern of this series, as is much of the work I produce.

The paintings in "Something In-between" are all self-portraits. I've used the imagery of the mask as a central focus in each painting, symbolizing a switching of identities and the often restrictive labels of race and colour. As a biracial woman, I navigate between two very different worlds.

In the painting "Oneness", the masks are removed from the face, and hang from a hook on the wall. In the end, I move beyond the mask, in all its contradictions — that superficial layer identifying me as a colour rather than a human being.

Erika DeFreitas

My interdisciplinary practice draws on both personal and cultural histories to investigate the qualities of absence and presence, which comes from my curiosity with the various forms of loss one encounters, and a fear of the loss one anticipates encountering; such as the loss of an opportunity, a memory, identity, or of a loved one. I explore the dichotomy of absence and presence through textile-based practices, and performative actions that are photographed; this places an emphasis on process, gesture, and documentation — all relating to ways of affirming one's presence. This is further emphasized in my use of large scale photographs that are often installed as serial/sequential images. What has evolved in my investigation is a playful obsession to find ways to make the impermanent permanent, or to engage in ritualistic acts with the hopes of regaining what is lost, as evidenced in the photographic series *A Teleplasmic Study with Doilies*, which explores through performative acts, the historical accounts of séances conducted in Winnipeg during

the 1920's. A key component in my practice involves embracing the unpredictability of loss, while conceptually developing ways to highlight different aspects of loss in a contemporary context.

Olivia McGilchrist

Juxtaposition of parallel co-existing realities has become an important and elusive aspect of my work, since returning to live in Jamaica in 2011. Since then, my practice has incorporated my body, remapping it within the tropical picturesque through a combination of video, photography and live video performance, presented as large installations. My masked alter ego Whitey, was created to portray my uncomfortable feelings as a returning visibly white Jamaican in a predominantly black society. Whitey's placement in the Jamaican landscape questions the role of racial, social and gender based categorisation, classification and discrimination in the contemporary Caribbean space. The performative aspect within the work traverses two strands of personal experience, which Whitey embodies with varying degrees of engagement. She questions the shifting spaces in which she belongs: white post-colonial Creole identity, and the female body in a post-modern space.

Prior to this, as a London based artist, I was fully enraptured with the portrayal of other bodies, and focused on the movements of anonymous dancers in clubs; constructing seemingly private moments within a usually shared experience. Since this shift from a documentary based approach to the construction of characters and mimed narratives, my work is now more conceptually grounded in Caribbean Feminist theory, combined with 1950's existentialism, absurd theatre and the French Nouveau Roman (a movement in French literature which called into question the traditional modes of literary realism). I draw particular inspiration from the absurd social rituals in French Philosopher Jean Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* (1944) and contemporary Barbadian-Canadian artist and scholar Jocelyn Gardner's 'Untangling' of female Creole identity.

G.2. Artist Information: Video Transcript of *The Artists Speak*

Jordan Clarke

My name is Jordan Clarke. I am a visual artist. I work primarily in oil paint. The recurring themes in my work are usually mixed race identity and black female identity. The painting *Nothing is Just Black or White* was originally created for a group exhibition. I wanted to interpret the idea of the mask in a personal way. Because it was a Caribbean themed exhibition, I didn't want to use, I guess the general idea of the Carnival mask. I wanted something more personal. I initially thought of the mask as a superficial layer of identity, something that can be placed on me, or removed – a mask that I wear, or that can be placed on me by others. The mask symbolizes society's need to put people or mixed race identity and to attempt to put them into groups or categories. But mixed race identity can't be put into a specific category because it's complex.

I found the fist painting, *Nothing is Black or White*, I'm very defiant in it – almost asking the viewer to define me as a person. I'm very complex, but I challenge you to define me.

Then there's the painting *Something in Between*. In that painting, I've depicted myself three times. So there are three different views of me – I identify with the portrait in the middle. On either side, there's myself with the white mask and myself with the black mask, and they do represent my two sides but also two different worlds that don't come together. In that particular painting, I have mixed feelings. I'm kind of almost proudly stating that I'm mixed race, but at the same time saying that I am just something in between — whatever that is, I'm not sure.

Erika DeFreitas

My name is Erika DeFrietas I'm primarily a conceptual artist, who works with performance textile based work

The photo-based work in the exhibition consists of nine photographs, where I'm saying the quote "I am not tragically coloured" It's a quote from Zora Neale Hurston. In the performative action, I am holding a piece of glass up to my mouth and saying a syllable of that quote. So each photograph reflects one of those syllables.

I've been thinking a lot about the idea that race is a social construct: it's something that's created. I've done a lot of reading about how people are trying to break down categories as a system of classifying people. Some of the ideas that I'm working through with that piece is addressing some of the historical notions of the mixed-

race individual – primarily that of being a beautiful, exotic, sexualized human being. I feel like I’m kind of I’m trying to be subversive with that by disfiguring my face, even if it’s slightly; I’m trying to disrupt that notion. I’m playing with the abject and the grotesque nature of pressing the glass against my face – in a sense it’s objectifying my body – so I’m becoming more of an object rather than a subject, but I think that shifts because of my gaze. My eyes are looking out directly to the viewer or the audience – so there’s a little confrontation in the work

There are times when other people will assume that I am from another culture or a different race than what I identify as, and there is that feeling of not being who I am in the eyes of someone else, but not identifying with the other that they are assuming I am.

When I was creating the work I was thinking of the mask, not being a literal mask, but as a mask to conceal things. I know that mask means to conceal and to hide. I think sometimes our way of labeling and categorizing things is a way to bring comfort — dispel fear, not dispel fear, but eliminate fear — by being able to put something into a neat category. I think with language, society’s way to deal with some of those fears is by labeling, and so my use of language in the gallery is to kind of play with that a bit, and give people the opportunity to question how they use language and interpret language when read.

Olivia McGilchrist

Hi I’m Olivia McGilchrist and I’m a Jamaican French visual artist using video photographer and video installations more recently.

The inspiration for the film *Ernestine and Me* was based on a photograph that I found in my grandfather’s house - which I’m living in at the moment in Jamaica – he’s no longer alive and there’s no one around from the family, they’ve all passed away– so finding this photograph was a little bit of an epiphany, I would say, I’d never seen anything about his family and his parents. So I assume that that photograph was him with his parents and his siblings. Throughout this one image there’s a history of a variety of people who happen to be my family and I’m just wondering how they would perceive me today if they were around, or if they could see me or how I would be amongst them. All the other Jamaicans who come in and out of the frame are basically like a reality check of how it is to be in Jamaica today. Of course I don’t look or sound like a typically Jamaican person, even though Jamaica is a reasonably diverse population. So initially I felt very very marginalized, and I didn’t really feel like I was fitting in – particularly when I started realizing that the most obvious trait of yours is generally what people call you by on the street. So I was getting called “Whitey” all the time. I wanted to really be very honest and very clear that I was making work about whiteness and about the fact that I’m white and how I’ve come

to understand the implications of being a white person in an essentially non-white country. The mask just became a natural extension of that dilemma and that work.

One of the references in terms of an art history, a historical reference, there's a famous John Canoe character. Jonkunnu is a Jamaican folk dance. It was started by the slaves, it's still going on, but it's dying out. It happens around Christmas time. One of the characters is called Actor boy – and he wears a white mask. I figured that me wearing a white mask, even though I'm white, might hint some people that whiteness is essentially a mental construct as much as a reality of a skin tone, or an ethnic belonging or ethnic group.

G.3. Artist Information: Artist Curriculum Vitae

Jordan Clarke

1709-111 Pacific Ave
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6P 2P2
416 - 831- 9063
www.jordanclarke.ca
Jordan.clarke@sympatico.ca

Education

- 2008 – 2009 Academy of Realist Art (Canada)
BFA 2007 Ontario College of Art & Design, Major in Drawing and Painting (Canada)
2005-06 Ontario College of Art & Design Off-Campus Studies (Florence, Italy)

Juried Exhibitions

- 2013 Toronto Art Expo – Metro Toronto Convention Centre: April 11-14
2012 “When I Hear Music, I See Colour”. Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre and
Common Ground Gallery – The Artists Of Colour. Windsor Ontario: February
10 - 21
2011 LOOK.AT.ME Art Show: in conjunction with the play “*Da Kink in My Hair*”
written by Trey Anthony. Enwave Theatre, Toronto Ontario: August 11 – 28
2009 Junction Arts Festival. Academy of Realist Art. Toronto, Ontario:
September 9 – 13
2007 *African Roots: Celebrating Black Heritage*. Gallery Streetsville, Mississauga,
Ontario: February 15 - March 22

Solo Exhibitions

- 2012 “Vessel Goddess”. Theatre Passe Muraille – 2nd floor Mezzanine. 16 Ryerson Ave
Toronto, Ontario: February 1-28
2012 “Something In-between”. Balzac’s Coffee – Second Floor Gallery. The Historic
Distillery District Toronto, Ontario: October 1-31
2011 “Something In-between”. Hang Man Gallery - Artists’ Network of Riverdale. 756
Queen St. East Toronto, Ontario: September 6 – 25
2010 “Mask” Series: Recent Paintings by Jordan Clarke. 588 Markham Street,
Studio 7. Toronto, Ontario: July 9 – 11

Group Exhibitions

- 2012 “Faces In Between” Recent Paintings by 3MW Collective. Daniels Spectrum –
Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre, 858 Dundas St. East Toronto, Ontario:
February 1-28
2008 *Mask*. Association of African Canadian Artists. Metro Centre. Toronto, Ontario

- 2007 *Silent Auction: Shimmy-a-thon*. Naditu Belly Dance. Toronto, Ontario
- 2007 *Silent Auction: "The Passion of Winnie" Gala*. Ensemble Noir/Musica Noir. Toronto, Ontario
- 2007 *Tour de Force: OCAD Graduate Exhibition*. OCAD, Toronto, Ontario
- 2007 *OCAD Figurative Exhibition*. OCAD, Toronto, Ontario
- 2007 *Black Heritage Celebration Exhibition*. Canada Revenue Agency, Mississauga, Ontario
- 2006 *Whodunit?*. OCAD, Toronto, Ontario
- 2006 *Summer Send Off*. Naditu Belly Dance Studio, Toronto, Ontario
- 2006 *Those who go, those who stay*. OCAD Student Gallery, Florence, Italy
- 2005 *The 23 Show*. OCAD Student Gallery, Florence, Italy

Commissions

- 2007 & 05 Tabuli Restaurant. Toronto, Ontario
- 2004 Naditu Belly Dance Studio. Toronto, Ontario

Books

- 2010 *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out* edited by Adebé DeRango-Adem and Andrea Thompson. Anthology of poetry and visual art. Paintings included: "Nothing is just black or white" and "White Mask".
- 2010 *A Many-Splendored Thing* poems by Peter Austin. Cover image art.

Publications

- 2011 Interview by Mixed-me with Rema Tavares. www.mixed-me.ca

Grants

- 2013 Ontario Arts Council: Exhibition Assistance.
- 2011 Ontario Arts Council: Emerging Artists Grant.

Personal

- 1984 Born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

ERIKA DEFREITAS
www.erikadefreitas.com

EDUCATION:
M.V.S., University of Toronto, Toronto, 2008
B.Ed., York University, Toronto, 2004
H.B.A., Art History and Studio, University of Toronto, Toronto, 2003

AWARDS AND GRANTS:
Canada Council for the Arts, Visual Arts Travel Grant, 2013
Ontario Arts Council, Exhibition Assistance Grant, 2013
Ontario Arts Council, Exhibition Assistance Grant, 2010
Ontario Arts Council, Exhibition Assistance Grant, 2008
Ontario Arts Council, Exhibition Assistance Grant, 2008
Canada Council for the Arts, Visual Arts Travel Grant, 2008
Fellowship, University of Toronto, 2006 - 2008
Canada Council for the Arts, Inter-Arts Travel Grant, 2006

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2013
Deaths/Memorials/Births, Centre3 for Print and Media Arts, Hamilton, ON.

2008
Deaths/Memorials/Births, Platform Centre for Photographic + Digital Arts, Winnipeg, MB.

2005,
The Snapshot Chronicles, CWSE, OISE/University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014
Face Value, Gallery 1313, Toronto, ON.

2013
The boat is a floating piece of space, Houston Museum of African American Culture, Houston, TX.

2012
unseen SEEN, Studio 42, Toronto.
New Faces: Portraits from the Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank, Jardins de Metis - Reford GardensEstevan, Quebec.

2011
This Woman's Work..., Project Space, Hamilton, ON.
Eccentricities, Papermill Gallery, Toronto, ON.
Here and There, Propeller Centre for Visual Arts, Toronto, ON.

2010
Feminist Research Performance Project (in collaboration with Leena Raudvee), XPACE, Toronto, ON.
Do You See What I Mean? Voyez-vous ce que je veux dire? Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa, ON.
The Trans-Cultural: Women in Performance, CWSE, OISE/University of Toronto.
Around the Frayed Edges, Agnes Jamieson Gallery, Minden, ON.

2009
DIASPORArt: Strategy and Seduction by Canadian Artists from Culturally Diverse Communities in works from the collection of the Canada Council Art Bank, Rideau Hall, Ottawa, ON.
In The Bedroom Series, Gallery 44, Toronto, ON. (Vitrines)

2008
MVS Graduating Exhibition, The University of Toronto Art Centre, Toronto, ON.
Toronto Alternative Arts & Fashion Week, The Distillery District, Toronto, ON.

2007
Fleeting Face, A Space Gallery, Toronto, ON.
Rehab: Weaning Youth off Corporate Crack, The Gladstone Hotel, Toronto, ON.

2006
Alumni Show, The Gallery, The University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.
Art in the Halls, 401 Richmond, Toronto, ON.
Collision 2006 Inter-arts Research and Practices, University of Victoria, B.C.
Get on the Bus, CITY – SPACE, San Francisco, CA.

2004
Sticks and Stones, sisboombah, Toronto, ON. (Vitrine)
*7a*11d International Festival of Performance Art*, Toronto, ON.
LISTEN! FIVE HOLES series, FADO, Toronto, ON.
Squarefoot 2004, A.W.O.L Gallery, Toronto, ON.

2003
Touch and Go, The Third Floor, Brooklyn, NY.
Body: Not My Autobiography, The Gallery, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.
Gestures, Implant, Toronto, ON.
Beautificades, Ne Plus Ultra, Toronto, ON.

2002
hardFORM, Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts, Toronto, ON.
Grapefruit, Lemon, _____, Art System, Toronto, ON.

AUCTIONS

2013
Canadian Art Foundation Art Auction, Toronto, ON.

RESIDENCIES

2010
Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA), Winnipeg, MB.

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2008
Vivencia Poetica, FADO Inc., Toronto, ON.

GUEST LECTURE / PANEL

2014 Panel Member, *The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation*, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, ON.
2010 Artist Talk, MAWA, Winnipeg, MB.
2009 Artist Talk, Gallery 44, Toronto, ON.
2008 Panel Member, *The New Art of Suburbia* at Centennial College, Toronto, ON.
Artist Talk, Platform Centre for Photographic+Digital Arts, Winnipeg, MB.
2006 Artist Talk, A Space Gallery, Toronto, ON.

JURIES/ADVISORY

2012 Jury Member, Ontario Arts Council Visual Artist: Emerging, Toronto, ON.
2007 Jury Member, Masters of Visual Studies Selection Committee, University of Toronto, ON.
2006 Jury Member, A Space Gallery, Toronto, ON.

PUBLICATIONS

Artist portfolio in Prefix Photo (Issue 18), 2008.
"Deaths/Memorials/Births." (Cover Image) The Manitoban: The University of Manitoba Students' Newspaper, Volume 96 November 14: November 12, 2008.
Online artist project 'Deaths, Memorials, Births' on Extensions: The Online Journal of Embodiment and Technology, <<http://www.extensionsjournal.org/the-journal/4/deaths-memorials-births>> UCLA, Los Angeles, 2008.

REVIEWS/ESSAYS

Mathews, Nolan. "The Art of Erika DeFreitas." The Silhouette. May 21, 2013. <http://www.thesil.ca/deathsmemorialsbirths-the-art-of-erika-defreitas-2> (Reproduction).
Vegh, Stephanie. "Erika DeFreitas at Centre 3." Akimblog, March 19, 2013. <http://akimbo.ca/akimblog/?id=674> (Reproduction).
Davidge, Michael. "Message Pictures: Adventures in Reading Images Part 3." BlackFlash Magazine, Issue 29.2, Winter 2012. (Reproductions).
Cittern, Zoe. "A Different Spin on Textiles." Country Voice, Volume 3 Issue 9: Thursday, March 25, 2010, p.26.
Carraway, Kate. "The art of Scarborough." Eye Weekly, December 12, 2008. <http://www.eyeweekly.com/arts/torontonotes/article/47709>
Eyland, Cliff. Akimblog: Winnipeg, December 2, 2008. <http://www.akimbo.biz/akimblog/?id=244> (Reproduction).
Thiessen, Brittany. "The significance of a blank page: Toronto artist uses obituaries as her canvas for exhibit." The Uniter: The University of Winnipeg Student Weekly, Issue 14: November 27, 2008. <http://www.uniter.ca/view.php?aid=41020> (Reproduction).
Eigenkind, Heidi. (Exhibition Essay) "Deaths/Memorials/Births." Winnipeg: Platform Centre for Photographic + Digital Arts 2008. (Reproductions).
Landry, Mike. "Deaths/Memorials/Births." Things of Desire: Canada's Alternative Art Weekly, Volume 1 Number 11: October 30-November 5. <http://thingsofdesire.ca/2008/10/30/deathsmemorialsbirths/#more-429> (Reproduction).
Reckitt, Helena. (Catalogue Essay). MVS Programme 2008 Graduating Exhibition. Toronto: The University of Toronto 2008. (Reproductions).
Goddard, Peter. "At the Galleries: Closing Today." The Toronto Star, July 21, 2007, Sec. E6.
Schechter, Fran. "Ethnicity's Fleeting Face." NOW Magazine, July 12-18, 2007, p. 81.
Nicholls, Sophie. "Battling against in-school discrimination." 24 Hours, December 4, 2005, p. 6. (Reproduction).
Whyte, Murray. "Random acts of weirdness." The Toronto Star, March 26, 2005, Sec. H, p. 1 and 12.

COLLECTIONS

2010 Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa, ON.
2009 Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa, ON.

olivia mc gilchrist / c.v.
e: oliviamcgilchrist@gmail.com
w: oliviamcgilchrist.com

selected exhibitions and presentations 2010-2014

april 2014 / *Transforming Spaces*, National Gallery of the Bahamas, Nassau, Bahamas
march 2014 / *Volta NYC*, participating in panel *Metanoia: Practices of Exhaustion*, NYC
march 2014/ *Rencontres Internationales*, La Gaité Lyrique, Paris, France
march 2014 / Visiting scholar; screening at Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queens University / Kingston ON, Canada
february 2014 / *Face Value*, Gallery 1313 / Toronto, Canada
november 2013 / *Southern Panoramas* 18th SESC Videobrasil / Sao Paulo, Brasil
october 2013 / *That Ship has sailed*, Rex Nettleford Arts Conference, Edna Manley College of the Arts, Jamaica
september 2013 / *Caribbean Cream (what you do is what you see)*, Brut Edge Gallery at Mana Centre, New Jersey
september 2013/ *New Media*, ARC & Trinidad & Tobago film festival, Medulla Gallery, Port of Spain, Trinidad
september 2013 / *Fresh performance project* curated by Damali Abrams, NYC and Fresh Milk, Barbados
july 2013 / *new roots: 10 emerging artists*, National Gallery of Jamaica
june 2013 / *native girl* live videos, NLS / Kingston, Jamaica
december 2012 / *National Biennial*, National Gallery of Jamaica
november 2012 / *Under 40 Artist of the Year competition*, Mutual Gallery / Kingston, Jamaica
june 2012 / *no place like home*, K.O.T.E. Arts Festival, Kingston, Jamaica
april 2012 / *artist in residence solo show*, CAGE Gallery, Kingston, Jamaica
march 2012 / *Home and Away*, The Gallery, St George's, Grenada
march 2012 / *Art Fresh*, Mutual Gallery, Kingston, Jamaica
july 2011 / *Jamaica Cultural Development Commision National Exhibition*, National Gallery of Jamaica
november 2010 / *M.A Photography Final Show*, London College of Communication, London, U.K.

selected recent publications and online reviews

2014 / *See Me Here: Contemporary Self-Portraits from the Caribbean*, Robert and Christopher Publishers, Trinidad and Tobago, edited by: Melanie Archer and Mariel Brown

2013 / ARC Magazine issue 8 / Olivia McGilchrist's 'Impure' Art: Insights to Identity, Space and Time by Marsha Pearce
<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume7-15/The%20Aesthetic.asp>
<http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2013/10/the-evolution-of-narrative-at-ttff-and-arcs-new-media/>
<http://www.uprising-art.com/portfolio/olivia-mcgilchrist-jamaique/>

2012 / *Caribbeanintransit Arts Journal* issue 2 *Location and Caribbeaness, My Dear Daddy*, edited by Honor Ford-Smith
<http://nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com/2013/03/01/perspectives-on-blackness-in-the-2012-national-biennial/>
<http://www.petrinearcher.com/masks-and-mobility>

awards

2013 / New Media prize, Trinidad & Tobago film festival

2012 / Jury prize, Under 40 Artist of the Year competition, Mutual Gallery, Kingston, Jamaica

2011 / Video art & newcomer prize, Jamaica Cultural Development Commission National Exhibition, National Gallery of Jamaica

education

2010 / M.A. Photography, London College of Communication, U.K

2003 / B.A. Fine Art, Middlesex University, London, U.K

1997 / French Baccalaureat (Literary section), Lycee International de Ferney-Voltaire, France

recent employment history

2011-ongoing / Lecturer in Photography and New Media at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, Kingston, Jamaica

2011-2012 / Senior Curator, National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica

2003-2010 / Freelance photographer and digital retoucher, London, U.K.

H. Ethics Review Board: Letter of Approval



Research Ethics Board

August 28, 2013

Dear Heidi McKenzie,

RE: OCADU 106, "Masked: Mirroring the Gaze."

The OCAD University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named submission. The protocol and the consent forms dated August 28, 2013 are approved for use for the next 12 months. If the study is expected to continue beyond the expiry date (August 27, 2014) you are responsible for ensuring the study receives re-approval. Your final approval number is **2013-31**.

Before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required. It is your responsibility to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the OCAD U REB prior to the initiation of any research.

If, during the course of the research, there are any serious adverse events, changes in the approved protocol or consent form or any new information that must be considered with respect to the study, these should be brought to the immediate attention of the Board.

The REB must also be notified of the completion or termination of this study and a final report provided. The template is attached.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Kerr', enclosed in a rectangular box.

Tony Kerr, Chair, OCAD U Research Ethics Board

OCAD U Research Ethics Board: rm 7520c, 205 Richmond Street W, Toronto, ON M5V 1V3
416.977.6000 x474

H.1. Ethics Review Board: Artist Interview Questions

1. Can you state your name for the record?
2. How do you self-identify as an artist?
3. Do you consider yourself an emerging, mid-career or senior artist?
4. Do you self-identify as Caribbean? Why or why not?
5. (If relevant) From which island(s) do you or your ancestors come from?
6. Do you self-identify as mixed-race?
7. Please identify the various ethnic heritages that you identify with?
8. Is there one specific ethnicity with which you most identify?
 - a. Why or why not?
9. Are you a naturalized Canadian, 1st, 2nd or 3rd generation?
10. Where did you grow up? (specifically, i.e. what neighbourhood)
11. What economic and social class did your family belong to?
 - a. What did your parents do for a living?
 - b. Does this influence the art that you create?
12. Did you grow up connected to your ethnic roots? If so – each or all of them or only certain ones? Please elaborate.
13. Are there any other personal indicators or influences that you would like to identify as relevant to your art practice at this time?
14. Do you feel that your cultural roots are a factor in the art that you create?
15. If yes – how, specifically, would you say they manifest? (In a conscious or unconscious way? In a literal or figurative, abstract or concrete, oblique or obvious way, subversive or playful?)
16. Are you connected to other Caribbean or mixed-race artists?
 - a. If so, please list names and regions where the artists are residing.
17. Have you ever been programmed/curated with other Caribbean artists in a territorially ethno-specific exhibition? (in Toronto or elsewhere?) If so, please cite examples.
18. Have you ever been exhibited with a curatorial premise relating to race, ethnicity or mixed-race?
 - a. If so, please articulate exhibitions.
19. Are you more often exhibited in group shows as an artist, outside of any consideration of your cultural heritage or race?