

MASS MoCA

In *Like Magic*, rituals and devices of enchantment become tools for subversion

The themed group exhibition features new commissions and goes on view beginning October 28, 2023 in MASS MoCA's Building 4 and 5A.

North Adams, MA, August 10, 2023 — MASS MoCA is pleased to announce the group exhibition *Like Magic*, opening October 28, 2023. *Like Magic* addresses contemporary artists' relationships to technologies associated with magic—including devices, talismans, rituals, incantations—and invites visitors to explore the points where technology and magic converge.

The exhibition features work by **Simone Bailey***, **Raven Chacon**, **Grace Clark***, **Johanna Hedva**, **Gelare Khoshgozaran**, **Cate O'Connell-Richards**, **Rose Salane**, **Petra Szilagyi***, **Tourmaline**, **Nate Young***. (*full or partial commission). Using healing earth, witches' brooms, AI, divination, and more, these ten artists explore how technologies of magic proliferate in times of chaos and uncertainty. Imagining these technologies turned towards delight, care and healing, their work mobilizes rituals and devices to subvert oppressive power.

Like Magic's curator **Alexandra Foradas** notes, "When we say something is 'like magic,' it is a way of articulating that its operations are beyond the scope of our comprehension, or even are perhaps ultimately unknowable. For those whose lives are surveilled because of their race, sexuality, gender identity, indigeneity, or immigration status, magic's unknowability can function as a refusal of a system's efforts to know, categorize, and control their lives and stories."

Many of the artists in *Like Magic* explore the architectural language of spirituality. **Grace Clark**'s newly-commissioned chapel-like installation reflects on the relationship between processes of healing and the natural world, which is for the artist a kind of "church." At each new moon, visitors will be welcomed to apply charcoal from a hole in the floor of Clark's installation onto parts of their own bodies that are in need of healing. **Petra Szilagyi**'s new installation *Bless Your Harddrive* invites visitors to enter a "counter-apocalyptic devotional space" to offer prayers for a benevolent future for the internet, in which Szilagyi has combined the visual language of technology (including PC towers, cables, gaming chairs, and VR headsets) with natural materials (including wood, leather, and cob).

For other artists in the show, magical technologies provide a mode of engagement with histories—tools charged with the potential for solace and healing, or with the potential to harm. Co-commissioned by MASS MoCA and Southern Exposure, **Simone Bailey**'s three-channel film *Home Training (Bagpipe Piece)* explores the shifting meaning of *Crann Tara* or "fiery cross," the ancient Highlander ritual used to communicate danger between clans, which was transformed by white supremacists in the United States into an act of racist violence. **Nate Young** crafts and intricate drawings of reliquaries for horses' bones, reflecting on the horse that carried his great-grandfather from North Carolina to Philadelphia during the Great Migration. A new sound installation surrounds visitors with the animal's breath. **Rose Salane** assembles lost rings from Atlantic City and pilfered shards from the Pompeii archaeological site later returned by tourists wracked with guilt and shame. Invested in the psychospiritual life of what she calls "power objects," Salane has observed that these seemingly mundane fragments "pose new ways of defining their source" once assembled. In *Atlantic is a Sea of Bones* (titled after a poem by Lucille Clifton), **Tourmaline** presents a film portrait of performer Egyptt Labeija. The film

draws on the Black queer and trans histories of New York's waterfronts and examines afterlives of the transatlantic slave trade that continue to haunt the present. **Raven Chacon's** graphically-notated scores *For Zitkála-Šá* are dedicated to the titular Yankton Dakota composer and activist. The scores form portraits of 13 contemporary Native women sound artists – "A graphic score," writes Chacon, "can resist the history of Western notation, and with that can eliminate normalizations and assumptions of time that influence how we see the universe and whoever created us."

Many of the artists in the exhibition similarly use magical technologies as a tools for intervening in existing systems of power, towards the ends of healing and joy. "*U.S. Customs Demands to Know*," an installation by **Gelare Khoshgozaran**, transmutes packages from the artist's Tehran-based parents that were roughly inspected by US Customs on their journey in the country. Through the artist's intervention, these parcels become glowing, otherworldly lanterns scattered across the gallery floor. **Johanna Hedva's** *Who Listens and Learns*, a handmade artist book bound in human hair, takes the form of a novella addressing the mystical and political qualities of artificial intelligence, as experienced in times of isolation. Meanwhile, **Cate O'Connell-Richards'** series of sculptures fuse traditional broom-making and metalworking techniques with the forms of occult objects to suggest the potential of labor as a site of ritual power. In a presentation that subverts the visual language of institutional museum displays, O'Connell-Richards' works explore the eerie witchiness lurking beneath tame veneers of domesticity and the rural.

The exhibition will include a library and programming space co-curated by **Foradas** and curatorial assistant **Meghan Clare Considine**, which will be filled with reading recommendations from artists, museum staff, and community members interested in the myriad technologies of magic. *Like Magic* will also be accompanied by a series of live programs, including a teen zine-making workshop hosted by **O'Connell-Richards**, performances, gallery talks, and workshops with visual artists, herbalists, tarot practitioners, and other local thinkers. As **Foradas** notes, "rural spaces—like the Berkshire Mountains and Hoosic River Valley that is MASS MoCA's home—have historically been sites of wildness and magic." By programming public conversations about these practices, MASS MoCA hopes to offer attendees opportunities to examine their own relationships to technologies of magic, and the possibilities that these technologies might offer to them, in turn, for solace, care, joy, experimentation, and liberation.

[IMAGES](#)

Like Magic will open at MASS MoCA on October 28, 2023. It is curated by **Alexandra Foradas**, Curator of Visual Art at MASS MoCA.

Major support for Like Magic is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Programming at MASS MoCA is made possible in part by the Barr Foundation, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and Mass Cultural Council. Simone Bailey's *Hometraining (Bag Pipe Piece)* was co-commissioned by Southern Exposure and MASS MoCA, with additional support provided by the San Francisco Arts Commission and Headlands Center for the Arts

ARTIST BIOS

Simone Bailey (she/her) is an artist who utilizes sculpture, performance, and video, in her practice. Her work is an interrogation of disembodied poetics and the impulse to grasp the intangible. Her practice focuses on perception, process, hybridity, ephemerality, desire, violence, and the impossible, all while maintaining an intimate proximity to blackness. Simone's work has been exhibited at The Museum of the African Diaspora, The Lab, Southern Exposure, the Studio Museum in Harlem, among other venues. She received an MFA in Fine Arts and an MA in Visual & Critical Studies from California College of the Arts. She also earned a BFA in Filmmaking from San Francisco Art Institute. Simone lives and works in San Francisco.

Raven Chacon (he/him) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, performer, and installation artist from Fort Defiance, Arizona. Currently, he lives in Red Hook, New York and Albuquerque, NM. A recording artist over the span of 22 years, Chacon has appeared on over eighty releases on national and international labels. He has exhibited, performed, or had works performed at LACMA, Vancouver Art Gallery, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, SITE Santa Fe, The Kennedy Center, and more. His artworks are among the collections of the Smithsonian's American Art Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, LACMA, and others. As an educator, Chacon is the senior composer mentor for the Native American Composer Apprentice Project (NACAP).

Grace Clark (she/her) is a visual and social practice artist whose work is centered in a deeply diaristic narrative of metabolizing love, loss, and labor. She reflects upon these themes within her experiences as a museum worker, educator, mediator, patient, and daughter to contemplate ways of living, feeling, and wishful thinking. Sculptural, text, and photographic media, often including found and natural objects, play fundamental roles in her practice as she navigates and interprets a variety of landscapes—attempting to organize a spiritual space within the natural, question the cultural, and map her own interior.

Johanna Hedva (they/them) is a Korean-American writer, artist, and musician, who was raised in Los Angeles by a family of witches, and now lives in LA and Berlin. Hedva is the author of the novels *Your Love Is Not Good* and *On Hell*, as well as *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain*, a collection of poems, performances, and essays. Their albums are *Black Moon Lilith in Pisces in the 4th House* and *The Sun and the Moon*. Their work has been shown in Berlin at Gropius Bau, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, and Institute of Cultural Inquiry; The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London; Performance Space New York; Gyeongnam Art Museum in South Korea; the LA Architecture and Design Museum; the Museum of Contemporary Art on the Moon; and in the Transmediale, Unsound, and Rewire Festivals. Their writing has appeared in Triple Canopy, frieze, The White Review, Topical Cream, Spike, and is anthologized in *Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art*.

Gelare Khoshgozaran (she/he/they) is an interdisciplinary artist, writer and filmmaker whose work engages with the legacies of imperial violence. Khoshgozaran uses film and video to explore narratives of belonging outside of the geographies and temporalities that both unsettled our sense of home, and make our places of affinity uninhabitable. Khoshgozaran has exhibited internationally and has been the recipient of the Andy Warhol Foundation LACE Lightning Fund (2022), The Graham Foundation Grant (2020), The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2019), The Art Matters Award (2017), The Rema Hort Mann Foundation grant (2016), The Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant (2015), and The California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Arts (2015).

Cate O'Connell-Richards (they/them) is a queer artist, jeweler, broomsquire, and educator currently living in Madison, Wisconsin. O'Connell-Richards has exhibited internationally and shown work at Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, MA, Hesse Flatow in New York, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA, Abel Contemporary in Stoughton, WI, Lillstreet Arts Center in Chicago, and the Gallery im Körnerpark, Berlin. They have been awarded several travel grants for craft research, including funding for fieldwork in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and at the Foxfire Museum and Appalachian Heritage Center in Georgia. They have taught workshops at Ox-Bow School of Art and Kansas City Textile Arts Center. Currently, they are a Lecturer for both UW-Madison and UW-Green Bay in design history, art foundations and metals/jewelry.

Rose Salane (she/her) is an artist living and working in New York, NY. Salane excavates systems of evaluation, exchange and considerations of sentimental value to reflect on the conditions that shape life in cities. Using collections of everyday objects as an entry point, her work illuminates the inherent ties between what is perceived as mundane and that which is historic. Major presentations of Salane's work include the Whitney Biennial (2022); New Museum Triennial (2021); Hessel Museum of Art (2021) and MIT List Visual Arts

Center (2019). Salane completed her MA in Urban Planning at The Spitzer School of Architecture, CUNY, and her BFA at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.

Petra Szilagyi (they/them) is a multimedia artist creating works exploring consciousness and ecotopias. Raised in Hollywood, CA, its culty, campy influence contrasts years spent natural-building with mud and wood at regenerative agriculture centers. The spiritual nexus of their work derives from family practices in West African, East Asian, and New Thought spiritual traditions. They received their undergraduate degree from Williams College and their MFA in Sculpture and Extended Media from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2020. They received the 2021 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowship in Sculpture. They have been in residency at Storm King Sculpture Center, Perfocraze in Kumasi, Ghana, Vermont Studio Center and the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Lagos, Nigeria. They have spoken at Parapsychology conferences in France, England and Vietnam.

Tourmaline (she/her) lives and works in New York, NY. She received her BA from Columbia University in 2006. Tourmaline's first solo institutional presentation *Tourmaline. Pleasure and Pollinator* is on view at MUDAM, Luxembourg until October 2023. Her work has been included in the 2022 Venice Biennale *The Milk of Dreams* and several institutional group exhibitions. Tourmaline's work is included in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, AUS; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Tate, London, GBR; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Nate Young (he/him) works across media in a manner that challenges traditional modes of artistic production, creating work that engages with issues of race and racialization. He explores the systems and objects that impact one's beliefs, often addressing theological themes through text, diagrams, or architectural elements. Young's work has been shown in selected solo and group exhibitions at the Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, NM (2022); Lubeznik Center for the Arts, Michigan City, IN (2022); moniquemeloche, Chicago, IL (2022); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2021). His work is in the permanent collections of DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL; Fabric Workshop Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.

CURATOR BIO

Alexandra Foradas (she/they) is a curator and art historian specializing in modern and contemporary art with an emphasis on systems of meaning-making, technologies of knowledge transmission, and practices of care. At MASS MoCA, Foradas has curated exhibitions by Jenny Holzer (2017, 2019), Janice Kerbel (2017), Lady Pink (2022), Gunnar Schonbeck (2017, co-curated with Mark Stewart), Taryn Simon (2018, 2021), EJ Hill (2022), and Jason Moran (2022) among others, as well as the group exhibitions *Bibliothecaphilia* (2015), *Kissing through a Curtain* (2020; catalogue 2021), *"How does your horn sound?"* (2020), and *Deep Water* (2022). Upcoming projects include a major new commission by artist Osman Khan (2024). She has taught at RISD and Hunter College.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. Much of the work we show in our light-filled spaces, on our technically sophisticated stages, and within our lovely network of late 19th-century courtyards is made here during extended fabrication and rehearsal residencies that bring hundreds of the world's most brilliant and innovative artists to North Adams all year round. For more information about MASS MoCA, visit www.massmoca.org or follow us on Instagram at @massmoca.

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