

***Jibade-Khalil Huffman:
You Are Here***



About this Teaching Resource:

This packet features artwork from *Jibade-Khalil Huffman: You Are Here* which was featured at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston from May 14 – July 17, 2021. This packet is intended as a tool to help you look at art with your children/students. You can prepare for your inquiry-based discussions by reviewing the background information provided. Then use the Questions for Viewing below and artwork reproductions to look closely, think critically, and respond to the art together. Extend your investigations with one or more of the suggested activity ideas. In general, questions for younger audiences are listed first followed by progressively more complex ideas. Feel free to adapt the suggested activities according to the age group you are working with. We encourage you to check out the [Halsey Institute's blog](#) for articles related to the show, as well as interviews with some of the artists.

Share your teaching stories with us! If you use these materials, let us know by email at halsey@cofc.edu

About the Exhibition:

Jibade-Khalil Huffman is a collector of visual culture, layering images familiar and unknown to build new meaning. Using unrelenting movement, Huffman's work draws on all senses, utilizing video, audio, text, and the ultimate tool: the viewer's own experience. In his new work featured at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Huffman considers the concepts of reality and embodiment. This is explored through visual elements we would expect to find in a video game, which typically rely on first or third person perspectives, while Huffman seeks to explore the second person. The concept of embodiment renders the human body both subject and object, depending on the perspective employed. *You Are Here* asks us to question the nature of our own realities and the modes through which we understand them.

Jibade-Khalil Huffman is an artist and writer whose video and photo works use found, archival material and contemporary ephemera to address slippage in memory and language, particular to race and visibility. Lyrical strophes of text and densely-composed imagery produce objects of perpetual flux, indexed by accumulating layers which challenge normative symbolic and semiotic hierarchies. Through projection and repetition, Huffman's work evokes the untranslatable, ruminating on the liminal qualities of singular experiences through narrative and graphic rhythms.

Recent exhibitions include the Wexner Center for the Arts, Tufts University Galleries, Ballroom Marfa, The Kitchen, MoCA Tucson, Swiss Institute, New York, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, The Jewish Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, The Studio Museum in Harlem and the Hammer Museum. Educated at Bard College (BA), Brown University (MFA, Literary Arts), and USC (MFA, Studio Art), his awards include the Grolier Poetry Prize, the Jerome Foundation Travel Grant and fellowships from Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, the Lighthouse Works, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Millay Colony for the Arts. Huffman was a 2015-16 Artist in Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem and lives and works in North Carolina and Los Angeles.

Curator's Essay:

By Katie McCampbell Hirsch, Halsey Institute director

Jibade-Khalil Huffman's work defies definition. His video work is sculptural. His prints hum with electricity. Cut outs in walls are enlivened with projections. Text is given equal weight as a visual. In this newest iteration, commissioned by the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art and set to expand over a series of forthcoming exhibitions, Huffman's work draws on all senses, utilizing film, print, audio, text, and the ultimate tool: the viewer's own experience.

Trained as a poet and an artist, Huffman's work is the answer to his own ever evolving stream of internal questions about how culture functions and communicates. Although each new project is approached as its own unit, Huffman's work continually considers how Black Americans are seen and see themselves, and their collective engagement with societal trauma. Using both original and found footage and imagery to build on shared iconography of popular television shows, video games, and other familiar elements, Huffman's work calls on the viewer to orient themselves with a reliance on our own visual and cultural literacy.

Huffman is the ultimate collector of imagery, layering images familiar and unknown to build new meaning. In this process, he sows fertile ground for the viewer to continue this construction, forming connections between recognizable images and the labyrinth of our own experiences. In this way, Huffman's work has the ability to morph and reform with each new viewer and each new daily headline. His own artistic process is similarly in constant flux, meticulously creating a foundation of

work and providing context for it improvisationally, placing projectors and monitors throughout the gallery in unexpected ways.

Huffman constantly considers the viewer when planning for installation. From the first sketch to the final placement, he scrutinizes the viewer's sightlines and paths of movement. For *You Are Here*, the layout of the Halsey Institute's gallery is transformed, automatically shaking viewers familiar with the gallery into a new spatial awareness. Huffman's work is not completed when packed for shipment, but only after he is able to experience the gallery space and carefully consider the best context for each piece. Video is cut and reworked after installing monitors to ensure that the environment and narrative fully synthesize. Every facet of the viewer's experience is considered, from the pace of narrative unfolding on the screen to the quality of the video itself, with the tension between the grainy and degraded quality of found footage felt in contrast to the crisp quality of original work. We are all well-versed in these aesthetics, whether we've stopped to consider them or not.

The work in *You Are Here* draws on our experiences of varied forms of embodiment in video games, with the narrative eventually transforming and unfolding off the screen into our space. In a world rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, our personal and shared realities can seem to always be unstable. It makes sense to question reality using the medium of the present—technology and visual culture colored by our own overlapping memories. Huffman pulls us in, if just for a moment, to focus on the here and now. His work compels you to stay, to watch, to listen, to reflect on the space around you and your own roles within it.

Questions for Viewing:

Are there any songs you recognize throughout the videos in *You Are Here*? How do they relate to the video, and what do they add to it? How do your personal memories and experiences inform the work in front of you? Would you feel and think the same way next week, next month, or even tomorrow?

What can you gather about any storyline in the *You Are Here* video? Is there one? Is it a collection of stories? Or is there no clear end?

Listen to the sounds and music around you. Consider these question: What sounds do you recognize? Do they spark any memories? How does the music make you feel? Nervous, confident, uneasy, afraid, happy? See if you can identify any words or phrases in the audio and videos. Who are the words directed to? What are they saying in the audio? Who are they talking to? What are they talking about? Are they talking to you? How did they sound? Energetic, anxious, angry? Why do you think the artist might have chosen to include these particular words and phrases? What kinds of sounds make up your daily life? What songs and noises can you recall from throughout your life?

Look closely at the people in the *You Are Here* videos. What do their facial expressions and body language tell you? What might they be feeling? Who are you in relation to the characters? Another player, a spectator, a controller? Why might the artist have chosen to present the subjects in the second person?

Look at the tv screens – left, right, or both! Look closely at the actors/characters. How does the music reflect their actions and attitudes? What might they be doing? Are there any symbols, or repeated motifs, in the video? What might they represent?

Look at the three projection screens of *Untitled (Blank)*. How do the projected videos relate to each other, and how do the still art printed on the screens relate? Do they have anything connecting them?

Step back and look at the wall cutout shapes in *Untitled (Blank)*. How do walls transform a space? What do the cutout shapes look like? How do they relate to one another? Why do you think the artist may have chosen those motifs?

Reproductions of the artworks in this section have been included at the end of the packet. You can also view the pieces online by [clicking here](#) or check out this [interactive 3D camera recording of You Are Here!](#)

Suggested Activities:

Memory: Think about a particular sound or image that stuck out to you. Draw a memory that comes to mind. What made you think about this moment? Does this memory remind you of anything else? What might other people think of when hearing/seeing the same thing?

Everyday Noise: Write/record the sounds you hear as you go about your day, as many as you can! What sounds would you include in your own installation? What sounds and music might you share with other people? How does closing your eyes and simply listening impact your experience? Are there any noises you may have not noticed until now?

Collage: Make a collage of your life. What symbols and images are always around you? Which ones are most important to you? Where do symbols and images come from? Social media, video games, family traditions, pop culture?

The Second Perspective: Write about a journey in the second person. What is the relationship between you and the characters? Are you the main character? How might the story differ from being told in the first or third person?

Cutouts: Take a piece of paper and cut out a shape in the middle of it. Now, draw or print a picture inspired by the world around you. It can be anything! Family, friends, people, places, things. Once you're done, cover your drawing with the cutout. What can you see? Does the covered picture look much different from the original? What can you *not* see? How does the cut-out change your perspective?

The World Around Us: Artists are often informed by the world around them when making art. Think of a recent event or issue that may have influenced this artist. Now choose your own current event and write/draw a piece describing how that has impacted you.

Music: Listen to the music that is tracking the video and feel the way it changes and affects the viewing of the exhibit. Pick a song or sound that you feel best pairs with your life. How does it compliment your life? Why does it relate?

Influence of Light Quality: On a thin sheet of paper, draw a picture of any memory you might have. Now, hold it up to different lighting to see how the light interacts with the art. Does it change the way you see it? Could it bring a new meaning to the art?

Related Readings available through our partners at the Charleston County Public Library:

Ways of Seeing by John Berger

Blind Spot by Teju Cole

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Just Us: An American Conversation by Claudia Rankine

Believing Is Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art by Mary Anne Staniszewski

Monument: Poems New and Selected by Natasha Trethewey

Men We Reaped: A Memoir by Jesmyn Ward

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson



Related Readings that are available through the Hoopla Application (browser and smartphone) with Charleston County Public Library:

[Ways of Seeing](#) by John Berger

[Invisible Man](#) by Ralph Ellison

[So You Want to Talk About Race](#) by Ijeoma Oluo

Related Readings available through the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library and PASCAL:

Books

[Reframing photography : theory and practice](#) by Rebekah Modrak

[Framed Spaces: Photography and Memory in Contemporary Installation Art](#) by Monica E. McTighe

[Documenting the visual arts](#), Roger Hallas, editor

[Perception and imagine: photography - a way of seeing](#) by Richard D. Zakia

[Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body](#) by Harvey Young

[Invisibility in Visual and Material Culture](#), Asbjørn Grønstad, editor

[See the light: photography, perception, cognition: the Marjorie and Leonard Vernon Collection](#) from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2013

[Visual Alchemy: The Fine Art of Digital Montages](#) by Catherine McIntyre

Articles

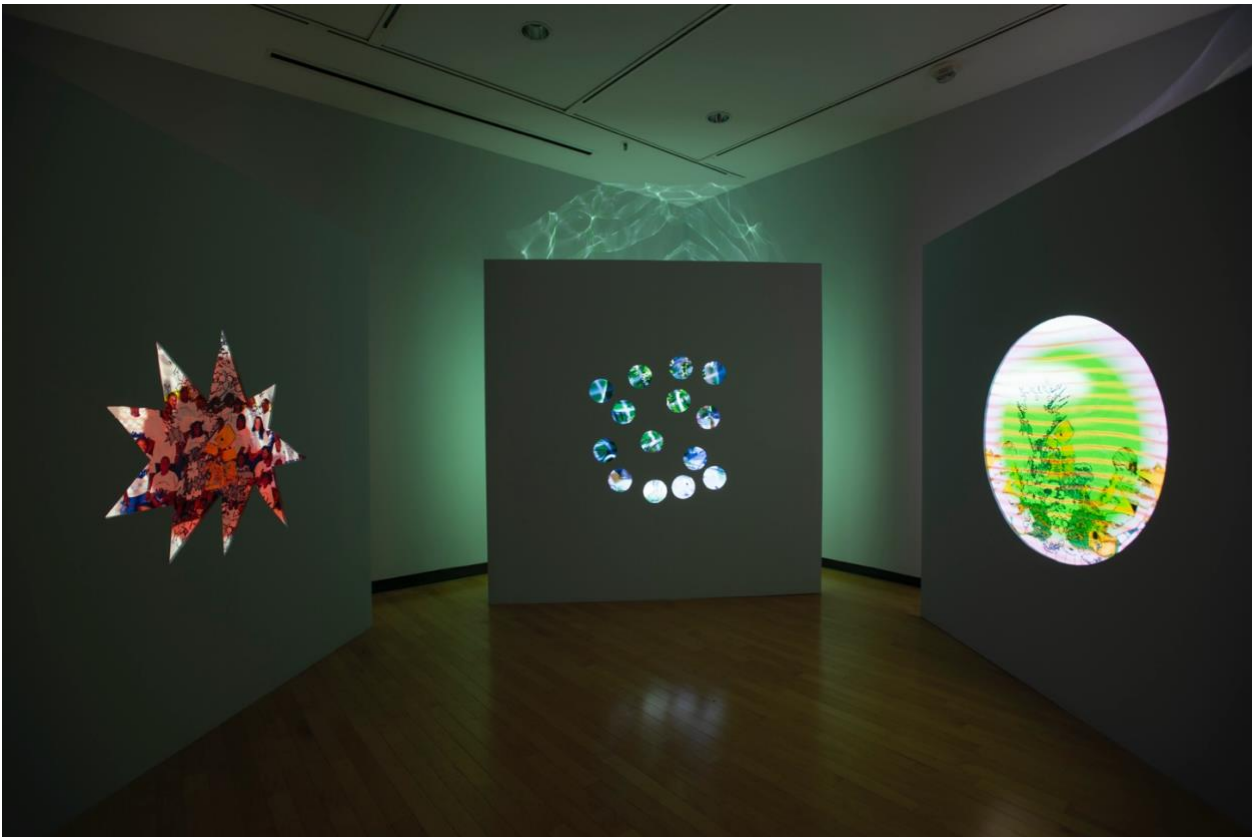
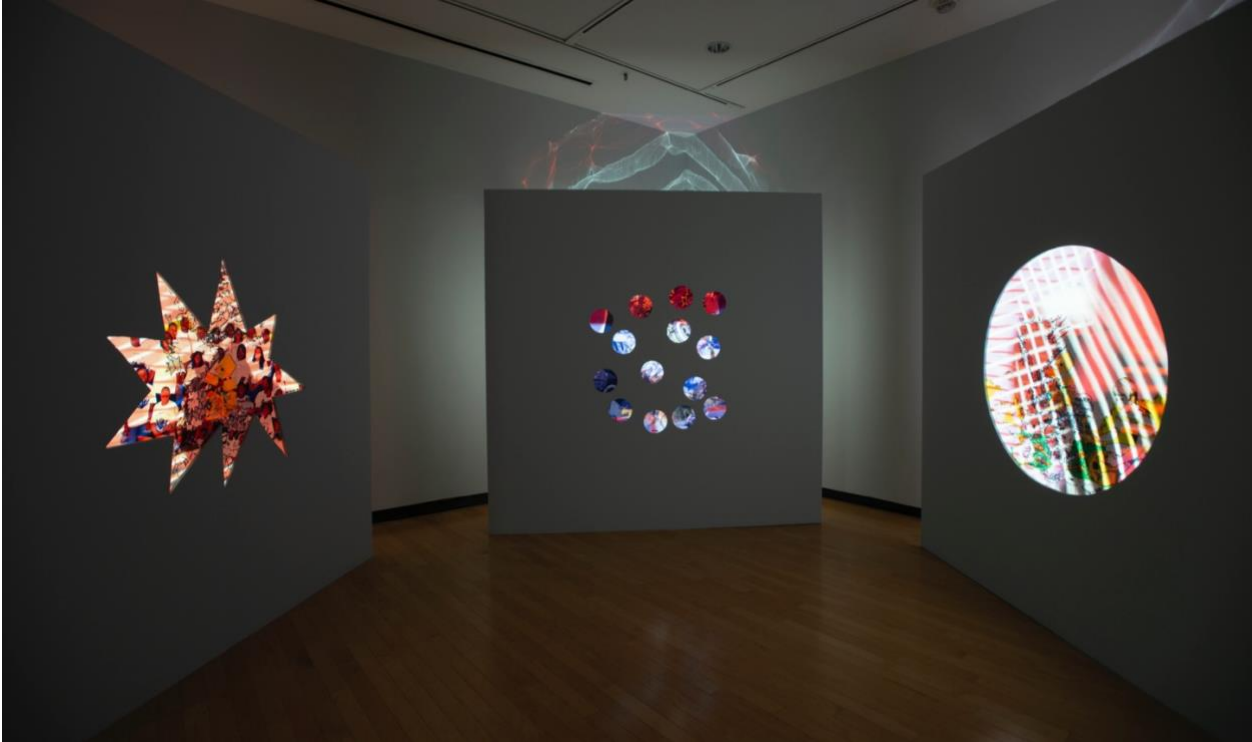
["More Than Just Inclusion: Race, Memory, and Twenty-First Century Cultural Industries"](#), Cathy Stanton, *American Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 68 (3), p. 815-822.

["Critical Attitudes toward Overly Manipulated Photography in the 20th Century"](#), Patricia D. Leighton, *Art Journal*, (New York. 1960), 1978-06-01, Vol. 37 (4), p. 313-321.

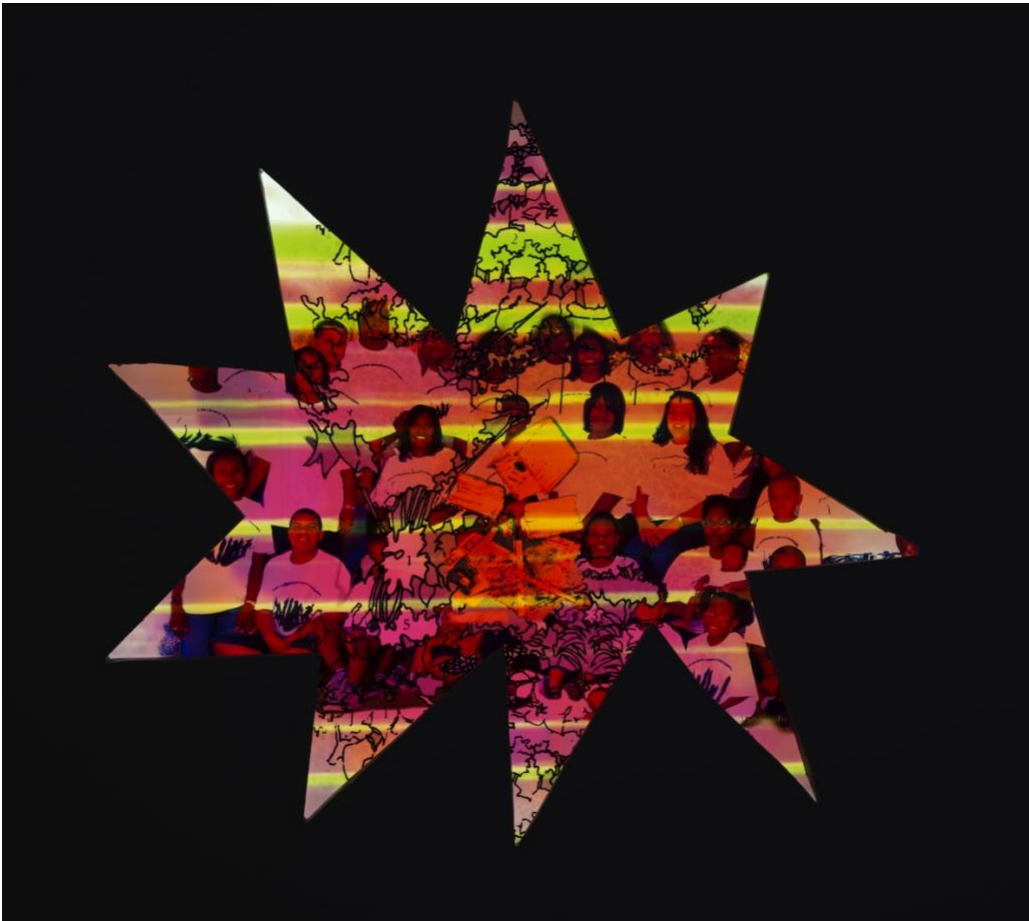
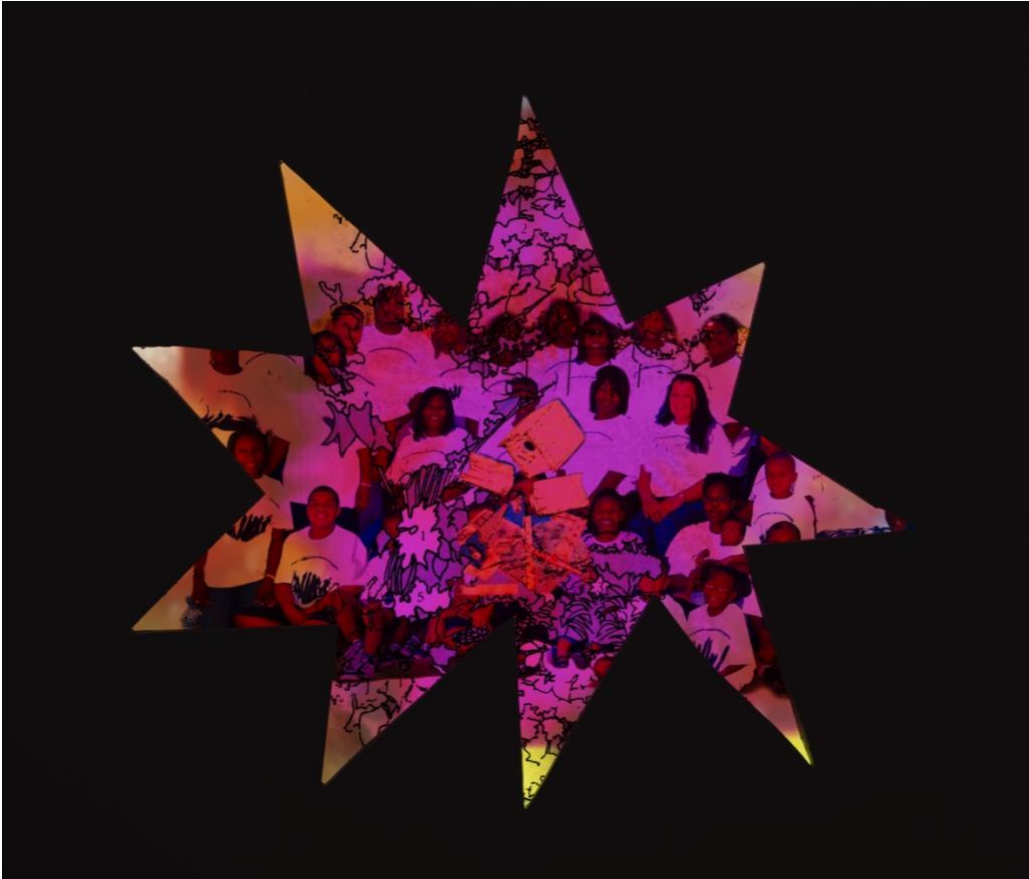
Artwork Images:

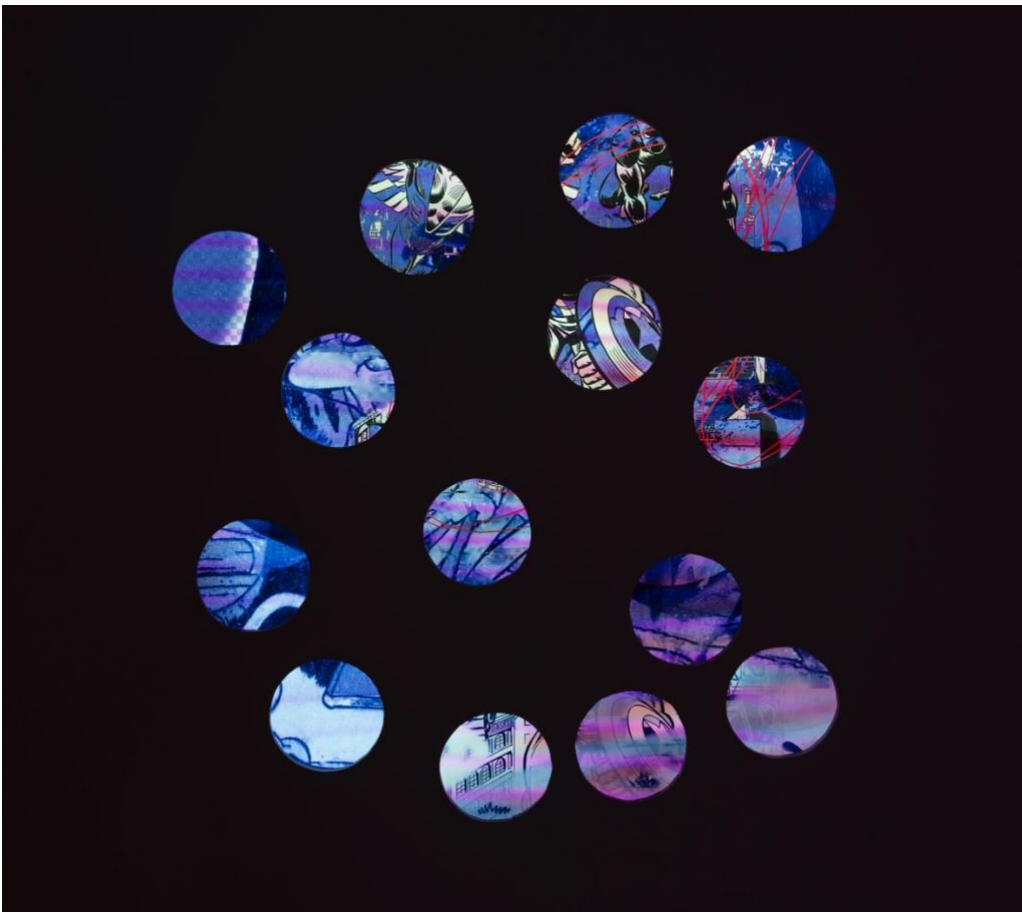
Reproduced below are images of the artworks referenced in the “Questions for Viewing” section. You can also view the pieces online by [clicking here](#) or check out this [interactive 3D camera recording](#) of *You Are Here!*

Untitled (Blank), 2021 [installation views] Duratrans transparencies, looping video, temporary walls:



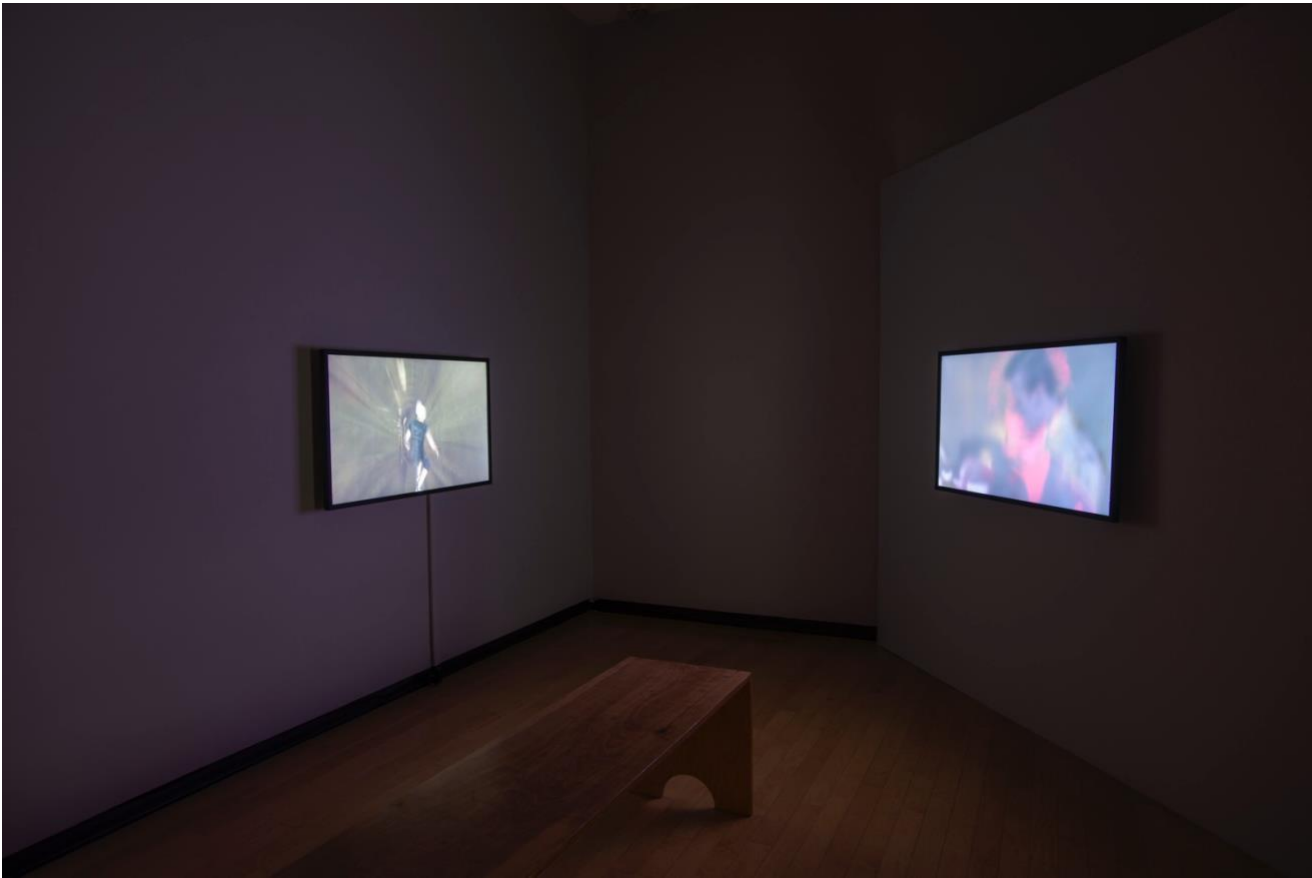
Untitled (Blank), 2021 [details] Duratrans transparencies, looping video, temporary walls:

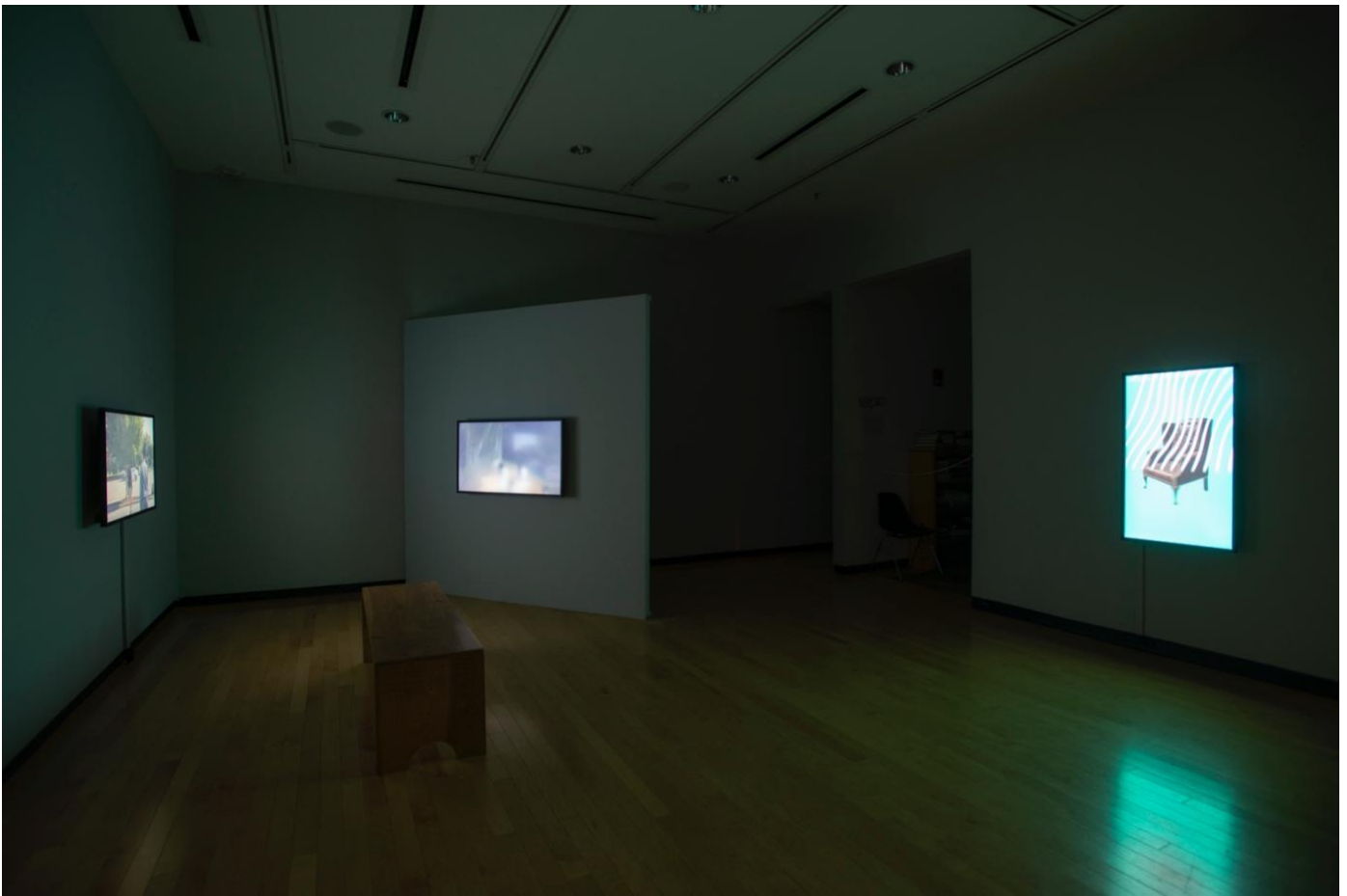
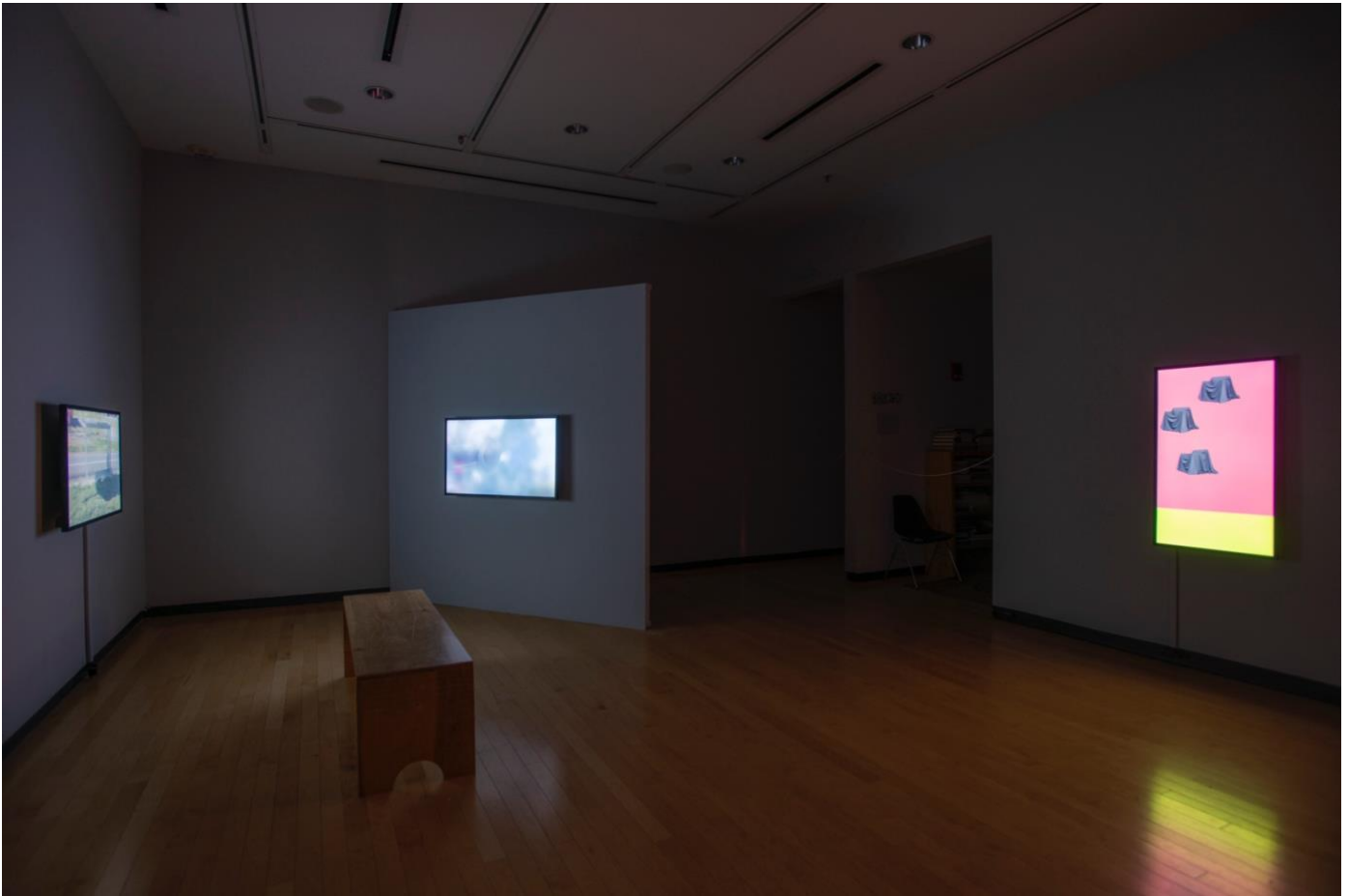






You Are Here, 2021 [installation views] Three channel video. Running time: 33 minutes, 50 seconds:





You Are Here, 2021 [details] Three channel video. Running time: 33 minutes, 50 seconds:

