

## *Fall 2021*

Press talk: 2. 9. 2021, 11:00 a.m.

Opening: 2. 9. 2021, 6 p.m.

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark  
Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

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HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark is delighted to present the fall program 2021 with two large solo exhibitions of the work of the Afro-American artists Kevin Jerome Everson and Doreen Garner. These two exhibitions mark a further highlight for the new institution in its inaugural year 2021. The artistic positions of Everson and Garner draw attention to political discourses in the USA, and in particular to the lives of Afro-Americans past and present.

While Kevin Jerome Everson accompanies various black communities in the USA, documenting their lives and places of work with his camera, the young artist Doreen Garner uses a specific approach to sculpture to address the fates of Afro-American women who in the second half of the nineteenth century were victims of operations in the name of medical research. Although both artists work very differently, their works each offer intimate insights into the social and cultural conditions of black lives in the USA.

In his films, for which he only uses a 16mm camera, Kevin Jerome Everson directs the lens at black people without enforcing any kind of specific representation. The film scholar and companion of the artist, Greg de Cuir Jr., describes his work as driven by the concern to record everyday “black experience” (above all in the United States). The exhibition in Graz focuses on a depiction of Afro-American realities, and on the work of the filmmaker himself, looking at the materiality of analog film and its capacity to reproduce reality from a certain characteristic perspective. As well as the exhibition presenting eight films in total, *Recover* also highlights the artist’s work as a sculptor, which is key to his whole oeuvre.

Taking the stairs down into the basement leads you to the *Study Room* in the foyer that has been especially established for the two exhibitions. It expands the context and is also intended to make references to local history. Here, among other things, we look at Europe’s colonial history and in particular the historical connections between Austria and central Africa. For example, the contribution by Mirelle Ngosso, politician and activist, which deals with the myth that Austria has nothing to do with colonialism.

The exhibition by Doreen Garner, which can be accessed through the *Study Room*, also depicts the effects of colonialism and racism. The works on show here draw on the artist’s reading of the seminal work *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial*

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*Times to the Present* (2008), by the medical historian and writer Harriet Washington. Based on historical research and specific case studies, this book presents a chronicle of the systematic exploitation of slaves in both the south and the north of the USA by “white medicine” and in the name of science. In her exploration of the individual fates of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Garner develops works that show black women’s bodies as dehumanized material. This dehumanization of slaves was systematically realized by their owners and by physicians, in order to conduct callous experiments with black bodies. These were used to develop medical procedures that were intended above all for the benefit of the white upper classes.

The three works, including one new piece that was especially made for this exhibition, show battered body parts hanging like meat intended for consumption from hooks. The artist uses a range of different materials in order to create sumptuous surfaces of crystals or beads, countering the devaluation inscribed into these objects.

These two exhibitions in combination, and the dedicated *Study Room*, aim to bring to Austria a specific political discourse that in comparison to other central European countries has hitherto been underrepresented in contemporary art and in particular within the institutions of the art world.

At the same time this program offers an opportunity to understand the repression of black and brown bodies not merely as a symptom in the history of the society of the United States, but as a global and thus also local phenomenon. The Afro-American political scientist Cedric J. Robinson (1940–2016) traces the history of the capitalist economic order, placing Europe at the beginning of the development of “racial capitalism,” a principle that describes the social and economic exploitation of non-whites to the benefit of white majority societies.

The HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark fall program wishes on the one hand to achieve greater visibility for the outstanding artistic positions of Kevin Jerome Everson and Doreen Garner in German-speaking Europe. The establishment of a *Study Room* also aims to create further points of reference to the artistic works on show, while uniting the perspectives of different artists and critics that can initiate fresh and forward-looking thinking.

## Study Room

With contributions by: manuel arturo abreu, Greg de Cuir Jr., Mirelle Ngooso, Carl Robert Pope Jr., Morgan Quaintance, Paige Taul, Danielle Brathwaite Shirley

## Program

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