



**A Blade of Grass Announces New Details on Artist-Led Workshops  
As Part of Its Ongoing *Curriculum for the Future***

**Artists LaJuné McMillian, Cassie Thornton, Stephanie Dinkins, and Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine Will Engage the Public in Collaborative Artmaking, Learning, and Discussion**

New York, NY—March 16, 2021—A Blade of Grass, an arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement, today announced new details on its forthcoming artist-driven programming, including workshops led by artists Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine (comprised of Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney), Stephanie Dinkins, LaJuné McMillian, and *The Hologram* (initiated by Cassie Thornton). The workshops are part of A Blade of Grass’s *Curriculum for the Future* initiative, which was first announced last month and is focused on collaborating with and providing a platform for artists to engage the public in developing solutions to important social and communal challenges. The initiative is guided by A Blade of Grass’s core belief that artists have a crucial role to play in creating a more just, equitable, and loving society.

Each artist has worked with A Blade of Grass to create a multi-part digital experience that deepens understanding of their individual practice and provides an opportunity for participants to learn new skills and insights and to also contribute to or engage directly with particular projects. Two of the four workshops will culminate in a public performance or installation in the summer or fall of 2021. Among the subjects and ideas that the featured artists are exploring are representation and inclusion within the digital realm, the value of alternative caregiving and peer-to-peer healthcare, and the importance of community-organizing to shifting cultural norms and understandings. The first workshop kicks off on March 24, with others rolling out across April and May. A full slate of events, including dates and details, for *Curriculum for the Future* follows below.

**Artist-Led Workshops (organized chronologically)**

**LaJuné McMillian: *Understanding, Transforming, and Preserving Movement in Digital Spaces*  
March 24, 2021, 5:00 – 8:00PM, on Zoom; with five additional sessions taking place on the following five consecutive Wednesdays at the same time**

*Participants do not need any prior knowledge or experience and do need to commit to all six sessions in order to engage in the workshop. To register, email [info@abladeofgrass.org](mailto:info@abladeofgrass.org).*

In this six-part workshop, LaJuné McMillian, a new media artist, maker, and creative technologist based in New York, will share their knowledge about extended reality (XR) tools and their relationship to race, gender, and culture. The workshop will explore issues of cultural representation, erasure, and exploitation

through readings and discussions as well as provide an introduction to motion capture, avatars, rigging, and 3D environments. Core elements of the class will integrate performance, virtual reality, and physical computing to question access, control, and representation inherent in these technologies.

Together, McMillian and workshop participants will also use various free software to co-create a live performance that will be produced this summer by A Blade of Grass. Additionally, the group will build and continue the development of an online archive of ethically digitized Black movement for the *Black Movement Library*.

### ***Minimum Viable Hologram Sessions***

**Concept Created by Cassie Thornton; Facilitation by a growing team of peers**

**April 15 – July 15, 2021; Groups of four will be able to sign up for two-hour long *Minimum Viable Hologram* sessions at various days and times**

Registration will open April 15 and be available at <http://thehologram.xyz/MVH>.

Participants are invited to sign up for an intimate two-hour facilitated session of *The Hologram*, which is intended to demonstrate a practice of radical care among a group of peers. The simple but transformative method demonstrates how we can distribute the labour of care differently, creating sustainable energy—rather than exhaustion—and aiming us towards a social world where more people have the tools to participate in caregiving relationships. Using the principles of *The Hologram* project, participants are invited to sign up in groups of four, with one participant asking three others to join in on a guided conversation about their physical, social, and emotional health. The session will show how many of our basic needs can often be met through carefully negotiated relationships with peers rather than through systems that are too frequently exclusionary, inaccessible, and tied to capitalist frameworks.

Thornton will also be participating in a panel discussion on **March 23 at 6:00 PM** with [Miki Kashtan](#), a practical visionary applying the tools of Nonviolent Communication, and moderated by Dharma teacher [Kaira Jewel Lingo](#). The conversation will explore how we can change our individual and collective habits to center non-hierarchical grassroots care practices for our greater mutual benefit and provide a grounding for Thornton's work and the wider *The Hologram* project. Registration for this panel is available at [eventbrite](#).

### ***Binary Calculations Are Inadequate to Assess Us***

**Stephanie Dinkins**

**April 22 and April 29, 2021; 6:00 – 7:00PM, on Zoom**

*Participants do not need any prior knowledge or experience to engage in the workshop. To register, email [info@abladeofgrass.org](mailto:info@abladeofgrass.org).*

In this two-part workshop, transmedia artist and Stony Brook University Professor Stephanie Dinkins leads a conversation about the exclusionary nature of artificial intelligence (AI) and the algorithms that undergird our technologies as well as the steps we can take to create more equitable datasets. This workshop will rely partially on the contributions of participants to create a more inclusionary and interactive algorithm, proposing a data commons approach where anyone can contribute to a training dataset that in turn can be used to power AI. The data collected during the workshop will contribute to

[Our Data](#), an app which is currently under development and aims to co-create more nuanced algorithmic possibilities by creating two repositories—one for text and one for image—which will be available for people to use as an alternative to existing data sets.

### ***The Song That I Sing is Part of an Echo***

#### **Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine**

**May 6 and May 13, 2021; 6:00 – 7:30PM, on Zoom**

To register, email [info@abladeofgrass.org](mailto:info@abladeofgrass.org).

At this time when we are both more local and more global than ever before, The Brooklyn Hi Art Machine (comprised of artists Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney) invites the public to collaborate on a “Global Fence Weaving”. The project concept is inspired by a line in the poem *Leftovers — What is Left?* by Assata Shakur and explores how communities can join their voices together in an echo that is heard globally. This action both celebrates survival and serves as a communal act of grieving—an echo of liberation resounding through many disparate communities. The “Global Fence Weaving” will also build on Brooklyn Hi-Art Machines prior works, including sidewalk art workshops and large-scale public fence weavings that have become a regular feature in their home neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn and that serve as a site for contemplation, discussion, and action.

Through the two upcoming workshop sessions, participants will work with Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine to define the vision for and approach to the “Global Fence Weaving.” Following, A Blade of Grass will work with the artists and public participants to physically enact the project in neighborhoods across the country and the world. The wide-ranging public collaboration will culminate in Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine then producing an artwork that captures the scope of the project and that will be distributed among participants.

More details about how the project will be actualized will be released following the May workshop sessions.

### **Forthcoming Panels**

A Blade of Grass previously announced a series of panel discussions as part of its *Curriculum for the Future*. A listing of forthcoming events and access to prior discussions follows below. All of the events are held virtually and include Q&A portions for participants. The panels are free to the public.

**March 17, 2021, 6:00 PM**

***Practicing the Future, with Ari Meleciano, Samuel F. Reynolds, and Colin Rusch, moderated by Roderick Schrock***

**[Register at eventbrite](#)**

What is the future and how do you predict it? This simple question has taken on new and profound meaning in our contemporary moment, bringing both anxiety and hope. Join three practitioners of the future—artist and founder of [Afrotectopia](#) Ari Melenciano, predictive astrologer and former skeptic Samuel F. Reynolds, and Oppenheimer and Company Managing Director and Senior Research Analyst in Sustainable Growth & Resource Optimization Colin Rusch—for a conversation about how they view time, conduct research into the past, consider the unknown, and imagine and predict the future. Bringing

distinct and dynamic perspectives to the conversation, the panelists provide insights into how we might shape our own futures. The panel will be moderated by Roderick Shrock, an arts executive and curator who currently leads the functional capacities of Eyebeam's direct artist support and guides the organization's focus to realign societal relationships with emergent technologies.

**March 23, 2021, 6:00 PM**

***Parallel Fields: Radical Care with Miki Kashtan and Cassie Thornton, moderated by Kaira Jewel Lingo***

**[Register at eventbrite](#)**

In our capitalist society, people try to meet their needs by earning enough money to take care of themselves. This system puts us out of relationship with one another and creates real scarcity, allowing people who have power and resources to more actively meet their needs. What if we imagined a different future—one that would allow us to live in a state of abundance and connection? What if we chose to believe that everybody's needs are powerful and valid and are intended to be met through relationships with others, rather than through money or other forms of exchange? This kind of shift could create a world that is healthier, more connected, and equitable. Join [Miki Kashtan](#), a practical visionary applying the tools of Nonviolent Communication, and artist [Cassie Thornton](#), whose project Hologram creates sustainable caregiving relationships, for a conversation about how we can change our thinking and social structures to center care for our greater mutual benefit. The panel will be moderated by Kaira Jewel Lingo, a Dharma teacher who began practicing in 1997 and currently shares Buddhist meditation, secular mindfulness, and compassion internationally, providing spiritual mentoring to individuals and communities.

**The first panel in the series, *Making Change: Scot Nakagawa and Loretta Ross in Conversation*, took place on March 4, 2021 and can be viewed [at this link](#).**

### **About A Blade of Grass**

A Blade of Grass is a New York-based arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement. The organization is guided by the core beliefs that artists have essential roles to play in fostering critical conversations on social change and creating new systems and structures that benefit our communities and our lives. A Blade of Grass collaborates actively with artists to realize their visions for specific socially engaged projects or programs, offering a variety of tools that amplify artists' work and build their audiences. It produces public programs, workshops, performances, installations, and other community actions that raise the visibility of artists who are creating change in communities through art.

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