

Up 86

Guest
Curator
Series

MOSS
ARTS
CENTER

Friday, April 7, 2023, 8 PM

Shirlette Ammons

Moss Arts Center
Cube

VT VIRGINIA
TECH

UP 86

Guest Curator Series

North Carolina artist Shirlette Ammons is serving as the Moss Arts Center's first independent guest performing arts curator. Ammons brings a new perspective to the center's lineup, creating a focus on Black Southern artists who effortlessly cross genres and revitalize time-honored music traditions.

Ammons reflects on her curation process and travels along Highway 86.

This trio of performances connects neighbors separated by winding roads.

The artists conjured over that three and a half hour drive extend vastly beyond this performance trilogy. But, in various ways, they are represented in the works of Sonny Miles, Rissi Palmer, and yours truly. Sonny, Rissi, and I are part of a regional music community with limbs that reach back and forth, across genre- and borderlines; down into the murk of Black Southernness; across time to invite new interpretations of old sounds and experiences; and out into a world where next door neighbors are divided by fields, and fences, and party lines.

In the planning stages of this series, I traveled to Virginia Tech twice, navigating remote stretches between Durham and Blacksburg, each trip made identical by shallow morning dew and provoking terrain. The landscape reminded me of the small eastern North Carolina plot that raised me, the rural swaths connecting beatdown bungalows, open pastures, and single-wides. I thought about the music that might waft through each kitchen, past walls of family portraits, and out flimsy screen doors. I began making a mental playlist of the songs that came to mind.

Curating this series has been an expansive experience for me. As participants, I hope you are inspired to spend more time getting to know your neighbors, their journeys, and the paths they pave.

Shirlette Ammons

Biographies



SHIRLETTE AMMONS

Shirlette Ammons is a Durham, North Carolina-based poet, musician, emcee, and film creative whose highly collaborative work defies genre. Interrogating her own relationships to gender, Blackness, and Southernness, Ammons' upcoming recording, *Spectacles*, is a "poignant expression of her own multitudes, rendered by a modern wellspring of Black Southern brilliance and her wider creative community," says writer Grayson Currin.

A Cave Canem fellow and a 2013 recipient of the North Carolina Arts Council artist fellowship, Ammons has toured Germany, Switzerland, and Austria as part of the Purple Velvet International Female Hip-Hop Tour with all-female emcees representing three continents: sookee (Germany) and Lex La Foy and DJ Doowap (South Africa).

Ammons is also accomplished in the realm of TV and film, working as a producer on the Emmy Award-winning PBS docuseries *A Chef's Life*, as well as *Somewhere South*. She also served as a producer on *The Seeds We Keep*, a hybrid art essay and documentary short for *Oxford American*, and *Stay Prayed Up*, a feature-length concert documentary exalting the musical legacy of eastern North Carolina gospel trio the Branchettes.

For 10 years, Ammons also served as youth arts coordinator at The ArtsCenter in Carrboro, North Carolina, where she offered arts instruction every day after school to hundreds of young artists.

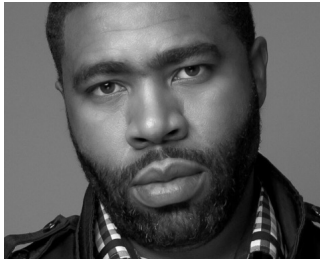
Her guest curatorial work with the Moss draws upon her deep community orientation as someone born and raised in the small eastern North Carolina town of Mt. Olive. Ammons' interests span the gospel tradition, the "covert

This performance was programmed by Guest Curator Shirlette Ammons.

Biographies, continued

SHIRLETTE AMMONS, *continued*

musicianship” of the juke joints and cat houses where music was played historically in her region, underground marginal economies of Black and queer music, and coded language that relates to Southern and rural experiences.



BREVAN HAMPDEN, *drummer and musical director*

Brevan Hampden was born into a musical family in New York City, and has resided in Durham, North Carolina, since 1988. Hampden completed a bachelor's degree in jazz studies at North Carolina Central University and a master's degree in jazz studies

and performance at CUNY Queens College. Hampden has performed and recorded with many Grammy-nominated and award-winning artists, including Branford Marsalis, Aretha Franklin, Ani DiFranco, Bilal, Ben Williams, HISS Golden Messenger, and Frank McComb.



CHRISTIAN SHARP, *bassist*

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Christian Sharp found a love for music at an early age. It was not until he moved to Greenville, South Carolina, and started playing bass guitar in church at the age of 14 that Sharp truly found his passion. Playing upright bass in his high school's philharmonic orchestra prompted

his decision to become a professional musician. Upon graduating, Sharp auditioned for the lauded music department at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and received a full scholarship to study jazz. As principal upright bassist for the NCCU Jazz Ensemble, Sharp has performed and competed at the 2020 Inaugural Jack Rubin Jazz Championship, hosted by Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. Since graduating from NCCU with a master of music in jazz studies, he has recorded with jazz juggernauts Branford Marsalis, Frank McComb, and Joshua Bell, and has also sat in with the Durham Symphony. Sharp gives credence to music's salubrious power and is now sharing his knowledge by teaching at a local elementary school.



HUGH SWASO, *guitarist and keyboardist*

Multi-instrumentalist Hugh Swaso has over 30 years' experience as a musician. Swaso began his career as a pianist before becoming fluent on violin, viola, vocals, and guitar. Swaso boasts a “Swiss Army knife” array of musical abilities, which has allowed him to work with numerous bands of varying genres.



RUSSELL FAVRET, *guitarist*

Russell Favret draws on his eclectic musical interests to create a guitar style that is as much informed by jazz as it is by rock and hip-hop. Favret is a staple of the local music scene and performed with names such as Rhapsody, 9th Wonder, Rakim, Boulevards, Braxton Cook, and Jeff Bradshaw. He is also a member of

Durham-based fusion jazz/hip-hop act ZOOCRÜ. In 2021 Favret was nominated for a Grammy for his work on Pierce Freelon's children's album, *Black to the Future*.

This is the first performance by Ammons and the band at the Moss Arts Center.

Tell Us What You Think!

We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Cécile McLorin Salvant on Saturday, April 29, 2023.



bit.ly/shirlette-ammons-feedback

Engagement Events

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2023

STUDIO HOURS WITH SHIRLETTE AMMONS

As part of a free weekly recording and artist development program at True School Studios, Digging in the Crates: Hip-Hop Studies at Virginia Tech hosted Ammons for this hands-on session with university students.

THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023

INTERVIEW ON WUVT-FM

The hosts of *Dusty and Digital* on Virginia Tech's campus radio station welcomed Ammons on their weekly program.

DISCUSSION AT THE LGBTQ+ RESOURCE CENTER

In celebration of Pride Week at Virginia Tech, Ammons participated in a conversation with students at the LGBTQ+ Resource Center.

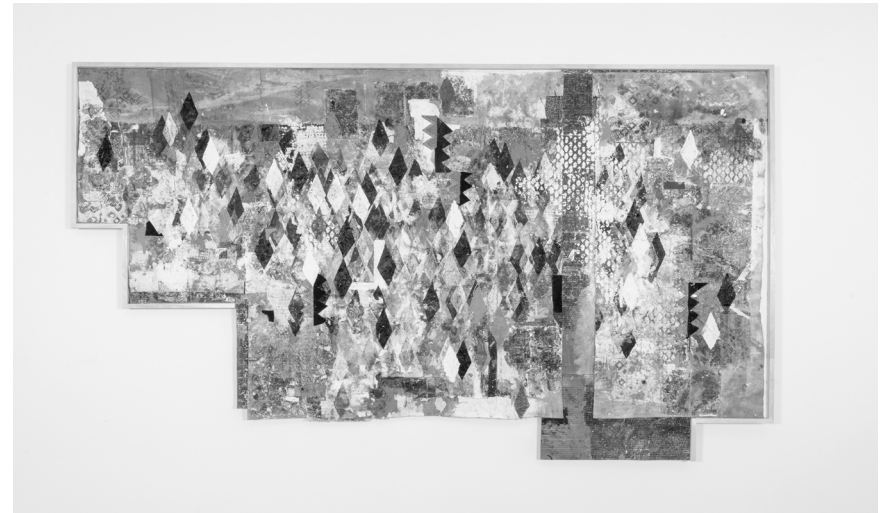
Special thanks to VTDITC: Hip-Hop Studies at Virginia Tech, LGBTQ+ Resource Center, Craig Arthur, Kevin Ayoub, Ashleigh "Bing" Bingham, Kim Clark-Shaw, Nina Ha, Grant Hamming, Kwame Harrison, Shernita Lee, DeRay Manning, Freddy Paige, Matthew Vollmer, and Janean Williams

Go Deeper

Ammons has attributed the inspiration behind her album, *Language Barrier* (2015) to scholar bell hooks' notion of "love as an act of resistance." Where do you see and hear this ethic in Ammons' performance? Do you carry this principle in your own life and, if so, where?

In the Galleries

Through Saturday, April 22



Anne Samat

Follow Your Heart Wholeheartedly 2

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

In her fiber-based reliefs, Malaysian artist Anne Samat meticulously juxtaposes beadwork and traditional South Asian weaving techniques with common items, a project that questions the boundaries of craft and art.

Yanira Collado

Zafa/ A Spellworking of Temporal Geometry

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen

'71 Reception Gallery

In the face of inevitable change and displacement, memories find a home in the relic. Yanira Collado explores the ideas of migration, reliquary, and memory through construction and ritual.

▲ Yanira Collado, *Areíto #2*, 2020-2023, paper, carbon transfers, gel medium transfers, carbon paper, textile, paint, drywall compound, 65½ x 107 ½ inches, courtesy of the artist

K-12 Programs at the Moss



Experiences with the arts cultivate the next generation of creative thinkers, engage learners of diverse backgrounds, and foster community dialogue. The Moss Arts Center has been dedicated to providing K-12 students in the region with free, high-quality, and exciting arts programming since opening our doors in 2013. Through school-day matinee programs, gallery tours, in-school performances, and workshops with artists, we are passionate about serving our youngest community members and schools. Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

Did You Know?

The Moss Arts Center's four-story experimental Cube is a highly adaptable space for immersive environments, intimate performance, audio and visual installations, research, and experimental investigations. The Cube is a space shared between the Moss Arts Center and the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology.

Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit.

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

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We are grateful for the generosity of our patrons and donors who sustain the Moss Arts Center with their annual gifts. The impact of all contributions, no matter the amount, is significant in helping us transform lives through exploration and engagement with the arts and the creative process. We are honored to have received donations during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, from the following:

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continued...

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Sunday, April 23, 2023, 4 PM

Opera Roanoke and Blacksburg Master Chorale

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Details about the 2023-2024 season are coming soon!

This coming year marks the 10th anniversary of our opening in fall 2013, and we're proud to celebrate 10 years of performances, exhibitions, and creative engagements.

Subscription Sales: Thursday, May 4
Individual Ticket Sales: Thursday, August 3

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 PM


Cécile McLorin Salvant

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- Oscar Wilde

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YMCA at VIRGINIA TECH



the Y
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HEALTHY KIDS DAY
April 29 | Free to the Public

Fun Run, The Y Fabulous 4Miler, field games, interactive performances, VT therapy Dogs, VT Police, MFRL Book Mobile, story time, healthy snacks, and so much more!

YMCA at VT Food Insecurity Initiatives

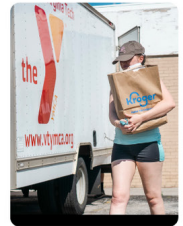


The oldest hiker Saul Simon was 84 yrs old!



THEN: The YMCA at VT coordinated hunger hikes in the 70's and 80's to help combat food insecurity.

NOW: The YMCA at VT provides meals to the local community 4 days of the week while providing enrichment activities with 5 days' meals at each distribution! We provide food to more than 250 kids in the NRV each week.



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