

PROJECTS ARCHIVE

DeKalb Gallery, Pratt Institute

On view August 24–September 30, 2026

Opening reception Tuesday, September 8, 2026, 6–7pm

Organized by Kamau Amu Patton, 2026–27 Fine Arts Civic Engagement Fellow

Prologue

On building through and keeping care of histories of community. On dwelling and making place. On being in right relation¹ and developing a spatial syntax. The archive is a gift of life. The archive is the afterlife of images, of peoples, of places, of things. To witness is to articulate world view, to synthesize through experience the poetics of place. Memory is media. A material constructed through engagement with the present moment.

About the Exhibition

Projects Archive presents project documentation of community and site engagements from over the course of Kamau Amu Patton's career. The projects included in this survey articulate the broad range of work and working practices Patton has deployed over the years. For this exhibition, Patton shares works which consider the methodologies of place, the body, and the built environment. Through these site engagements, Patton's practice considers history, memory, and the politics of dwelling. What does it mean to live or stay in a particular place? How do sites compel the mind and work on the body? Do sites as temporary architectures have the power to confound enclosure and to unify communities? How do places inform way-of-life practices, rituals of being, empowerment, and remembrance? Through what processes do sites take shape—in the body and in the world? Communities are formed through a network of concerns in relation. To consider place and placemaking is to grapple with form.

Patton's work is grounded in a consideration of community building as a process of self-determination and resistance. As the work of being present in place requires a physical displacement, his work is an index of the undoing of familiar modes and ways of being. To be present in a new community or context is to trust that the body articulates itself through experience and memory. Patton's practice considers the community archive as a means of survival, as a mode or orientation, and as a response to the conditions of capture. To dwell is to speak nearby, to reflect, and to consider community values and infrastructure as one collects and shares a vision of community experience.

Being, dwelling, and becoming are central elements of social practice. The task of socially engaged art is to render through experience the words, sounds, and images of community: as memory, as image, as a substance which utters itself. To dwell is to bear witness and to keep care of collective experience. Community memory is a substance which resides in place. Coexistence principles itself through the power of me. To spend time as a practice is to coexist in the principle of "me" as the material of life and to build trust through engagement.

Epilogue

Can civic engagement and social practice repair the "lost train of thought"? What is the function of the community archive? How do we assess cultural value and build infrastructures around moments of collective action? With what apparatus do we document moments of cultural production? Are the experiences of individuals, communities, and families the substance of site? Can the archive reach out to a state beyond the image to articulate the magic of life? Does holding on to memories of the past welcome a future presence?

¹ "Right relations" is an ethical framework focused on respect, reciprocity, and accountability. It guides how individuals and communities interact with each other, Indigenous cultures, and the natural environment. The goal is to correct historical imbalances and foster healthy, conscious connections.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Kamau Amu Patton is a media artist who lives in Brooklyn, NY. Patton's work engages archives, documents, networks, stories, and sites. His projects are immersive constructs and take form as expanded field, inter-media structures. His works are temporary architectures, always becoming, continuing, and undergoing transformation.

Over the span of his career, Patton has engaged a range of communities. Patton's practice entails physical emplacement to an actual site in order to observe its context and conditions. Central to Patton's practice is the question of how to prepare for each engagement, what to observe, what to document, and how to bear witness to the various phenomena related to each site that describe its present moment, its histories, and potential futures.

Image: Kamau Amu Patton at Fulton Park, Brooklyn, NY, 2023

ABOUT PRATT FINE ARTS' CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP

Fine Arts' Fellowship in Civic Engagement is a one (renewable to two) year position for an established artist who is active in collaborative, socially engaged practices that seek to address the social and political realities of communities. The Fellowship fosters interdisciplinary collaboration across the Institute and forges relationships with external communities and organizations. In addition to teaching responsibilities in the Fine Arts Department, the Fellow develops programming and/or workshops connecting their practice to internal and external communities.

Learn more about the Civic Engagement Fellowship [here](#).

CHECKLIST

DRUMMER'S GROVE

2022

Video (color, sound), 20:04

Sound: Kamau Amu Patton & Sun Ra, *The Past and Other Dreams*, 2020

Voice 1: Sun Ra

Voice 2: Kamau Amu Patton

Recordings from the Sun Ra / / El Saturn Collection: items SR-R149, SR-R116, and SR-C211

Brooklyn, New York



About the Project

The video on view represents ongoing participation of community at Drummers Grove in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY, a gathering place for drummers for over 30 years. What began in 1968 as a weekly gathering of the Congo Square Drummers has grown into a beloved Prospect Park tradition rooted in Afro-Caribbean history, community, and joy. Restored by Prospect Park Alliance in 2021, Drummer's Grove is beautiful in every season. From April through October, it comes alive on warm Sunday afternoons with music, movement, and connection.

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

Prospect Park is a 526-acre (2.13 km²) urban park in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. The park is situated between the neighborhoods of Park Slope, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Flatbush, and Windsor Terrace, and is adjacent to the Brooklyn Museum, Grand Army Plaza, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Prospect Park is the second-largest public park in Brooklyn, behind Marine Park. Designated as a New York City scenic landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Prospect Park is operated by the Prospect Park Alliance and NYC Parks.

First proposed in legislation passed in 1859, Prospect Park was laid out by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux for the then-independent city of Brooklyn. Prospect Park opened in 1867, though it was not substantially complete until 1873. The park subsequently underwent numerous modifications and expansions to its facilities. Several additions to the park were completed in the 1890s, during the City Beautiful architectural movement. In the early twentieth century, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) commissioner Robert Moses started a program to clean up Prospect Park. A period of decline in the late twentieth century spurred the creation of the Prospect Park Alliance, which refurbished many parts of the park from the 1980s through the 2020s.

AFTERLIFE GEOGRAPHIES

2024

Video (color, sound), 06:02

Brooklyn, New York



About the Project

Afterlife Geographies considers sacred sites, sites of restoration, sites of reclamation, and sites of liberation. The project charts language, movement, thought, speech, and action to develop structures that archive histories of community building. This project documents “way-of-life” practices in relation to processes of settlement by which communities articulate world view, synthesize experience, and establish infrastructures of empowerment and remembrance. This project was developed as a memorial for Frankie Lewis “Hollywood Play.”

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

Herbert Von King Park is an urban park in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York City. It was one of the first parks established in Brooklyn. In June 1857, the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn voted to establish Tompkins Park, named after former New York governor Daniel D. Tompkins. Funding was achieved six months later, as the incorporation papers were misplaced and had to be relocated. In 1870, the Parks Commission took control of the park, and, in 1871, James Stranahan commissioned Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted—architects for Central and Prospect Parks—to submit a plan for the park. In 1985, the park was renamed in honor of Herbert Von King, a longtime local community organizer who was nicknamed the “Mayor of Bedford–Stuyvesant.”

The park is bounded on the North by Lafayette Avenue, to the East by Tompkins Avenue, to the South by Greene Avenue, and to the West by Marcy Avenue. It contains a ballfield, a playground, and the Herbert Von King Cultural Arts Center, the latter of which opened in 1973. The facility also includes the Almira Kennedy Coursey Amphitheatre, named after a longtime advocate for the facility’s construction.

MEMORY AND DATA STORAGE

2012

Video projector, CRT monitor, reel-to-reel tape, reel-to-reel tape player, cassette tape, cassette tape player, vinyl records, record player, LED lights, digital prints, PA, computer, software, and digital video (color, sound), 01:04

Video by Emily Lacy

Los Angeles, California

Organized in collaboration with Machine Project



About the Project

Memory and Data Storage was presented in conjunction with *Pacific Standard Time*. The project focuses on the Ampex Data Storage Corporation, a patron sponsor of the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971. The project is an investigation of Ampex corporate culture and identity in relationship to its role as a manufacturer of memory storage and data storage materials and devices. *Memory and Data Storage* posed the following questions:

How does Ampex deal with storing, accessing, and presenting its own corporate history? How does this history relate to corporate identity? Does the Ampex Corporation exist as a techno-ideological representation of the processes and products it develops? Is the Ampex Corporation a compact data storage device?

The project views the Ampex corporate culture through the memories of the people that worked for the company. A collection of interviews, print ads, Internet streams, and sound and video recordings were displayed to give context to the role that the Ampex Corporation has played in the recording and storage of events in our collective memory. Figures and events included in the presentation are: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Apollo 11 moon landing, The Grateful Dead's *Europe '72*, Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev debates, The LSD experiments of Martin Stolaroff and Al Hubbard, Alexander M. Poniatoff (Ampex founder), Ed Kuen-Sang Shum, and Yoko Ono's Plastic Ono Band.

Stage One of the project investigated the structure of Ampex as a "memory palace," or mnemonic device. Ampex Corporation is a pioneer in the field of information storage and transmission, with many of the great events of our collective history preserved on their products, and thus making the Ampex Corporation a historic site. Stage Two of the project leads with the assumption that body memory does exist and investigates the body memories of a representative sampling of Ampex employees.

Memory and Data Storage took place within the Storefront Plaza by Nate Page. Storefront Plaza relocated the windows of Machine Project and reinstalled them twenty feet back into the main gallery space. To achieve

this, the exterior walls of the building stretched deep into Machine's storefront along a constructed support structure which re-assigned much of the interior space as exterior space. As a result, the public was able to access what was formerly Machine Project's front room, now transformed as a large sidewalk alcove.

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

Machine Project

Machine Project is a Los Angeles performance and installation space investigating art, technology, natural history, science, music, literature, and food. From its storefront near Echo Park, Machine presents events, workshops, and site-specific installations using hands-on engagement to make rarefied knowledge accessible. Beyond their local space, Machine operates as a loose confederacy of artists producing shows at locations near and far. The Los Angeles-based not-for-profit arts organization and community event space announced its closure in January 2018.

KANSEI

KANSEI Information Processing (KIP) is an emerging research area and industry from Japan (Hashimoto, 1997). The concepts behind KIP are strongly tied to Japanese culture. *Kansei* is a Japanese word that does not have a direct counterpart in Western languages; every attempt of translation captures just some of the aspects of *kansei*. The concept of *kansei* is strongly tied to the concept of personality and sensibility. *Kansei* is an ability that allows humans to solve problems and process information in a faster and personal way. In every action performed by a human being, traces of their *kansei* can be noticed, as well as their way of thinking, of solving problems, of their personality. Therefore, although it can be related to emotion, *kansei* is not a synonym for emotion, but rather it refers to the human ability of processing information in ways not just logical (Hashimoto, 1997). *Kansei* is related both to problem-solving tasks and to information analysis and synthesis.

An artist expresses their *kansei* through their works or performances, and they leave traces of their *kansei* in the final product and their message. A skilled actor or dancer can mimic the *kansei* required to make the character they are simulating more believable. The person that will see the work of the dancer, of the actor, the masterpiece of an artist, will use their own *kansei* in order to evaluate it and to extract meaning and information about the perceived *kansei*. According to Shuji Hashimoto from Waseda University of Tokyo, it is possible to grasp one of the aspects of KIP as a process that allows us to personalize the way in which a message is sent or an action is performed, choosing solutions suitable for the personality and sensibility of the performer. The person that will perceive the results of those actions will use their *kansei* ability to also extract details about the solutions adopted by the performer obtaining details, hinting about the personality and the *kansei* of the performer.

OPEN ARCHIVE

2015

Video (color, sound), 02:54

Hamilton, New York

Organized in collaboration with Machine Project and Hamiltonians

About the Project

Open Archive was an invitation to the Village of Hamilton, New York, to share and display its community history. The project was an examination of the recent past as recorded on obsolete and soon-to-be obsolete machines. Equipped with machines found through online bulletin boards, social networks, and yard sales, a screening room/transfer station was set up to view, scan, and archive media artifacts gathered from the community.



View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

The Village of Hamilton

Hamilton is a village located within the town of Hamilton in Madison County, New York, United States. As of the 2020 census, the village had a population of 4,107. It is the location of Colgate University.

The area that became the town and village of Hamilton was originally inhabited by members of the Iroquois League, and some of the territory is still considered to be sacred by the Oneida Indian Nation. Following the American Revolution, the area was ceded to the State of New York. Until 1878, Hamilton was an original outpost of the Chenango Canal.

The town of Hamilton was founded near what is now Earlville and gradually expanded into a wide area populated by farms and settlements. The family of the brothers Samuel and Elisha Payne had been prominent in Connecticut since before the Revolutionary War, in which they had served, possibly at Fort Stanwix, near what is now Rome, New York. At the close of the Revolutionary War, the pair moved from Lebanon, Connecticut, to the town of Whitestone (now Whitesboro, New York), a few miles from Utica.

Machine Project

Machine Project is a Los Angeles-based organization dedicated to helping artists do fun experiments together with the public. Ten artists, performers, and innovators visited Colgate University and the Village of Hamilton throughout a fall semester to create an innovative series of immersive, community art projects in collaboration with university faculty and village residents, ushering in a new experience in community-driven performance and display.

Perfect Strangers: Machine Project and the Hamiltonians unfolded from the week of September 8 to November 13, 2015, on campus and at various sites throughout the village.

THE IRON TRIANGLE | CENTRAL RICHMOND

2007

Video (color, sound), 06:39

Richmond, California

Organized in collaboration with the Richmond Museum of History, The Richmond Art Center, and Opportunity West youth programs

About the Project

The Iron Triangle was a community project led by artist Kamau Amu Patton and Director of Richmond Museum of History Donald Bastin in Richmond, California. Working in collaboration with The Richmond Art Center and Opportunity West youth programs, Patton and Bastin developed a series of workshops for Richmond youth focusing on museum archives and museum practice. Through the use of video recorders, audio recorders, and cultural events, students documented the material culture of their community. The collected material was added to the museum's collection.

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

The Iron Triangle, sometimes known as Central Richmond, is a neighborhood in Richmond, California. It is a largely residential area but includes the downtown Richmond business district along Macdonald Avenue. Commercial areas on Cutting Boulevard and near Interstate 580 are also in the neighborhood is the more expansive of two possible definitions of the area that is used.

The area is well known as the heart of Richmond's African-American community. It has a population of 19,807 and is roughly 66% African-American.

The Latino community has been growing in the Iron Triangle since the late 1980s, making up about 34% of Iron Triangle's population. The first Mexican community in Richmond started in the 1920s in the lower part of the Iron Triangle at the bottom of Macdonald Ave, below 5th St and at A St and B St. Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway began bringing Mexican workers to work in the Santa Fe Rail Yard in Richmond. The Railroad also built a Housing Project for Mexican railroad workers called Section housing, which was located on Macdonald Avenue and Gerrard Blvd. The small Mexican community that started to form at the bottom of Macdonald Ave grew during World War II, especially by Mexican American shipyard workers who came from the southwestern United States.

The Iron Triangle is also known as a high-crime area and has become known as a "warzone" in neighboring cities. In fact, its name reflects that of the Iron Triangle of the Vietnam war era. Residents are attempting to reverse this image in a number of ways. One of these is the new East Bay Center for the Performing Arts (completed in 2011) at MacDonald and 11th St, which contains the aptly-named Iron Triangle Theater.



THE SKY ABOVE

2013

Video (color, sound), 01:06:10

Los Angeles, California

Organized in partnership with the Getty Initiative Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. and Machine Project, and in collaboration with Mark Allen, Ian Byers-Gamber, Jimmy Fusil, Bennett Williamson, and Mathew Au



About the Project

In partnership with the Getty Initiative Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A., Machine Project asked artists to take on the whole environment of Los Angeles and create performances shot on video and edited into short experimental films in response to notable architectural sites throughout the city.

As part of the Machine Project Field Guide to L.A. Architecture, Patton engaged with a series of buildings in Los Angeles via a chartered helicopter while performing a sound work composed for the flight. Accompanied by a cameraman and sound engineer, the entire flight was streamed live to Machine Project's storefront space and the web. Designer Matthew Au compiled a history of the tallest buildings throughout the history of Los Angeles.

From April-September 2013, Machine Project invited a total of 30 artists to create new projects that respond to 30 notable architectural sites around the city of Los Angeles for a wide-ranging look at the postwar built environment of the city as a whole—from its famous residential architecture to its vast freeway network, revealing the city's development and ongoing impact in new ways. The events ranged in size and scope and included a tract home light show, a lecture on nineteenth-century aquaria inside a \$3 million Frank Gehry-designed aquarium, a cave concert, an experimental theater piece performed in the only Schindler home ever built, a movement piece for pregnant performers in a domed church, collaborative walking tours, a theatrical performance of *The Odyssey* set in a Honda Odyssey circling the freeways, and a Miracle Mile memorial Starline bus tour guided by the spirit of Whitney Houston. The Field Guide culminated with a final screening of short films made in conjunction with each project.

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

At first glance, from afar, Los Angeles appears in a haze like any other city. The small cluster of vertically oriented buildings that rise and peak quickly identify its downtown. However, set against the nearly infinite

horizontal expanse of development around it, this skyline of towers begins to seem a little strange; it's oddly small for a city of its size, a little too blunt at its top and bottom, and absent the density that is expected for a city of 3.8 million. Diverse in its building styles and types, tall structures in Los Angeles are consistently atypical. The shape of the city and its towers and plazas more than showcase style of their era, they are the cumulative product of abject laws and regulations, shady political maneuvering, ungrounded utopianism, competitive one-upmanship, apologetic urbanism, and—like it or not—parking.

The relative scarcity of tall buildings in Los Angeles can be attributed to a half-century City Council ordinance set in 1905 (later amended in 1911) which prohibited the construction of buildings in Los Angeles taller than 150 feet. The few exceptions to this strict ordinance included a loophole allowing uninhabited “decorative” towers, such as the Art Deco Eastern Columbia Building, and Los Angeles City Hall, the single permitted variance in over 50 years.

Read a brief history of Los Angeles' tallest buildings [here](#).

SICK FEELING AT SUPER CHIEF GALLERY

2014

Video (black and white, sound), 08:40

New York, New York

Organized in collaboration with Jesse Miller
Gordon, Don Devore, Danny Wood, and Alan Yuch

About the Project

This project created a context for performers in performance and a viewer experience of performance within New York City Cabaret Law. Noise, Art and Revolution, Art and life, Utopia, experimental music, counter culture, DIY, acts of sedition, and temporary autonomous zones were all considered on a backdrop of Punk, Post-Punk, and Cyber Punk movements.



An 8 ft x 12 ft , soundproof room was built inside a gallery. Members of the band Sick Feeling and all of their equipment were then situated in this room. Embedded in the structure were a series of sound sensors that triggered strobes. The room was also furnished with: photoelectric sensors that converted the strobe flashes into sound, microphones to pick up the sounds inside the box, and an infrared video camera connected to a projector in the gallery. The composite sound signal from inside the room was sent to Patton's mixer and processed through a network of filters. The audio and video feed from the box was subsequently sent to the gallery audience. The performance went for the entire four-hour duration of the evening. Periodically, six people at a time were allowed entry into the box to view the band and experience the room for the length of one song.

View the project video [here](#).

Civic Context

New York City Cabaret Law

The New York City Cabaret Law was a dancing ban originally enacted in 1926 during the Prohibition Era and Harlem Renaissance and repealed in 2017. It referred to the prohibition of dancing in all New York City spaces open to the public selling food and/or drink unless the business had obtained a cabaret license. It prohibited “musical entertainment, singing, dancing, or other form of amusement” without a license.

Critics argued that the license was expensive and difficult to obtain and that enforcement was arbitrary and weaponized against marginalized groups, but proponents insisted that the law minimized noise complaints. At the time of the 2017 repeal of the law, after amendments over the years, the law required a license for cabarets, defined as:

Cabaret—any room, place, or space in the city in which any musical entertainment, singing, dancing, or other form of amusement is permitted in connection with the restaurant business or the business of directly or indirectly selling to the public food or drink, except eating or drinking places, which provide incidental musical entertainment, without dancing, either by mechanical devices, or by not more than three persons

An attorney and professor challenging the Cabaret Law wrote that the law originally targeted jazz clubs in Harlem and the social mixing of races, but a historian of the period rejected the view, instead stating there was “little evidence” for that to be the case.

In proposing the law, the Committee on Local Laws argued that “there has been altogether too much running ‘wild’ in some of these night clubs and, in the judgement of your Committee, the ‘wild’ stranger and the foolish native should have the check-rein applied a little bit.” The 1926 Committee’s reference to “running wild” may have been an allusion to the popular 1920s song “Runnin’ Wild,” which popularized the Charleston dance.

From 1940 to 1967, the New York Police Department issued regulations requiring musicians and other employees in cabarets to obtain a New York City Cabaret Card, and musicians such as Chet Baker, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Billie Holiday had their right to perform suspended.

In 1971, the Cabaret Law was modified to exempt musical performance “by not more than three persons playing piano, organ, accordion or guitar or any stringed instrument,” which disproportionately affected jazz since drums, reeds, and horns were not allowed, as was stated in the Chiasson I case and the Chevigny book. The so-called three-musician rule was not found in the original 1926 text of the bill.

Throughout its history, the law was selectively enforced, with its most notable enforcer, former mayor Rudy Giuliani, resurrecting the dormant rule as part of his implementation of broken windows policing to fine and shut down perceived nuisance bars in the late 1990s.

All works created by Kamau Amu Patton. All images courtesy of the artist.