

Respiration:**Galerie de l'UQAM and Diane Gistal present the first virtual installment of the *QUADrature* project**

General curator: Louise Déry, in collaboration with Anne Philippon and Philippe Dumaine

Guest curator: Diane Gistal

Artists: Marie-Danielle Duval, Moridja Kitenge Banza, Marie-Laure S. Louis, Siaka S. Traoré

Dates: September 11 – October 10, 2020

Online opening: Thursday, September 10, 5 p.m.

Montréal, August 27, 2020 – For the entirety of the 2020-2021 season, Galerie de l'UQAM will present *QUADrature*, a virtual project in five acts, curated successively by Diane Gistal, Ariane De Blois, the Musée d'art actuel / Département des invisibles and Bénédicte Ramade. Montréal design studio LOKI has been tasked with providing the look-and-feel, with their holistic approach to graphic design, cultural production and social change.

We start off with *Respiration*, an exhibition that delves into the political significance of breathing for people of African descent, more specifically in the Québec context.

About *Respiration*

The central motif of *Respiration* (“Breathing”) is a seemingly banal action that has taken on an eminently political status for African communities and people of African descent. Breath and the threat of breathlessness, whether as symbolic or physical facts, loom over Black lives like a sword of Damocles.

Recent developments in the United States have become a lightning-rod for millions worldwide who have joined in chanting “Black Lives Matter” to express their shared feeling of exasperation. French-speaking Canada is clearly no exception to this global sense of disaffection.

Still, for the curator, “an overwhelming sense of denialism reigns when it comes to the crushing, asphyxiating – annihilating – weight of the violence experienced by a portion of Québec’s population.” In the words of filmmaker Raoul Peck, racism continues to fulfill its brutal purpose “even when it hides behind well-intentioned paternalism.”

Amid this constant upheaval, breathing becomes an act of resistance and resilience, transformed into poetry.

By focusing precisely on silences, hesitations, sighs, and intakes of breath, Montréal artists Marie-Danielle Duval, Moridja Kitenge Banza, Marie-Laure S. Louis and Siaka S. Traoré at once reveal and sublimate the political power of simply “breathing.”

About the curator

Diane Gistal is a researcher, independent curator and founder of [Nigra luventa](#). A graduate in History from Université Paris VIII, she is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Literature at Université du Québec à Montréal. Her research interests focus on the “lieu de mémoire” in Haitian literature, and her curatorial approach is characterized by the creation of dialogue between visual arts, literature and humanities. *Subalternes* (CDEx, 2019) and *je sais pourquoi l’oiseau chante en cage* (Fonderie Darling, Centre culturel Georges-Vanier and CDEx, 2020) are among her most recent curatorial projects.

About the artists

Marie-Danielle Duval is a visual artist based in Montréal. Her praxis melds her industrial design background (Université de Montréal) with visual and media arts (UQAM). She has also studied new business development (HEC). Her practice employs photography and graphic design while including elements of drawing and painting. Duval’s work has been shown in various artist-run centres throughout Québec.

Moridja Kitenge Banza (b. 1980, in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo) is a Canadian artist of Congolese heritage. He holds degrees from the École des Beaux-arts de Kinshasa (1999) et l'École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Nantes Métropole (France, 2008). His multidisciplinary practice includes painting, photography, video, drawing, and installation. He won first prize at the Dakar Biennale (Dak'Art) in 2010 for his video *Hymne à nous* and for his installation *De 1848 à nos jours*. His work has been exhibited at the Musée Duaphinois (France), the Museum of Contemporary Art Roskilde (Denmark), the Arndt Gallery and the New Society for Visual Arts (Germany), the Galerie de la Fondation Attijariwafa Bank (Morocco), the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (South Africa) and at the Galerie Joyce Yahouda in Montréal.

Marie-Laure S. Louis is a Mauritian visual artist. Born and raised in the Republic of Mauritius, she began her post-secondary studies in France. She is currently working on her PhD in fine arts research and studio practice at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Her research and oeuvre overlap in examining individual freedom in order to unpack notions of identity, authenticity, borders, and futurity. She has participated in major residencies and conferences in North America and France. Her work has been exhibited in Québec and France.

Born in Cameroon in 1986, **Siaka S. Traoré** is an artist hailing from Burkina Faso. With a degree in civil engineering, Traoré started as a self-taught photographer in 2012. He draws inspiration from dance, capoeira, and the urban environment in his artistic practice. Traoré's work critiques notions of identity, the human, our surroundings, and the body in movement, testing our capacities as people and as viewers. His first exhibition, the acclaimed *Sunustreet* series, was included in the 2014 Dakar Biennale (Dak'Art) and his career took off from there. He was awarded the 2016 "Prix Orange de l'artiste numérique AKAA" (a prize for digital creators at Parisian art fair Also Known as Africa) for his work entitled *Dans... ce*.

About QUADrature

QUADrature is inspired by Samuel Beckett's *Quad* (1980), a work created for television in which four actors move laterally or diagonally in quadrangular set, according to a set of strictly determined instructions. In the 1981 premiere, directed by the author, a beam of differently coloured light matched each performer, who in turn employed a specific set of sounds throughout the piece. The four performers were of similar height and indeterminate gender, and each wore a long, hooded tunic that shrouded their face. The first iteration of *Quad* originally broadcast on German television was then reproduced with slight variations, at the author's instigation. *Quad* is characterised by scenic restraint, minimalism, and abstraction; actors traverse the stage in every possible permutation of their permitted movements, the four analogous figures moving from solitude to unity without ever touching each other, leaving centre stage empty at all times.

Beckett's work resonates strikingly with the global pandemic reality facing us today. *Quad* is confined to the television screen, its actors to a confined area; the anonymity, concealed faces, and repetitive movements will seem familiar to many of us. Likewise, *QUADrature* has emerged a context of digital screens, masked individuals moving routinely in predetermined areas, social and physical distancing. Between two people, there is always already an empty space that Beckett referred to as the "danger zone."

With the support of Galerie de l'UQAM colleagues Anne Philippon and Philippe Dumaine, director Louise Déry has conceived *QUADrature* as a locus in which four guest curators develop an iteration of the project, each involving four artists. The virtual exhibits in this series will be released over the course of several months, in keeping with the Beckettian dramaturgy of *Quad*, culminating in a final presentation of works by all four curators and sixteen artists.

While *QUADrature* is conceived for the digital arena, the notion of shortcoming is germane to its form: it is intended as a forum for curatorial experimentation, interrogation, trial-and-error, and new beginnings. We hold out hope that under ideal circumstances, the works in this series will be shown in the physical space of Galerie de l'UQAM so that they might be enjoyed in their full, experiential materiality.

Public activity

Virtual opening of the exhibition

Thursday, September 10, 2020, 5 – 6 p.m.

Via Zoom: <https://uqam.zoom.us/j/92962588536>

In French
Free admission

Join curator Diane Gistal and the Galerie de l'UQAM team to celebrate our online exhibition Respiration, and to know more about the QUADrature initiative.

More on QUADrature

The [first iteration of Quad](#):

Samuel Beckett, *Quad I+II*, 1981, Betacam SP, PAL, colour, sound, Centre Georges Pompidou Collection, France

Directed by Samuel Beckett and broadcast on Germany's Süddeutscher Rundfunk on October 8, 1981, as *Quadrat I+II* (in two distinct stagings). In rehearsal, Beckett intimated that "between the two parts there is an intermission of 100,000 years."

[The text:](#)

Samuel Beckett, *Quad et autres pièces pour la télévision*, followed by *L'Épuisé* by Gilles Deleuze. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 106 p., 1992

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