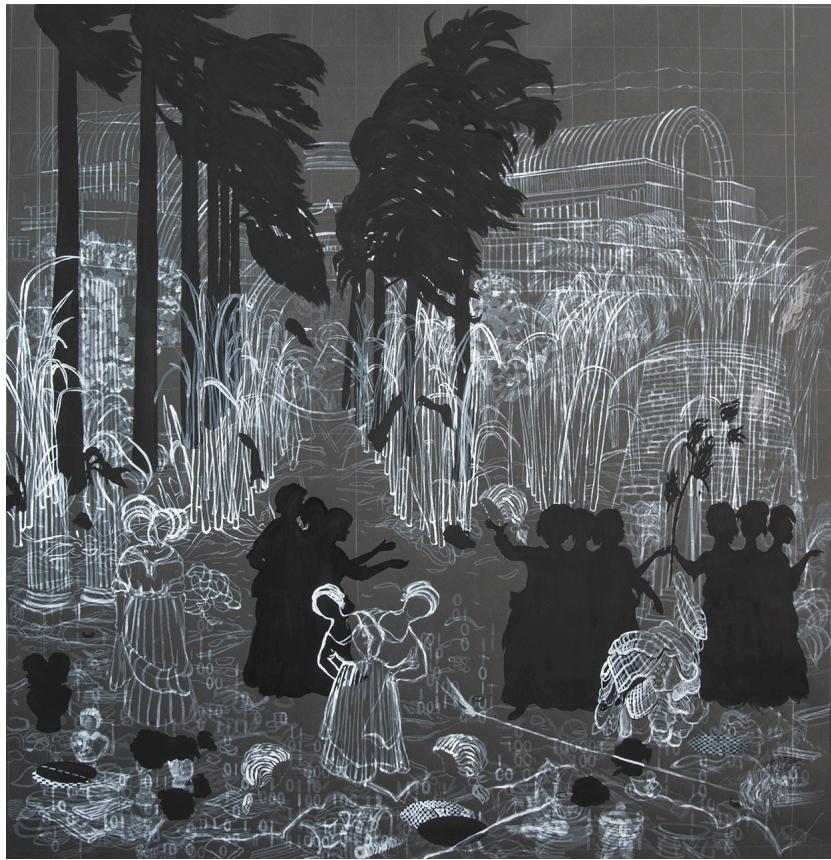


# art space ▾

50 Orange Street [artspacenh.org](http://artspacenh.org) [info@artspacenh.org](mailto:info@artspacenh.org)  
NEW HAVEN, CT 06510

## Artspace New Haven Explores Black Liberation Movements Past and Present with ***REVOLUTION ON TRIAL***



Alex Callender, *A Schematic for History from Outside of Where History Gets Produced*, 2019, mixed media on paper, 42 x 36 in

Artspace New Haven is proud to announce the opening of ***REVOLUTION ON TRIAL: May Day and The People's Art, New Haven's Black Panthers @ 50***, a group exhibition of painting, photography, sculpture, installation, and ephemera reflecting on the 1970 murder trial of Black Panther Party (BPP) national chairman Bobby Seale, New Haven chapter founder Ericka Huggins, and seven other party members.

In this group exhibition, artists **Kwadwo Adae**, **Chloë Bass**, **Alex Callender**, **Melanie Crean**, **Ice the Beef**, **Paul Bryant Hudson**, and **Miguel Luciano** consider the trial and protest movement that erupted around it, the Black Panthers' organizing in New Haven, and the broader nexus of Black Power politics. Thinking through this critical human rights lens, the artists, working across a range of media, explore the content, shape, and role of existing historical archives, the narratives they do and do not contain, representations of justice and revolution, manifestations of Black joy and communal care, and global ramifications of the city's "trial of the century."

While Seale and Huggins were ultimately acquitted of the murder of Panther member Alex Rackley, a suspected FBI informant, the 1970 case shook the city and underscored the deep inequities in the legal system and wider social structures.

The exhibition places particular focus on May Day, the two-day protest organized by the Panthers in solidarity with local activists and Black student leaders at Yale University, to bring national attention to the trials. Together, these actors worked behind the scenes to manage the violence that could have erupted in New Haven, the potential for which was made very clear four days later at Kent State University, when National Guardsmen murdered four student protestors, and, ten days after that, at Jackson State University where police murdered two student protestors.

Some of the works in the show are designed to enter spaces of protest, and have the capacity to transform art into action. While **Miguel Luciano's** bold graphic metal shields, fashioned from slices of the side of a decommissioned school bus, can be mounted on a wall or pedestal, he made them for use by civilians protesting the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico. **Paul Bryant Hudson's** "Soundtrack" celebrates how music and the spoken words create joy, reduce anxiety, enable unity, profess love, and mobilize people in protest movements and everyday life. **Melanie Crean's** mural project calls for the reimagining of two large-scale 1919 neoclassical paintings in New Haven's Superior Courthouse, which center an allegorical White female figure as the paradigm for justice. Generated by nine contemporary Connecticut-based Black, Brown and Indigenous women justice leaders, the new depictions offer an alternate, more realistic and liberatory vision.

A second group of artists interrogate the archive as a repository for selective storytelling. Working from the personal records of Panthers and their descendants, **Chloë Bass's** video explores family love, interpersonal love, and the things redacted from historical scripts, bringing attention to the omissions in revolutionary histories. **Kwadwo Adae's** paintings of local activists and community organizers commemorate living Panthers and individuals leading today's Black liberation struggles, making space for self-determined alternatives to photographic depictions produced by the news media. **Ice the Beef's** theatrical readings of Ericka Huggins's poems, penned as she awaited trial in Niantic Prison, highlight the activist as an artist in her own right, as well as the names of other Black, Brown and Indigenous women whose lives are frequently left out of the archives. **Alex Callender's** collage-based wallpaper highlights patterns of systemic racism within New Haven's early property laws and urban design.

*REVOLUTION ON TRIAL* commemorates May Day, not as a solitary, historic event in isolation but an exchange of power between ideologies of state control and demands to dismantle entrenched systems of racial oppression and colonization. New Haven's vast archives and oral histories of Black community members, recorded specifically for this project, serve as key resources.

Following in the spirit of New Haven's Black Panther Party, *REVOLUTION ON TRIAL* offers sustenance for fighting state violence, which continues today through the police as evidenced by the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Mubarak Soulemane, Jayson Negron, Desmond Franklin, and many more. The prevalence of mass incarceration, excessive bail bonds, escalating poverty rates, lack of affordable housing opportunities, school and healthcare inequality, disproportionate effects of Covid-19 on Black, Indigenous, and Brown communities, and various other forms of racial oppression has ignited artists, providing opportunities to help audiences process complex feelings about US society. As the artists of *REVOLUTION ON TRIAL* draw comparisons between the BPP'S fight and the Black Liberation Movement today, they provoke us to build our better tomorrows.

**In light of public health recommendations from the CDC, all visitors should wear cloth face coverings unless doing so would be contrary to their health or safety because of a medical condition.** Any child under the age of 2 years, or an older child if the responsible adult is unable to place the cloth face covering over the child's face, is not required to wear a cloth face covering. It is also important for everyone to practice social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from other people) at all times. In order to minimize the number of visitors in the gallery at any given time, opening hours for the reception on Friday will be extended to 12 - 6pm. Orange Street will also be blocked to traffic so that guests can walk through the show and have an outdoor space available for socially distanced conversation.

*"Throughout time the colonized and the enslaved have taken action to break the yoke of violent subjugation and break free of social and economic chains. Power based in personal and structural greed is violent. Power based in love for humanity is sacred."*

-- Ericka Huggins

#### **About Artspace New Haven**

Founded by artists in 1987 as part of the alternative space movement, Artspace has served as a home for artists from all walks of life to take risks, share their stories and build bridges between Greater New Haven's diverse communities. Artspace's mission is to connect artists, audiences, and resources; to catalyze artistic activity; train and empower future art leaders; build audiences; and ground art as an agent of change.

Artspace is based in New Haven, Connecticut, and operates out of a 5,000 square foot storefront in a former Civil War-era furniture factory. We've mounted group shows and solo projects that spark local/global dialogues, foster collaborations between artists and non-artists, support experimentation, defend radical expression, uplift teen voices, champion under-resourced voices, and encourage interdisciplinary exchange around some of the most urgent issues of our time. Over the past decade, these projects have

addressed racial bias in the Criminal Justice system (Arresting Patterns, 2015), the jettisoning of worker rights (A new job to un-work at, 2017), Land Justice (Paying Homage: Soil + Site), and our individual and collective resiliency (with the art and healthcare commissions, WellBeing).

Artspace is supported by state art funding from the CT Office of the Arts/Department of Economic and Community Development, a state agency funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Recent funders have included CT Humanities, Foundation for Contemporary Art, the Public Welfare Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, and the Wingate Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, the Andy Warhol Foundation, the Board of Directors and Friends of Artspace, and generous artists who contribute to an annual benefit art auction.

**Press Contacts**

Ed Winstead  
Cultural Counsel  
[ed@culturalcounsel.com](mailto:ed@culturalcounsel.com)

Robert Grand  
Cultural Counsel  
[robert@culturalcounsel.com](mailto:robert@culturalcounsel.com)