

**we respond
together**
*Jacolby
Satterwhite:*
Room for Living
**at The Fabric
Workshop and
Museum,
Philadelphia, PA**

The University of Pennsylvania
Fine Arts 264 : Art, Design and Digital Culture
with Avery Lawrence
Fall 2019




FWM We are open today from 10 am to 6 pm

About Join Donate

Exhibition

Jacolby Satterwhite: Room for Living

September 13, 2019–January 19, 2020



Jacolby Satterwhite, *Room for Demoiselle Two*, 2019. Image courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

In Jacolby Satterwhite's animated videos, human avatars interact with 3D models in an amorphous, liberated realm; neither time, space, scale, nor societal normativity limit the expression of his characters or architecture. Collaborating with FWM as an Artist-in-Residence, Satterwhite has reimagined elements from his acclaimed digital animation work spanning nearly a decade in *Room for Living*, his first solo museum show. From the initial phase of his two-year residency, Satterwhite has worked with the FWM Studio team to integrate digital fabrication tools into his expanding practice, bringing animations to life in physical form. Building upon the scenes and motifs featured in two groundbreaking series—*Reiflying Desire* (2011-2014) and *Birds in Paradise* (2017-2019)—the exhibition will feature multi-media installations, new video works, and a virtual reality experience.

Over the past decade, his videos have also referenced the works of his late mother, Patricia Satterwhite, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia when her son was in middle school and prolific in the creation of inventive drawings intended to solve problems both mysterious and mundane. *Reiflying Desire*, an opus-scale series of six videos combining the artist's interest in the histories of art, dance, queer theory, and American material culture, often featured his mother's drawings as three-dimensional digital objects. More recently, *Birds in Paradise* incorporated audio tracks made from a cappella recordings written and sung by Ms. Satterwhite. In *Room for Living*, the artist continues this collaboration with his mother, pays homage to a lifetime of ingenuity by realizing her designs as physical objects.

Iconic scenes from the *Reiflying Desire* series will take three-dimensional form as physical objects constructed by the FWM Studio. Employing cutting-edge techniques in digital fabrication—such as 3D printing and CNC machining—these objects will be integrated into five multi-media installations featuring elements from Satterwhite's videos at various scales, from three-inch miniatures to figures standing over seven feet tall. His allusions to Modern and Renaissance painting will also be present, as seen in the seven-foot tall figures composed in one installation to reference *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by Caravaggio (1601-2). In another, the artist has positioned five female figures to resemble the protagonists in Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R.)* (1907). The exhibition will also feature a new video by Satterwhite marking the continuation of ideas introduced in *Reiflying Desire* and *Birds in Paradise*, accompanied by a virtual reality component. Providing an opportunity to digitally enter the artist's world and explore it in 360 degrees, visitors will be guided by a soundtrack poignantly interwoven with the transformed voice of the artist's mother.

Location

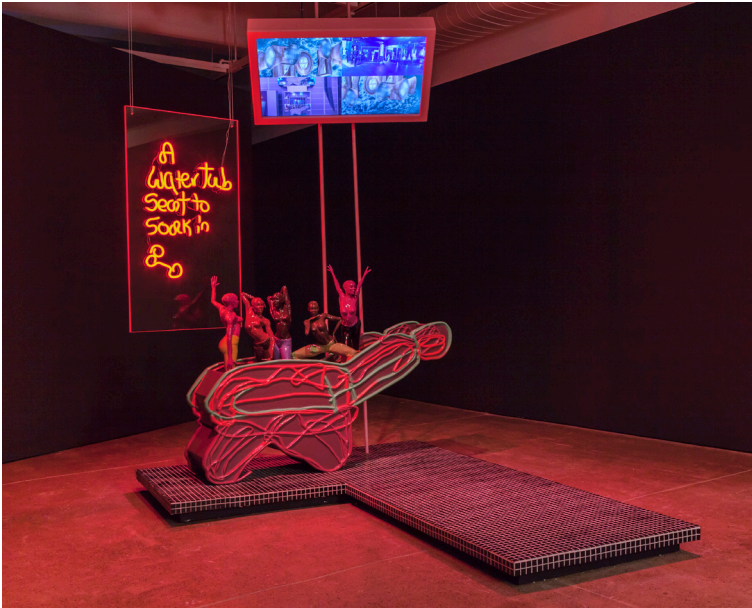
The Fabric Workshop and Museum Second and Eighth Floors

Opening Reception

Friday, September 13, 2019, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Room for Living


screenshot of The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) *Jacolby Satterwhite: Room for Living* webpage





top: Jacolby Satterwhite answers students' questions on December 5, 2019 (photo: Avery Lawrence)
bottom: Jacolby Satterwhite: *Room for Living* installation view, FWM (photo: Carlos Avendaño)



the writers



	Alejandra Cabrales
	Marta Garcia Ferreiro
	Bryan Joung
	Carly Ryan
	Sonia Shah
	Alexandra Sharpe
	Pia Singh
	Rebecca Spratt
	Avery Lawrence

the sections



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2. "spirituality, sexuality and desire" ***pgs 9 & 10***
3. "physicalizing the digital" ***pgs 10 & 11***
4. "allusions, historical and otherwise" ***pgs 11, 12 & 13***
5. "viewer discretion advised" ***pgs 13 & 14***



Jacolby Satterwhite answers students' questions
on December 5, 2019
(photo: Avery Lawrence)

1. "introduction to we respond together"

Avery Lawrence

"Let's co-write a response/review/reflection in reaction to our experiences with the exhibition *Jacolby Satterwhite: Room for Living* at the Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM)," I said to 16 students in October of 2019. Thus began an experiment in collaborative art writing. I encouraged the students to share their honest and thoughtful feelings and ideas about the show. Instead of attempting to emulate a professional art-writing style, the idea was to embrace our amateurishness as we co-crafted an unimpeded - and, maybe, unexpected - written response to an art show.

As a class, we had various encounters with the work over the course of the exhibition:

October 17, 2019 we visited the exhibition at FWM, spending one hour seeing the exhibition and touring the building

December 5, 2019 we chatted with Jacolby Satterwhite over FaceTime

The format of this collaboration was structured. 8 students elected to write about Satterwhite's exhibition (the other 8 wrote about Michelle Lopez's work at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania). Based on an initial written response to Satterwhite's work, the students were organized into four thematic groups. Each group of two students worked together - in person or in a shared digital document - to craft one written response to their assigned theme. Each student had a color associated with his/her/their name, his/her/their writing. In the paragraphs and pages that follow, you will find 8 students thinking and writing about art, together.

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2. "spirituality, sexuality and desire"

Marta Garcia Ferreiro

Alexandra Sharpe

The word that comes to mind when I think of Jacolby's show is multifaceted. There were sculptures, digital installations, and the VR experience. ~~Jacolby's exhibition at the Fabric Workshop and Museum stands out to me first because of the variety of media utilized, ranging from digital animation to sculpture and performance:~~ This mix of different types of media highlights the bizarreness and otherworldliness of the pieces themselves, since it helps create a universe of its own that's not restricted by a specific media type.

I have never seen a show that is so distant from reality - Jacolby has truly created his own world. Not just a regular world, one rife with sex, nudity, and mythical creatures. There was a certain spirituality that I felt was being expressed, though I did not fully understand exactly what Jacolby wanted to express. ~~Through his pieces, there are some recurring themes of sci-fi, desire and sexuality, but none of these themes are explained to be symbols of anything or explicit social commentary. In comparison to other artists depicting queerness, he doesn't seem to attempt to make a social critique or to celebrate it necessarily, but rather to simply have it present in his world in different forms. Perhaps this is part of why his work is powerful. In Jacolby's fictional / computer generated world there seems to be a lack of order or restriction of desires, making it seem like an escape from reality. Due to this freedom and the bizarreness of the entire universe even highly sexual images somehow lose their potential eroticism. The most intriguing part of the show was the combination of extreme sexuality with recreations of his mother's drawings. I found that paradox perplexing and would like to know more about the inspiration and motivations behind it.~~

What is the message he's trying to convey? I also thought that was interesting, the fact that his mother's drawings are part of his art also takes away some of the eroticism of them and makes his depiction of sex and sexuality more like something natural that's just part of his world, not a taboo subject.

3. "physicalizing the digital"

Alejandra Cabrales

Bryan Joung



Jacolby Satterwhite: *Room for Living*, installation view at FWM. (photo: Carlos Avendaño)

How do we experience the memories of another person? Bringing an emotion, a thought, or a vision into the physical world requires thoughtful choice, at the risk of misrepresentation.

The vividness of Jacolby's translated message is in the details. Smart material choices bring into focus the layered depth of his message, drawing the viewer into the personalized touches that are scattered throughout his artwork.

Glossy saturation & fleeting shimmer.

Saccharine Pop-ness.

As you dive more and more into the details, you fall deeper and deeper into intimacy with Jacolby in a show that pulls heavily from personal experience.

Jacolby's use of mixed media allows the viewer's perspective to travel beyond the physical aspects of creativity. It allows them to dive deeper into his imagination and world. Jacolby plays with angles, depth, and size in all of his pieces. The screens that play his animations, his sculptures, and mirrors are all displayed at different angles and sizes giving the viewer diverse perspectives of his work.

His lengthy and fast paced animations give the viewer much to process, think about, and feel. Every time frame is dense. The randomness of the animation gives the viewer a lot of space for interpretation that could lead to the risk of misrepresentation.

4. "allusions, historical and otherwise"

Carly Ryan

Sonia Shah

Jacolby Satterwhite's show was an eclectic peek into his consciousness, where the different elements are woven together to give us a rich view of his consciousness, including references to his imagination, art history, his past and family. [Satterwhite's multimedia works use allusions, historical and otherwise, to enhance the audience's experience and perception of the art.](#)

One of the most prominent references to culture was the one to *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. While digesting the other multimedia



Jacolby Satterwhite: *Room for Living*, installation view at FWM. (photo: Carlos Avendaño)

aspects of the piece, *Room for Cleansing*, the spectator might take a second to notice it. But, once they make the link to Picasso's early popular work, the perfectly shiny 3D rendition of the painting that art history knows so is well enthralling. While the medium and style is vastly different, through the subjects' posture and attitude, the link to the painting is undeniable. In this painting, Picasso was revolutionary in abandoning known mechanisms of representation, by abstracting rather than idealizing the female form, and, 100 years later, Satterwhite revolutionizes representation, through shocking mixes of media and theme.

Furthermore, his video works are collages that bring in references to other materials, whether it be his older works or art-historical material. For example, his videos include clips from a variety of sources, including clips from his time as a Penn student – when he initially created these videos, he was not planning for their use in a later project. His videos also seem to reference other fantasy worlds, as they include mythical animated creatures and characters. The

style of these animations even hint at a video game-like impression. So, by bringing in such a variety of visual elements and allusions, his final video works provide the audience with a mesmerizing, sensational experience of the art.

5. "viewer discretion advised"

Pia Singh

Rebecca Spratt

viewer discretion advised because this world, these multiple worlds of screen and sculpture unlike anything I have experienced before: a world unique from any other a three-dimensional video-game kind of digital combination of haunting audio, eerie form, graphic visuals a scary serenity wafts through museum walls unspeakable ~~but we know~~ acts, playing with dolls there is beauty in *peculiarity*: viewer discretion is **advised** innocence lost, unsupervised or ~~cannibalized~~ humans for public display, is this art today? boundaries pushed every which way, walking through - do you stay or ~~run away~~ open-ended narratives screens sounds and *hidden* ~~explicit~~ imagery fluidity, bondage, and ever-present sexuality fantasy aura, push you **Out** and pull you ~~right back~~ in **severe discomfort** arises slowly, steadily rising within unfamiliar and **Over**whelming, ~~unnatural~~ and natural understanding the meaning: ~~truly~~ impossible from his own identity and upbringing ambiguity and chaos ~~leaves you~~ chilling ever-evolving and undefined by physical space personally, I had a very difficult time scientific, futuristic, **ballistic**

lost in the mind

what are you saying **JACOLBY**

Who are **you**, **we**, **us**? Who do want to be in these. multiple. worlds?

your worlds? or have you given this world(s) to us?

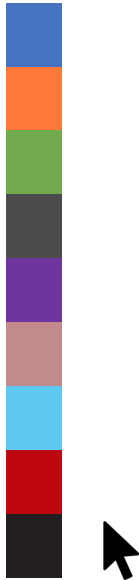
Have you accomplished your vision?

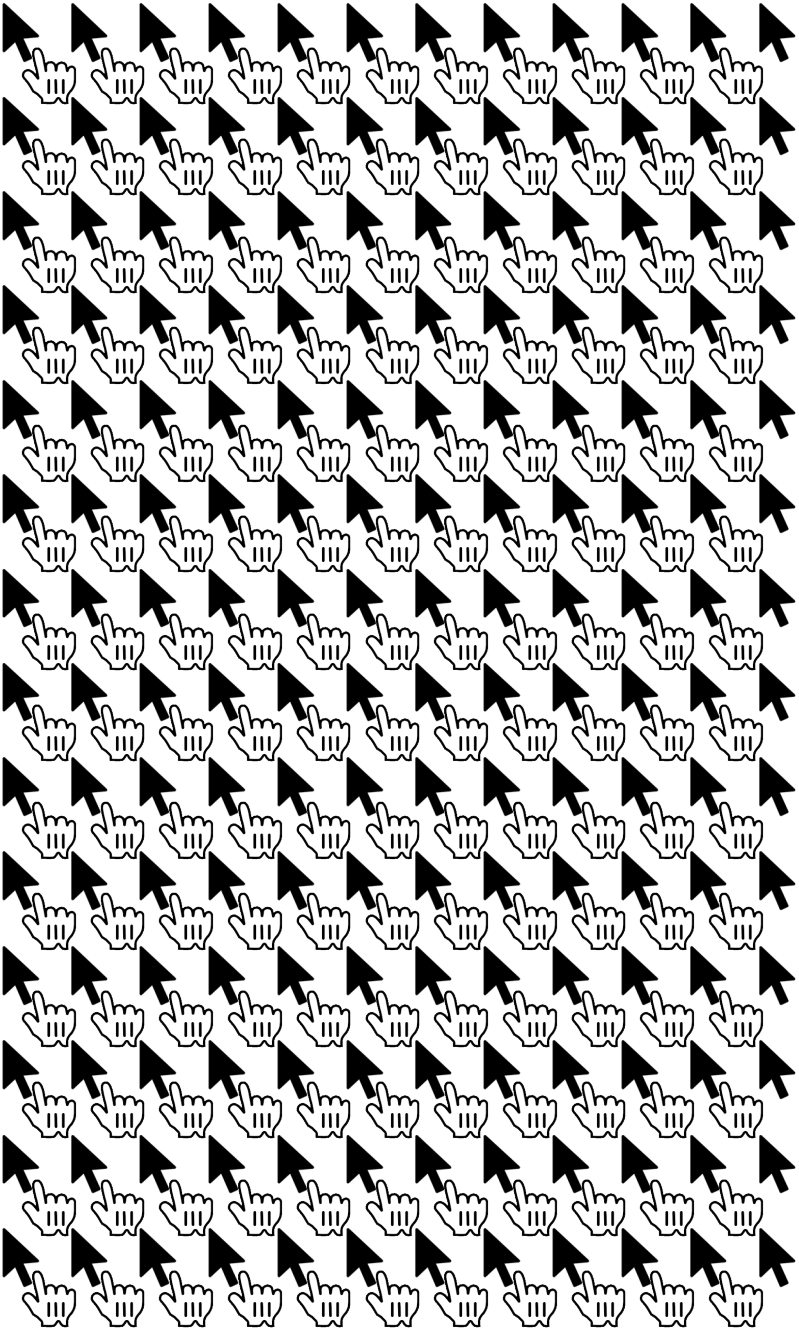
We are intrigued, if this is the future, we are **uncomfortable**



Jacolby Satterwhite: *Room for Living*, installation view at FWM
(photo: Carlos Avendaño)

Special thanks to Jacolby Satterwhite for taking the time to talk with our class over FaceTime and to the Fabric Workshop and Museum for presenting great shows and public programs





we respond together, fall 2019