

Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden: Shrouds is an exhibition of drawings, performance video, carving, installation, and rubbings (or frottage) that continue artist Faheem Majeed’s investigation of *culturally specific institutions*. The term refers to museums or art centers that specialize in celebrating the culture of a particular ethnic, social, or cultural group as a means of engaging with their histories, accomplishments, or struggles. Examples of such institutions include the National Museum of Mexican Art and the Holocaust Museum. For Majeed, the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) in Chicago has been the primary focus of what he calls a “loving critique” for over a decade. The 80-year-old institution is the oldest African American art center in the United States still operating in its original landmark building. In response to this history, Majeed began the *Perennial Garden* series in 2012 (first exhibited at Hyde Park Art Center) to consider the many questions he had concerning the role of culturally specific institutions: Who is accountable for their maintenance? How do they remain relevant to the current concerns of the community while preserving the past? What would the creative landscape look like in their absence?

Subtitled *Shrouds*, this latest chapter of the *Perennial Garden* series introduces one of the largest rubbings Majeed has made yet. The series title is borrowed from a 1994 essay on the history of SSCAC by member artist Anna Tyler for the *International Review of African American Art*. In August 2020, Majeed and his assistants Jonathan Aldrich and Eric Perez wrapped the front of the three-story SSCAC building in strips of muslin and rubbed sticks of graphite over architectural features. The laborious process of making the work is a key element of Majeed’s art practice. Framed rubbings at various sizes included in the exhibition highlight materials—like thread, screws, nail holes—to emphasize the value of process. The act of rubbing is extremely tactile and intimate. The maker feels every inch, contour, and texture of the object being covered. For this reason, the intention is to highlight shrouds as something sacred, as Majeed considers SSCAC a temple for Black art and culture.

After moving to Chicago in 2003, Majeed paused his accomplished work in metal sculpture to apply his talents toward art administration. The blacksmith’s anvil included in the installation— anchors the ropes for the center shroud—is a biographical reference. He worked as Executive Director and Curator of SSCAC from 2005–2011. There, the Margaret Burroughs Gallery has exhibited artwork on its wood paneled walls since its inception, and the modular New Bauhaus style has become a signature feature. Majeed reconfigures similar cedar panels in every *Perennial Garden* installation; here, he uses them to create a low pedestal for the rubbing of the building. SSCAC holds a collection of paintings, drawings, and sculpture by some of the most revered Black artists of the twentieth century, including James Van Der Zee, Gwendolyn Brooks, Charles White, Barbara Jones-Hogu, to name a few. Surrounded by the legacy of his artist idols, Majeed was able to play with the artworks through experimental exhibition-making and public discussions during his tenure. The institution, its history, and its people became his muse.

How does an institution get built? This is one of the core questions in Majeed’s art practice. It is represented in *Legacy Signature*, a drawing made by Majeed imitating the signature of Dr. Margaret Taylor Burroughs (1915–2010), and *Modernity* (Faces 2), a portrait of two young women carved in drywall that reinterprets the original print *Faces* by Burroughs. Burroughs was a founding member of SSCAC, a prolific printmaker, educator, activist, and collector, who Majeed knew and still considers as a role model. She championed racial harmony, supported artists, and inspired the

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founding of numerous cultural institutions, including the Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC) and AfriCOBRA movements. Her house was located across the street from SSCAC, where she built the collection of African Diaspora Art that started the DuSable Museum of African Art. Majeed’s use of simple construction materials like OSB particle board and drywall relates to the idea of building institutions in a literal way, while inscribing it with handmade marks to signify the people that help define the work of the institution.

The exhibition also introduces Majeed’s first performance video collaboration with the Seldoms Dance Company in a piece called *Push Pull*, choreographed by founder and director Carrie Hanson. The performance features a suited dancer, Damon Green, in struggle and release with the central shroud on display. The work was performed privately during Majeed’s first solo exhibition that preceded this exhibition at SSCAC, *Faheem Majeed: From the Center* (January 16–March 27, 2021). Majeed curated a selection of paintings that most influenced him from the collection, which hang on the wall behind Green. The artists include (in order) Jeff Donaldson, Barbara Jones-Hogu, Leon Wright, Charles White, and Bernard Goss. Green’s emotional movements astutely respond to the gestures in the artworks. Hanson and Majeed created *Push Pull* in response to Majeed’s first performance in 2009, *Piano Push*, in which Majeed wore his museum director’s suit and pushed a piano—the only constant object in the Burroughs Gallery—across the SSCAC gallery floor. *Piano Push* illustrated the weight of institutional legacy that a director bears, while *Push Pull*, exhibited in conversation with the shrouds, has a message of devotion to the institution. The exhibition reminds us that institutions exist as long as they are needed and relevant to their community.

Located just three miles apart and established within three years of each other, Hyde Park Art Center and South Side Community Art Center share their origins in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) era of the late 1930s. Both were founded by artists, historians, and educators living in their respective neighborhoods of Hyde Park/Kenwood and Bronzeville to nurture the growth of artists and ensure art and culture is free and accessible to everyone. This monumental project by Faheem Majeed commissioned by Hyde Park Art Center has brought new understanding to the purpose of both institutions working together to achieve a higher level of support for artists to accomplish more impactful work. By identifying overlaps in the mission of the two institutions, as well as opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another, *Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden: Shrouds* and corresponding public programs (see reverse) contribute to the Art Centers’ goals of promoting a more civically engaged Chicago.

Allison Peters Quinn
Director of Exhibition & Residency Programs



Faheem Majeed, *Push Pull* (Spiritual), 2021, archival inkjet print, 20 x 30 inches.



FAHEEM MAJEED is a builder—literally and metaphorically. A resident of Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood, Majeed often looks to the material makeup of his neighborhood and surrounding areas as an entry point into larger questions around civic-mindedness, community activism, and institutional critique. As part of his studio practice, the artist transforms materials such as particle board, scrap metal and wood, and discarded

signs and billboard remnants, breathing new life into these often overlooked and devalued materials. His broader engagement with the arts also involves arts administration, curation, and community facilitation, all which feed into his larger practice. From 2005–2011, Majeed served as Executive Director and Curator for the SSCAC. In this role he was responsible for managing operations, staff, programs, fundraising, curation, and

archives for the SSCAC. During his time with the SSCAC, Majeed curated exhibitions of numerous artists including Elizabeth Catlett, Dr. David Driskell, Charles White, Jonathan Green, and Theaster Gates. Majeed received his BFA from Howard University and his MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).



Push Pull, 2021, digital video, 19:42 minutes. Produced and directed by Faheem Majeed. Choreography by Carrie Hanson. Performance by Damon Green. Photography by Liviu Pasare.



From Left to Right: *Perennials 1- 12*, 2021, graphite on muslin, 12 x 12 inches each; *Push Pull (John Henry's 11th Hour)*, 2021, archival inkjet print, 30 x 20 inches; and *Modernity (Faces 2)*, 2011, drywall and wood, 97 x 48 inches



On Center: *Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden Shroud*, 2021, charcoal and graphite in muslin, cedar, and cinder blocks, 30 x 25 feet. **On Far Wall From Left to Right:** *Legacy Signature 1*, 2016, graphite and pen, 21 1/2 x 29 inches; *Demise Shroud (Floor 1)*, 2016, charcoal and graphite on muslin, 34 3/4 x 32 3/4 inches; and *Demise Shroud (Piano)*, 2016, charcoal and graphite on muslin, 34 3/4 x 32 3/4 inches.

Public programs

Artists at the Center Thursday, April 8, 6–8pm

Hyde Park Art Center and South Side Community Art Center present a roundtable discussion with living artists across generations who have exhibited their work at both institutions in the 20th and 21st centuries. The conversation brings together artists **Faheem Majeed**, **Juarez Hawkins**, **Rhonda Wheatley**, **Candace Hunter**, **Tony Smith**, **Jonathan Green**, and **Julian Williams**, who will discuss their experiences working with the institutions, their audiences, and legacies. The conversation is moderated by **Patric McCoy**.

Virtual Panel Discussion: On the Value and Future of Culturally Specific Institutions Thursday, May 27, 6–8pm

Leaders of culturally specific arts institutions discuss how their institutions are uniquely positioned to serve as culture keepers and enable communities (particularly queer and communities of color) find power in their collective identities. The conversation will be moderated by **Pascale Ife Williams**. Panelists include **Debra Yeppa-Pappan** from the Native American Exhibition Hall at the Field Museum, **Cesáreo Moreno**, Chief Curator at the National Museum of Mexican Art, and **Carla Stillwell**, Executive Director of the Stillwell Institute for Contemporary Black Art.

Center Sunday: Rubbing Workshop Sunday, June 6, 1–3pm

Youth Art Board alumni artist, **Stevia Ndoe** leads a free workshop on the technique of frottage. Ndoe was one of several Art Center teen artists who assisted Majeed in making *Shroud*.

Push Pull: A Live Performance by The Seldoms in collaboration with Faheem Majeed Thursday, June 10, 6–7pm Saturday, June 12, 2–3 pm

Join us for a live performance of *Push Pull*, a collaboration between Seldoms Dance Company's **Carrie Hanson** and **Damon Green**, and artist **Faheem Majeed**. The choreography activates Majeed's rubbing of the South Side Community Art Center. In person program. Reservations required. Reserve through our website.



Virtual Panel Discussion: Architecture and Black Lives Thursday, July 8, 6–8pm

The concluding conversation brings together artists and scholars to meditate on the ways that Black people navigate and commune with each other amidst oppressive architectural structures. With a particular focus on Chicago spaces, this program will consider how to conceive of architectural forms that affirm Black life, with **Adrienne Brown**, Interim Director of Arts + Public life and author of *Black Skyscraper*, artist **Faheem Majeed**, and members of Black Reconstruction Collective—**Mario Gooden**, author of *Darkspace*, and **Amanda Williams**, architect, artist and Hyde Park Art Center Board Member.

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Generous support for this exhibition is also provided by the Exhibition Host Committee.

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Hyde Park Art Center is a hub for contemporary arts in Chicago, serving as a gathering and production space for artists and the broader community to cultivate ideas, impact social change, and connect through expanded networks. The Art Center functions as an amplifier for today and tomorrow's creative voices, providing the space to make, see, learn about, and engage art with freedom. The Art Center is funded in part by: Allstate Insurance Company; Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Foundation; Chicago Architecture Biennial; The Chicago Community Trust; City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events; Creative New Zealand; Crown Family Philanthropies; David C. and Sarajeon Ruttenberg Arts Foundation; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council Agency; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Reva and David Logan Foundation; Smart Family Foundation, Inc; Terra Foundation for American Art; Walter and Karla Goldschmidt Foundation; and the generosity of its members and people like you.

Cover Image: Installation view of *Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden: Shrouds* on view at Hyde Park Art Center.

Portrait of Faheem Majeed courtesy of Michael Sullivan.

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by Faheem Majeed

May 3–July 24, 2021