

# Curriculum

## A List of Favorite Anythings

By Leslie Hewitt

Saturated with references to the lives of African Americans, Leslie Hewitt’s work explores the poetics of visual history, its absences, and its mysterious narratives. In her series of constructed images *Riffs on Real Time* (2006–9), Hewitt overlaid found snapshots of everyday people onto ephemera, including pages from *Ebony* magazine. Her photographs, often presented in sculptural installations, function as portals into memory, where historic scenes mingle with personal lives.

### Eva Hesse: *Diaries*, 2016

Mon.  
Be stronger—say no.  
—Eva Hesse, 1964

Each entry from the beautiful object that is *Eva Hesse: Diaries* is a strange yet paralleling space between a finished and unfinished thought. Her objects and drawings in a similar way give room to the viewer, inviting a proximity of intimacy and engagement. How much to reveal and what should remain a mystery (yet to be discovered or experienced) is a delicate balance for all artists. Hesse’s interior world (shared in the diaries) is as rich as her material investigations (shared through her studio work).

### Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, 1999

In 1990s New York, shifts in demographics were visible, and the effects of public policies shaped my walks through the city. Pamela M. Lee’s book on the work of Gordon Matta-Clark—her words contextualize the spatial histories his cuts revealed—was a counterpoint to the modules of erasure that were “cleaning up” the cityscape his art addressed. Lee’s writing is crucial to a stance that acknowledges architectural and sculptural acts as sharing a temporal relationship with photography.

### David Hammons: *Rousing the Rubble*, 1991

How can David Hammons’s inert objects produce critical energy, curiosity, and a sense of playfulness while evoking complex systems of knowledge and culture? In his mostly nonobjective approach to sculpture, and adept transformation of material, there’s a cross-pollination of conceptual art practices with a blues aesthetic. Concepts of introspection and contrapuntal modes of expression evident in the artist’s power objects and installations move together seamlessly. Hammons’s investigations of objecthood, performance, and provocations guide artists in the twenty-first century toward a formidable critique of systems of power.

### Stan Brakhage, *Mothlight*, 1963

The 1960s visually and intellectually provide a place of refuge, even within that era’s political volatility and convention-breaking modus operandi. Third Cinema, along with the structural approaches found in the works of Tony Conrad, Michael Snow, and the nonnarrative explorations of Stan Brakhage, give me courage to seek out new visual registers through repetition. Brakhage’s *Mothlight* is as arresting when viewing the still frames as it is in motion, asking the viewer to consider collage and montage equally across time and space.

### Deborah Willis, *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, 1996

Deborah Willis’s scholarship and mentorship opened a world of criticality and emotion in the approach to photography, challenging me to see beyond the surface of things, to dare to uncover what lay unpictured, underexposed, or overexposed. The juxtaposition of snapshot images with the book’s narrative text, built around the pictorial gaps, led me to nestle my artistic practice in a similar space, full of sociopolitical modes, that questions history and asserts agency even in subtle gestures.

### Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 1975

Irwin Rubin, a painter and professor at Cooper Union and my teacher, utilized the educational strategies of his teacher—artist and color theorist Josef Albers. In Rubin’s course, we interrogated modes of color phenomena and materiality. Beyond the classroom, I could not unsee aspects of color relationships from the moment I opened my eyes in the morning to when I closed them at night. The transmission of art through exchange, methodology, interplay, and experimentation can radically change a person’s life.

### Sherrie Levine, *Meltdown*, 1989

Sherrie Levine uses appropriation to critique mythologies around art and genius. The results defy categorization and create a symbiotic relationship between her subject of criticism and her artistic gestures. *Meltdown* engages the works of Marcel Duchamp, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Piet Mondrian, and Claude Monet, resulting in woodcuts with variations on twelve squares of color. Levine made this portfolio in the late ’80s. Considering the velocity of images we contend with by the minute, the contemplative pace of this work continues to mesmerize.

### Hito Steyerl, *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013

“The most important things want to remain invisible. Love is invisible. War is invisible. Capital is invisible.” In *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN*, Hito Steyerl reminds the viewer of the underlying paramilitary technology photographic practices employ, and to what end. This playfully disturbing video creates the cognitive dissonance needed to fully embrace and acknowledge the risks taken while indulging in the virtual window. The socialization process of self-surveillance and constant mediation produces strange effects, procedures, and navigations, one of which is agency.

### Project Row Houses, Houston; the Stony Island Arts Bank, Chicago; the Underground Museum, Los Angeles

Writer Greg Tate refers to “maroon spaces” of black music, but could such spaces also exist as architectural sites in the contemporary art world? I would argue yes: At Project Row Houses, where the logic of John Biggers’s paintings interacts with the notion of Joseph Beuys’s social sculpture and a concrete rebuke of gentrification. At the Stony Island Arts Bank’s four dynamic archives (academic glass lantern art history slides, a collection of “negrobilia” or racist “kitsch” objects, house-music pioneer Frankie Knuckles’s vinyl collection, Johnson Publishing archive). And at the Underground Museum, with its recent, probing exhibition *Non-fiction*. These vanguard projects create space and open platforms, both in theory and in practice.

### Kellie Jones, *EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*, 2011

Genealogy matters in art: Who are your teachers? Your friends? Your community? What are these cacophonies of influences? Plotted onto a graph, is summation even a possibility? Kellie Jones opens up such questions, offering up multiplicity as a system for understanding contemporary art. *EyeMinded* brings to life New York, the creative class, and the intricately laced art worlds that shape Jones’s view and her approach to writing about art objects, artists, and the collective act of making meaning.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Andrea Bowers, *Hope in Hindsight*, October 2009. Photograph by Eric Hester; Barbara Brown, *Eva Hesse*, ca. 1963; Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, *David Hammons*, 1980; still from *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013; cover of Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 1975; Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, 1978; still from *Mothlight*, 1963



Clockwise from top left: Bowers, Courtesy Project Row Houses; Brown, Courtesy the artist; Greenfield-Sanders, © the artist; Steyerl, © the artist and courtesy the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; Matta-Clark, © Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark and Artists Rights Society, New York, and courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London; Brakhage, Courtesy Estate of Stan Brakhage and Fred Camper