

## ***Zeelie Brown: Queer Mothers' Space***

June 1-June 15, 2022

### **Opening Reception:**

Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 5-9 PM

[RSVP via Eventbrite](#)

A way to answer the question: how do I stay whole in a place that is trying to kill me? A queer reflection on black place. An invitation to improvise. A means of empowerment. A refuge in and of itself. A blueprint for ways to cobble together community at a time when all social action is a digitally surveilled commodity. A break. A way for black, queer people to come together and share. A way for those set to the margins to grow into their power. A crisis meeting to dynamite away the ways that white supremacy is an architectonic program cast in concrete, glass, and steel built into the heart of the American project. A plea to re-examine material histories of the places we come from that we are asked to leave behind as we (re)form the world. An exercise in kindness. A space of gifting a new system to the world as capitalism seems to be falling apart all around us.

EFA Project Space is thrilled to present *Zeelie Brown: Queer Mothers' Space*, the first solo presentation of work in New York by Alabama raised and NYC-based artist **Zeelie Brown**. The exhibition is accompanied by an original zine publication by the artist featuring a commissioned essay by **Katherine Adams** and poetry by **Dre Cardinal**. Framed as a conversation between Brown and figures both living and historic, the solo project will include performances by Brown and guests, a public dinner, talks, and a gallery-spanning installation of lush inter-media, tactile, and sonic works that confront the intersectional realities of climate injustice, oppression, and anti-Blackness in contemporary American society. Brown focuses on the potential for transformative and restorative justice through acts of resistance and care, as a means to "(re)form the world." Brown refuses polite forms of permission-seeking to exist and to be visible, or as Brown writes in their artist statement, "*You'll forgive me if I want to destroy things...*"

### **ARTIST STATEMENT**

*Queer Mothers' Space* is a multi-sensory scream for Black&queer justice in a time of environmental genocide. This space roils as/like a hurricane, storming down the market systems suckled at birth by chattel slavery. In this storm's wake, I leave fertile ground to revolutionize global provision and nourishment. I offer a gentle breeze for children to befriend and a wild tempest to tatter the sails of the unjust. For inspiration, I think of what my woods used to be.

**EFA Project Space**, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, [323 West 39th Street, 2nd Floor, NYC, 10018](#)  
Hours: Wednesday–Saturday, 12–6 pm, and by appointment: [www.projects-space-efanyc.org/reservations](http://www.projects-space-efanyc.org/reservations)  
[www.projects-space-efanyc.org](http://www.projects-space-efanyc.org) | [projectspace@efanyc.org](mailto:projectspace@efanyc.org) | 212-563-5855 ext 244 | Masks Required.

\* image: Zeelie Brown, *Justice Statement (Prayer)*, 2022, New York, NY. Courtesy of the artist.

The Alabama woods, my first art museum, are browning. The grass in my family's little hamlet of 100 souls no longer clothes itself in morning dew. The morning air no longer turns blue regularly between the loblolly pines. The next crop of okra and field peas hasn't been planted in twenty years. Main Street, in the big town down the way, folded to Walmart's half-priced, quarter-made imitations. I'm 33. I've seen most of those dearest to me from back home to their graves. I long for the rusted, browning stories of the old folks' steel mill escapades *up Nof'*. Familiarity lingers in the stench of trees boiling in a rage of sulfuric acid: the paper mills are always hiring. Oil companies cut up my swamps into Swiss cheese to get to the Gulf faster, leaving all who live there turning and twisting, vulnerable to ever more forceful hurricanes.

*You'll forgive me if I want to destroy things.*

I spent a great deal of my 20's going through lists of things I'd like to destroy: myself, for not being able to manage independently; others for being in a place where they could do something and covering their ass with the complacency of well-resourced apathy; the Metropolitan Museum for putting African art in a room that looks like the food stamp office got it's nails done; the Whitney ~~plantation~~ museum for embodying in waterfront glass and steel the country my family has lived in since the Declaration of Independence was signed, the country I may never truly be a member of; Oberlin for making life hell on Earth for Black students; global markets, for the stupid economic religion that all natural competition is zero sum.

So, to remind me of home—amid an installation full of embroidered denim quilts, home-canned food, a clothesline to hang your emotional dirty laundry and a self-theft room; spicy and bitter craft cocktails; music by **Yatta Zoker** and me; a crab and Conecuh sausage gumbo dinner; poetry by **Dre Cardinal**, and a conversation in a Southern truck garden that I've grown for this show—*I rage. I destroy. I craft. I green. I care. I queer. I mother.*

*This work was made possible, in part, by the Franklin Furnace Fund supported by Jerome Foundation and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.*

## **PARTICIPANT BIOS**

**Zeelie Brown's** first art museum was the pine woods in Alabama. They make Black&queer wilderness refuges called "soulsapes" to (re)imagine what nature might be. Zeelie is currently working with the MIT Department of Architecture, NOMAS, and Group Project to create sustainable human waste solutions in her native rural Alabama. *Queer Mothers' Space* is their first solo presentation of work in Manhattan.

**Dre Cardinal** is a half-Korean, quarter French-Canadian, quarter German published poet who has won numerous awards, most notably the highly competitive creative thesis mentorship under her favorite poet Josh Bell while (not) studying at Harvard College. A Gemini military brat who moved around the South, she mostly grew up in San Antonio where Zeelie was her next door neighbor. Dre has also lived in Germany, South Korea and Madagascar. She is the last of a long line of first-born surviving females. Her life's purpose is to clear heart chakras through her writing—and bring love. She's known Zeelie for 31 years.

**Yatta Zoker** (YATTA), a Houston native, has shared the stage with musicians like [Cardi B](#) and [The Sun Ra Arkestra](#). Their 2016 debut EP, '[Spirit Said Yes!](#)' was released on NYC's imprint PTP. In 2019, YATTA released [WAHALA](#). The album was named one of Fact Magazine's 25 Best Albums of 2019 and one of Pitchfork's Best Experimental Albums of 2019. Most recently, YATTA released '[DIAL UP](#)' and performed selections at the Getty alongside collaborator Moor Mother's free-jazz ensemble, Irreversible Entanglements. Yatta has performed at MOMA PS1, MOMA, New Forms Festival, Sonic Acts Festival, and NTS x The Tate virtual festival. They are a former artist-in-residence of Pioneer Works, Elsewhere Museum, Otion Front, and Flux Factory. They are a 2022 MFA Candidate at Bard College and a teaching artist in Los Angeles, CA.



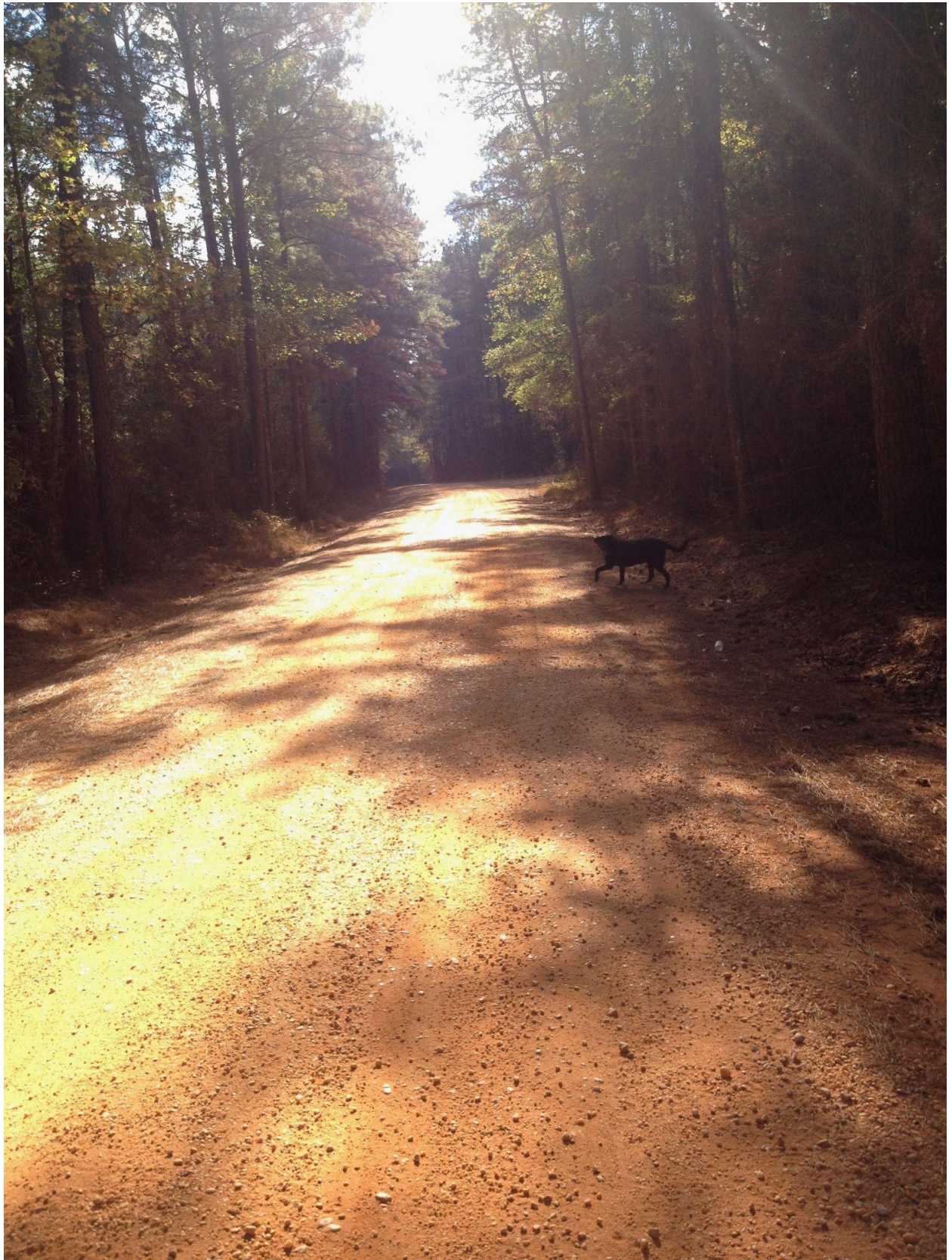
Zeelie Brown, *(Re)form the World*, 2021. Courtesy of the Artist.



Zeelie Brown, *But, I Can Pray*, 2010/2021, Oberlin, OH. Courtesy of the Artist.



Zeelie Brown, *Repast*, 2009/2022, Pollard, AL. Courtesy of the Artist.



Zeelie Brown, *Loblolly Pines and a Red Dirt Road*, 2020, Pollard, AL. Courtesy of the artist.

## PRESS INQUIRIES

Alexander Si, Program Manager  
EFA Project Space Program  
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Dylan Gauthier, Program Director and Curator  
Oren-Andrew Wentzel, Spring 2022 Intern (Antioch)

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**EFA Project Space**, launched in September 2008 as a program of **The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts**, is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary arts venue founded on the belief that art is directly connected to the individuals who produce it, the communities that arise because of it, and to everyday life; and that by providing an arena for exploring these connections, we empower artists to forge new partnerships and encourage the expansion of ideas.

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Through its three core programs, **EFA Studios**, **EFA Project Space**, and **EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop**, EFA is dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice. EFA is a catalyst for cultural growth, stimulating new interactions between artists, creative communities, and the public. [www.efanyc.org](http://www.efanyc.org). EFA Project Space has received public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, as well as from generous individuals in our community. EFA Project Space's SHIFT: A Residency for Arts Workers is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), Teiger Foundation, the Willem de Kooning Foundation.

### ACCESSIBILITY AND COVID-19

EFA Project Space is located on the 2nd floor of 323 West 39th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues. The building has an ADA wheelchair accessible elevator that provides access to the gallery from the ground floor. There are all-gender single stall bathrooms and an ADA approved bathroom on the 3rd floor. The space is not scent-free, but we do request that people attending come low-scent. Admission to the building does not require an ID, but you will be asked to sign-in and out to facilitate contact tracing, as necessary. The closest MTA subway station is the Port Authority A, C, E stop which is ADA wheelchair accessible. Texts and programs are in English. Large format texts can be provided with an advance request. EFA Project Space is committed to nurturing an intergenerational environment and we encourage children & kid noise at our events. Please notify us of any accessibility needs by email to [projectspace@efanyc.org](mailto:projectspace@efanyc.org), or by phone at (212) 563-5855 x 244. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, masks are required for entry.



A Program of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts  
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