

Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

March 12–
August 15, 2021



Stories of Resistance

Bani Abidi
Andrea Bowers
Banu Cennetoğlu
Torkwase Dyson
Emily Jacir

Glenn Kaino
Bouchra Khalili
Candice Lin
Jen Liu
Guadalupe Maravilla

Tuán Andrew Nguyễn
Trevor Paglen
PSA:
Wendy Red Star
Dread Scott

Kemang Wa Lehulere
Wide Awakes
Maryam Parwana
Combo
Otherward



Tuán Andrew Nguyễn, *The Boat People*, 2020. Single-channel video, 4K, Super 16mm transferred to digital (color, 5.1 surround sound). Produced by Bellas Artes Projects and James Cohan, New York. Courtesy the artist and James Cohan, New York.



Audio Tour

Visit camstl.org/audio on a mobile device to hear directly from the artists and curators.

Stories of Resistance is a collection of stories past, present, and future exemplifying the power of acts of resistance from across the world. Such acts take many forms, arising from conditions of oppression, systemic racism, colonialism, and violence. Fueled by their own agency, people put themselves at risk to spark change—be it through speaking, organizing, or by making their struggles visible. The art in the exhibition amplifies gestures of resistance and highlights the courage and resilience found in these actions.

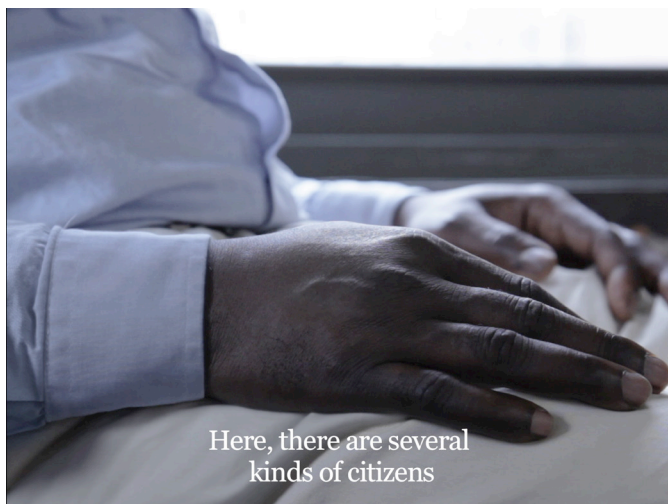
The exhibition is organized into three thematic sections. Language as Resistance demonstrates how speech and storytelling empower individuals and resonate in many contexts and across geographies. Existence as Resistance presents various themes around making visible and asserting the presence of lesser known histories. Movement as Resistance focuses on the mobilization of people—whether through migration or marching in the streets—as a revolutionary form of action and self-determination.

Drawing connections worldwide, *Stories of Resistance* reveals profound influences that traverse borders and cultures. St. Louis, too, exists within a narrative of persistent calls for justice, as seen in Dred Scott’s appeal for freedom in the Old Courthouse, labor organizing at Pruitt-Igoe, and the rise of Black Lives Matter in the wake of the police killing of Michael Brown. Through these lived experiences, we might begin to find commonalities across time and space in the power of resistance as a shared human experience.

Language as Resistance

Language as Resistance explores the ways in which language—be it written or spoken—can be utilized as a tool of resistance. Some works in this section explore individual stories, through the writing or the recitation of texts or the use of written language to convey a collective sense of urgency to speak up, organize, and act. Words are used by individuals to make injustices legible and to reframe history. They are calls to collectively organize and take action. The artists in this section include: Andrea Bowers, Banu Cennetoğlu, Emily Jacir, Bouchra Khalili, and PSA:.

Two works from this section of the exhibition are highlighted here, including Banu Cennetoğlu’s *Gurbet’s Diary* (27.07.1995–08.10.1997), a sculpture that presents the words of a freedom fighter as documented in her diary to make her struggle known, and the installations on the building exterior by PSA:, a collaborative public art project that takes its name from “public service announcement.”



Bouchra Khalili, *Chapter 3: Living Labour* from *The Speech Series*, 2012–13. HD video, 25 minutes. Courtesy the artist and mor charpentier, Paris.



Emily Jacir, *Stories of Resistance*, installation view, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, March 12–August 15, 2021. Photo: Dusty Kessler.



Andrea Bowers, *Resist* (Illustration Designed by Suffrage Atelier, London, 1909), 2017. Acrylic marker on cardboard, 54 × 40 × 5 1/2 inches. Courtesy the artist; Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; and Vielmetter Los Angeles.

Banu Cennetoğlu

Gurbet's Diary (27.07.1995–08.10.1997) is made up of 145 lithographic limestone slabs containing the entirety of Gurbetelli Ersöz's diary. Ersöz was a Kurdish journalist and the first female editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Özgür Gündem*, known for its coverage of the ongoing conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). A militant and political organization based in Turkish and Iraqi Kurdistan, the PKK seeks autonomy and political and cultural rights for Kurds.

On December 10, 1993, the newspaper's headquarters in Istanbul was raided. Ersöz and her seventeen colleagues were arrested and after thirteen days of torture, sentenced to prison. Released in June 1994, Ersöz was forbidden to continue her work as a journalist. In 1995 she decided to join the PKK. Following the guerrilla tradition of keeping a diary as a way to communicate an unwritten history, hers is both a personal and factual document that does not compromise herself or the organization. Rather, it is a diary, both public and private, in which she writes about resilience, camaraderie, love, and nature, and ponders her roles as both intellectual and freedom fighter.

Killed on October 8, 1997 in Southern Kurdistan, Ersöz's body was never recovered. As of March 2021, in Turkey there are 85 journalists in prison, and 150 news and media outlets are sealed. Hundreds of books are banned, Ersöz's diary being one of them.



Banu Cennetoğlu, *Gurbet's Diary* (27.07.1995–08.10.1997), 2016–17. 82,661 words from *Gurbet's Diary*. *I Engraved My Heart into the Mountains* by Gurbetelli Ersöz in mirror image, 107 days, 145 press-ready lithographic limestone slabs. Courtesy the artist and Rodeo Gallery, London / Piraeus.

(Right) Simiya Sudduth x PSA:, *Filled with Wisdom*, 2021. Mixed media installation.

Simiya Sudduth x PSA:

June 24–August 15, 2021

PSA: is a collaborative public art project organized by artists Shannon Levin and Marina Peng. Using the traditional framework of the public service announcement, PSA: presents rotating text installations by St. Louis artists, writers, and poets at sites around the city. For *Stories of Resistance*, PSA: invites three contributors, Jen Everett, Aida Hasanović, and Simiya Sudduth, to present their work, each for a two-month duration. Working within the site's existing parameters, each installation varies in tone, be it poetic, personal, or a direct call to action. The installations have maximum visibility on the exterior of CAM's building, keeping with PSA:'s mission to widely broadcast messages that consider the notion of "public good."

Simiya Sudduth Artist Statement:

"Filled with Wisdom is an affirmation as well as an invitation. When we pause and connect with our breath and the present moment, we can access and enjoy some of the deepest acts of self-care and self-love possible. Deep breathing can be a powerful tool in cultivating a sense of personal empowerment and wellness. When we pause and check in with ourselves and listen to the messages that our body is sending, we can strengthen our intuition: our guiding light in life. Now more than ever, we are all reminded of the importance of our health, in mind, body and spirit. When we actively cultivate our own personal healing and self-care practices, we are engaging in acts of liberation by actively resisting systems of oppression that encourage us to neglect ourselves and each other. This piece also acts as a reminder that the presence, strength, and wisdom of Ancestors, both collective and personal, are available to guide us at any time when we are open and willing to receive their connection."

Rotation Schedule

Jen Everett: March 12–May 2, 2021

Aida Hasanović: May 6–June 20, 2021

Simiya Sudduth: June 24–August 15, 2021



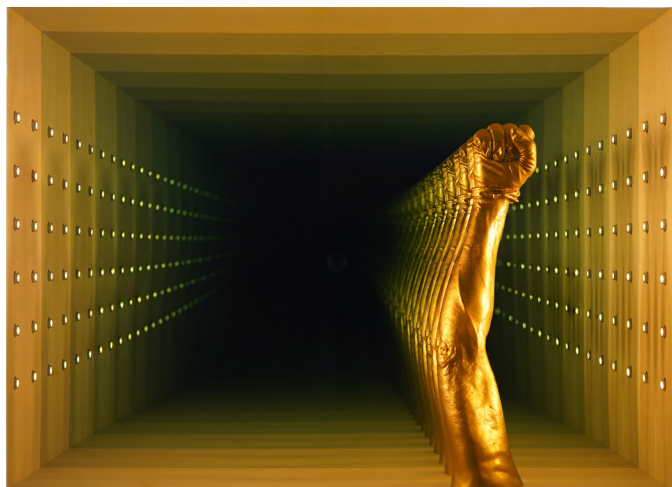
Existence as Resistance

Existence—or continued survival—is seen as a form of resistance in this section of the exhibition. The works here make visible histories, stories, and peoples that are often disregarded or forgotten. Some of the works urge us to question the routine abuse of power by governmental agencies through systems of surveillance. Others explore the erasure of information and of people to retain a dominant narrative, used as a tool by colonial powers. Some works in this section speculate on ways to undermine these narratives by enacting a strategy of collective disappearance—or mass departure—as an act of agency.

Here two works from this section are discussed: Wendy Red Star's prints that draw attention to the continued traditions and livelihood of Indigenous communities, which have survived despite the history of genocide against those very populations; and Kemang Wa Lehulere's sculptural installation, which highlights systems of oppression and modes of invisibility. Artists in this section also include Bani Abidi, Torkwase Dyson, Glenn Kaino, Candice Lin, Jen Liu, and Trevor Paglen.



Jen Liu, *Pink Slime Caesar Shift: Gold Loop*, 2020-21. 4K video (color, 4-channel sound). Courtesy the artist and Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam.



Glenn Kaino, *Salute (Lineage)*, 2019. Wood, glass, fabric, urethane, lights, gold paint, 51 1/2 × 38 1/2 × 8 inches. Courtesy the artist.

Wendy Red Star

While researching the collection at the Denver Art Museum, Wendy Red Star discovered an archive of 20,000 catalogue cards for objects in the Native Arts department. The collection consists of mostly Apsáalooke clothing and ceremonial objects. On one side of each 5 × 8-inch yellow catalogue card Red Star found a watercolor illustration of the object. The other side of each card contained documentation: the date the piece was added to the collection, its purchase price, and a written description of the object. The illustrations were made by Works Progress Administration (WPA) artists, in the 1930s and '40s, from objects that were collected on the Apsáalooke reservation in Montana in the first half of the 20th century.

For this series, Red Star combines reproductions of the catalogue card images with photographs of parade participants from the 2018 Crow Fair wearing similar, and in some cases identical, objects. Crow Fair originated in 1904 as a way to assimilate the Apsáalooke community into farming culture by the US government. The fair quickly turned into an annual event that showcases Apsáalooke cultural resilience, in direct contrast to the government's agenda. Crow Fair continues to this day and is located on the reservation where Red Star grew up, and she has participated in it her whole life. In each work Red Star has eliminated background details, so that both the archival drawing and its present-day likeness appear without context and out of time. This juxtaposition emphasizes the continuity of traditions and the living nature of these archived items, which are too often relegated to an exotic and romanticized past.



Wendy Red Star, *Catalogue Number 1948.102*, 2019. Pigment print on archival paper, 18 × 28 inches. Courtesy the artist and Sargent's Daughters, New York.



Kemang Wa Lehulere, *Stories of Resistance*, installation view, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, March 12–August 15, 2021. Photo: Dusty Kessler.

Kemang Wa Lehulere

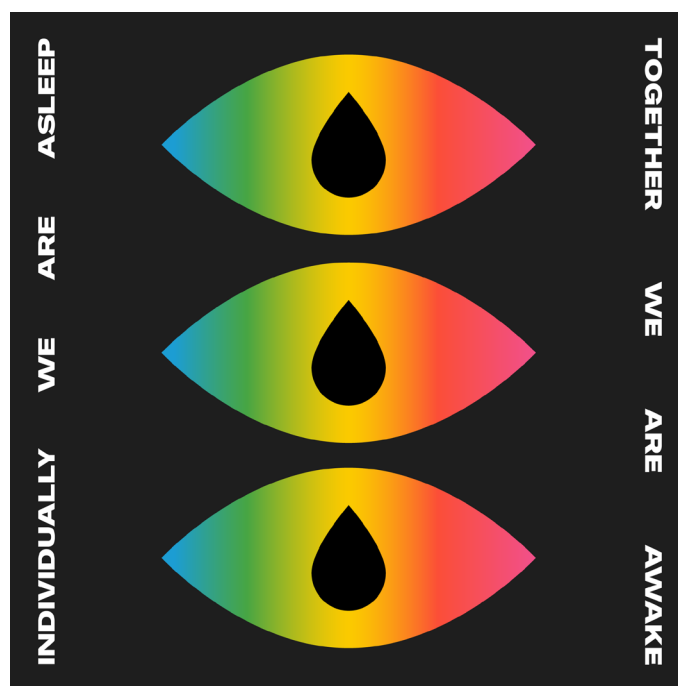
Kemang Wa Lehulere uses items associated with the classroom to emphasize the education system as a powerful form of public indoctrination where both oppression and liberation occur. The artist incorporates salvaged school desks because of the many hours he spent in detention for being “one of the most ungovernable students.” In South Africa, the word “ungovernable” has a specific connotation related to the 1980s anti-apartheid movement in which the youth were mobilized with a call to action: “make the townships ungovernable.” Wa Lehulere remarks that one of the punishments for his own “ungovernability” in school was to erase marks made on desks. The name of this installation is drawn from an inscription on one of the desks, where a student had carved the words “Matric 2005.” Here, the artist retains and amplifies the traces of that student’s gesture.

Erasure has become one of the artist’s principal techniques. In this installation, the glass bottles contain messages inaccessible to viewers, and the piano hammers have nothing to strike, maintaining the silence of unsung songs. Another recurring element in Wa Lehulere’s practice is German Shepherd sculptures, which convey a sense of blind obedience in acts of violence. This breed of dog was used by apartheid-era security police to suppress anti-apartheid unrest, in particular during waves of student uprisings in the mid-1970s. *Matric 2005* looks at this unquestioned obedience in various histories of oppression, compelling us to speak up and act against institutionalized systems of repression, where intellectual freedoms can be limited.

Movement as Resistance

This section of the exhibition explores how people mobilize as an act of resistance. These movements can be the migration of individuals seeking a better future, or collective communities working toward a common goal. They can be as loud as protests on the street and as quiet as one person’s determination to act. Some works illustrate both the undeniable plight of the refugee as well as individual perseverance, resilience, and the ability to collectively heal. Other works draw attention to the strategy of organized movements as a way to give voice to the masses. Included in this section are works by Andrea Bowers, Guadalupe Maravilla, Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn, Dread Scott, and Wide Awakes.

The two works included here illustrate this theme: Guadalupe Maravilla’s *Disease Thrower #4*, which comes out of his family’s experiences fleeing their home in El Salvador to escape the US-backed civil war, and Dread Scott’s *Slave Rebellion Reenactment*, a two-day march to commemorate the largest slave rebellion in US history.



Courtesy Wide Awakes.

Guadalupe Maravilla

Disease Thrower #4 is part altar, part instrument of sound and of healing, as well as a “portal,” as it is described by the artist Guadalupe Maravilla. Functioning as a wearable headdress, the sculpture can be activated by the artist in participatory performances, or “sound baths,” in which an Earth Gong is used to cleanse the space and wash away anxieties, providing a deep state of meditation. Toward the overarching goal to expunge or throw a disease out of the body, Maravilla incorporates a specific anatomical model in each portal. At CAM, you find human lungs, the source of breath that is associated with vitality in spiritual practices. Flanking the sculpture on either side are banners with symbols of disembodied limbs and clenched fists. These are recurring symbols in Maravilla’s practice and refer to Mayan hieroglyphs. They pay homage to his heritage and represent an ongoing resistance against persecution and trauma.

Painted atop the Earth Gong and surrounding the walls of the sculpture is a reinterpretation of the Salvadorian children’s game *Tripa Chuca* or “rotting guts,” in which two players take turns drawing lines that never intersect. In 1984, when Maravilla was eight years old his family fled their home in El Salvador to escape the US-backed civil war. Maravilla crossed the border through Tijuana into Southern California alone, escorted by a coyote, or human trafficker. Playing *Tripa Chuca* with other immigrants during this journey became a way to bring individual paths together to tell a shared story. Maravilla invited two St. Louis-based Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients to play *Tripa Chuca* on the gallery walls at CAM. This collaboration further expands the opportunity to connect the shared experience of border crossing.



Guadalupe Maravilla, *Stories of Resistance*, installation view, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, March 12–August 15, 2021. Photo: Dusty Kessler.



Dread Scott, *Slave Rebellion Reenactment performance still 1*, 2020. Pigment print, 40 × 60 inches. Courtesy the artist.

Dread Scott

In 1811, the largest slave rebellion in US history took place just outside of New Orleans. It was organized by groups of individuals plotting together, whose aim was to seize Orleans territory, to fight for their emancipation, and to end slavery. On November 8–9, 2019, the artist Dread Scott presented *Slave Rebellion Reenactment*, a community-engaged performance, six years in the making, that reimagined the 1811 rebellion. Hundreds of Black and Indigenous reenactors dressed in period clothing, rode horses, carried flags, and marched to the beat of African drums while singing in Creole and English for two days across twenty-four miles. Following the same route as the original rebellion, the joyful procession seemed jarringly out of place moving through neighborhoods, strip malls, and oil refineries. Performance stills and flags from the event are included in the exhibition.

An essential component of this project, not visible at CAM, are the self-organized meetings and conversations that took place among the reenactors. The reenactors discussed their reasons for participating, how to get others involved, and the importance of history in contemporary society. These conversations formed the foundation for understanding that the past is not prescription. For Scott, making a project about freedom became a chance to broaden the vision of what is possible—the rebellion became a story that beckons to ask “What if?”



INTERSECTING LOCAL AND
GLOBAL AGENTS OF CHANGE

As a major component of the exhibition *Stories of Resistance*, Radio Resistance assembles the voices of intersecting local and global agents of change. Artists featured in the exhibition are paired with figures from the past, present, and future of St. Louis, coming together to transmit messages of dissent. Eleven episodes will be released over the course of the exhibition, amplifying shared struggles, collective dreams, and models of individual and group action.

Selections of Radio Resistance will be broadcast on *St. Louis on the Air*, the noontime talk program hosted by Sarah Fenske on St. Louis Public Radio. Full episodes will be released biweekly in this gallery and on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Stitcher.



Radio Resistance is co-produced by Michelle Dezember, Director of Learning and Engagement, Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator, and Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator. Sound design and editing by Sean Pierce. Visual identity by Visitor Assembly.

The co-producers wish to thank Sarah Fenske, Lara Hamdan, Aaron Doerr, Honna Veerkamp, Kalena Michele Boller, St. Louis Public Radio, and all of the participants who contributed their voices.

Listen and learn more at
camstl.org/radio-resistance.

Episodes

/ **March 12** Prologue: CAM Staff & Producers

/ **March 25** Organizing Rebellion: Dread Scott and Walter Johnson

/ **April 8** Perseverance and Participation: Wendy Red Star and De Nichols

/ **April 22** Leveling the Field: Glenn Kaino, Tommie Smith, and Dr. Harry Edwards

/ **May 6** Public Platforms: Marina Peng & Shannon Levin (PSA:) and Cleo Barnett

/ **May 20** Insisting on Our Humanity: Hank Willis Thomas (Wide Awakes) and Congresswoman Cori Bush

/ **June 3** Collective Healing: Guadalupe Maravilla and Dr. LJ Punch

/ **June 17** Women as Activists: Jen Liu and Candace Borders

/ **July 1** Forms of Liberation: Torkwase Dyson and Geoff Ward

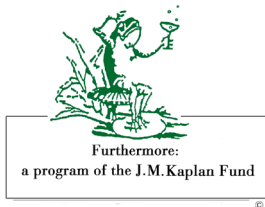
/ **July 15** Ancestors and Testimonies: Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn and Gwen Moore

/ **July 29** Defiant Writing: Banu Cennetoğlu and Treasure Shields Redmond

/ **August 12** Afterword: CAM Staff & Producers

Stories of Resistance is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator, with Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator.

Stories of Resistance is generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation. Additional publication support is provided by Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.



Candice Lin, *On Being Human* (*The slow erosion of a hard white body*), 2018. Pit-fired ceramics, welded metal frame, wooden structure, plastic tubing, fired ceramics, unfired porcelain, glass distillation system, hot plate, plants, dried mushroom (grown from the care and distilled urine of Occidental students), welded metal, plastic buckets, pumps, timers, Dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles. Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.



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Museum St. Louis**
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Related Programs

Programs take place online until safety guidelines change. Please check camstl.org/calendar for updates and to register.

Read the Resistance

The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States

by Walter Johnson

Wednesday, March 24, 7:00 pm

Black Sun by Rebecca Roanhorse

Wednesday, April 28, 7:00 pm

The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart by Alicia Garza

Wednesday, May 26, 7:00 pm

Washington Black by Esi Edugyan

Wednesday, June 23, 7:00 pm

Daughters of Smoke and Fire by Ava Homa

Wednesday, July 28, 7:00 pm

Film Screening: Jen Liu, *Pink Slime Caesar Shift: Gold Loop* (Triad)

Chapter 1: March 12–May 11

Chapter 2: May 12–June 15

Chapter 3: June 16–August 15

Feast Your Eyes: Akar

Wednesday, March 31, 6:30 pm

Film Screening: *With Drawn Arms*

Wednesday, April 21, 7:00 pm

Curator Tour

Wednesday, May 12, noon

Drawing from Observation

Wednesday, June 2, noon

RE: The Work of Resistance

Thursday, July 1, 4:00 pm
