

Colored People Time  
 MUNDANE FUTURES  
 QUOTIDIAN PASTS  
 BANAL PRESENTS

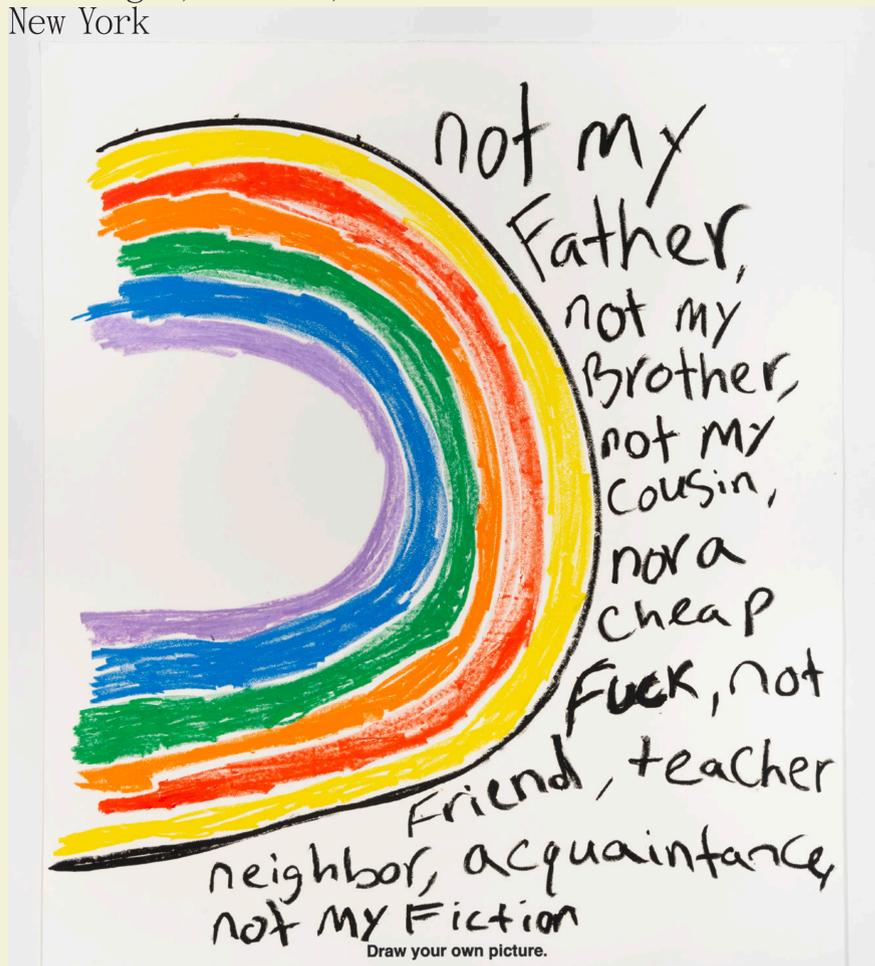
An exhibit in three chapters  
 September 13–December 22

Sable Elyse Smith

60 ×  
 50 inches

Courtesy of the artist,  
 Cal Siegel, and JTT,  
 New York

Coloring Book 33  
 2019  
 Screen printing ink  
 and oil stick on paper



I KNOW  
 THIS RUNS  
 SOMEWHAT  
 COUNTER  
 TO WHAT  
 YOU'RE  
 THINKING,

BUT CAN WE SAY  
 THAT THERE IS NO  
 SUCH THING AS  
 THE PRESENT,  
 OR THAT  
 THE PRESENT CAN BE  
 SEEN TO BE BUT ONE  
 ASPECT OF THE PAST?



Cameron Rowland  
 Depreciation 2018

Restrictive covenant;  
 1 acre on Edisto Island,  
 South Carolina

40 acres and a mule as  
 reparations for slavery  
 originates in General  
 William Tecumseh Sherman's  
 Special Field Orders No. 15,  
 issued on January 16, 1865.  
 Sherman's Field Order 15 was  
 issued out of concern for a  
 potential uprising of the  
 thousands of ex-slaves  
 who were following his army  
 by the time it arrived in  
 Savannah.<sup>1</sup>

The field order stipulated  
 that "The islands from  
 Charleston south, the  
 abandoned rice fields along  
 the rivers for thirty  
 miles back from the sea,  
 and the country border-  
 ing the Saint Johns River,  
 Florida, are reserved and  
 set apart for the settle-  
 ment of the negroes now  
 made free by the acts of  
 war and the proclamation  
 of the President of the  
 United States. Each family  
 shall have a plot of not  
 more than forty acres of  
 tillable ground."<sup>2</sup>

This was followed by the  
 formation of the Bureau  
 of Refugees, Freedmen, and  
 Abandoned Lands in March  
 1865. In the months imme-  
 diately following the  
 issue of the field orders,  
 approximately 40,000 former  
 slaves settled in the  
 area designated by Sherman  
 on the basis of posses-  
 sory title.<sup>3</sup> 10,000 of these  
 former slaves were settled  
 on Edisto Island, South  
 Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

In 1866, following Lincoln's  
 assassination, President  
 Andrew Johnson effectively  
 rescinded Field Order 15  
 by ordering these lands be  
 returned to their previous  
 Confederate owners.

Former slaves were given  
 the option to work for their  
 former masters as share-  
 croppers or be evicted.  
 If evicted, former slaves  
 could be arrested for home-  
 lessness under vagrancy  
 clauses of the Black Codes.  
 Those who refused to leave  
 and refused to sign share-  
 crop contracts were threat-  
 ened with arrest.

Although restoration of  
 the land to the previous  
 Confederate owners was  
 slowed in some cases by  
 court challenges filed by  
 ex-slaves, nearly all the  
 land settled was returned  
 by the 1870s. As Eric Foner  
 writes, "Johnson had  
 in effect abrogated the  
 Confiscation Act and uni-  
 laterally amended the law  
 creating the [Freedmen's]  
 Bureau. The idea of a  
 Freedmen's Bureau actively  
 promoting black landown-  
 ership had come to an abrupt  
 end."<sup>5</sup> The Freedmen's Bureau  
 agents became primary  
 proponents of labor con-  
 tracts inducting former  
 slaves into the sharecrop-  
 ping system.<sup>6</sup>

Among the lands that were  
 repossessed in 1866 by  
 former Confederate owners  
 was the Maxcy Place plan-  
 tation. "A group of freed  
 people were at Maxcy Place  
 in January 1866. ...The people  
 contracted to work for the  
 proprietor, but no contract  
 or list of names has been  
 found."<sup>7</sup>

The one-acre piece of land  
 at 8060 Maxie Road, Edisto  
 Island, South Carolina,  
 was part of the Maxcy Place  
 plantation. This land was  
 purchased at market value  
 on August 6, 2018, by 8060  
 Maxie Road, Inc., a nonprofit  
 company formed for the  
 sole purpose of buying this  
 land and recording a  
 restrictive covenant on  
 its use. This covenant has  
 as its explicit purpose  
 the restriction of all  
 development and use of the  
 property by the owner.

The property is now  
 appraised at \$0. By render-  
 ing it legally unusable, this  
 restrictive covenant elim-  
 inates the market value of  
 the land. These restrictions  
 run with the land, regard-  
 less of the owner. As such,  
 they will last indefinitely.

As reparation, this covenant  
 asks how land might exist  
 outside of the legal-  
 economic regime of prop-  
 erty that was instituted by  
 slavery and colonization.  
 Rather than redistributing  
 the property, the restric-  
 tion imposed on 8060 Maxie  
 Road's status as valu-  
 able and transactable real  
 estate asserts antagonism  
 to the regime of property as  
 a means of reparation.

1—Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 71.  
 2—Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi, *Special Field Orders No. 15* (1865).  
 3—Foner, *Reconstruction*, 71.

4—Charles Spencer, *Edisto Island, 1861 to 2006: Ruin, Recovery and Rebirth* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008), 87.  
 5—Foner, *Reconstruction*, 161.  
 6—Foner, 161.  
 7—Spencer, 95.

## Colored People Time

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QUOTIDIAN PASTS

BANAL PRESENTS

An exhibit in three chapters

September 13–December 22

Carolyn Lazard

Cameron Rowland

Sable Elyse Smith

“The now is present, is past, is future. The past is now, as is the future, and all we have is meaning, our fear of, flight from, or embrace of it, in its fragile and fractally fragmented multiplicity.”

—M. NourbeSe Philip, email to the curator, June 25, 2019.

### Project Space

**Banal Presents** is the third and final chapter in the exhibition series **Colored People Time** and stages a conversation between the artists Carolyn Lazard, Cameron Rowland, and Sable Elyse Smith. The artists in this exhibition—and we, as viewers—occupy a current moment haunted by what the Professor Saidiya Hartman has termed the “afterlife” of slavery. This “afterlife” names the enduring presence of slavery’s racialized violence that permeates every aspect of our society. **Banal Presents** locates the present as the space where we bend the relationship between the past and the future. The present, in all of its fleetingness, is where we act.

#banalpresents

### Related Programs

**Friday, September 13, 5PM**  
Members Preview  
Public Opening Celebration, 6:30PM

**Saturday, October 12, 12PM**  
Transcribez Writing Group

**Thursday, October 17–  
Saturday, October 19**  
The Legacy of 1619: The 2019 Annual  
Callaloo Conference\*

**Thursday, October 24th, 7–9PM**  
Performance by SCRAAATCH  
Holy Apostles and the Mediator  
Episcopal Church  
260 South 51st Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19139

**Wednesday, November 13, 6PM**  
Curator-Led Tour with Meg Onli

\*Please visit [icaphila.org/calendar](http://icaphila.org/calendar) for further details and more upcoming events.

In his 1972 article “Some Notes on the Blues, Style and Space,” Ronald Walcott wrote “time is the very condition of Western civilization which oppresses so brutally.” Published under the Johnson Publishing Company’s imprint *Black World*, Walcott’s essay examined the works of three prominent black cultural producers—author Ralph Ellison, playwright Charles Gordone, and poet Melvin B. Tolson—through their shared depictions of “Colored People’s Time” (aka CPT or CP Time.) As Walcott observes, black people occupy and deploy CPT as a political performance to “evade, frustrate, and ridicule” the enforcement of punctuality and productivity, key disciplinary structures of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> For many, CPT is the time-space of the struggle.<sup>2</sup> It emerges from conditions of ongoing oppression that stretch back to the beginning of Transatlantic slavery. CPT challenges and disavows the predominant opinion that being “on time” is the only way of being “in time.”

I began thinking about CPT while developing an exhibition that examined how a group of artists, activists, and writers have considered how white supremacy and the legacy of chattel slavery have existed so insidiously in our current moment(s). I was drawn to CPT as both a living and liberatory phrase. It has provided a linguistic tool for black people to navigate their own temporality, within and against the construct of Western time. Not surprisingly, white supremacist logics have attempted to distort and co-opt CPT, constructing a dual meaning through racial stereotype. In spite of this, CPT has remained part of the vernacular of racially marginalized groups, to think and act differently in time.

*Colored People Time*, structured as an experimental exhibition in three chapters—*Mundane Futures*, *Quotidian Pasts*, and *Banal Presents*—unfolds over the course of 2019. Within the exhibition, I want to explore the plural and malleable nature of the term. CPT connects to the tradition of black expressions grounded in counter-language, ones performed as part of “resistance discourse, created as a communication system unintelligible to speakers of the dominant master class.”<sup>3</sup> Like the constructs of race and gender, time is an experience and subject that escapes the limitations of language.

The artists represented within this exhibition include: Aria Dean, Kevin Jerome Everson, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Carolyn Lazard, Dave McKenzie, Cameron Rowland, Sable Elyse Smith, and Martine Syms; accompanied by historical objects from the Black Panther Party, Sutton E. Griggs, the National Institutes of Health/Getty Images, and the African Collection at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. It is through these works that we are invited to reconsider the singularity of Western time and bear witness to the everyday disruptions that restructure and reorganize black being in the past, present, and future.

—Meg Onli, Assistant Curator

Institute of  
Contemporary  
University Art  
of Pennsylvania



Colored People Time: Banal Presents is organized by Meg Onli, Assistant Curator. A fully illustrated catalog will be published in early 2020.

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118 S. 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 898-7108, [icaphila.org](http://icaphila.org)

1—Walcott, Ronald. “Ellison, Gordone and Tolson: Some Notes on the Blues, Style and Space.” *Black World*, December 1972, pp. 4–29.  
2—Streamas, John. “Closure And ‘Colored Peoples Time’” in *Time: Limits and Constraints*, ed. Jo Alyson Packer, et al. (Boston: Brill Publishing, 2010).  
3—Smitherman, Geneva. *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.