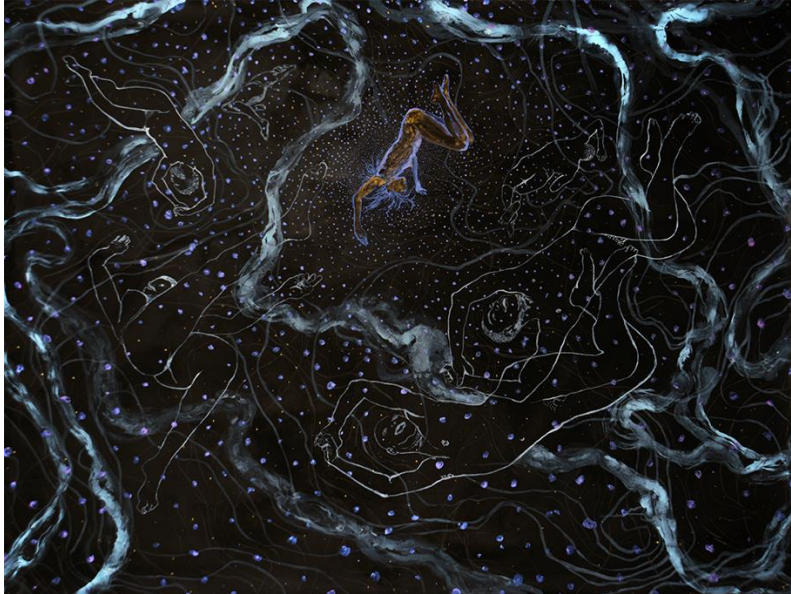


SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT

KAMBUI OLUJIMI: NORTH STAR

FROM NOVEMBER 1, 2024 THROUGH JUNE 1, 2025



For Immediate Release

San José, CA (September 24, 2024)— From November 1, 2024 through June 1, 2025, the San José Museum of Art (SJMA) will present *Kambui Olujimi: North Star*, an immersive exhibition that invites us to imagine a different way of being in the universe. *North Star* is Olujimi’s first solo museum exhibition on the West Coast and will feature large-scale watercolor and ink paintings, a site-specific mural, a film, and a new sculpture and video installation that together comprise the artist’s most recent multidisciplinary project. Taking the deliberate absence of Black joy in Western art histories and visual culture as a point of departure, *North Star* explores the liberatory possibilities of weightlessness. Approaching white supremacy as a type of structural force like gravity, Olujimi asks: What does the Black body, freed from the gravity of white supremacy, look like? What is the Black body in zero gravity?

“Olujimi’s work is deeply joyful,” said SJMA’s Chief Curator, Lauren Schell Dickens. “With his *North Star* installation, he’s offering us a way to navigate away from the entrenched politics of representation, to imagine possibilities of boundlessness, within bodies, between bodies, and with the universe.”

A highlight of the exhibition is *North of Never*, a film about a parabolic flight the artist chartered for a group of singers, writers, choreographers, and other artists from the African diaspora to experience weightlessness. Organized into chapters exploring ideas sparked by the group’s experience, footage of the flight is spliced with clips drawn from the artist’s video archive and found footage—including clips of South African car spinning showcases, Maasai jumping dance performances, and a recording of French

figure skater Surya Bonaly's 1998 Olympics performance. The soundtrack layers audio from post-flight interviews with a score by jazz pianist Chris Pattishall. The film was commissioned by the Lincoln Center in New York, which hosted the premiere of the film and a two-day symposium that explored the film's themes of play, self-discovery, and the unknown with leading artists, scientists, writers, musicians, and dancers.

The centerpiece of *North Star* consists of Olujimi's large-scale watercolor and ink paintings enveloped by a site-specific wall mural, which will transform the main gallery into an immersive cosmic space. During a trip to the NASA Ames Research Center, Olujimi toured and met with scientists working in the Arc Jet Complex and the Space Science and Astrobiology Division. Olujimi's conversations with NASA scientists inspired a new sculpture and video installation, which will animate the figures from Olujimi's paintings and provide an architecture of transfer and transformation to further imagine other possibilities of life here and elsewhere.

Kambui Olujimi: North Star is organized by Lauren Schell Dickens, SJMA's chief curator, and Juan Omar Rodriguez, SJMA's assistant curator.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be featured in a major artist book, designed by Melissa Gorman, published by Gregory R. Miller & Co., and distributed by Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.

PROGRAMMING

First Friday and Opening Celebration:

Kambui Olujimi: North Star and *Beta Space: Patty Chang and David Kelley*

Friday, November 1, 6–9pm • Member Reception: 6–7pm

Free

Creative Minds: Kambui Olujimi

Friday, March 14, 2024

Free with Museum admission

KAMBUI OLUJIMI

Born in 1976, Brooklyn-based Kambui Olujimi holds an MFA from Columbia University (2013) and a BFA from Parsons School of Design (2002); he also studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Olujimi's work was featured in the 2023 edition of the Sharjah Biennial, *Thinking Historically in the Present*. Select solo exhibitions include *Walk With Me*, Project for Empty Space, Newark, NJ (2020); *Zulu Time*, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, WI (2017); and *A Life in Pictures*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Inheritance*, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2023); *Love & Anarchy*, Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC (2023); *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, South Africa (2022); *Our whole, unruly selves*, San José Museum of Art (2022); *New Histories, New Futures*, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH (2021); and *Fantasy America*, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (2021).

Olujimi is the recipient of many awards and residencies, including the Denniston Hill Artist Residency in Catskill, NY (2023); an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant (2022); a Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship (2021); the Black Rock residency in Dakar, Senegal (2019); the MacDowell Colony residency in Peterborough, NH (2018); and the Headlands Center for the Arts residency in San Francisco (2018), among many others. Olujimi's work can be found in the collections of the Birmingham Museum of Art, AL; Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Newark Museum of Art, NJ; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, NY, among others.

SUPPORT

Kambui Olujimi: North Star is made possible by the SJMA Exhibitions Fund, with lead support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Operations and programs at the San José Museum of Art are made possible by principal support from SJMA's Board of Trustees, a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José, and the Lipman Family Foundation; by lead support from the Adobe Foundation, the California Arts Council, Toby and Barry Fernald, Brook Hartzell and Tad Freese, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Richard A. Karp Charitable Foundation, Tammy and Tom Kiely, the Knight Foundation, Evelyn and Rick Neely, Yvonne and Mike Nevens, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Skyline Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the SJMA Director's Council and Council of 100; and with significant endowment support from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and the San José Museum of Art Endowment Fund established by the Knight Foundation at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is a modern and contemporary art museum dedicated to inclusivity, new thinking, and visionary ideas. Founded in 1969 by artists and community leaders, its dynamic exhibitions, collection, and programs resonate with defining characteristics of San José and the Silicon Valley—from its rich diversity to its hallmark innovative ethos. The Museum offers lifelong learning for school children and their educators, multigenerational families, creative adults, university students and faculty, and community groups. SJMA is committed to being a borderless museum, essential to creative life throughout the diverse communities of San José and beyond.

SJMA is located at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Thursday 4–9pm; Friday 11am–9pm; Saturday–Sunday 11am–6pm. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and school teachers (with valid ID). Admission is free from 6–9pm on the first Friday of every month. For up-to-date information, call 408.271.6840 or visit SanJoseMuseumofArt.org.

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Press Images

Image Credits

Kambui Olujimi, *Even More Beautiful Than I Ever Imagined*, 2024. Watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper, approximately 96 x 72 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Kambui Olujimi. Photo by Elliot Jerome Brown Jr.