

Presented by: Mandy Harris Williams

ARTIST

PORTFOLIO

CRITIQUE
AS
CARE

2021 - CURRENT
ARTIST, PERFORMER,
INTELLECTUAL





MANDY HARRIS WILLIAMS
ARTIST, PERFORMER,
INTELLECTUAL

Mandy Harris Williams is an artist working in the literary/intellectual, visual, cinematic, performative and musical arts, originally hailing from New York City and now living in Los Angeles. She graduated from Harvard, having studied the History of the African Diaspora, as well as contemporary Black issues, including the mass incarceration crisis. She utilizes multimedia gestures to analyze and re-imagine desirability privilege as a real and mythological market and political force, attention economies in action, Blackness, and its micro and macro structures. She is a former classroom teacher who integrates a holistic and didactic style into her current creative practice.

Conceptual Artist, Radio Host, Musician, and Writer, she has worked in a multitude of formats as well as in various spaces both digital and physical.

She has shown work at the Moving Picture Biennial at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, MOCA Geffen Contemporary, Performance Space NY, and Paula Cooper Gallery, among many others.

ABOUT ME



INSPIRED BY

RE-ENGINEERING ARCHETYPES & MYTHOLOGIES

When I was 15 years old, I was fortunate to take a year's long course on James Baldwin—half a year for fiction, half a year for non-fiction. He quickly became my dearest inspiration. Other Intellectuals I'm inspired by include bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Guy Debord, and artists including Jean Luc Goddard, Nina Simone and Octavia Butler.

I am equally stimulated by contemporary media, while dubious of it's endgame. I aim to analyze and embody the aesthetics and modalities of Youth Culture, Popular Media and the Capital of Cool—doing away with what is inherently exploitative and repurposing it's continuously expanding toolbox—a populism of the arts, made to drive insights and actions.

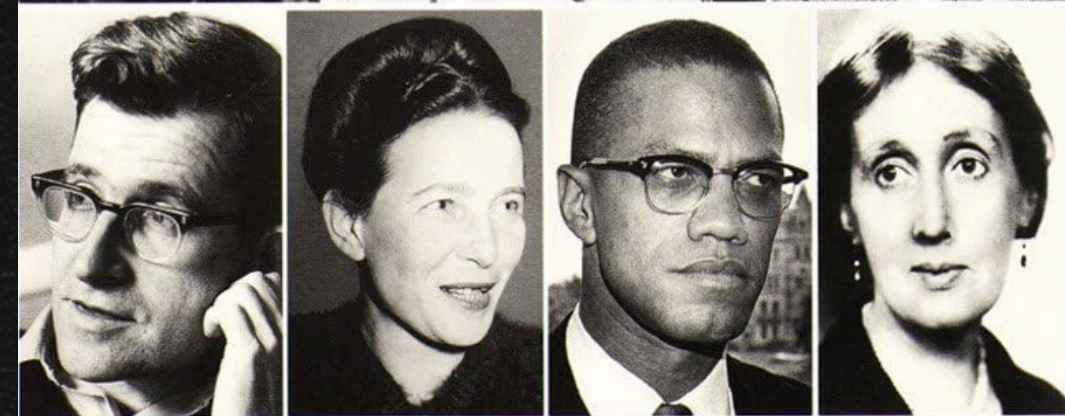
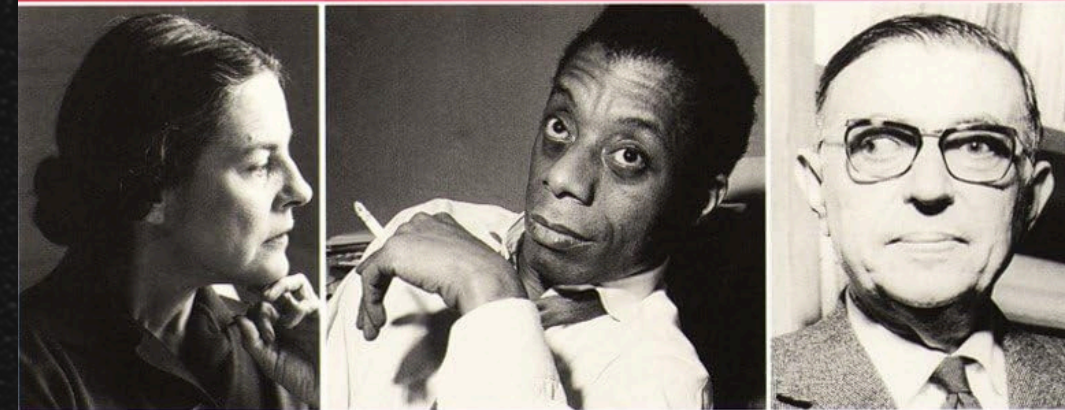
My current inspirations include a wider spectrum of types of artists and productions including, Crazy Horse Paris, Josephine Baker, Jean Baudrillard and countless people reimagining the textual and visual vocabulary of attention and esteem throughout the World Wide Web.

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EDWARD W. SAID

Author of *Culture and Imperialism*



REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INTELLECTUAL



MY SKILLS



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Teaching: From 2010 - 2017, I worked as a Classroom Teacher in Kindergarten and First Grade. I focused on early literacy and numeracy— compelling the attention and cognition of 5-7 year olds, where sensation meets structure. Coursework in linguistics, classroom management, lesson and curriculum design, and inquiry based learning.

This professional experience, as well as my good fortune to have matriculated at some of the most excellent and also experimental and esoteric schools in the world has shaped the way I communicate. My work is skillfully didactic as well as entertaining.

My Practice is especially skillful in its: use of language, persuasive writing, songwriting, novel composition and use of media, sense of glamour and production value. It utilizes research, close reading, history, queer theory, critical theory, logic, and expository writing as it's intellectual and academic foundation and skillset.

Writing: Journalism, Feature Writing, Short Form and Longform Creative Film. Video, Theatrical, and Music Work: Screen and Stage Play Writer, Directing, Video Editing, Performing, Music Composition, Arrangement, Music Production, Singing and DJ'ing. Public Speaking
Marketing: Strategy and Copywriting
Add'l: Spanish Language Proficiency, Athletics.



Photography from "Couture Critiques" (2021), Comissioned by dis.art and Premiered at The Biennial of Moving Pictures at Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève

ARTWORKS

A Sample of Recent Works (2021 - Present)

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PHOTOS FROM *CRITIQUE CABARET* (PREMIERED AT PERFORMANCE SPACE NY) (2025)

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MORE ON *CRITIQUE CABARET*

GLAMOUR AS REFUGE, OR AS TROJAN HORSE, OR BOTH?

Critique Cabaret is a 60-minute multimedia performance-lecture examining what it means to think, feel, and perform in a world where attention has become both currency and trap. Moving between critical theory, cabaret glamour, original music, live writing, and digital intimacy, Mandy Harris Williams stages a space where scholarship becomes spectacle and spectacle becomes survival.

The performance integrates live projection, video content, costume changes, and audience interaction to explore the tension between intellectual honesty and commercial survival in contemporary America. It opens with Williams' signature spinning dress sequence — Nancy Sinatra's "You Only Live Twice" foreshadowing the central conflict — and moves through a behind-the-scenes confessional, social media commentary, political satire, live journaling projected in real-time, and original songs.

*This performance is credited to Mandy Harris Williams as a solo work, but was collaborative in its scale and execution. Special thanks to Michael Speciale, Creative Producer.

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“Talk about it, Be about: blank” —
Innovations. Interventions.
or Language is as Language
Does: a 28-Point Praxis*

**I. Maintaining a reflective practice on
The Nature of the Self, its rights and
responsibilities.**

- A. Authenticity over Articulation: De-prioritize efficiency. Optioning narrative (context) over category. I contain multitudes and none of the categories work in the way they should.
- B. Identity, Authenticity, and their Market Conditions
1. How have you shown yourself and why?
 2. (perpetually) Contemplating my embodied facts of life as they determine language cognition (nonconsensual): What sorts of speech were modeled and learned for you? What sorts of communications are especially vital for particular communities, or more broadly, what relation are “communication” and “community”? Or, “culture”? Or, “context”?
- C. Identity as (mythologizes) capacity for understanding, veracity—per subject, validity, et al., but also, see 7a.
- D. Identity as interpersonal valuation algorithm. [On the word level, mind you.] And, conversely, the condition of objectification or, coarsely speaking, productization.
- E. What is your one unique purpose on this earth, that is: *what does “it all mean?”*
1. What you owe and what you’re owed.
 2. What you’ve been waiting for.
 3. Contemplate/Perform: how to evade the identity industrial complex. How to remain critical of our own influence, inspiration, intonation, and indebtedness.

II. Meaning wants to be made——easier said than done.

**III. Stay Wary / Don’t Get Weary:
Language is not enough, and it’s not
good enough, and it doesn’t do what it**

**could never say what it’s going to do. All
language is *lingua franca*.**

- A. Remain wary of the political/cultural disputes over language
1. Be wary of political conveniences of information, and its constituent parts, and its concurring ideology.
- B. If language is the master’s tool, and the master’s tools won’t dismantle the master’s house, how do Black people make such excellent (liberatory) writers, orators, lyricists, storytellers, vocalists, etc. *If* logic serves: some part of how we’ve reasoned these legacies and liberations necessarily cannot *be*.

**IV. Healing the childhood wounds of
language.**

- A. Itinerary: First, crawling. Next, object permanence. Object permanence corresponds with the mirror phase in which the infant can conceptualize the self. The self instantaneously implies another. A few months later, at roughly one year of age, for most infants, walking and talking—or, the capacity to get *into trouble*, and the capacity to get *out of it*.
- B. Betrayal: rupture from the mother, the lie of language; that I am constantly directed, if not scolded, to use my words, but they ring hollow within the astronomical scope of feeling, and I have used the very best ones and they never do. (See 8a, 8d, 14.)

**V. Disabuse tone from previous connotations with “true feeling/intention.”
Disabuse oneself of the mythological
purity of “true feeling/intention.”**

- A. Proceed with extreme caution when disabusing others of this misapprehension.
- B. Tone is Cultural.



TEXT AND IMAGES FROM “IDEAL INDETERMINATE” FOR X-TRA MAGAZINE (ARTIST PROJECT) (2023)

MANDY HARRIS WILLIAMS

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MORE ON “IDEAL INDETERMINATE”

RUPTURING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TEXT AND GESTURE

Published as the Artist Project in the last print of X-Tra Magazine, *Ideal Indeterminate* displays one of the most textual examples of my practice in subverting traditional text forms, without eradicating their content or degrading a high level of thought. To this end, the project works as a performance piece, a work of visual art and text. It adapts traditional feature writing for its own uses, drawing readers in to a sense of familiarity and glamour.

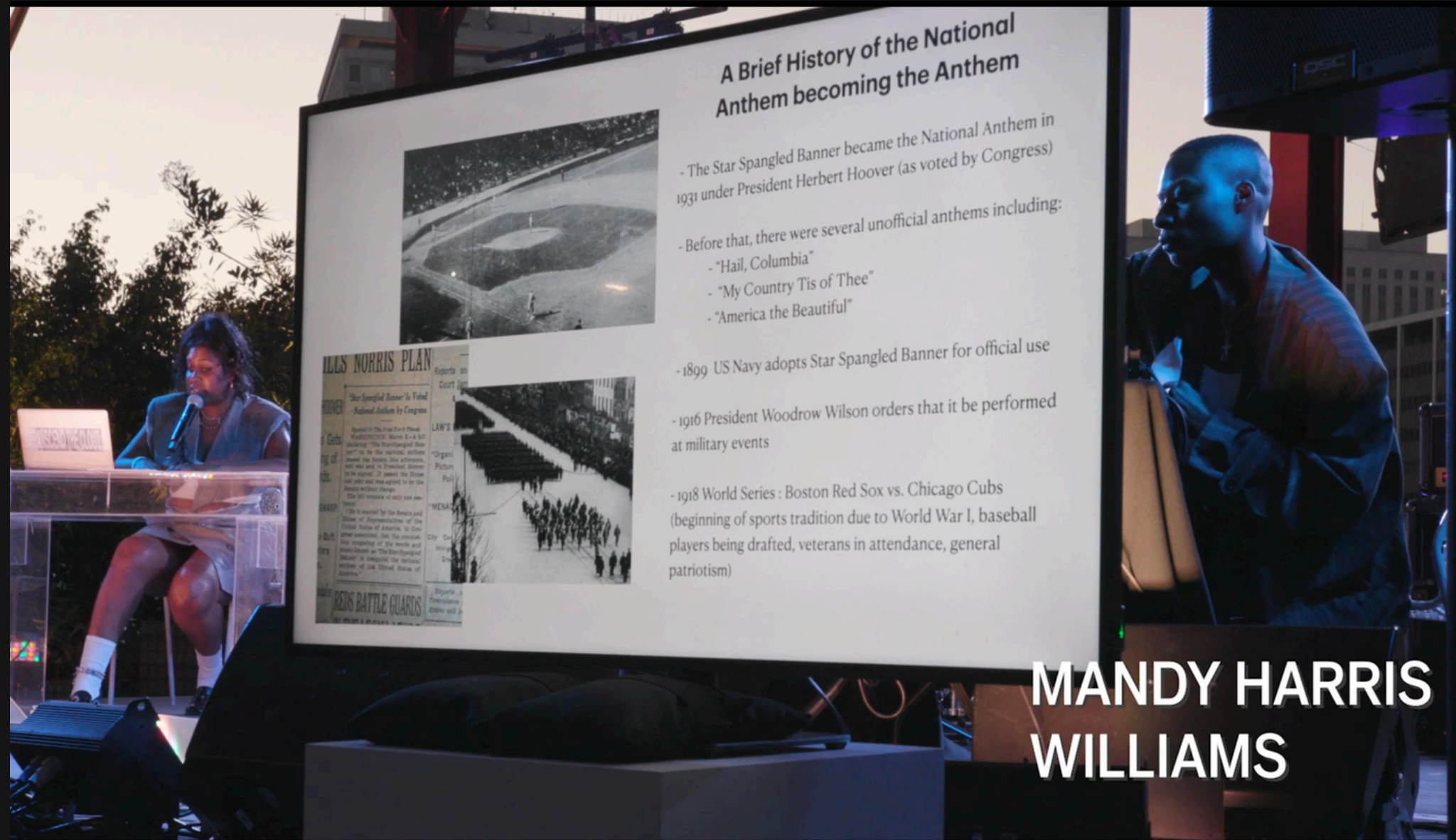
The photoshoot against a white seamless background shows Mandy in positions that are specifically meant to convey authority, honesty and transparency. The center page of the magazine, is just that, a transparency, featuring writing on two sides, bifurcating the project by the question: what is the correct way to read this? What is the correct perspective to take?

Issues of transparency, honesty, and the nature of language itself are also the content and not just the tools of trickery used to create. The project opens with Mandy “staging” an interview with a chatbot, a frequently used motif in my practice, before launching in to a discussion of meaning, linguistics in the internet age, and the currency of truth.

*This work is credited to Mandy Harris Williams, but brought to life with the support of Designer Becca Lofchie .

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DOCUMENTATION FROM "ANTHEMS AND THE ANTHEMIC" (PREMIERED AT MOCA GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY, LA) (2022)

MANDY HARRIS WILLIAMS
ARTIST, PERFORMER, INTELLECTUAL

MORE ON “ANTHEMS AND THE ANTHEMIC”

QUESTIONING THE TONES OF IDENTITY AND LIBERTY

“Anthems and the Anthemic” was presented during the Music/Theory festival which is credited as a solo work by Mandy Harris Williams*. In keeping with my practice of utilizing contemporary popular formats towards different— more critical, anticapitalist—ends, I envisioned what could happen if artists were expected to connect with audiences about their politics and beliefs as well as performing. This format borrows from the Bluegrass tradition of music festivals where performers are expected to connect with their audience, explicitly with the goal of instructing about and furthering musical traditions.

Music/Theory is a multi-genre cultural festival that presents musicians as cultural workers, theorists, creative practitioners, and of course, rockstars. Guests had the opportunity to watch their favorites take to the main stage on the Aileen Getty Plaza for their musical set and also connect in talks, workshops, and panels. Collectives, support and aid networks, and non-profits table in the hall provided opportunities to learn and connect, and ethical vendors were in attendance selling their wares!

“Anthems and the Anthemic” is the name of the performative lecture performed by Mandy Harris Williams on the day of the festival. Structurally, it serves as a model for how creative practitioners might infuse more critical content in to performances where they have a captive audience. The content of the piece analyzes the history, lyrics and adoption of the Star Spangled Banner.

*Although commissioned to Mandy Harris Williams and credited as a solo project, this work was made possible by Olivia Surnow and Daniela Aramayo who served as co-producers and organizers.

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**MANDY HARRIS
WILLIAMS**





STILLS FROM "COUTURE CRITIQUES" (2021)

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MORE ON "COUTURE CRITIQUES"

CRITICAL THEORY NO LONGER ESCHEWS THE SPECTACLE

Couture Critiques (2021) updates and reinterprets Edward Said's 1993 Oxford Reith Lectures "Representations of the Intellectual" in the filmic language of MTV's 90s' hit show House of Style. In an information era, with too little knowledge, where is the truth and who is telling it? And when they do, are we listening? Or are we tuned into something more pleasant, entertaining and stylish? Directed, written, and hosted by Mandy Harris Williams*, Couture Critiques renews an elemental conversation about representation in an era where the media is not just mass, but omnipresent.

*This work, like all works of film, is made possible by the entire crew credited in the film, and especially Co-Director Keenan Macwilliam who managed on set direction as I transitioned in to the role of performer and was intimately involved in understanding the directorial vision as it developed.

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DOCUMENTATION FROM "TONGHT'S MUSICAL GUEST" (PREMIERED AT OXYARTS, LA) (2021)

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MORE ON “TONIGHT’S MUSICAL GUEST”

A POPULAR FORMAT TAKES ON UNEXPECTED LEVITY

“Tonight’s Musical Guest” is the first work in my performative lecture series which can be said to be truly multimedia. Presented in a small Black Box theatre on the Occidental College campus, this work utilized a somewhat traditional lecture style that was merged with the tonality of a nightly show. This allowed for a wry and witty voicing that compelled the sold out audience for an hour of lecture and twenty minutes of musical performance which echoed the themes of the lecture.

The lecture was a historical analysis about the ways in which technological innovations in music recording increasingly shifted the means of production and ownership, as well as representation and support away from Blues Mamas, and towards lighter, thinner, and straighter artists.

This performance was funded by the Mellon Guest Artist program and commissioned by Occidental College as a part of the show “Encoding Futures: Critical Imaginaries of AI” curated by Mashinka Firunts-Hakopian.



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THANK YOU

Thank you to the jury at La Becque for considering my application. It is my sincere hope that I will be able to participate in and enrich your community of artists, past, present and future, while utilizing the resources of the residency and Lake Geneva itself as core building blocks of the practice I am pleased to build.

+1(917)690-7333

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