

Between Friends Part II: Performance Review of OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/ by Zedekiah Gonsalves-Schild and Jeunée Simon

“ I wondered whether in a friendship, one side works harder than the other to keep the connection flowing. It does feel like that sometimes. And in healing, perhaps it is advisable to detach ourselves from our trauma and let our friends show us the way. ”

by Paulina Félix Cunillé



Jeunée Simon and Zedekiah Gonsalves-Schild,
OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone

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Between Friends is an intimate three part exhibition curated by Samantha Hiura (MA Curatorial Practice/MA Visual & Critical Studies '25), on view at CCA's PLAYSPACE Gallery through November 22, 2023. The show gives the CCA community a peek into what some of the MFA students are exploring. Hiura's curatorial approach is in conversation with other recent exhibitions reviving archives or non-exhibited pieces; for example *Assembly 1: Unstored, Contemporary Sculpture from Mexico*, curated by Darkin Hart, which was on view until last spring at ASSEMBLY in Monticello, NY. Hiura's curatorial eye creates a space for works that, as she describes, "have not yet found a home" within the artists' practices.



Installation view of *Between Friends Part 2*, PLAYSPACE Gallery
Photo courtesy of Nicholas Lea Bruno

Part II of *Between Friends* opened on October 6th and was on view until October 26th, featuring works by CCA MFA students Jesse Muñoz, Amanda Bristow, Jason Stern, and Molly Barker. This second iteration of the show presented a minimalist selection of works who share qualities of smallness and subtlety. The opening reception included a performance by Zedekiah Gonsalves-Schild (MFA Fine Arts '25) and Jeunée Simon, titled *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*. Centering themes of healing, dialogue, and engagement, the performance explored the syncretic nature of

friendship and repair of the collective body within a contemporary context. According to curator Sam Hiura, "Zedekiah and Jeunée have worked together before and they share an interest in the body and nature just as some of the artists in this iteration do. A lot of [Gonsalves-Schild's] works are about healing and emotional feelings." As part of her ongoing coverage of the show, RRR Arts Reporter Paulina Félix Cunillé shares her remarks on the evening's performance.



Jeunée Simon in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone

Held in the Nave Presentation Space, the scenography consisted of a darkened room, two black folding chairs in a corner of the room, divided by a short white pedestal bearing a medium-sized potted plant. Covering a large expanse of the adjoining walls behind these items, two projectors screened two videos that constantly changed but shared similar themes: an okra plant at different stages and days, insects, natural disasters, and unique events in San Francisco, such as fireworks being ignited in the middle of the street. A prerecorded track that sounded full of striking metallic sounds played while Gonsalves-Schild lay down, clad in a white Hazmat-like suit. He didn't move nor make a sound, as if he were asleep. Meanwhile, the source of the ambient sound was ominously nowhere to be found.

A few seconds after the track started, Simon came out from one of the side entrances of the room—with an identical suit—and proceeded to tap a hammer against the wall closest to her as she moved throughout the room, as if testing for something behind it. There wasn't any doubt on her face while doing this, making this action appear to be a usual habit of



Simon standing over Zedekiah Gonsalves-Schild in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone



Simon and Gonsalves-Schild in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone

hers. After tapping several times on this particular wall, she approached Gonsalves-Schild's body on the other side of the room. As she did this, a spotlight turned on to illuminate their bodies and she opened his suit to pull out what looked to be a fake vertebrae. She attached this vertebrae to her own suit and continued pulling it out. She stopped this by lifting her hands at shoulder height and twisting them as she also twisted her face from one side to the other. Through these actions, Gonsalves-Schild was woken up from his 'sleep.' Both of them then proceeded to engage in a similar dance, slowly bringing their right legs forward over and over again. Mirroring this, the track's rhythm also slowed down. They ceased to do this then approached the chairs. Before sitting down, they repeated the same trance-like motions that Simon had performed for Gonsalves-Schild's awakening.

Thus, the tapping at the beginning of the performance had resembled the initiation of a friendship, making it seem that testing the waters isn't a moment to feel dubious or scared, but rather a moment to tap into our feelings and needs as potential friends with certainty. The two performers' lives were somehow intertwined; there was something that connected them here and we were witnesses of this moment. Their bodies serve just as messengers of what the images in the videos and the soundtrack carry: a reflection on how life impacts us while bonding and the idea of getting carried away by it.



Simon and Gonsalves-Schild in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone

While both performers were sitting down on the chairs, Simon's silky voice popped up in the track narrating a story where she describes a father as an okra. Meanwhile, both of their bodies' outlines stood out in front of one of the screening projections, which displayed insects approaching the okra plant as well as scenes of natural disasters and chaotic events. Her monologue finished with the phrase "time is right," followed by the explosion of fireworks on a street in San Francisco and simultaneous shots of more fireworks juxtaposed alongside close-ups of an okra plant. As an echo, I could only hear a sound similar to a bomb exploding while these videos were still going. I saw Simon

grabbing the plant on the pedestal from one of its leaves, whereas Gonsalves-Schild was grabbing it from its pot. A last 'boom,' akin to how shocking news can feel, closed the performance with both artists frozen in those same positions.



Simon and Gonsalves-Schild in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone



Simon and Gonsalves-Schild in *OKRa/repair for the Un-dead/*
Photo courtesy of Tariq Stone

Much like the show's flyer, which blurs Gonsalves-Schild's face, the performance emphasized Simon's presence as the leading force of the performance. I wondered whether in a friendship, one side works harder than the other to keep the connection flowing. It does feel like that sometimes. And in healing, perhaps it is advisable to detach ourselves from our trauma and let our friends show us the way. This performance offered a reflective gaze towards friendship and provided a link to the title of *Between Friends* worth remembering long after its presence is gone.

