

A.I.R.

old blues new bruises

Keli Safia Maksud

May 27–June 25, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, June 1, from 6–8pm

GALLERY III



Keli Safia Maksud, *Topographies of Sound* (detail), 2022, Embroidery on carbon paper, 26 x 39 inches.

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *old blues new bruises*, a multimedia exhibition by 2022–2023 Fellow Keli Safia Maksud. This is Maksud’s first solo exhibition in New York City.

Mapping and sound are at the center of *old blues new bruises*. Drawing from diagrammatic systems such as musical notation, architecture, and city planning, and practices of counter-mapping that are used in multiple disciplines to reclaim colonized territory, Maksud presents an aurally and visually rich environment in the gallery, including embroidery on carbon paper, sound, and light. Historically, carbon paper was utilized to create copies of an original document or record. For the exhibition, this paper becomes both an instrument of replication and also one of abstraction. Using embroidery as a drawing tool to navigate the audible traces of African postcolonial histories, Maksud stitches musical notations through the paper, producing a double-sided document. On one side there are replicated drawings from sheet music of various national anthems, and on the other, rhizomatic marks that operate in excess of these diagrammatic systems of knowledge. Here Maksud draws upon musical notation as a language to think through the traces and audible legacies of history and identity, particularly in relation to African independence.

Throughout the exhibition, Maksud draws parallels between audibility and legibility to consider the structures that continue to perpetuate a colonial order. Intervening within the architecture of the gallery is a new multi-channel sound installation composed of frequencies captured by an ETHER recorder, which receives all the interference and radiation that a traditional radio tries to eliminate in order to create a clean signal. Here Maksud considers, how can we attune ourselves to pick up different frequencies, to feel what reverberates and hear what sounds at the margins? What might be a practice of decolonial listening? How might we tune out colonial sub frequencies that constantly hum in our ears? How might we hear beyond them or beneath them or perhaps hear another future?

old blues new bruises is a continuation of a broader body of research on post-colonial subject formation through African national anthems. Listening back to these histories, Maksud considers the contradictions, failures, and collapse of post-colonial hopes that prevailed during the early 1960s on the continent. Maksud’s practice traces these invisible structures and systems that construct and fix bodies in space and the violence embedded within systems of representation.

Keli Safia Maksud earned her BFA in Painting from the Ontario College of Art and Design University, a Diploma in Art and Curatorial Studies at the New Centre for Research and Practice, and an MFA in Visual Arts at Columbia University. Her work has shown at Salon 94 in New York, NY, Miriam Gallery, NY, Huxley Parlour in UK, the Bamako Biennial in Mali, National Museum of Contemporary Art – Seoul in South Korea, Galería Nueva in Spain and the Biennial of Contemporary Art Sesc_Videobrasil in Brazil. Maksud has been awarded fellowships and grants from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Council for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (2022). Her writing has been published in *OCULA Magazine*, the Swiss Institute, *LEAP Magazine*, and A Space Gallery.

