

# ARMORY

For Immediate Release: August 22, 2016

Contact: [gallery@armoryarts.org](mailto:gallery@armoryarts.org) | 626-792-5101 x 122 | [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org)

Exhibition: *Radio Imagination: Artists in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler*

Exhibition Dates: Sunday, October 2, 2016 through Sunday, January 8, 2017

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 1, 2016, 6-8pm

Location: Armory Center for the Arts, Caldwell Gallery

145 North Raymond Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103

## **New Artworks Inspired by the Archives of Science Fiction Writer Octavia E. Butler on Display in Exhibition Curated by Clockshop**



Connie Samaras, from the series *The Past is Another Planet*, 2016 (detail)

Pasadena, CA—The Armory Center for the Arts is pleased to present *Radio Imagination: Artists in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler* a group exhibition organized by the Los Angeles-based not-for-profit organization Clockshop. The exhibition debuts 6 new commissions inspired by the Octavia E. Butler papers at the Huntington Library. *Radio Imagination: Artists in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler* is part of Clockshop's year-long program throughout 2016 celebrating the life and work of Pasadena science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006). The exhibition is on

view in the Armory's Caldwell Gallery from October 2, 2016 through January 8, 2017. A reception, free and open to the public, will take place on Saturday, October 1, 2016 from 6-8pm.

Octavia E. Butler was a bestselling and award-winning author, receiving both the Hugo and Nebula Awards for her groundbreaking science fiction, as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award from PEN West. She was the first Black woman to achieve international prominence in the genre, and is the first and only writer of science fiction to earn a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship. With Black female protagonists, radical notions of kinship, and a keen understanding of power dynamics, Butler's writing revamped the conventions of the science fiction genre. Ultimately, her work suggested new ways of thinking and new models of working for generations of writers and artists to come. 2016 marks the 10-year anniversary of Butler's death.

*Radio Imagination: Artists in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler* debuts new work by **Laylah Ali, Courtesy the Artists (Alexandro Segade and Malik Gaines), Lauren Halsey, Mendi + Keith Obadike, Connie Samaras, and Cauleen Smith**—contemporary artists working in performance, sound, installation, photography, drawing, and video. Forming an unprecedented collaboration with Clockshop, the Huntington Library in San Marino granted these artists access to work in Butler's archive. The Octavia E. Butler Collection at the Huntington Library consists of 8,000 individually cataloged items and more than 80 boxes of additional ephemera. Materials range from Butler's very first short stories, written at age 12, to manuscripts, photographs, and Butler's collection of inspirational quotes. The commissioned artists comprise an intergenerational group of emerging and established artists, each with an affinity for Butler's work and a long-standing interest in her oeuvre.

Prompted by Butler's "commonplace books"—the notebooks in which she jotted down her daily thoughts and ideas—**Laylah Ali** has created 10 new figurative drawings. **Mendi + Keith Obadike**'s sound-based installation incorporates phrases from an unpublished science-fiction story Butler wrote as a teenager, and includes an audio component that will be launched into space. Installation artist **Lauren Halsey** will build an immersive sculptural work that alludes to the various landscapes of Butler's novels, from ravaged fields to anarchic streets to living spaceships. **Cauleen Smith** has adapted one of Butler's texts in which the central character's return to the present from the past is unexpectedly violent. **Connie Samaras'** new body of work uses large format photography and multiple exposures to overlay Butler's journals and photographs with images of the Huntington Gardens. Finally, a choral and orchestral work by **Courtesy the Artists** (Malik Gaines and Alexandro Segade) will premiere on the evening of the exhibition opening. Featuring projected animations, 4 singers and 4 musicians, *Star Choir* incorporates phrases from an unfinished novel, *Parable of the Trickster*, which Butler famously struggled to complete. The exhibition will also include a selection of images depicting materials in the archive.

*Radio Imagination: Artists in the Archive of Octavia E. Butler* includes related programming. Courtesy the Artists' performance will repeat three times on opening night at the neighboring Levitt Pavilion. In addition, a tour of Butler's Pasadena led by Butler biographer and founder of the Octavia Butler Legacy Network Ayana A.H. Jamieson will meet at the Armory on December

4, 2016. On October 19 an in-gallery talk will feature *Radio Imagination* artist Connie Samaras in conversation with writer Lynell George and on December 11 artist Lauren Halsey will talk with writer Fred Moten. For the full schedule of exhibition related events please see [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org) and [www.clockshop.org/project/radio-imagination/](http://www.clockshop.org/project/radio-imagination/).

Additional *Radio Imagination* events happening this fall include a musical performance by Nicole Mitchell and a panel discussion on radical reproduction at the Huntington; and a screening of short films at REDCAT curated by Erin Christovale. For more info on this program please see [www.redcat.org/event/let-it-be-known-short-films-inspired-octavia-e-butler](http://www.redcat.org/event/let-it-be-known-short-films-inspired-octavia-e-butler).

“The Armory is honored to present *Radio Imagination* and participate in the conversations inspired by Octavia Butler’s humanistic vision,” says Irene Tsatsos, the Armory’s Director of Exhibition Programs and Chief Curator. “Clockshop has generated an important and multi-layered program—one that inspires reflection on moments both past and future, and motivates thoughtful action in the present.”

Clockshop Director Julia Meltzer said, “Recognition of Butler’s influence across artistic disciplines, and her contribution to the Los Angeles cultural landscape is long overdue. Our hope is that *Radio Imagination* will bridge Butler’s groundbreaking fiction with contemporary conversations about the future of Los Angeles.”

*Radio Imagination* is made possible with support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation, the WHH Foundation, and Pasadena Art Alliance.

### **About Clockshop**

Clockshop is an arts organization in Los Angeles working to expand the dialogue around cultural production, politics and urban space by commissioning new projects by artists and writers and partnering with diverse institutions. Clockshop is known for its unique collaboration with California State Parks, the Bowtie Project, through which the organization executes artist projects, campouts and an education program on a plot of undeveloped land adjacent to the LA River. Clockshop was founded by artist and filmmaker Julia Meltzer in 2004.

### **About the Armory**

Armory Center for the Arts, in Pasadena, California, believes that an understanding and appreciation of the arts is essential for a well-rounded human experience and a healthy civic community. Founded in 1989, the Armory builds on the power of art to transform lives and communities through presenting, creating, teaching, and discussing contemporary visual art. The organization’s department of exhibitions offers diverse programs at its main facility and in locations throughout the region. In addition, the Armory offers studio art classes and a variety of educational programs to more than fifty schools and community sites in the greater Los Angeles area.

Parking is available on the street or in the Marriott garage directly north of the Armory for free for 90 minutes. The Armory is off the Gold Line at Memorial Park – walk one half block east to

Raymond and one half block north to the Armory. For more information please visit [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org).

###