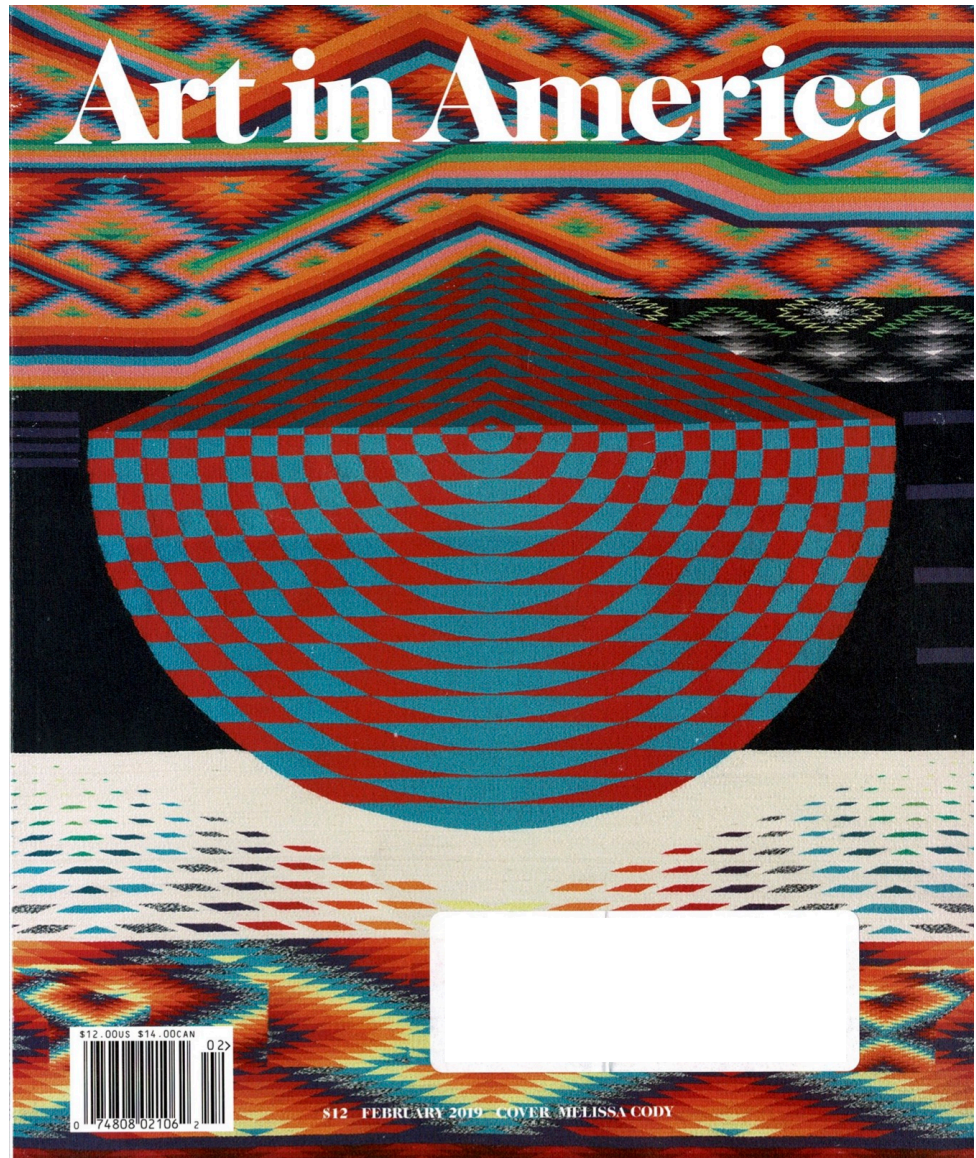


# Art in America

**Ariel René Jackson**

By Sean J Patrick Carney, February 2019



SculptureCenter

## FIRST LOOK



View of Ariel René Jackson's installation *Color Composition*, 2018, soil, latex balloons, spray paint, strings and wire, 8 by 7 by 20 feet, at the Museum of Human Achievement, Austin. Photo Hiram Mojica.

## Ariel René Jackson

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INSIDE A RUSTED, twenty-foot-long trailer cage in a gravel lot on Austin's east side, dozens of balloons encased in layers of dirt and pigmented chalk dangled in the breeze over a bed of local soil. As spring turned to summer in Central Texas, the installation was blasted with airborne debris and heavy rains. The balloons withered. Chunks of soil and chalk broke off, revealing the balloons' true colors of black and white.

Ariel René Jackson designed this site-specific sculpture, *Color Composition* (2018), to correspond to redlining maps that Austin used in the 1920s and '30s to segregate black communities from white ones. The balloons' color distribution represented "hazardous" (black) and "desirable" (white) neighborhoods designated by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1935. Nearly a century later, the effects of redlining remain visible, especially in rapidly gentrifying East Austin. *Color Composition* was installed in the neighborhood as part of the Cage Match Project, a series of outdoor works at the artist-run Museum of Human Achievement.

Jackson came of age in post-Katrina New Orleans. She enrolled at the Cooper Union in 2009 and called New York home for years. In 2017 she moved to Austin to pursue an MFA at the University of Texas. In each city, she has probed the local

intricacies of segregation. These extended field studies feed her studio output, which makes complex social information systems legible through videos, installations, and quilts, to name some of the mediums she has worked in. In recent years, Jackson has extended her inquiries into rural areas, researching and codifying the history of African American farming and the racist policies to which it has been subject over several generations.

For "In Practice: Other Objects," an exhibition of emerging artists at SculptureCenter in New York, Jackson is presenting a new installation, *In Extended Remnant* (2019). In a four-minute video projected onto a soil-coated surface, the artist performs gestures to a spoken-word soundtrack, making marks with a chalk mold of a rusted grass-cutting tool she found on her grandparents' defunct Louisiana farm. The work, Jackson said in an interview, "nods to black feminist epistemology, which asserts that experience is a form of knowledge." By incorporating a tool her grandparents employed in their labor, she is linking injustices in American history to those in the present. "Had it not been for the series of discriminatory loans between 1981 and 1999, my grandparents probably could have kept all their land," she told me. "I think that's why gentrification, and its historical connection to redlining, really hits me." ○

CURRENTLY ON VIEW  
Work by Ariel René Jackson in "In Practice: Other Objects," at SculptureCenter, New York, through Mar. 25.

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