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Culture Mill Presents its 2023/24 Season

(Saxapahaw, North Carolina) – In its 2023/24 season, Culture Mill, the Saxapahaw-based Performing Arts Laboratory, deepens interdisciplinary artworks and community collaborations with a responsiveness to place, land, history, ancestry, and the body. Exploring a range of artistic, cultural, and communal contexts through residencies abroad and creative processes rooted in the Triad/Triangle region of NC, Culture Mill weaves an inclusive creative ecosystem that invites the cross-pollination of artists near and far. At the intersection of a range of projects is sustained communal practices that center the body and claim the transformational power of art and storytelling. This year celebrates Culture Mill's 10th anniversary season.

ARTISTIC WORKS

When We were Queens... by dancer/choreographer Murielle Elizéon and composer/musician [Shana Tucker](#) retraces individual, communal, generational, and place-based histories and explores a shared ancestry of diaspora and violence. Presenting two solos as a diptych, *When We were Queens...* joins the pair's stories in an embodied poetic conversation. In visual art, diptychs present a complimentary pair that illuminate each other's wholeness while made of two distinct parts, at times joined by a hinge. *When We were Queens...* investigates how Elizéon and Tucker are "hinged" together by resonant experiences as women from the African diaspora, considering the body as a repository of history and the complexities of ancestral heritage and excavating across mediums the themes and threads that tell a story beyond words. Development and presentation residencies engage community as part of the creative process. Commissioned by [NC State LIVE](#) (Raleigh, NC) and Co-Produced by the [Wilson Center](#) at Cape Fear Community College (Wilmington, NC) and [Weatherspoon Art Museum](#), UNC Greensboro (Greensboro, NC), the work will make its world premiere at the [NC Museum of Art](#) in February 2024, followed by presentations at the [Cameron Art Museum](#) and as part of *Barn Church* at [Kindred Seedlings Farm](#).

How To Be a Visitor is a new collaboration by dancers/choreographers Tommy Noonan and Hector Thami Manekehla (South Africa). Manekehla and Noonan feel their bodies change as the landscape changes, whether that landscape is a natural, social, cultural, or even a relational one. They also feel their bodies' ability to change according to their own imaginations. *How to be a visitor* is a question that captures the urgency of a personal, artistic, and political orientation at this moment from two trans-national artists with complex diverging and intersecting cultural identities and experiences. Manekehla and Noonan believe that negotiating *how to be a visitor* through their bodies is a process that unpacks the complexity of such an inquiry for audiences, and to model it as a distinct and generative way of being in the world. The creative process moves between South Africa, the US, and Central Europe. The development of *How To Be a Visitor* is supported in part by the [American Dance Festival](#) (Durham, NC). The work will make its world premiere in 2025.

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

Barn Church, a creative placemaking initiative facilitated by Culture Mill and Kindred Seedlings Farm, will hold its second annual season. *Barn Church* is a liberatory and anti-racist project which combines original performance, the sharing of food, and work on the land as a social practice of community care that centers BIPOC voices and embodied imagination. Building a place of belonging invests in and uplifts BIPOC artists and community members, *Barn Church* takes place at Kindred Seedlings Farm, one of few Black-owned farms in rural Alamance County. The project addresses racism of the individual and communal bodies, explores intentional relationship with the land, reclaims church, and shares socially-engaged art as a vehicle for human connection. This season will feature performances by [Crystal Cavalier-Keck and Jason Crazy Bear Keck](#), [Jeghetto](#), Murielle Elizéon and Shana Tucker, *Barn Church* Chaplain [CJ Suitt](#), and more; winter workshops with [Jasmine Powell](#); and workdays at the farm. *Barn Church's* caterer-in-residence is emerging baker and chef Malik Walker.

After a year of reflection, the *Parkinson's Performance Project* will launch in 2023-24. Past iterations have been known as *They Are All* (2019 ADF Commission), *Dancing With*, and *Moving Through*. The *Parkinson's Performance Project* cultivates a multigenerational creative community with and around people living with Parkinson's disease (PD) through the exploration of music and dance and multidisciplinary performance-making in collaboration with professional artists. The project fosters embodied practices and dialogues with occupational therapists and neuroscientists to advocate for a creative and holistic approach to PD that centers individuals living with PD as self-agent experts. The project will offer six workshops and two open studio showings in 2023-24, all of which works towards the creation of a future performance in collaboration with the Parkinson's community.

CONTINUED PROJECTS

Culture Mill will continue its partnership with *Southern Futures at [Carolina Performing Arts](#)*, an initiative that produces new works, collaborations, and research on social justice, racial equity, and the American South. In its third year of the residency, Culture Mill expand upon practices and collaborations deriving from *Eclipse* (2022) and will support an interdisciplinary cohort of six locally-based artists in their collaborative artistic direction of *The Commons Festival and Residency*, culminating with place-based performances of Black identity May 3 and 4, 2024 at The CURRENT ArtSpace + Studio. The cohort includes [Sylvester Allen Jr.](#), [Johnny Lee Chapman III](#), [Cortland Gilliam](#), [Anthony "Otto" Nelson Jr.](#), Jasmine Powell, and CJ Suitt.

Culture Mill will also continue its collaboration with the UNC Geography Department and the [Marian Cheek Jackson Center](#) in a second year of practices bridging UNC students and the historic [Northside community of Chapel Hill](#). Their 2022-23 collaboration produced a listening practice at the Old Well uplifting the long legacy of Black masons in Chapel Hill and their relationship to the university built by enslaved labor.

Culture Mill with Carolina Performing Arts presented the reading of *NOTHING ABIDES*, an evening of poems in dialogue by Southern Futures writers-in-residence Cortland Gilliam and [Brian Howe](#). The pair has debuted their collaborative writing in relationship to

Eclipse, which is not about the dance piece but around and within it. A first reading took place at [Attic 506](#) on August 27. Additional *NOTHING ABIDES* performances will be shared as part of the *Octopod Reading Series* in Durham, among others.

Lastly, Culture Mill continues to collaborate with [Restorative Practice facilitator](#) and [UNC adjunct lecturer](#) Val Hanson to share excerpts of *Eclipse* with UNC Public Policy students. These presentations share an untold history of UNC and the intersection of Restorative Justice practice and creative process.

SUSTAINING CULTURE MILL

The Culture Mill Lab continues to serve as a generative space for artistic practice and creation in Saxapahaw, NC. So far in 2023-24, open space residencies have supported creative processes by Kasey Kinsella, [Majesty Royale-Jackson](#), and Cortland Gilliam and Brian Howe. The Lab's Open Space Policy and Open Space Residency gifts use of the space for varying amounts of time to locally-based artists. The Lab also supports the 2023-24 projects named above.

Operationally, Culture Mill is in the final year of a three-year capacity-building grant from the Kenan Charitable Trust. Culture Mill seeks to sustain its work, operations, and team of four through a 10th Anniversary fundraising campaign centering *10 years, 10 stories*. The campaign celebrates past and present work and dreams of a sustainable future, marking the first year of a five-year vision to raise \$300,000 per year through a network of Patreon sustainers, individual donor pledges, and funding institutions through values-aligned engagement and community collaboration. Culture Mill continues to share public-facing dialogues and critiques of the nonprofit and philanthropic systems and how we both find relationship with and disrupt these systems.

Please find more information at www.culturemill.org

Culture Mill's 2023-24 Season and operations are generously supported by numerous individuals and the following institutions:

Culture Mill's 2023-2024 operations are supported by Kenan Charitable Trust; The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation; and the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. In-kind support is provided by Durham Coop Market and Wegmans.

When We were Queens... is a Culture Mill production, commissioned by NC State LIVE and co-produced by Wilson Center at Cape Fear Community College and Weatherspoon Art Museum, UNC Greensboro. Culture Mill is a 2022 and 2023 NDP Finalist Grant Award recipient. Support was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to address sustainability needs during COVID-19 and in support of *When We were Queens...*

How To Be A Visitor is a Culture Mill production. Development of *How To Be A Visitor* is supported in part by the American Dance Festival.

Barn Church is a Culture Mill and Kindred Seedlings Farm collaboration, supported in part by the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation.

Culture Mill's collaboration with CPA is presented as part of *Southern Futures as Carolina Performing Arts*.