



Thomas F. DeFrantz, Director

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SLIPPAGE is thrilled to announce that Webster McDonald has joined the lab as the 2024-2025 Postdoctoral Affiliate supported by the Mellon Foundation grant, Black Social Dance and Geographies of Freedom. Dr. McDonald recently earned the PhD degree in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Kansas. His dissertation, “Voyages into Colonial Spaces: Unsettling Western Culturality, Constructing Implicated Subjects, Inaugurating Contemporary Human Systems,” focuses on Michael Rothberg’s writings about “multidirectional memory” and, more recently, “implicated subjects.” It expands upon the work of scholars such as Pierre Nora to offer a conceptual framework for studying public and transcultural remembrance of the disavowal of queer lives.

Dr. McDonald is an artist-scholar-educator who has taught courses in Acting, Movement, Approaches to World Dance, Post-Colonial Theory, and Drama at The University of Kansas. For three consecutive summers, he has offered Special Topics in Dance, Performance Studies, and Contemporary Arts as a visiting professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada (2021-2023).

Dr. McDonald theorizes a queer, Black Jamaican, post-colonial subjectivity to subvert normative cultural discourses like colonialism, anti-Blackness, and hegemonic masculinity. He does this within his trance-rhizomatic theory, defined as a hybrid container for research that centers Afro-Caribbean thought in conversation with Western knowledge systems. This concept allows him to move within, between, and against the anti-Black design of space's political, social, and economic organization, as well as perceptions of Blackness that emerged during violent colonial ruptures. By offering trance-ness as a critical Black modification of the rhizome, McDonald argues for research processes that turn to embodied knowledge, pulling the researcher and the researched into a spiritual-like state to enact Afro-diasporic calls and responses. He joins the ranks of many radical post-colonial thinkers who call attention to humanism in its secular state to construct projects that seek to enact epistemological ruptures, especially in spaces where the culture of White supremacy predominates.



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Dr. McDonald has presented scholarly works in the US, Iceland, Canada, the UK, and parts of the Caribbean. He is a co-author of the anthology Dubbin Monodrama Anthology I: Black Masculinities in African Diaspora Theatre (2019) and most recently published the essay, "Scripts of Sexual Ethics: Tensions With/In the Performance of Jamaican Citizenship" (Caribbean Studies, Volume 51, 2023). He also has a short essay, "Scripts of Maleness: Tensions Within Homosexual Performances in Jamaican National Identity," currently under peer review by Keino Senior and Opal Palmer (The University of the West Indies Press).

One of SLIPPAGE's core questions is, "How do we make social progress via performance?" Dr. McDonald says, "This aligns with my current research interest in constructing a kind of Black queer performance aesthetic devoid of a depoliticized queer culture in Jamaica. That is why SLIPPAGE became of huge interest to me: the emphasis on centering Black minoritarian voices and how they simultaneously resist neo/re-colonization and embody post-colonial sovereignty. Having started the groundwork for what I call 'tapping into the archival weight of Blackness and queerness' in my recently completed Ph.D. in Performance Studies, a post-doc in SLIPPAGE's lab under the mentorship of Thomas DeFrantz will allow me to solidify approaches to situating, documenting, and disseminating Black aesthetics at the crossroads of racialization, epistemic disobedience, and resistance."

Please join our mailing list to learn more about Webster McDonald's work with SLIPPAGE.

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