

Express Newark at Rutgers University Newark Appoints Salamishah Tillet as Executive Director and Nick Kline as Creative Director



Photograph of Salamishah Tillet by Nick Romanenko/Rutgers University and Nick Kline by Anthony Alvarez

Newark, NJ [January 27, 2022]— Rutgers University-Newark has appointed Salamishah Tillet as Executive Director, and Nick Kline as Creative Director of Express Newark, a center for socially engaged art and design which opened in 2017. Conceived as a “third space” for students, artists, and activists, Express Newark brings together the community, the campus, and the City of Newark. Supported by Rutgers University - Newark, it is to make art that matters, address our city’s most prevailing social justice issues, and advocate for systemic change.

Salamishah Tillet is renowned for her sustained focus on gender and racial justice in her scholarship, activism, and cultural criticism. She is a Henry Rutgers Professor of African American and African Studies and Creative Writing and the founding director of New Arts Justice, an initiative for Black feminist approaches to public art in the City of Newark. A contributing critic at large for the *New York Times*, she is the author of *In Search of The Color Purple: The Story of an American Masterpiece* and *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination*. In 2020, she was awarded the Whiting Creative Nonfiction Grant for her book-in-progress, “All the Rage: Mississippi Goddam and the World Nina Simone Made.” In 2003, with her sister, Scheherazade Tillet, she founded A Long Walk Home, a nonprofit organization that uses art to empower young people to end violence against girls and women.

“Rutgers-Newark is not the most diverse campus in the country, but also one of the most socially aware ones. While Newark itself has long been the lodestar for artists who are committed to justice,” Tillet says. “By bringing these two communities together, Express Newark doesn’t have to invent anything new, we are just fully embracing who this City and this campus have always been.”

Nick Kline, Associate Professor of Photography in the Department of Arts, Culture, and Media, is a visual artist who works in photography, artists’ books, installation, and socially engaged art. He is the founder and director of Shine Portrait Studio, Newark, NJ which opened in 2017 is based at the site of James Van Der Zee’s first photography job and is dedicated to his legacy of celebrating community. With Shine, Kline creates collaborative and engaged projects, shapes residencies for visiting artists and curators, is an educator, facilitator, and editor/publisher.

Kline’s artwork has been featured in solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States, and his residency awards include ArtexTe, in Montreal, Canada, and the Center for Contemporary Arts, in Prague, Czech Republic. His artists’ publications are in numerous permanent collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harvard Art Museums, and Getty Research Institute.

“I am inspired by the various histories that inform us, such as the Black Arts Movement, and that we’re situated in a former Hahne and Co., a luxury department store that had racially discriminatory practices for far too long,” Kline says. “My priority is to create spaces here for people to be able to relax, reflect, and to be inspired to use their creativity and curiosity to make real change.”

In 2021 - 2022, with its annual theme as “Play and Performance,” Express Newark launched its inaugural art and curator residencies curator-in-residences and artist-in-residences program, opened the exhibitions **THIS IS THE WE: MURALS FOR JUSTICE**, and **PICTURING BLACK GIRLHOOD: MOMENTS OF POSSIBILITY**, and will host the internationally renowned Black Portraiture[s] conference. In 2022-2023, Express Newark will launch its Free School, a core curriculum of courses that are open to its vibrant community of artists, faculty, visiting artists/critics, and Newark residents as well as the Community Media Center’s “community filmmaking” year-long festival series.

Express Newark’s Studios include Artistic Passion and Purpose, Community Media Center, Design Consortium, Form Design Studio, Humanities Action Lab, Institute of Jazz Studies, New Arts Justice, Newest Americans, Paul Robeson Art Galleries, SHINE Portrait Studio, and Visual Means.

About Express Newark

Express Newark is a center for socially engaged art and design that brings together the community, the campus, and the City of Newark. Supported by Rutgers University, Newark, it is conceived as a “third space” for students, artists, and activists to make art that matters, addresses our city’s most prevailing social justice issues, and advocates for systemic change.

About *Black Portraiture[s] VII: Play and Performance*

Black Portraiture[s] is an academic conference committed to the study of African diasporic art and culture that began as a colloquium hosted by Harvard University and New York University in Paris in 2013. Now in its seventh iteration, the conference *Black Portraiture[s] VII: Play and Performance* will be hosted by Rutgers-Newark at Express Newark from February 17-19, 2022.

The two landmark exhibitions: **PICTURING BLACK GIRLHOOD: MOMENTS OF POSSIBILITY** at Express Newark and **SCHEHERAZADE TILLET: BLACK GIRL PLAY** at Project for Empty Space will be featured as part of the conference.

About Rutgers University - Newark

Rutgers University – Newark (RU-N) is a remarkably diverse, urban, public research university that is not just in Newark but of Newark—an anchor institution of our home city. We think of anchor institutions as place-based organizations that persist in their communities over generations even in the face of substantial capital flight, serving as social glue, economic engines, or both.

COVID

In accordance with Rutgers University and State of New Jersey guidelines, visitors 12 years and older must be vaccinated against Covid-19, and visitors two years and older must wear a mask. Photo ID and proof of vaccination or negative PCR test from a test taken no more than 72 hours before the event must be presented when entering an event. This applies to all populations: students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors.

Visitor Information

Express Newark is located at 54 Halsey Street in downtown Newark, NJ.
Exhibition Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 12-5, Thursday 12-8, and Saturday 12-5.
Admission is free.

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