

**For Immediate Release**

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026



Asli Narin, *Hand In Hand No.5*, 2023, Archival Inkjet Print.

**Season I, 2026 International Residency Exhibition**

## ***Lick Dirt, Kiss Bone***

**February 27–March 17, 2026**

Curated by NARS Curatorial Fellow **Courtney Zoa Brown**

**Opening Reception: Friday, February 27, 6–8pm**  
**NARS Main Gallery**

**The New York Art Residency & Studios (NARS) Foundation** is pleased to present ***Lick Dirt, Kiss Bone***, a group exhibition featuring work from the **Season I, 2026 International Residency Artists**: Melika Abikenari, Obadah Aljefri, Jieun Cheon, Priyanka Dey, Christopher Paul Jordan, Arom Ju, Colby Lamson-Gordon, Yutong (Leah) Liu, Fe Lugo, Asli Narin, Hyunjin Park, Sabrina Herbosa Reyes, and Chanya Vitayakul, curated by NARS Curatorial Fellow **Courtney Zoa Brown**. The exhibition brings together a group of emerging artists whose practices consider how knowledge moves across bodies, geographies, and generations.

Treating memory as something carried physically, the exhibition positions dirt, bone, and spirit as material witnesses. It asks how we remember collectively and through movement when survival itself

becomes a way of passing knowledge forward. Grounded in the philosophical idea of innatism, the belief that knowledge is embedded at birth, *Lick Dirt, Kiss Bone* reflects on what it means to inherit memory before it is spoken.

Across sculpture, painting, installation, and film, the works function as a living archive. Rather than presenting memory as fixed or complete, the exhibition treats the space itself as active, where bodies, materials, and gestures operate as forms of record. Here, memory becomes a method, something sensed, activated, and reimagined collectively across time and place. The exhibition draws on notions of ‘critical fabulation’<sup>1</sup> and the poetics of the undercommons<sup>2</sup>, where history emerges through fragments, absences, and acts of imaginative repair. As Saidiya Hartman writes in *Lose Your Mother*, “I am the vestige of the dead, and history is how the secular world attends to the dead,” emphasizing how memory is carried through absence and what remains unspoken. The works invite us to inhabit these traces, letting bodies, objects, and gestures enact and hold memory, making the past present without needing to fully name it.

Situated at NARS Foundation in Sunset Park, a neighborhood shaped by migration, labor, and shifting futures, the exhibition understands the site as a threshold where everyday life and contested histories exist side by side. Within this context, the works bring forward what has been overlooked or suppressed, allowing it to surface through material and presence.

The participating artists approach these questions through distinct material and conceptual practices, each offering a different entry point into memory, inheritance, and place.

Working with textile and fiber, **Jieun Cheon** and **Melika Abikenari** consider environmental conditions shaped by survival, transmission, and the quiet holding of memory within soft, accumulative materials. Through found objects and acts of reuse, **Christopher Paul Jordan** treats abstract painting as a site of accumulation, where the remnants of previous works gather into an evolving archive.

**Sabrina Herbosa Reyes**, **Yutong (Leah Liu)**, and **Hyujin Park** create sculptural investigations that move through space, spirit, and longing, forming environments that feel at once intimate and unsettled. **Fe Lugo** traces Afro-Caribbean memory through confessional forms and wood-based processes, allowing personal and cultural histories to surface through material transformations shaped by histories of labor and extraction.

**Asli Narin** and **Colby Lamson-Gordon** explore ancestral and familial archives through maps and geographic tracing, reflecting on shifting ideas of home, migration, and return. Using sculptural text,

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<sup>1</sup> Saidiya Hartman, “*Venus in Two Acts*” (2008), in which she outlines *critical fabulation* as a way to work with archival absence and imagination to reframe historical narratives.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013), describes the *undercommons* as a fugitive, collective space of resistance and shared study that exists outside dominant institutional logics.

**Chanya Vitayakul** reflects on familial and bodily archives, where language becomes a physical structure that holds memory.

**Priyanka Dey** and **Arom Ju** work with fragments, color, and partial visibility, creating works that hover between presence and absence as they consider meaning and belonging in the face of an incomplete archive. Through dreamlike bodily forms, **Obadah Aljerfi** creates fluid queer narratives that move between visibility and obscurity, reflecting on displacement, place, and the weight of inherited political realities.

Throughout the exhibition, knowledge appears not as something formally taught or fully known, but as fugitive, affective, and constantly in motion. The works ask where knowledge resides within the body, the object, the spirit, or the spaces between them, and how fate, intuition, and memory are carried across generations.

By foregrounding the self, the body, and the environment as sentient witnesses, *Lick Dirt, Kiss Bone* proposes remembrance as an ethical and relational practice, an insistence on presence, care, and the right to be felt and remembered across time, terrain, and loss.

### **Curatorial Note**

*Lick Dirt, Kiss Bone* is a title that leans into touch, sensation, and the body's relationship to language. Each word carries its own set of connotations. "Lick" suggests intimacy and taste, "dirt" evokes ground, origin, and burial, "kiss" implies care or reverence, and "bone" points to structure, ancestry, and what remains.

To me, the title reads like a fragment of a sentence, or a quiet instruction that has been broken apart and left open. I'm drawn to the way incomplete phrases and shifting meanings feel closer to how memory actually moves, in pieces, in sensations, and in things that aren't always fully said.

### **About the Curatorial Fellow:**

**Courtney Zoa Brown** is an experimental visual artist, curator, and cultural facilitator based in Brooklyn, originally from the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. Their practice engages experimental and interdisciplinary forms across diasporic contexts, with a focus on sculptural, ritual, and spatial languages. Grounded in African-Diasporic sociality, Brown's practice investigates how communities navigate displacement, archive lived experience, and build forms of resistance through embodied knowledge. Listening functions as both material and methodology in their curatorial approach.

Brown holds a BA in Art History and Africana Studies from Oberlin College. They have curated and programmed with institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago, Brooklyn Arts Council, South London Gallery and John St Gallery. Their notable projects include *Through the Loop: Chicago's Youth Artist Revolution* at Jip Gallery (2021), a virtual exhibition exploring displacement, activism, and positionality within Chicago's underground youth artist scene, and *Firelei Báez: Sueño de la Madrugada (A Midnight's Dream)* at South London Gallery, co-curated as part of the inaugural 2023–24 New Curators international fellowship.

**About the Artists:**

**Melika Abikenari** is an Iranian-born, Brooklyn-based artist, educator, and organizer whose practice investigates the intergenerational inheritance of memory, matrilineality, ritual, and the body in relation to state violence through material inquiry, performance, and installation. Abikenari holds a BA from UCLA and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. She has exhibited in galleries and institutions across the US, participated in NYFA's Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program, and completed residencies at Cerámica Suro, Art Cake, and the Textile Arts Center.

**Obadah Aljerfri** is a Brooklyn-based multidisciplinary artist and designer rooted in long-term investigations into identity and perception across queer, Muslim, and diasporic experience. Their conceptual practice integrates painting, sculpture, installation, performance, and illustration with satirical, abject, and tender gestures that trouble the violences of the gaze. Holding an MFA in Integrated Practices from Pratt Institute and a BFA in Illustration from the Savannah College of Art and Design, they bring over ten years of experience in art production, art direction, illustration, and branding across art, design, fashion, and marketing. Aljerfri has worked on major exhibitions with Muhannad Shono, Jenny Polak, and Andrew Woolbright, and has exhibited internationally at Ithra, the Bronx Council on the Arts, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, and Volta Basel.

**Ji Eun Cheon** (b. 1995) is a multidisciplinary artist exploring the intersections of perception and understanding. Through installations that synthesize various media, she examines the coexistence of paradoxes—order and chaos, reason and uncertainty. Her fictional universe, *Uncharted World*, reflects the limits of knowledge and the perpetual tension between structure and instability. She holds BFA and MFA degrees in sculpture from Seoul National University and MFA in fine arts from School of Visual Arts.

**Priyanka Dey** lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute. Originally, Dey is from Mumbai, India. Dey aims to create work that plays with optics of perception by experimenting with and leveraging obscurity. Her process balances a calculative yet intuitive paradigm which resists definitive categorization.

**Christopher Paul Jordan** is a painter and public artist who investigates the afterlife of memory, simulating conditions of removal to reexamine human relationships. Lacing salvaged textiles such as window screens and debris netting with acrylic paint, Jordan separates his images from their original surfaces while generating new histories from the traces they leave behind. Through parallel practices in performance, installation, and sculpture, his inquiries are persistently situated in public space. Jordan's first museum exhibition: *In The Interim - Ritual Ground for a Future Black Archive*, buries African American predictions of the end of the world on the grounds of the Frye Art Museum until the year 2123. His 20ft bronze, aluminum, and steel sculpture *andimgonnamisseeverybody* (2021) is the centerpiece for The AIDS Memorial Pathway in Seattle. Jordan has completed residencies at Bemis Center for the Arts, Headlands Center for the Arts, Mahler and LeWitt Studios, Museum of Glass, and NXTHVN. Jordan is a Leslie Lohman Museum Fellow, A Queer|Art Fellow and holds an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from the Yale School of Art (2023).

**Arom Ju** is a multidisciplinary visual artist from South Korea, now based in the U.S. Beginning in digital illustration, she translates the flat precision of screen-based imagery into painting, bridging digital and physical languages. She has recently expanded her practice to include mobile-like moving elements that explore motion and fragility. Ju holds an MFA from Hongik University and has exhibited in the United States and Korea, including at the New Museum Los Gatos, A Space Gallery, and Bushwick Gallery in Brooklyn. Her work has also been featured by institutions such as Microsoft and The New York Times.

**Colby Lamson-Gordon** is a Brooklyn-based artist working across image, video, and sound. Adopted from China to the United States, they explore (dis)placement and imagined memory through process-driven images and experimental documentary. Their practice draws on the archive and embodied knowledge to probe longing and the instability of personal history. Lamson-Gordon's work has shown at Ridgewood Off-Kilter Film Festival, East Village Film Festival, Residency Unlimited, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Mannes School of Music, and Gallery ZXY. They hold an MFA in Design & Technology from Parsons School of Design and a BA in Economics from Barnard College, where they received the O'Connor Award for best economic thesis. An upcoming resident at NARS Foundation and Vermont Studio Center, they live in Brooklyn and teach at Parsons.

**Leah Liu** is a New York-based artist who received her BFA in Sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2025. Her practice spans sculpture and sound. Through cast hollow chambers and modular assemblages, she activates absence and deviation, fracturing the coherence of structural systems. Liu's work has been exhibited in the United States and China, including at Gelman Gallery (Providence), Woods-Gerry Gallery (Providence), and Acentric Space Gallery (Shanghai). She has participated in residencies at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts (Maine), Arts Letters & Numbers (New York), and Acentric Space (Shanghai), with upcoming residencies at GlogauAIR (Berlin).

**Fe Lugo** is a Bronx-born, genderqueer artist whose practice spans sculpture, image-making, writing, and digital experimentation. They work with materials such as glass, wood, metal, and photographic imagery to study how identity, power, and desire take form across both intimate and collective histories.

Fe holds a BFA in Art and Art Education from Pratt Institute, where they trained in woodworking, glass, metal fabrication, mold-making, and photographic processes. Lugo has been an educator in New York City arts programs and has held residencies including Stove Works and Wassaic Project. Their work has been presented in community-centered art spaces and interdisciplinary exhibitions, and they continue to expand their practice through research-driven studio work, material experimentation, and teaching. Lugo lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

**Asli Narin** is a visual artist based in the United States, originally from Turkey. She holds a BA in Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design from Sabanci University and an MA in Image and Communication from Goldsmiths, University of London. Her work has been presented nationally and internationally, including at the 16th Istanbul Biennial (2019, Turkey) and the Ruthin International Arts Festival (2024, UK), with recent exhibitions at the Silver Eye Center for Photography and the Houston Center for Photography. Her work is in collections including Eskenazi Health and the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art. She recently received the DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award from the Arts Council of Indianapolis and was an artist-in-residence at Visual Studies Workshop Project Space Residency.

**Hyunjin Park** is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher based in New York and Seoul. She investigates the affective presence of non-human beings and how they challenge boundaries between the modern and ancient, life and death, and human and non-human. Her solo exhibitions include Gallery OOOJH (Seoul, 2022), Gallery Chamber (Seoul, 2025), with upcoming shows at Open Space Bae (Busan, 2025) and Kumho Museum of Art (Seoul, 2026). She has participated in group exhibitions at Total Museum, Onsonggan, Hui Gallery (Hong Kong), and OyG project (NYC). Park has attended residencies including Domaine de Boisbucchet, Vermont Studio Center, the Wassaic Project, the Watermill Center, and NARS Foundation. Park was also selected as the AHL Foundation T&W grant recipient.

**Sabrina Herbosa Reyes** is Filipina-American architect and interdisciplinary artist (sculpture, painting, movement, film, performance) interested in the relationship between spirit and matter as it exists across temporalities and explored through materiality, ritual and craft. Reyes creates environments through large-scale sculpture and installation, as a way to evoke the sublime, inward reflection and daydream. Alluding to nature and “home,” Reyes pulls from her memories of the Philippines and New York to create relationships between environments and bodies. Through movement, the body is seen as a vessel to activate and respond to space, both natural and built. Through this process her work becomes a site that encourages communal gathering and ceremony, as a way to transmute spirit in the form of collective healing.

**Chanya Vitayakul** (they/them, b. 2003) is a multidisciplinary artist from Bangkok, Thailand. Their work has been exhibited in New York, Rhode Island, South Korea, and Thailand, and has appeared in publications including Curatory Magazine, Divide Magazine, New Visionary Magazine, and the Survivor Arts and Writing Collective. Chanya holds a BFA in Graphic Design from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and is based in Long Island City, New York.

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The NARS Galleries are open Monday - Friday from 12 to 5 pm. For more information, please call the office: 718-768-2765 or email [info@narsfoundation.org](mailto:info@narsfoundation.org).

**The New York Art Residency & Studios (NARS) Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization committed to supporting artists and curators on an international level as well as engaging the local community in Brooklyn and the Greater New York area. Our mission is to present diverse platforms on which to nurture creative inspiration and innovative cross-pollination of ideas.