

**For Immediate Release**  
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Heather Renée Russ, *Echoes of Care*, 2026. Courtesy of the artist.

## ***Riis Beach: In Reverberation***

May 29–June 26, 2026

**Heather Renée Russ**

**Opening Reception: Friday, June 5, 6–9pm**

**Artist Talk: Friday, June 12, 6–7pm**

**NARS Project Space**

NARS Foundation is pleased to announce ***Riis Beach: In Reverberation***, a solo exhibition by NARS Alum **Heather Renée Russ** centering the historically queer People’s Beach at Riis Beach in New York City, a refuge for queer, trans, and BIPOC communities since at least the 1940s.

Increasingly threatened by climate change, coastal erosion and development pressures, the site embodies overlapping conditions of environmental and social precarity. Through experimental photography, installation and refracted light projection, Russ traces resonances between fragile

ecosystems and queer spaces, examining how both persist through adaptation, care and collective presence.

For decades, the long-abandoned Neponsit Hospital shielded the queer beach from public view, creating conditions in which bodies outside heteronormative, white supremacist norms could gather, cruise and enjoy the surf with relative safety. The hospital's demolition in 2023 exposes the site to intensified visibility, over-policing and renewed development interest, while the beach itself faces accelerating erosion. Russ's installation responds to this moment of vulnerability, treating the former hospital as both architectural memory and optical device.

Video fragments of queer artists frolicking in the tide and sometimes struggling to stay upright are projected through glass vessels shaped to evoke the fallen structure. Acting as porous lenses, these forms refract projected footage into shifting fragmented rainbow imagery that echoes the complexity of queer experience.

Russ's photographic works extend her long-term engagement with Riis Beach through a custom scanner converted into a high-resolution camera. She photographs Seaside goldenrod, a plant that stabilizes dunes and helps protect the coastline from erosion, alongside seaweed that absorbs excess nitrogen and carbon dioxide while producing oxygen, and strands of wig hair left behind by beachgoers. By focusing on these materials, Russ queers the tradition of landscape photography by shifting attention to the microcosm of coastal ecologies. During extended exposures outdoors, the sky bleeds into the images and the machine struggles to fully register her movements over time. This process produces chromatic glitches. Russ understands these disruptions as metaphors for collective anxiety and as reminders of the rainbowed spaces queer communities create, spaces that often exist outside the logic of patriarchal and extractive systems. She sees symbiotic relationships within seaside ecologies as parallel to the mutual aid networks that are critical for queer communities to thrive.

The exhibition also includes footage Russ captured of the Neponsit Hospital demolition. The imagery is partially obscured and refracted by aluminum, creating an intimate viewing experience that invites viewers to move closely around the work in order to gradually perceive the full image of the destruction. This formal approach reflects the artist's sensitivity to the emotional weight of the demolition for those connected to Riis Beach, offering a mediated encounter that acknowledges both loss and care.

Through material experimentation and site-responsive installation, *Riis Beach: In Reverberation* foregrounds the interdependence of ecological and queer survival.

The exhibition will include a public conversation moderated by **Erica Dawn Lyle**, an experimental musician, writer and long-time collaborator.

### **About the artist:**

**Heather Renée Russ** (she/they) is a multidisciplinary artist working across experimental photography, installation and bio art. Her practice incorporates queer femme signifiers and organic materials to explore queer ecologies, displacement and climate grief, while centering queer joy and systems of care. Russ comes from a rich history of organizing in underground art scenes. She co-directed Lair Fera, a

queer collaborative space in Brooklyn. In San Francisco she co-produced Club Feral, a raucous mutual aid queer nightclub. The experience of stewarding spaces for queer artists in ever-shifting environments informs her work.

In New York, Russ has exhibited at NARS Foundation, Field Projects, Elijah Wheat Showroom, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, Wassaic Project, Underdonk, Flux Factory, State University of New York (SUNY) Old Westbury and in Every Woman Biennial at Pen+Brush. Russ has also exhibited at NADA Miami with Paradise Palase, Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum (Cal State Long Beach), IMT Gallery (London) and SoMos (Berlin),

Russ has participated in residencies at NARS Foundation, Wassaic Project, MASS MoCA, ChaNorth, TransBorder Art and Vermont Studio Center and received the Powerhouse Arts Subsidy Award in 2026. She is currently a member of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) Studio Program in Manhattan.

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***For press inquiries please contact:***

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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.



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