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**California African American Museum Presents
Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul at Art + Practice**

A collaboration between CAAM and Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought



(Los Angeles, CA) — The California African American Museum (CAAM) announced today the presentation of the first United States exhibition of the work of Turner Award-winning British artist Helen Cammock. The multi-genre exhibition *Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul* will be on view February 11–August 5, 2023 at Art + Practice in Leimert Park.

The exhibition includes a new film, poetry, performance, archival documents, and books, rooted in the social history, geography, and community of New Orleans, a place

Cammock visited for the first time in January 2022 as part of a residency with the Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought and the Amistad Research Center. *Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul* is a gathering of encounters and observations, figured in text and image, of her experiences in the city. Cammock convenes both contemporary and historical voices—from archivists, artists, writers, and musicians to the protagonists of the civil rights movement—and adds her own through poetry, ceramics, and the sound of her trumpet, an instrument that she began practicing in New Orleans.

Drawn in part from archival materials in the Amistad Research Center on the campus of Tulane University, *I Will Keep My Soul* is threaded throughout with the story of artist Elizabeth Catlett's struggle for agency, creative autonomy, and support throughout her 1976 commission for the Louis Armstrong sculpture in New Orleans's Armstrong Park. Catlett's protracted process, revealed through letters and fraught exchanges, acts as a mirror to both past and present, asking how to be artist and activist—and free.

"Helen Cammock regularly examines diaspora identities, and this is the first time she has turned her attention to the United States," says Cameron Shaw, Executive Director of CAAM. "It's particularly meaningful to situate her internationally acclaimed work in Leimert Park, one of Los Angeles's liveliest and most important nexuses of Black diasporic cultures."

Cammock lives in London. She observes and interacts with New Orleans as an outsider, yet like so many visitors developed a sense of belonging there. "I have a feeling of tenderness for a place where I can walk down the street and feel seen and unseen in the same moment," says Cammock.

"Being in New Orleans has always been inextricably bound to belonging in New Orleans," says Andrea Andersson, co-curator of the exhibition and director of the Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought in New Orleans. "The answer to the question, 'Outsider?'" has often been confused with or reduced to a choice between binaries: insider or outsider, French or American, Black or white. What separates New Orleans from the rest of the world is its sheer impossibility to exist apart from the larger fabric from which it comes."

Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul is organized by the Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought and the California African American Museum and presented at Art + Practice. The Los Angeles presentation of the exhibition is curated by Andersson; Jordan Amirkhani, Rivers; and Essence Harden, Visual Arts Curator, CAAM, as part of a multi-year collaboration between Rivers and CAAM. CAAM at A+P is part of a five-year collaboration.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the RosaMary Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Research for this exhibition was

conducted in the archives of the Amistad Research Center as part of the Amistad-Rivers Research Residency supported by the Mellon Foundation.

About Helen Cammock

Helen Cammock (b. 1970, Staffordshire, England) uses film, photography, print, text, song, and performance to examine mainstream narratives about Blackness, womanhood, oppression and resistance, wealth and power, poverty and vulnerability. Her works often cut across time and geography, layering multiple voices as she investigates the cyclical nature of histories in her visual and aural assemblages. In 2017, Cammock received the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, and in 2019 she was the joint recipient of the Turner Prize.

Cammock has exhibited and performed worldwide, including recent solo shows at Whitechapel Gallery, London; The Photographer's Gallery, London; STUK Art Centre, Leuven, Belgium; Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; VOID, Derry, Northern Ireland; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; and Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, Germany. She also recently performed at Hacer Noche Festival, Oaxaca, Mexico. Cammock's work has been in group shows at Serpentine Galleries, London; Tate Britain, London; and Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany. Upcoming projects include solo exhibitions at Oakville Galleries, Toronto, and Amant, Brooklyn, as well as a residency at Edinburgh Printmakers in Scotland.

Catalogue

Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul will be accompanied by an artist's book co-published in March 2023 by Siglio Press, Rivers, and CAAM. In addition to photography, historical documents, poetry, and interviews, it includes contributions by Jordan Amirkhani, Andrea Andersson, Roshanak Kheshti, and Kristina Kay Robinson, an interview by Courtney J. Martin, and an afterword by Cameron Shaw, Executive Director, CAAM.

About the California African American Museum

CAAM explores the art, history, and culture of African Americans, with an emphasis on California and the West. Chartered by the State of California in 1977, the Museum began formal operations in 1981 and is a state-supported agency and a Smithsonian Affiliate. In addition to presenting exhibitions and public programs, CAAM houses a permanent collection of more than 5,000 works of art, artifacts, and historical documents, and a publicly accessible research library. Admission to CAAM is free.

Hours: Wednesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays (except MLK Day) and Tuesdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. CAAM is located in Exposition Park at the corner of Figueroa Street and Exposition Boulevard,

west of the 110 (Harbor) Freeway. Exposition Park parking is available for \$15 (daytime) at 39th and Figueroa Streets. The Metro Expo line Expo Park/USC station is a five-minute walk through the Exposition Park Rose Garden to the Museum.

About Art + Practice

A+P is a private operating 501(c)3 foundation based in the neighborhood of Leimert Park in South Los Angeles. A+P supports the local needs of foster youth and children experiencing displacement worldwide through its collaborations with nonprofit providers First Place for Youth and PILAglobal. A+P also provides Angelenos with access to museum-curated art exhibitions and diverse public programs, organized by the California African American Museum. Admission to A+P is free.

Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Closed Sundays, Mondays, and select national holidays. Art + Practice is located in historic Leimert Park Village at 3401 W. 43rd Place, Los Angeles, with a space for public programs across the street at 4334 Degnan Boulevard. There is metered parking on Degnan Boulevard and W. 43rd Place. Free street parking can be found in the neighboring residential area with a two-block walk to A+P. Bus lines that stop nearby are 40, 102, 210, 705, 710, and 740. A+P is also serviced by the Metro K Rail Line. The station is Leimert Park.

About the Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought

Rivers is a non-profit institute for research and publishing, exhibitions and convenings on art of the global diaspora. Based in a city whose history and future are predicated upon and consigned to migration, Rivers commits to art informed by diasporic experience—and to research at the confluence of diverse bodies of knowledge. Rivers invests in the complex circulation of people and ideas, and partners with long-term collaborators at home in New Orleans and across the globe to support the development of new work and its expanded reach across geographies.

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Image:

Helen Cammock

I Will Keep My Soul, 2022 (film still)

Courtesy the artist

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