

# ARTIST PROFILE

DECLARATION  
APRIL 21st –  
SEPTEMBER 9th

ICAVCU.ORG  
#DECLARATION  
#ICAVCU



Installation view: Levester Williams, *Tar Ball*; Amalia Pica, *Stranger on Commonland*; Curtis Talwst Santiago, *Infinity Series*, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, Virginia, 2018. Photo: Terry Brown

## LEVESTER WILLIAMS

In *Tar Ball* Levester Williams combines tar and used bedsheets from incarcerated individuals into a sculptural form. The tar seals and immortalizes bodily traces of those who have been removed from society and rendered invisible. The combination of materials invites us to contemplate the damaging, long–lingering effects of the United States' judicial system on incarcerated peoples.



*Tar Ball*, 2014. Image courtesy of the artist

### ON VIEW

*Tar Ball*, 2014

Unclean bed sheets from a Virginian adult penitentiary, tar, flies, and other media

Collection of Darryl Atwell,  
Washington, D.C

### LOCATION

Gallery 3

### RELATED PROGRAM

#### TOPIC TOUR:

#### LOOKING AT ART

May 12, 2018

1pm

Visit ICAVCU.ORG for event details and ticketing information. All events are free and open to the public

DECLARATION

# ARTIST PROFILE

INTERVIEW

---

*One that is truly committed to unalienable rights of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness for all people could only come to conclude we need an overhaul of our criminal justice system. That's a declaration for a declaration deferred.*

—Levester Williams

---

# DECLARATION

## WHAT MOTIVATES YOU AS AN ARTIST?

My work strives toward a greater fertility between objects and beings, language and the world. My praxis is deeply rooted in aesthetic and critical inquiries into modes of existence and existing. Questions arising from the politics and poetics of identity, space/place, boundary, and the body coalesce into forms. My work is always striving towards the brink of soulfulness of all things.

## WHAT DOES THE WORD "DECLARATION" MEAN TO YOU?

A declaration is an announcement, typically coupled with a sense of urgency that state of affairs prompting the call is something with which to be dealt. Needless to say, a declaration is more than the beginning of a desired condition: it punctuates and commands moments of and pathways to mutability. Mutability naturally induces matters of change or changes of matter: it is a principal of principles in both my pieces, *Tar Ball* and *Sulking*, as the material strives to transcend its own materiality to reach an idealized state of existing. Hence a declaration claims a state of and for existing.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE SHOWING YOUR WORK AT THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY? IN THIS LOCATION? AS PART OF THE ICA'S LAUNCH?

Virginia is one of twelve states that deny the voting rights of persons incarcerated on felony charges—although the governor of Virginia, at this time, could individually restore their voting rights. Such disenfranchisement is a vestige of "Black Codes" from the Confederacy—various criminal laws which included fining, and subsequently, forcing blacks to indentured servitude to work off any amassed debt under a white employer.

# ARTIST PROFILE

## BIOGRAPHY



*Sulking*, 2014. Image courtesy of the artist.

Born 1989, Lansing, Michigan; Lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Levester Williams is a multimedia artist whose work questions the politics and poetics of identity, space and place, and the body. These ideas coalesce into sculptures, installations, sound, performances, drawings, and writings.

Williams received his BFA in Art and Design from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and his MFA in Sculpture + Extended Media from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

Select solo exhibitions: Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia (2018); Museum of African Design in Johannesburg, South Africa (2017); Institute for the Humanities in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, Virginia (2014). Select group exhibitions: The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture in Charlotte, North Carolina (2017); Institute of Humanities in Ann Arbor, Michigan (2016); Reynolds Gallery in Richmond, Virginia (2015); Transformer Gallery in Washington DC (2015); and George Mason University in Washington, DC (2014). Select awards: U.S. Fulbright Research in the Arts Grant (2016), Virginia Commission for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture (2015), and Gates Millennium Scholarship (2008). Select residencies: Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Madison, Maine (2016); Vermont Studio Center in Johnson (2016); and the Bag Factory in Johannesburg, South Africa (2016–17).

DECLARATION