

***Storie Americane:  
Stephanie Williams, Naoko Wowsugi, Elizabeth Acevedo***

Curated by Allison Nance

**Opening Reception: Saturday March 23 2019 – 4.30 to 8 pm**

Sala 1, Piazza di Porta San Giovanni 10, Roma

March 20 - April 15, 2019

Tuesday to Saturday from 4.30 pm to 7.30 pm

(Rome) Sala 1, in partnership with International Arts & Artists, presents *Storie Americane: Stephanie Williams, Naoko Wowsugi, Elizabeth Acevedo*, curated by Allison Nance and supported by DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities' Sister Cities Grant Program, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the patronage of the United States Embassy to Italy. Using video installation, photography, and poetry, this exhibition brings together three Washington, DC artists to share work on gender, ethnicity, and the immigrant experience in America. The exhibition will **open at Sala 1 on Wednesday, March 20, 2019, and will run through Monday, April 15, 2019**. Curator Allison Nance, and artists Stephanie Williams and Naoko Wowsugi will be present to talk about the work with visitors at the **opening reception on Saturday, March 23, 2019 from 4.30 to 8 pm**. The project is in collaboration with the non-profit Hillyer Gallery in D.C. and part of the Sala 1 educational program with "Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro" with the Ministry of Education in Italy as well as the gallery's student internship programs with the Università di Roma/Academy of Fine Arts and Fondazione IES.

**Stephanie Williams** has been interviewing members of her family, both American and Filipino, over the past year in order to fill in gaps in her knowledge about where her family comes from, instigated by not so new controversies linked to immigration and nationalism. What she found was not an ability to fill in those gaps, but in many cases, how much those gaps seemed to widen, pointing to how "American" her experience of the world is. Her video installation, *Lingering Survival of the Unfit*, is a stop-motion animation featuring puppets she has hand-stitched, moving in a walk sequence that was inspired by her Filipino grandfather's participation in the Bataan Death March during the Japanese occupation in WWII, a story that she never heard in school learning about American history.

Stephanie Williams is interested in the US, and its histories, entanglements and perpetuated memory gaps about its influences on the world. She's interested in her own gaps of experience as she reflects upon these stories. Williams received an MFA in Sculpture from Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, and has shown nationally and abroad, including ACRE Projects, The Wassaic Project, The Delaware Contemporary, Washington Project for the Arts, IA&A at Hillyer, Grizzly Grizzly, and Lawrence University's Wriston Art Center. Her work has been reviewed in the Village Voice, Huffington Post, and The Washington Post. She has received fellowships from Yaddo, VCCA, Elsewhere Collective, the Vermont Studio Center, and Toby Devan Lewis Foundation. Williams currently teaches in the Animation Department at Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD. She lives in Washington, DC.

**Naoko Wowsugi**, a Korean-born artist who was raised in Japan, had a steep learning curve when she arrived in the United States in 2001, knowing only the word "yes." In her photographic installation *Thank You for Teaching Me English*, Wowsugi memorializes the people who helped build her vocabulary. Shot in an awkwardly formal style, these portraits feature many of the individuals that taught her different English words—seditious, bureaucracy, symbiotic—posing for the artist while articulating the very word they had taught her.

Naoko Wowsugi lives and works in Washington, DC. Through a multidisciplinary practice including visual art, local lore, horticulture, and community participation, she celebrates human connections by toying with interpersonal and sociopolitical norms. Using art as a form of communication, her work depicts the individual in cultural economies and challenges habits of self-perception. Wowsugi received her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, and her BFA from both the Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO, and the Osaka University of Arts in Japan. Notable recent exhibitions and talks include "Open Engagement" at Queens Museum, Queens, NY (2018), "Ae Kai: A Culture Lab on Convergence," presented by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center in Honolulu, HI (2017) and "The Outwin: American Portraiture Today," at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (2016). Wowsugi currently is a Halcyon Arts Lab Fellow and teaches at American University in Washington, DC.

**Elizabeth Acevedo's** poem *Afro-Latina* speaks about her journey being born and raised in the United States as the daughter of Dominican immigrants. "My parents' tongue was a gift which I quickly forgot after realizing my peers did not understand it. They did not understand me," she says in her poem.

Acevedo describes learning as early as the first grade about the tensions that exist in the ways Latinos identify in the United States. Growing up she struggled with the dichotomy of the Dominican culture she was raised in at home versus wanting to sound and look like what she perceived as the majority population of her peers at school growing up in New York City. Learning about the history of the Dominican Republic, colonialism, slavery, and post-slavery in Latin America was monumental in shifting what she thought and understood about herself. The more she learned, the more she was proud of how each of the facets of her heritage has survived in the United States. Viewing stations of Acevedo performing her poems, *Afro-Latina* and *Hair*, will be available for visitors to watch and listen to her bring her poetry to life.

Elizabeth Acevedo is the *New York Times'* bestselling author of the award-winning novel, *THE POET X*. She is the winner of the 2018 National Book Award for Young People's Literature and of the Boston-Globe Hornbook Award Prize for Best Children's Fiction of 2018. She holds a BA in Performing Arts from The George Washington University and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. Acevedo is a National Poetry Slam Champion, and she resides in Washington, DC.

**Allison Nance** is the Director of IA&A at Hillyer, a program of International Arts & Artists (IA&A), a nonprofit arts service organization dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally. **IA&A at Hillyer** will also organize a solo exhibition of **Pietro Ruffo**, one of Italy's most important contemporary artists.

**Sala 1** is a cultural non-profit association founded in 1970 by sculptor Tito Amodei as an experimental research center for contemporary art, architecture, performance and music. Internationally known not only for its extensive program, but also for its suggestive location in the complex of the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Scala Santa in San Giovanni, Sala 1 is directed by Mary Angela Schroth and Ottaviano D'Egidio, and curated by Sara Esposito together with a team of specialists and international volunteers as well as a specific educational program for students and interns.

**Sala 1 – Centro Internazionale d'Arte Contemporanea** Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, 10 - 00185 – Roma.  
Tel. 06 7008691 - 339 2397762 | E-mail: salauno@salauno.com – sala\_u@hotmail.com  
www.salauno.com | Fb: Sala 1 - Centro Internazionale d'Arte Contemporanea | Instagram: @sala1galleria  
Orario: dal martedì al sabato dalle ore 16.30 alle ore 19.30