

**A solo exhibition by Keli Safia Maksud
January 25 – March 16, 2024**



New York, NY – CUE Art Foundation presents *worried notes*, a solo exhibition by **Keli Safia Maksud** with mentorship from **Abigail DeVille**. The exhibition is on view at CUE’s gallery space at 137 West 25th Street until March 16, 2024. Attendance during gallery hours (Wed–Sat, 12–6 pm) is free; no reservations are required.

About the Exhibition

worried notes builds upon artist Keli Safia Maksud’s ongoing interest in the formation of national identity, particularly in relation to post-colonial African statehood. Through sound, sculpture, installation, text, printmaking, and embroidery, Maksud explores notions of replication and standardization as enduring influences of colonialism — and as processes that continue to shape individual and collective understandings of self.

Utilizing diagrammatic systems of notation as a starting point, *worried notes* examines inherited identities, cultural memory, and received histories. A “worried note” — also called a “blue note” — is a term in musicology that refers to a note that falls slightly below one that exists on the Western 12-tone major scale. Present in blues, jazz, and gospel music, and derived from African vocalization that is not based on the major scale, worried notes are often thought — within the construct of Western music — to contribute to sound that is expressive and intense, conveying emotions such as pain, longing, melancholy, and despair.

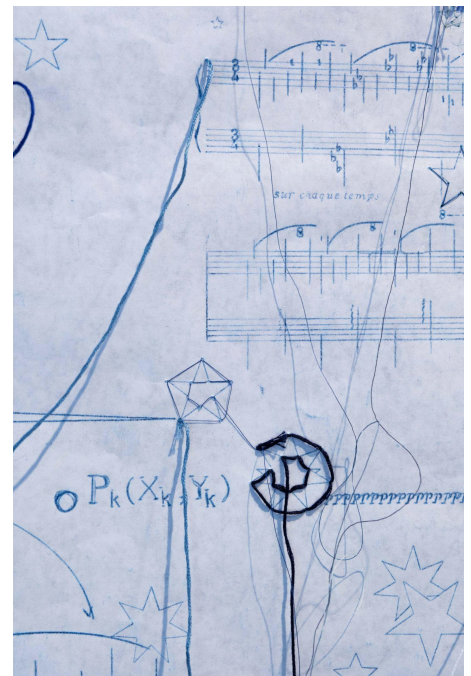
It is in this space of dissonance that Maksud plays with boundaries often considered to be objective or inherent. Using embroidery as a language, she exposes traces of the past that inform our present context, stitching and embossing fragments of architectural blueprints, cartography, mathematical formulas, and music onto carbon paper. The musical fragments, in particular, represent pieces of various African national anthems, which were developed in the wake of colonial departure from the continent and sought to create shared identities for citizens of newly independent nations. However, they were often modeled after the anthems of former colonial powers in notation, structure, and concept. In repeating the musical norms of the West, they reinforced sonic — and cultural — borders analogous to those created through the haphazardous geographic partitioning of Africa.

worried notes engages with the complexities of this context, asking us to consider the spaces in between and beyond that which can be measured. Maksud's "notes" map representational conventions such as shapes, symbols, lines, and numbers that have been codified in various industries and realms of inquiry. In abstracting them from their source material, she seeks to call attention to how we order space, time, and distance, and to challenge the legacies that constrain our movement to predefined limits and trajectories.

Reflecting upon drawing as a political act, Maksud utilizes straight lines and rigid forms — geometric devices often associated with modernism that project aspirations of rationality, enlightenment, and control. However, she generates a unique visual language that resists translation and embraces opacity as a right of those who exist outside of systems of global influence. Standard sized sheets of carbon paper function as a reprographic device that speaks to modes of repetition. The act of stitching by hand results in entwined, rhizomatic threads on the reverse side of the paper, materially referencing the leakage that begs to exist outside of imposed demarcations. The puncturing of the paper with a needle and thread creates incisions — or scores — that evoke the violence embedded in systems of representation. The works are framed by metal armatures that serve as infrastructural delineations, but also allow viewers to navigate around, between, and through them. Throughout the installation, sound and film keep time at various paces, creating new frequencies that reverberate and make perceptible forms of interference.

Through this layering of gestures, Maksud composes both an elegy to the agony of embodied hegemony and a hopeful ode to future hybridities. *worried notes* provokes an awakening to the overlapping physical, spatial, and emotional traumas of colonial entanglement, and urges us to chart pathways of resistance to that which is known.

Read more about the exhibition at www.cueartfoundation.org.



About the Artist

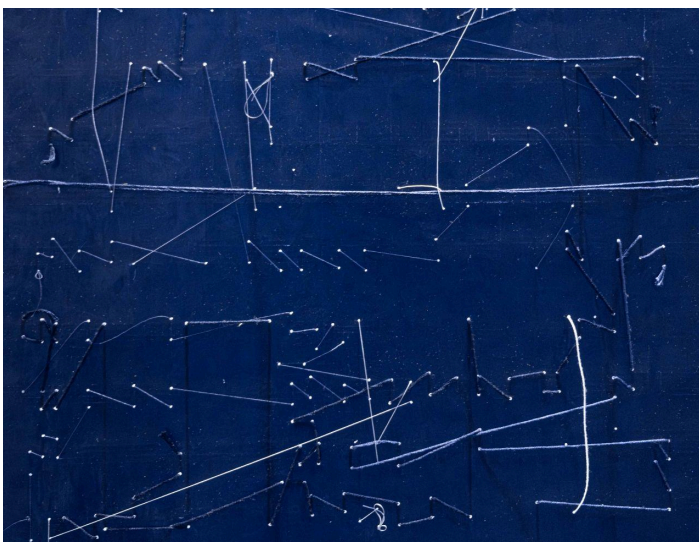
Keli Safia Maksud is an interdisciplinary artist and writer working in sound, sculpture, installation, printmaking, and embroidery. Concerned with histories of colonial encounters and the effects of these encounters on memory and identities, Maksud's practice favors the space of in-between and its threshold — working toward destabilizing received histories in order to expose fictions of the state.

Maksud earned a BFA in Painting from the Ontario College of Art and Design University, a Diploma in Art and Curatorial Studies at the New Centre for Research and Practice, and an MFA in Visual Arts at Columbia University. Her work has been shown at Goodman Gallery, ACUD Galerie, Salon 94, Huxley Parlour, the Bamako Biennial, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Seoul, Galería Nueva, and the Biennial of Contemporary Art Sesc_Videobrasil. Maksud has been awarded fellowships and grants from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Council for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts. Her writing has been published in and for *OCULA Magazine*, the Swiss Institute, *LEAP Magazine*, and A Space Gallery.

About the Mentor

Abigail DeVille (b.1981, New York, NY) is known for her site-specific installations, sculptures, and performances that conjure vast universes from discarded objects and fragmented archives. In a seemingly boundless practice that transcends codified space, DeVille often sites her dense assemblages anywhere between museums, theaters, public parks, and city streets. By honoring and amplifying the memory of those that once used the everyday components preserved in her work, DeVille urges a reconsideration of what constitutes a historical record and who contributes.

DeVille's most recent solo exhibitions include *Bronx Heavens* at the Bronx Museum of the Arts and *In the fullness of time, the heart speaks truths too deep for utterance, but a star remembers* at JTT, New York, NY (2023). She has also had solo exhibitions and commissions at Madison Square Park, New York, NY (2020-21); Crystal Bridges Museum, Bentonville, AR (2021); the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC (2021-22); Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR (2018-19); Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2017-18); the Whitney Museum, New York, NY (2017); Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2017-18); and The Contemporary, Baltimore, MD (2016). Her work has been included in numerous group shows, and she has received awards and fellowships from United States Artists (2018); the American Academy in Rome (2017-18); Creative Capital (2015); Harvard University (2014-15); The Studio Museum (2013-14); and the Joan Mitchell Foundation (2012). DeVille teaches at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and Yale School of Art. Her work is in many collections, including the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco; Kaviar Factory, Henningsvaer; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis; Pinault Collection; and The Studio Museum (New York). DeVille received an MFA from Yale University and a BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She was born in New York and works in the Bronx.



About CUE Art Foundation

CUE Art Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works with and for emerging and underrecognized artists and art workers to create new opportunities and present varied perspectives in the arts. Through our gallery space and public programs, we foster the development of thought-provoking exhibitions and events, create avenues for mentorship, cultivate relationships amongst peers and the public, and facilitate the exchange of ideas. For more information about CUE, visit www.cueartfoundation.org.

Credits

worried notes by [Keli Safia Maksud](#), mentored by [Abigail DeVille](#). Catalogue essay by [Jordan Jones](#), mentored by [Renee Gladman](#). Graphic design by [Jasmine Buckley](#). Presented by CUE Art Foundation, 2024.

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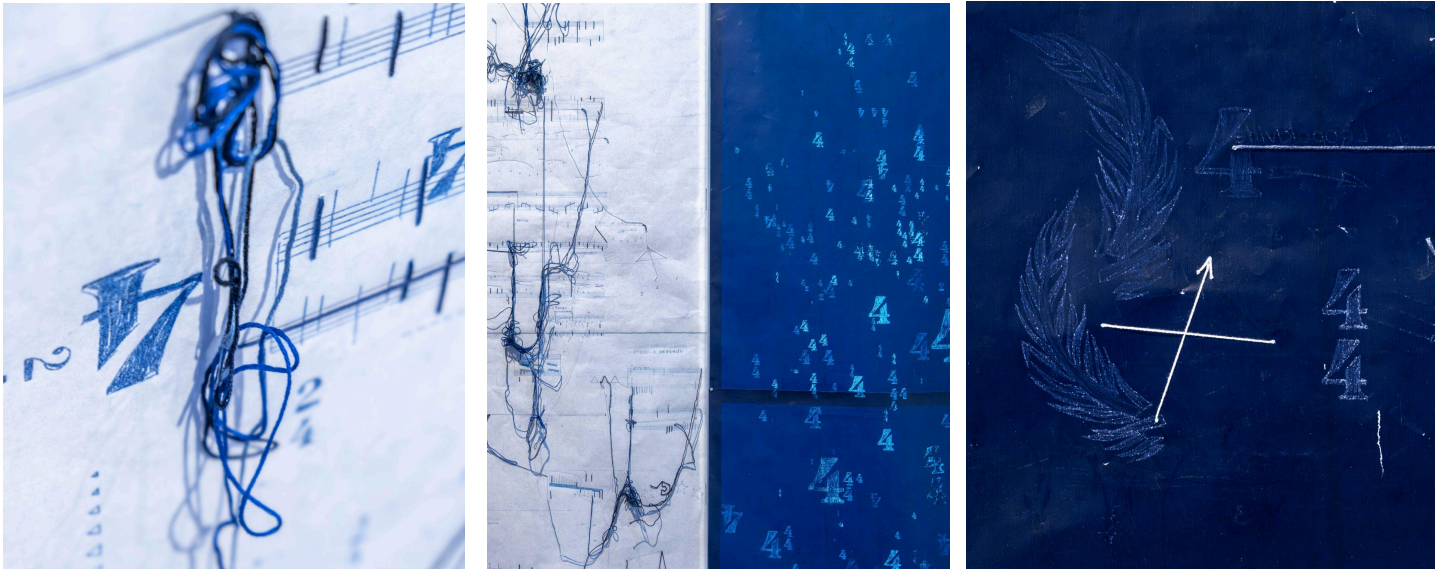
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