



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART

Tiona Nekkia McClodden

Jul. 20-Oct. 20

📍 52 Walker
52 Walker St.
Downtown

212-727-1961

The unsettling, contemplative show “Mask / Conceal / Carry,” at 52 Walker, is the most complex of three exhibitions by this Philadelphia artist, now on view across New York City, which are thematically distinct but united by their conceptual rigor and their interweaving of emotions, erotics, and politics. At MOMA (in a selection of contemporary works from its collection), McClodden exhibits a B.D.S.M.-inflected video installation from 2017, in which she is seen reciting the poem “On Subjugation,” written in 1988, by the late Black gay poet Brad Johnson, while she hangs upside down. At the Shed, a sprawling sculptural installation pairs four portable dance floors with big screens showing films of Black performers. (The piece is an homage to the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s legendary Dance Black America festival, held in 1983.) In Tribeca, at 52 Walker, McClodden dispenses with specific historical subjects to more broadly reflect issues of trauma and self-protection. Here, the practice of shooting a gun without ammunition, known as dry-fire training, becomes an aesthetic and rhetorical prompt for video works, drawings, and leather-and-plastic cast objects, such as the components of an AR-15-style rifle, bathed in ghostly blue light. McClodden opens the show with a framed text denouncing the concept of trigger warnings, committing herself to complexity, in spite of the risk, when she writes, “I’d rather make a statement and stand behind that position, no matter the difficulty.”

— *Johanna Fateman*