

# LAFAYETTE ANTICIPATIONŖ

Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette



# WU TSANG

Press Kit

Exhibition

Wu Tsang, *visionary company*

21 October, 2020 > 28 February, 2021

9 rue du Plâtre  
F-75004 Paris

Wu Tsang, *The Show is Over*, 2020, Still  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin

# PRESS RELEASE

**Wu Tsang**

*visionary company*

**21 October, 2020 - 28 February,  
2021**

*the world*

*is dry land,*

*earth is water.*

(Fred Moten, *Come on, get it!*, 2018)

## **The work of Wu Tsang**

*Wu Tsang's* award-winning films combine documentary and narrative techniques with fantastical detours and explore hidden histories, marginalized narratives, and the act of performing itself. Her works often evoke theatrical settings in specific locations, such as historic queer nightclubs, time-traveling ships in the South China sea, and mythical journeys through of the Greek island of Lesbos. Tsang re-imagines racialized and gendered representations to encompass the multiple and shifting perspectives through which we experience the social realm.

## **The exhibition at Lafayette Anticipations**

For her first exhibition in France, Wu Tsang has transformed Lafayette Anticipations into a hybrid space that summons the worlds of the night and the sacred. Through this metamorphosis, the visitor is immersed in a mysterious atmosphere where recent and earlier works by the American artist are brought together. Like so many reflections on the values carried by our culture, Wu Tsang takes up the themes of perspectives and points of view, of power relationships and solidarity, to revitalise the way we look at individuals and the way society works. For her exhibition, the artist has created an experience which draws on music, dance, architecture, theatre, and performance to celebrate the metamorphosis and fluidity of being.

# PRESS RELEASE

The project is built around the monumental and original video installation *The Show is Over* (2020), a form of multi-layered opera in which a community of dancers perform to the rhythm of the text ‘come on, get it!’ by the African American poet and academic Fred Moten. The film deals with the liberation and alienation of beings, embodied in a choreography and music that guide the trajectories of the performers and invoke the historical legacies related to blackness—struggle, oppression, power relations—put into perspective with the potential liberation of the being through a renewed relationship with the world and new connections with the elements.

The film’s setting, a floating place, transforms and makes the famous Penrose stairs appear. An ‘impossible’ object, this trompe l’oeil staircase varies according to the viewer’s perspective and can simulate an infinite staircase, a metaphor for the multiplicity of possible points of view and the myriad realities that result from them. *The Show is Over* is a story of separation and fluidity, of the encounter and permeability of materials, states, and bodies.

*The Show is Over* has been co-produced by Lafayette Anticipations and Schauspielhaus, Zürich, where the artist has been director in residence since 2019.



Wu Tsang, *The Show is Over*, 2020, Still  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin



Wu Tsang, *The Show is Over*, 2020, Still  
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# INTERVIEW

## Wu Tsang and Anna Colin

(extracts from the exhibition's booklet)

**Anna Colin:** The exhibition's centrepiece is the film *The Show Is Over* (2020), which was produced in Zurich at the Schauspielhaus theater where you, Tosh Basco, and your performance collective Moved by the Motion—who all collaborated on the film—are currently in residence. Could you start by telling us how the film sits within your practice and by introducing the setting in which it was created?

**Wu Tsang:** I think *The Show Is Over* is emblematic of my practice in two important ways: (1) it was created with a group of collaborators who I have been working with for a long time; and (2) performance is essential to our process. The film is a culmination of our first year working at the Schauspielhaus Zurich, which has been a big undertaking for us. Before we moved to Zurich, we were all constantly travelling to make a living out of freelance gigs, so we did not have much opportunity to work together in a sustained way. As of August 2019, we've all settled together in Zurich. We have studios and we are supported by the theatre with their production teams and this has dramatically changed the way we're working. While this film is a culmination of sorts, it also feels like just the beginning for us, as the residency will last for at least three years.

**AC:** How was *The Show Is Over* developed?

**WT:** *The Show Is Over* was developed through a series of performances called *Compositions* we did at the theatre between January and June 2020 based on the ongoing poem 'come on, get it!' (2014–) written by our collaborator Fred Moten. We worked with staging, lighting, scenography, camera, improvisation, and choreography of movement; movement of bodies and voices. We spent time together talking, listening to music, reading, doing a lot of research, and tracing the infinite references of Fred's poem. One reference that became especially important was James Baldwin's 1966 essay in *The Nation* called 'A Report from Occupied Territory' about the infamous Harlem Six case. His essay is an impassioned indictment of racist policing in the United States and, sadly, it still feels very relevant today despite being written over fifty years ago. We talked a lot about the ways this essay resonated, not only with Fred's poem, but also with our current moment. This was before George Floyd's murder, which I think points to the fact that these discussions have been ongoing—Baldwin could be speaking about today. Fred's poem also addresses themes around policing and violence and embodies our resistance, as black, queer, POC under perpetual siege of the State. That's a really deep thread in his work, especially in his collaborative writing with Stefano Harney.

# INTERVIEW

We shot *The Show Is Over* in early March, just before the pandemic. In fact, we finished shooting one day before Zurich's lockdown and I edited the film during quarantine. But it was very strange to be working on a huge project that was conceived before corona, because everything was so uncertain and it was hard to make sense of anything. At that time, it felt like my instincts, my sense of connection to the world or reality were completely thrown off. Then in the midst of all that, the murder of George Floyd and the eruption of Black Lives Matter protests worldwide—well, actually I would not say eruption because BLM did not come suddenly out of nowhere, it had been percolating for a long, long time—but this moment felt like the world was finally paying attention. So, it's not to say that the film is able to address these historic moments, but it feels important to explain the context in which this film was made.

**AC:** You've previously talked about improvisation and what is planned and scripted as opposed to what isn't. There are also the unplanned—yet brewing, as you said—events external to your immediate practice that you have just described, and the way they do end up being somewhat present in the final work, if only in the abstract. Could you discuss your interest in improvisation in your relation to film and filmmaking and beyond?

**WT:** Well, I feel shaped by two broad traditions of filmmaking: documentary and narrative (fiction). In documentary, you aim to capture 'reality' and discover the story through that process: for example, you often shape the story later, in editing. Whereas with narrative filmmaking you usually *begin* with a story, with a script, and you shoot according to a plan and 'create' reality. Over time, I've developed ways of working between these two approaches. There is usually a script and a narrative approach to staging, but for me, the purpose of all that preparation is to create a situation for unknown moments to unfold. So, in other words, we do have a plan, but the plan is to not have a plan, if that makes sense.

For me, this hybrid-documentary approach is closely tied to improvisation, in the sense that it's about 'being ready'—to borrow a phrase from Danielle Goldman (a dance theorist who writes about improvisation). Goldman's idea challenges the conventional understanding of improvisation as free expression but instead considers forms that are born from constraint and repetition. She uses examples of artists and communities of colour for whom improvisation has been a tool for survival.

Anna Colin is associate curator at Lafayette Anticipations.

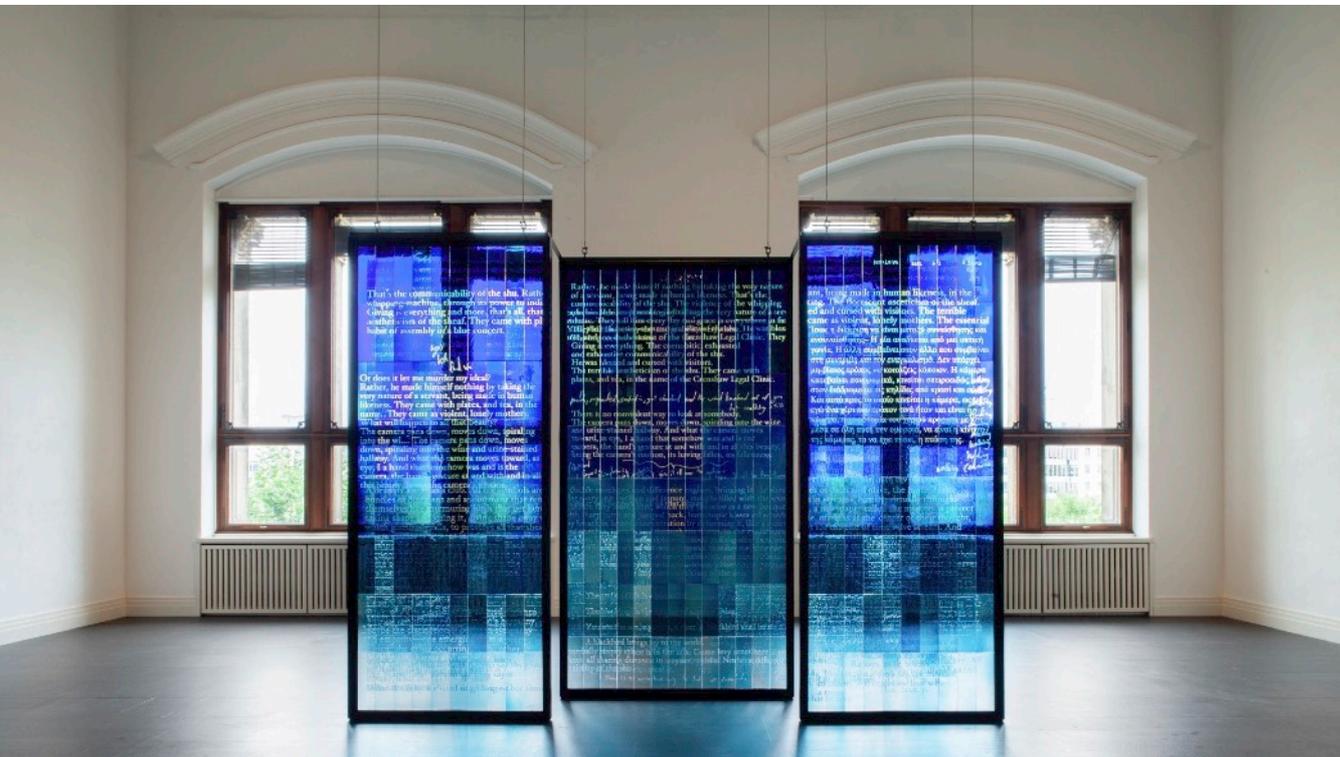
# BIOGRAPHY



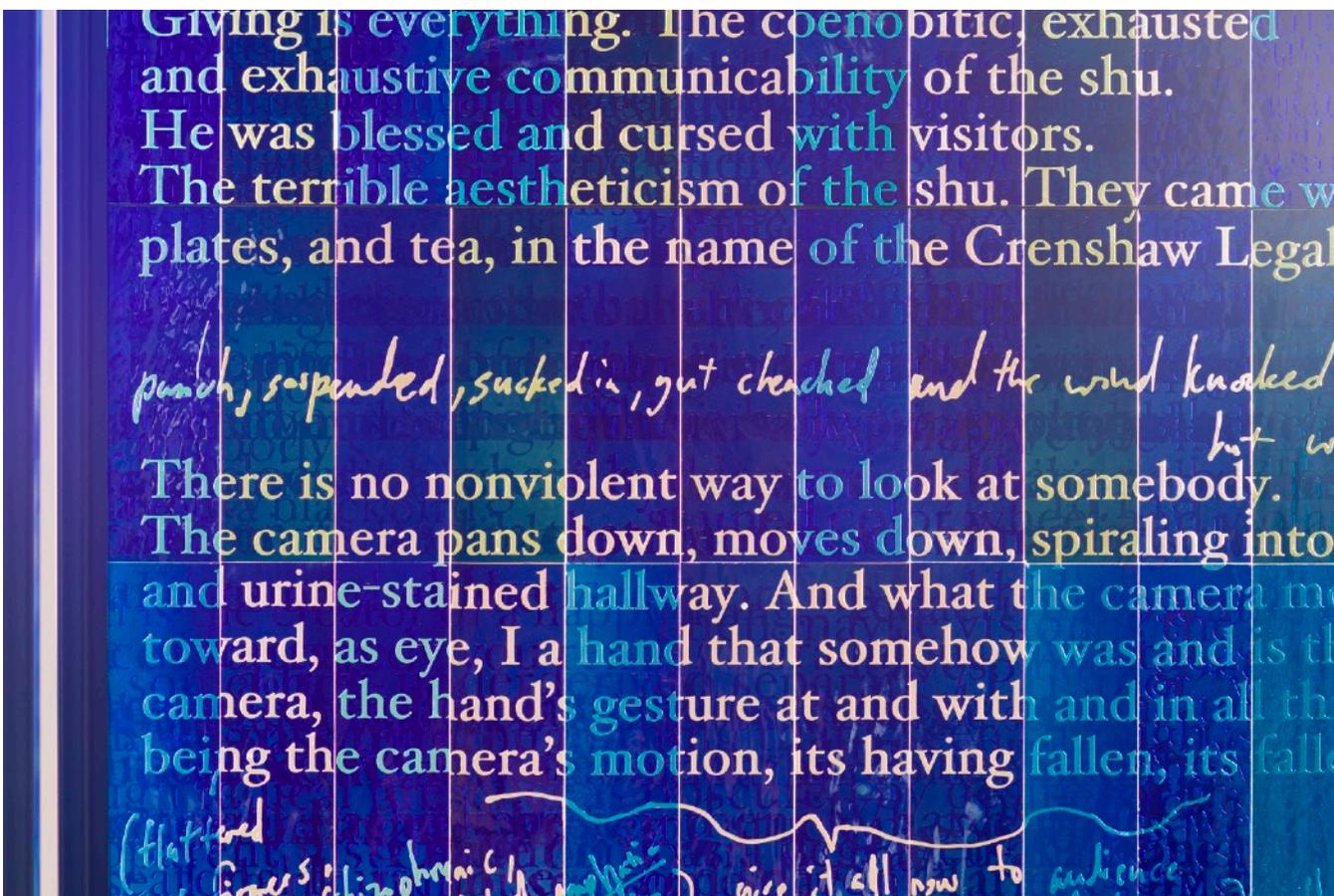
**Wu Tsang (born 1982 in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA) lives in Zürich, Switzerland.**

Wu Tsang's work as an artist emerges from collaboration, particularly as a co-organizer of a weekly nightclub called *Wildness*, which was a flashpoint for underground art and community activism in Los Angeles. Taking place at an immigrant gay bar near MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, *Wildness* created a space where the bar's longtime patrons, queer people of color, mixed with artists and performers. Tsang's feature film *Wildness* (2012) documents this scene and the perpetual negotiation of race, gender, and socioeconomic class among the patrons, who wrestle with questions of gentrification, authenticity, and ownership as they encounter each other's realities. The bar itself plays a leading role in the film, serving as an omniscient narrator and embodying the imaginative and performative acts through which cultural fictions are formed and expressed. The artist became widely known in 2012 thanks to this film, which premiered at MoMA's Documentary Fortnight.

Wu Tsang received a B.F.A. (2004) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an M.F.A. (2010) from the University of California at Los Angeles. Other films by Tsang include *We hold where study* (2017), *Girl Talk* (2015), *Damelo Todo (Gimme Everything)* (2010), and *Shape of a Right Statement* (2008). Wu Tsang's work has been exhibited or screened at Gropius Bau in Berlin, Tate Modern London, Kunsthalle Münster, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, among many other national and international venues.



Wu Tsang, Sustained Glass, 2019  
 Courtesy the artist and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin  
 Photography credit: Roman März



Wu Tsang, Sustained Glass, 2019  
 Courtesy the artist and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin  
 Photography credit: Roman März

# IN 2021

## Upcoming exhibition and festivals

25 > 28 March, 2021

Festival

Closer Music

23 April > 25 July, 2021

Exhibition

Martin Margiela

28 May > 30 May, 2021

Festival

Kaleidoscope Manifesto



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# TEAM

## Lafayette Anticipations

Guillaume Houzé, President  
Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel, Managing Director  
Simon Gérard, Assistant Curator  
Mahaut de Kerraoul, Head of Administration  
Aurélie Nahas, Administrative assistant  
Célia Lebreton, Administrative secretary  
Dirk Meylaerts, Director of Production  
Nataša Venturi, Head of Production  
Judith Peluso, Head Technical and Building Supervisor  
Lisa Audureau, Project manager - Collection and Production  
Raphaël Raynaud, Workshop Manager  
Gilles Baume, Head of Education and Outreach  
Oksana Delaroff, Project manager - Cultural Outreach  
Matthieu Bonicel, Head of Publishing and Information Technology  
Manon Soumann, Publishing Manager  
Aurélie Garzuel, Head of Communications  
Chloé Magdelaine, Digital Communication Manager  
Émilie Vincent, Welcome desk and ticketing supervisor

Anna Colin, Associate Curator

## Société La Maîtrise

(Store and Café-Restaurant)  
under the direction of Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel  
Pauline Vincent, Head of operations

## Press contacts

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#expoWuTsang



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## **Opening hours**

Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 11 AM - 7 PM  
Thursday, Friday: 11 AM - 9 PM  
Closed on Tuesday

## **Admission**

**Exhibitions** : free entry  
**Events** : special rates

## **Access**

9, rue du Plâtre - 75004 Paris  
44, rue Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie -  
75004 Paris

## **Metro**

Rambuteau: line 11  
Hôtel de Ville: lines 1 & 11  
Châtelet - Les Halles: lines 4, 7, 11, 14 & RER  
A, B & D

## **Bus**

Archives - Rambuteau: 29 & 75  
Centre Georges Pompidou: 38, 47, 75 N12,  
N13, N14 & N23  
Hôtel de Ville: 67, 69, 76, 96, N11 & N16

## **Parking**

31, rue Beaubourg  
41-47, rue Rambuteau  
4, place Baudoyer