



## Recapitulation Hernease Davis

## About the Artist

**Hernease Davis** earned her M.F.A from the International Center of Photography - Bard College. Her current body of work uses photograms, cyanotypes, performance and craft to emphasize self-care through the artistic process. The solo exhibition of her series, *A Womb of My Own (Mistakes Were Made in Development)* opened at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, NY in May, 2018. Her work was selected for Photography Now 2016 at the Center of Photography at Woodstock and was included in *The Surface of Things* at the Houston Center for Photography, an exhibition featuring photographers working with camera-less techniques. She has also exhibited with the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, the International Center of Photography, Foley Gallery, Rush Arts, Java Project and Spaceworks as an Nfinit Foundation Artist-In-Residence. Hernease is on faculty at the Visual Studies Workshop and has served as a Visiting Lecturer at ICP-Bard where she led a course exploring empathy through art practice.

Cover image: TKTKTKT

## Recapitulation

**Kate Kelley**  
Deputy Director,  
Silver Eye Center  
for Photography

Hernease Davis is becoming comfortable with what she can't know. Empathy has become increasingly crucial to Davis, yet she uses this word particularly. "Societally, we often think about empathy reductively - we can't actually understand anyone's full experience", Davis says, continuing to add, "I'm realizing there are things I don't know about myself right now, perhaps I can't know, and I have to ask, am I okay with that? I think I am." The title of this exhibition, *Recapitulation*, is a word meaning the act of summarizing, or restating the main points of an idea or event. It also has etymological roots as a word pertaining to musical theory—an area of particular interest for Davis—where it references the moments where a musical theme is presented again later on, after its initial appearance. In this installation, Davis has fused these notions of restarting and renewing, as she uses photography as a personal mode of processing, calming, and coping through experiences of past trauma.

Stepping into *Recapitulation*, the prominence of music in Davis' practice becomes evident. Filling the space is a sound installation. For Davis, music is not only a long held source of delight and comfort, but the way she most clearly understands the world. She often finds herself more concerned with what she hears, as opposed to sees, and the sound installation feels akin to this idea, creating a soundscape equally as powerful as the visuals on display. Layering her own voice over itself through a series of tonal humming, the sound charges the room sonically, filling in the physical gaps between works of art, and connecting each of the different bodies of work together. The repetition of tones and breaths is a soothing action, allowing the artist to ground herself through an internal, individual process. The act of humming adds a degree of familiarity to the installation as well. Everyone catches themselves in the act of humming occasionally yet here, Davis takes this ubiquitous gesture and turns it into a communal experience.

In the center of the gallery space Davis has installed work belonging to her series, "*... new love*", with luxe silk and linen cyanotypes hanging from the ceiling of the gallery with delicate looking, but surprisingly sturdy crocheted strands. Falling nearly floor to ceiling, the works recall the lushness of a treetop canopy and the fluidity of a fast-moving body of water. Davis has selectively developed these fabrics, abstractly marking them with developer so once exposed to light, the materials take on colors ranging from a sea foamy greenish yellow, to deep and robust royal blue. The cyanotype is a historic process, with roots stretching to the early 19th century, yet in this body of work, Davis upends the weight of tradition by embracing the unknown. Portions of the fabric she has

left unmarked will continue to shift in color for a long period of time, subtly evolving into a final stage. Significantly, Davis refers to these works as self-portraits, a nod to her own process of evolution and becoming.

Davis cites the prominent Martinican poet and writer Édouard Glissant's essay, "On Opacity" as a foundational text for her work. The ability to preserve a sense of opacity—retaining some part of oneself as a method of maintaining private complexities and rituals—aligns with Davis' desire for an empathic approach to her work. To create the works in "*...new love*", the sheets of fabric are first exposed to sunlight, a process of several minutes in which the artist herself can rest, recuperate and bring her attention back to herself and what she needs in the moment. Once installed in the space of the gallery, she extends that gesture of healing and respite to the viewer, as the work creates a kind of private shelter to slip inside of.


Lining the walls of the gallery are several photograms, adorned with crocheted nets of cotton and silken yarn. Belonging to her series, *Bare With Me, Foundation*, these works evoke a sense of meditation, but also joy. Hand painting developer on to the paper through instinctual gestures, Davis does away with any self-prescribed sense of planning, trusting the knowledge she already possesses and freeing her hands to create at will. The crochet element of the work, while complicating the image and providing a rich array of texture and pattern, stems from the artist's desire to spend more time with the work after the initial process of developing the print was finished. The title of this series seems to tentatively move towards a sturdiness of self, and acceptance of finding joy in creation. It asks the viewer for trust as Davis moves forward with creating a steady platform, weaving a kind of home for the image to sit within.

For Davis, creating acceptance for the things she doesn't, or can't know, leaves space for a kind of radical ethics of love, care and joy. Pleasure and joy, as well as their attendant emotions of safety and transcendence, can step in to fill this void once the pressure to understand oneself or others in totality has been released. A supremely powerful part of *Recapitulation* is that it ultimately references a word without an end. Beginning, and moving forward, only to look towards the starting line again is a courageous decision, one borne out of a fierce desire to enjoy the process as much (or more) as the outcome.





	5, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2018 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, silk crocheted yarn, liquid light 16x20 inches	NFS
	11, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2018 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, cyanotype, cotton crocheted yarn, liquid light	NFS
	13, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2018 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, cotton crocheted yard, liquid light	NFS
	14, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2018 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, cotton crocheted yarn 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	3, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2017 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn, liquid light 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	8, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2019 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn, cyanotype 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	15, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2021 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	16, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2021 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn, liquid light 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	17, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2021 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn, cyanotype 16 x 20 inches	NFS
	18, from the series, <i>Bare With Me, Foundation</i>	2021 Silver gelatin fiber photogram, yarn, liquid light 16 x 20 inche	NFS

	"...new love"	2020 cyanotype on canvas, linen and silk, felted wool, crochet Various sizes	NFS
	<i>Hums in Keys of B♭</i>	Audio Installation	NFS

**Silver Eye Center for Photography**  
**4808 Penn Avenue**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15224**

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