



of soil and tongues

Miatta Kawinzi

lê thi diem thúy

Sahar Muradi + Laimah Osman

June 1—October 1, 2017

Hampshire College Art Gallery

M—F 10:30—4:30

[gallery.hampshire.edu](http://gallery.hampshire.edu)

## **lê thi diem thúy**

*sông song / river song*

2017, tracing paper, calligraphy ink, pine, cherry, pigments, brick dust, vinyl  
dimensions variable

Place is the seam of Time\*

A river coursing

(ever) en route to, from, between:

a 14 year old boy—in Mississippi, 1955

504 men, women, boys, girls—in My Lai/Son My, 1968

Tributaries

of a persistent American tendency:

to commit violence and proclaim

Exceptionalism

Working out from the space of several new poems and a novel-in-progress, lê thi diem thúy charts a current that keeps running, sounding out a song of the past.

*Of Soil and Tongues* began with an invitation: to install poems in space, considering poetry as a form that is heard, read, graphic, performed, and embodied.

The three responses give shape to places—that is, meeting places of history, intimacy, and geography. The place “United States” can only be sensed in a current with these sites. The works sing, they stutter, of the Mississippi and its tributaries, of a ravine in My Lai; of a walk along the west coast of Puerto Rico, and of a migration from Afghanistan.

Kawinzi, lê, and Muradi + Osman trace what has happened in these places and direct our attention toward what might. We invite you to read in a new register, following the paths of horizons and rivers, dashes and diacritics, seams and sutures.

## **Sahar Muradi + Laimah Osman**

*Gates*

2017, monotypes with chine-collé, 4 prints, each 22.5 x 30in

*Salaam Alaikum*

2017, monotypes, 6 prints, each 15.25 x 22.25in

How do you read (yourself)  
into place?

In the Farsi language, short vowel sounds—ah, eh, oh—are voiced but not visible. *Gates* remixes the diacritic marks that help children and Farsi/Dari learners pronounce the ghosted vowels, fitting and misfitting those marks to similar sounds in English words drawn from excerpts of Muradi’s poetry. It takes work to turn tongue and breath anew around a language.

In *Salaam Alaikum*, hand-stencilled Dari greetings rub up against their English transliterations. The warm performance of greetings—Peace be upon you, May you not be tired—and the verses that unmask them chafe against the taut subject of war and the loss of childhood innocence.

Ghosts and yearning, possibility and play  
Attend every syllable.

\*Édouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, trans. Barbara B. Lewis and Thomas C. Spear. pp. 233

## **Miatta Kawinzi**

*sweat/tears/sea*

2017, video with sound, 6min14sec  
installed with hammock and stools

*Assembly*

2017, vinyl installation on window  
80.25 x 69 in.

In *sweat/tears/sea*, words assemble, oscillate, and reach over time.

We can’t print them  
here

They unfold across footage of the west coast of Puerto Rico and linger with various rhythms—waves, crickets, digital drum beats, human vocalizations.

What does it mean to have time, to hold time?  
What does it mean to navigate a contested place of beauty and disenfranchisement and abundance and debt?

If *sweat/tears/sea* guides us to read differently, it also offers tools for a re-orientation: you, suspended in a hammock, relative to waves of gravity and oceans.