



Fun. Loving. Genius. The Soundpapered drawings

January 12-22, 2017

281 North 7th Street, Ground Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11211

#funlovinggenius | [@okayspace](#) | [@soundpapered](#) | space@okayplayer.com

Opening reception: Thursday January 12, 2017, 6-9pm



New York, January 3, 2017 – Okay Space is pleased to announce **Fun. Loving. Genius. | The Soundpapered Drawings.** Over three years, British-American visual artist, Rachel D. Abrams, sketched jazz, hip hop, and soul musicians at gigs she attended across the U.S. and in Europe, creating [Soundpapered](#) as a live drawing, live music journal. In this, her debut solo New York show, she will take over Okay Space, the gallery and activation space of online music magazine, Okayplayer.com.

Based exclusively on the original Soundpapered drawings, *Fun. Loving. Genius.* is conceived as a site-specific installation at Okay Space, featuring thematic work that includes new handmade, silk-screened work, digital prints, projected animations and two-dimensional textiles. **The gallery will host an opening reception on Thursday, January 12, 2017, from 6-9pm.**

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About Soundpapered

In any given set, Abrams captured at least one performer, steadily inking a series of pocket-sized, quadrille sketchbooks: Headliners and sidemen, band leaders and backing vocalists, singers, horn players, drummers, bassists, pianists, flautists, harpists. Abrams started sharing the drawings online as @Soundpapered as musicians began to repost her raw sketches to their own fans.

Images featured in the exhibit, among others, derive from performances by Nia Andrews, India Arie, Erykah Badu, Casey Benjamin, Stephen "Thundercat" Bruner, George Clinton, Eve Corneliou, Jose James, Robert Glasper, Keyon Harrold, Derrick Hodge, Quincy Jones, Kennedy, Emily King, Terrace Martin, Taylor McFerrin, Kendrick Lamar, Amber Strother, Marcus Strickland, Burniss Earl Travis, Patrice Quinn, Kamasi Washington, Rickey Washington, Ben Williams, Brandee Younger and others.

While the Soundpapered drawings depict a wide range of personalities, they share a consistent scale and form, each generated according to strict, self-imposed rules: Sketched from within the audience, figures appear solo on the page, drawn straight into ink, started and finished within the duration of a set, never from photos, never redrawn afterwards. With live musicians in constant motion and oblivious to Abrams' focus on their flow, she treated Soundpapered as extreme life drawing, with each sketch an authentic record of an interaction between two performative forces: One public, rehearsed, time-based, spectacular, the other anonymous, off-stage, discreet, and ultimately, on the page for perpetuity.

Abrams never set out to create showbiz likenesses, but rather to pay attention to, and make use of, the physicality of live performance. Soundpapered's visual mark-making is as technically disciplined and as loosely improvisatory as the music the audience comes to hear. These drawings make no attempt to abstract what it feels like to hear this music. Instead, these figure drawings are representational, a reference to the idea, attributed to the late saxophonist, Yusef Lateef, that *"External instruments are only extensions of the biological instrument."* So each drawing records the physicality of creativity, reflecting that mastery connects the mind and hand, and that, for the duration of a gig at least, tools are there to amplify, rather than diminish, individual agency.

Soundpapered draws inspiration from sprawling influences, among them Al Hirshfeld's spare, humorous Broadway caricatures, Jamie Hewlett's *Gorillaz* characters, David Hockney's ink portraits of his friends and lovers, the religious iconography on the walls of Turkish cave churches, the pretty yet sinister post-colonial visual commentary of British-Nigerian artist, Yinka Shonibare MBE, Alexander Calder's mobiles, Karel Martens' prints, Japanese wood cuts, English ceramics, and writing about jazz, notably Nat Hentoff's 1962, *The Jazz Life*, Geoff Dyer's *But Beautiful*.

Abrams began the Soundpapered work in the year she took American citizenship, and completed the most recent sketches featured in this exhibition as the 2016 Presidential election approached. And in this stretch of national turmoil, Soundpapered became her way to gather evidence of the best things about the city and the country she had moved to.

By developing a drawing practice in a context of social music, Abrams had not only deliberately put herself in front of an exquisite, quintessentially American art form, she had also found a critical and productive space, places where articulating and questioning the rights and responsibilities that her identity shift implied was already well established, pulling on the pursuit of happiness and freedom of expression on the one hand, pushing the right to protest systemic and social injustice on the other. A bookend to a long personal endeavor, Soundpapered is an exuberant, obsessive expression of her affection for, and struggle with, settling in the United States.

And so, as Obama's presidency ends, and as Europe wobbles, *Fun.Loving.Genius.* riffs on emblems and artifacts of national identity, American and British: Flags, crowds, monuments, historical paintings, postage stamps, domestic news, a counter to bleak, hateful idiocy.



About the artist

Rachel D. Abrams founded [Soundpapered](#) in 2014, and has since drawn for Apple Music with Ky-Mani Marley in 2016, for Okayplayer with the Robert Glasper Trio at the Village Vanguard, for Blue Note Records/Revive Music for the Supreme Sonacy album release and others in 2015. Soundpapered debuted in a group show at The Pleiades Gallery, Durham, North Carolina, in April 2015. As a graphic facilitator by day, Rachel has drawn live for the United Nations General Assembly, Amnesty International, Grimshaw Architects, Museum of Modern Art, Rockefeller Foundation and others, and completed commissions for the UK National Film and Television School and for the Open Society Foundations US programs. Rachel teaches at the School of Visual Arts Products of Design MFA program. Educated at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Art, she has lived in New York since 2000.

About Okay Space

[Okay Space](#) is a multi-use gallery and activation site located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY. In addition to being a hosting venue, Okay Space showcases partnerships, programming and the aesthetics of media companies, Okayplayer and Okayafrica.

Gallery hours

12-6pm Tuesday-Saturday, closed Sundays and Mondays.

Opening reception: January 12

The opening reception will take place on Thursday, January 12, 6-9pm, featuring **DJ OP!** and live performance by **Malik Work**.

About DJ OP!

DJ OP! is a founding member of the heralded I Love Vinyl Party and a co-partner of the long established Afrokinetic party in NYC. Additionally, DJ OP! is a resident DJ at the award-winning speakeasy Bathtub Gin and the hip Royal Palm Shuffle Club, both located in NYC. As a purveyor of all things soulful, OP!'s sets include hip-hop, r&b, reggae, pop, rock, and classics to house, future soul, and various electronic genres from the UK and musical flavors from Africa. OP! has been instrumental in shining light on various sounds of underground, popular, and global vibes, championing good music on the world stage from South Africa, Puerto Rico, Canada, and points around the United States.

About Malik Work

Malik Work is a self-styled actor/writer/teacher/emcee/deejay, known for his years as front man for the live hip hop/jazz band The Real Live Show. His new film, [Verses At Work](#), recently received the International Spotlight Award at the Los Angeles Brazilian Film Festival. He is producing the live "one man show" version of the script, currently at Theater for the New City, in Lower Manhattan.

Additional events at Okay Space during the Soundpapered exhibit

Fun. Loving. Genius. will open in the week following the New York Winter Jazz Festival, and conclude on the weekend of the Presidential inauguration, on the eve of the Women's March on Washington. Special related programming (other musical performance, artist's Q&A) in the gallery space will take place over the weekend preceding Martin Luther King Day, and during the week of January 16. Further details to be announced on social media.



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