



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 28, 2022

**The Station North Arts District, under the auspices of the Central Baltimore Partnership, presents the exhibition *Memento mori* at The Parlor, a former funeral home on North Avenue**

Featuring 50 works from a dozen artists, *Memento mori* marks a significant transition in the life of 108 West North Avenue – a late 19th-century rowhome that from 1914 until recently served the community as a funeral home. No longer a place for the dead and grieving, the building’s future includes providing space for art and artists in the Station North Arts District – hopefully for many years to come.

The exhibition **features work by artists Amy Berbert Vu, Antonio McAfee, Bao Nguyen, Dina Fiasconaro, Edgar Reyes, Jill Fannon, Lynn Silverman, Michele Blu, Stephen Hende, and Webster Phillips.**

The exhibition opens on **November 18 and will run through December 17**, with **live performances from 6:30-8 pm November 18** by **Michele Blu and Carrie Fucile & Brenton Lim** and a pop-up speakeasy, designed by **No Land Beyond**, featuring beverages crafted by mixologist **Ciara Newton**.

Mining the liminality of the setting and the associated profound experience of loss and remembrance from a remove rather than immersed in grief, *Memento mori* pays homage to the building’s past and the lives celebrated within its walls. It is a meditation on mortality and memory that is dedicated to lives lost in Baltimore and the loved ones left behind as we enter the holiday season.

*Memento mori* is curated by artist **Catherine Borg**.

## About the Featured Artists

***Remembering the Stains on the Sidewalk*** by artist [Amy Berbert Vu](#) commemorates the 318 victims of homicide in Baltimore City in 2016 with a series of photographs taken on the one-year anniversary of each death at the same time and place (“Same Day. Same Time. Same Place. One Year Later” is the subheading of the series. In addition to a small selection of framed photographs, *Memento mori*’s presentation of this project will include all 318 photographs from the series presented for the first time (outside of Instagram) in three bound books.

[Antonio McAfee](#) appropriates photographs from W.E.B Du Bois and Thomas Calloway's *Exhibition of American Negroes* (1900) and Ronald Rooks Collection (housed at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's, Albin O. Kuhn Special Collections) into various 3D images for his series ***Eyes of Another***. Reimagined by McAfee, the images provide alternate ways to see historical portraits of African Americans and suggest multitudes of possibilities, real and imagined for the sitters and the viewers.

*The Exhibition of American Negroes* set out to combat racist depictions and ideas with photographs of middle-class blacks in Georgia. McAfee continues that legacy and adds to the cycle of upgrading our perception of others for a constructive shift in biases and assumptions to be passed on.

[Bao Nguyen](#) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Baltimore, Maryland, born in Vietnam, and a BFA candidate at MICA. Interpolating a series of Vietnamese Buddhist and Catholic prayers in a multimedia performance of chanted voice and movement, their video work ***After/life (song) cycle*** is a profound meditation on being, heightened within the context of the setting of *Memento mori*.

[Carrie Fucile](#) and [Brenton Lim](#) present a live sound and image performance, ***Dada Morte***, on November 18, about dead technology, dead data, and dead people. It incorporates several files derived from MIDI interpretations of an old IBM punch card Fucile found in her father's office after his death. She says: "I have no idea what data is on this card: the technology is long gone, as is my father. The machines faded, my father faded, my memory is fading... I and my hard drives will go too, eventually..." **Brenton Lim** is taken with the idea of "digital rot": the process by which lossy digital images decay over time. **Carrie and Brenton perform live on November 18.**

Filmmaker [Dina Fiasconaro](#)'s video installation ***There is no One What will Take Care of you*** explores the empathetic relationships between a father, daughter, and friend whose lives are tragically impacted by addiction.

In photographic, textile, and sculptural works multimedia artist [Edgar Reyes](#) explores the blending of Indigenous and European traditions, the mementos people cherish, and the layers of loss endured from migration and the passing of loved ones. It is an ongoing process of conquest and resistance that reflects his family's history and highlights the beauty of being Mexican American while questioning national and cultural traditions. The complex history of forced and voluntary resettlement throughout the Americas is ever-present.

***Care in the Garden*** is [Jill Fannon's](#) portrait project of healthcare workers that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. It evokes the underlying presence and steadfast service women provide during the most vulnerable of times in our healthcare system.

[Lynn Silverman](#) uses photography and video as a way of harnessing light to animate objects and situations. Photographing ten unclaimed boxes of ashes stacked on the basement floor of the funeral home was a particular challenge. Some of the cremains lacked identification. In this case, her use of light is less about revealing the identity of these ashes, but rather drawing attention to the gap between the physical remains, which include the boxes, and the unknown history of the individuals and their families.

[Michele Blu](#) is a Baltimore-based Kemetic yoga instructor who uses singing bowls, a sample player, and percussion to evoke what she loves in her video *Imbaraga Quiet Storm* – and that is sharing healing, spiritual grounding, and positive energy. She is also the owner of Michele Blu Yoga Studio, the Blu Treasures hand-crafted line full of creativity, art, fashion, music uniqueness, and lots of love, and co-founder of Kemetic Lullaby. **Michele will also perform live on November 18.**

[Stephen Hendee](#) creates a sculptural homage to the unclaimed cremation remains. Based on estimates from the Cremation Association of North America, an estimated 1% of all cremation cases in the United States, which is over 15,000 sets of cremated, went unclaimed in 2018 alone.

Artist and archivist **Webster Phillips** shares photographs from his [IHENRYPHOTOPROJECT](#) – an archive of thousands of black and white photographs taken from the 1940-1980s by his grandfather, I. Henry Phillips, Sr., and his father, Irv Phillips, Jr. Included in the archive are political figures and celebrities they photographed for their editorial work. But both also documented daily life through portraits, and event and street photography. Webster has and continues to share images from this amazing family archive to shed light on the overlooked and erased history of Black Baltimore and identify as many depicted as possible through interactions with community elders.

## About the Curator

**Catherine Borg** is a visual artist and curator interested in tracing shifting narratives in American culture. Her work has been included in many screening events and exhibitions – highlights include screening events at the National Gallery of Art, SFMOMA, and MASS MoCA. She is the curator and managing director of [SPARK](#), an annual exhibition and related programming presenting the work of Towson University and UMBC faculty and student artists in venues in the heart of Baltimore City. A daughter of immigrants born in California, she now calls Baltimore City home.

## About the Speakeasy

The speakeasy is presented in collaboration with **Michael Cohn** of **No Land Beyond**, Baltimore's first boardgame bar. Mixologist **Ciara Newton** is an artist, activist, and bartender

based in Baltimore. Her practice works to undo anti-Black injustice in place today. Through craft, art world identity politics, and performance she disrupts spaces of privilege in order to analyze our concepts of labor, worth, and beauty.

## About the Central Baltimore Partnership

The mission of the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP), founded in 2006, is to galvanize the renaissance of Central Baltimore. We pursue this mission with more than 100 partners, including nonprofits (ranging from small neighborhood associations to large universities and hospitals), businesses, and government agencies active in the eleven neighborhoods of Central Baltimore. This area comprises Abell, Barclay, Charles North, Charles Village, Greenmount West, Harwood, Oakenshawe, Old Goucher, East Baltimore Midway, Remington, Wyman Park, and Waverly Main Street.

A program of the CBP, the Station North Arts District is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2022. The Arts District was Baltimore's first state-designated arts and entertainment district. The Arts District comprises historic Barclay; Charles North, the commercial and entertainment hub; and Greenmount West, a vibrant enclave with working artists, makers, and numerous galleries.

## About Timshel

Timshel is a mission-driven real estate advisory and development company created by John Renner in June 2021. Since its formation, Timshel has focused exclusively on historic buildings in Central Baltimore, advising Cross Street Partners (CSP) on the Baltimore Penn Station Redevelopment and the Central Baltimore Partnership on 405-417 E. Oliver Street ("Area 405"). Prior to forming Timshel, John led the real estate development division at CSP for 10+ years along with developing market-rate and affordable housing in NYC, D.C., and Rwanda.

## About 108 West North Avenue

108 West North Avenue was built in 1878 when North Avenue was known as Boundary Avenue. This wide boulevard served as the northern boundary of the City of Baltimore until 1889.

In the earliest years of development, large houses and institutions were built on what was the outskirts of town but as the city quickly grew development shifted to commercial establishments

and anchors, such as the Eastwick Motors – now The Motor House (1914), the Parkway Theater (1915), and the historic North Avenue Market (1928).

It is difficult to know precisely how the property was used over its first few decades as it appears to have stayed in the possession of the builder until 1886, changed hands several times between 1886 and 1890, and then was owned by Samuel Hyde - identified as a corn packer in the initial deed - until his death in 1910. Aside from providing housing for Hyde, it may have served as rental housing for one or more families or as a rooming house, but this is pure speculation.

#### Stewart & Mowen

After the death of Hyde, the property was sold to Harry L. Stewart in 1914. Stewart was a partner in Stewart & Mowen, funeral directors with two existing locations in Baltimore by 1908.

After purchasing 108 West North Avenue, Stewart converted the building to house an undertaking establishment on the first floor and apartments on the upper levels. Stewart also extended the rear of the building to cover the entirety of the lot, erecting a brick garage at a cost of \$20,000.

Stewart & Mowen placed an advertisement in the Baltimore Sun announcing their newest location, describing it as a “Funeral Chapel” with a connecting Reception Room with an “up-to-date” garage housing the company’s “New Cadillac motor equipment.” A second advertisement ran the following month, featuring images of two hearses and further elaborating on the building’s use:

*. . . we have so arranged and constructed our NEW ESTABLISHMENT at 108 W. North Ave. . . . to offer those in distress our MODERN “FUNERAL PARLORS,” which we have ample accommodations for large-size funerals, in connecting with a RECEPTION ROOM . . . in addition to this we have our Offices, Spacious Showroom, large Wareroom, Trimming Room, Sanitary Embalming Room and an up-to-date Garage where our motor equipment is kept . . .*

Though the legal title changed over time, Stewart & Mowen appears to have been owned and operated as a family business through 1984. George Mowen Wooden died in February 1985 and the property was then sold to Konstantine E. Diakoulas and James T. Casey in November of the following year. It was sold to Ronald M. Taylor, I and Ronald M. Taylor, II in 2006, who operated the Ronald Taylor II Funeral Home at the property until spring 2022.

Though the property changed hands multiple times throughout the late twentieth century, it consistently served the neighborhood as the local funeral home for over 100 years.

It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 as a contributing structure to Baltimore’s North Central Historic District.

Timshel Development purchased the property in the spring of 2022 with a plan to rehabilitate the infrastructure of the building for studio and creative office spaces on the second, third, and fourth floors and a restaurant and bar on the first floor and basement levels.

*Memento mori* marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of 108 West North Avenue.

## Gallery Hours

**Fridays and Saturdays: 5-8 pm**

**Daytime Saturday hours to be announced**

**Speakeasy cash bar November 18 and December 17**

*Memento mori is sponsored by the Central Baltimore Partnership, Johns Hopkins University, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, PNC Bank, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios, [www.bakerartist.org](http://www.bakerartist.org)*