



YAMS COLLECTIVE BRINGS FERGUSON THEMED INSTALLATION TO THE LES

By [Rhett Jones](#) | September 12, 2014 - 02:00PM

If you thought the story of Michael Brown, [Ferguson](#), and the racist, militarized, out-of-control police was over, a new exhibition on the LES by the art collective [Yams](#) reminds you that it's far from finished.

While the intense 24/7 media coverage of Ferguson has receded, this week alone there were several [arrests of protestors](#) following an "[insulting](#)" proposal for a police review board. A [new video](#) unearthed by [CNN](#) showed a witness telling police that Michael Brown had "his fucking hands up," immediately after the shooting. Most importantly, there is still no decision on whether officer Darren Wilson will be prosecuted. Suffice it to say, even when the Ferguson story "is" over, the plot of a lawless police force armed military grade equipment — quietly growing more dangerous and ubiquitous — continues.

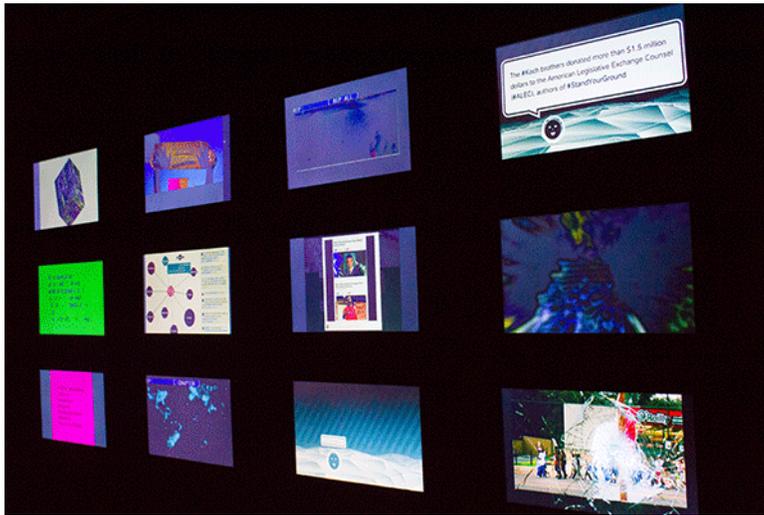
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At [P! Gallery](#) on Broome Street, Yams (short for HowDoYouSayYamInAfrican?) has installed a dark vortex of multi-channel video that displays protests, arrests, tweets, cartoons, news footage, status updates, and 3D graphics. Consisting of two large projections and a wall of small monitors, the exhibition is titled “Post-Speculation, Act I.” According to Yams, it is “addressing contemporary conditions such as police brutality, American-funded international violence, and the ways that memes and hashtags collapse and make legible such threats to personhood.”

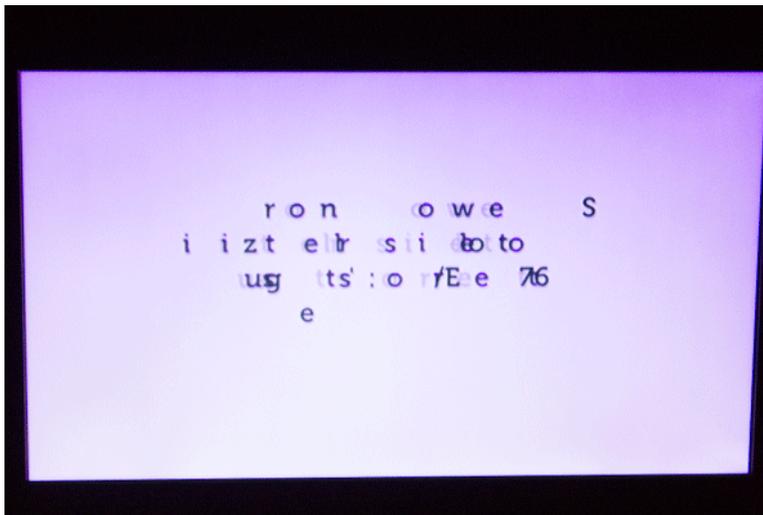
When you walk into the exhibition the first thing you notice is the emergency siren. It turns off and on and makes the pitch-black environment very disconcerting. All around you, screens are the only illumination, and you quickly remember just how much information was streaming through the inter-webs about this small town that no one had even heard of. On the screens, there are animated photos of cops firing tear gas like they’re in an action movie, Chris Hayes stating that he’s interviewed witnesses that the police haven’t, John Oliver giving his post-vacation analysis, and so many people with their hands up. It has an overwhelming effect.



Typically, when people talk about Post-Internet art they refer to artists like [Artie Vierkant](#) or [Aleksandra Domanovic](#). These are artists who straddle the digital and physical art worlds, but are most recognized for their digital roots. Yams are usually referred to as a video and performance collective, but what you see at Post-Speculation is one of the best examples of Post-Internet art in recent time. This is work created by a lot of people, living in different places around the country, crowd-sourcing raw material about an event that probably would’ve received little attention without the internet. In other words, art that wouldn’t exist if the internet didn’t exist. Then, all of this is presented in a physical space.

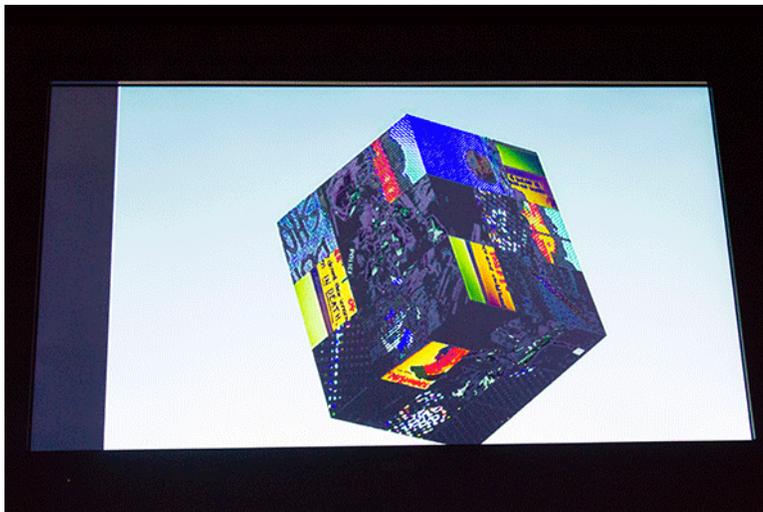
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The importance of the internet to this whole affair is key to the Yams end game, which is to launch thewayblackmachine.net on September 12th. Inspired by [The Way Back Machine](#), a project that attempts to archive as much of the internet as possible, the Way Black Machine will be an “archive of activism around black embodiment.”

Yams came to attention when they pulled out of the [Whitney Biennial](#) this spring over another artist’s project that some would argue constituted a new form of blackface. The collective doesn’t have a set number of members, and in their own words they are “mostly black, and mostly queer.” Designer V. Mitch McEwen, who works with Yams told the [New York Times](#), “We’re not so much claiming a demographic territory... but examining the question of what makes art universal.”



While it’s easy to see the show at P! as being primarily about racial issues, it’s important to remember an irresponsible and even homicidal police force effects everyone. Reason is not determined by race — it is the process of consciously, logically making sense of things. Plato distinguished speculative reason from practical reason as a way of defining the contemplation of a subject vs. deciding what to do about it. *Post-Speculation, Act 1* cleverly adapts the gallery space as a place for speculative reason, a place to meditate on all of those images and issues. *The Way Black Machine* will embody a form of practical reason, realizing that all of this history needs a place where it can be archived. The Post-Speculation will occur when you visit thewayblackmachine.net and engage in your own contemplation of the issues. What you decide to practically do about it could be extremely important.

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