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ABOUT THE CURATOR

Dr. Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander is the Robert M. and Ruth L. Halperin Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Co-Director of the Asian American Art Initiative (AAAI) at the Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University. At the Cantor, she is the curator of *Spirit House* (Sept. 4, 2024–Jan. 26, 2025), *Livien Yin: Thirsty* (Aug. 21, 2024–Feb. 23, 2025), *Dwelling: New Acquisitions* (Oct. 4, 2024–ongoing), *The Faces of Ruth Asawa* (Jul. 2022–ongoing), and *East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art* (Sept. 28, 2022–Feb. 12, 2023). With assistant professor of art history Marci Kwon, Aleesa co-founded the AAAI, an ongoing project that advances research, education, community engagement, and public access to the works of Asian American and diasporic artists.

Aleesa manages AAAI’s curatorial program, cultivating relationships with community members, donors, artist estates, and living artists to help build the Cantor’s growing collection of Asian American art, which is now among the best nationally. Her exhibition catalogue for *Spirit House* is the AAAI’s first major publication. Aleesa frequently lectures at museums, universities, and non-profit organizations on topics related to Asian American art, museum practice, and historical exclusion in the art world. Born in Bangkok, Thailand, she received her Ph.D. in art history from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2018.

Spring 2026

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Hydra
Violette Bule

Houston, Texas

In-Residence: January 26 - March 22, 2026
Exhibitions on View: March 19 > July 19, 2026

Curated by Dr. Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander
Stanford, California



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Violette Bule is a conceptual artist whose practice weaves together archival research, community participation, and interdisciplinary installation to explore social and economic vulnerability as a source of creativity and political agency. Her work addresses themes of memory, technology, social justice, and the political realities of displacement, examining how cultural and institutional frameworks shape identity.

Bule studied photography at the Escuela Activa de Fotograf  a in Mexico City before earning her MFA in Studio Art from the University of Houston. Her recent exhibitions include *Soy de Tejas: A Statewide Survey of Latin American Art* (The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, Riverside, California, 2025), *La Biental Poli/Gr  fica de Puerto Rico y el Caribe: Bajo Presi  n* (San Juan, 2024), *Round 57: Southern Survey Biennial II* (Houston, 2024), and *Day Jobs* (Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University, and the Blanton Museum of Art, 2023–24), among others.

She is the recipient of the 2023 Horton/Artadia Award and funding from the City of Houston’s Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs for her public art project *Re-thinking Your Neighborhood*, part of *Inst1 1ation*, organized by Houston Arts Alliance and Art League Houston. She has completed residencies at Cornell University (2022), the Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas at Austin (2024), and SOMA Summer in Mexico City (2014). Her monograph *De la Lleca al Cohue – Born from Prison Workshops* (2010–12), documenting self-organized photography workshops in Venezuelan penitentiaries, was named Book of the Month by the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation in July 2024.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Hydra by Violette Bule immerses visitors in a space shaped by systems of control, surveillance, and political rhetoric surrounding immigration and incarceration. The title evokes the mythological Hydra, a creature whose many heads regenerate when cut, suggesting systems that endure even when challenged.

At the center of the installation stands a gold-painted security turnstile, a literal and symbolic reference to the “revolving door” of enforcement, detention, and policy that continues across administrations. Visitors must pass through this structure before continuing through the installation, physically navigating a space where movement is directed and constrained. Throughout the gallery, woven razor wire forms dense patterns across the floor, recalling the architecture of borders, detention centers, and prisons. The material establishes an environment that feels both constructed and precarious, emphasizing how systems of confinement are built, maintained, and normalized within everyday political discourse. Pathways guide visitors carefully through the space, heightening awareness of where movement is permitted. Convex security mirrors line one wall of the gallery. Commonly used in prisons, checkpoints, and surveillance environments, these mirrors fragment and multiply the viewer’s reflection. As visitors move through the space, their presence appears repeatedly from different angles, creating a heightened awareness of observation within the installation. Six video screens along the back wall present archival footage of U.S. presidents—from Richard Nixon through Barack Obama—speaking about immigration and law enforcement. Each clip is paired with audio drawn from speeches by Donald Trump. By overlaying contemporary rhetoric onto historical footage, Bule creates a dissonant but revealing continuity. The work suggests that while the language and tone of political leadership may shift over time, the underlying narratives surrounding immigration enforcement and criminalization often remain strikingly consistent.

A teleprompter stands within the space, serving as both a device and a stage. When activated, it presents a poem by the artist reflecting on observation, distance, and the uneasy position of the observer within systems of surveillance. When a visitor steps before it, their image is projected onto opposing walls, magnified and unavoidable. At the press of a keypad, prompts trigger a series of hard facts related to immigration enforcement, detention economies, and the expanding infrastructure of mass incarceration. These statements appear as the viewer’s image fills the walls, collapsing the distance between political rhetoric, statistical reality, and the individual standing within the system being examined.

Through irony, repetition, and participation, Bule’s installation draws connections between past and present political discourse. Humor and discomfort coexist, allowing the work to confront serious political realities while preserving moments of sharp tension. As visitors move through the space—reflected, projected, and observed—they become part of the structure the work examines.

– Rhys Munro, Residencies and Exhibitions Manager

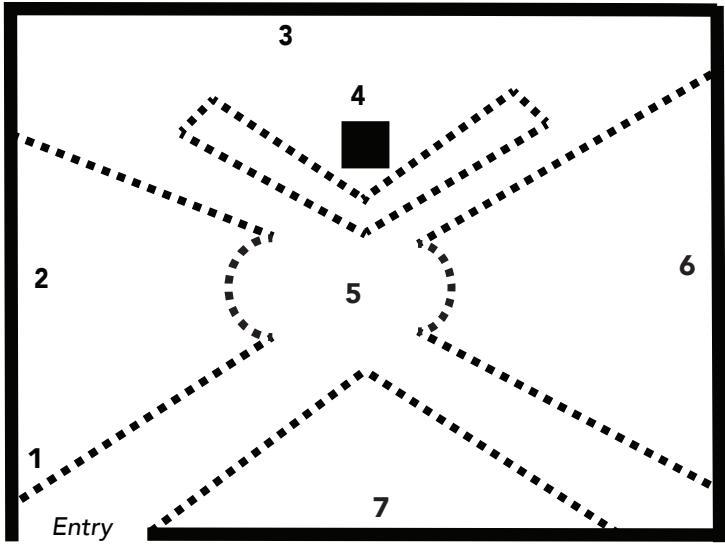
Hydra situates detention, migration management, and circulation within a cultivated landscape where maintenance and deterrence coexist. Razor wire woven into garden-like forms, modular thresholds, and regulated passages compose a terrain of repetition and containment. Within this ordered environment, coercion is embedded in design and sustained through routine administration, framing confinement and restricted movement as mechanisms for managing labor, resources, and economic stability. The system adapts as political agendas shift, echoing precedents from convict leasing after the 13th Amendment to contemporary private detention and migration-control industries, suggesting that what appears as a crisis often functions as a durable structure of governance. – Violette Bule

Violette Bule
Hydra, 2026
28 x 39 feet (installation variable)



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GALLERY MAP AND WORKS LIST



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>Wire Drawing Component</i> , 2026
Razor Wire | 5 <i>Turnstile Component</i> , 2026
Steel, Gold Paint |
| 2 <i>Razor Wire Component</i> , 2026
Razor Wire, Gold Paint | 6 <i>Video Data Component</i> , 2026
Looping Video Installation |
| 3 <i>Video Installation Component</i> , 2026
Six Looping Video Installations | 7 <i>Mirror Component</i> , 2026
Convex Security Mirrors (various sizes) |
| 4 <i>Interactive Teleprompter Component</i> , 2026
Teleprompter, Video Data Animation,
Poem Text | |

Hydra incorporates video, audio recordings, and factual data as part of the presented work. For a full list of video and audio materials, as well as information sources, please scan the QR code below.



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