



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM FOR CULTURE & SOCIETY



### THE OTOLITH GROUP

*Mascon: A Massive Concentration of Black Experiential Energy*

Sept. 27, 2024 – Jan. 10, 2025

In the fall of 2024, the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society will present a new moving-image work by the Otolith Group titled *Mascon: A Massive Concentration of Black Experiential Energy*. The exhibition is presented as a complement to a new mural commissioned for the Art Institute of Chicago's Griffin Court, on view starting September 26.

The two pieces were conceived in dialogue with each other: the images that form the building blocks of the mural at the Art Institute are stills from *Mascon*. Both installations are presented as part of a series of exhibitions and events linked to [Panafrika: Histories, Aesthetics, Politics](#), a multi-year research project at the Neubauer Collegium that is exploring the links between Pan-African politics and culture. Together the Otolith Group's mural and film essay serve as a prelude to *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrika*, a major exhibition opening December 15 at the Art Institute that was informed by the research project and curated by members of the research team.

Founded by Kodwo Eshun (b. 1966) and Anjalika Sagar (b. 1968) in London in 2002, the Otolith Group have gained international renown for their richly researched and densely textured film installations and performances, which frequently reference the global history of science fiction and

the transnational legacies of historically overlooked critical theories. Their works have been commissioned and presented by museums, galleries, biennials, and foundations worldwide. Recent monographic exhibitions include: the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy (2024); Secession in Vienna (2022); the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (2022); the Institute for Contemporary Art in Richmond, Virginia (2020); the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2019), Kunsthall Bergen in Norway (2014); and MACBA in Barcelona (2011).

The artists describe *Mascon* as an “audiovisual investigation into the gestures, geometries, grammars, and geographies that compose the forms and forces of the films of Ousmane Sembène and Djibril Diop Mambéty.” *Mascon* consists of a mosaic of images extracted from the works of these two Senegalese directors, prominent figures among a generation of African auteurs whose films explored the emancipatory movements that swept across the continent in the late 1950s and early ’60s. According to the Otolith Group, their homage to these filmmakers “summons the borderless imagination of the cine-Sahel,” amplifying and distilling Sembène’s and Mambéty’s favored motifs in order to elicit what American literary scholar Stephen Henderson termed “mascon” (shorthand for “a massive concentration of black experiential energy”).

In addition to its links to the Panafrica project, *Mascon* inaugurates a yearlong series of public events driven by the idea that “The Solution Is Human.” Taken together they mark the Neubauer Collegium’s first decade as a humanistic research incubator at the University of Chicago. The Collegium’s gallery figures centrally in the public series as an open laboratory for experimentation and innovation. Upcoming exhibitions will showcase works by Betye Saar and the Raqs Media Collective as part of long-term research projects led by Neubauer Collegium Faculty Fellows.

“The first ten years of exhibitions at the Neubauer Collegium make a powerful case for the impact of integrating the arts and research inquiry,” said Tara Zahra, Roman Family Director at the Neubauer Collegium. “The Otolith Group’s research-informed artistic practice aligns with the Collegium’s unique approach. This exhibition is a fitting launch to conversations we hope to sustain throughout the coming year.”

*Mascon* is curated by Dieter Roelstraete and made possible by the Neubauer Family Foundation and the Brenda Mulmed Shapiro Fund.

**IMAGE:** The Otolith Group, *Mascon: A Massive Concentration of Black Experiential Energy*, 2024.  
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## **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

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Gallery hours: M–F, 9:00am – 4:00pm