The Black Unicorn Library Pop Up and Artist Workshop @ Smith Libraries

Bekezela Mguni’s Black Unicorn Project is a pop-up library of books by black women authors and artists, which was most recently installed at BOOM concepts in Pittsburgh, PA. In collaboration with the Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh, Bekezela Mguni has created a space for readers to explore and celebrate black women’s stories from across the African Diaspora.

“The Black Unicorn is a beacon of inspiration fueled by the genius of Black women’s stories, queer and transgender herstories, a love of libraries, reading and Audre Lorde. The Black Unicorn exists because there are not enough spaces to celebrate our beauty, to seek refuge from the world’s brutality and for education that feeds us.” - Mguni, Facebook post, 3/18/2016

Bekezela is visiting Smith College as the Steinem Initiative’s Activist-in-Residence, until April 30.

Proposal

Part 1:
Students from PRISM (Smith’s Student-Led Organization for Queer/Non-Binary/Questioning Students of Color) and QUINTA (Queer International Alliance), along with Digital Scholarship Librarian Miriam Neptune, propose to create a pop-up of the Black Unicorn Reading Room @ Smith, during the week of April 23 - 29th. This temporary installation in the Neilson Library Core will invite students and other patrons to engage with literature already held within the Smith Libraries collections that serves to affirm the intersectional experiences of black and queer students at Smith. PRISM and QUINTA will organize activities to draw students into dialogue with Bekezela Mguni as Smith’s current Activist in Residence. By bringing this exhibit to Smith, the artist aspires to create an environment that allows critical and progressive discourse about pertinent issues of race, ethnicity, class and queer identity in a transnational context. Visitors can leave their thoughts in a collective journal, and will be encouraged to use social media to engage with the space.

Part 2:
The reading room installation will be accompanied by a one-time screenprinting workshop (Wed 4/27) at another location (preferably the SCMA atrium outside of Hillyer Library). Students will have an opportunity to learn about Bekezela’s art techniques and create their own artwork using selected images from the Sophia Smith Collection. This event will be co-coordinated with SSC staff.