

# Institute of Contemporary Arts

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## Five Volumes for Toni Morrison



12–14 March 2020

Five Volumes for Toni Morrison is a three-day convening to celebrate the life and work of the novelist, essayist and Nobel laureate in literature. Inspired by *Five Poems* (2002), a collection of poems by Morrison with illustrations by Kara Walker, Five Volumes seeks to create a space for existing and new Morrison readers to engage closely with her work. The convening revisits Morrison's 1986 *Guardian* talk at the ICA alongside screenings, talks, performances and study groups.

Widely celebrated for writings that captured the specificity of African-American experience and identity, and that spoke to broader human desires for rootedness, pleasure, intimacy, connection and self-determination, Morrison drew from her imagination to create works that were, in her own words, 'both political and beautiful'. Over five decades, Morrison authored 11 novels that spanned the 17th century to the present day, as well as children's books and essay collections. Her renowned works include *Song of Solomon*, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1977; and *Beloved*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 and was adapted into a film directed by Jonathan Demme and produced by Oprah Winfrey.

While known mainly for her novels and essays, Morrison was also an accomplished editor who advanced the writings of black women authors and civil rights activists. Before her own writing career was established, Morrison worked at Random House, where she edited works of fiction by Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones and the autobiographies of Angela Davis and Muhammad Ali. She was also involved in a black women's writing group that met regularly in

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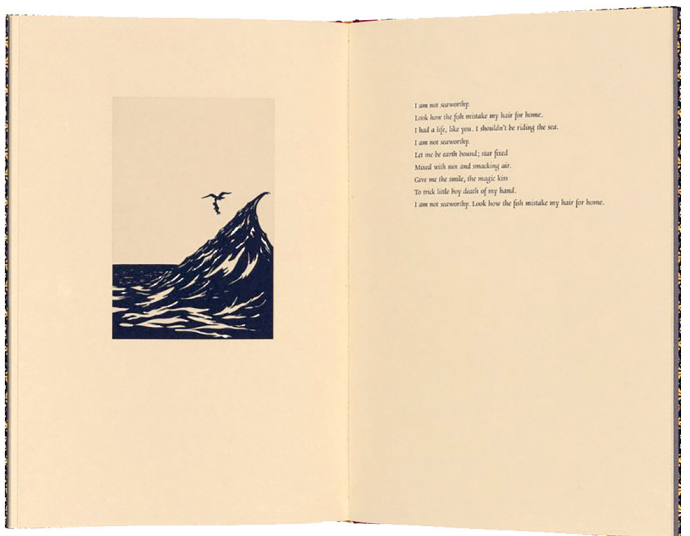
New York in the 1970s; founded by Alice Walker and June Jordan, it also included poets Ntozake Shange and Audre Lorde, journalists Margo Jefferson and Phyl Garland, and culinary writers Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor and Jessica B. Harris.

A testament to Morrison's influence on the arts, Five Volumes explores the continuing impact of her work on generations of cultural luminaries. The convening puts Morrison's work in dialogue with other artistic and expressive forms – from poetry to film, and music – and speaks to audiences of diverse ages and backgrounds. Care, beauty, memory and restorative justice are themes and motifs throughout the programme, for which participants include Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Leo Hermitt, Selina Nwulu, Lola Okolosie, Kareem Reid and The Black Curriculum.

Five Volumes for Toni Morrison is co-curated by ICA Curators Ifeanyi Awachie and Nydia A Swaby, with support from ICA Community Arts Apprentice Aaliyah Kelly-Hibbert.



*Farah Jasmine Griffin*



*Courtesy Kara Walker / Sikkema Jenkins & Co.*

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## Volume I

Thursday 12 March, 7pm

*ICA Cinema*

### **Ethics of Care, Restorative Justice and Healing in Toni Morrison's Late Fiction**

Farah Jasmine Griffin, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, opens the convening with a pre-recorded keynote lecture on the ethics of care, healing and restorative justice in Morrison's late fiction.

## Volume II

Friday 13 March, 7pm

*ICA Theatre*

### **Five Poems for Toni Morrison**

In *Five Poems for Toni Morrison*, poets and writers including Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Leo Hermitt, Selina Nwulu and Kareem Reid are invited to write and perform an original piece in response to Morrison's work.

## Volume III

Friday 13 March, 8.30pm

*ICA Theatre*

### **Screening of 'Guardian Conversations: Toni Morrison' (1986)**

Five Volumes presents a screening of Toni Morrison's 1986 talk at the ICA. This talk was part of a series of public conversations hosted by the *Guardian* in collaboration with the ICA. In conversation with literary critic and novelist A. S. Byatt, Morrison discusses and reads from her masterwork *Beloved*, reflects on centring black characters and responds to the notion of the black woman writer.

*Guardian Conversations: Toni Morrison* is a selection from the ICA archive and screens exclusively for Five Volumes.

## Volume IV

Saturday 14 March, 1pm & 3.30pm

*ICA Studio*

### **Study groups with The Black Curriculum and Lola Okolosie\***

*Volume IV* comprises study groups led by writer, schoolteacher and winner of the Novel Studio scholarship from City University, Lola Okolosie, and The Black Curriculum, an organisation that seeks to address the lack of taught Black British History within schools.

The Black Curriculum study group, aimed at students aged 11–16, focuses on Morrison's 1992 novel *Jazz*, considering the connections to music and photography in Morrison's writing.

Lola Okolosie's study group offers a critical reading of Morrison's 1970 novel *The Bluest Eye*, drawing upon contemporary references.

*All study group participants will receive a free copy of the book under discussion, courtesy of VINTAGE.*

**\*SOLD OUT.** Wait list only, please speak to Box Office or email [sales@ica.art](mailto:sales@ica.art) to join the list.

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## Volume V

Saturday 14 March, 6pm

*ICA Cinema*

### **Screening of 'Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am' (2019)**

The convening concludes with a screening of the 2019 documentary *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*. The film provides an intimate look at Morrison's life through interviews with Morrison's colleagues and friends, among them Oprah Winfrey, Sonia Sanchez and Farah Jasmine Griffin. *The Pieces I Am* features artworks by significant African American visual artists including Mickalene Thomas (who created the collage that opens the film), Faith Ringgold, Elizabeth Catlett, Kerry James Marshall and Romare Bearden.

Programme subject to change. Correct at time of going to print.



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