David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present GET HOME SAFE, a solo exhibition of new work by Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, on view May 27 through July 1, 2022. An opening reception will take place on May 27 from 6 to 8 PM.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is an artist working predominantly in animation, sound, performance, and video game development. Her practice focuses on intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively retell the stories of Black Trans people. GET HOME SAFE is an immersive, interactive installation, and part of an ongoing archival project where she endeavors to remedy the state of erasure in which Black Trans lives have been removed from records of the past, accounts of the present, and visions of the future.

Throughout her work, Brathwaite-Shirley develops imagery and language based on everyday details of Black Trans experiences. She seeks to illuminate without unnecessarily centering the trauma and violence that so often affect those experiences and to provide multiple entry points into emerging narrative themes. For Brathwaite-Shirley, archives become spaces for amplifying the voices of Black Trans people.

Brathwaite-Shirley's research into the history of interactive video games introduced her to early massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) such as Island of Kesmai and MUD1. In these games, text was used both as a tool to communicate information to multiple users and as an overall aesthetic for how the user experienced these virtual spaces. Brathwaite-Shirley references Island of Kemai and MUD1 as major touchpoints for developing her interactive video games, citing an interest in how texts—or words—are used to not only describe oneself, but further define our subjectivity when moving through the world.

At the center of the exhibition is an immersive, digitally animated work that draws on the history and aesthetics of MMORPG. The pro-Black, pro-Trans game—in which viewers explore what it means to walk home alone at night in certain bodies—tasks the player with

guiding the on-screen protagonist through a desolate cityscape. Prompts that elicit viewers to acknowledge their association with privileged identities—such as white, hetero, able-bodied, and/or cisgender—become important points of connection. Interactivity is also a key conceptual element, with viewers asked to take an active role in deciding how the narrative unfolds.

Eliciting a felt sense of responsibility is a key component of Braithwaite-Shirley's work. Thus, her primary medium is the audience and its actions, decisions, and behavior as they unfold within the spaces of her digital and physical environments. The game is rendered in low poly graphics, with text occasionally positioned across the various bodies that appear on-screen and underscoring the thematics at play. As scenes shift based on decisions taken by the player, alerts show up when chosen actions cause harm to the very figure they are intended to protect. Subtle inactions, such as inert stillness, are called out— often with a reminder that inaction is a form of complicity.

Also included in GET HOME SAFE are text-based drawings created by printing red letters on black acrylic panels that further explore the power of text as an engine to further define and communicate Black Trans existence. The red is similar to the color of blood, emphasizing the vital energies at stake and the intimacy they make possible. Mounted on custom wallpaper covering the entirety of the gallery and featuring images of the Kerry James Marshall portrait, A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of His Former Self (1980), the panels are components of a world-encompassing vision that has ramifications for every facet of life in the twenty-first century. This vision includes, most importantly, the negotiation of ever-shifting lines between individual storytelling and collective community-building.

Situated throughout GET HOME SAFE are video portraits composed using motion capture data, which records the movement of objects and people. Here, Braithwaite-Shirley records data from Black Trans people and converts the data into text which, in turn, gives the human form in these works a new, readable body. The portraits speak to visitors of the

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exhibition and depict Black Trans people from a range of source materials, both found by and given to the artist. Also included are images of people Braithwaite-Shirley meets; each participant receives compensation for their time and the personal stories they share. The portraits are both homages and testaments to the power of speaking about the fullest range of life experiences. Likewise, they document the process of assuming agency for the ways in which one is remembered and identified by the community at large.

For Braithwaite-Shirley, this process gives the compositions a human-like, tactile quality, despite their digital origins. In GET HOME SAFE, technology is combined with references to very real human qualities, and therefore, becomes a way to imagine Black Trans lives in environments that prominently center their bodies—those living, those that have passed, those that have been forgotten, and those that have yet to be born.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley produced a solo performance work at Tate Modern, London, in 2020. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at QUAD, Derby, England (2021); Focal Point Gallery, London (2020); Science Gallery, London (2020); and MU Hybrid Art House, London (2020). Group exhibitions include Re$$urection Lands, Les Urbaines, Lausanne, Switzerland (2019); BBZ GRADUATE SHOW, Copeland Gallery, London (2019); and Transpose: The Future, Barbican, London (2018). Brathwaite-Shirley lives and works in London.