

SHERRILL  
ROLAND  
INERTIA

GAKU  
TSUTAJA  
A TRIP TO  
THE MOON

SEPTEMBER 10 - NOVEMBER 2, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 6 - 8PM

SHERRILL ROLAND *THE JUMPSUIT PROJECT* PERFORMANCES:

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 3 - 4PM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 5 - 7PM

**SHIRLEY FITERMAN ART CENTER**

81 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10007

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY

[www.bmcc.cuny.edu/sfac/](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/sfac/)

## SHERRILL ROLAND: INERTIA

In 2012, just before the start of his first year in the MFA program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Sherrill Roland was accused of having committed a felony. Despite his innocence, Roland was convicted and incarcerated for ten months at the Central Detention Facility in Washington, DC. Eventually, he was released and exonerated, but the experience changed him profoundly.

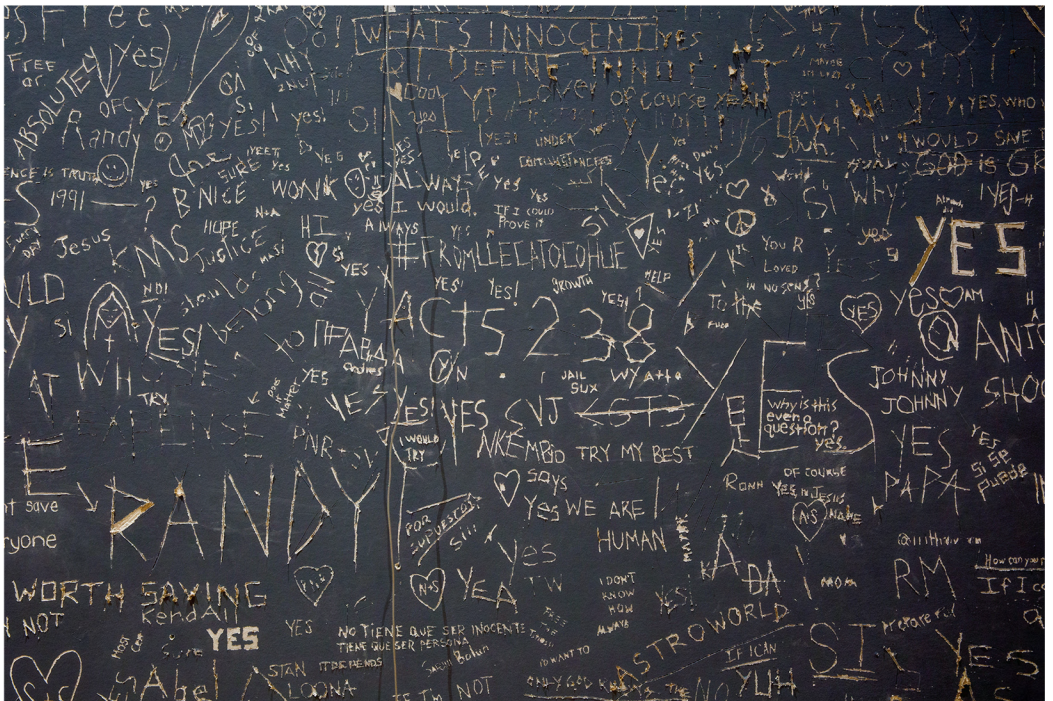
After the charges were dismissed, Roland struggled with the idea of resuming his MFA studies. But in re-thinking the idea he determined that his experience—and the potential role the orange jumpsuit might play on campus—could be the foundation for his thesis project. Roland completed the final year of his program, wearing an orange jumpsuit every day and documenting his interactions. **The Jumpsuit Project** has since become an ongoing social practice work in which he engages visitors, creating a safe space for questions and conversations about incarceration that also encourage participants to address their own prejudices towards those who are or have been incarcerated. Through his investigation into the many social and political issues surrounding incarceration, and by sharing his own story, Roland sheds light on the far-reaching consequences and implicit racial inequity of the American prison system.

Much of Roland's research into his own case, and into issues of wrongful incarceration, exoneration, and remuneration more generally, have fueled other aspects of his art practice. His **Artfor-us** series of collage works are made from materials that would have been available to Roland while he was in prison, and include toilet paper, legal paper, Sharpie markers, Kool-Aid powder, as well as the cards, letters, and monthly issues of **Artforum International** that his family sent to him. These

intimate layered collages also include descriptions of his experiences, quotes, and biblical passages, and are mounted on black metal screens that echo prison enclosures.

"Inertia" is defined as a tendency to do nothing or to remain unchanged and Roland's use of the title **Inertia** also suggests the way in which incarceration halted his movement (even while life itself kept going). Works on view, including **The Jumpsuit Project** and the **Artfor-us** series, reference cyclical periods of times or narrative arcs that counter the sense of inertia and also of injustice that Roland experienced. His work also speaks to the activity, resourcefulness, and various coping mechanisms that are needed, not just to adjust to and endure incarceration, but also to handle the challenges of returning to life afterward. One of the most difficult things to contend with in prison is the constant surveillance and total lack of privacy. In **Fig Leaf on Cell #45**, the transparent cell door alludes to the subordination and sense of nakedness that prisoners experience and the small ways in which they attempt to defy them. Maintaining a sense of self and of dignity while in such circumstances takes shape in other covert but significant ways. This is addressed in **The Wake Up**, in which Roland invites the viewer to carve answers to questions posed by the artist into a gray prison-like wall. "The Wake Up" is a phrase that refers to being released from prison, and one of Roland's jobs while incarcerated was to paint cells after inmates were released and before new ones occupied them. Often previous inmates had clandestinely carved into surfaces, leaving behind personal marks in a place intended to strip away one's individuality. These private markings and the actions of creating them form another means of combatting the inertia and anonymity of prison.

Sherrill Roland, *After the Wakeup*, 2017



## SHERRILL ROLAND: INERTIA

**The Jumpsuit Project**, 2016-ongoing  
Performance, orange jumpsuit, four framed photographs (each 24 x 20 inches), duct tape  
Dimensions variable

**After the Wake Up**, 2017/2019  
Constructed wall, primer paint, carving tools  
Dimensions variable

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**October 2013**  
Legal paper, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
12 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**November 2013 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** November issue  
2013, toilet paper, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
26 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**December 2013 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** December issue  
2013, toilet paper, coffee filter, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, pencil, steel  
28 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**January 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** January issue 2014, toilet paper, coffee filter, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
28 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**February 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** February issue 2014, toilet paper, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
28 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**March 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** March issue 2014, toilet paper, toilet paper Roll, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
26 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**April 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** April issue 2014, toilet paper, legal paper pad, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
26 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**May 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** May issue 2014, toilet paper, legal paper, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
24 x 24 inches

**Artfor-us Issues**, 2018  
**Summer 2014 Issue**  
**ArtForum International** summer issue 2014, toilet paper, coffee filter, primer paint, Kool-Aid, Sharpie marker, steel  
24 x 24 inches

**Contraband Item #1**, 2019  
Razor  
11 x 14 inches

**Contraband Item #2**, 2019  
Ink pen cartridge  
11 x 14 inches

**Contraband Item #3**, 2019  
Cinnamon Floss, paperclip  
11 x 14 inches

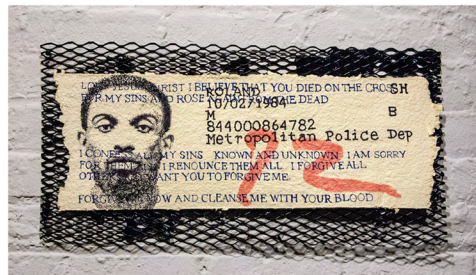
**Fig Leaf on Cell #19**, 2019  
Ink, Plexiglas, toilet paper, steel, vinyl, paint  
90 x 42 x 30 inches

**Fig Leaf on Cell #45**, 2019  
Ink, Plexiglas, toilet paper, steel, vinyl, paint  
90 x 42 x 30 inches

**Jumpsuit Project DC**, 2019  
Printed photographs  
Dimensions variable

**Jumpsuit Project DC**, 2019  
USB video  
Dimensions variable

**Weight(s)**, 2019  
Six elements each comprised of knit drawstring bag, shoe strings, exoneree transcript papers  
12 x 12 x 10 inches each



Sherrill Roland, *October 2013 Issue*, *Artfor-us Issues*, 2018