

Tina Campt, Barnard College, Columbia University

Fugitives Before the Law: Black Futurity in a Photographic Frame

This talk stages an embodied encounter with a group of images intended to regulate and literally 'arrest' the movement of a class of individuals deemed criminal by the state: convict photos. It juxtaposes two archives of incarcerated black subjects: convict photographs taken between 1897 and 1907 of inmates at Breakwater Prison in Cape Town, South Africa and mid-twentieth century mug shots of African American Freedom Riders in the US South. It theorizes these images through the analytical framework of 'refusal,' which I use to define the range of creative responses black communities have marshaled in the face of racialized dispossession.