



Installation view of *Near in the Distance*, with one side of Regan Rosburg's "Everything Is Fine" in the left foreground. / courtesy of RedLine

Artists Look at Gentrification and More at RedLine's *Near in the Distance*

MICHAEL PAGLIA | FEBRUARY 12, 2020 | 11:34AM

Since it was established over a decade ago by Laura Merage, RedLine has presented an annual members' show that follows the theme for the venue's exhibition program. This year, that theme is "Afrofuturism," which imagines utopian pasts or futures in which black people are central to the narrative content.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: It doesn't make sense to tie a members' show to a specific theme when the participants have little in common – ideally, such an exhibit should be a free-for-all, with each artist presenting what they do best, whatever that may be. Luckily, that's pretty much how this year's members' show, *Near in the Distance*, turned out. As RedLine director Louise Martorano observes with a laugh, "The artists never follow the theme, and just do what they want."

The unwieldy task of organizing the show fell to Rhode Island-based curator **Nicole J. Caruth**. Some months ago, Caruth came to RedLine to speak with the residents about what they intended to create for the exhibition, and she found that some of the artists were uncomfortable with the theme, feeling that their work would be inauthentic. As a result, she did an admirable job of adjusting the Afrofuturism theme to the mostly non-African American artists at RedLine, or at least was flexible enough to allow the artists to adjust the theme themselves. As she says in her curator's statement, "You won't find the typical aesthetics associated with Afrofuturism here."