

Institute of Contemporary Arts

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Fugitive Feminism

18–22 July 2018

'This materialised scene of unprotected [Black] female flesh – of female flesh "ungendered" offers a praxis ... for living and dying'

Hortense Spillers, *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*

Whose interests, experiences and perspectives are contained in the dominant conceptions of gender? What possibilities are created when Black women abandon gender? Programmed with sociologist Akwugo Emejulu, this five-day convening of artists, activists and academics focuses on contemporary Black feminist politics, examining the impossibility of Black women's claims to womanhood and the new spaces that are created by a politics of refusal.

Historically, Black feminism has identified that social stratifications such as race, gender, class, age, sexuality, disability and legal status do not exist separately from each other, but are interwoven. Inspired by the work of Black radical theorists such as Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe and Tina Campt, this convening takes as its starting point the proposition that gender is an antagonism for Black women because gender is constructed and reproduced in ways that can only name the experiences of certain kinds of women. Rather than seeking inclusion in gender relations that cannot account for Black women's myriad experiences, Fugitive Feminism refuses the category of gender altogether, instead embracing a transgressive category of the fugitive – one who flees domination and joins with others to collectively construct a new liberation politics. Generating conversations across the diaspora and across generations, Fugitive Feminism brings together a range of thinkers and practitioners for a series of talks, film, performance and workshops.

As a primer for the convening, Hortense Spillers joined Gail Lewis at the ICA on 9 June 2018 to present a transnational discussion on the meaning of Black culture and the significance of ungendering. Their thought is foundational to the work of many Fugitive Feminism participants. Following their conversation, this programme addresses discourses in Afro-pessimism and the claiming of transgressive subjectivities; conceptions of freedom and the embodied Black feminine subject; Black women's activism and the struggle to be recognised as political actors; and the politics of Black women's pleasure in the realms of feminist theory and visual culture.

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BBZ London (Bold Brazen Zamis OR Babes) is an exhibition platform/tun up centering femme identity and eradicating misogyny for queer womxn, trans folk and non-binary people of colour. BBZ explores a plethora of mediums including film and dance.

The Batty Mama is a down and dirty, sex/body-positive dystopic and immersive clubnight of queer Black performance, visuals, film and music holding space for queer and trans bodies from all constellations to reclaim booties of colour. Curated by Hakeem Kazeem and Ama Josephine Budge.

Ama Josephine Budge is a speculative writer, artist, curator and pleasure activist whose work navigates intimate explorations of race, art, ecology and feminism in order to activate movements that catalyse human rights, environmental revolutions and queered identities. She is convenor of the anti-conference I/Mages of Tomorrow, co-founder of queer black collective The Batty Mama and initiator of pleasure collective Self Love and Ecstasy.

Cressida Djambov is a London-based illustrator and maker. Her work explores themes of family, LGBTQI issues and British subcultures. She holds a BA (Hons) in Illustration and Visual Media from London College of Communication.

Akwugo Emejulu is Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick. Her research interests include the political sociology of race, class and gender and women of colour's grassroots activism in Europe and the United States. She has co-authored *Minority Women and Austerity: Survival and Resistance in France and Britain* (2017) and co-edited the forthcoming publication *To Exist is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe*.

Amandine Gay is a Montreal-based, Afro-feminist filmmaker, activist and journalist. She studied Politics and Dramatic Art and has performed in theatre and television. Most recently, she authored the preface for the first French translation of bell hooks' seminal book *Ain't I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* (1987/2015). *Speak Up* is Gay's first feature length documentary.

Rita Gayle is a PhD Researcher at the University of Birmingham investigating how millennial Black British feminists work collectively to counteract their exclusion from the creative and cultural industries. Rita is funded by an AHRC DTP Midlands3Cities Research Award. She previously worked for BBC News.

Goldsnap is a collective of WOC producers and DJs consisting of Mwen, Dibs and Gin. As well as being invited to guest DJ at various parties around London, Goldsnap also provides accessible courses for QTPOC ranging from 1-2-1 sessions to group DJ workshops, music production workshops and Ableton Music Jams.

Saidiya Hartman's major fields of interest are African American and American literature and cultural history, slavery, law and literature, and performance studies. Hartman received her BA from Wesleyan University and PhD from Yale University. She is the author of *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* and *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*.

Layla-Roxanne Hill is a writer, curator and researcher. Her work focuses on the (de)construction of cultural production, marginality and Black Scottish lives. She is Head of Engagement at investigative journalism platform *The Ferret* and sits on the Black Workers' Committee of the Scottish Trade Union Congress and the Council of the National Union of Journalists. She is a co-founder of Yon Afro Collective.

Azeezat Johnson is a social geographer at Queen Mary University of London, interested in conversations on Black and Muslim geographies, which push against the racialisation of Black bodies as Other to a neutralised White Self. Her PhD research explored the performance of identity in relation to different objects, bodies, gazes and spaces through the clothing practices of Black Muslim women in Britain.

Kiyémis is an Afro-feminist Parisian writer and blogger. She studied history and political science and founded the blog *Les Bavardages de Kiyemis*, addressing systemic racism, sexism and fatphobia. She recently published the poetry book *A nos humanités révoltées* (2018) and has also contributed to *Slate Magazine*, *Atoubaa*, *Les Glorieuses*, *M Le magazine du Monde*, *Grazia* and *The Huffington Post*.

Gail Lewis is Reader in Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck. Her academic interests centre on psychoanalysis, black feminism, experience as a site of knowing and knowledge production, and social policy and welfare practice. She has a mixed disciplinary background with a degree in Social Anthropology, an MPhil in Development Studies and a PhD in Sociology. She is also a qualified psychodynamic psychotherapist.

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Magic Clit is a lesbian night primarily aimed at black women but welcoming to everyone. You can expect to hear everything from bashment and R&B to classic grime and funky cuts. Residents on rotation include founder Amz, Manara, Sweyn J and 2Shin of BBC AZN NETWORK.

Mwasi Afrofeminist Collective is an organisation founded in 2014 by a group of black and African women who felt the need to unite, exchange and express themselves on black women's issues. The organisation's intersectional approach to the struggles it encounters positions it on many battlefields; they agitate against discrimination based on class, gender, sexuality, ability and religion and against the institutionalisation of heteropatriarchal domination.

Victoria Nambi is a creative, born and based in London, with a particular interest in film. A recent English graduate from University College London, Nambi worked at both Film Africa and the BFI London Film Festival in a volunteer capacity before making the leap to film programming with the Barbican Young Programmer scheme.

Mariel NO is an illustrator and Assistant Arts & Culture Editor for *gal-dem*. Her work covers the intersections of race and sexuality, and uses craft forms to explore gendered approaches to representation and creation. Outside of editing, she spends her time working in global media strategy and consulting.

Fania Noël is a Haitian-born, French activist-organiser. She is experienced in grassroots movements against racism, specifically anti-Blackness and Black feminism in France. In addition to being part of the Mwasi Afrofeminist Collective, she is the co-creator of the Decolonial Summer Camp, a five-day anti-racism training course in France. In 2014, she founded the political project AssiégéEs (Besieged).

Kelechi Okafor is an actor, dance innovator and social commentator. Her interests are in race, class and pop culture.

Francesca Sobande is a Lecturer in Marketing and Advertising at Edge Hill University, with a background in sociology and politics. Her work addresses issues regarding identity, ideology and intersecting inequalities in relation to digital media and markets. Francesca's PhD thesis focused on online and media experiences of Black women. She is a co-founder of the Yon Afro Collective.

Hortense Spillers is a Professor in the English Department at Vanderbilt University. She co-edited *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition* (1985) and edited *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (1991). Her essays *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (2003), span the breadth of her professional interests in African-American culture and history.

Nydia A. Swaby is a historian and ethnographer working at the intersection of black feminist theory, diaspora studies, and queer theory of colour. She is a Senior Teaching Fellow in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at SOAS, University of London, where she obtained her PhD from the Centre for Gender Studies. She is a member of the editorial collective for *Feminist Review*.

Fanta Sylla is a film critic and researcher based in Paris. She conceived and taught the film course Cinema in Black based on The Black Film Critic Syllabus, an online file compiling references about Black representation in film, criticism and theory, grounded in Afro-pessimist thought. Her work has featured in *Les Inrocks*, *Reverse Shot*, *The Village Voice*, *Sight & Sound* and *Pitchfork*.

Selina Thompson is a Leeds-based artist and performer. Her work focuses on identity politics and how this defines our bodies, lives and environments, and is often participatory. She has made work for pubs, cafes, hairdressers, toilets, galleries and theatres, including SPILL Festival of Performance, National Theatre Studio and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. She is currently developing a new project looking at job centre culture and unemployment.

Shatema Threadcraft is a political theorist and Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. She researches concepts of freedom and the embodied black feminine subject. She holds a BA in Biology from Harvard University, an MSc in Philosophy, Policy and Social Value from the London School of Economics and a PhD in Political Science from Yale University.

Rianna Walcott is a PhD candidate at King's College London researching Black identity formation in digital spaces. She co-founded Project Myopia, a website that promotes diversity in academia and a decolonised curriculum, and frequently writes about feminism, race and literature for publications including *gal-dem*, *Dazed* and *The Guardian*. She is associate editor of the forthcoming anthology *The Colour of Madness*.

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Thursday 18 – Sunday 22 July

The Politics of Pleasure Installation

Studio, 12–9pm daily

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 18 July

Speak Up! + Q&A

Kiyémis, Amandine Gay (via live video)

Cinemas, 6pm

Thursday 19 July

Towards a Fugitive Feminism

Akwugo Emejulu, Mariel NO

Cinemas, 6.30pm

Friday 20 July

Selina Thompson: 'salt.', Live Reading

Selina Thompson, Cressida Djambov

Theatre, 7pm

Flee the Scene

Dibs (Goldsnap), BBZ, AMZ (Magic Clit), DJ Krystal Lake and Ama Josephine Budge (The Batty Mama)

Theatre, 9pm

Saturday 21 July

Organising Fugitive Feminism

Akwugo Emejulu, Layla-Roxanne Hill, Francesca Sobande, Fania Noël (Mwasi Afrofeminist Collective), Rianna Walcott

Theatre, 11:30am

Shatema Threadcraft on Fugitive Feminism

Shatema Threadcraft, Francesca Sobande

Theatre, 2pm

Round Table on Fugitivity

Nydia A. Swaby, Ama Josephine Budge, Rita Gayle, Azeezat Johnson, Saidiya Hartman (video presentation)

Theatre, 4pm

Sunday 22 July

The Politics of Pleasure Workshop

Nydia A. Swaby, Rita Gayle, Ifeanyi Awachie

Studio, 1pm

Womanhood While Black: Subversive Subjects, Sublime Possibilities

Victoria Nambi

Cinemas, 4pm

ONLINE

Thursday 19 July

ICA Twitter: @ICALondon takeover by Kelechi Okafor @kelechnekoff

Saturday 21 July

ICA Twitter: @ICALondon takeover by Fanta Sylla @littleglissant

#fugitivefeminism