

Institute of Contemporary Arts

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ICA

**Image
Behaviour**

Experiments in artists' moving image

Rebecca Bellantoni
Joseph June Bond
R.I.P. Germain
Deborah-Joyce Holman
Asuf Ishaq
Kemi Lijadu
Kadeem Oak
@KO___OL

+ others

Launches 17 March 2022
Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

ICA Theatre
17 March – 30 April 2022



Image Behaviour, the ICA's annual convening dedicated to experiments in artists' moving image, returns with a programme that addresses significant shifts in moving image practices – exploring and supporting artists engaged in new approaches to art-making and presentation in the wake of a global pandemic.

The ICA has this year joined forces with Dr. Martens to support the creation of eight new commissions for Image Behaviour through production grants to emerging UK-based artists worth £60,000, awarded through a nationwide open call – the first time such grants have been awarded.

The selection panel comprising Steven Cairns (ICA), Beatrice Dillon, Languid Hands, Amber Henry (Dr. Martens) and Naeem Mohaiemen reviewed an unprecedented number of applications to the open call to reach their final decision. In adding an additional commission to offer eight opportunities instead of the original seven, they selected artists Asuf Ishaq, Deborah-Joyce Holman, Joseph June Bond, Kadeem Oak, Kemi Lijadu, @KO___OL, Rebecca Bellantoni and R.I.P. Germain.

From 17 March – 30 April the selected artists will each present their completed works in a series of one-off events. Read on for a series of interviews with the artists who discuss their practices, and their new moving image works for Image Behaviour 2022.

Image Behaviour stakes out the need for new modes of engagement, presentation and discourse, encompassing the perceptual, technological and social possibilities that artists' moving image brings to bear in 2022. Exploring the evolving role of moving image in the arts and its wider role within visual culture, the artists included in the programme are at the forefront of the medium in our generation-defining times.

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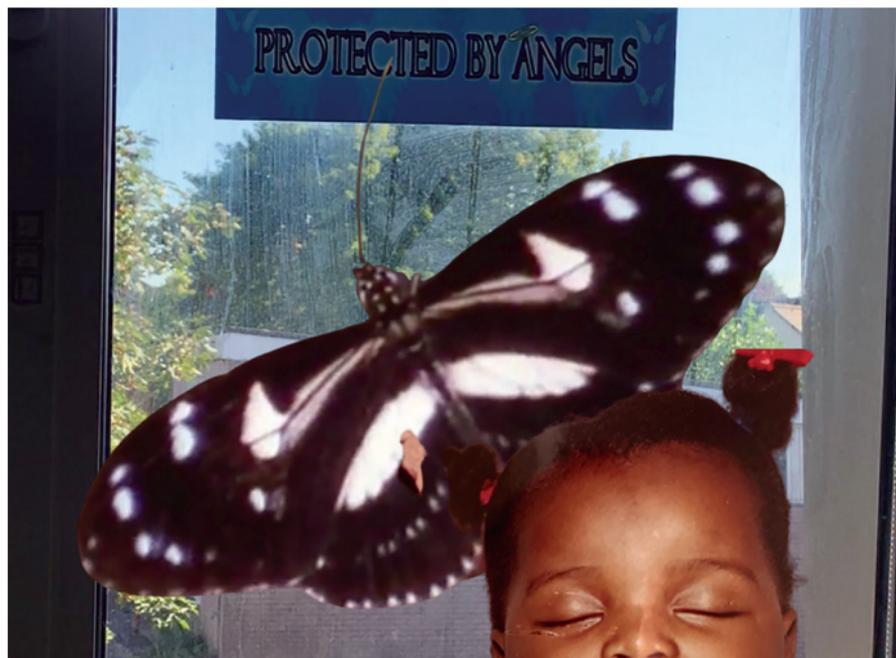
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Kemi Lijadu



Guardian Angel

ICA Theatre, Thursday 17 March, 7pm

A multi-screen projection and multi-sensory live performance, *Guardian Angel* (2022) is a newly commissioned film event that explores the artist's relationship with religion, informed by her grandmother, study of African philosophy and Catholic upbringing.

Q&A

So where did the idea come from for the new work?

The idea for *Guardian Angel* was sparked in the wake of my grandmother's passing. My grandmother was a terribly intelligent and thoughtful person, deeply nuanced and open to the full spectrum of cultures, spirituality and ways of being. As a child she would tell us fantastical stories about figures from Yoruba folklore, such as Ajapa the Tortoise, along with those from Catholicism about guardian angels and angels on earth. I was captivated by the intermingling of disparate worlds and the contradictions then and now, so the questions that my work tackles are things that I have been wrestling with subconsciously and consciously for much of my life.

I remember when I was 16, I read *Fela: This Bitch of a Life*, Carlos Moore's biography of Fela Kuti. It discussed Fela's decision to move away from Christianity and embrace Yoruba traditional spirituality. It radically transformed my world view and exposed the depths of 'colomentality' all around me despite living and growing up in Nigeria. Turning those pages was the first time I realised that much of what was deemed in my environment as 'juju' or witchcraft was traditional Yoruba spirituality. And that was paradigm-shifting for me, and in stark contrast to my Catholic upbringing.

Guardian Angel is really me working through that in real time. I don't have an answer, but it's just really leaning into all the contradictory swirl of emotions, both rational and the irrational that come when confronting religion, spirituality and history.

How does this work relate to your broader practice?

I'm a trained philosopher. I studied philosophy at Stanford at both an undergraduate and at master's level. And so I'd say my work is an extension of my training and every piece of

work that I'm building is a sort of philosophical argument or exploration. What I really loved about philosophy, and what I still love about philosophy is the fact that any argument, contrary to the way arguments often play out in our modern world right now, always considers very seriously the contradictory side to its thesis. In philosophy one is trained to lean into and admit the limits of one's understanding and knowledge. Similarly, my practice is of leaning into the unknowing across mediums and I do that with moving image and with music.

And how does moving image function specifically in your practice?

I have always been obsessed with timelessness. When I was younger I remember thinking that I needed to do something during my time on earth, worthy of being immortalised in history because I had a deep fear of being forgotten. As I have gotten older, I have cared less about being forgotten and more about forgetting. This is why I love the moving image, because it is a way of preserving a moment in time in the most magical way. That is what first drew me to my first video camera and what inspires me to make the work I do.

Does this work speak to or relate to any previous works that you've made, and is religion an area of exploration or something that you've looked at before?

Yes, my master's thesis was on Yoruba philosophy. I found that if one is to look at the philosophy of my people, then I must look at history, and we cannot look at our history without looking at spirituality. Religion has a part to play in that.

One day I was in class studying the Ancient Greeks and I had a striking realisation. Of course this is contested, but I realised that many of the other students could culturally connect to what we were studying in a way that I could not. It was deeply hurtful to me that I could study Philosophy for five years and not once study ancient African philosophy prior to the fight against colonialism.

Interestingly I felt deeply vindicated in my pursuit when I saw my surname on an unfamiliar title in a Lagos bookshop. I picked it up and found out that I have an ancestor who was a philosopher – Reverend E.M. Lijadu – he was a theologian who published a classic study on Yoruba mythology towards the end of the 19th century.

For my thesis, I looked at the work of wonderful Yoruba thinkers and philosophers such as Dr. Sophie Oluwole and Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí. It became clear to me that the religious arm of the colonial project in Nigeria is responsible for why a lot of the philosophical work we generated prior to colonialism has been dismissed as *esoteric* at best, but at its worst, demonic.

And can you talk a little bit about your process and perhaps if it connects with some of the ways you've used your research and background in philosophy and how those have developed in this piece?

In a philosophical sense, a lot of the artists I admire have always dealt with themselves first. And so I think that's what I'm trying to do with *Guardian Angel*, to deal with myself and the questions that I need to reconcile around spirituality. James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* is a huge inspiration in that regard.

Now in terms of process, I started with my personal archive. Three or four years ago, I felt the impulse to interview and film my grandmother, so I really began by sorting through my personal archives.

I also love to talk and generate within community, and so a big part of my research came from conversations with

the people around me. Speaking with friends, understanding the ways in which they reconcile, concede, ignore, run away or embrace their spiritual practice of choice or none. There is a real tension that comes up being a Nigerian colonised person, of trying to move away from the myopia of Western influence but unsure of what one is running toward. A huge amount of those conversations were with my collaborator Ngozi Olojede, with whom I worked on the concept and spatial design.

I see my film as a sort of collage, which my process mirrors. Some of the footage you see in the film is my personal archive – from a trip to Dakar from years recent and far in Lagos and with family here in London. The score itself, some of which I will be playing live, is made up of stitched together voicemails, songs discovered on Youtube and music I created myself.

Great, is it easy for you to describe how a person will experience your work?

I hope that this work prompts people not to ask each other, 'What are you (Christian, atheist, Muslim)?' but rather, 'What questions do you have? What questions will we always have? What are you afraid of and what makes you feel connected?'

I think that there is a certain comfort in discomfort I have and I enjoy it because this *comfort in discomfort* is more honest, and that is what I hope to share.

And how does the performative aspect to your work relate?

I am also a DJ and what I love the most about DJing is the unpredictability and the freedom to play based on or as a response to the collective feeling in the space, and Image Behaviour presented the perfect opportunity to integrate musical performance into my moving image work.

The ability to play aspects of my score live is crucial to the work as it firmly emphasises the point that the work is not a full stop but more like an ellipsis. It allows me to respond to the feel of the space in real time. The ephemeral nature of performance also mirrors the ethereal nature of my grandmother who inspired *Guardian Angel*.

I'd love to thank the incredibly talented women that I collaborated with on this project with: Ngozi Olojede, Mimi Koku, Ese Otubu, Omowunmi Ogundipe and Anne-Lise Agossa.

Kemi Lijadu is a multi-disciplinary Nigerian artist with a focus on the moving image. Lijadu's work explores collective memory across the Atlantic, diasporic music and family history. She graduated from Stanford University with a M.A. in Philosophy, where she focused on Greek and African philosophical systems. Her work explores the interplay within and between these two worlds.

Kadeem Oak



Effra Creek! Effra Wash! Effra Splash!

ICA Theatre, Saturday 19 March, 7pm

Effra Creek! Effra Wash! Effra Splash! (2022) is a newly commissioned film installation work that reflects upon the River Effra, a lost tributary of the London Thames. The project examines the cultural and sonic ecology of the river's course as it runs from Norwood, through Brixton to Vauxhall. The work explores Afro-Caribbean histories and themes of industry, community, landscape and memory.

Q&A

Where did the ideas for your work in *Image Behaviour* come from?

The ideas around the work started to develop during my time living in Brixton. I often draw inspiration from subject matter within my immediate locality and during that time I started to notice a recurrence in signage, road names, pub names, everyday things which denote the Effra River and water in general (Effra Road, Atlantic Road, Brixton Water Lane and so on) but I found it curious that there wasn't any obvious visible stream flowing through Brixton. I also have vivid memories of visiting Brixton as a child and getting a sense of the strong Caribbean community there. My motivation for the film was really to examine ways of thinking about this invisible river through a cultural and metaphorical lens – thinking about time, erosion, disappearing or marginalised communities, geological change, migration and identity among other things.

Is the Effra River a new subject for you, or is it something that you explore in other works?

My first exploration into the Effra as a subject matter for making work was in a film I made called *Brixton Lift*, which I made at the artist workers' cooperative not/nowhere, formerly No.w.here Bethnal Green in 2014. The film incorporated a mix of 16mm film, SD video and hand-drawn illustrations; and documented the now discontinued/shutdown and conveniently called Brixton Splash celebration, an annual street party which took place from 2006 to 2015 in commemoration of Jamaican Independence Day. The street party was

located along much of the route of the Effra and I think it's here where I started to make that connection between the ecology of the river and the cultural occurrences which ebb and flow above ground. This work is currently on display at Cubitt Gallery as part of Languid Hands' curatorial fellowship programme No Real Closure.

Can you tell me a little bit about your practice more broadly? Are you working predominantly with moving image?

I enjoy working with moving image however I don't feel too loyal to one particular medium. I find it easier to understand and communicate ideas with the filmed and photographed image over other mediums. I enjoy that visual language and I'm interested in developing ways of thinking about moving image within the context of sculpture, installation, sound, discovery, collaboration and social documentation. My practice is about working with the vernacular and reconfiguration of artists' moving image, storytelling and experimental documentation. I like to examine the ways in which we share and articulate a sense of place through themes such as time, locality, sound and ecology while exploring new perspectives on Black British identity and a diasporic heritage today within a framework of nature and landscape.

Is the idea of place something that comes up regularly in your work?

Yes, I think it is important as a mechanism for your own self discovery as well as finding ways for your work to resonate with others. I made a video piece called *Metal Work* which was filmed in Kelham Island, Sheffield. It is one of the oldest industrial manufacturing sites in the city (where I grew up) and it still has the steam engine (now situated in a heritage museum) that my grandfather worked on after migrating from Jamaica to Sheffield in the '50s. That film focuses on themes of redundant forms of production and the dichotomy between labour and leisure. And more recently I made a film called *Le Mistral Wind* which takes the historic port city of Marseille as a significant site in Afro-pean history, recording the geology of the Calanques (a coastal area) which points across the Mediterranean Sea towards Algeria, Northern Africa. The film is a short document, recording joyful moments of a Black Marseillais family playing by the sea. Nothing really happens, however it felt like an important record. At the time, I'd been reading a lot of accounts from Black writers and their experience of living in or travelling to Europe such as James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon and Johny Pitts, which influenced that work.

And can you talk a little bit about your process of making?

Work for Effra Creek! Effra Wash! Effra Splash! started by gaining a good physical understanding of the course of the river. I walked the route numerous times and I feel like on those journeys, looking for real indications of the route, almost became a performative aspect of the work in itself. I sourced several books on the history of the river, its uses and changes in perception from pre-medieval London to its submergence in the mid-1800s. I was able to work with several collaborators in the production of this work, something which I haven't done too much of before. The illustrated map that features in the film was created by graphic designer Matthew Lewis (Creative Director of *It's Freezing in LA!*, a climate change magazine) and was drawn from maps found in the Lambeth Council Archives and the work of archivist Jon Newman. The digital renderings of Brixton cultural artefacts was created by digital artist Jason

Ramanah (Unreal Explorations). The linocut motifs were drawn by artist Jack Fawdry Tatham with sound design by the artist cooperative Black Shuck.

My work often starts out with a specific intention or atmosphere that I'd like to communicate on screen. For example, much of the film was shot using an ultra-wide angle lens, a choice I made because I wanted the viewer to feel enveloped by the expansive landscape images on screen while still being able to register a level of warped intimacy and closeness to the subject simultaneously. When it comes to editing, for me the filmed footage doesn't always have to be perfect, it's just a starting point from which to collage and manipulate the image. Once the editing process is underway, I begin to think about the best installation situation that will support the ideas within the film.

How involved do you get in the edit? Is that something you work on yourself or do you work with people on that?

I enjoy editing my own film work as a way of moulding the narrative, gaining a real understanding of how to communicate certain ideas, and to establish a specific rhythm. I think editing is a really important skill to keep building on in my own practice. For this film I'm also working with Black Shuck in this regard, in a consultation capacity.

What about the presentation format?

I think the flexibility that presenting this work in a space like the ICA Theatre provides is a good fit for my ideas around being able to experiment with the presentation of moving-image work in an immersive and haptic context. The ambitions of the Image Behaviour programme sit well with my own interest in the history of artists' moving-image production and forms of storytelling. I see this format of event-type moving image presentation as a kind of showcase of my experiments and a space to trial new things. Following this I'd like to show the work for a longer duration in an exhibition format.

I'm incorporating a variety of graphic mediums into the film project. While mainly filming in 4K digital video, the work employs a medley of graphic mediums: handmade linocut motifs, virtually rendered 3D graphics, drone footage, archive photography, 16mm hand painted film, cartography and elements of found and previous work made about/in Brixton/The Effra. In the space alongside the film sits a traditional Jamaican sound system, one that you would find on the Notting Hill Carnival parade floats (trucks), which will play the soundtrack of the film.

Without giving too much away, how would you describe your new work?

My film installation *Effra Creek! Effra Wash! Effra Splash!* reflects upon the River Effra, which is a lost tributary of the London Thames. The title denotes the different names that the Effra had along the course of its route: The Washway, Vauxhall Creek, among others. The project examines the cultural and sonic ecology of the river's course as it runs from Norwood, through Brixton to Vauxhall. Much of the Effra now resides underground having been intercepted by London's underground sewer system in the 19th century; however it can be heard and seen at specific sites, at its source along Norwood Ridge and down through the Lambeth area. The work explores Afro-Caribbean histories and themes of industry, community, landscape and memory.

My aim for this new work was for it to feel somewhat timeless, periodless, distinctly London but void of too much human everyday traffic or distraction – I wanted the dub

sound system and soundtrack to take ownership of often very painterly, even Victorian style landscape imagery on screen. I'd like to meld together the muddyness and greyness of these London scenes (its English flora and fauna) with the sound elements of Jamaican music culture.

How would you explain the work to people who don't know London or the significance of Brixton?

Brixton has one of the largest Afro-Caribbean communities in Britain; it's synonymous with Jamaican culture and the Windrush Generation. Brixton historically has been a site for social change and resistance against police brutality. Through the work it's my intention to also highlight the ongoing gentrification, out of place building developments, evictions and rising rental prices ongoing in the area and the cultural erasures happening in the community allegorically by tracking the movement and disappearance of the river as it shifted from public open space to a private hidden space.

My process of working on this film was to simply ask myself a few questions such as, if I were to make a film about something you can't see how would I go about it? How do you film/record something that is lost, forgotten, disappearing / being erased – what other senses come to the fore, what else can you emphasise and how can sound help to tell the story and how does specificity of sound signify a location, a site or community?

Will there be a narrative or a dialogue that makes that connection with the West Indian community in Brixton?

One element of this can be found in the digital renderings made of food stalls and shop fronts found in Brixton Market and Atlantic Road. I've selected these fragments to be rendered digitally almost as cultural artefacts, relics; the specificity of this aesthetic is a reminder of the limitations of appropriation and imitation. In the installation you will also find images and renderings of stone circles – in sound system culture, speakers are traditionally presented in a ring or circle or stacks, something which is common place in Brixton (to this day) – but this circular formation reminds me a lot of ancient stone circles, and I'd like to cement the idea of these sound systems as a kind of ancient cultural artefact much in the same way as the ancient stone circles I've encountered in Britain's countryside. Along with the underground recorded murmurings of the Effra River I feel there's a natural internal vibration that dub/reggae music produces which resonates well between the two ideas. I feel the heavy bass sounds and vibrations in the body that these speakers create synchronise well with our connection with the ground and the underground vibrations/movements of the Effra River.

Kadeem Oak is an artist and filmmaker based in London. His work is concerned with the vernacular and reconfiguration of artist's moving image, storytelling and experimental documentation. He examines the ways in which we share and articulate a sense of place through time, locality, sound and ecology while exploring new perspectives on Black British identity and a diasporic heritage today.

Deborah-Joyce Holman



ICA Theatre, Thursday 24 March, 7pm

A new two-channel moving image work documenting two performers reciting excerpts of the seminal *Cinéma Vérité* film *Portrait of Jason* by Shirley Clarke. Meditating on Black and queer subjecthood and portraiture in visual cultures, this work employs cinematographic tools from a wide range of reference points such as *Cinéma Vérité*, social media and popular culture and employs repetition and opacity in order to retain agency.

Q&A

Where did the initial idea for your new work come from?

I read an essay by Tavia Nyong'o a couple years ago called 'Crushed Black'. It's a chapter of his book *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (2018), which has informed my practice a lot. In this specific chapter, Nyong'o considers the 1967 *Cinéma Vérité* film *Portrait of Jason* by Shirley Clarke through its technical faults, such as crushed blacks and blur, which allow spaces for the agency of the film's protagonist Jason Holliday. I couldn't shake the film after watching it, as I was taken aback by how violent and extractive it is, and felt I needed to engage with it in some way through my own work.

This project has grown out of two endeavors or questions: on one hand, I'm expanding on my engagement with tactics of refusal, non-performance, and other aspects of a positioning in opposition to the short-sighted and insufficient logic of Black representation that the Black struggle for liberation is co-opted into. And on the other hand, I hope it can be an amplification and an act of solidarity with Jason.

How does moving image fit into your practice and what do you explore in your practice more broadly?

I work with different media. A lot of my work has been object- or text-based. In 2020, I was commissioned to make a moving image work, which was the first time I even ever thought about it. I'm interested in exploring the limitations and possibilities of whichever medium I'm working with at that moment, so I was intrigued to work through moving image and to explore what questions arise through the process. In working with moving image, one aspect that I really enjoy is how collaborative the nature of it is and how much space there is to consider the process of working

together, which hopefully informs the work, though this is sort of a project away from what is made explicit in the work itself.

As of the last couple of years I've been thinking about notions of refusal, especially in relation with visual culture and popular media. This has been the red thread of my practice, conceptually and formally. With object- and text-based works, I've been turning away from portraiture or figuration. I was interested in what would happen when that entry point is denied and a more in-depth engagement with this buzzword 'identity' is required. With moving image, I feel much more drawn to feature people, which has led me to consider ways to approach this with the same questions of refusal and illegibility.

Do you feel like there's a direct connection to some of your other work that you've made?

With this project, I was thinking about the refusal enacted by acts of recital and repetition. This includes engagements with notions of time in terms of non-linearity and cross-temporal engagement with Jason Holliday and Shirley Clarke's portrait of him. My more recent works include asemic text drawings, which were on view at Yaby in Madrid in 2021, and cardboard cut-outs painted with layers of black bitumen paint, *Untitled (for scale)*, exhibited in a group exhibition that's just closed at Kunstverein Last Tango in Zurich. With the former, I was exploring language, slipperiness and illegibility, which were things I was again coming back to when working on the script, and approaching multidisciplinary artist Rebecca Bellantoni, who also made a film for Image Behaviour, and artist, writer and curator Imani Mason Jordan for the performances of it. With the latter, I was interested in the circulation of images of Black people, non-performance as acts of refusal and opacity, which are themes I've definitely had on my mind when working on this project.

Can you talk about the process of making this work?

I wanted to make a two-channel installation with one actor on each screen. They would engage either in dialogue or monologue that would overlap at points. While working on the dialogue, I returned to *Portrait of Jason*. After conversations with my friend Noémi Michel, a brilliant writer, academic and critic based in Geneva, I grew very interested in the moments where Jason declares himself to be XYZ, like, 'I'm a lazy cat', 'I'm a stone whore', 'I'm a truth teller', as well as those where he promises to go into speaking about his suffering and his trauma as prompted by Shirley Clarke and Carl Lee off camera without getting into it. I decided to transcribe only these specific moments, and to build the rest of the film from there, led by the words, by Rebecca's and Imani's performances.

Was the process of working with a script and performers new?

That was definitely new. I was interested in working with the two performers, Rebecca Bellantoni and Imani Mason Jordan, because they have a practice of refusal or complicating 'representation', as well as a specific relationship to performing for camera. It was important to me that I have a personal relationship with both of the performers, so that there is an element of trust and they would feel comfortable just walking off camera if they need to. The rehearsals with Rebecca, whose voice I am just completely floored by, have contributed a lot in the final stages of the film. They both bring something really, really different to the work.

Do you think the link to the film *Portrait of Jason* is important for people to know?

Yeah. One of the reasons I wanted to engage with the 1967 film *Portrait of Jason* now, in 2022, was because the film really exemplifies a mainstream appetite for Black trauma on camera, which speaks to our times, too. It emphasises the voyeurism on the part of Shirley Clarke, as well as audiences, and the mythification of Jason at the hands of the white filmmaker who cut the 1 hour 47 minute film together from 12 hours' worth of footage. These are all very contemporary and ongoing issues – we've all seen how June 2020 was fuelled, the demand for trauma porn that ensued and the short-sighted, empty gestures of making Black folk 'more visible' across the mainstream as well as in the arts. So, as much of my practice, with this project I was interested in working through a complicated relationship with visibility, performance and portraiture, through the cracks in Jason's performance – not those where the supposed 'true' him comes out, but those where he refuses to be pinned down and counters his capture.

Deborah-Joyce Holman is a multidisciplinary artist based in London, UK, and Basel, Switzerland. Holman employs a variety of media in her practice, such as text, sculpture, installation, film- and image-making. Holman's work has recently been shown at Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2022); Last Tango, Zurich (2022); Unfinished Live, The Shed, New York City & House of Electronic Arts, Basel (2021); 7th Athens Biennial (2021); TransBona-Halle, Basel (2021); Kiefer Hablitzel Prize nomination exhibition, Basel (2021); Conceptual Fine Arts Live, Milano (2021); Cherish, Geneva (2021); Yaby, Madrid (2021); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2021); La Quadriennale di Roma (2020); Material Art Fair, Mexico City (2020); A Soft Spiral (solo), Mikro, Zurich (2019); Fondation Entreprise Ricard, Paris (2019); Auto Italia, London (2019); Live In Your Head, Geneva (2018); Alienze, Lausanne (2018); OSLO10, Basel (2017); Locale Due, Bologna (2016), among others. As part of her curatorial practice, she worked as Associate Director (2020–21) and as Associate Curator (2021–22) at East London arts organisation Auto Italia. She is the founding director of 1.1, a platform for early-career practitioners in arts, music and text-based practices, with an exhibition space in Basel, Switzerland, which ran 2015–20. Deborah has curated the 2018 and 2019 annual group exhibitions for Les Urbaines, Lausanne.

Joseph June Bond



Get It Out The Mud!

ICA Theatre, Saturday 26 April
Installation open 12–6pm, performance 7pm

The foreshore of the Thames is an organic, constantly shifting mass – digesting and regurgitating, listening and echoing back. *Get It Out The Mud!* is an experimental moving image work that acts as a messenger to these slippages through projections, sound and performance. At night, the immersive environment becomes a site for encounters with drag and dance artist OK Norris, and a sonic gathering with DJ and artist Ashley Holmes.

Q&A

So, first question, can you talk a little bit about where the idea for the work came from?

This body of work began last summer, during a research and development residency, as part of Siobhan Davies Studios' Percolate Programme. The opportunity presented itself to facilitate a week-long communing of artists, athletes, movement therapists, collaborators and mentors. Movement artist and my long-term collaborator OK Norris, national boxing champion Oriance Lungu, players from the basketball community I coach, and many others brought their distinctive, embodied knowledge into the inquisitive, shared space. Collectively, we began exploring forms of physical resistance and warping on the body, whilst discussing this idea of the thinking body. Rather than performing choreography, or something that it knows, this body is figuring it out, finding its way and failing often.

During lockdown, I spent nearly every low tide mudlarking (scavenging the exposed riverbed for lost or discarded things) down on the Thames foreshore. Mud is this material of strange, glorious consistencies that place resistance, weight and drag on the body. It's also a messenger, a digestive system and an ear that hears and archives the chorus of languages, ever-changing dialects and hundreds of years of slang that have been audible along the Thames. It's a body that swallows these slivers of history, waste, ritualistic offerings and then, twice a day, spits them back up at high tide in gorgeous gatherings.

How does this new piece relate to your wider body of work?

Over the last two or three years, I've been slowly feeling through bodies of fluid, fluid bodies and bodily fluids as repositories for movement, sound and knowledge. Abundant spirits stir within these temporal, tidal spaces along the Thames, where the sea transforms into the city. They've always been portals through which a perceived otherness, unknowns and futures have emerged into the heart of London. Last year I produced *Thames Whale*, a sound work supported by the ICA and NTS, which was broadcast on the BBC. For as long as I can remember I've felt this deep kinship with whales. They are unfathomably ancient, alien and yet so intimately intertwined with humanity. The project explored extraordinary accounts, dating back to the 17th century, of whales making their way up the Thames.

How does choreography and performance come into your work and practice?

I danced until I was about 14 or 15 and only really stopped because I was being bullied for it. It was around that age where all you want is to fit in and not be noticed, you know? As always, these things never leave our bodies, so movement warped itself and emerged as these different practices that were less explicitly recognised as dance. It took more than a decade for me to recognise that my sound work, exhibition design, basketball coaching, workshop facilitation, mudlarking, all of it is rooted in the movement of bodies. I guess I got to a point where I had to stop pretending that I hadn't always been dancing, in one way or another. I think this is the first body of work that honours how movement found ways to weave itself through my practice before I came to that acknowledgment.

Is it easy for you to kind of describe succinctly the new work for Image Behaviour?

You know really, the mud guides this work. It's a tangling together, or constellation, of historical, cultural and spiritual sediment. An integral part of making the work has been resisting this very seductive urge to untangle the aura, piece together all these residual fragments, and make sense. Instead I learned to cherish the intangibility, trusting that the meanings linger in the slippages in-between and will always translate imperfectly.

In *The Skin of the Film*, Laura U. Marks talks about how words, sounds and images trap as much as they free. That was an idea that we returned to throughout this process, often asking ourselves whether we were trapping the feeling, or freeing it. This reverberating question really nourished a letting go, a letting loose, where we stopped trying to wrangle and wrestle the work into being. In the same way that the mud, the clay, the water truly know, the work began to communicate what it wanted to be and let us wholeheartedly trust and follow its guidance, as you would an old friend, or a loved one.

The film is of, about and for bodies: fluid bodies, precarious bodies, thinking bodies, queer bodies. I think of the film as a body itself too. The wriggling reels of 16mm and 8mm film are its intestines. Their textural markings are a delicious tonic of body fluids, scavenged natural pigments, rubbings of the foreshore, and pollutants in the Thames.

Can you talk a little bit from a practical perspective about how you approach making the work and how the kind of more physical performance elements relate to the moving image and how you negotiate the two?

This project began in asking the mud what it's heard and shadowing those echoes. During the residency at Siobhan Davies Studios, Far From The Norm dancer Nāïma Souhaïr

helped develop an idea I'd had to generate movement through imitating a whale's echolocation. In practice, this meant one of us would be in the middle of the space with our eyes closed whilst others moved around making sounds with their bodies, their mouths, their teeth, their feet, and you sought the source of these sounds through the space.

Throughout the project, the body has been in this perpetual state of reacting and responding to stimuli. We've moved on uneven, precarious surfaces, held on to each other's limbs, struggled and moved seductively on wobbly exercise bubbles, and kept taught distances between two or three bodies within resistance bands.

The installation at the ICA is a site for the filming and a site for the film. As the lone source of light, a moon perhaps, the projection is leaky, porous and flows out into the darkness of the space onto the bodies of the performers and through the audience cruising the space. The moving image is never wholly captured or held by the permeable, translucent gauze, so there's a suppleness and fluidity. It dances in the space like silt, releasing these moments of thick, sensuous darkness and womb-like warmth through which sound, scent and touch can spill. Juniper is burned here to arouse the senses and ward off evil spirits, as it has been throughout British folklore. It takes root along ancient pilgrimage routes, roadsides and edge land spaces that are so often sites for queer cruising.

Joseph June Bond is an artist, community organiser and basketball coach. Their interdisciplinary practice centres intergenerational knowledge sharing and collaboration through practical workshops, sports methodologies and open source resources. Bond's recent research and projects explore bodies of fluid, fluid bodies and body fluids as porous repositories of ritual, movement and sound. They work predominantly within site-specific contexts and peer-to-peer platforms including artist run spaces, online radio and DIY communities. Bond facilitates a weekly, inclusive space for women, non-binary and trans people to play basketball in London.

OK Norris (WET MESS) is a drag and dance artist who works across cabaret, film, performance and theatre. Their live work explores how the structure of society impacts and shapes our identity across bodies, behaviour and adornment. They perform to laughable, grotesque and disturbing ends, through dance, lip syncing, DIY spectacle and dark humour.

Ashley Holmes (b. Luton, 1990) is an artist and DJ based in Sheffield. His interdisciplinary practice combines sound, moving image, performance, installation, radio broadcasts and ongoing collaborative projects. Holmes' recent work is informed by an interest in the value and potential of music as a research methodology that allows us to think relationally within broader social, cultural, and political discourses and reimagine notions of listening, storytelling, collaboration, ownership, place-making and belonging. Ashley currently hosts Tough Matter, a monthly broadcast on NTS Radio, and also facilitates Open Deck – a series of gatherings giving space to collectively listen and hold discursive space around relationships to music, sound and oral histories.

Rebecca Bellantoni



First, everything happens. C.R.Y

ICA Theatre, Wednesday 30 March, 7pm

First, everything happens. C.R.Y (2022) is the first part of a trilogical new moving image and performance work by Rebecca Bellantoni that deals with the realities and magic of the city, looking at the urbanised landscape, materials and past actions/movements. Focusing on a section of the Westway flyover and a song taught to them in childhood by community member Patsy Herbert, this new work imagines the city, its past encounters and their energetic traces as a positive trigger for meditation, transformation and growth. Ultimately the work speaks to the creation, dissolving of and regeneration of community and self.

Q&A

What is the background to your new work *First, everything happens. C.R.Y (2022)*?

It comes from a larger project called *C.R.Y*, which stands for Concrete Regenerative Yearnings. It is a project about the spiritual lives of people living in the city and the materials used to build the urban environment. I try to consider the experiences that I and others have had while living in the city that have allowed me/us to thrive and to grow, as well as the things that I/we used in order to satiate, to calm and to move forward.

There is a song I was taught when I was nine years old by a member of my community, and I wanted to examine that song while thinking about the community – the formation of community and the disillusionment of community through that song. I decided that I would actually do that with the person who taught it to me, and that I would collaborate with them to make this moving image/performance work.

What does your practice encompass?

My practice is broad in terms of the materials that I use and the works that I've made. It's often the idea that forms the starting point of the work and guides the material direction of it. I started off working with photography and then veered off towards sculpture and installation. Then not long before my daughter was born, I found myself in a situation where

I had no studio space and no disposable income to buy materials. I decided that I still wanted to keep on making work, and that's how I came to performance.

At the time I wasn't really advertising that I was going to be doing something and that started me thinking about how to document those performances, and while documenting those performances, I started to think about reproduction of colour, and I realised often documentation doesn't give you the feeling of the live performance. So, I started to think about how I could do that. What could I use in the editing process to push forward what it was that I was trying to give through these live performances? I think really that's how I came to moving image work. It was through trying document performance and then finding out that there was this new language that, for me, is related to photography, that allowed me to express something else.

I work with sounds, I work with text, in something that I call sound-text. I've worked with concrete, I've worked with textiles, I've worked with glass, I've worked with movement. I mean, my materials are endless really. So, I think that my practice just continues to grow in that way. Every time a new idea comes, if there's a new material, then I'll figure out how to make that work.

Are there any instances where you involve others in your performances?

For all of my performances, I have worked with my long-term collaborator artist Rowdy SS on the sound elements. In terms of what is seen I just realised the other day that actually, I am in general the sole performer in my performances. I hadn't really considered it earlier, other than to consider myself a proxy of myself. I had always just been making the work and I just so happened to be the person that could fulfil the role of me. The new work that I'm making now for the ICA is the first time that there will be an additional person in the performance, which is very exciting for me.

Would you call your *C.R.Y* works a series?

I don't know if I would call them a series, because there's so many variations between the works, but I think that in the future we'll see how they tie together. They all have the same origin. They're all considering the same things, but one time I might be considering an actual solid material, another time I might be considering, for example in this work, a song. They're very different things, and so I think only time will tell if they become a series and how they live together as a body of work. I don't think I'm approaching it like that at the moment. It feels like research in a way. Research and making.

Can you talk a little bit about your process and how you start in relation to research and how you develop your ideas into works?

It's really difficult actually, because I think that the research doesn't come first, but the research has been going on for so long now that I'm not sure where it starts or ends. There's always a new piece, a new text, a new work, or a new conversation to be had that might alter what's happening. The actual works come to me in what feel like visions, and I go from there. The visions involve all of the things that have come before, seen in a new way. Something is removed for clarity, something is added for depth.

So, it's like the ideas and concepts behind the work are ongoing. That's an ongoing process, but then every once in a while I might be reading something or listening to something, and then a visual will jump into my head, a feeling develop in my body that is attached to my thinking.

It's difficult to pin down a process; research is important, but the time to close my eyes and to see things is very important as well.

Can you describe your new work?

The work is about the creation and dissolution of community and the self, and about those cycles. So, something gets created, something dissolves, and then something gets created again from what's left over. I think that there are similarities in community and the self in that kind of regenerative urge that exists within them.

What is your relationship to audience; do you perceive of audience or have expectations of an audience for your work?

I don't perceive of an audience. I think I consider the audience something more like, not participants, but conductors, in a way. The audience join in this thing with me and we become conductors for something, and that something can be different each time. But I think the audience helps me to solidify intention, that the very act of turning up to join, to experience, to watch this thing, solidifies intention. What I truly hope to do is always provide some kind of space in which people can have their own room for meditation.

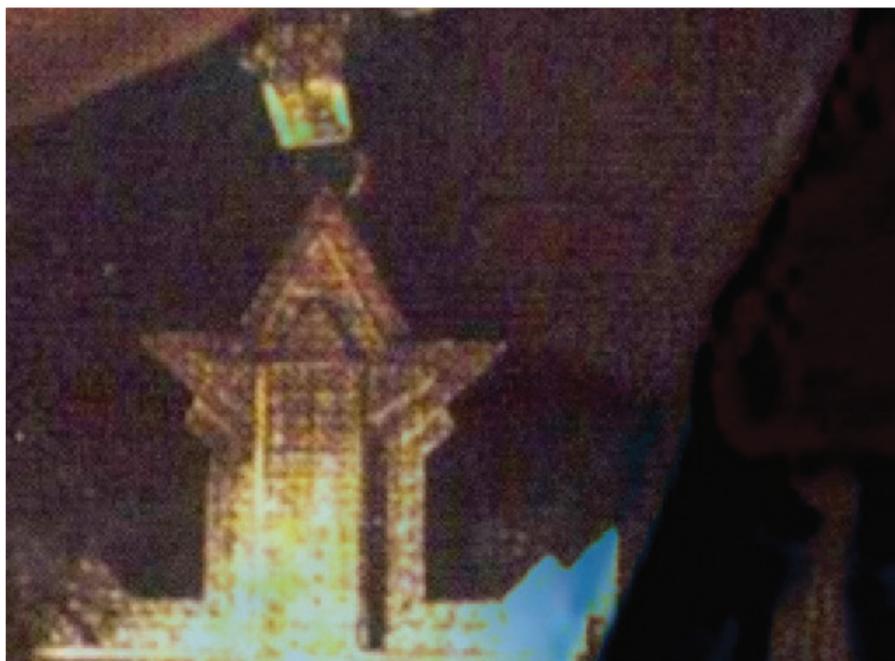
I don't mean meditation in a sit down and close your eyes, empty your mind type of way. I mean, to meditate on what it is that you're seeing and what that brings up in you. That's how I perceive of the audience, and I want to do the same thing myself in all of my performances. I've never answered any questions before I get to the performance. So what I'm doing for myself is what I hope I'm doing for the participants/conductors.

What is your relationship between the screen and live performance?

It's the first time I would've done something to this scale. There have been times when I've made performances that have included multiple screens at once, as well as projection. For example in the performance *Run come water*. The thing that I'm most interested in thinking about actually is the way that the live performance interacts with the screen, and its physicality. So things like shadows and obscuring what's on the screen with the body or possibly scenography or sculpture. That for me is something that I'm really interested in, but that interest only came about through doing. There were some things that happened while I was doing, that I realised, 'Oh, this is more interesting, than if it hadn't happened.' So for me, the relationship between performance and the screen is fraught in a way. It isn't an easy relationship in my practice, but it's something that I'm enjoying working through.

Rebecca Bellantoni's practice mines everyday occurrences and abstracts them, with a focus on the lives of Black people, in particular those living in cities. Investigating, through the lens of metaphysics, philosophy, spirituality and the aesthetics of them, the artist considers the concept of the accepted/expected 'real' and the experiential 'real', looking at how these removed borders may offer meditative experiences and portals to self, collective reasoning and healing thought. In material concerns Bellantoni works with materials that proliferate our everyday and within contexts that are both familiar and unfamiliar, aiming to skew/reinterpret their meanings and future encounters with those substances. Recent works have been shown at and with Frieze LIVE 2021; Den Stroom, The Hague (Languid Hands); Tate Modern, London (Rowdy SS); Raven Row, London (Nora-Swatje Almes); PUBLICs, Helsinki (Adelaide Bannerman); Art Night London (Nikki Agency); and Goldsmiths Library, London (Present Futures).

@KO___OL



The AudiTT

ICA Theatre, Friday 1 April, 7pm

I stood at the back of the room, laughing, making jokes, and I was, I don't know, fucking amazed. I was so fucking proud of us. I don't know why. I just was. We looked like kids that had done well in life.

The AudiTT is a two-channel film and sculpture examining memory and lore; oral, aural and behavioural, tradition, millennial folklore and material culture. The work explores the topics of recurring dreams and core memories.

Q&A

Where did the idea come from for your new work?

Where did the idea come from? I guess a few different places. Music is a big part of my life, my day to day, so I tend to draw a lot of inspiration from that. I think that So Solid Crew are really important as a group, a black British group. Just even as a cultural phenomenon. It was like the best glitch ever. They succeeded in spite of everything being against them and doing it all while being fly as fuck. A metaphor. I think it's just very interesting, looking at it from a few different perspectives and trying to place that in context now. That was what I was thinking about.

My little cousin is ten and he lives here in Lagos, and he is obsessed with drill music. So initially, it started off as mainly being about So Solid Crew and all the things that they stood for and the symbols that they used, and all that kind of stuff. Then I just tried to bring it a bit closer to home by channeling that through the lens of my little cousin, and how these are the kids that...he doesn't even know who So Solid Crew are, but they pioneered a sound in the early 2000s that has kind of led to what is happening now. So just connecting the dots. I like connecting the dots between things, basically.

Is it easy for you to describe the work and how you experience it? Does your work have a narrative focus?

I think it's looking at how things are passed down, whether that's through family or different mediums that could be like TV, CD, vinyl, leaflets, magazines, all of that stuff. It doesn't exist in a linear way. You can pick up a magazine

from, I don't know, the early '90s and find something in there that can be activated now, really. The minute you come into contact with it. I think that's what I'm exploring in this. It's hard. There's a lot of different things that go into it, like I said, connect the dots between the different things that interest me in it and how it's relevant to me and maybe try and get someone to look at someone or something differently.

You mentioned before that music is a major part of your life and work. Could you talk a little bit more about your practice?

Yeah. I guess I worked in, well, I still work in the music industry as a creative director, manager, and I run a label. I'm just always around incredible artists and friends. All the artists I work with tend to work with multiple mediums as well. Helping them come up with concepts, research, references, whether that's for the music, whether that's for the visuals or live shows. A lot of the things that I just do in my free time, whether that's just mining for images, records, blogs, or picking up old books, magazines, movies, just reference stuff. That gave me the opportunity to distill all stuff that I had been collecting in music videos, album covers and styling. All that sort of stuff. I always made things for myself, but never showed it really. Yeah, never really showed it until pretty recently. This is all pretty cool in that sense, but also like, fuck.

What about your other pieces of work that you've made recently and shown? Can you talk a little bit about whether there's any connection? Do you have a subject that all your works interlink and relate to? Or are you just trying out different things with each opportunity that you have?

I think they've mainly revolved around, so far, around 2003 as a year. Especially, even with this piece as well. That's just been a year. That was a pivotal point in my life – I was consuming things consciously, indiscriminately and voraciously. So I really wanted to explore that year. We wanted to explore that year in my life because I also keep diaries and stuff. I actually still have a lot of stuff from that time that is really funny to read and look through now as well. I think it was also a very pivotal year for black music both British and US music, and TV as well. There were a lot of things happening that I think the legacy of them is really important.

So yeah, again, all the things I've shown are music based as well. I showed this piece at Swab Art Fair that was kind of...well, I mean it's loosely music related, but it was looking, again, at 2003. It was meant to be a teenager's backpack, so I had like a school report in there, using my own school reports, excerpts from my diary, a Nokia 7600 and an FHM magazine Beyoncé cover from November 2003. Then I'd made these mugs that had a particular pose that Dizzy Rothko (sic), 50 Cent on his *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* album, and also Jonny Wilkinson would do before he would kick. It's a big rap trope. That was the year that *Boy in da Corner* and *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* came out, and England won the Rugby World Cup. I think the three things side by side tell a story. I liked playing around with what connected them and it was 'tea/e': 'dirtee', 'kicking tee', 'drinking tea', 'fif-tea'. 'I'm not a mook'...'I'm not a mug'... Just silly little like word play. Maybe I'm the only one that finds it funny, but yeah, it makes me chuckle.

Yeah. Well, it sounds personal but also super relevant to a lot of people. Can you talk a little bit about your process of approaching this work?

I guess there's the initial idea that I was just like, 'Okay, this would be cool'. Then going off and doing the research to see if it's actually possible to do how I want. I started finding all the available interviews, videos, magazines. I was buying old supplements of different newspapers, and different magazine covers. Even in that, I found this really rare magazine that they were on the cover of super early on. That opened up this whole other wormhole of stuff. So it's just very much a kind of gathering. Gathering all that stuff together and just seeing what jumps out to me. And this is how I zeroed in on the Audi TT.

So yeah, research. Then I spent a load of time trying to find the exact right pieces. It's a lot of research and finding the materials, because it's really important to me that the relics and pieces of the shrine sculpture are exact.

It was then coming to Lagos where it took a different turn, which I didn't expect, which was then, okay, now I can make a link back to my family and back to me. Making that loop. Which was super rewarding, because then it helped me carry on that process of, okay, how does my 11-year-old cousin aka DJ Frosty know all these drill songs. Whether it's London or Manchester, Birmingham, wherever. He's doing the accents, he knows them all. He's jokes, he's a star! He's just on TikTok. Yeah, he's on TikTok, basically. That's where he's finding all this stuff. He was the missing piece in everything that actually makes it relevant to what's going on today. How his generation shares things with each other and finds out about stuff.

Koyejo's work concerns itself with what he calls 'the sci-fi of everyday life'. Pulling inspiration from the unexpected profundity of casual conversations with taxi drivers, accidental field recordings or deeply transformative ancestral archives, Koyejo necessarily deploys an aggregation of medium – video, sound-mixing, promo-photography, messaging, song, fashion, blogging and sculpture on his journey to illuminate immanent unknowns.

Having ensured the imagery and audience for Moses Boyd's release *Dark Matter* in 2020, and LA Timpa and Dawana on his own label O___o?, Koyejo expands his own material language, scoping an urbanomic field of activity. One that functions within the iconographic currency of desired branded objects and the perished, evacuated capital of pop-art materialism.

The cosmological whole, its acoustic, gif anime, j-peg, snapchat, meme texture – our febrile media channels – offers no hierarchical distinction in an age of digital multiplicity. Koyejo renders the canonical porous, even obsolete, a characteristic insistence of our time. One single urgent taxonomy: the socialised, agravic coalescence of speech, sound and vision, with its diametric, Rorschach ghosting, impossible hi-hat geometries and unsettling architectural sub-sonics.

Koyejo digs deeper into subjects that we may initially meet with fear, such as the root of religion and African spirituality, and testifies that with a little bit of exploration, adjusted sub-realities and sur-fictions can ultimately be found and occupied.

Through intense examination of the effects of recurring dreams, psychedelics, pop culture and fantasy, Koyejo embodies the unquantifiable aspects of everyday life and cultural phenomena in his work, rendering his own personal love-hate relationship with intransigent consumerism, fleeting temporal digital imaging, religious ideology loss and the aestheticisation of ancestry.

Koyejo belongs to a generation of artists whose labour is concerned with existence in all its forms – how it plays out in reality through memory, music, and the myriad of things we collect and archive to remind ourselves of our short time here on earth.

Asuf Ishaq



Articles of Home

ICA Theatre, Thursday 21 April, 7pm

Asuf Ishaq's new moving image work *Articles of Home* (2022) narrates migration experience as told through a relationship with objects and places, things left behind by the artist's mother when she migrated to Britain. Drawing inspiration from Édouard Glissant, the piece will incorporate land and soil, recognising its symbolic significance as both a beginning and an endpoint, a transtemporal portal, an archive of migration. The event will explore Ishaq's practice through conversation with the artist and includes earlier related work and music.

Q&A

So the first question, where did your ideas come from for this new work *Articles of Home* (2022)?

I've been interested in family histories, especially with my parents' migration experience. A previous film I made, *Mother* (2020), was based on a fifty-year-old photograph of my mother as a personal family archive. This new work is a continuation of that, but my perspective is now looking at objects and places that carry personal connections, memories and histories.

For my research I have been reading a fascinating book *The Skin of The Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* by Laura U. Marks, which explores Gilles Deleuze and Walter Benjamin's ideas of objects as fossils and having auras. So my ideas about the representation of objects have developed from this research too.

And can you talk a little bit about your practice more widely?

Generally, my practice is concerned with themes of embodiment, fragmentation, displacement, migration, post-colonialism and personal memories. I look to the diasporic body as an evolving archive of experience that it transmits to the next generation. Within this framework I make sculpture, film, sound or photography, using each medium to open up to various ways of expressing narratives, emotions and ideas.

How does moving image fit into your practice? Is it something that you've always done or something that's fairly recent?

I've been working with moving image mostly in the last few years. I have a graphic design background, so I've been working with moving image for a while, but it's only now that I bring it into my art practice. I find moving image vibrant and exciting to experiment with, as I am interested in the sonic experience in relation to text, film footage, narrative and images. I enjoy the challenge of telling stories and conveying emotions through time-based work, as I can represent past experiences, and through the process of making, make sense of fragmented memories.

How would you describe your new work?

For *Articles of Home*, I was planning to visit Pakistan and film my mother's family village. But I couldn't because of the whole Covid crisis, so now I'm representing some parts of my film in CGI. I'm recreating a very old mango tree as well as the family graveyard. I weave in some of the film footage recordings of my mum and her objects. The film also goes into an imaginary place where she's burying objects into the ground in the family village, which is underwater for half the year. The tree, house and graves are all submerged. My intention is to express location, memory and culture through the sense of home, the past and longing to return. I work with live footage, CGI, narration and electronic soundscape. The sonic work is inspired by my previous experience as a club DJ, and I enjoy bringing this aspect into my work.

You mentioned that *Articles of Home* is a continuation from your previous work *Mother*. Could you talk a little bit about that work specifically?

Yes, sure. *Mother* involved a dialogue with my mother that centered around a 35mm photograph of my mother when she had just married my father. It was very damaged and torn, suggestive of the journey it had. The photograph is like a memory fragment: it opens up through the exercise of repair and remembering, drawing out memories and experiences. In the film I weave in interviews and images of the house where she lived. We sat to edit the photograph together exchanging experiences, mine of art making, and this overlap was a new experience for us.

Do you see this new work, which you've said connects with your previous work, as being one step in a longer series of works that interlink?

My film for Image Behaviour is a new distinct work, not part of a series, but there are certainly overlaps. My practice encompasses themes I am interested in such as the diasporic body and the body as an archive transmitting inter-generational experiences. I also use nature and soil to express cultural identity and ideas of rootedness and rootlessness. In this new work I am still interested in objects and places, fragments of memory and viewing objects as fossils that hold auras. This perspective is based on objects which have a life of their own for the owner. The objects tell us their own stories, a cultural and political narratives.

Can you talk a little bit about your process, if you have a typical process in which you make your work, and then maybe more specifically about the process behind making this work?

I normally have film footage based on an aspect or an idea, but I'm also really interested in discovering the nature of filming, accidents, movement of camera or a detail. Then I build around this using sound, text, still images and spoken word; discovery is an important aspect of my process. Sometimes I stage or create a fictionalised imaginary situation, where I provide instructions for re-enacting. Stories and narratives begin to appear, and I sometimes then expand on a story or an experience. I film my own footage and edit in Adobe Premiere, and create music with friends in Ableton Live. For this work, I collaborate with a 3D animation artist, learning as I go along. This opportunity has provided me with time to experiment with new elements such as CGI and in-depth sonic work.

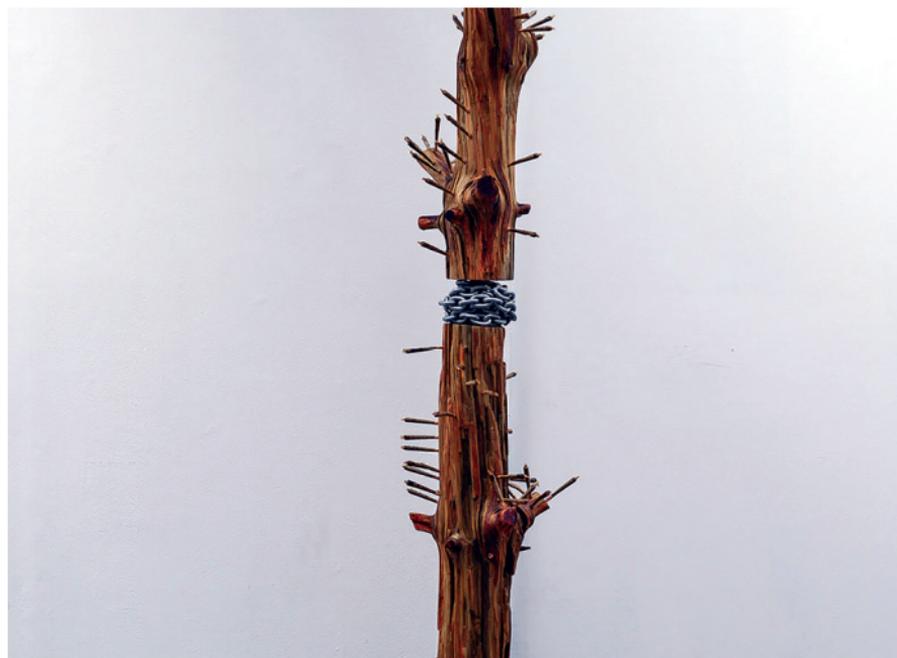
Your work is obviously deeply personal and involves family members. Are you comfortable with your work being described as biographical?

Yes, I don't mind that description. I draw into the rich experience of my family and culture, with the intention of having universal appeal though. So it hopefully resonates with people or viewers from all walks of life, from different cultures and backgrounds. I am dealing with themes of human experiences, life and emotions. I always have this at the top of my mind as I am researching and making. Personal narratives and lives contain politics and national memory, and politics drown out some of the individual and the personal. I bring my experience of identity, politics, post-colonial histories and cultural meaning into my work.

Asuf Ishaq's practice is concerned with themes of embodiment, fragmentation, displacement, migration and memory, often presenting the physical diasporic body as an evolving archive that transmits experience with cultural and political meaning. Ishaq's work unravels across spaces and narratives to reveal new meanings and draw out personal histories. Working with narration, words, sound and images, he deploys fiction, non-fiction, archival material, storytelling and personal memories in works that manifest as moving image, sculpture, installation, sonic and photography.

Ishaq lives and works in London, he grew up in Birmingham to Pakistani migrant parents. He studied MFA Fine Art at Goldsmiths (2020) and Graphic Design at Royal College of Art (1996). Ishaq has shown work recently at South London Gallery (New Contemporaries), Firstsite Colchester, Goldsmiths CCA, Safehouse 1 (2021), Saatchi Gallery (2020). Upcoming in summer 2022, The London Open exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery.

R.I.P. Germain



mew

ICA Theatre, Friday 17 June, 7pm

R.I.P. Germain's new moving image work *mew* (2022) documents an asemic exploration into rituals of burning that involve transmuting in order to call in the futures we long for. In holding a space to process the trauma, displacement and collective uncertainty of this time, *mew* continues a trajectory of creating different types of spaces to witness, muse and move towards change collectively.

Q&A

Where did the ideas for your new work come from?

The idea to make *mew* came from conversations I had with Amal Khalaf, Cubitt Artists Director of Programmes, and Serpentine Galleries Civic Curator. She's a good friend of mine, and during the time my solo show *Dead Yard* was on at Cubitt she began to tell me about rituals you can do to process trauma and use as modes of self-healing. The rituals she taught me mainly centered around doing moon-cycle-based burnings in order to call for things or to get rid of negative energy, so from those conversations that I had with her, I then started to splice these burning rituals into works in various ways. One of those works was *J.D.D...S.Y.M (Farin)* (2021), which was shown in a group show at NICO in Bari, Italy that Arcadia Missa hosted, where I did a burning ritual through an installation so I could put a traumatic experience to bed. So once I'd done that burning, I felt that after getting rid of that energy, and thinking in the register of me being a vessel, I'd be empty, right? So naturally the next move would be to call in some positive energy. This is when the wheels started turning in my head and I began to develop the ideas that would become *mew*.

Can you talk a little bit about your practice and how moving image fits in?

So my practice, as it stands, traffics in double meanings, deep resonances and a tension between accessibility and occlusion. I try to play both trickster and guide (laughs). I'm also really interested in system making at the moment and how it can affect a person or community, whether it's subtly or forcibly enacted onto them or self-generated or self-policed. My work draws from multiple genres of Black experience, history and culture – personal and collective,

with the intention to make art that is rigorous about my commitments and possibilities as a Black artist. Moving image though, hasn't really figured into my practice until now, at least in a traditional sense. This is all uncharted territory for me, and that was the most exciting thing about the prospect of making *mew* when I submitted my proposal!

And does the new work link specifically with any of your previous works, and do you see it as forming a larger focus for ongoing work?

Yes and no. Yes in the sense that it's a continuation of my exploration into rituals and ritual making. Whether that's from taking direct influence from specific religious practices or remixing and figuring out ways to create my own rituals with various goals in mind. Making *mew* also saw me take my practice of hosting open calls in order to seek a degree of audience participation that could shape the outcome of a work one step further, with the open call being much bigger than I'd ever attempted before with regards to things like social media coverage, visibility and response. However, where *mew* takes its own course is the meta topics I'm investigating within it, both personally and culturally. There's a lot of 'messy' feelings and thoughts that are raised and exposed like raw wounds for the audience to see, so it was a new thing for me to document that type of thing in a non-static way.

With the rituals and the idea of ritual and religion, I suppose, comes an idea or a conversation around performativity in action. Do you see moving image as a way of negotiating that terrain?

That's a good question. Moving image for me is a tool to capture, document and archive in a very specific way, and it becomes a part of the performance of the ritual as well when the end goal is to show it to an audience. You choose what to show, and you choose how to show it, so that then becomes the way the audience receives the ritual, and how they can understand it. I don't really have an interest in things like exaggerating the flamboyance or falsifying the nature of the rituals I do for the camera's sake, as I feel like the reality of them is intellectually and aesthetically rich enough. They don't need Insta filters (laughs).

This leads into the next question, which is, do you have a process that you tend to go through in order to make your work? Is that a typical process, or do you want to talk about the process you went through to make this work?

So you want to know the method to the madness? (laughs)

Well, I do a lot of research, a *lot* of research, and there's no hierarchical system that I use or any kind of intellectual elitism that I apply to determine what I consider to be a good reference or useful piece of information. High or low brow, it doesn't matter to me as long as it helps to get my point across to the audience effectively.

The research acts as the foundation. Actually, tell a lie, it's the second stage, because I will have already come up with the idea by the time I decide to do some research. I look into my research bank as a way to check against and figure out how a work could reach its best possible outcome. And from there I take into consideration the time and monetary limitations I have and then use that as the playground to go and explore conceptually what's possible. I'm really open to the work manifesting in whatever way it needs to. I'm very much an artist who isn't tied to a medium. Anything other than being elastic just feels claustrophobic to me at the moment.

Last question, which is kind of a mini question. The aspect of travel and place in this new work, is that something that's important for the audience to understand specific location?

Yes. Location is an extremely important aspect of this film. A large part of it is about me trying to re-root to my cultural heritage, so it was vital I went all out in this department! And to be honest, I couldn't have made this film anywhere else. Truly. *mew*'s essence was shaped by where we were and the specific time we were there, and the people who we came into contact with. So many 'crazy' things happened and so many 'odd' coincidences occurred during the time of filming that by the end of it my crew and I all felt like 'something' was guiding us. We got 'lucky' too many times for us to put it down to us being, you know, lucky (laughs). It was just a special place where 'special' things can happen with special people.

R.I.P. Germain's practice traffics in double meanings, deep resonances and a tension between accessibility and occlusion. Trickster and guide, he tries to dance a fine line: making work that speaks to deep truths without cheapening them with explanations or flattening them out for easy consumption. Sedimented with layers dense with cultural meaning and reference, the extensive research undergirding R.I.P. Germain's work draws from multiple genres of Black experience, history and culture - personal and collective, seeking to make art that is rigorous about his commitments and possibilities as a Black artist.

Artists' Selection Panel

Steven Cairns (ICA)
Beatrice Dillon
Languid Hands
Amber Henry (Dr. Martens)
Naeem Mohaiemen

Board

Wolfgang Tillmans (Chair)
Sepake Angiama
Charles Asprey
Sara Blonstein
Amanda Gray
Nabihah Iqbal
David Kolbusz
Jo Stella-Sawicka
Maria Sukkar
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