



SANCTUARIES

A VIRTUAL EXHIBITION PRESENTED
BY GALLERY 1C03 & CURATED BY
PATTERNS COLLECTIVE

SEPT 20 – DEC 19, 2021

THESANCTUARIES.CA

Sanctuaries is a virtual exhibition that puts forward vast perceptions of the female body within a contemporary frame detached from conventionality. Over the past decades, art and life have become inseparable, and the gallery or its concept has been emancipated from the realms of the museum's four walls. In response, contemporary artists have approached the body with a broader lexicon that is ever evolving with modernity. As such, *Sanctuaries* features works by artists Anique Jordan, Akum Maduka, Rajni Perera, and architect Odudu Umoessien that explore a wide variety of themes pertaining to the body, including form, grief, food, pleasure, survival, resistance, sensuality, mortality, migration, reproduction, and belief.

Canonically, the conventional gallery has been an inaccessible site for propounding and documenting linear and constricting ideas, such as addressing the gaze from a unidirectional perspective, where the viewer or looker is white or male and the subject is racialized or female. Canadian poet Dionne Brand exposes the historical gaze further in verso 16.1 of *The Blue Clerk* (2018). The poet quotes Walter Benjamin and André Suarès, writers who referred to the Haitian actress Jeanne Duval -- who was also Charles Baudelaire's lover and muse -- as "the consumptive negress", amongst other derogatory labelling. Baudelaire was a revered poet and important art critic in the 19th century who witnessed and commented on the effects of technological innovations on art during the industrial revolution. Early technological innovations, including photography, were instrumental in further propounding the historical gaze in more execrable ways. Over the centuries, technology has continuously been weaponized to phenomenologically debase racialized bodies to spectacle, slaves, animals, substandard, as readily available as the subjects in Paul Gauguin's artworks, as decorative as the servant in Edouard Manet's painting, *Olympia*.

Racialized women in the arts have paradoxically utilized technology in rejecting the gaze. Artists like Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson have created works that are subversive to or question the gaze within the museum space. However, the internet has afforded artists from marginalized communities a wealth of imagination and possibilities that surpass the limitations

of the museum, and access to exist within these possibilities. *Sanctuaries* is a virtual exhibition that provides an accessible landscape for contending with themes of the body. It also grants the artists and curators an expanse of infinite perspectives in presenting these themes. In our formulation of this exhibition, we referenced W.E.B. Du Bois's pluralist concept of the gaze in the first chapter of his seminal text, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Du Bois's idea of the "double-consciousness" unlocks the concept of "self-gaze", but also falsifies the singular gaze. Within this digital realm *Sanctuaries*, therefore, considers multi-dimensional ways of approaching the body. It pulls works from artists that address themes of the body and identity from a lens pointing back at their singular and collective selves, given the harsh realities faced by racialized bodies navigating colonial spaces. *Sanctuaries* convolutes the gaze by a selective rejection of gazes and exploration of agency in self-portrayal and self-determination.

It was important for us to present works by women from different cultural backgrounds to achieve variation in context as it pertains to the body. Trinidadian-Canadian artist Anique Jordan, Nigerian-Canadian artist Akum Maduka, and Sri Lankan-Canadian artist Rajni Perera -- all women of hyphenated nationalities -- have their work occupying a utopian virtual space built through their collaboration with Nigerian-Canadian architect Odudu Umoessien, who rendered the floral-shaped structure that the art inhabits.

Rajni Perera has made it her duty to challenge conventional narratives by problematizing presupposed social orders and evolutionary relations. She critiques the social function of imagery with her depictions of fantastical worlds. Using the body as a portal for exercising the aesthetics of science fiction and literature, she contemplates imagined realities constructed with the aid of movement, shape, form, color, and material to explore otherworldly possibilities and invite viewers into futuristic mappings. Perera's "objects" in the show, *Positive Forms*, explore materiality while investigating the aesthetics of science fiction and distilling them into dynamic sculptural shapes that describe physical phenomena such as light, matter, sound, and mass. Are these objects genetically modified or mutated beings? Are they vessels for transportation in post-apocalyptic realms? Are they bodies housing other bodies? The possibilities are vast and abstracted and thus her work points to hope in unabridged potentialities.



Rajni Perera, *Positive Forms*

Anique Jordan's art revolves around memory as she investigates the effects of past data processed in the present and its tendency to inform future events. Her interdisciplinary practice -- she works in photography, sculpture, and performance -- considers the ongoing effects of important events on personal and collective identities. Themes of the body and place are important drivers in Anique's practice. In her *Darkie* photographs, for example, she reclaims a racial slur and creates images full of possibility and power. *Darkie* is an introspective self-encounter where the artist plays the roles of photographer and subject. Anique dissects, fragments, and subsequently rearranges parts of her body to recreate the iconography of the Black female protagonist. The duplicity in the work is revealed as Anique depicts her own body as simultaneously obscured and unobscured, as a specific individual and as a stand-in for the female black body in general. This duality in her work shows Black bodies as multifaceted expressions of the self, with agency to feel and express grief and violence, but also joy, softness, vulnerability, self-love, tenderness, and care. In *Sanctuaries*, Anique's *Darkie* photographs rest upon one of the petals in the exhibition's floral structure like magnified drops of dew, thus symbolizing the powerful potential they hold.



Anique Jordan, *Darkie*

Akum Maduka's work also breaks away from societal constructs. Growing up in the northern parts of Nigeria, Maduka was a first-hand witness to a chronic patriarchy and misogyny rooted in conservative religion, cultural stagnation, and colonization. In her art, Akum uses collage, ink, watercolour, and other media to concoct narratives that make global statements pertaining to feminisms. Her often burlesque images are usually layered in sarcastic irony and a yearning for expressive freedom. The artist explores the everyday strivings of present-day women -- addressing issues like displacement, ritual, depression, fertility, music, athleticism, food -- and their relation to the erotic. As such, her work breaks the ideological shackles within her work, considering society's control and curtailment of sexual expression by women. Akum's drawings exceed relatable shallow narratives as they lead the viewer into deeper psychological destinations. Grief, pleasure, longing, and expressive notions of the uncanny lie in her mark making.



Akum Maduka, *Ms Ikebe Super*

Sanctuaries explores the vast possibilities that come with the emancipation of the art gallery from the traditional white room. As curators, we worked with architect **Odudu Umoessien** to render a virtual space in close collaboration with the artists to create an environment whose context complements the artworks and ideas underpinning the exhibition. Odudu's sensitive and insightful approach to thinking through space is evident in this project. His expertise, care, research, and translation of conversations with the artists laid a strong foundation for the show. The utopian edifice that holds the art takes the form of a slightly opened flower. Considering it is situated in the middle of an expanse of water, away from judgment and social constructs, it embodies the idea of a sanctuary, creating a safer space which permits vulnerability and freedom of expression. The petal-shaped structure references floral reproduction and regeneration. Upon entering this floral oasis, the viewer is met by a cascade of swirling steps for a fluid navigation of the artworks within. This highly experiential space mimics nature's design, as Odudu considered texture, colour, light, and sound to heighten the immersive quality of the viewing experience and simulate the passage of time.

As a virtual experience, *Sanctuaries* represents a meeting point between artists and curators who approach the subject of the female body from multiple dimensions. The exhibition makes room for expansive imagination that brings about regenerative and revelatory modes of human existence within spaces. Furthermore, *Sanctuaries* allows for vulnerability, self-reflection, self-care, compassion, and a non-constrained power fueled by self-agency, self-realization, and self-determination. With the aid of imagination, these artists have mapped out a sanctuary for bodily existence within perpetual catastrophes.



Odudu Umoessien, *Sanctuaries*

BIOGRAPHIES

Curators - Patterns Collective

Shaneela Boodoo is a graduate of the University of Manitoba with a BFA (Honours) in Design. She is a second-generation immigrant, born and based in Winnipeg, Manitoba and identifies as Indo-Caribbean. As an emerging artist, designer, and curator, Boodoo explores themes such as colonialism, displacement, and womanhood. Boodoo has also worked to establish and brand many BIPOC collectives in the city, such as RIND, Patterns Collective and Chroma Collective. Her curated exhibitions include *Adornment* and *Analogous* for the School of Art Gallery, which centered the experiences of BIPOC in institutional spaces.

Mahlet Cuff is an emerging interdisciplinary artist who produces their work through digital, and film still photography as well as audio recordings. They explore subjects of healing, memory, collective care and existence to question relationships between kin and the relationship they have with themselves. She is also a community organizer and founder of the group Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg where she advocates for abolition and safety of all Black people. She has curatorial experience with being involved with Patterns Collective and co-curating work for Window Winnipeg for the exhibition called *Joy is more than just a feeling*. Their work has been shown locally and nationally as well.

Chukwudubem Ukaigwe is a Nigerian born son, dispersed by a transient Atlantic breeze, currently passing through Treaty 1 Territory, so called Canada. He consciously uses a variety of mediums to relay a plurality of ideas at any given time. He views his art practice as a conversation, or a portal into one, and in some instances, as an interpretation of this ongoing exchange. Chukwudubem operates as an interdisciplinary artist, curator, writer and cultural worker. He and Shaneela Boodoo and Mahlet Cuff are the founders of the curatorial collective Patterns Collective. In addition to curating *Sanctuaries*, Patterns has worked online for the past year on their own and in partnership with organizations such as Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art among others.

Artists

Anique Jordan is an award-winning artist, writer and curator who has presented her work across Canada and internationally. Working for over a decade at the crossroads of community economic development and art, Jordan's practice stems from and returns to the communities that inform it. Jordan's photographs, sculptures and performances play with the foundations of traditional Trinidadian carnival and the theory of hauntology, challenging historical narratives and creating what she calls impossible images. This work creates space to reinterpret the archives offering a new and speculative vision of the future.

Akum Maduka is a Winnipeg based emerging artist with Nigerian roots. Originally from an architectural background, her work investigates the role of societal constructs and their influence on human performance within space and how such notions have created skewed ideals of what a normative life should be. Her intimate drawings entwine these narratives with ongoing lived experiences, as she examines the pliancy and complexity of gender roles, sexuality, desire, and ethnicity in modern society.

Rajni Perera was born in Sri Lanka in 1985 and lives and works in Toronto. She explores issues of hybridity, futurity, ancestorship, immigration identity/cultures, monsters and dream worlds. All of these themes marry in a newly objectified realm of mythical symbioses. In her work she seeks to open and reveal the dynamism of the icons and objects she creates, both scripturally existent, self-invented and externally defined. She creates a subversive aesthetic that counteracts antiquated, oppressive discourse, and acts as a restorative force through which people can move outdated, repressive modes of being towards reclaiming their power. Rajni's work has shown across Canada and internationally, including at MOCA Toronto, Mackenzie Art Gallery, and Centre PHI to name a few.

Odudu Umoessien is a Nigerian born storyteller and multi-disciplinary artist exploring the relationship between human perception and the natural world which he translates into expressions of Light and Space through architecture. His incorporation of film has allowed him to introduce the dimension of Time into his work, making his stories and questions much more powerful and immersive. Odudu has a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Manitoba and has received several awards for his work, including the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's International Prize Scholarship. He has presented his work locally at the Winnipeg Design Festival and now lives and works as an Architectural Designer in Toronto.

Oghosa Ogiemwonyi is a media and communication student with a focus on website/graphic design, and search engine optimization. He was born in Nigeria and came to Canada as an international student. Oghosa is interested in various forms of design and uses his own design to help small to medium size businesses have an appealing visual presence online. Oghosa has also worked with various creatives in the past to put together a magazine that showcased other creatives within Canada with a major focus on Winnipeg creatives. Oghosa designed the *Sanctuaries* website.

Chimwemwe Undi is a Black poet and lawyer living and writing on Treaty 1 territory. Her writing and performance has appeared in *Brick*, *The Walrus*, and *Border Crossings*, on CBC and BBC World, and at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, among others. A creative response by Chimwemwe to *Sanctuaries* is forthcoming.

LIST OF WORKS

Anique Jordan, *Darkie*, 2018, Archival print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta, 27" x 23"

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Akum Maduka, *And she rode into the sunset, merrily ever after*, 2021, India ink, Pastel, Acrylic, Pencil, Collage, Watercolour and Charcoal, 16.4" x 11.9"

Akum Maduka, *Cut Flower*, 2020, Pencil, Watercolour, India Ink, Pastel, and Charcoal, 36" x 24"

Akum Maduka, *Ms Ikebe Super*, 2021, India Ink, Pencil, Tracing Paper, Pastel and Charcoal, 16.3" x 12.3"

Akum Maduka, *Ripe Fruit*, 2021, India Ink, Pencil and Pastel, 12" x 9"

Akum Maduka, *Untitled*, 2019, Pen, Conte and India Ink, 12" x 9"

Akum Maduka, *Untitled (Eating cake)*, 2021, Pencil, Acrylic transfer, Watercolour, Ink, Pastel, and Charcoal, 17.9" x 12.8"

Akum Maduka, *Women's Ward*, 2021, Ink Jet Print, India Ink, Graphite and Collage, 17.9" x 13.4"

Rajni Perera, *Positive Forms*, 2017, series of 3 objects

Odudu Umoessien, *Sanctuaries*, 2021, virtual structure

ONLINE EVENTS

Studio visits with Anique Jordan

Presented with *La Maison des artistes visuels francophones*. Applications due September 23, 2021

Discussion with Sanctuaries curators and artists

Presented with *The University of Winnipeg's Critical Race Network*. September 29, 2021, 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Community meet-up for Black artists hosted by Mir Asoh

Presented with *The Black Mosaic*. November, 2021

Lecture with Akum Maduka

Presented with *The University of Winnipeg's Women's & Gender Studies department*. Priority to women and queer people. November 17, 2021

Hassaan Ashraf and Shaneela Boodoo in Conversation with Rajni Perera

Presented with *Take Home BIPOC Arts House*. December, 2021

ACCESSIBILITY

ASL can be arranged for online events with two weeks' advance notice by contacting the Gallery.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gallery 1Co3 is on Treaty 1 Territory. We are located on the territories of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Our water is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

Gallery 1Co3 is grateful to our program partners: The Black Mosaic, La Maison des artistes visuels francophones, Take Home BIPOC Arts House, and The University of Winnipeg's Critical Race Network and Women's & Gender Studies department. We acknowledge financial assistance for Sanctuaries from the Manitoba Arts Council and Winnipeg Arts Council.

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