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FOR THE OPENING WEEK OF VENICE BIENNALE

ENAM GBEWONYO PERFORMS

Nude Me/ Under the Skin: The Awakening of Black Women's Visibility one Pantyhose at a time

At The Palace of Ritual

Palazzo Donà, Palazzo Donà Brusa, Campo San Polo 2177, Venezia

Saturday 11 May 2019, 4.30pm

An Arts Territory Initiative



Textile and performance artist Enam Gbewonyo will close Arts Territory's Palace of Ritual at Venice Biennale opening week with her debut performance, *Nude Me/ Under the Skin: The Awakening of Black Women's Visibility one Pantyhose at a time*. Running on Saturday 11 May at 4.30pm, the performance is a continuation of a series of works which began with *'Nude Me/ Under the Skin: Reclaiming Black Women's Visibility one Pantyhose at a time'*, at the Costume Institute of the African Diaspora's Exchange event, London College of Fashion (2018). Described as a performance of 'healing' by the artist, the work also pays homage to Senga Nengudi's seminal *R.S.V.P* performance series.

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Tackling issues of discrimination, the work also speaks to the the sensuality of the female form, and the elasticity and malleability of the human body. Activating an artwork made from recycled nylon tights - the 'third-eye' or 'oculus' - the performance is a channeling of Gbewonyo's matrilineal ancestors, who speak to her and the audience via an audio monologue. The artist acts as central figure in conversation with the four voices, which relay fictional narratives concerning their personal relationships with tights.

At first rigid and angular, Gbewonyo's constricted movements then morph into the more fluid traditional Ghanaian Ewe dance, *Agbadza (ag-bah-jah)*; resistance gives way to an awakening against the homogenous mould in which Western society attempts to constrict Black women. Within the work, *Agbadza* functions as a process of healing, reawakening the seven chakras by creating a flow of expansion and contraction linked to the body's spinal-chord.

Nude Me/ Under the Skin: The Awakening of Black Women's Visibility one Pantyhose at a time represents the many forms of bondage that constrict the black woman to fit a mould not intended for her. The artist comments: "*To arrive at the point of reclamation, black women must face the pain of their ancestor's past, before releasing it, and opening up space to receive their love and heal. With this performance I create a live vessel for this process of healing.*"

Curator Kasia Sobucka comments: "*Of the many issues facing societies today, those of gender and race are unsurprisingly very much at the fore. However what is not openly discussed is how these issues affect those it targets. With this performance Gbewonyo opens up space for us to understand the vulnerabilities, pain and resilience of the black woman, and how by reflecting internally they might come to find a place to heal the many layered wounds inflicted over centuries.*"

The performance forms part of The Palace of Ritual's programme of immersive, intimate performances, screenings and discursive workshops that unites the disparate practices of sculpture, I-Ching, architecture, dance, shamanic healing, song, calligraphy and performance through the lens of ritual. Initiated by Arts Territory, The Palace of Ritual is co-curated by Annie Jael Kwan, Denis Maksimov, Michał Murawski and Kasia Sobucka, and draws together themes of forced migration, climate change, democracy, mythology, rebellion, cosmology, feminism, futurism and the disruption of power hierarchies.

Nude Me/ Under the Skin: The Awakening of Black Women's Visibility one Pantyhose at a time is delivered with support from brand partners; Freed of London, Sheer Chemistry and Swedish Stockings.

The Palace of Ritual is supported by Adam Mickiewicz Institute, The School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, The FRINGE Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Complexity and Istituto Polacco in Rome. The PASAR: Post-Asian School of Alternative Rites is presented in collaboration with Something Human and Asia-Art-Activism and additionally supported by Arts Council England.

Follow The Palace of Ritual on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at @artsterritory and with the hashtag #thepalaceofritual

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For more information about The Palace of Ritual contact Kasia Sobucka at Arts Territory at kasia@artsterritory.org or visit <http://artsterritory.org>. Follow Arts Territory on social media at @artsterritory

For press requests or media interviews contact Anna Castleton Simmons at Arts PR London at anna@artsprlondon.com

Artist Biography

Enam Gbewonyo's practice investigates identity, womanhood, and humanity through the mediums of textiles and performance. Through her work, she is also an advocate for handcraft using processes like embroidery, knit, weave, print and wirework. In February 2019, Enam delivered the commissioned performance *agbegbɔgbɔ*, an activation of Senga Nengudi's 'Sandmining' installation. The performance closed Senga Nengudi's first institutional solo exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute. Her work has also been exhibited in several national and international group shows with leading art spaces such as TAFETA Gallery (2018), Bonhams (2018), Bisi Silva's Gallery of Small Things at Centre Culturel Doua Seck, Dakar (2018) and ACDF Lagos (2017), Toronto's, The Artist Project Fair (2016) and TEDxEuston in London (2015). She was also a 2017/18 International Curator's Forum 'Beyond the Frame' participant - a 22 month programme developed to support BAME art professionals.

www.enamgdesigns.com

Instagram: [@enamgd](https://www.instagram.com/enamgd)

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Notes to editors

Enam Gbewonyo -

Passionate about elevating black women artists, Enam Gbewonyo is also the founder of the Black British Female Artist Collective. Founded in 2015, the Collective serves as a platform to support emerging African/Caribbean diaspora women artists in building sustainable careers. Since its launch the Collective have delivered a number of successful projects. This includes their 2017 Arts Council funded cross-cultural artist exchange in Ghana and the 2018 two site collaboration with Adidas America and Germany. Enam further advocates for black women artists as a writer and public speaker. She has delivered talks with the likes of Leeds University (2018),

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Oxford University (2018), UAL London College of Fashion (2017/18) and Kuenyehia Art Prize, Ghana (2017). Her thought pieces can be found in international art publication, 'Something We Africans Got'.

About The Palace of Ritual

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About Arts Territory

Arts Territory is a not-for-profit arts organisation with a mission to support artists in creating new work. We work across borders and facilitate dialogue between artists, curators and communities internationally. Operating as a nomadic, fluid and open agency, Arts Territory offers a new model of arts commissioning, supporting radical artistic experimentation, research and collaboration, alongside testing new forms of curation and expanding the agency of curating. With a strong focus on concepts of cultural and national identification and its relation to the idea of territory, Arts Territory is dedicated to exploring new models for artists, curators and large public institutions to work together, and the development of politically-informed, critical discourses. Arts Territory realises hybrid live events, multidisciplinary exhibitions, festivals and symposia around the globe as well as commissions content online for its journal and online space. Our projects are future-facing and wide-ranging, embracing an independent fluid structure and fostering dialogue across disciplines and borders. Founded by curator Kasia Sobucka in London in 2012, initially as a vehicle to develop creative links between Polish and UK artists, it is now global in scope reaching beyond particular identities and provides a platform for curators and artists from a variety of backgrounds to work together. Within this spectrum, Arts Territory still continues to on supporting Polish artists living in the UK and working with Polish communities in London.