



# OST

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Open: Friday 29th & Saturday 30th September 12 - 6pm  
Preview & Performances: Friday 29th September 6 - 8pm

OPENing, 11 Angel Court, Moorgate, London EC2R 7HB.

We are ghOSTed.

Reflectance Transformation Imaging makes visible the timespace of the erased and overlooked. We are haunted in this old underground bank at the heart of the City of London by hOSTs of ghOSTs. The building is a shell holding itself up by memory, being prepared for regeneration. Lost rivers echo in the basement. Traces of past occupation point to the future, divining by acronym:

Open Source Threat,  
Outer Space Treaty,  
Observed Survival Time.

For the past year we have been working and talking, thinking about material culture, cultural capital, power and estrangement. We've visited with entities in museum stores, jumped time zones and calibrated calendars to make connections.

We present here actions, images, sounds and objects.

On Second Thoughts..  
Original Sound Track...

**OST** is a project developed by participants in the Prisoners of Love project. Prisoners of Love: Affect, containment and alternative futures [funded by the AHRC GCRF project Imagining Futures] aims to connect UK museum collection items with their trans-national home peoples and bring emerging artists from diasporic communities in the UK, curators and researchers into conversation, to work responsibly with complex histories and material practices, opening out extra-institutional art and archival practices in the form of artwork, story and theory.

We have been working with the Horniman Museum and Gardens and Compound 13 Lab in Mumbai, India; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford and the Department of Archaeology at the University of Ghana in Accra; Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and the Mootookakio'ssin project based on Blackfoot homelands at the University of Lethbridge, Canada. This exhibition contains responses from Ghana, the UK team, partners on Blackfoot Territory and Compound 13 Lab in Dharavi, Mumbai, India. We are working towards further collaborations.

Thank you to our project friends & partners:

Imagining Futures

Compound 13 Lab, Mumbai

The Horniman Museum and Gardens

Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

Mootookakio'ssin Project, Canada

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

The Economic Botany Collection, Kew Gardens

Rolina Blok at OPENing Gallery

Loyane Bianchini, Capture Lab at Central Saint Martins

Andy Brooks & Jacob Hall, Foundry at Winchester School of Art





Rihanata Bigey  
 The Shelf  
 Clay and paint on cardboard and wood 2023

## Esi Eshun

### The Quiet Object

In the summer of 2022, the Central Saint Martins' contingent of the Prisoners of Love project were invited to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford for an object handling session. The obvious need to conserve and preserve objects from potential harm meant that it wasn't the most straightforward request for the museum to comply with; which is perhaps why it felt like such a privilege to be allowed, after months of negotiations, to touch, feel, smell and listen to objects we'd selected from the online catalogue.

The occasion brought the opportunity to think through some of the questions we'd been formulating individually and collectively throughout the project. For me, these included notions of how to translate non-Western traditional knowledges in ways that resonated with contemporary, metropolitan, inter-generational audiences living in Euro-American dominated societies? How to close epistemic gaps so that seemingly distinct forms of knowledge might enfold and inform each other, erasing hierarchies forged by what Argentinian thinker, Walter Dignolo, terms 'the colonial difference'? I also wanted to know how these questions might feed into the formation, processing and reception by different audiences of archival materials, while expanding on and taking forward the many permutations of the notion of a living archive.

Certainly, these are questions that go beyond the scope of these short reflections. But in attempting to address them, they seemed, in many ways, to impact on the affective realm, on the possibility of apprehending objects in ways that transcend the scopic or visual dimension, to take in both more fully embodied ways of knowing and the roles played by emotion, intuition and imagination in understanding museum holdings. On that point, it's perhaps worth noting that

by acknowledging the play of imagination in museum practices, the aim was not to discount the desire for scholarly objectivity or neutrality that so many institutions aspire to, but rather, to throw open such ideas, to unsettle and disrupt assumptions that such goals might be readily achievable.

For me, the event also enabled me to explore ideas I'd been pondering for some time, based around notions of the quiet, explored initially within the work of African American academic Kevin Everod Quashie, whose book *The Sovereignty of Quiet*, explores the idea of black interiority in contrast to what he sees as the ubiquity of more dramatic and public forms of black expressivity and the notions of resistance entwined within them. Meanwhile, African American scholar, Tina Campt, in her book, *Listening to Images*, advocates attempting to listen to quiet images as a way to apprehend otherwise inaudible layers of sensation, emotion, and reflection resonating beneath the surface of objectified images of black people.

In the book, the quiet relates to the realm of the mundane, the quotidian, the everyday, and is also about the type of interiority that prevails beneath the surface of ID photos and other types of official documentation that attempt to reify images of black peoples within certain kinds of colonial and settler colonial frameworks. The idea of largely inaudible vibrations - made up of interrelationships between thoughts, emotions, gestures and material surroundings - resonating in excess of and counter to such documentation entails a form of resistance against the reductionism of official, codified archival images. Expanding on Campt's ideas, I wanted to apply her concepts to objects in the Pitt Rivers collection. While the objects themselves might not allow for the same process of reification as a photograph, the act of labelling - similarly ensnared in colonial discourses - provides parallels to it. My aim, therefore, was to explore how the idea of quietness in relation to mundanity, everydayness and the domestic, might contribute to expanding or disrupting familiar conceptions around blackness or more specifically, Africanness, in museums. Certainly, quiet, everyday objects, such as pottery, are part and parcel of many museum collections. But it tends to be those considered atypical, spectacular, or exemplary of their kind, that make it into display cabinets, their selection imbuing them with an aura of singularity which presupposes an atmosphere of hushed reverence towards them. The mundane meanwhile, tend to reside within the domain of the overlooked, the semi-discarded, the undervalued.

My journey into the collection began by looking through the online catalogue for examples of women's domestic objects from the Gold Coast, the colonial name for Ghana; my own family background being from the southern coast of Ghana, from a town first colonised by Europeans in the 15th century. However, since I wasn't born in Ghana, and only lived in Accra, the capital, for a few years as a child, my lived experience of the country is limited - a factor which perhaps explains why I wanted to feel closer to the daily lives of people there. Instead of concentrating on objects deemed distinct enough from the European norm to be worthy of display, I hoped to commune with the type of items and everyday lives we all share, albeit viewed through the hazy prism of my own understanding and specific diasporic background.

In my initial catalogue search however, I found no objects meeting my criteria. Widening my terms slightly - from objects relating only to my own Fante background to the more generalised term, Akan, which also incorporates the more famous Ashanti people - I found a few more items, although details about them remained scanty. Attempting to fill in the gaps in the official record, I began to conjure up images of the spaces where the quiet objects lurked, picturing them on back room shelves, in vast but dimly lit vaults where the majority of the museum's excess stock resided. Here, I imagined them loitering unobserved except by passing staff and the odd visiting researcher. In a flight of fancy, I envisaged them gradually turning spectral in form, beginning to dematerialise through lack of attention, before becoming shadow versions of themselves as they slipped into transitory states and zones, of the kind inhabited in the popular imagination by the likes of zombies and vampires, creatures thought to negotiate the passageway between the living and the dead. Only when rewarded with attention, I imagined, would such objects revivify, supplementing their own feeble energy with a portion of the observer's until at last they'd be capable, once again, of emanating and transmitting some of their previously suppressed power. Until that point however, they would be condemned to languish unseen, kept compulsively under possession, locked away from everyone's gaze.

To return to the handling session... I chose two objects that appeared mundane in the extreme. One, described as a brown leather wallet embroidered with green and red thread was said simply to come from the Akan region of the Gold Coast. At first, I assumed the wallet was used to hold dried herbs or

other plants, but looking and touching its thin, suede, page-like interior layers, made me think, erroneously I'm sure, that it might have been used to hold paper money. But there was no information in the catalogue to confirm or contradict my assumption

The other object I chose was indeed one of the vanishingly small number of Akan women's objects. Labelled only as a women's leather girdle, circa 1929, it is elsewhere described as a belt. A circular band in oxblood red, about two inches thick with a small button and loop meeting in the middle, it was smooth, yet grainy to the touch, and smelled, richly, of leather. Crucially, however, its diameter was tiny, suggesting that it belonged not to a woman, but to a child or adolescent. The only other information supplied was that it was donated, in 1935, by a Mrs Violet Ensor, a widow who made several donations of objects, acquired from around the world, on behalf of her collector husband, FW Ensor. In lieu of any other contextual information, an extract from a letter Mrs Ensor had written to the museum accompanied each of her many listings. Dated 1929, it referred, with a kind of excitable insouciance, to savages, cannibals and kindly missionaries living in the South Sea Islands. Strikingly, I noted that at the handling session, a member of staff had placed a paper print out of the paragraph next to the belt, taking care to underline the most egregious phrases in thick black ink. When I queried the text, a staff member pulled open a cupboard full of bound volumes of archival documents. Leafing through sheafs of letters, she failed to find any by Mrs Ensor herself, but nonetheless explained that the museum's catalogue drew directly and without redactions from original correspondence, many written to the museum over a century ago.

As I looked at the belt, I struggled to conceive of a viable biography for it. I imagined it encircling the body of a girl aged around 11 or at most 13. And the longer I looked at it, touched it, felt it, the more I thought of her as having a character and background similar to mine. Superimposing elements of myself, or aspects of some figmented version of my grandmother, I pictured her admiring herself in a long mirror, her back to me, then turning her head slightly my way, as if looking for affirmation from an unseen person's gaze, which was, of course, my own. I saw her buttoning the belt at the back in order to hold up a long skirt, sewn from a patterned kente-like fabric, as she prepared herself to go to a party or a dance or some other kind of festivity. Because, in my mind, the finely crafted belt could only have been or a dance or some other kind of festivity. Because, in

my mind, the finely crafted belt could only have been worn for special occasions; otherwise, I reasoned, its sheer mundanity would have excluded it from any European's interest. And yet, each time I tried to visualise who the original collector might have been, the person who I thought would have passed the object on to Ensor, I could think only of missionaries and the schools they administered, and I couldn't quite bring myself to conceive of a mechanism by which it might have come into their possession.

For all that, however, there is another unexpected twist to this story that I haven't touched on yet, that throws it into paradoxically spectacular relief. Wanting to know more about the belt, I googled the phrase 'Akan women's girdle' and was taken aback to see a section from the book, *Gold Coast Diaspora*, by Walter C. Rucker, pop up on the screen. In the passage in question, Rucker outlines vividly, dramatically, a perhaps apocryphal scene from the life of the legendary Jamaican heroine, Queen Nanny, leader of the country's first maroon settlement, a community of free Africans who, from the early 1700s, waged war against the British from their base in the inaccessible Blue Mountain region of Jamaica. Many had been former slaves released by their Spanish owners when Britain seized control of the colony from Spain in 1655. Others had been runaways. Although there are few written records about Nanny herself, she is known to have been an Akan woman whose undoubted authority stemmed from her possession of superior guerrilla tactics and from her profound knowledge of spiritual and herbal technologies. The book describes how, in battle, Nanny wore a girdle wreathed with daggers, while surrounded by followers wearing ankle bracelets adorned with teeth torn from the gums of their enemies. Here, the perhaps meagre resistant qualities I'd hoped to impose on the girdle suddenly appeared transposed and amplified in uncompromising, brutal fashion. But my questionable sense of vindication about my ideas turned out to be short lived.

For some time, I'd been attempting to conduct intermittent research into maroon communities around the world, and as I continued, I was disappointed to discover that in order to secure their right to freedom, the Jamaican maroons had agreed to sign a peace treaty with the British that required them to hunt down other fugitives and to help crush future rebellions. A little later, as I returned to thinking about the girdle, I contacted a relative who, having lived for longer in Ghana, might have known a little more about it. Before she'd even returned my call

however, I'd already intuited some information that disturbed me. I'd been browsing through the novel *Palmares*, by Gayl Jones, which takes its name from the largest maroon settlement in Brazil, which lasted from 1605 to 1694. At the beginning of the novel, an elderly woman is described as wearing nothing but a thin cloth around her waist. And as her image floated before my mind, I suddenly realised that the girdle had never been a resistant object in the way I'd hoped. Rather, it had most likely been acquired for the same reason as so many other colonial objects - because it seemed to satisfy some kind of atavistic desire for difference, for notions of primitivism, for the confluence of the exotic and erotic.

The girdle, I was told, is similar to the kind of waistbeads once commonly given to young girls at puberty. Worn under, rather than over clothing, to help provide protection during menstruation, it would be used everyday, and would be replaced or expanded as the girl grew older and larger. Additionally, because it was made from leather, it was unlikely to have come from the Akan region as suggested, but from further north in the country. The information threw me off balance. Now, when I thought about the girdle, I could feel and smell the damp trace of a girl's skin shedding against my fingertips. I could feel and smell her sticky sweat and warm blood, could hear her sometimes laboured breathing. Suddenly, I was aware that my attempts to get closer to a living sense of the object's past by fabricating an image in my head had been mired in fiction. My impression of the girl, which had once been indistinct, now seemed much stronger. But I was also aware that in conjuring up a sense of her body, through engagement with the object, with slightly more detailed information, and with my own imaginings, I had found myself delving into her most private workings, intruding into her interior self, her body and perhaps her soul, in a way I had no right to do. I felt a frisson of body horror and realised that I'd entered into a kind of quiet space that I had no desire, or permission, to enter.

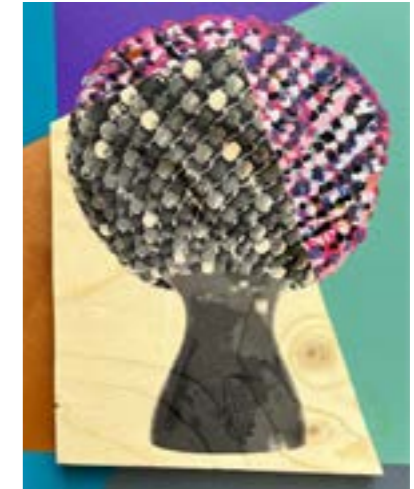
And what of the object itself in all of this, and the absences in the label beside it? To a certain extent, I'd felt relief that I hadn't been asked to read phrases such as initiation rites, puberty, fertility, phrases which would have undoubtedly embroiled me in the centre of the type of gendered, colonial relations I'd been seeking to avoid. But my own researches had led me right back to the same location, with added emphasis, and now I wondered, if only glancingly, to what extent the silence of the labels might have been intentional after all.





## Joseph Ijoyemi

### Our Language



“Our Language” is an evocative art installation made out of canvas strips and painted on that seeks to celebrate the rich tapestry of Nigerian traditions, embodying the diverse cultures that coexist within this remarkable nation. This work is an exploration of the profound significance of the language and its pivotal role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage.

In addition to this, the work emerged from a transformative visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum, where I was presented with 10 photographs, which resonated deeply with my own roots and experiences.

The ten evocative photographs taken in Ondo State, the very place my parents are from, left an indelible mark. It was within these images that I discovered a person named Adanilo Fagbakori, serving as Rebiya of Oshoro, Lukokun II in Ondo. There is a powerful connection between photography and language that creates a focal point for “Our Language,” serving as a touchstone for exploring themes of identity, tradition, and the passage of time.

Nigeria, with its myriad ethnicities and languages, stands as a testament to the vibrant mosaic that is African identity.

the realm of Yoruba proverbs that “Our Language” finds its inspiration.

Within this kaleidoscope, Yoruba culture occupies a place of prominence, with its profound wisdom and traditions that have shaped generations. It is within the realm of Yoruba proverbs that “Our Language” finds its inspiration.

Yoruba proverbs serve as reservoirs of ancient wisdom, encapsulating the essence of life’s experiences, moral lessons, and communal values. They transcend time, acting as vessels that carry the collective memory of a people. Through this installation, we delve into the treasury of Yoruba proverbs, unraveling their layers of meaning and significance, and presenting them as a testament to the enduring legacy of Nigerian identity.

Incorporating these proverbs into the artwork is a deliberate choice, as it not only pays homage to the linguistic richness of the Yoruba people but also serves as a bridge to connect various cultures within Nigeria. It is a reminder that despite our diverse backgrounds, we share a common heritage rooted in the wisdom of our ancestors.

“Our Language” invites viewers to engage with these proverbs, encouraging a deeper understanding of the Nigerian identity. It beckons us to reflect on the threads that bind us as a people, acknowledging that our strength lies in our unity, our shared history, and our collective aspirations for the future.

# Rihanata Bigey

## Tapestry of Memory

The 'Tapestry of Memory' and the 'Shelf' are works that highlight time, space, trauma and identity. Both works testify to Africa's deep-rooted traditions and culture, as well as its disjointed relationship with Western society. In this society, a shelf is a simple piece of furniture that represents possession, dispossession, memory, experience, good and bad. Often overlooked as a simple household object, shelves are the symbol of a multi-faceted heritage, bearing witness to changing narratives. In this work, I use the shelf to present paintings of objects inspired by artefacts from the African continent found at the Pii Rivers Museum in Oxford. The museum houses a wide range of African artefacts that are powerful symbols of the rich tapestry of cultures. These objects, collected over 8me, bear witness to the immense diversity, creativity and complexity of African societies; each object is more than just an object; it is a tapestry and a living symbol of a culture's history, beliefs, traditions and values. These objects have multiple meanings, ranging from spiritual and ceremonial functions to everyday use, storytelling and community identity. In the old Underground Bank of the City of London, I am exhibiting paintings of objects from the African continent, in order to explore their provenance, the ethical implications and the role of Western museums in possessing these objects. The work not only challenges the valuable information about the continent's heritage, but highlights the ethical and historical complexities surrounding their display and acquisition outside their place of origin.

"Tapestry of Memory" is a large tapestry of woven white paper that is not only an exploration of materials and techniques that bridge tradition, memory and the interplay between space and imagination. Through the intricate interweaving of threads, the work 'Tapestry of Memory' is a living testimony to cultural narratives and traditions passed down from generation to generation and over time. The act of weaving not only represents the skilful manipulation of materials, but also weaves the threads of heritage, preserving the stories and experiences that transcend moments. Through this process, I interpret a manifestation of the intimate relationship between myself and my environment, a dialogue between the hands that make and the spaces of the old underground bank. The work is the result of a complex textile that encapsulates the essence of African cultural richness, its journey and representation through time. The use of white paper is a way of translating a context of absence and loss, but also infinite possibility, what has been and can be. The colour can invoke emptiness as well as beauty and emotion.

Like the object represented in the work "Shelf" I weave to translate not only a static sculpture but rather translate a dynamic conduit of knowledge.







## Mame Afua Mensah Keteke

'Keteke' Represents the continent of Africa, moving from one stage of development to the other, challenges encountered and the feasible way forward. Elements from the exhibition, which includes, akuaba, oware, stool, stone beads, goldweights, xylophone and others are explored and symbolically used to project the story told of 'keteke'. We see the Akuaba fertility doll, used to embody the beauty and resources being birthed on the land (fertility); rich in both natural and human resources. Akuaba is also adorned in beautiful beads around the neck as well as its forehead signifying completeness and the ability to draw others (investors, tourists, international market etc.) based on the beauty being perceived. Her earrings are made of a blend of symbols as 'du-afe' (symbol of good feminine qualities), 'nya akoma' (sankofa) and 'epa' (law and justice).

Strokes of red, green, blue, yellow and others are used to represent the diversity of emotions, strengths, and achievements of our people. All these elements are used to project issues of restitution, social justice, trade, power and other themes. These coupled with other elements in 'keteke' are used to discuss how far the people of this continent have come, decades after independence and the need for change. We are on a journey to self discovery, empowerment, development and more. However, we may not have checked for any faults or unforeseen challenges through this journey. The good news is that, we are now conscious of some of these challenges if not all, and there is a need for us to come together as a people in remodeling the beauty in Africa we want to see and project to the global village.



Thomas Allison's 3D printed capture targets for the gold weights at Pitt Rivers Museum



3D printed palm nuts from the Economic Botany Collection at Kew



Project visit to Hastings Museum and Gallery. Adanma and Esi discussing the HMAG Agere ifa (àgéré Ifá). This is a holding receptacle, vessel or container for keeping and raising the sacred palm nuts or ikin used in Yoruba divination.

# Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

## Clare Sheridan Collection

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery's First Nations and Native American material comes from four main collectors: Blackmore, Taylor, Sheridan and Belaney, also known as Grey Owl. Unique among these collections is the material deriving from Clare Sheridan's visit to the Reiss brothers' artists' colony in Glacier Park, Montana and the Kainai Reserve in Alberta in 1937-8 where she lived with the Tailfeathers family.

Sheridan was a privileged member of elite British society, a cousin of Churchill, who leveraged her encounters for self-promotion and collected voraciously, but was also viewed by the establishment as dangerous and subversive, being an admirer of Communism and a critic of British Imperialism. <sup>1</sup> Sheridan's visit is narrated in her travelogue, *Redskin Interlude*, the title reflects that she was active in compounding racial stereotypes and hierarchies, despite her sympathetic politics and published critique of the Residential School system.

Items in the Sheridan collection find context and stories through associations with individuals named in her book. It is unusual for material culture from North America to be documented in this way, most items having been severed from context with little or no recorded provenance. The individuals named in Sheridan's book who gave and sold to her have living relatives on Blackfoot homelands including Deserae Tailfeathers who has contributed to this exhibition and other members of the Mootookakio'ssin team. This project begins to re-connect people with their ancestral material and its immanent, intangible culture. Work with these groups and broader publics aims to connect and strengthen links between people and things geographically separated but culturally related, past ancestors, present day and future generations.

1. Carter, S. Clare Sheridan, British Writer, Sculptor, and Collector in Blackfoot Country, 1937 in *Object Lives and Global Histories in Northern North America*, Lemire B., Peers L., and Whitelaw A. [Eds.] 2022, McGill-Queen's University

## Darby Herman

### Red-Tail

digital painting,  
dimensions & media variable



This artwork is in relation to the National Canadian Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This relatively new Canadian holiday is held on September 30th and can be honored by wearing orange shirts with the slogan "Every Child Matters". The day is a way to honour the innocent lives lost during the residential schools and the adults who are still healing from their time in that system. The day has become a symbol to honour the experiences of First Nations people and to celebrate the commitment we have to our children.

The artist: Darby Herman lives in southern Alberta Canada. She is First Nations Black Foot and Northern Cree. Darby was raised in the Black foot territory with her mother's family and now raises her two daughters with her husband in Lethbridge Alberta while attending the University of Lethbridge. Her oldest daughter, Elora, has special needs and requires one-on-one care 24 hours a day. Being Elora's mother gave Darby a new challenge but one she saw as an opportunity to not only care for such a unique child but to help other families in similar situations. "Every Child Matters" hit a special spot in Darby's heart because it includes children like Elora.

To represent and honour the messages of "Every Child Matters" Darby chose to use a red-tail hawk with floral arrangements chosen for their individual meanings.

- The red tail hawk can represent strength, courage, and determination. It is also considered a powerful messenger from the spirit world in many indigenous cultures. These messengers are revered for their ability to bring important messages and guidance to those who are open to receive to them.
- The hawk is decorated with prairie sage, babies' breath, peonies, pink carnations, and Alberta's wild rose.
- Sage spreads from the hawks' wings to show a spiritual connection for healing.
- Babies breath is speckled throughout the sage to represent the connection to children. These small white flowers symbolize the purity of a child, innocence, and everlasting love.

## Deserae Tailfeathers

### Kakatoosi'aakii Star Woman

beaded hat and digital capture portrait file

Oki/Hello

Niistoo niitan'iko Itsissaa'nawa. My name is Deserae Tailfeathers or "Seen Standing In Front of a Group". I am a fifth-year student at the University of Lethbridge and a member of the Blood Tribe/Kainai Nation. I have previously worked with the Mootookakio'ssin project aimed at Blackfoot digital art collaborations.

My exhibition submission is a wide-brimmed hat in Blackfoot contemporary fashion. I made it for my mother after she stated her need for a ceremonial hat to be used in her endeavours and ritual practices as a Blackfoot elder. The hat is made from wool, felt, and nylon. The beads are size 10 seed beads and the inner band is beaded on utility rope.

I was inspired to create this hat for my mother in response to research I had done on cultural objects collected by Clare Sheridan during her time with my family, the Tailfeathers' family on the Blood Reserve. Through the University of Lethbridge, the Mootookakio'ssin project aims to reconnect some these objects with Blackfoot people through various digital art media and resources. As I did research on the items, I felt a connection invoked with fashions and beading patterns which have existed and been passed down in Blackfoot culture. Over time, the type of fashions worn have changed but the patterns used by the Blackfoot have always remained the same.



Drawing from this, I was able to create a contemporary fashion by using the wide-brim hat (which has been a staple piece of Indigenous fashion). The beadwork pattern and colour blocking I have chosen to use reflects modernity while still using the traditional Blackfoot geometric patterns.

I chose to name my project "Kakatoosi'aakii (Star Woman)" based on a dream I had during the making of the hat, and to show my appreciation for my mom who has always been the star woman of my life.



## Deserae Tailfeathers and Ian Dawson

### Deserae Tailfeather's Artwork 2023

dimensions: 70cm x 50cm x 60cm

Notes: On Wednesday August 23rd a folder was shared by Deserae Tailfeathers and Christine Clark in Canada. It contained a 3D scan of a beaded hat made by Deserae Tailfeathers. The Beaded Hat was being worn by Deserae's mother, Sharon. Deserae is a research assistant on the Mootookakio'ssin project which aims to create a path to reconnect Blackfoot knowledge and Blackfoot identity with Blackfoot objects held in UK Museums. Ian rescaled, hollowed and sliced the scan into 80 printable sections and printed the parts between August 25th and September 3rd 2023 before 'stitch-welding' them together.



Ian Dawson

Black Ball Ballads 2023

digital Video - dimensions and duration variable

Notes: During the Mootookakio'ssin project, Blackfoot belongings held in UK museums were recorded using a variety of digital imaging processes in order to virtually reconnect them with their people. One of these technologies, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), creates interactive pictures where lighting conditions can be altered afterwards. RTI creates lighting effects akin to a diffractive process, because of this RTI was also used in workshop environments to help demonstrate and explain how images are never innocent representations of a subject and actively participate in the emergence of meaning. Experimenting with RTI became an intrinsic part of this project and Black Ball Ballads documents these experiments with RTI. One of the constancies of the process is a black shiny ball which always appears in the photographic frame. Through an animation of the various images created during this project Black Ball Ballads tells a story of the project through the pictures that slowly evolve across the screen.

## Virtual Visit

Compound 13 Lab, Dharavi, Mumbai

The Horniman Museum and Gardens



This object is from Madurai, Tamil Nadu and was accessioned into the Horniman collection in 2007. The large ceramic vessel was placed with great care on a cushion for our virtual visit connecting Compound 13 Lab and The Horniman Collection Centre. Everyone in Dharavi burst into laughter immediately at seeing a Ghatam on a cushion. The Ghatam slips between categories, it is a cooking pot, a water vessel and a musical instrument. In the Horniman catalogue it has an Anthropology rather than a Music number. The only provenance is that it is that is was from Mr Harjit Shah and was probably commissioned for the Horniman's Music in India exhibition in 2007. C# is written in permanent marker on it.

Limitations of how we can interact with collection items meant that we couldn't hear the sound of this particular Ghatam but the augmented reality objects can be brought to life by the sounds of the environment they are rezzed into.

Digital objects can have multiple forms, scales and lifeways. They are inconclusive forms and not easily containable. Each time you call up a file, it is a new iteration. These avatars of collection objects can be inserted into your space making new contexts and meanings. In the museum itself interaction with objects is minimal, even with handling collections there are restrictive rules. It is an artefact of the museum process that objects are frozen and not touchable and that prioritising preservation means that contact with light and other 'agents of deterioration' is minimised.

Digital ghosts of the objects can be liberated to educate about process, to populate new places and spark ideas and connections. The first time I conjured the AR of the ghatam I got stuck inside it. I could only see the world through its circular opening.

# Compound 13 Lab and Ian Dawson

5 copper copies 2023

3D printed in copper and bioplastic compound

dimensions variable

Notes: In January 2023 five members of The Compound 13 Lab in India chose 5 different objects from the digital database of the Horniman Museum in London. The Horniman objects that they chose related to items in common use in their community, ones that would be used and handled regularly during their daily lives. They also corresponded to familial items that had special resonance to them, the bladed object, Eeli, related to a vegetable slicer that had been passed down through generations of Laxmi's family. The objects were all 3D scanned during a remote viewing session between the Horniman Collections Centre and the Mumbai Lab space. Digital files of these objects were shared with members of the Compound 13 Lab and all 5 items were reprinted and shared within their community in Dharavi and beyond.

## Gold Weights: Scanning, Printing, Foundry

Pitt Rivers Museum

Central Saint Martins, Capture Lab

Winchester School of Art, Foundry



# Esi Eshun

## Gold Weights



Gold dust was the primary currency in the Gold Coast, the colonial name for Ghana, from at least the 16th century onwards, enabling a vast network of economic and cultural transactions through much of the Saharan region and beyond. It fuelled the wealth of the Ashanti region in particular, and was a key driver for Europe's colonialist ambitions, contributing to the enrichment of those countries and their expansion into other parts of the globe.

Gold weights formed part of an assemblage of items, used predominantly by men, to weigh the dust. Small, individualised objects, cast in brass, bronze or

copper, they bore geometric designs or were shaped in the form of animals, birds and objects - sometimes modelled in unlikely configurations - symbolising philosophical sayings intended for social instruction. As receptacles for gold - a metal widely believed to be a materialisation of the sun's rays - they also represented aspects of the owner's soul or life force, and therefore played a central role in the economic, social, cultural and psychic life of individuals and communities within the region.

With the prohibition of gold dust as a currency after Britain took full control of the country in 1901, the 'social life' of the objects shifted. Made redundant from their primary role, they circulated instead in tourist and museum markets, where their value was measured in anthropological and aesthetic terms, such that they became paradigmatic of the kind of 'primitivist' African art and artefacts appropriated by modernist artists and consigned by museums to a reified past.

When the Prisoners of Love project invited staff, students and associates from the University of Ghana to a remote object viewing session at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, they were asked to choose items from the collection they would most like to observe. I wasn't surprised when they chose a number of the gold weights, since I'd been intrigued by these objects myself for some time, and at the preview session, I took several photographs, mostly on my iPhone.

Each gold weight measures around three inches in height. But many of them seem to exude a characterful sense of self, which, in the initial absence of specialised knowledge about their meanings, became an inevitable point of focus for me. When I considered using my photos for this exhibition, I wanted to convey a multifactorial sense of agency in the weights, while contrasting it with their diminished status in the capitalistic world they inadvertently helped bring about.



I imagined them having lost much of their original power while languishing within the back-rooms of the museum. Waning through lack of attention, they'd turned spectral in form until the project opened doors for them, and I imagined them gradually re-materialising, emerging from their liminal states and escaping from their confines, before heading, like fish out of water, through buildings, cities, and climate altered landscapes towards the Atlantic coast.

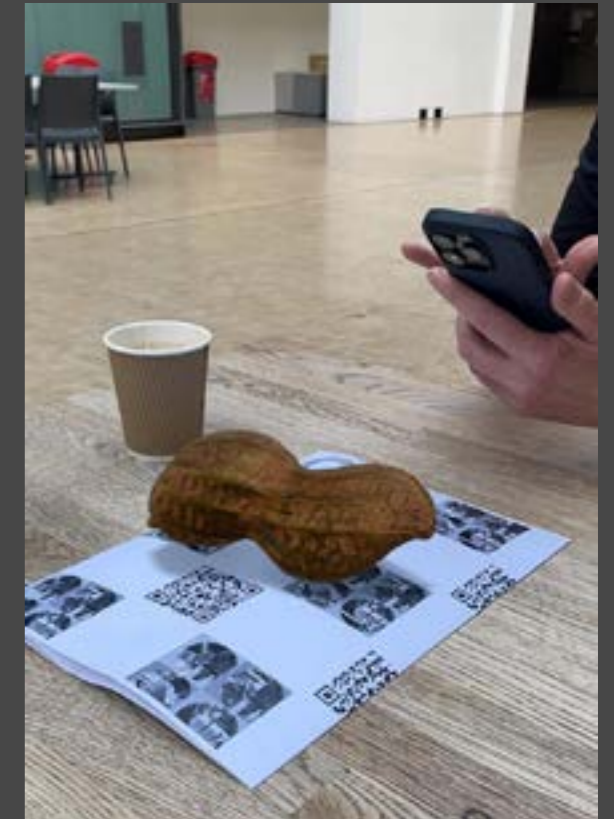
The images featured in this exhibition appear in two contexts. First, there are a series of photo montages that evoke the process of the objects coming back into being. The style of each image varies as a way of symbolising the journey of the gold weights through time as well as space, as they wander through different, European/American aesthetic and cultural/historical landscapes. .

The images also feature as collaged design elements for lengths of fabric, reminiscent of the wax prints imported to Africa from Indonesia by Dutch traders in the 19th century. In their vivid colour schemes, however, they also refer to Ghana's signature Kente cloth, a fabric that influenced Bauhaus designs among others, and that represents one of the few types of cultural capital historically afforded to Ghana on the world stage.

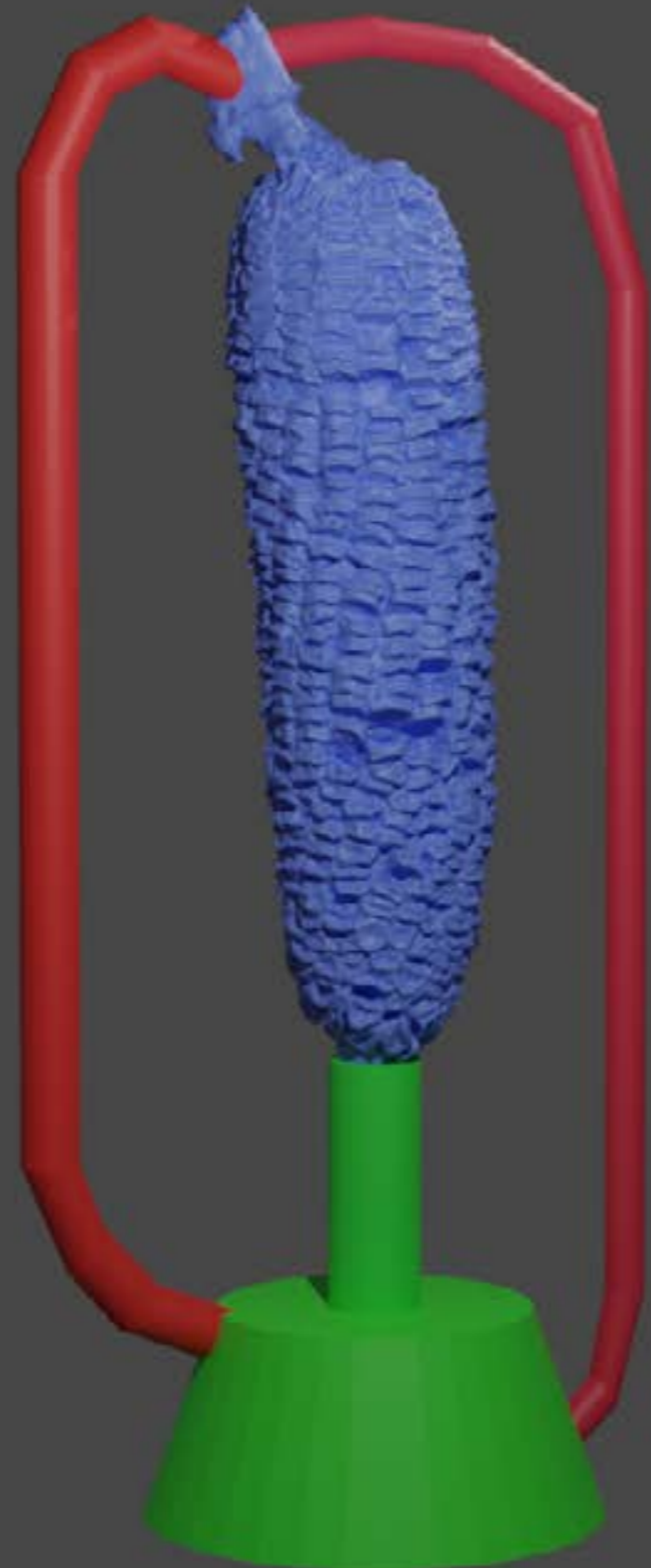
The fabric patterns were laid out by Louisa Minkin and displayed, in this exhibition, by Adanma Nwankwo, to reflect the altar pieces she learned how to create in Nigeria. As a result, the textiles return the gold weights to a limited and perhaps compromised kind of functional worth, while the project as a whole intends to provoke questions about the nature of the value invested today in the creatures the weights represent, in the people who once used them, and in the worlds from which they emerged and into which they attempt to re-enter.



Doll made with a corncob, Pitt Rivers Museum



Responding to the Akan weights at Pitt Rivers Museum with the help of Loyane Bianchini in the capture lab at CSM and Andy Brooks and Jacob Hall in the foundry at WSA.





## Dawn Codex

Dawn's current body of work reimagines the City of London as a future indigenous site powered by artificial intelligence, inhabited by different versions of herself. Exploring ideas of technomancy and psychogeography, this installation is a cyber-invocation of her future alter-ego (Six), creating a divinatory performative presence both in situ and on a public dating site. Combining found objects, handmade oracle cards, moving image and sound, Dawn invites the visitor to engage with Six in an embodied performance based on the aisle and the altar. This work seeks to excavate the colonial history of the City of London, disrupting our ideas of linear time and consumerist thought; for Dawn it is also a mechanism for retrieving the lost rites of her personal ancestry.

## Her Name is Six

Dawn is a multidisciplinary artist working with texture, moving image, sound, biographical found objects and found-materials. Her practice is research-led and serves as an autoethnographic and ontological exploration of selfhood, presenting ideas for an esoteric feminine ideology that unifies her past, present and possible future. Her current practice explores the use of narrative as a form of archiving - to bring complex and difficult histories into the realm of the audience by way of storytelling. Dawn's experimental mythologies enable the creation of layered repositories of knowledge to be accessed and experienced in a variety of ways.

## Adanma Nwankwo

### Triangle 1 - a world of secret sacred wisdom

“I had a dream and in my dream, I drew a triangle as an exploration of something I can not quite remember...” - Triangle I

The dream was set in the context of an exhibition and somehow my only piece was a triangle... I have never been intrigued by the triangle as a shape or form, always finding myself more drawn to the less angular and more organic shapes like circles, ovals or weird undefined blobs. Hence, even the mirror in my room looks more like an irregular droplet than any standard shape. Intrigued by my unusual interest, I decided to explore the triangle as the nucleus of my making process in this residency.

Diving into the realms of the triangle, I found myself in the world of memory, flowing through realms of, religion, Rosicrucianism and sacred geometry - the former two of which I had not come in contact with for a long time and the latter almost completely new to me. Growing up, my dad was a part of the Rosicrucian order in Nigeria and my mom a born Christian. As a result, my relationship with religion and spirituality has always been a fluid exploration as opposed to a fixed mindset. In my investigation of the triangle, I found myself intrigued by its key role in the understanding of what were my founding spiritual belief systems - the 'holy trinity' for Christianity and the triangle that encloses the cross in Rosicrucianism. However, I was not too keen on narrowing my investigation to any of these spiritual denominations. Thus, my interest in sacred geometry took the forefront.

A fellow artist in the residency introduced me to the 'star tetrahedron merkba' - a sacred geometric shape said to represent our 'energy systems' in the higher realms.



Fascinated by this idea, I began constructing the star tetrahedron as the component structure and tigation. In addition, I was interested in the intersection between the ritualistic practices I experienced growing up in the church and in the temple, looking to explore their overlapping elements as a means through which I could activate the space using performance.

My journey with the triangle took me on a tour through forgotten knowledge and led to new discoveries. Akin almost to delving into the world of secret sacred wisdom.



# Rabiya Nagi

## Ravens, Banks and Museums: [Unmasking Capitalism's Myths] [London's Less Hidden Myths]

### Installation

Financial Times, paper, ink, fabric

Each morning I walk past the Bank of England, an almost faceless façade, guarded by security guards and its own armed police trying to look discreet. It has no visible sign outside to reveal its identity to the uninformed, yet it sits on a 3.5-acre island site surrounded by roads on each side with no neighbouring buildings to weaken its secure walls. Its only potential weakness is the underground station on one corner of its building with which it shares its name. There is a strange absence of heavy traffic in the vicinity of the Bank. I assume it is seamlessly routed away from the Bank by invisible, smart traffic remote control systems. The Tower of London, a mere 17-minute walk away is less protected from traffic but perversely has its captive ravens to keep it safe.

I walk past two of its walls (the Bank of England) before I get close to Angel Court and into another bank, now long closed to customers and gratefully occupied by artists and artists in residence. I am one of the artists on a six-week collaborative residency responding to the role of the museum and decentering collections. There have been lots of conversations between us, ideas have been exchanged, revisited, abandoned, or developed, and positions gently negotiated for our end of residency show. I have learnt new skills, RTI specifically, which has opened up new ideas for future work and experimented with materials.

I brought my practice with me but allowed ideas to develop as a response to the city with its two well know institutions, the one I walk past each day and the Tower of London. Both represent the face of capitalism and British modernity and histories that touch us in different ways.



The empire has long fallen but the ravens remain at the tower, not six but seven, and held captive, as is the Koh-i-noor. The required six and the spare are called Jubilee, Harris, Popp, Georgie, Edgar, Merlina and Branwen.

My response to the site consists of a wall pasted with the stand-out pink pages of the Financial Times representing the comforting face of capitalism, and ravens symbolising superstitions and myths, and captivity. By incorporating text on the wall, the wall also becomes a memorial for the long line of captive ravens. Away from the wall and painted on fabric are the free ravens, free of captivity and free from excuses to hold them captive and objects of amusements for tourists.

# Louisa Minkin

## Shifts and Expedients

material: 3D bioplastic prints, sticks and twigs covered in plant dyed cloth, hooks and weights.

dimensions variable



The stick on the wall acts as a balance. At the moment one end has a pair of trousers made out of worn sheets and dyed with plants over lockdown. The pattern for the trousers comes from artist Thomas Baines' 1871 book *Shifts and Expedients of Camp Life, Travel & Exploration*. Weighed up against the garment are bioplastic 3D prints from a scan of Catalogue Number: 54663. 75.00 CUCURBITACEAE *Lagenaria siceraria*: a beer ladle made from a gourd collected by Baines and now in the Economic Botany Unit at Kew.

The work acts as a trap connecting in a precarious moment, landscape and technology, predator and prey, meaning and materiality. Traps, like artworks, make bridges between human and thing, technology and ecology, ontology and epistemology. Traps assemble bodies, knowledge practices, materials and environments in transformative encounters. Entrapments are captivating: they have intellectual, emotive and moral force. They give material form to hunters knowledge of habit and terrain and put this knowledge to work in autonomous, animate technologies – ingenious, poetic, deadly,

# Thomas Allison

## Digital Shebeen fluid simulation

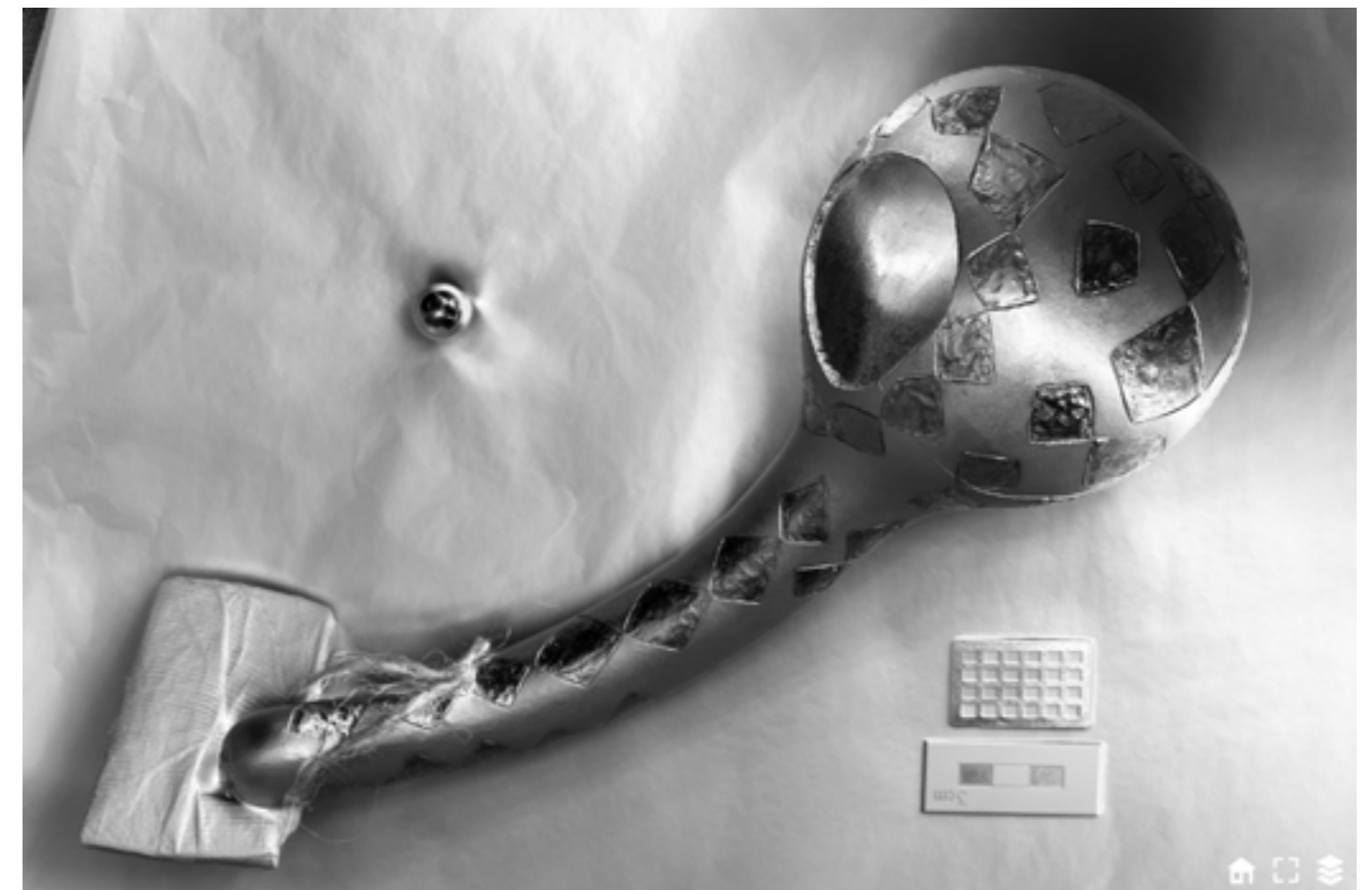
Thinking around messy digital creation/recreation  
crossing/spilling beyond fields, formality and function.



# Lennon Mhishi

## The Cup from Which We Drink

This gourd, mukombe, carries and quenches.  
It is plant, of the earth, use, reuse, to come with the hands, the lips, the being-body  
into contact with the sorghum, and the millet, and the maize, and the keys of the  
mbira, and the thump thump thump of the drum in our hearts.  
Even within computation, other Shebeens are possible.



Economic Botany Collection Kew Gardens. Catalogue Number: 54663.  
Beer ladle gourd collected from Zimbabwe by Thomas Baines, under Reflectance Transformation Imaging

