

SALT to CATCH GHOSTS

September 9 - December 17, 2022
Opening Reception: September 9, 5 - 8pm (Full Moon)

/ 1150 25th St, Building B, San Francisco
Open Thursday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

JOJO ABOT / April Bey / Kenturah Davis / Shanequa Gay / Adebunmi Gbadebo /
Courtney Desiree Morris / Sabrina Nelson / brontë velez
Soundtrack by Sarah Kirnon

Curated by Ashara Ekundayo



Image: Courtney Desiree Morris, *Cleansing*, 2021, Digital Video Still

An Ntozake Shange novel opens with “Where there is a woman there is magic. If there is a moon falling from her mouth, she is a woman who knows her magic, who can share or not share her powers” (*Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*, 1982). This prose serves to remind us of the availability of magic and a choice to conjure.

SALT to CATCH GHOSTS is an experiential exhibition laying bare radical imaginations from a selection of Black women and femmes whose large, magical works surround each witness and call them into a spiritual and environmental possibility of contemporary apothecary. Macroscaled textiles, sculptural installation, film, photography, print, and sound command devotees to look toward, be purified by, and journey into the immensity that is birthed from Black femme generosity, safety, rage, ritual, and ceremony.

*The veil thins, calling the Ghosts, as throats open
Step forward and collect her flesh
Through design and performance, a waxing a-waxing,
an opportunity is rendered, savored -
... a Present-Day device, our adornment, and a spell for ecstasy is spilt,
handle well with washed hands.
Bring it to your lips. Salt the Skin.*

Offered as a survey of the materiality of Blackness and bodies, these artists use aspects of the figurative form to investigate and re-inscribe the living archive, make prayers and antidotes. Like old and wrinkled recipes tucked under a Grandmother's lace and inside bottles for future meals, *SALT to CATCH GHOSTS* offers for the undisturbed a curio of dreams, and for the wayward, a roadmap of compound elements for survival.

How do we mine the water and extract salt to commune with our Ancestors?

How do we choose to catch the Spirit with our hands and learn to differentiate bitter from sour?

This exhibition is, by choice, an aim to build a covenant with the viewer and *welcomes the Ghosts* through a collective tactile memory and a call-and-response methodology that shouts a full moon chant. The salt has been made holy, place it where needed.

- Ashara Ekundayo

SALT to CATCH GHOSTS, curated by Ashara Ekundayo, is the seventh in a series of exhibitions at /, each organized by an independent Bay Area-based curator. The exhibition was organized with the help of Isha Rosemond. A digital catalogue featuring a commissioned essay by ruth gebreyesus will accompany the exhibition.

JOJO ABOT is a nomadic interdisciplinary artist exploring evolving themes of spirituality, identity, and community with self as the starting point to collective evolution. JOJO ABOT has collaborated with the MOMA, Brooklyn Museum, The Ghana Pavilion at La Biennale Di Venezia, and Frieze art fair x Theaster Gates x Prada, among many others. She has toured with Ms Lauryn Hill, and performed at Afropunk, Radio City Music Hall, The Apollo Theater, the Kennedy Center, and more. JOJO ABOT continues to develop and present her interdisciplinary practice through *POWER TO THE GOD WITHIN* and other curatorial projects.

April Bey grew up in The Bahamas (New Providence) and lives in Los Angeles, CA. She is a visual artist and art educator, whose interdisciplinary work is an introspective and social critique of American and Bahamian culture, feminism, generational theory, social media, AfroFuturism, AfroSurrealism, post-colonialism, and constructs of race within supremacist systems. Her work has been exhibited internationally and in seven solo exhibitions to

date and is in the collections of the California African American Museum, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, and more. Bey is currently a tenured professor at Glendale College and represented by TERN Gallery, The Bahamas and Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles.

Kenturah Davis is an artist working in Los Angeles, California and Accra, Ghana. In drawings, textiles, sculpture, and performances, she uses text as a point of departure to explore the fundamental role that language has in shaping how we understand ourselves and the world around us. Davis earned a BA from Occidental College and an MFA from the Yale University School of Art, and was an inaugural artist fellow at NXTHVN. Her work has been included in institutional exhibitions in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. Davis is part of the inaugural cohort of the Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab.

Shanequa Gay (b. 1977, Atlanta, GA) is an artist whose work draws upon ritual and personal memory, storytelling, fantasy, and the deep well of Southern Black traditions found in her home place of Atlanta. Holding an MFA from Georgia State University, her recent exhibitions include the Atlanta Biennial, Atlanta Contemporary (2021), and *Holding Space for Nobility: A Memorial for Breonna Taylor*, Ackland Museum, Chapel Hill North Carolina (2020), among others. Gay is a 2019 Do-Good Fellow recipient, 2022 Emory University Arts and Social Justice Fellow, and currently a visiting professor at Spelman College. Her work was featured at the European Cultural Centre exhibition at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022).

Adebunmi Gbadebo is a New Jersey-born and Philadelphia-based artist whose work centers on deeply resonant materials such as indigo, human hair, and clay hand dug from plantations. Her practice tends to the stories of ancestors, families, and individuals either long overlooked or too-closely surveilled. Gbadebo earned her BFA at the School of Visual Arts, NY. Her work is currently being shown at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and is included in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, among others.

Sarah Kirnon is a chef, designer, and equitable foods activist who believes in preserving ancestral traditions, fostering community, and protecting BIPOC creatives from displacement. Born in the UK and raised in Barbados, they currently live and cook in Oakland, CA. Inspired by the richness and diversity of the African diaspora, their Oakland-based projects, including Sanctuary for Sustainable Artistry, have taken shape to highlight the creativity and vibrance of Black cultural traditions everywhere.

Courtney Desiree Morris (b. 1983, Fort Ord, CA) is a Berkeley, CA-based social anthropologist and artist whose work is concerned with ancestral memory, ritual work, ecology, climate change, death, mourning, and Black

feminist aesthetics. Her work has been shown at the National Gallery of Jamaica (Kingston, Jamaica), the Frye Museum (Seattle, WA), and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Madrid, Spain) among others. She is an assistant professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and her forthcoming book is titled *To Defend This Sunrise: Black Women's Activism and the Geography of Race in Nicaragua* (Rutgers University Press).

Sabrina Nelson was born in the wake of the '67 Rebellion in Detroit, Michigan. With a degree in painting from Detroit's College for Creative Studies, she has been a professional artist for over 35 years and an educator for nearly as long. Influenced by Yoruba Religion, as well as Eastern and African philosophies, the scope of Nelson's work includes sculpture, objects, performance, and installation. Her work has been exhibited at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, the African American Art & Culture Complex in San Francisco, and more.

brontë velez is a Black-Latinx transdisciplinary artist, curator, trickster, educator, jibarx, and wakeworker, whose eco-social art praxis lives at the intersections of Black feminist placemaking, abolitionist theologies, environmental regeneration, and death doulaship. They are the creative director for Lead to Life design collective and ecological educator for Weaving Earth. Currently, they are co-conjuring a mockumentary with esperanza spalding in collaboration with the San Francisco Symphony and practicing pastoral care as a co-steward of a land refuge in Kashia Pomo territory in Northern California.

Ashara Ekundayo is a queer Black feminist interdisciplinary independent curator, visual maker, cultural theologian, arts organizer, and strategist whose creative practice is rooted in joy-informed pedagogies and the study and creation of Black archives, site-responsive ceremony, and the specific expertise of Black womxn of the African Diaspora. She is the founder of the philanthropic organization Artist As First Responder and has collaborated with artists and institutions including the Museum of the African Diaspora, SFMOMA, and Black [Space] Residency. Ashara currently lives and works between the San Francisco Bay Area and her hometown of Detroit, MI.

Isha Rosemond is an Ayitian-American postdisciplinary artist whose works use somatic poetry to explore the distance between colonial documentation and African Diasporic truth-telling. Isha is the founder of the Black Freedom Fellowship, an international rest residency that offers resources for BIPOC artists/activists to create vital futures. They are a 2022 Curator-in-Residence at SOMArts San Francisco, 2022 Artist-in-Residence at Mirante Xique Xique in Bahia, Brazil, and a 2021 California Artist Council Individual Artist Fellow.

ruth gebreyesus is a writer and producer based in the Bay Area. Her work centers cultural products and their movement across physical and digital margins. Her writing can be found in SSENSE, the Guardian, and Open Space, among others. She served as a food culture and art columnist at KQED and has presented on Black digital production at the Oakland Museum of California and at the New Museum in New York. gebreyesus is currently a co-curator of Black Life, a multidisciplinary art and film series.

/ is a nonprofit visual art space founded in 2018 to advance and promote the expanding field of contemporary art in San Francisco through exhibitions, publications, and public programming.