

G A S W O R K S

Libita Clayton: Quantum Ghost **24 January – 24 March 2019**

Gasworks presents *Quantum Ghost*, the first UK solo exhibition and a major commission by Bristol-based artist Libita Clayton.

Comprising of an immersive sound installation, a series of large-scale photograms and a programme of live performances, *Quantum Ghost* maps a journey through archives and territories related to the artist's heritage. Clayton digs deep into personal documents and oral histories tracing her family tree across different mining regions and colonial geographies of extraction. She reconstructs the paper trail left by her late father, a member of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation, the political mass movement that fought for Namibia's liberation from Apartheid South Africa) who went into exile in the 1980's and studied mining engineering in Cornwall.

Grounded in these sites of memory and testimony, Clayton's research unearths the subterranean histories and political undercurrents connecting the mining regions of Namibia and Cornwall. From mined ores and sedimentary rocks to precious metals and rare earths, her work examines the raw materials at the core of capitalist extraction, revealing how the echoes of colonialism and diasporic migration reverberate through the deep-time of geology and across the ruined landscapes of the Anthropocene.

This project began with Clayton's residency at Gasworks during the summer of 2018, followed by research trips to Cornwall, Namibia and South Africa. During these trips she accessed public archives including the photographic records of the Camborne School of Mines, in Cornwall; and the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle (AACRLS), held within the National Archives of Namibia. She also collected field recordings in places that are intimately bound with her family history, such as the Cornish tin mines and iron-ore heaps in Penwith (not far from where the artist grew up), and the pink salt lakes and uranium mines near the town of Walvis Bay, in Namibia.

Samples from these field recordings form part of a multi-channel audio installation, created through a shared process of collecting and looping, collaging and re-assembling a sonic archive. The work was developed in collaboration with artists and musicians Demelza Toy Toy, Jol Thomson and Hannah Catherine Jones, also featuring contributions from Perivi Katjavivi and Memory Biwa.

Conceived as an exercise in sound archaeology, Clayton summons a polyphony of ancestral voices in the form of a lament, while exploring the unheard sounds of a mineral landscape that is haunted by the ghosts of colonialism and extraction. The often inaudible rhythms of geological phenomena (from slow-moving magma to mineral growth and the radioactive decay of uranium into lead) resonate with the violent flows of natural resources and human bodies across history.

Leading to the 21 minute long audio work is a tunnel-like structure made from cob, a mixture of clay, sand and straw. Riffing on subterranean materials and textures, the gateway into the audio installation lies somewhere between a mine shaft and an ear canal.

At the entrance of the exhibition, a series of dimly-lit photographic prints hold ghostly images that speak of visions of other worlds. Produced by pressing mined minerals and personal

objects directly onto a light-sensitive paper, these photograms are reminiscent of cosmic landscapes and dark matter. In them, the progressive unfolding of history as perceived from a human perspective is broken into kaleidoscopic visions that range from the geological time-scale of mineralisation to the light-speed of the Internet.

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Libita Clayton is a British-Namibian artist who works across sound and performance. She also organises workshops and discursive events developed in partnership with DIY organisations, broadcasters and publishers. Clayton's work was included in the Diaspora Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale, 2017.

Quantum Ghost is commissioned and produced by Gasworks. Libita Clayton's exhibition is part of the Freelands Artist Programme, which offers artists based outside London a three-month residency and a solo exhibition at Gasworks. In late 2019 the work will travel to Spike Island. The exhibition is also generously supported by Arts Council England

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Related Events

Welcome Note: Imani Robinson & Libita Clayton

Wednesday, 23 January, 7.30pm

Opening speech inviting guests into the exhibition, written and performed by writer, researcher and curator, Imani Robinson and Libita Clayton.

Holy Fire: There are no stories only the ghosts of other stories

Sonic lecture by Perivi Katjavivi & Libita Clayton

Wednesday, 20 February, 7pm

Libita Clayton will discuss her work in the context of sound and archive practices with filmmaker and musician Perivi Katjavivi. The lecture stresses the importance of being lost in order for a new logic to emerge, while expanding and meditating on ideas around black noise, sacred space, and second sight.

Closing Performance:

Demelza Toy Toy, Jol Thomson, Hannah Catherine Jones & Libita Clayton

Saturday, 23 March, 3pm

A live experimental lament to mark the closing of *Quantum Ghost*, composed with sonic fragments, off cuts and notes from the exhibition, performed by the artist alongside her collaborators Demelza Toy Toy, Jol Thomson and Hannah Catherine Jones.

All events are free to attend, no booking required. Seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

@GasworksLondon #Libitaclayton #quantumghost

Commissioning partners and exhibition supporters:



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Production Credits

Collaborators

Demelza Toy Toy
Jol Thomson
Hannah Catherine Jones

Contributors

Memory Biwa - Voice of storyteller Lena Venter, recorded in Okahandja, Namibia. documented by linguist Ernst Dammann in the 1950s. Sound recording from BAB. (Basler Afrika Bibliographien), Basel, sampled by artist Robert Machiri.
Perivi Katjavivi - *Holy Fire*, interlude track from *Ejuru* album.
Brain The Tool - Field recordings in Windhoek, Namibia; press image for *Quantum Ghost*, taken in Walvis Bay, Namibia.

Sound engineering

Fred DeFaye

Photograms

Produced at St Pauls Community Darkrooms, Bristol
Technical support from Ruth Jacobs and the Real Photography Company

Public archives

Camborne School of Mines, Cornwall
Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle (AACRLS)
National Archives of Namibia


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