



Omens of Capacity

21 Apr–11 Jun 2023

Jackie Abhulimen
Bridgette Hickey

Janice Lee
Ariana Nuala
Diego Morales-Portillo

Alex Tatarsky
Shanzhai Lyric

With a title drawing from Guyanese writer Wilson Harris, *Omens of Capacity*, the final show in the eleventh Curator in Residence season, “reads back through the shock of place and time for omens of capacity that were latent, unrealized, within the clash of cultures and movements of peoples.”

Jackie Abhulimen presents a contemplative space modeled after the Hellenic cultic inner sanctum, ἄδυτον (*adyton*, ‘inner sanctum’, lit. ‘not to be entered’) which initiates her publication platform of the same name. Unlike the Hellenic temple, however, this space is open to public entry. Housed within are fragments of poetry and contemplation and the audience is invited into ἄδυτον and may engage with it in any way they choose.

Janice Lee presents a contemplative space comprising projection of a moving image work and a meditation cushion surrounded by drawings on rice paper by the artist; in her words, the work “is a reminder of Thich Nhat Hanh’s concept of inter-being, that the environment is not outside you; you are the environment. The title for this work derives from a particular confluence of Korean words: 바다 (*bada*) meaning sea or ocean; 받다 (*badda*) meaning to receive, undergo, endure (suffering), or support; 바닥 (*badak*) meaning ground or floor.” You are invited to take off your shoes, sit down on the cushion, and to take a single enso circle with you.

Bridgette Hickey draws upon ancestral somatic healing practices in a floating sculpture which incorporates branches, a poem on dyed paper, and mirrored acrylic. The work is part of an ongoing prayer for life on this plane, and a process-based mapping of the body’s relation to time, landscape, and sense of life. What happens when much of what we carry, or what carries us, is on another plane? Map-making to this plane of life necessitates, in the artist’s words, “alternative modes of communication, bridges, honoring.”

Performer **Alex Tatarsky** presents a rot altar that explores etymological overlaps between “clown” and “clod.” To feel low, to feel like Pagliacci,

to feel in the dirt: what kind of connections unfold when one sits with these etymological slippages? Comprising traces of a remote performance, the work operates in a dimension of play against a replica of NYC construction barriers (“post no bills”) which serve as surfaces for accumulating notes and marks.

Recife-based curator and scholar **Ariana Nuala** presents a new video about the quilombo leader Malunguinho, who led Afroindigenous and Amerindigenous people in resistance against Portuguese colonizers. The work connects this living legacy to contemporary Afroindigenous and Amerindigenous makers, thinkers, and cultural workers, in particular exploring the coloniality of individuation and its failure to capture this living legacy. A rotating golden key is paired with a ‘shadow’ of the key via die-cut vinyl on the floor.

Referencing Chiquita Banana, the Monroe Doctrine and the debt-governed banana republic through which the United States exerts influence in its “backyard,” **Diego Morales-Portillo** presents an interactive work consisting of bananas with artist-designed stickers laid on the ground in the shape of the Latin American continent. Viewers are invited to take one or more, take the peel and sticker home or leave them, and reflect on the colonial conditions that lead to a Guatemalan banana becoming available for a Portland shopper.

continued



Exhibition notes

continued from previous

In *Endless Garment* (2015-), **Shanzhai Lyric** explore the potential of mis-translation and nonsense as utopian world-making. Their archive of shanzhai poetry-garments is available here to be read aloud by audiences; a mic picks up speech and converts it to text projected behind the archive, expanding a never-ending poem catalyzed by the fecundity of the error.

*

The strange and secret rooms of your voice. It waters its own flowers, but the flowers are tiny old men that feast on heaps of cig butts and hang things on string for fun.

I was not the first to reach this memory. Who put it there? Yes, against this light from a purple-edged leaf lodged in the mind we see again your mother holding you by a string, but looking closer we see the string is a song.

This place of stripped rocks where we burn trash, here each angel moves forward to relinquish its name. Worlds are snuffed out. We never had access to them to begin with, but it still hurts to witness. Even those who don't believe in gods may still fear their secret names, encoded like lineages into those of the angels. Only the mothers learn these.

Those who jumped overboard may have had to transform in order to reach rest. The bones at the bottom of the ocean need to rest. They don't need to be a railroad. There is no final witness if the past is not yet past.

When you ingest the enemy to become stronger, and make a flute from the bone, you can play a blood melody that builds two versions of a stone castle. On closer inspection you see it's not stone, but ossified coral. I was not the one who asked you to come forward, you hear someone say.

manuel arturo abreu

Artist statements

Janice Lee

바다 (OCEAN / RECEIVE / GROUND)

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Once I was fire, choking on my own breath, the breath that kept the fire alive, the breath I consumed and that consumed me. I didn't know how to stop, how to stop myself from wanting more and more, until I saw my own reflection in the vast ocean, fire, the moon looking down, fire, on the surface of the ocean, fire, the sky and smoke sifting through, fire. I couldn't stop myself from wanting more, from diving in to embrace myself, from wanting to be submerged in moonlight, so I didn't stop myself, and arrived inside my own reflection as fire and evaporated as smoke and whisper. The vibrations of the whispers create ripples on the ocean's surface, and the ripples are the stories of everything I destroyed and witnessed as fire.

This work is a reminder of Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of interbeing, that the environment is not outside you; you are the environment. The title for this work derives from a particular confluence of Korean words: 바다 (bada) meaning sea or ocean; 받다 (badda) meaning to receive, undergo, endure (suffering), or support; 바닥 (badak) meaning ground or floor.

Diego Morales-Portillo

One might contend that, in the Western Hemisphere, monoculture is one handy metaphor for our not-so-subtle brand of American empire. But we don't need to worry your hangry little head about it here. Think about Cavendish this way: we want something exotic, but consistent too! We want a food that simply arrives from 3,000 miles away and is inexplicably the sixth of a price of an apple from a neighboring country. Indeed what could a banana cost?

Johannah Herr & Cara Marsh Sheffler

The Banana Republic Recipe Book

continued



Artist statements

continued from previous

Bridgette Hickey

[Note: This artist statement is also available as a separate takeaway printed with risographic ink, placed near the work.]

The black wave I dreamt of repeatedly warning my family with no voice, gathering inside at two, guiding and stretching my body over our home, third.

*

Rowing a boat, alligators pass us, I am not threatened, when I reach the dock I lift the little boy and the little girl falls into the water. Diving to find her I fall and it is calm allowing myself to sink, I open my eyes in this contained water and wait for a force to face me, I am too afraid and eject out of the dream.

**

Now, Jaguar follows me to the cabin and bites me, a water hole created in the ocean beckons for me to be sucked up. A God hands me an amulet.

Do you go writhing? Struggling? Asking always for more time or not this again again again

Brave enough to split yourself open, red paper bits of surrender before the sun, agreeing to be sewn together by fire

Do you go dancing, asking to remember more of this life?

I wanted to cascade my voice vibration through the lower half of my body

Carve new pathways with acknowledgement, holding of past, a leaving with honor

Pattern repair and either way there is a departing. Departure. Again I wonder what does it really *mean* for something or someone—matter—to be *there*. And, is it really *mean*? or really *there*?

This new sculpture, *Amplification*, begins my new body of work: *Symbology of an Echo*. *Symbology of an Echo* is a series from the apothecary of time. It is constituted of objects that have manifested through day/dreams where guides informed me of things that I need/ed. Objects that I have remembered through practices of storytelling divination where I recall medicinal and sacred objects. Sculptures that come from spontaneous episodes of memory recall starting in the form of falling out and red prose that are given and often include the identity of a tool needed for the future. I take care of time. I bring prayers to the feet of chronos and spiral through kairos. This series is a practice of turning poems from 7 years ago into iterations of sculptures.

These are markings of change and initiations in my ecology and geography.

This is some of the weight of who is not here, and what is coming. This is life language retrieval and recreation.

This is also about waking a little one who sleeps in the base of oak trees.

Works in the exhibition

A

Alex Tatarsky

Untitled (clown show) 2023

Dimensions variable

Plastic, cardboard, chalk

B

Alex Tatarsky

Untitled (eggheads) 2023

Dimensions variable

Styrofoam, ceramic, bulb, tomatoes, flowers

C

Ariana Nuala

There is only one in the woods 2023

Dimensions variable

Digital video (5:00), die-cut vinyl

D

Shanzhai Lyric

Endless Garment 2015

Dimensions variable

Selections from Shanzhai Lyric archive, projection, voice recognition software, digital video (03:02)

E

Jackie Abhulimen

ἄδυτον [*adyton*, innermost sanctum] 2023

12 × 9 × 14 feet

Chiffon fabric, soil, wooden chair, red rosin paper, riso ink

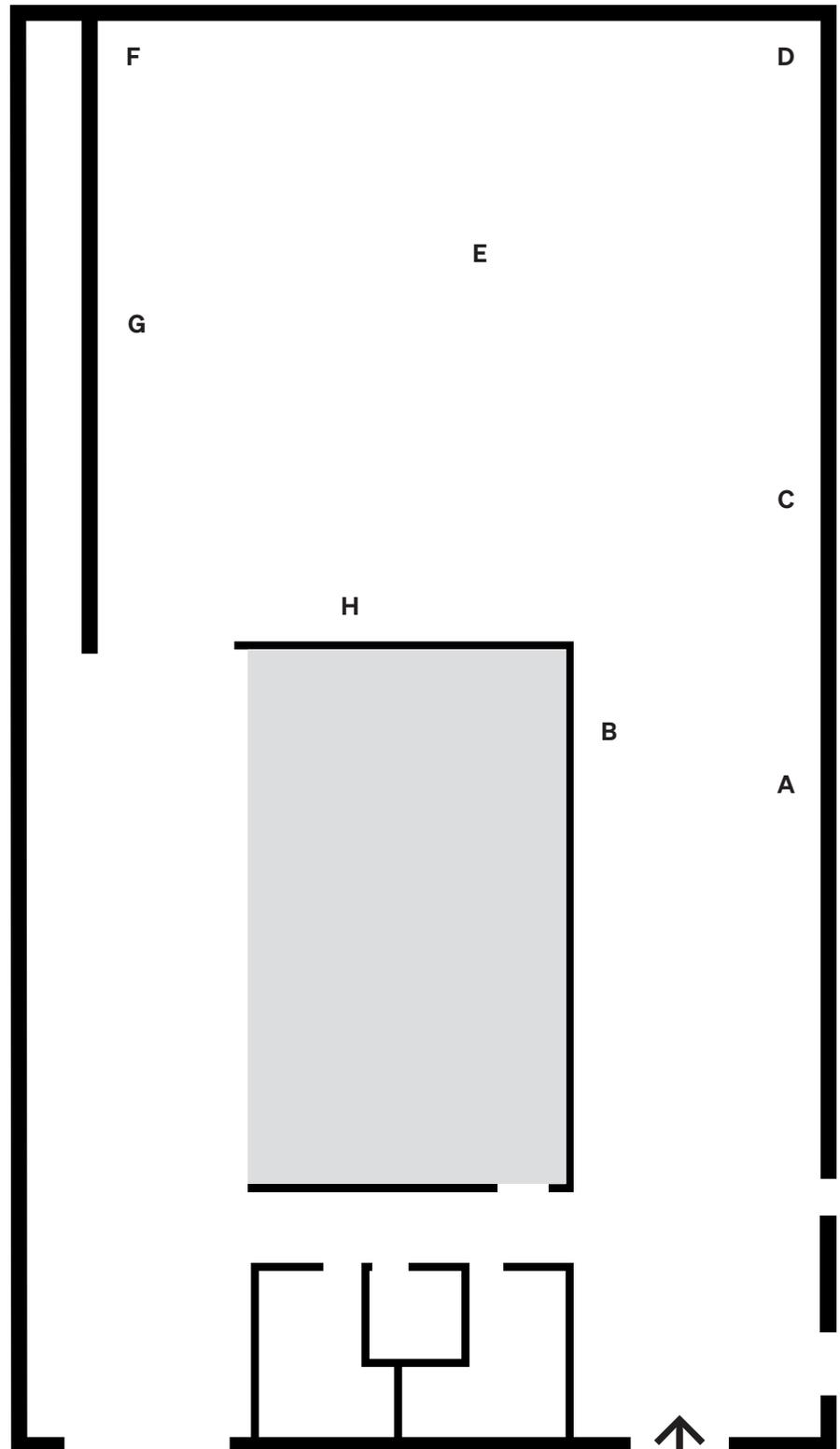
F

Diego Morales-Portillo

Monroe 2023

Dimensions variable

Bananas, artist-designed stickers.





Works in the exhibition

continued from previous

G

Janice Lee

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[bad(d)a(k) (OCEAN / RECEIVE / GROUND)] 2023

Dimensions variable

Digital video (02:51), zabuton meditation cushion, sumi ink on rice paper with essences of obsidian, snowdrops, cedar, dandelion seed, bamboo mat

H

Bridgette Hickey

Amplification 2023

13.5 × 18 × 4 feet

Tulip poplar tree branch, magnolia branches, log-wood dye, homemade lemon balm, homemade rosemary dye, homemade copper fixer, indigo, blackberry, wool yarn, acrylic, embroidery thread, monofilament, paper, riso ink, rocks, dirt, shells, silk, cotton

About the participants

Jackie Abhulimen

Jackie Abhulimen is a writer, scholar and activist from Athens, Greece. Her activism in dismantling the inequities that shape the migrant experience in Europe has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Al Jazeera*, and NPR, and in local Greek press. Jackie holds a BA in Development and Peace Studies from the University of Bradford and an MA in Performance Studies from New York University. She currently lives in New York City, writes on black diasporic culture and practice and is working on her first manuscript of poems.

Bridgette Hickey

Bridgette Hickey is a heart and shadow scientist, a multidisciplinary archivist exploring interspecies communication with her ancestors. She works in repetitive time intensive traditional mediums to weave fragmented and disembodied themes and materials.

They are a community herbalist, poet, and care worker currently developing their skills in textiles, education, grief facilitation, and craniosacral therapy. She has been led here through a remembering of her families Black Gullah, white Irish, Nipmuc, and Mohawk lifeways.

Bridgette has a background in medical anthropology with a focus on state inflicted intimate violence and chronic illness. She has an appreciation for relational neuroscience and somatics: the ways our sinew hold stories of joy, pain, love, and guidance for the beyond.

Bridgette's work *Doing My Hair* was included in an artist talk alongside Lisa Jarrett, Sharita Towne, and Susana Pilar Delahanate Matienzo in 2015. In 2020 Bridgette collaborated with Salimatu Amabebe's *love letters to black folks* creating flower and environmental literary essences. They are

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About the participants

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featured on the Water in The Desert website as one of the 2020 Switch artists in residency alongside Intisar Abioto, sidony o'neal, Yawa Amenta, and Ni Abioto. Bridgette is a spring 2022 recipient of a make build learn RACC grant to support her current herbal textile work Beloved Fragments in collaboration with Adriene Cruz and is a current summer 2022 PLAYA resident.

Janice Lee

Janice Lee (she/they) is a Korean American writer, teacher, spiritual scholar, and shamanic healer. She is the author of 7 books of fiction, creative non-fiction & poetry, most recently *Imagine a Death* (Texas Review Press, 2021) and *Separation Anxiety* (CLASH Books, 2022), a finalist for the 2023 Oregon Book Award. *A roundtable, unanimous dreamers chime in*, a collaborative novel co-authored with Brenda Iijima, is forthcoming in April 2023 from Meekling Press. An essay (co-authored with Jared Woodland) is featured in the recently released 4K restoration of *Sátántangó* (dir. Béla Tarr) from Arbelos Films. As a writer she is interested in the decolonization of narrative and language, and the systems which we use to make meaning and create reality. Incorporating shamanic and energetic healing, Lee teaches workshops on inherited trauma, healing, and writing. She is trained in the Q'ero tradition of medicine and energy work and is a practitioner of Zen Buddhism in the tradition of Plum Village and Thich Nhat Hanh. She also incorporates elements of Korean shamanic ritual (Muisim), Korean folk magic, plant medicine and stone/flower essence work, and interspecies communication. She currently lives in Portland, Oregon, where she is the Operational Creative Director at Corporeal Writing and an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Portland State University.

Ariana Nuala

Ariana Nuala (b. 1993, Recife, Brazil) is an educator, researcher and curator. She often works collectively to explore issues related to power, permanence and the visible and invisible plots that make possible the existence of community diasporic practices by combining strategies that begin in the body. She is currently a master's student in art history at the Federal University of Paraíba. She worked in the Coordination of Education at the Murillo La Greca Museum (2018 - 2020) and is currently assistant curator at the Oficina Francisco Brennand Institute. Nuala coordinates the Platform and Residency Práticas Desviantes, and is also a member and curator of the collectives CARNI (@carnicoletivo) and Trovoa (@trovoa__).

Diego Morales-Portillo

Diego Morales-Portillo (b. 1992, Ciudad de Guatemala) is a multidisciplinary artist and graphic designer living and working in Portland, OR. Morales-Portillo graduated as a bachelor in artistic drawing at the National School of Fine Arts of Guatemala in 2010; in 2015 he received a Bachelor's degree in graphic design and advertising (cum laude) from the Universidad del Istmo. In 2019 he received an MFA in visual studies at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, OR. Diego has presented his work in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Italy, North Korea, Spain and the United States in exhibitions such as the *18th Asian Art Biennial of Bangladesh*, 2017 *Pacific Standard Time LA/LA*; *Mapping Narratives: New Prints 2021/Winter* at the International Print Center in NY (2021); auction and exhibition of Latin American art Juannio 2013, 2016, 2017, 2020. His work is in public collections such as Neo-Murales of the Rozas Botran Foundation and Imago Mundi of Luciano

continued



About the participants

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Benneton in Italy and Portable Works collection of the Regional Arts & Culture Council in Portland, Oregon. Diego has been awarded residencies such as Open Studio Residency at Haystack Mountain, The Studios at MASS MoCA, Caldera Art residency in Sisters and Leland Iron Works at Oregon City, both in Oregon.

Alex Tatarsky

Called “a hilarious, finely tuned absurdist” (*Theatre Jones*), Alex Tatarsky makes performances in the uncomfortable in-between zone of comedy, dance-theater, performance art, and deluded rant—sometimes with songs. Tatarsky experienced fleeting fame as Andy Kaufman’s daughter and used to perform as a mound of dirt. Playing with perceptions of language and narrative structure, their live performances are highly responsive to venue and audience, often breaking the fourth wall and embracing humor to reveal vulnerability and humanity. Venues include Abrons Arts Center, La Mama, MoMA PS1, The Kitchen, Judson Church and many bars and basements. As curatorial fellow at the Poetry Project, they organized a series on the poetics of rot. Research interests include bootlegs, hellscapes, and compost.

Shanzhai Lyric

Shanzhai Lyric is a body of research focusing on radical logistics and linguistics through the prism of technological aberration and nonofficial cultures. The project takes inspiration from the experimental English of shanzhai t-shirts made in China and proliferating across the globe to examine how the language of counterfeit uses mimicry, hybridity, and permutation to both revel in and reveal the artifice of global hierarchies. Through an ever-growing archive of poetry-garments, Shanzhai Lyric explores the potential of mis-translation and nonsense as utopian world-making (breaking) and has previously

taken the form of poetry-lecture, essay, and installation. In the fall of 2020, Shanzhai Lyric founded the fictional office entity Canal Street Research Association.

home school

home school is a free pop-up art school and space of sacred duty co-run by Victoria Anne Reis and manuel arturo abreu. Since 2015, home school has offered genre-nonconforming edutainment, critical care, and contexts for contemplation, all free or sliding scale for local and remote publics.

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Oregon Center for Contemporary Art recognizes that our programming is held on the traditional lands of the Chinook, Cowlitz, and many other Nations. We take this opportunity to offer respectful recognition to the Native communities in our region.

Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and colonization, as well as the continual displacement of Native people by the government of the United States. Oregon Contemporary, as part of our Equity Statement and Plan, agrees to recognize the inequities inherent in our culture and take action to dismantle them.

Join us in acknowledging the contributions Indigenous peoples have made, and continue to make, to our region and beyond. Text (907) 312-5085 or visit native-land.ca to find out **whose land am I on?**

Oregon Contemporary's **Curator in Residence** program is the first of its kind in the region. Through the CIR program, audiences are inspired by viewing local, national, and international work in their region, and the arts community establishes new connections throughout the world.

Oregon Contemporary

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