

# WHAT IS A GATHERING?

In conjunction with the exhibition *Practice as Ritual/ Ritual as Practice*  
September 15 - November 5, 2023

Presented by Artspeak Gallery, The Black Arts Centre  
and Libby Leshgold Gallery

# INTRODUCTION

In response to the exhibition *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice*, this collection of programs investigates the implications of gathering as a gesture of continuance rooted in love and resistance, situating Black women artists within a legacy and lineage of cultural production, place-making, radical pedagogies, feminist theories, and decolonial discourse. Commemorating artistic practices, complex and ever-changing identities, contributions, and fastidious efforts made by Black women and femmes, the offerings evaluate the potential emergence of embodied expressions when Black femmehood is centered with intentionality.

What does it mean to bring Black and Afro-Diasporic people together in a city that has, whether unwittingly or deliberately, fragmented our communities, downplayed our contributions to its cultural landscape, fetishized, and tokenized us? How might we frame any gathering of Black bodies as inherently political based on its possibility to cultivate and maintain cultural rituals and practices beyond the veil of whiteness?

Alongside the physical gathering typified in this booklet, another gathering occurs behind the scenes between Libby Leshgold Gallery, Artspeak Gallery, and The Black Arts Centre. Our collaboration is a reminder that institutions can align and gather amongst themselves in acknowledgement that the role of art institutions does not end as works created by marginalized bodies perform within the gallery space. Instead, it is within our dispensation to devise means by which ongoing dialogue can occur within and beyond the gallery walls.

# EVENTS + PROGRAM

This program of events was created collaboratively between Artspeak, Black Arts Centre, and Libby Leshgold Gallery and presented on the occasion of the exhibition, *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice*. The exhibition is curated by Andrea Fatona and Nya Lewis, and features Buseje Bailey, Marie Booker, Claire Carew, Dzi..An, Khadejha McCall, Mosa McNeilly, Chloe Onari, Barbara Prézeau Stephenson, Winsom Winsom. It will run September 15 - November 5, 2023, at the Libby Leshgold Gallery.

## **Opening Reception: *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice***

Thursday September 14, 6PM

Libby Leshgold Gallery, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

## **Workshop: On Paying Homage to Past Selves While Envisioning**

### **Future Realities with Dr. Winsom Winsom**

Saturday September 16, 2PM

The Black Arts Centre

## **Film Screening: *This Is Not A Burial, It's A Resurrection***

Thursday September 21, 7PM

Reliance Theatre, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

## **Exhibition: *New Forms (that which constitutes critical matter)***

October 25 - December 16, 2023

Artspeak Gallery

## **Curator's Talk: Dr. Andrea Fatona and Nya Lewis in conversation**

Wednesday November 1, 6PM

Reliance Theatre, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

## **Black Women and Femmes Gather feat. Author Aisha Bentham**

Friday November 3, 7PM

Libby Leshgold Gallery, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

**\*\*Please note that this event is exclusively for Black and African self-identifying women and femmes.**

## **Reading Room: alt//**

September 15 - November 5, 12 - 5PM

Libby Leshgold Gallery, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

# Opening Reception: *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice*

Thursday September 14, 6PM

Libby Leshgold Gallery

Emily Carr University of Art + Design



Image: DZL.AN, *Transition*, 2022, installation view, A Space Gallery, Toronto. Photo: Selina Whittaker.

Please join us for an evening reception to mark the opening of *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice*, a touring group exhibition featuring the work of nine Black Women artists who participated in the historical 1989 DAWA exhibition, *Black Wimmin: When and Where We Enter*, the first national exhibition to address the exclusion of Black women artists from the visual landscape of Canada.

The exhibition attests to and affirms the heterogeneity of perspectives and forms that constitute Black Canadian women's art today. Featuring primarily new commissioned works, including paintings, photography, text, installation, video, and sculpture, the exhibition highlights the sustained aesthetic and everyday practices of these artists who critically challenge the structures that delineate Black women's lives in the current moment.

# Workshop: On Paying Homage to Past Selves While Envisioning Future Realities: 2D Altar Construction with Dr. Winsom Winsom

Saturday September 16, 2PM

The Black Arts Centre



Image: Winsom Winsom, *Red Pyramid* (1997), Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Join us at the Black Arts Centre for a 2D Altar collage workshop led by Dr. Winsom Winsom. Participants of this workshop will be encouraged to embark on a self-reflection journey grounded in the Twi worldview of referencing the past to make positive progress in the future, a concept embodied in the Sankofa Bird. This workshop draws heavily from Winsom's Afrocentric artistic practice, which mediates the subconscious and preconscious across various mediums. This workshop is open to all ages and materials will be provided.

**Winsom Winsom** is a Visionary, Healer and Spiritual Artist who has grounded herself in learning and living the wisdom passed on to her by the Ancestors. Winsom continues to bring about the synchronization of her Art and Spirituality and believes "true power originates from internal spiritual enlightenment, and that she must use this power to reach her higher self: Creating Harmony and Healing with her Art".

# Film Screening: *This is Not A Burial, It's A Resurrection*

Thursday September 21, 7PM

Reliance Theatre

Emily Carr University of Art + Design



Image: *This Is Not A Burial, It's A Resurrection* (still), 2019.

Join us for a screening of Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese's acclaimed film; *This Is Not A Burial, It's A Resurrection*. Moving beyond the prevalent cinematic archetype that poses elderly Black matriarchs as passive knowledge repositories in the "hero's journey," Jeremiah Mosese's *This Is Not A Burial*; instead situates within the frame, the possibilities of Black matriarchs as active forces of change, resistance and disruption. Through an exploration of an amalgamation of themes that include Black female subjectivity, neo-colonial dispossession, embodied relations with the land, and the after-effect of colonization, Jeremiah Mosese's film asks its viewers to consider the draconian actions taken in the name of so-called progress.



# Exhibition: *New Forms (that which constitutes critical matter)*

October 25 - December 16, 2023

Artspeak Gallery



Image: Becky Bair *Collaboration with the sun*, 2019

*New Forms (that which constitutes critical matter)* foreground the relationship between material, making, representation, interpretation, radical aesthetic, regeneration, and intellectual imaginings. The exhibition centers alternative forms of art-making and conceptual practices that subvert perception, revealing the undercurrents of historical discourse, and endeavors to transform or modify materials from artists' environment to concepts and substances that ground them. By creating outside the limitations of representational "accuracy," these cross-disciplinary practices turn to the potentiality of abstract or conceptual approaches in materializing Black life, building something that intentionally occupies space, and positions the act of worldmaking futures within the artists' hands.

Curated by Artspeak director/curator,  
Nya Lewis.

Participating artists: Charles Campbell, Jan Wade, Chantal Gibson, Eva Birhanu, Rebbeca Bair, Shaurie Bidot, and Chiedza Pasipandoya.

# Curator's Talk: Andrea Fatona and Nya Lewis in conversation

Wednesday November 1, 6PM  
Libby Leshgold Gallery

Join us for a conversation between *Practice as Ritual / Ritual as Practice* co-curators Andrea Fatona and Nya Lewis. Taking the evolution of the exhibition as a starting point, this conversation explores the complexities of preserving Black art histories in Canada, material cultures and lineages, and building the archive through intergenerational knowledge sharing.



**Andrea Fatona** is an independent curator and associate professor at OCAD University. Fatona was the former curator of contemporary art at the Ottawa Art Gallery, and has worked as the programme director at Video In, Vancouver, Co-Director of Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, and Artistic Director of Artspace Gallery, Peterborough. Her curatorial practice is concerned with creating spaces of engagement for Black cultural producers in Canada. Fatona is a Canada Research Chair, Tier II in Black Canadian Diasporic Cultural Production.



**Nya Lewis** is an independent curator/writer currently serving as the Director/curator of Artspeak Gallery, and the inaugural Research Fellow at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Her practice is a culmination of centuries of African resistance, love, questions, actions, study and embrace.



# Black Women + Femmes Gather

Featuring *dissident: Spatial Disruption of the Body* with

author **Aisha Bentham**

Friday November 3, 6pm

Libby Leshgold Gallery

Emily Carr University of Art + Design

Libby Leshgold, BLAC, and Artspeak host an evening gathering Vancouver-based and visiting Black women artists, featuring keynote speaker Aisha Bentham.

Join us for a cocktail social and small bites catered by Brownside Kitchen.

Please note this event is exclusively for Black and African self-identifying women and femmes. Please register by email to [info@artspeak.ca](mailto:info@artspeak.ca) by November 1, 2023.



**Aisha Lesley Bentham** is an internationally trained artist-scholar and vegan chef from Toronto and has earned her BFA(H) Acting degree with a minor in Women and Diaspora Studies from the University of Windsor. Aisha attended the world renowned school arthaus. berlin in 2016 where she studied Devising Theater and Performance, as well as founded a residency for multi-disciplinary artists/creators called RootReach. In 2020 Aisha completed her MA in Theater and Performance where she researched the intersections of cooking and performance and created *Movements with my ancestors: A multi-sensory and non-verbal performance-installation that uses food preparation and cooking techniques as participatory and reflective storytelling.* Her research and passion looks at the intersections of cooking and performance and looks to interrogate notions of care, eco-somatics and cookery. In 2020 she was a Black Arts fellow at Wildseed Center for the Arts and Activism, a professor in the Performing Arts and Food and Media departments and is the head of Food and Drink at the Canadian Green Alliance, bridging the gap between theater and sustainability.

## **Reading Room: *alt//***

September 15 – November 5

Libby Leshgold Gallery

Emily Carr University of Art + Design

***alt//*** is a collaborative physical activation and digital archive documenting a lineage of decolonial practices led by Black and African women artists in North America between 1950–2023. The project uses open-source archival tools to preserve ephemera and documentation like posters, flyers, zines, books, manifestos, interviews and reviews, providing public access to materials that document the histories of Black and African cultural production, countercultural, anti-racist, and trans/feminist/queer activist movements. *alt//* weaves and repositions notions of history that enact erasure by discovering and producing a dynamic reinterpretation of material. The installation reframes inaccessible material, altering and informing a Canadian art archive with new entry points. Tracing a phantom lineage or succession, *alt//* presents a fragmented and questioning collection of documentation, fostering a curriculum or ever-evolving resource, increasing understanding of Black arts ecologies, and the practices and conditions of regional art making.

**\*In this iteration, Artspeak director Nya Lewis presents *alt//* as popup. Visitors are welcome to engage with the material on view. At its closing, *alt//* continues as a virtual curriculum accessible through [artspeak.ca](https://artspeak.ca)**

**HOW DO WE  
RECORD  
A LINEAGE  
OF BLACK  
FEMINIST  
AND  
DECOLONIAL  
WORK?**

## **Artspeak Gallery**

233 Carrall St  
Vancouver, BC V6B 2J2  
<https://artspeak.ca>

Established in 1986 as a Canadian artist-run center, Artspeak is an experimental exhibition and programming space, Artspeak encourages dialogue between contemporary visual art and writing. Artspeak is committed to intersectional participation and exchange, making visible the work of Black/African diasporic, Indigenous, and POC cultural practitioners within the regional specificity of Downtown Eastside Vancouver.

## **The Black Arts Centre**

Unit 105 - 10305 City Pkwy  
Surrey, BC V3T 4Y8  
<https://theblackartscentre.ca>

The Black Arts Centre (BLAC) is an artist-run center, cultural hub and community space owned and operated by Black youth in Surrey, BC. Existing at the intersection of art, community, and culture, BLAC hosts exhibitions, performances, events, workshops and other diverse programming. This multifaceted approach provides infrastructure for Black art, creativity, and imagination.

## **Libby Leshgold Gallery**

520 East 1st Avenue  
Vancouver, V5T 0H2  
[libby.ecuad.ca](http://libby.ecuad.ca)

The Libby Leshgold Gallery is a public art gallery dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art. Located within Emily Carr University of Art + Design, the gallery's primary objective is the presentation of exhibitions and public programmes that effectively communicate the role of the gallery and University as an active site for the exhibition, discussion, teaching and production of art and design.

This is a Diasporic African Women Artists (DAWA) Legacy Collective Exhibition, which originated at A Space (Toronto) and is circulated with assistance from the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Thank you to the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Centre for the Study of Black Canadian Diaspora for their generous support.

The events and programs presented as part of *What is a Gathering?* take place on the unceded, traditional Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories as well as the shared, unceded traditional territory of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen Qayqayt and Tsawassen First Nations.

Artspeak,



**LIBBY  
LESHGOLD  
GALLERY**  
AT EMILY CARR



CENTRE FOR  
THE STUDY OF  
BLACK CANADIAN  
DIASPORA



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