



Arcadia Gallery
11:00 AM - 17:00 PM
27th July - 21st August 2021

MULTIPLICITY OF US

Ije, Loraine Masiya Mponela, Ryan Christopher, Ayesha Jones, Japhet Dinganga, Gloria Adusu, and melissandre varin

Afro-descendant artists connected by Coventry present work celebrating the infra-resonance of their labour. The exhibition is about pluriversality, love, and movement. Beyond the pleasure of the artists to share work nearby one another, the artworks echo conversations on the frontline of diasporic revolutions.

multiplicity of us is a slow-birther assemblage, made by and of beings i love.

melissandre varin

This exhibition represents the last seasonal residency of artist melissandre varin, who have worked with Coventry Artspace since October 2020. Through these residencies they have explored how spaces such as Arcadia can be used to nourish collaborative practices and celebrate the work of artists who have been marginalised, while questioning and interrogating preconceptions of what we consider art to be.

The series of seasonal residencies have been funded by



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



In this document every artist used their own words, both to talk about themselves and the artworks they are presenting as part of *multiplicity of us*. The document is dis-articulated and we are not sorry about that.

Some work exhibited is available for sale - please contact Artspace directly: 07975623806 / space@coventry-artspace.co.uk

Ije (eejay)

Ije (eejay): A Scottish/Nigerian artist-healer. My practice draws on a lifetime of moving across the UK and beyond exploring landscapes, from wild spaces of mountains and coastlines, to mining and farming communities to industrial towns and cities. My painting, photography, installation and writing are products of immersive experiences, connecting audiences with the transformative properties of expansive natural spaces. Textured paintings with inclusions of manufactured materials are often described as bold and energetic, reflecting the feelings, political resonance, and sensuousness of my encounters. My photographs/videos initially act as immediate note taking, capturing glimpses of the times and spaces that I occupy in the world.

I am a mixed practice artist: I am a writer, a poet, an explorer, a painter, a photographer, a creator, a healer; I am a sculptor, an adventurer, a walker and a runner, a performer, a thinker, a catalyst. I look towards, I look onto, I look through and on the face of things; I encounter, touch, feel, remember, imagine, and fabricate.

I take commissions and run individual/small group creative painting workshops.

Website: www.ije-artist.com

Instagram: [@ijeartist4764/](https://www.instagram.com/ijeartist4764/)

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Loraine Masiya Mponela

Loraine is a native of Malawi. She has lived in England for 13 years in September. Loraine's background is public health. She holds MPH from Uni of Leeds UK although she doesn't practice. She is a migrants rights campaigner and community organiser.

During the pandemic, trying to distract herself from nightmares of being an asylum seeker living in Coventry, Loraine is exploring poetry as a tool to tell her own life experiences and of those she deem to serve - with their permission.

She is a mother of 1, she also writes articles, public speaker and more. She organises [@caragcoventry](https://www.caragcoventry.co.uk) www.carag.co.uk and she is also in the leadership of #StatusNow4All <https://www.statusnow4all.org> campaign – The campaign which is calling on the UK and government of Ireland to give indefinite leave to remain to ALL people stuck in the UK asylum and immigration system, ALL undocumented migrants and ALL people seeking asylum to end the long suffering the system has created.

Twitter and Instagram: @lorainemponela

Youtube: Loraine Mponela <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9rXX-OPIAZh2y67uFDQN8A/videos>

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Ryan Christopher

Ryan considers creoleness, composition, the 'body of Christ', the hidden and the peripheral.

Working within the confluence of diasporic collectivities and poetics, the artist's cross-disciplinary work presents chance, elliptical encounters with objects, materials, and images. In doing so, he draws on horticulture, theological anthropology, reflective film, Antillean literature and postcolonial theory to emphasise ideas around emancipatory thought, communion, renewal and ultimately, relation.

website: www.ryanchristopher.co.uk

Instagram: @ryancl_

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Ayesha Jones

Ayesha is a dual heritage, neurodiverse, visual artist. She uses photography and film to interrogate social structures and belief systems, through personal narratives. Her autobiographical project, which explores disability, female sexuality and family lineage, was one of 30 projects to receive an international award from Magnum Photos.

Ayesha has recently received an award from Unlimited and City of Culture 2021, for her latest project 'Motherland'. She explores the relationship between art and spirituality and how ritual can be used as a tool to heal outdated and toxic social structures. Motherland is also an exploration of her own maternal lineage and how our bodies hold the memories and experiences of our ancestors. This exploration is part of Ayesha's ongoing journey towards understanding more about the dialogue of cosmic energies, that is expressed through all of us, in unique ways.

website: www.ayeshajones.co.uk

Instagram & Twitter: @Ayesha_Jones

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Japhet Dinganga

I'm an Artist based in Birmingham and a Painting Masters student at Coventry University, currently on a gap year.

My intrigues to Art are mostly therapeutic and self satisfactory, however I still strongly believe Artists should forbid their Art to be bound by rules and concepts. Rather, Art should indicate emotions and the

atmospheric of the metaphysic.

The use of material and object in my work holds validations that I encourage anyone to relate to personally at their own play of perspective. I do not wish to enforce any symbolic meanings towards any use of material or object, rather it's the experience they hold that I'm most intrigued by, as they all share individual history.

Instagram: @spacegate

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Gloria Adusu

Originally from Ghana, I live in Coventry, I have been in the UK for 17 years now. Mother of 4, I live with the last one. I am very active in Coventry, and volunteer with Carriers of Hope <https://carriersofhope.org.uk/>, I am a member of CARAG @caragcoventry <https://www.carag.ico.uk> , and volunteer to make meals for those in need.

I am an artist. I write short stories, poems and songs, dance and drum.

When the pandemic started, there was a need to make face masks to protect each other. I started to make them for my household. I remember that I first practiced with hand towels and from there bought African print fabrics to help community groups, organisations, and individuals in Coventry, Liverpool, London, and Birmingham. It has become a way for me to support people in the community. I now work with my brother on this project and we make unique pieces including face masks but also fans and slippers.

Twitter: @GloriaAdusu

email: setorglo1234@gmail.com

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melissandre varin

Relation, displacement, multiplicity, identity, interdependency, and language emerge from melissandre's work. Making from an Afro and Caribbean diasporic context, melissandre add layers of complexity using a situated Black feminism. Through poetic performance arts, moving image assemblages, and site-specific installations - among other things - melissandre interrogate how the encounter between bodies that have been marginalised, everyday materials, and institutional spaces transgresses normativity.

melissandre are an artworker and a co-parent of 2 years old Eole. They currently work on (B.O.O.K) *Building Our Own Knowledge*, a healing space with Coventry Biennial, *papaya* a series of transnational afrofeminist performances, curate *Open Call* a branch of Studies in Theatre and Performance journal and are an artist in residence and a Coventry Artspace Artist Advisory Group member.

Instagram: @vmelissandre

List of artworks

Ije (eejay)

1

TRACKS, TRAILS & TREACHERY AROUND THE LOCH (PFHOEM)

Red text on white vinyl approx. w 70 x l 200 x h 50 cm – imagine

Sharp, slicing wind, augury of life or death; piercing silver shards of hail & sleet; dazzling mercurial glints on the water, an iridescent glaze over inky indigo & payned grey; bitter though not twisted is the wind so tread carefully travelling to & fro

A benign woodland trail created for the Queen they say, by the deer some say, by the very elements it could be said; buffered from the brumous portents of the skies above & the loch to the left barely glimpsed through pine, bracken & heather, yomping onward out of arboreal protection into a frontal assault, the refrain setting a lively, tingling rhythm

Nerves jump like the nimble footwork required on granite sets, treacherous from the mutable waters running freely or freezing & coating with ice; water undifferentiated, existing in a state of continuous potentiality, I follow its example, whole body engagement required to navigate the here & now, what was just now & what could be now

Deer tracks, insubstantial yet clearly defining passage, precipitously flanking foaming waters; not much survival chance to fall, to slip & slide & slither & tumble & bounce & launch airborne into the stygian depths where cold penetrates, saturates, subdues, numbs & encapsulates. A dead stag spotted; washed up against boulders on the shoreline, belly bloated with gasses not grasses, did he slip or was he pushed? This is still life, a still life, life has stilled in him

So onward, towards journeys end. In the gloaming, not roaming we are focused on the track, picking & choosing between human-made & those made by four-legged foragers, whose eyes have adapted for this dusk time, unlike our own that require augmentation from torches strapped to our heads; our own antlers, though not for fighting for dominance, yet still fighting for survival; as we slip & slide, crunch & glide across the Tracks, Trails & Treachery Around The Loch

Ije 26.9.15 06:50; 16.6.17 12:04; 21.7.17 08:25; 28.8.17 11:52; 30.10.17 07:13; 23.1.18 06:22

STILL LIFE TRIPTYCH: TRACKS, TRAILS and TREACHERY

3 x photographs and text as direct prints onto A3 aluminium panels £275 each or £795 for the triptych

This work developed from a number of winter walks around and above Loch Muick in Scotland and a poem I wrote in 2015/2017. It is a take on there still being life during that time of year and yet in harsh conditions life can still, can stop, can cease; through bad luck, age, illness or predation. These images are versions of my embodied truth with a modicum of poetic licence and digital enhancement (credit to Thomas Vassaux for his expertise). Text reads:

TRACKS TRAILS AND TREACHERY AROUND THE LOCH / NIMBLE FOOTWORK REQUIRED
ON GRANITE SETS / DID I SLIP OR WAS I PUSHED?

PERDURANCE 20:

New and recycled white extruded silicone cord, hand chained, then sculpted + fishing line + used running shoes - suspended, knotted, pushed through, resting on, falling from...

Created in situ July 2021. The chaining and knotting creates a space for me within the activity; the cleansing, mind freeing repetition of manual labour generating interconnected weavings, entanglements, encounters and interlocutions. I can move, I can move it, can it move me? Initially suspended and woven, the initial embodiment will be cut, dropped, and sculpted.

Patterns of Perdurance

In the space of the activity, I am changing

My fingers, my toes, my muscles, my joints ache

They become exposed, unfamiliar, then accustomed to new patterns

Syncopated, rhythmic, disjointed, synchronous

They endure

I endure

Ije 9.7.15 06:06

FIND SOME COMFORT

Handmade velvet cushion, faux fur and recycled barbed wire

186 x 61cm

We all need solace and comfort in our lives, at times this can be almost impossible to find from others; so find your own where and however you can. Barriers can keep you in as well as others out, pain can keep you alive, and contentment lead to stagnation. Find some comfort, please...

Lorraine Masiya Mponela

5

i raise my fist

deep blue double bed sheet, red acrylic paint
137 x 190 x 30 cm

6

poetry in wooden box

6:50 film, one chair, wooden box
186 x 111 x 185

list of poems:

Beauty - Still I am limitless - I raise my fist - keep your smile to yourself - three generations warriors

Ryan Christopher

7

The Garden of Gethsemane

13/04/21

Image transfer on Chopping Board, Paint

22 x 31.9 x 1.7 cm

Narrative:

With its title referencing both a piano solo by Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, the Ethiopian musician, and the site where Jesus prayed before his betrayal and crucifixion, the work shows a hand raised in a church in Trinidad. The image is a video still, transferred to a chopping board and painted, drawing heavily on the film theory of the French filmmaker Robert Bresson, with his calculated use of economy and ellipsis, exemplified in his close-up shots of hands. With elements that creolise, the work is dense and resistant, yet fragile and dependent, drawing connections between horticulture, postcolonial theory, and theological anthropology in fragmentary narratives of solace and grace.

Constantine's dream & the trellis for our grapes

08/06/21

Wood, tape, nails and elastic

12.5 x 28 cm

Remnants of a garden trellis are taped together to form a cross.

And like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth

23/07/21

Masking tape, Paper

8 x 8.1 cm

A cropped video still from a Church in Jamaica shows a figure gazing at the floor.

Ayesha Jones

Alchemy, 2016-2017

4 x photographs onto A3 £85 each or £270 for the set

“Alchemy is a photography installation inspired by my initiation into Kemetic spirituality. Each of the 4 images represents an element; Fire, Earth, Water and Air. The images were taken in a temple in Togo, where I was exposed to the power of spirit first hand. Not in theory, not in “love and light” but in a very real and practical way, that was felt and observed in the physical. Those experiences completely shifted my idea of reality, and since coming back to the UK in 2017, I have found it challenging to slip back into a world that is not centred around natural principles. I attempt to use my work to disrupt the “western” experience a little and bring the focus back to life, back to reality (yes I did just quote Soul II Soul). Through working with the 4 elements, through finding balance and harmony, inside and out, magic really does happen.

My visit to Meritah (Africa) was all about learning, observing, listening, understanding. When I first arrived, I was told that they call people from the west “people with eyes who can’t see.” By the time I left 14 months later, I found out what they meant by that. Coming back to the west...with eyes a little more open, has been a challenge to navigate.” - Ayesha Jones

This exhibition is part of Ayesha's ongoing project "Motherland" which has received an Emerging Artist award from Unlimited and Coventry City Of Culture 2021, and will be exhibited in spring 2022.

Ayesha's work can be printed on other materials - **please contact Artspace directly: 07975623806 / space@coventry-artspace.co.uk**

Japhet Dinganga

11

Door - 2021

Wood, Bitumen and acrylic paint mix media
(196cm x 76cm)

12

Concrete wave opaque - 2021

Wood, fabric, glass, bitumen mix media
(53cm x 50 cm)

13

The People's home Harambe - 2021

Image on wood of people of Kenya grieving the death of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta August 1978
(100cm x 39cm)

14

triangle material with wood - 2021

wood and triangle material
(81 cm x 24cm)

Gloria Adusu

15

Face Masks, 2021

Wax fabric - £4 per masks
adult sizes available

When the pandemic started, there was a need to make face masks to protect each other. I started to make them for my household. I remember that I first practiced with hand towels and from there bought African print fabrics to help community groups, organisations, and individuals in Coventry, Liverpool, London, and Birmingham. It has become a way for me to support people in the community. I now work with my brother on this project and we make unique pieces including face masks but also fans and slippers.

Please contact Artspace directly to purchase an exhibition face mask: 07975623806 / space@coventry-artspace.co.uk

melissandre varin

16

Who's gonna clean the mess in/of your garden? 2021

mixed-media installation
fluid dimensions
black synthetic hair, black 'natural' hair, black acrylic marker

Inspired by My mother's Garden by Alice Walker, my mother, and my (im)possibilities to mother. The ground-level, and collaboratively shared sequence of ideas invite further reflection on (reproductive) labour, (radical) care, (intergenerational) trauma, and on precariousness of life.

17

extraction of knowledge, 2020

film on bubble wrap, 'random' stickers
122 x 101

There is something sexual, something healing, and something menacing in this meditation on contemporary (dis)location of knowledge. An ode on what a body can('t) do.

The film was made at Warwick University a couple of months before melissandre varin interrupted their PhD in this institution for systemic and personal reasons.