

**LA** FOUNDATION  
**FA** FOR THE ARTS

Presents

# TOUCH

12.04.24 23.05.24

Curated by Chantel Akworkor Thompson

Produced by Bright Boakye-Danquah

featuring

Adelaide Damoah | Asia Clarke

Maggie Sade Coker | Sianeh A. Kpukuyou

Enam Gbewonyo | Black Girls Glow

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# FOREWORD

BY SAFOA AISHA CABLYE-GAISIE



At the beginning of the year, when I decided to transition from a gallerist to a foundation owner, I never fully realised the impact that this decision would have. Today as the proud founder of La Foundation for the Arts, I am grateful for those that have come along on this journey with me, and those we have carried with us through Touch.

LA Foundation for the Arts (LAFA) is a non-profit service organization with an unwavering commitment to advancing, realizing, and preserving the vision of emerging and unrecognized art workers and administrators in Ghana through meaningful relationships with the wider African diaspora.

Our primary objective is to create new, sustainable opportunities and to empower individual artists by providing critical support, professional development tools, and resources for defining and achieving career success.

Led by our Executive Director and Chief Curator, we are excited at the prospect of also being able to facilitate the production and presentation of contemporary art projects outside of the gallery structure.

We hope that Touch will demonstrate our commitment to the art community, in Ghana and for all Ghanaians and Africans globally.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Safoa Cablye-Gaisie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The name "Safoa" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Cablye-Gaisie" is written in a larger, more prominent script.

Safoa Aisha Cablye-Gaisie

Founder, La Foundation for the Arts

# INTRODUCTION

BY CHANTEL AKWORKOR THOMPSON



It is with much joy and pleasure that I welcome you to TOUCH, a women led exploration of materiality. As Director of the Foundation and the curator of our inaugural exhibition, I cannot express enough my gratitude to all who have contributed and collaborated to make this come together.

Through the exhibition, I wanted to create an environment of reflection and meditation, where participants could not only experience the works, but also be touched by it.

Considering the idea of touch being something one achieves by making contact with an object using their hands, I wanted to interrogate this notion further, by removing the ability for those experiencing the work to touch it (with their hands).

With this, the guiding questions surfaced:

*'it possible to activate your other senses in order to touch?'*

*What does it mean to touch?*

*What does it mean to be touched? and*

*What does the act of touching or being touched evoke, and can it initiate healing?*

Despite what these question unearth, I do truly hope you are touched by the artistic display.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Chantel Akworkor Thompson'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

tion for the Arts





ENAM GBEWONYO, NUDE ME/UNDER THE SKIN: A RESURRECTION OF BLACK WOMEN'S VISIBILITY

## CURATOR

CHANTEL AKWORKOR THOMPSON

Chanel Akworkor Attakakra Thompson is an independent curator and educator based in Ghana. She has curated shows in Accra, New York and Paris, working predominantly with African artists, including Amoako Boafo, Adjei Tawiah & Aplerh-Doku Borlabi. Founder of Beyond the Black Canvas, she amplifies the voices of Black artists and supports early-career artists in Ghana, bridging the knowledge gap between home studio and the international art market. Through her art collection, she aims to create a visual archive of her lived experience as a British born Ghanaian, documenting the moments that have shaped her identity.



## PRODUCER

BRIGHT O. BOAKYE-DANQUAH



Over the past fourteen years Bright Opanin Boakye - Danquah has been working in the creative arts and advertising industry. The latter eight years have been spent leading teams as creative producer or director for high profile projects with brands such as Gucci, Miss Universe, MTN and Government of Ghana. Bright employs persuasive communication skills to deliver inspiring stories and contribute to the evolving narrative of African identity. From across the continent in countries like Ghana and South Africa to global projects in the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe, Bright has collaborated with diverse teams, forging strategic connections that have grown over time.

Bright's work as a storyteller using various media places him at the nexus of art and communications. His foray into the arts has strengthened his resolve to give back by creating opportunities for up and coming creatives to find their footing in the fast paced industry. Whether curating private art events for the British elite or planning art exhibitions in Paris and Ghana, Bright's goal is to ensure that African artists are well represented— especially those that might not ordinarily get a foot in the door.

## CONTRIBUTING WRITER

AMMA AMOFAAH-OFOSU

Amma Amofaah-Ofosu is an educator and writer. She has maintained a balanced interest in both education and language. Amma studied English Literature with Creative Writing at the University of Hertfordshire, earning a first-class BA (Hons). She holds an MA in English Education with distinction from University College London (UCL).



As an educator, she has taught as a secondary school English teacher and managed a nationally recognised tuition centre. Inspired by bell hooks, Amma approaches teaching socio-culturally and playfully. As a writer, she explores various themes while experimenting with genre conventions. Leaning on the analogy of a story as a journey, her narratives are shaped by observations and rhythms. In 2021, her long-form poem 'Amistad' was exhibited at Brocket Gallery in London, accompanying the work of award-winning printmaker Tanaka Mazivanhanga.

Amma is also the founder of 27Beginnings, a creative Institute focused on education and language. As an Institute, a holistic approach to learning, the use of narrative and an expansive understanding of language drive theory and practice. We deliver creative workshops and develop resources, projects and solutions, centring play as a form of learning. 27Beginnings envisions a world where learning and language are approached playfully to develop thoughtful and reflective communicators.

# THROUGH THE SENSES AND STORED IN OUR SOULS

AMMA AMOFAAH-OFOSU

TOUCH is a group exhibition exploring the dissemination of ancestral and intuitive knowledge through sensation and connection. La Foundation for the Arts invites six womxn artists of Ghanaian heritage or living in Ghana to meditate on their sensory understandings. The exhibition is a syncretic showing of works rooted in femininity, identity, African spirituality, ecology, and humanity, explored through various mediums. Echoing writer Clarice Lispector, the artists demonstrate that “the question of understanding isn’t about intelligence, it’s about feeling, about entering into contact” (Dodson, 2017). We are guided through a felt space, receiving signals from each artist, and interpreting their work to make sense of what is happening around us.

Adelaide Damoah’s layers of ink and pigment draw the eyes in. Using body print technique, she transforms the body into an instrument of touch, leaving recognisable marks and figures on handmade, recycled cotton rag paper. In response to Picasso’s *Women*, a series of monologues, the pairing of Marie-Therese and Olga recounts history in a way that critiques the perception of the female body. Damoah’s pieces use placement and texture to create forms that speak to the female body and its reactions to contact, illustrating the body’s memory and ability to hold a narrative. Enam Gbewonyo’s film *Nude Me, Under the Skin*, is a cinematic dialogue. The conversation dances between the narrative, the architecture of the space, and the visibility of the black female body. Behind backgrounds of wooden surroundings and stained-glass windows, the black female body inserts and asserts itself. Gbewonyo also elicits conversations about colonisation and slavery. Touch is active, both an unravelling and a revealing. The slow tear of knitted nude tights in *What Lies Beneath* exposes and coerces a search for truth.

Like Gbewonyo, Sianeh A. Kpukuyou uses colour and narrative. Against an ocean-blue backdrop, Back Yard Kids positions a sun-stricken mat over two black women. The mat serves as a symbol of gathering, a material that connects and brings people together. Colour is also used to split sight and direct gaze. Kuba is poised. Through a nostalgic haze, we are touched by the various moments our stories have encountered others. All three artists “raise questions about all representations of the black female, whether erotic, benign, or simply there” (Sivanarayanan, 2005), asking what specific motions say about their women subjects.

How can indigenous knowledge facilitate healing? Asia ‘WildMoon’ Clarke and Black Girls Glow consider how spirituality prompts reflection, while Maggie Sade Coker employs ecological understandings to encourage healing.

Clarke blends ingenuity and expression through her representation of Caribbean folklore. The Jumbie reveals similarities between African and Afro-Caribbean cultures. The recognition of the Jumbie as a malevolent spirit is challenged. Clarke’s bold sculpture silently celebrates African spirituality and mysticism. The Jumbie serves as a symbol of forgotten and misunderstood ancestors, a shadowy figure that inspires pause and offers guidance. Texture and depth are carefully added by mixing materials including fabric, wood, wire, and beadwork. Crowned with braids that glare with resistance, touch is evoked through sight and contemplation. A connection of spirits. A celebration of our ancestors.

Black Girls Glow nurtures space for healing through sound. Touch My Hand is a direct and antiphonic summons. Presented in a veiled space, using headphones, listeners are offered to sit among community while absorbing a choir of blended voices. The resounding melodies engage listeners through a call-and-response structure (a common practice in African spiritual songs). What is offered is a dynamic dialogue between performers and their listeners. The collective’s use of imperatives and repetition is a reminder of the essential and continuous nature of healing. We are transported into a sacred space that focuses on unity.

Coker's native flora knowledge is exemplified through her use of aromatherapy. Touch: An Ecological Healing Garden (Womb) is a sculptural space that salutes the "'vital force' in all living and non-living things" (Abiodun, 1994). In this explorative and interactive space, audiences are confronted with scents of basil and wild turkey berries, known to reduce stress and promote harmony. We are reminded of the vital role nature plays in nurturing mental, emotional, and social health. The womb is after all where we are made ready and restored. We are urged to undergo a rebirth that returns us to eco-friendly custodians of our land.

TOUCH is an act of connecting with everything around us, a sensory action that requires various forms of contact. There is a collective display of holistic sensory knowledge, culminating in a wide-reaching comprehension of what it may mean to touch and feel connected.

### Bibliography

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SIANEH A. KPUKUYOU, KUBA, 2023





# **FEATURED ARTISTS**

ADELAIDE DAMOAH

ASIA 'WILDMOON' CLARKE

BLACK GIRLS GLOW

ENAM GBEWONYO

MAGGIE SADE COKER

SIANEH A. KPUKUYOU

## ADELAIDE DAMOAH



Images courtesy Adelaide Damoah. Photography by Nick Delaney

British-Ghanaian multi-disciplinary artist Adelaide Damoah stands at the confluence of painting and performance, her artistry resonating within the tapestry of themes encompassing colonialism, ecology, identity, feminism, and radical joy. After graduating from Kingston University London with a degree in applied biology, her career within the pharmaceutical industry was curtailed when she received a diagnosis of the chronic illness, endometriosis. It was during multiple periods of convalescence that she discovered her devotion to art.

In her current practice, Damoah employs an array of mediums and techniques, including storytelling through performance and filmmaking, utilising artificial intelligence, image transfer methods, body printing, and painting. These elements converge to weave a narrative that delves deep into her own familial history, ultimately extending to a profound exploration of imperialistic and capitalistic expansion and the enduring ecological ramifications it bears.

At the centre of Damoah's practice lies a concept she defines as "generating a spontaneous communi(cati)on between myself and an audience." Through her performances, she serves as a conduit, channelling a recorded history that was once known, then obscured by time, only to resurface with uncanny familiarity in the present moment, only to slip once more into obscurity at the performance's conclusion. Each of her performances represents a mythopoetic creation, born of organic processes. These processes are intricately tied to her sensory perception of the world, encompassing both unambiguous, explicit, and literal experiences as well as the more elusive, implicit, and metaphorical dimensions of existence. This interplay also draws upon the wellspring of memory images, both individual and collective, derived from her multisensory experiences and the profound impact of her diasporic journey.





ADELAIDE DAMOAH, MARIE THERESE, 2018

## ASIA 'WILDMOON' CLARKE



Asia Clarke is an Afro-Caribbean/Canadian Multidisciplinary Artist, Designer and Hairstylist who centers sustainability and futures-thinking in her arts practice. She is passionate about re-envisioning African diaspora futures and helping communities, clients and brands to envision and actualize their creativity. She holds a Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation from Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University. She has been practicing as an artist for 13+ years as a jewelry and costume designer, and hairstylist, her work has been published worldwide, with featured credits in major publications. As a consultant she is also very accomplished, with over 9 years of experience in international development projects in Canada, Dominica, Trinidad, eSwatini and Ghana.





ASIA 'WILDMOON' CLARKE, JUMBIE, 2024

## BLACK GIRLS GLOW



Black Girls Glow is a collective that increases the active participation and presence of women and non-binary artists in their communities. They bring visibility to women's issues and explore ways in which they can use art to solve these issues, by providing programs that foster collaboration, innovation and leadership development.

Founded in 2017 as a residency to foster collaboration among artists, it has grown into a cluster of programs dedicated to exploring ways in which art can be used to build community and thriving ecosystems.

They are invested in a world where women and girls have access to resources, community, mentorship and space in their growth as artists, leaders and active members of their community.





BLACK GIRLS GLOW

## ENAM GBEWONYO



Enam Gbewonyo is a British-Ghanaian textile and performance artist, curator, and founder of the BBFA (Black British Female Artist) Collective. Her art practice investigates identity - womanhood in particular, whilst advocating the healing benefits of craft. She uses performance as a vessel, creating live spaces of healing that direct audiences to a positive place of awareness, countering systems of oppression such as racism and sexism. Her work enables audiences to face the truth of the dark past surrounding colonial legacies and the emotions it brings forth.

Recent exhibitions include *Neo-Custodians: Woven Narratives of Heritage, Cultural Memory and Belonging* at Bemis Center in Omaha, USA, *Body Poetics* at Southampton's GIANT Gallery, and *Rites of Passage* at Gagosian London. Her work has been exhibited and showcased internationally at the 58th Venice Biennale, Art X Lagos, and UNTITLED Art Fair Miami to name a few.

Gbewonyo is represented by London-based gallery TAFETA, who specialise in 20th-century and contemporary African art. Her works are in several private and public collections including Fondation H, Madagascar and White & Case LLP, UK. She is a 2022 recipient of the Henry Moore Foundation Artist Award and winner of the 2022 Dentons Art Prize and New Art Exchange Future Exhibition Prize respectively. She is also a fellow of Kehinde Wiley's acclaimed Black Rock Senegal artist residency as well as Bemis Center, Omaha, USA.





ENAM GBWONYO, WHAT LIES BENEATH - EMPIRE'S DARK HISTORY REVEALED



## MAGGIE SADE COKER



I'm a holistic mental health practitioner, flower therapy workshop facilitator, and floral stylist with over ten years of experience. I'm originally from the UK and am currently in Accra, Ghana. I'm also the founder of FlowerTalk Official.

FlowerTalk is a multidisciplinary studio, with mental wellness, flower therapy, and nature at its core.

Along with my one-to-one coaching I host workplace wellness workshops and facilitate indoor and outdoor nature-inspired activities for brands and corporate events for example I have worked with Snapchat, YouTube, Adidas, Uniqlo, Esty, and more!

After traveling around the world and living in Germany for the past ten years I decided to return to the continent to explore if my services and setting up a Flower Therapy Mental Wellness Studio would be of use by offering a naturopathic alternative approach to dealing with community mental health care.

I am interested in expanding knowledge and perception of how we as Africans approach mental health and community care. What hidden knowledge exists within our indigenous healing community, what indigenous African herbs hold the keys to our mental and physical health? How can we as Africans align ourselves back to nature respectfully and joyfully?

In a fast-paced modern city connecting Nature and flowers to mental health offers a beautiful and healing icebreaker.





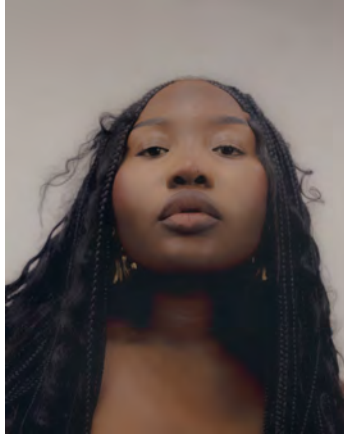
MAGGIE SADE COKER, FLOWERTALK





SIANEH A. KPUKUYOU, OUTSIDE THE BOX, 2023

## SIANEH A. KPUKUYOU



Sianeh A. Kpukuyou also known as Ask is a versatile photographer and creative director committed to crafting authentic stories through her lens. Her work celebrates people and communities, resonating globally with clients such as Paramount Studios, Tate modern, Water Ai, Vogue, Gucci, and more. Starting her journey in 2018 Sianeh's mission is to capture each frame as a piece of nostalgia, weaving timeless stories that evoke lasting emotions. Passionate about the art of storytelling, she takes pride in curating visuals that breathe life into memories.





SINEH A. KPUKUYOU, BACK YARD KID, 2022





# FEATURED WORKS

ADELAIDE DAMOAH

- Marie Therese
- Olga

ASIA 'WILDMOON' CLARKE

- Jumbie

BLACK GIRLS GLOW

- Touch My Hand

ENAM GBEWONYO

- What Lies Beneath - Empire's Dark History Revealed
- Nude Me, Under the Skin- a Resurrection of a Black Woman's Visibility

MAGIE SADE COKER

- Touch: An Ecological Healing Garden ( Womb)

SIANEH A. KPUKUYOU

- Back Yard Kids
- Carry Our Load I
- Carry Our Load II
- Kuba
- Outside of the Box





ADELAIDE DAMOAH, OLGA, 2018

ADELAIDE DAMOAH



**Marie Therese**

Pigment and ink on handmade cotton rag

135 x 94 cm

2018



**Olga**

Pigment and ink on handmade cotton rag

135 x 94 cm

2018



ASIA 'WILDMOON' CLARKE

**Jumbie**

Braids, fabric, wood, wire, beadwork on wooden  
mannequin)

6.5 ft x 2 ft

2024

GHC 27,000



## ENAM GBEWONYO



### **What Lies Beneath - Empire's Dark History Revealed**

used tights, bamboo/cotton yarn, cotton thread and recycled PET thread

60 x 63cm

2021







SINEH A. KPUKUYOU



**Back Yard Kid**

Mixed Material: Cotton and Polyester  
152 x 103 cm  
2022



**Carry Our Load I**

Mixed Material: Cotton and Polyester  
152 x 103 cm  
2023



**Carry Our Load I**

Mixed Material: Cotton and Polyester  
152 x 103 cm  
2023

SINEH A. KPUKUYOU



**Kuba**

Fine Art Print (sold with frame)

60 x 75 cm

2023



**Outside the Box**

Fine Art Print (sold with frame)

60 x 60 cm

2023





MAGGIE SADE COKER, TOUCH: AN ECOLOGICAL HEALING GARDEN ( WOMB) 2024





























