

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *PROJECTS: DINEO SESHEE BOPAPE*, THE ARTIST'S FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK

NEW YORK, May 23, 2023 - The Museum of Modern Art announces *Projects: Dineo Seshee Bopape*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition in New York, on view in the Museum's street-level gallery from July 1 through October 9, 2023. The central work in this exhibition, the multichannel sound and video installation *Lerato laka le a phela le a phela le a phela/My love is alive, is alive, is alive* (2022), also incorporates soil, rock, and water. Known for bringing together video, sound, and organic materials in her often site-specific installations, Bopape considers how social, political, and spiritual histories of the African diaspora inhabit the physical land and waters. Originally commissioned by TBA21-Academy and co-produced with Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, this site-responsive presentation will be expanded at MoMA to include additional artworks in clay and soil. *Projects: Dineo Seshee Bopape* is organized by Martha Joseph, The Phyllis Ann and Walter Borten Assistant Curator of Media and Performance.

Bopape's multimedia installation takes the spirits of the ocean as its starting point. Combining video recordings of the sea in Jamaica and the Pacific Ocean with audio recordings of coastal winds around Louisiana, Jamaica, South Africa, and West Africa, this work depicts the ocean from above and below as the artist submerges her hands and places organic matter such as fruit, flowers, and various libations in the water. Audio elements are incorporated through Bopape's rhythmic drumming of the water and through her voice—she can be heard singing in her mother tongue, sePedi. The work was inspired by the whip-lacerated back of an African American man known only as Peter (formerly misnamed Gordon), who escaped American slavery in the 18th century and whose story of resilience of spirit continues to be told through a widely circulated photograph. Bopape explains, "this work pays homage to the ocean as a host of memories: of Peter and 12 million others who crossed the Atlantic, those who survived and those who fled in the waters escaping enslavement, seeking sanctuary amid the water."

For this first presentation of the work in the US, Bopape is collaborating with the descendants of enslaved people who lived and worked on the Menokin Plantation in Virginia. During workshops with the artist, this collective of descendants are creating small sculptures from clay sourced from the property. This collaboration began during a recent show in Richmond Virginia, and Bopape will include these new objects in the exhibition at MoMA.

This expanded iteration of *Lerato laka le a phela le a phela le a phela/My love is alive, is alive, is alive* will project the video on a limestone surface framed by a wash of soil on the gallery walls. Bringing together these materials, the work allows multiple timelines—the geological,

the historical, the personal—to converge in the present. For Bopape, this connection to the physical world is an exploration of collective memory: “It’s a spiritual and a political rebellion to remember, to not forget what one is being asked to forget.”

ARTIST BIO

Dineo Seshee Bopape was born in the year of the golden rooster, 1981 on a Sunday. If she were Ghanaian, her name would be akosua/akos for short. Bopape lives in Southern Africa. She has shown her work internationally in numerous solo exhibitions, most recently in 2022 at Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan; Ocean Space, Venice; and Secession, Vienna, and in 2021 at Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond. She co-represented South Africa at the Venice Biennial in 2019.

SPONSORSHIP:

The Elaine Dannheisser Projects Series is made possible in part by the Elaine Dannheisser Foundation and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art.

Additional support is provided by MoMA’s Wallis Annenberg Director’s Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art.

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