

PS1

MoMA PS1 PRESENTS FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION BY ARTIST AND FILMMAKER ONYEKA IGWE OPENING MARCH 16

February 23, 2023 – MoMA PS1 will present the first solo museum exhibition by filmmaker and artist Onyeka Igwe (b. 1986, London). On view from March 16 through August 21, 2023, *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)* brings together three films that highlight the artist’s ongoing interest in the relation between dance and protest movements, especially those enacted by women. Igwe engages choreography on and off the screen, creating an immersive, expanded cinematic environment—evoking the performance space of the black box theater—through which audiences move to watch three short films played sequentially. The principal subject of the film cycle is the 1929 Aba Women’s War, which Igwe first learned about from family lore since few historical records on the conflict exist. Led primarily by Igbo women, the Aba Women’s War is considered one of the first anti-colonial uprisings in Nigeria. By conceptually recovering the repressed history of this collective act of resistance, Igwe finds, even in the tragedies of the past, new means for understanding the present.

Igwe describes her practice as “telling a truth in as many ways as possible.” She examines little-known historic events through documentary sources including government records, official reports, material artifacts, and personal memory, as well as gesture, voice, dance, and song. Her rhythmic editing style emphasizes the dissonance, reflection, and amplification between image and sound. Tracing multiple narratives, the layered structure of Igwe’s films contests the singular, progressive origin story of Western ideology, and British imperialism in particular.

To imagine and represent the Aba Women’s War, Igwe reviewed repositories of film produced during the colonial period, which paralleled emergent cinema technology and the invention of the ethnographic documentary. All three works in the cycle manipulate, crop, and annotate footage originally recorded in Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania between 1930 and 1956 for foreign newsreels, Christian missions, and the Colonial Film Unit—an early-twentieth-century propaganda arm of the British government. As no imagery survives from the protest actions in Aba, Igwe adapted and reprocessed patterns of gesture and dance from these archival film sources, reworking the colonial gaze to produce an untold story of resistance.

Borrowing her mother’s voice for the first film, *Her Name in My Mouth* (2017) introduces the topic of the film cycle while also describing the loss of language, culture, and history in subsequent generations of diaspora. The second film, *Sitting on a Man* (2018), rehearses one of the strategies used in Aba, that of “making war” or “sitting on a man.” In Igbo society, this group action was a tool of public protest (along with boycotts and strikes) that women’s assemblies used to protect their interests as farmers, traders, wives, and mothers. This three-channel film positions the viewer within the women’s circle—as if “sat upon”—while dancers Emamanuella Idris and Amarnah Amuludun improvise alongside figures exposed on archival film. The final work, *Specialised Technique* (2018), is a montage of film strips cataloging various forms of dance in Africa. Igwe intervenes directly into the frame of these images to attempt an impossible conversation with their nameless subjects. *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)* proposes dance—and its rehearsal—as a vital form of transhistorical communication.

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Onyeka Igwe's exhibition will be celebrated during an Open House at PS1 on Saturday, March 18, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. alongside the opening of Chuquimamani-Condori and Joshua Chuquimia Crampton's exhibition. The artists will be on site with additional programming planned. The entire day is free and open to the public.

In conjunction with the exhibition, MoMA will present An Evening with Onyeka Igwe on Monday, March 20 at 7 p.m. at The Museum of Modern Art. The event is part of MoMA's Modern Mondays series and will feature a selection of works by Igwe made between 2015 and 2023, as well as an in-person conversation with the artist and Kari Rittenbach, MoMA PS1 Assistant Curator.

Onyeka Igwe lives and works in London, United Kingdom. She received an MA from Goldsmiths College and a PhD from the University of the Arts, London. Recent solo projects and exhibitions have been organized by the High Line, New York (2022); LUX, London, FORMA, London, and Mercer Union, Toronto (all 2021); Jerwood Arts, London (2019); Alchemy Film and Arts/Unit 4, Hawick, Scotland and Trinity Square Video, Toronto (both 2018). She has participated in group exhibitions at Display, Prague (2022); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2022); Tabakalera, San Sebastian (2022); Jarman Award Tour / Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2022); Neue Galerie, Innsbruck (2021); Liverpool Biennial (2021); MUNTREF and Club Cultural Matienzo, Buenos Aires (2019); The Showroom, London (2018); Articule, Montreal (2018); and Cordova, Vienna (2017). Her films have screened at festivals including the International Film Festival Rotterdam (2020, 2019, and 2018); London Film Festival (2020 and 2015); Images Festival, Toronto (2019); Smithsonian African American Film Festival, Washington, D.C. (2018); ICA Artists' Film Club (2017); Edinburgh Artist Moving Image (2016); and Nuit Blanche, Toronto (2016). Igwe is a member of the London-based collective Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.), established in 2018.

Onyeka Igwe: A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver) is organized by Kari Rittenbach, Assistant Curator.

SUPPORT

Onyeka Igwe: A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver) is supported by the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

ABOUT MoMA PS1

MoMA PS1 champions art and artists at the intersection of the social, cultural, and political issues of our time. Providing audiences with the agency to ask questions, access to knowledge, and a forum for public debate, PS1 has offered insight into artists' diverse worldviews for more than 40 years. Founded in 1976 by Alanna Heiss, the institution was a defining force in the alternative space movement in New York City, transforming a nineteenth century public schoolhouse in Long Island City into a site for artistic experimentation and creativity. PS1 has been a member of New York City's Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) since 1982 and affiliated with The Museum of Modern Art since 2000.

Hours: MoMA PS1 is open from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Thursday, Friday, Sunday, and Monday, and 12:00 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturdays. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

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Admission: \$10 suggested admission; \$5 for students and senior citizens; free for New York State residents and MoMA members. Free admission for New York State residents is made possible by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation. Tickets may be reserved online at mo.ma/ps1tickets.

Visitor Guide: Discover even more from MoMA PS1 with the Bloomberg Connects app. Read wall text, hear directly from artists, and uncover the building's history with this multimedia visitor guide. This digital experience is made possible through the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Directions: MoMA PS1 is located at 22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Ave in Long Island City, Queens, across the Queensboro Bridge from midtown Manhattan. Traveling by subway, take the E, M, or 7 to Court Sq; or the G to Court Sq or 21 St Van Alst. By bus, take the Q67 to Jackson and 46th Ave or the B62 to 46th Ave.

Information: For general inquiries, call (718) 784-2084 or visit moma.org/ps1.

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