

Mimosa House

Pélagie Gbaguidi *De-Fossilization of the Look*

23 June - 15 October 2023

Preview and Performance: 6:30–8:30pm, Thursday 22 June



Brussels-based Beninese artist Pélagie Gbaguidi's practice spreads across painting, drawing, performance and social practice. For her first solo show at a UK institution, the artist presents works from the series ***De-fossilization of the Look* (2018)** created in dialogue with Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto* (after 1457). This early Renaissance depiction of the Madonna features unorthodox iconography: the pregnant Madonna's dress is undone, exposing an undergarment; her face and posture convey fatigue. Gbaguidi scrutinises this imagery via a series of automatic drawings and paintings, pondering on the depiction of sacralised motherhood and woman's place and agency in the patriarchal society.

Gbaguidi subverts the Renaissance tradition of linear perspective with a fisheye lens: she grasps all at the same time, enveloping her subjects and dissecting them into fibres, as if looking at them from within. The artist states: "*I draw without perspective: my perspective is a perspective of a child, of a bird, of an insect, and of a fish*".

The exhibition also features works on paper from ***Les Vieilles* (2016)** (*Old Women*) series, consisting of 15 drawings and a new site-specific painting on the back wall of the gallery. This series reflects on the invisibility of elderly women in society, their untold stories and unacknowledged wisdom. Cherishing her connection to animistic and matriarchal perceptions of the world, intrinsic to Benin's pre-colonial culture, Gbaguidi transmits an animated spirit of inherited ancestral and contemporary impressions.

In the first floor room of Mimosa House, Gbaguidi invites visitors to take part in the making of a collective gesture by choosing a piece of fabric and stitching a button to it, as a symbol of collective repair.

At the preview, between 6:30–8:30pm on Thursday 22 June, the exhibition will be activated through a vocalisation by the mezzo-soprano Clotilde Van Dieren.

The exhibition is curated by Daria Khan, the founding director of Mimosa House.

For additional information, interview requests or press images please contact:

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Notes to Editors

Pélagie Gbaguidi, b. 1965 in Dakar (SN), lives and works in Brussels (BE).

Pélagie Gbaguidi calls herself a contemporary ‘griot’, which she defines as someone who functions as an intermediary between individual and collective memory and ancestral past. Her work is an anthology of the signs and traces of trauma and is centred on colonial and postcolonial history. She draws attention to the ways in which legacies of oppression are circumvented – and thus preserved – in official histories. She aims to reveal the process of forgetting by recontextualising archives and histories. Her works are not direct representations of a traumatic past but rather transmit embodied knowledge. Her paintings and drawings have a performative character: she often uses parts of her body to apply paint or pigment to the canvas. The images created by Gbaguidi through painting, drawing, performance and installation seek to break out of binary thinking, archetypes and simplifications.

In 2017 she participated in documenta 14 in Kassel with *The Missing Link Dicolonisation Education by Mrs. Smiling Stone*. This installation consisted of school desks, photographs and drawings on long scrolls hanging from the ceiling. The notebooks on the desks were the result of a workshop that Gbaguidi held over the course of documenta 14 with pupils from a local school. The installation puts forward education and knowledge transmission as the antidote to collective amnesia.

For her important series, *Naked Writings* she investigated the archives of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren. The title *Naked Writings* refers to the importance of un-learning, of shedding prior beliefs and consequently decolonizing the mind.

Pélagie Gbaguidi has participated in the Berlin Biennale (2020), documenta 14 (2017), the Lubumbashi Biennale (2019) and the Dakar Biennale (2004, 2006, 2008, 2014 and 2018). Her work has featured in group shows at Centre Pompidou-Metz, WIELS (Brussels), Musée Rochechouart,

Middelheimmuseum (Antwerp), Stadtmuseum (Munich), MMK (Frankfurt), National Museum of African Art – Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.).

Clotilde Van Dieren

After achieving a Bachelor of Philosophy, Clotilde van Dieren studied drama and singing at The Royal Conservatory of Brussels. She refined her technique with Sherman Lowe, Italy; Michael Warren, New York; and the duo Mitsuko Shirai and Hartmut Höll at the Karlsruhe Musikhochschule, Germany. Throughout her career, Clotilde has sung as a soloist in opera productions including *Nozze di Figaro*; *L'elisir d'amore*; and *Carmen* and explored a varied repertoire with ensembles and soloists such as Ô-Celli; Brussels Chamber Orchestra; Alfama Quartet; and Gérard Caussé. Clotilde has performed internationally, including at the Bechstein Concert Hall, New York, and festivals such as the Belle-Ile-en-mer Opera Festival; the Belgorioca Festival, Rio de Janeiro; and Octobre musical de Carthage, Tunisia. Her album, *La Chanson du vent* in duo with pianist Katsura Mizumoto was released by Belgian label CYPRES in 2022. It presents the first world recording of Belgian Adolphe Biarent's cycle of eight melodies for mezzo-soprano and piano.

clotildevandieren.com

About Mimosa House

Founded in 2017, Mimosa House is a non-profit art institution that supports intergenerational women and queer artists. Embracing inclusivity and sensitivity, Mimosa House is a safe and empowering space which focuses on the fluidity of identity and recognises the need for change.

Mimosa House, 47 Theobalds Rd, London, WC1X 8SP
Open Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm
Admission free | mimosahouse.co.uk | @mimosahouselondon

Image caption:

(Left) Pélagie Gbaguidi, *De-Fossilization Of The Look, Dialogue With Madonna Del Parto*, coloured charcoal and coloured pencil on paper, 29 x 21cm, 2018. Photographer: Peter Cox, courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp.

(Right) Pélagie Gbaguidi, *De-Fossilization Of The Look, Dialogue With Madonna Del Parto* coloured charcoal and coloured pencil on paper, 29 x 21cm, 2018. Photographer: Peter Cox, courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp.