



BLACK MALE REVISITED:
Revenge of the New Negro



other.explicit.body 2012
Photo courtesy of Harlem Stage

“One of the greatest inventions of the twentieth century is the African-American male-- “invented” because black masculinity represents an amalgam of fear and projections in the American psyche which rarely conveys or contains the trope of truth about the black male’s existence.”

- Thelma Golden, *Black Male, Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary Art*

“Black Male Revisited is my attempt to begin a dialogue about issues of visibility for Black Male Performance and Visual Artists. I want to celebrate BLACK MALE, a deeply important exhibition that happened 20 years ago using my body, my history, my work as the focal point to discuss themes of Black Masculinity from a first person perspective.”

-Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

Part visual installation, part live performance spectacle, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, a Brooklyn based artist and curator, brings a presence to the stage that asks viewers to reconsider their impressions of the Black Male Body in performance and visual art. In this mini retrospective of the artist’s decade collection of past works, Kosoko reconfigures, reconsiders, and recycles previous performance works into a new evening length piece filled with moving original poetry, live music, wild theatrical antics, and more.



Nigerian Boy with Peacock Feather, #1
Photo by Jaamil Kosoko with Sidra Bell & Umi Akiyoshi

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FOREWORD

Thoughts on Black Male Revisited

Chetachi A. Egwu Ph.D.

In American society, people of color often exist in the paradoxical space of unwelcome, negative attention versus a perpetual state of invisibility. This paradox forces individuals of color to adopt and conform to one of several worldviews: as the embodiment of socially-prescribed negativity, the positive example of and credit to the “race”, or to fade into the background and acculturate.

The inroads achieved by people of color and the election of the nation’s first African-American president seem to indicate that we have moved toward a “post racial” society. In fact, the blatant opposition to Obama’s policies by many in the legislative branch of government and vilification of black and brown males as in the cases of the Central Park Five and Trayvon Martin shows that the black male body still remains a point of contention and contempt. Further, the black male body is approached as a useless shell, without feeling or meaning.

So, in such a society, how does one negotiate a sense of self and solidify a voice when rendered voiceless? How can one break free from the spiral of silence, effectively challenging conformity? An exploration of this requires an exploration of what it means to question one’s sense of self and gain one’s voice...enter BLACK MALE REVISITED.

Curator, performance artist, choreographer and poet Jaamil Olowale Kosoko contextualizes the criminalization, demonization and sexualization of the black male body and hence, black male identity with fierce sensitivity and vulnerability. A celebration of black masculinity, this multi-tiered, multi-city, interdisciplinary performance work is designed to change shape in every destination, essentially becoming a new set of work at each stop.

Inspired by a 1994 installation titled BLACK MALE: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary Art, Black Male Revisited provides an introspective look at a decade of Kosoko’s previous work, actively challenging the viewer to rethink their perceptions of the black male body and therefore, black masculinity. The event is also meant to merge the subjectiveness and abstraction of art with tangible scholarship by peers, other curators and scholars engaged in associated talkback panel discussions.

Kosoko examines his Nigerian American maleness in a first person narrative. He divides a solo into two parts; the first features dance, theater and music, and the second explores performance art as an extension of the black male body.

The art installation stems from a performative place, recontextualizing the performance space on a platform. Cry is a series of photographs that shows black men crying - exposing a vulnerability that black men dare not display in public. The photos are unique in that some also visually discuss the transgendered body. The series speaks to the duality of black male existence in America; showing weakness of any sort questions masculinity, yet at the same time shows a humanness and challenges the Westernized masculine status quo.

Curating and exploring outside of his body as a type of unobtrusive observer, Kosoko challenges the notion of the endangered black male in performance art. The issue is not with creation but with avenues for distribution. Black Male Revisited promises to provide a space where exploring the issues associated with the black male body can coexist with its celebration.

ESSAYS

Endangered Bodies:

Locating the Black Male Presence in Contemporary American Performance Art

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

At first, looking at the performance art landscape in America, I scratched my head struggling with this question of the absence of black males in the field. I hadn't really thought about it before and particularly not in those terms. My colleagues male, female, black, white and Latino, all complain about the lack of access and so on, occasionally. We do talk about the overall state of emergency for all black artists. But never have I thought of black men as an "endangered species" in the performance art world. But even I must ask where are the black men?

--Excerpt from *Where, Oh Where, Are the Black Male Performance Artists?* by Homer Jackson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, In *Motion Magazine* June, 1997

As a Black male working inside the creative spheres of experimental dance, music, performance art, and performance curation, I know we are not endangered. There are plenty of Black men making internationally competitive works. The problem is the lack of distribution of these works due to unconscious cultural bias or what the scholar Joe R. Feagin calls "the white racial frame." He defines it as "an overarching worldview, one that encompasses important racial ideas, terms, images, emotion and interpretation. For centuries now, it has been a basic and foundational frame from which a substantial majority of white Americans - as well as others seeking to conform to white norms - view our highly racialized society." The truth remains that, as a nation, we still are rehabilitating from the aftershocks of segregation, and while many enlightened white contemporary curators and artistic directors know the importance of incorporating Black and other minority voices into their exhibitions and performance seasons, the fact remains that much of the art world is still managed under a passé white supremacist's doctrine that ordains European aesthetics and creativity as holding the highest level of intellectual and/or conceptual rigor.

The Internet, however, has changed the way visual and performance art is experienced by the global market. The world is a drastically different place now than it was two decades ago when *Black Male* was first exhibited at the Whitney Museum. The mainstream distribution of the World Wide Web has allowed the artistic playing fields to be leveled. Nowadays, contemporary Black male visual experimentalists can work online and/or in video and film mediums to push their work towards greater public consumption. These artists now have a digital platform that circumvents the curator as the middleman, connecting the artist directly with viewers and collectors.

Black male artists such as Jonté, Discosean21, Lawrence Graham-Brown, Jayson Scott Musson, and Kalup Linzy have created huge audiences for themselves online. The often hyper-afro-queer futuristic online personas that they portray in their works put them in situations that create structural, multi-layered, and sexually complex mystique. These artists use their bodies - sometimes as sexual subjects, sometimes as radical racial metaphors - to bridge the gap between “high” and “low” art, pop and avant-garde, all the while connecting their work to an electronic audience as a means to combat their lack of gallery representation.



Photo: Lawrence Graham Brown, Visual and Performance Artist

In a recent interview concerning the subject of Black art distribution, Philadelphia-based artist and independent curator Homer Jackson wrote:

Currently digital technology provides powerful and inexpensive tools for the artist’s tool chest. It allows us to cease the means of production and to reach for the means of distribution. That said, the advent of cheap digital scanners, palm sized video cameras, digital projectors, desktop publishing software, desktop media editing software, nonetheless the very internet itself, provide contemporary artists of all stripes with a critical choice that few artists in the past had: The choice to either co-exist with institutions/presenters or to go at it alone and self-produce.

Ultimately, entrepreneurship is the open door of which you speak. Right now, this is “the” door that is most open to black artists. The status of the non-profit artist is infeasible in today’s complex social and economic climate. I see more and more young people, particularly young black

people, avoiding the old school idea of the artist and trying something a little different. And to that end, the new technology provides easier access for everyone. And if that is the case then it's an even level playing field in America....meaning black folks are right back to their traditional disadvantages.

With this statement, Jackson brings into focus the traditional stereotypes or disadvantages that continue to plague the Black experience in America, and even more specifically the Black male experience. In the preface to her book *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, the feminist scholar bell hooks argues that "black men endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity." (p.xii). She writes:

Seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers, black men have had no real dramatic say when it comes to the way they are represented. They have made few interventions on the stereotype. As a consequence they are victimized by stereotypes that were first articulated in the nineteenth century but hold sway over the minds and imaginations of citizens of this nation in the present day. Black males who refuse categorization are rare, for the price of visibility in the contemporary world of white supremacy is that black male identity be defined in relation to the stereotype whether by embodying it or seeking to be other than it. (hooks, p.xii)

Today, more than ever before, I see a multitude of diverse representations of Black masculinity. From popular iconic images of RuPaul to Obama, we are living in a post-civil rights (or what the social critic Toure calls "Post-Black") era where Black folks are rooted in, but no longer restricted by, the construct of Blackness. The Internet, more than any other invention of the twentieth century, has given birth to a non-hierarchical approach to engage with people who are other. It has also altered the ways in which the public interacts with venues as well as the curatorial practice museums and performing art centers must take to become more viable in the lives of art consumers.

In a time when financial and educational resources in the arts are scarce across the board, no matter one's race or gender, if contemporary institutions are to remain embedded in the criticality of current artistic concerns, then they must be in consistent discourse with horizontal artists, self-taught artists, outsider artists, minority artists, and independent curators. Modern individuals today are in control of their experiences, carefully curating the cultural content which they ordain as most important to their lives (as displayed most concretely by social media), and so the role of the art institution of the future is to create more spaces for this kind of experiential, even-leveled, interactions to take place without judgment, prejudice, and highbrow critique.

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Nigerian Boy With Pet Horse
Photo by Jaamil Kosoko with Sidra Bell & Umi Akiyoshi

"I'M REVISITING MY PAST AND MAKING IT PRESENT" THE BEFOREDURINGAFTERLIFE OF JAAMIL OLAWALE KOSOKO

Brenda Dixon-Gottschild, PhD

BLACK MALE REVISITED: Revenge of the New Negro - A Portrait

Framed by a black background a man's face looks out through half-lidded, black, evenly spaced eyes. Detached. Disinterested. Not staring, they indicate the assured presence of one who does not need to feign emotion. The left eye is circled by white dots, giving the air of a millennial tribal affiliation—Fela; house culture; face painting as a fact of life—yet referencing the traditions. Are these eyes windows to the soul? The face they rest in is a sea of brown skin speckled, freckled with gold dust, perhaps the legendary goober dust of African and African-American lore—that enchanted stuff that grants mystical power and spiritual transcendence (most often gathered from the graveyard, thus uniting past and present). The mahogany lips are circled by a thin black mustache and short beard. Circling the neck and covering it completely is a multicolored scarf in white, yellow, red, and black lines that form angular patterns and complement the softer rhythm of the goldblackbrown face. Jaamil Olawale Kosoko's BLACK MALE REVISITED: Revenge of the New Negro portrait invites us to ponder and muse. Come, enter the world conjured up by this image, this face, this life.

*November opened my universe.
Vulva like a volcano. . .
. . . Being torn from refulgent flesh;
a body inside a body melting itself*

This compact performance installation pulls together themes that have occupied—if not haunted—the artist for the past decade. Threads from 2010's "An Expectation of Violence" are ripped from the original fabric, rewoven in a new pattern and clothed in his "Black Male Revisited" solo. Kosoko is in league with a school of performance artists who create "art vérité": work that collapses the boundary between fiction and reality, so raw and real that audiences don't know whether to laugh, cry, yell obscenities, or run for cover. Like Karen Finley, early avatar of this form, he succeeds in trumping expectations and transgressing spectator emotions—all of which he experienced as a child growing up in hardscrabble circumstances in Detroit. He takes on the personas of those who've wounded him (especially his now deceased mother), holds them close to perhaps become friends with them. Through this act he is exorcising self-hatred by embodying his demons. As he said in a recent online interview, he uses performance to examine his personal history, ". . . recycling, reimagining, experimenting, and essentially creating something completely new."ⁱⁱ

Throne

. . . . Or maybe I want to say that we don't know enough, that there can be a way to remain for us, to stay, like this, with our faces facing skyward and the rest of our lives blazing across our eyes.ⁱⁱⁱ

Knowledge is power; a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; carnal knowledge; God of the Old Testament didn't want Adam and Eve to have knowledge; Greek deities did not want Pandora to know what was in that box. All this to say that knowledge is a double-edged sword. Kosoko is aware of this, and his "throne of knowledge" both reveres and mocks what the books have to teach us. They offer escape, yet they make us captive. Freedom is its own prison.

Stallion Study - Hot Surrealism

Like the magician spreading his Houdini magic everywhere, everything the color of fire.^{iv}

Kosoko has access to a somatic as well as a vocal language that give form to the ineffable in describing the inexorable. He is a shape shifter, a man of many masks.^v His rich visual imagery, the urgency of his verbal scripts and the expressiveness of his stage movement accord his work an operatic dimension in a metaphorical sense as well as in the literal, etymological sense (that is, the Latin word *opera*, meaning labor, or work). The spectator feels worked, if not done in, watching his performances. In "Stallion Study #2 - Revenge of the New Negro" he begins seated, bare-chested, two x-shaped swatches of red masking tape covering each nipple, his face blacked-up, a mask of a horse pushed up and strapped to one side of his head, as though it were a hat. He wears tight gold lame pants, and a long, braided auburn plait hangs down from his crotch. Behind him, attached to a wooden stick, is a minstrel-era black-sambo face sporting a grotesque, red-lipped grin. Kosoko's white-gloved hand holds a book, and he reads from it in a measured, monotonous voice, marked by unexpected hesitations.^{vi} The text speaks of Europeans projecting their fantasies onto black bodies, of burned flesh, private parts, cut off pieces of black males bodies, ritualized sexualized torture of black bodies—of longing to consume those bodies, of a symbolic sexualized cannibalism. He stays with this text, jamming and riffing on the sounds so that they morph from words to a *mélange* of coughing, laughing, gagging, choking, guttural vocalizations, the sounds resonating like a Greek chorus on the automatic playback system. He allows himself to embody and become possessed by these non-verbal sounds, so that this "stutter vocalize" is manifested in his jerky, staccato movements. A sensual song accompanied by a suggestive dance and a poem^{vii} end this scene with Kosoko stretched out on the floor, face up, shaking in a full-body tremor the likes of which one might witness in a sanctified church service. Kosoko uses and abuses the stereotyped characterizations of black men.



Stallion Study #2
Revenge of the New Negro
Photo by Jaamil Kosoko with Ish Payne

He works the stallion trope, with its connotations around male dominance and sexuality: he is both rider and steed, bronco and buck—the spirit of both, fighting for mastery. He carries a whip that he wields sexually, angrily, violently, at different turns, sometimes caressing the auburn braid in a menacingly masturbatory way. But his message of agency is clear: he finally uses his whip to knock down the stick-sambo, then disappears off the darkened stage while the 1970s blaxploitation classic, “Boss Nigger” (sung by blues singer Terrible Tom) is played.

An Expectation of Violence

*raped mama cancer mama turning her into stone
mama is a stone mama buried without a tombstone
stoned mama suicidal mama underloved mama
mama, I have no mama no mama no more^{viii}*

Qualitatively—and unlike the cool headshot portraiture—Kosoko makes *hot* pieces. He said that much of his impetus for creating some of his past works is “. . . about somehow injecting my dead mother’s pain into my own veins, and embodying it. . . . I take her schizophrenia and her scleroderma and her rape and child abuse and become lost in the abandon of it all.^{ix} Take, for example, “An Expectation of Violence.” It opens with a female dancer enacting a body battle, with repetitive arm biting, throat-clutching, then total collapse, while the recorded voice of a child sing-songs Kosoko’s poem, “mama: a litany.”^x The dancer ends, standing frozen in a silent scream, mouth agape, hands holding her crotch, knees glued together.^{xi} Three other dancers, Kosoko included, join her and assume the same pose, then sink to the floor in a body pile, laughing, sensually rolling over one another and speaking an indistinguishable language. Next, they’re standing, spread across the stage, frozen, with knees pinned together and mouths agape, while a voiceover plays the Supremes singing “There’s a Place for Us” from *West Side Story*. In contrast, the ensemble looks displaced, disoriented, with no place to be.

Fast-forward to the final scene, where the ensemble enters wearing ball gowns, while Kosoko assumes one of the body-battle poses of the opening and dances as though he’s trying to break out of his body or break his body apart. Through clenched teeth he utters the word “no” repeatedly, beats on the floor, staggers across the stage, grabbing at the air. He sits on a chair, holds a large photo of his mother, shows it to the audience, and dons a wig that looks like her hairdo. Here is where it gets so intense that the audience is (purposefully) left behind to fend for itself—perhaps that’s how Kosoko felt as a child. He poses, wig on, with his mother’s photo held next to his face, and puts on a crocodile smile. He chants the words “somehow I’m living someone else’s life; I cut a star down with my life,”—or did he say “knife”? Unbuckling his trousers, he rages upstage to the seated dancers and screams, “give it



An Expectation of Violence
Performance photo by Lauren Mandilian Hont

to me," again and again, the sound of the scream locked somewhere deep in his throat, gut, bowels, genitals, as he moves his pelvis in feigned ejaculation. Abruptly he ceases, approaches the audience, apologizes, although he is still in a frenzy. He repeats, still through clenched teeth, as though reliving an unspeakable experience, "no, Mommy, no Mommy, no Mommy," with his changing emphasis changing the meaning of this phrase. Finally "no Mommy" morphs into "no body, nobody!!" He's transgressed the boundary and blurred the division between performance and life, artifice and reality. The silence in the audience is punctured with bits of nervous giggles. Kosoko's final words are "I didn't mean for it to go this way. . . . Stop this show! Cut it off!" We are amazed, after thirty seconds, that he and his cast are up, smiling, composed, and taking bows. After all, this is a performance, isn't it?

An American Chameleon

*our minds know all too well of lost memories,
of unkept reveries like hotel signs that read vacancy
. the unmakings
of dreams. . . .^{xii}*

The word chameleon is defined, first, as a lizard with protruding eyes and an uncanny ability to change color; it also means a changeable—read fickle—person. This video/slide show is all that remains of the original performance piece, wherein it functioned as a backdrop projected on the scrim. It was created in 2011 and intended as the middle work in a trilogy to be composed of "Expectation of Violence," "Chameleon," and "Nigerian Butterfly," (this final piece, yet to be realized, would be dedicated to Kosoko's father). "Chameleon" is dedicated to the artist's mother. The images take us on a funny-house-ride-cum-horror show, revealing Kosoko's wise, witty, or wonky perspective on this American life. He is our therapist-guide, treating us to a twenty-four minute session, inviting us to settle down and follow our (and his) stream of consciousness, with unexpected pairs mirroring one another and encouraging us to make the sub-rosa links that connect them. On a left-right split screen, there are always two images, but one is replaced before the other leaves the screen, so that one image is paired with a new one before it, too, disappears. A brilliant way of doing a chameleon-like turn, and a perfect metaphor for revealing, by comparisons and contrasts, the American character: changeable; fickle; also violent. Seen through the "protruding" eyes of this artist whose photographic couplings reveal marriages we hadn't imagined, we sense Kosoko's curatorial eye coming through.

The opening two shots are of Jaamil's mother, as a girl (left) and woman (right). Her birth name was Voncena Denise Anderson; her adult name, Waahiydat Rukiyat Kosoko (after her conversion to Islam and marriage to the artist's Nigerian father). So we begin with mother as chameleon, changing name, religion, and identity.^{xiii} No point in enumerating all the eye-opening



Cry by Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

“comparisons” that these couplings invite; suffice it to say that we start to sense a new definition of the word “likeness.” A flag is just a rag, and the stars and stripes hold a screen together with the confederate banner. So what? So why not? Are flags the way to show allegiance? Has the American flag served all Americans? Should we salute or revere any flag? Hmm. . . . Sarah Palin is paired (probably for the only time in her sorry life) with Rosa Parks, and they could be mother and daughter. Look at the smiles, the eyes, the set and turn of the head on the neck. See what there is that an alien from another planet would find, without the chatter and just the image: two women of the human species. Or we can bemoan the likeness/similarity of two such opposing histories. In one of several photos of the young Lucille Ball. Again, same family—check out the set of the brows, the lips, nose, teeth—and surprise: Lucy’s long-lost black child! We can crack up about other dyads but not all of this is amusing. A panel with the word “facebook” on a placard is paired with an old-school dial telephone; the facebook image is replaced by a 1950s version of Aunt Jemima, in front of a plate of pancakes and bacon; then the rotary phone is replaced by a shot of the mother of Precious from the recent film of the same name, so at this point Precious’s mom and Aunt Jemima (like Palin and Parks) are screened together. The way Kosoko slips in the photo of an enslaved African’s mutilated back, after multiple whippings, or the lynched body of another black man, still hanging on the rope, follows on the heels of

something that provoked giggles, and we are left with the laughter stuck in our throat, choking us with “the unmakings of dreams.”

Cry—The Ground Beneath Your Feet

*Black man-child broken in pieces,
All over the linoleum, the counter-tops.^{xiv}*

Calm-faced exhibition portrait: the calm before the storm. Look down: look where you step—watch it! Watch out! Watch your step! There are eyes watching you down there, not calm, but agitated, sobbing, weeping eyes. This visitation with the black male is one that has concerned Kosoko over the course of his career in poems, lectures, essays, video, and performances. What is there to say that, in order to move through this installation, we step on the faces, eyes, tears, of black men. We erase and destroy them, smearing their images with dirt, in symbolic reenactment of the casual violence they endure on a daily basis. Our soles soil sacred ground. His poetry volume, “Notes on an Urban Kill-Floor,” retrospectively visits Kosoko’s birth-to-manhood body battle, from his beginning as the miraculous result of an ectopic pregnancy. Of this ur-event, he writes, “I did not have to fight to stay alive, instead I fought not to and could not win.” The life of black men as a crap shoot from day one. . . .

ⁱ From “Ninth Sign of Zodiac,” Notes on an Urban Kill-Floor, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko. POVISMO/PRESS, 2011, p.15. Hereinafter referred to as Notes.

ⁱⁱ <https://soundcloud.com/art-in-odd-places/aiop-podcast-1>

ⁱⁱⁱ From “Entry,” Notes, p.27.

^{iv} From “Because I Cannot Tell You,” Notes, p. 28.

^v In one of our exchanges I called Kosoko a “master masker.” He responded by citing the power of the shape shifter’s invisibility.

^{vi} From We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, Bell Hooks. NY: Routledge, 2004 (from Chapter 5, “It’s a dick thing-beyond sexual acting out).

^{vii} The full “Ninth Sign of Zodiac” poem. See note 1, above.

^{viii} From “mama: a litany,” Notes, p. 22.

^{ix} Email correspondence, 30 September 2013.

^x Notes, p. 22.

^{xi} Her scream-frozen face mirrors the photo of Kosoko on the cover of his poetry volume, Notes.

^{xii} Her scream-frozen face mirrors the photo of Kosoko on the cover of his poetry volume, Notes.

^{xiii} Likewise, Kosoko’s brother, whose birth name was Abdul Jaamal Mohammed, is now known as Jik Black Disyigib.

^{xiv} From “Notes on an Urban Kill-Floor - I,” Notes, p. 39.

BLACK MALE REVISITED: revenge of the new negro

Whitney V. Hunter

The invitation to contribute artistically to BLACK MALE REVISITED: revenge of the new negro is the impetus of this writing. It is with my interest, and a mission, to re-contextualize preexisting negative cultural notions, that I involve myself in such an endeavor. Additionally, the overall mission of the performance event “to artfully re-imagine stereotypes of Black Men,” is a act that is deeply personal and of great importance to me.

I am not a historian, in respect to those whose life work is to record the achievements and lineages of the past; I am an artist who creates a history to be archived. With this effort, I accept the invitation and responsibility that comes with igniting a conversation of identity through art.

A key component to the creation of the following text is a 1957 television interview on The Open Mind featuring guests Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Judge J. Waties Waring; the subject, the “new negro” was presented. Additionally, a recent conversation between Jaamil and me regarding topics surrounding the themes of the event and the performance/installation-based work to be presented. Lastly, all subsequent panels, performances, etc. that have entered my realm of consciousness while preparing my contribution.

The form that this writing takes is a consequence of the intellectual and intuitive, and fully considers the power and possibilities of the word. This writing needn't be a manifesto, unless it wants to be. It needn't subjugate, unless it has to. All it has to do is be, right here, right now, in a perpetual state of aliveness.

It can be perceived and is conceived as part script, lecture, interview, or any other textual form meant to stimulate sensually the organs of sight and sound. The attempt is to chart the emotional and psychological flow of a conversation that once existed between and in the hearts and minds of two Black male artists.

The following information is a key to reading the text:

1. *italics*: Jaamil's responses
2. normal font: Whitney's question or original writing
3. bold text in quotation: outside source
4. All text should be read with attention given to the particular punctuation.

Dance / Performance Artist
and Independent Curator

BLACK MALE REVISITED: A performative text

nigger.

negra.

colored.

negro.

Black.

Afro-American.

African American.

?

That's a very good place to start.

What's the difference?

more poetic

I am revisiting the idea of the Black male

Did you see the original exhibition?

no... I was still in college, Howard University

Two subtitles:

Part 1: Revenge of the new negro

direct conversation with Locke.

Takes on character,

angry black man.

Unreliable character.

Flawed protagonist, dualism of self.

taken/possessed by spirit/ghost.

What would happen if a slave were reincarnate to the present moment?

How would they relate to black or white people?

How would that operate at the present moment?

Line of departure.

*Possessed by this creature who's angry,
pick on white audiences!
Ken doll as effigy.
Vodou sort of creature.*

Part 2: Experimental representations through ephemeral forms

Original Exhibition.

Thelma Golden.

2d/3d.

Still, black woman making sense of what is the black male at that present moment.

Rodney King riots, Million Man March...

Thinking about a continuing dialogue.

What is it now?

Advancements in media, technology...

How have these changed to construct black identity?

Complex, simplified.

Core:

*Form new conversation amongst men,
male identified body,
connected to our past*

*Fight and combat cultural amnesia!
not be silenced!*

*White washed /supremacist social frame,
easy to feel silenced.*

Genre desegregation.

Direct intention to dismantle genre.

Artists want to be known as artists in general!

What are these boundaries that we want to encapsulate artists?

igniting conversation.

I am talking to artists as artists!

Last but not least,

Queering black male identity.

*Not to make it gay,
but to confuse, push against pop concepts or constructs.*

Be free to be complex!

KING:

"the new negro is a person with a new sense of dignity and destiny, with a self-respect..."

"self assertive attitude."

"growing honesty."

"duplicity - deception as a survival technique."

"from the housetops, kitchens, and pulpits the new negro says on no uncertain terms that he doesn't like the ways he's being treated!"

"at long last the negro is telling the truth." (1957

Far cry from 50 years ago...

100 years...

150.

The rate at which identity has mutated/multiplied is phenomenal.

The most powerful man in the world is the Black man!

REVENGE:

against whom?

The self,

the past,

the history,

the system,

the MAN!

Never identified who the man is.

Many have been able to move forward and improve, but still haunted by past.

Oppression.

Invisibility.

REVENGE against the system!

Anyone who is there.

This particular character picks on the white man.

S&M

Ideas of power

Who's in control at any given moment?

say the words that no one wants to speak
make the actions that no one wants to take
cry the tears no one wants to shed
stand up and out!

walk the path that no one can
dance the steps buried inside
shout! the voice that is still unheard
love! the one no one can believe
dream the dream.

say
speak
take
cry
shed
shout!
love!
believe!
stand
walk
dance
dream...

be!

ONEMAN:

"The day the black man lets out his powerful scream, the earth will tremble... the earth will stop."

*Post.
modern.
visual.
creature.*

*broken down
completely undone
many representations
nervous breakdown*

*emotional
rollercoaster.*

Bell Hooks...

How much of yourself are you revealing?

*Blur the line of fiction and reality.
Confessional, autobiographical... theatre.*

Theatrical tropes:

*lighting,
sound,
live music,
original music,
visual spectacle.*

*Deep, pain.
Exposé.*

*This happened to me, blood memory.
Deep and heart breaking,
laughing.
Kitsch, comedy, tugging at heart strings simultaneously.
Shape shift.*

*As black people, we have a different relationship with religion.
sacred and profane.
Spiritual event.
Very profane!
(Start on shrine that I've created, adorned with deeply spiritual memorabilia):
fabrics, text, trinkets, photos.
Shrine/throne.
Embedded.*

*Distorted history.
Charting territory.*

*40oz bottles,
cotton flower stalks,
horse heads.*

*I too have been a victim of the self inflicted psychosis that once kept me from
being loved.*

*Contemporary malt liquor.
drugs.
Alcoholism runs rampant.*

Before going missing, he would use his disability check on beer.

Opening fridge and seeing it full of 40oz bottles

*Exorcising a lot of images.
Childhood spirits that were in the shape of the adults,*

recognizing the sickness.

Cry piece.

*(above the shrine)
an eye,
images/photos of black men crying.*

Black and white photo.

*Varying shapes.
sizes.
tones.*

Photos hang,

Fall to the floor.

Kosoko, Jaamil Olawale. Personal Interview. 8, October. 2013.

Blood n Brothers. By Preach R Sun. Perf. Preach R Sun. The Producers Club.
New York. 17 August. 2013

"The New Negro." The Open Mind. WNBC, NY. 10, February. 1957.

“Could such a metamorphosis have taken place as suddenly as it has appeared to? The answer is no; not because the New Negro is not here, but because the Old Negro had long become more of a myth than a man.”

**- Allain Leroy Locke,
Enter the New Negro
Survey Graphic, March 1925:
Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro**

BIOGRAPHIES

Originally from Detroit, MI, **Jaamil Olawale Kosoko** is a Nigerian American curator, producer, poet, choreographer, and performance artist currently based in New York City. He is a 2012 Live Arts Brewery Fellow as a part of the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival, a 2011 Fellow as a part of the DeVos Institute of Art Management at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and an inaugural graduate member of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP) at Wesleyan University. Currently, he co-directs anonymous bodies || art collective with his creative partner Kate Watson-Wallace.

His work in performance is rooted in a creative mission to push history forward through writing and socio-political art advocacy. Kosoko's work in live performance has received support from The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage through Dance Advance, The Philadelphia Cultural Management Initiative, The Joyce Theater Foundation, and The Philadelphia Cultural Fund. His solo performance work entitled *other.explicit.body.* premiered at Harlem Stage in April 2012 and is currently touring nationally. As a performer, Kosoko has created original roles in the performance works of Nick Cave, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Keely Garfield Dance, Miguel Gutierrez and The Powerful People, Headlong Dance Theater among others. Kosoko's poems have been published in *The American Poetry Review*, *Poems Against War*, *The Dunes Review*, and *Silo*, among other publications. In 2011, Kosoko published *Notes on an Urban Kill-Floor: Poems for Detroit* (Old City Publishing). He is a contributing correspondent for *Dance Journal* (PHL), the *Broad Street Review* (PHL), and *Critical Correspondence* (NYC). He has served on numerous curatorial and funding panels including the National Endowment for the Arts, MAP Fund, Movement Research at Judson Church, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the Baker Artists Awards, among others.

Brenda Dixon Gottschild is the author of *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance_Dance and Other Contexts*; *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (winner of the 2001 Congress on Research in Dance Award for Outstanding Scholarly Dance Publication); and *The Black Dancing Body - A Geography from Coon to Cool* (winner of the 2004 de la Torre Bueno prize for scholarly excellence in dance publication). Her most recent book, *Joan Myers Brown and The Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina-A Biohistory of American Performance*, was published in 2012. A freelance writer, consultant, and presenter, and former consultant and writer for *Dance Magazine*, she is Professor Emerita of dance studies at Temple University.

Chetachi A. Egwu is writer/producer, filmmaker, artist, performer and professor raised in Buffalo, NY to Nigerian parents. She earned a BA in

Communication from the University of Buffalo in 1996, then moved to on to Howard University in Washington, DC, where she completed a Masters (1999) and Ph.D. (2005) in Mass Communication. She has served as a faculty member in the Communication departments at Morgan State University and The George Washington University. She is currently Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Though her work has been featured in academic journals, newspapers and online publications such as TheGrio.com, her creative nature reaches beyond writing. Chetachi is a dancer/choreographer and was a member of Carla and Company, Coyaba Dance Theater, Choreographers Collaboration Project in Washington DC and several other projects. She is also a filmmaker and currently the co-producer and co-director for two documentaries, *Runway Afrique* and *No Justice, No Peas: Getting A Veggie In The Hood*. Chetachi holds memberships in several service organizations, including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Whitney V. Hunter is a New York-based dance / performance artist and independent curator from Chicago, IL. He creates and curates work for the stage, gallery, and alternative spaces, and directs his performance collective Whitney Hunter[MEDIUM]. Whitney has received a Puffin Foundation Grant ('11), Harlem Stages - Fund for New Work Grant ('09), a new work(s) commission from Thelma Hill Performing Arts Center ('08 & '11), National Foundation for the Advancement In the Arts Astral Career Grant ('06), and a Career Transitions for Dancers Support Grant ('03), and in 2007 he was featured as one of *Trace Magazine's* "7 NYC Dancers on the Rise". He is presently a Movement Research 2013 Artist in Residence.

Whitney has performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company from 2003 - 2006 and has worked in the companies of Pearl Lang, Rod Rodgers, Pascal Riout, Reggie Wilson, Dagmar Spain, Doug Hamby and with Kankouran West African Dance Company.

Whitney is the lead curator of the Work/Space group exhibition and Open Studios at The Invisible Dog Art Center, he has curated two solo shows of multimedia conceptual artist Anita Sto (Broadway Gallery, NYC), conceived and curated SITE Project (Long Island University/Humanities Gallery), and presently *InAction: The Virtuosity of Presence* (Long Island University/ Resnick Gallery). He holds a BFA in Theatre Arts/Dance (Howard University), an MFA in New Media Arts and Performance (Long Island University) and is presently a David Driskell Ph.D. Fellow in Art Theory, Aesthetics and Philosophy at Institute for the Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA). whitneyhunter.com



Untitled Performance
Photo by Jaamil Kosoko with Sidra Bell & Umi Akiyoshi

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MTTC
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Nigerian Boy with Peacock Feather, #2
Photo by Jaamil Kosoko with Sidra Bell & Lini Akiyoshi