June 11, 2021–September 21, 2022

Every Earthly Morning the Sky's Light touches Ur Life is Unprecedented in its Beauty

Precious Okoyomon

Aspen Art Museum

For the final iteration of poet and artist PRECIOUS OKOYOMON's unique eighteen-month commission at the Aspen Art Museum, the artist has reimagined the museum's rooftop exhibition space and has erected a large-scale architectural structure, built from natural materials found around Aspen, that the artist refers to "as a kind of earthly womb, a space set aside for self-fragilization." Inside the structure, the viewer experiences a musical composition arranged by Standing On The Corner Art Ensemble, a collective of jazz musicians led by Gio Escobar who worked with the artist on the soundtrack for each season of the installation. Okoyomon's poetry can be found mixed throughout the track, interwoven with the sounds of moog synthesizers and a symphony of other electronic instruments. A hanging door made out of the patchworked skins of stuffed animals encloses the shelter, separating the soft interior of the space from the wild exterior of the garden. Here, as in much of Okoyomon's work, two affects unite, the austerity of ancient forms is disarmed by the incredibly cute: the adorable.

The project, organized by curator-at-large Claude Adjil, expands Okoyomon's ongoing exploration of ecological materials and frameworks in their work and furthers their investigation into the ways in which the miracles and terrors of our natural world have been indexed into strictly policied and racialized categories. Completely reimagined for each passing season, Okoyomon makes use of the project's long timeline to highlight transformation and change. In the summer of 2021, Okoyomon collaborated with local growers to create a garden that celebrated the abundance and mutability of plant life, combining invasive species alongside those indigenous to the region and presented a monumental new sculpture *My Heart Makes My Head Hurt - Ditto, Ditto Battle Angel*, cast in concrete, of a black angel, resolute in prayer presiding over the garden, and the mountains behind her.

For the second iteration of the exhibition, the artist reimagined the museum's rooftop exhibition space to reflect the harshness of the barren winter. For winter, Okoyomon planted evergreens among the dormant plants that flourished in these same beds just months ago and installed a working community oven in the place of the now-absent angel. Titled *shining like a black sun at the end of the world* and made out of hemp, packed mud, and concrete, the oven, that's form is modeled after traditional West African storehouses, burned on Tuesdays and Sundays of each week for 9 hours in the heart of the garden to collectively warm and bless the community with ritual offerings. Continuing their collaboration with the jazz musician Gio Escobar, of the ensemble Standing On The Corner, who worked with the artist to record a chaotic randomized symphony for the garden in the summer, *Ice Words Ghost Appearance for Strings, Woodwind, Brass and Drum*, a new track, formally explored the season's cold desolation in sound. The figure titled *I saw nothing but the darkness in myself*, acted as an Egungun, or a watchman of the night, a mythological masked spirit in Yoruba culture that protects against the incursions of evil.

This summer, Okoyomon presents a far more modest figure, achieved in stoneware that continues their interest in deities. Inspired by the religious traditions of the Esan nation, an ethnic group in Southern Nigeria, the sculpture like an Orisha lurks in the garden's bramble, watching over the sacred space.

To take you to this space is going to require some time travel, which i
am prepared to do with
you, let us reorganize the cosmic symbols of earth's tyrannical love and
fall into other-than
-human-possession

Soil memory soft calculated fading

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory

Take me back to where I belong
A wound. Womb. Void.
Keep forgetting i am the void

LOL
If you think you took something from me
I am flattered and u can have it

I will be waiting
In blackened faith

What is more frightful than to die in a nightmare
lay down there
Fill it with red, orange, green
I put the earth in my mouth
Sustainable thoughts only
To accept a void in ourselves is supernatural

in violent distance of self i am capable of imagining what i fear and
laying it to rest
the suppression of knowledge_ the suppression of self
Hacked from light i am taking you with me_ galvanized spirits

we have a lot to do
pre-sky / emit light - yes like that

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory

The blood spurts in the earth and ten chapped fingers of recollection the
machine of the heart
uprooted in the smirking night
Odor of the earth's core

Harnessing the
Metabolized death of the soil
The echo of archival memory
The dream which cannot be slept thru

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory

Come rest in the soil
Dirt depth
Plant yourself in it

Remember the earth
Soothing errant roots

Soft grounding
Let the fear go

Fear imperceptibly fades into the fine lines of the dream
Soft grounding soil doze into the dream the liquid manure and smell of
the rotting earth the
pulsating sun back to the earth where everything is free

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
Flesh of the world
The soil is for all
Tyrannical love

Earth of mud
horizon of mud
Sky of mud

Death of mud into the palms of feverish breathing
Imagine your fingertips carry the imprint of the earth's memory
Conducting inwardly easy and ancient
Pulsing peace being known by sun and soil
Slowly life unties we exist

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory

Lie down invert yourself above a ditch or stream a bright blue sky

Lie down in any place let your body become the root

A sound with no fixed source
A ceaseless dispersal

Think about the body becoming food for the soil the worms soil memory

To reduce the living body

Life rubs up against matter inner core to innercore

Try not to be afraid you don't have to be afraid

Perhaps even for one moment

You don't have to be afraid

Soil frequency
Emit light perceptible to the ones who also know
Lie down
On the ground feel the dirt holding you memory transplanting upon your skin

Let love link you to the earth

sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory
sun beats down wind leaps soil memory

Soil language
Dreams of the tepid fire

Sun

Blood earth

unparcel this humanity
Sacrifice into a new narrative
Perform the body in a new way

Pre sky
Uncovering shifting beneath the soft hard layers fragilize into a new form quite premoidal
seismic shift

Emit light perceptible to ones who also

Lie on the ground like that

Into a new position

A fragment with sticky edges rotating in a wet soft space
Soil song

LIST OF WORKS

Precious Okoyomon
allow the knowledge of the other to mark me, deep into the co-emergence of transubjectivity, 2022
Structure built with tree branches, dried mud, hay, and stuffed animals

Precious Okoyomon
cosmic effluvia, 2022
Stoneware, resin, and blood

Gio Escobar of Standing On The Corner Art Ensemble
Do the Dead Know What Time It is?, 2022
Audio

Gio Escobar of Standing On The Corner Art Ensemble and Precious Okoyomon
Worm Food, 2022
Audio

Gio Escobar of Standing On The Corner Art Ensemble
Hee hee haa haa XuXu, 2021
Audio

PRECIOUS OKOYOMON is a Nigerian-American poet and artist. Their work considers the natural world, histories of migration and racialization, and the pure pleasures of everyday life. They have had institutional solo exhibitions at the LUMA Westbau in Zurich (2018), the Museum Für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt (2020), Performance Space New York (2021), and the Aspen Art Museum (2021). They were included in the 59th Venice Biennale, the 58th Belgrade Biennial as well as group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and the LUMA Arles, France. Major performances have been commissioned by the Serpentine Galleries, London (2019) and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2019). Their second book of poetry *But Did U Die?* will be co-published by the Serpentine Galleries and Wonder Press in 2022. Okoyomon was a 2020 artist-in-residence at the LUMA Arles, and they are the 2021 recipient of the Frieze Art Fair Artist Award, as well as the 2022 Chanel Next Art Prize.

STANDING ON THE CORNER is an Earth-based Art Ensemble founded in 2016 by Shamel Cee Mystery, aka Gio Escobar, that functions best in Brooklyn, New York. Inspired by, made for, and consisting of the resilience and upheaval of all people of the African diaspora, Standing On The Corner thrives in fugitivity: they can appear on any particular Night as the beat of one drum, as an orchestra of 30, or as a ghost entirely, but always on the run. The ensemble produces musical, visual, and experiential works that equate hyperlocal incidence to cosmological wisdom. Visiting sites of emotional resonance under the weight of subjective histories and traumas, the art ensemble seeks to uncover the mysteries and the ghosts of hidden truths through focused interpretation.

READING LIST

The reading list is softly inspired by where I am in life right now, trying to stop time and reading poems in soft patches of grass, looking for the same hummingbird every day, and then love stopping and starting time.

– Precious Okoyomon

The Waste Land and Other Poems
by T.S. Eliot

Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004
by Tan Lin

Alice ordered me to be made
by Alice Notley

Grace Period: Notebooks, 1998–2007
by Aaron Kunin

The Crisis of Infinite Worlds
by Dana Ward

The Arab Apocalypse
by Etel Adnan

Dear Science and Other Stories
by Katherine McKittrick

Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals
by Saidiya Hartman

She tries her tongue, her silence softly breaks
by M. NourbeSe Philip

Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary
by Veena Das

"The Lives of Infamous Men" (essay)
by Foucault

Stories of Mr. Keuner
by Bertolt Brecht

Dear Angel of Death
by Simone White

The collected poems of Édouard Glissant
by Édouard Glissant

PLANTS

Achillea millefolium
Achnatherum hymenoides
Agastache foeniculum 'Blue Fortune'
Ageratum Aloha White
Alcea rosea 'Blacknight'
Amelanchier spp.
Anemone canadensis
Anthyrium filix-femina
Aquilegia alpina
Aquilegia caerulea
Aquilegia canadensis 'Little Lanterns'
Artemisia dracunculus
Artemisia ludoviciana
Avens - Geum
Begonias
Blue Star - Amsonia tabernaemontana
Bouteloua gracilis 'Blonde Ambition'
Calendula - Calendula officinalis
Calendula officinalis 'Radio'
Campanula rotundifolia
Canna x generalis 'Bronze Orange'
Cannova® Bronze Orange Canna Lily
Clematis 'Jackmanii Superba'
Clematis spp
Clematis terniflora
Coreopsis lanceolata
Cornus sericea 'Artic Fire'
Daylily - Hemerocallis x 'Chicago Apache'
Dicentra spectabilis 'Valentine'
Digitalis purpurea 'Camelot Cream'
Digitalis purpurea 'Camelot Lavender'
Digitalis purpurea 'Camelot Mix'
Digitalis purpurea 'Camelot Rose'
Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus'
Gaillardia aristata
Geranium x 'Roazanne'
Iris siberica 'Caesars Brother'
Japanese Dappled Willow - Salix integra 'Hakuro Nishiki'
Jasmine Vine - Jasminum; L. impatiens
Liatris punctate
Lobelia - Lobelia erinus
Lonicera x heckrottii 'Goldflame'
Lupinus polyphyllus 'Gallery Blue'
Lupinus polyphyllus 'Gallery White'
Lupinus polyphyllus 'Gallery Yellow'
Mahona repens
Milkweed - Asclepias speciose
Morden Sunrise Rose - 'Rosa Morden Sunrise' petunia
Mugo spp
Nepeta Faassenii 'Six Hills Giant'
Penstemon "Elfin Pink'
Phlox subulata
Picea abies 'Pendula'
Pine Leaf Penstemon - Penstemon pinifolius
Populus deltoides
Potentilla
Queen Annes Lace 'Daucus carota'
Ratibida columnifera
Ribes uva-crispa
Rubus spp
Rudbeckia fulgida 'Goldstrum'
Sagina subulata
Sagina subulata 'Aurea'
Salvia officinalis
Sedum spp.
Sporobolus heterolepis
Stachys byzantina 'Silver Carpet'
Sweet alyssum flowers (Lobularia maritima syn. Alyssum maritimum portulaca grandiflora)
Sweet potato vine - Ipomoea batatas
Thymus pseudolanuginosus
Veronica pectinata
Creeping Mahonia - Mahonia Repens
Blue Chip Juniper - Juniperus horizontalis
Japanese Tree Lilac - Syringa reticulata
Weeping Willow Tree - Salix babylonica
Weeping Spruce - Picea abies 'Pendula'
Blue Fescue - Festuca glauca
Coneflower - Echinacea mangus
Euonymus alatus - Winged Burning Bush
Virginia creeper - Parthenocissus quinquefolia
Catmint - Nepeta
Aster macrophyllus 'Twilight'

Additional Suggestions for Winter Gardens

Kinnickinick
creeping cotoneaster 'Toms Thumb'
White Bud Mugo
Red Twig Dogwood
Yellow Twig Dogwood
Common yarrow
Rocky Mountain Sumac - Rhus glabra cismontana
Smooth Sumac - Rhus glabra
Praire Willow - Salix humilis
Scotch Pine hillside creeper
Coral Bells - Heuchera
Autumn Jazz Viburnum
Tufted Hair Grass
Shrub Rose
Diablo Ninebark
Purple Fountain Grass
Crimson Pygmy Barberry
Alpine Carpet Juniper

ABOUT THE ASPEN ART MUSEUM

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum is a thriving and globally engaged non-collecting contemporary art museum. Following the 2014 opening of the museum's facility designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architect Shigeru Ban, the AAM enjoys increased attendance, renewed civic interaction, and international media attention. In July 2017, the AAM was one of ten institutions to receive the United States' National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its fostering of learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location.

Aspen Art Museum
637 East Hyman Avenue
Aspen, Colorado 81611

aspenartmuseum.org
(970) 925-8050

Hours
Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6 PM
Closed Mondays

Admission to the AAM is free courtesy of Amy and John Phelan.

Every Earthly Morning the Sky's Light touches Ur Life is Unprecedented in its Beauty is curated by Claude Adjil, AAM Curator at Large.

Landscape design by Bluegreen: Rio Crandall

Soil provided by Paonia Soil Co., Colorado's living organic Supersoil

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