



## *Transcension*

A response to the work of Iyunade Judah  
by Chukwudubem Ukaigwe

Iyunade Judah's Solo exhibition at Platform Centre for Photographic & Digital Arts comprises one single-channel video playing via a flat screen television hanging from the wall. Viewers are choreographed succinctly from the entrance of the gallery to benches lined up in front of a screen, a portal for incessant transportation to cerebral dimensions where the viewers' trust of the artist's imagination is put to test. The 4:44 minutes looped short film titled; *Transcension* unfolds its literature in four parts, all rooted in a penetrating progression of poetic recital. "In a field, I am the absence of field"; The first auditory declaration in this piece sketches the topography of themes the artist sought to explore. Iyuna investigates Black existence in quantum, as material, as event, in circumstance, as occurrence, as psychological, by means of diffusion and aggregation of contexts within spaces, within field.

Act 1; Identity starts off in a corridor, where the figure sitting on a chair is subject to a blurry uncertainty, perhaps a question, perhaps a displacement, perhaps a confusion, an existentialist .....? The artists' employment of a photographic blur, achieved by reducing the camera's shutter speed, was instrumental to staging this diasporic puzzle throughout the film.

Reminiscent of a bacterial flagellum, the figures swirling under veils in Act 2; Colonial Obsession speak to migration as organismic, as subject to happenings, as subject to indoctrination, as subject to flotation, to pretext, to colonization, as subject to erasure, as defiance to graph. The supposed cloaking in this work is redolent of Jade Nasogaluak's photographic work; That's a-mori, where the Inuk artist made use of a ghost like covering of herself to invoke or question conceptions of invisibility and disconnection from cultural practices, as an artist who lives and practices in urban environments where she identifies as a minority.

In Act 2, an empty chair out in the field was occupied by a subject whose African attire in a Canadian landscape was topped up by his dreadlocks; a hairstyle that trademarks Black diaspora. What a syncretistic gesture? What a Pan African confluence? What a revolution of gathering selves? A whistle?

Act 3; Sunset casts a floral draped performer into frame. The performer looks into a mirror as if as to make sure he is what the reader said he is; "a river that is still flowing". The performer's vernacular gesture, free from perfection bears insight to Iyunade's interest in exploring humanist theatre; free from formulaic, unchained with film tradition. The shaky handling of the camera points an emancipation from academia.

Act 4; Final Form presents clips rolling in the serenity of nature; the sky and the ocean; elements essential to being, elements essential for migration. The reader begun a summoning of ancestors, calling names; reminding us that we share identity with our forerunners, and are a continuation of doggedness. The poem read throughout the film was written by Ruby Nwauche, and performed by Terry Mahobe. The plurality of authorship in this project allows for a non-linear, or a richer artistic language. Perhaps, this film is a tri-valent concoction, a trilogy of poetics, a baptism, a literary matrimony, a contention. Iyuna asks; "what am I", the reader answers; "I am".

**Iyunade Judah** is an artist-photographer based in Winnipeg Canada, originally from Ogun, Nigeria. His work focuses on the black experience from an African's point of view in the diaspora. He has worked on a number of photo projects and short films on black masculinity, gender and afrocentrism. Judah's work primarily focuses on identity and a need for consciousness in African art. Iyunade says that "My work is inspired by my curiosity to discover African history and art. I found out that there's almost no identity for me and a lot of people like me. I make use of imaginary narratives such as reincarnation in my practice to convey a message which might be on sexuality, history, identity or love. I infuse fabric as a backdrop to appreciate African prints and patterns which has become a personal style."

**Chukwudubem Ukaigwe** is a Nigerian born song, dispersed by a transient Atlantic breeze, currently passing through Treaty 1 Territory, so called Canada. He consciously uses a variety of mediums to relay a plurality of ideas at any given time. He views his art practice as a conversation, or a portal into one, and in some instances, as an interpretation of this ongoing exchange. Chukwudubem weighs an occurrence, feeling, or idea on a scale and then creates a narrative in his own language. Chukwudubem operates as an interdisciplinary artist, curator, writer, and cultural worker. Ukaigwe is a founding member of Patterns Collective.

**IMAGE |** Iyunade Judah, from *Transcension*



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