

# epiphany (temporaire)



## EXODUS CROOKS

CURATED BY ORPHÉE KASHALA

**Orphée Kashala** is a UK-based Pan-African and Diasporic Art Curator and Cultural producer. He was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and currently lives in London. From 2020 to 2021 he worked as a producer at Maokwo in Coventry, and in 2021 he was selected for the Emergence(y) project in Birmingham — an Ort Gallery and ICF residency provision for emerging Curators to develop their practices. He is currently studying a degree in Arts Management at Goldsmiths University of London, where he continues his research in Arts and Culture.

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Exodus Crooks  
The confession: part 1 (2022)

**Epiphany (Temporaire)** presents a new body of work by British-Jamaican artist Exodus Crooks. The exhibition invites us to witness - with reverence - as Exodus takes an inward journey, a slow walk home, a look inside themselves. On the artist's path imagination and self-determination intersect. Exodus places the creative process alongside the process of self-discovery, and searches for self through creativity, home through imagination, and heritage through interrogation.

For this work, Exodus has turned to their African-Caribbean heritage and spirituality to develop the language and tools to elucidate the struggle for self-expression. The exhibition pauses and probes the transitional moments of searching, finding, and letting go that punctuate Exodus' journey from self-exploration to self-attainment. In doing so, they reveal that who we are and our thoughts are converging parallels, meeting on the horizon, and therefore diverging as we get closer to them. In this body of work, Exodus is inciting us to reflect on the fluidity, diversity, and multiplicity of self that one may uncover when looking inward, thereby deconstructing the idea of a linear self, and setting a precedent for a multidimensional exploration of creativity and self-determination.

Exodus includes sculpture, film, text, and sculptural installation in the exhibition. They are invested in a process of carving out (sometimes literally) dialogues and bringing their thoughts to the surface. These references are drawn from the layers of history and culture around them. In Exodus' interrogation of domestic and familiar surfaces, they are investigating the embodiment and repository of memories and inheritances, stored, and transferred through time and shared space. A succession of profound experiences for the artist come together within the exhibition to form an allegory of personal stories of love, loss, and pain.

We are witnessing Exodus in a labour of searching, finding, and letting go. For them, this practice becomes a fundamental ritual in the process of becoming. This process is active in the present and ongoing, surpassing the temporariness of the moments of imagination and creation by the artist and those of witnessing the artworks by the audience. Exodus is turning to creativity to understand who they are: asking what their ideas are worth and who decides their value, and wondering what would happen if they just let them go.

Exodus turns to heritage as a starting point in the search to uncover the markers left by their ancestors - tales, idioms, objects, and traditions. Exodus also draws from an ambivalent relationship to spirituality and family, which allows them to transcend the oppression of time and space and look at their history for answers about the present. This embrace of temporariness overcomes the limitations of fixed time and space, and becomes vital to the recovery of meaning from within one's heritage and enables ripe thoughts and connections to arise. These connections create a constellation of reflection points that Exodus uses to imagine and reimagine freely and honestly who they are and the world they inhabit, while encouraging the audience to do the same.



Exodus intentionally gives visitors enough insight into the work as to enable us to confront a tangible vulnerability, which only their deep intimacy with the material can create. Yet, enough is withheld from us that we remain strangers. From this vantagepoint, we witness the sparks ignited by the profound questions Exodus and the exhibition's curator explored together, as well as the contradicting, eclectic answers they encountered in making this show. These sparks were epiphanies and moments of clarity, which also held harmonious contradictions and rhythmic confusion. Though only temporary, these epiphanies crystallise as fractals in the emergence of uncontrived narratives. For Exodus capturing moments of epiphany - while reconciling with their evasive nature and embracing their intrinsic contradictions and complications - is a liberatory act that enables us to reject a state of stasis and access imagination. This non-rigid approach to creativity is fundamental to Exodus' practice of honesty and vulnerability. This method fosters the deep and meaningful exchanges needed to tell stories that are rooted in intention and lived experience.

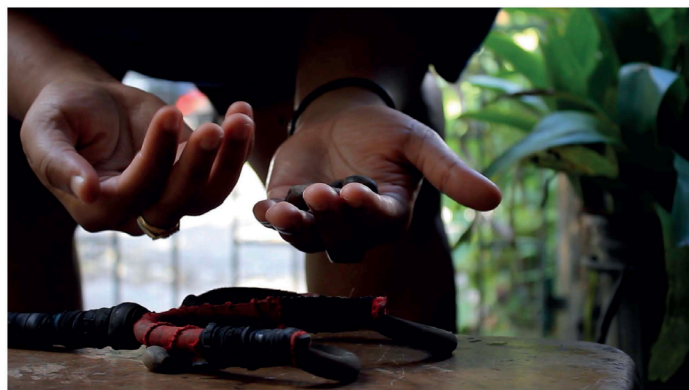
Epiphany (Temporaire) offers a glimpse into Exodus' poetic process of world-making and making sense of the world. As visitors, we are prompted to read ourselves in the artist's confessions. We witness an intimate process of critical reflection, which is ongoing, evolving and regenerating and allows us to re-define ourselves again and again through temporary epiphanies. We are invited into a new form of sociality, where creating and making sense of self is realised "not only through tenacious struggle but also through the reparative and restorative power of intimacy" (Tina Campt, 2021).

Exodus' unique depiction of this transformative process stems from the intimacy and vulnerability of each artwork. They use imagination as a tool to carve out and to unravel new and old thoughts, and as a conduit to access past and future selves. Thus, Exodus forges a connection between history and aspirations. They present the exhibition as an offering, and a window into the messy process of seeking answers. We get to see the arsenal they use to engage in a dynamic interplay of decrypting and articulating, utilising the power of imagination as a bridge to reconnect to a higher self and a practice of scribing as a ritual to establish and maintain a connection with a higher power, enabling a dialogue filled with questions and confessions.

Exodus approaches traditions as practices established to preserve meanings and transfer knowledge, and within the context of this exhibition, deciphering information becomes a crucial element. The cryptic nature of the information passed through tradition persists, although they are actively revealing its profound significance through these artworks. From Exodus' perspective, tradition, heritage, and history become the seeds germinating in the garden of imagination from where liberation springs.

"It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that humans will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world."

– Frantz Fanon



Exodus Crooks  
Leti'guh (2022-2023)

### The confession: part 1 (2022)

[Photograph and text on Birch wood]

*The confession, part 1* is the first in a 2-part work that presents a conversation between Exodus and their God. This work centers the very act of confessing and is an invitation to explore honesty with yourself and/or your deity, or yourself as a deity. The artist uses the layout of Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975) to reference the experience and result of conversing with (a) man. The photographic-text piece evidences the church as a space where mistakes are a prelude for unattainable perfection. The artist understands confessing to be a rite of passage in order to reach a state of higher knowledge and invites the audience to sit, be present and, if willing, exchange confessions for epiphanies.

### The offerings that remain (2012-2023)

[sketchbook pages, journals, notes and magazines]

Archival material in two vitrines refers to the artist's journey with their appearance. As the artist has continued to transition, both physically and spiritually, they felt called to draw upon their earliest memories of a physical self-awareness. Becoming aware of and celebrating their appearance began with the black hair and beauty magazines the artist would read with their maternal aunt. The inward and outward reflections on self are present in the material, creating a voyeuristic event where viewers are able to read and witness as the artist explores who, where and how they are.

### A message from my ancestors (2022-2023)

[wooden wardrobe with carved text and rug underneath]

*A message from my ancestors* uses the significance of the wardrobe, seen in biblical and magical contexts, to represent a portal to other worlds. In visiting their ancestral plane, the artist received a poem, originally titled *For your twelve year old self*. This installation consists of a mahogany wardrobe, sourced from their childhood home, with an old suitcase on top and the poem carved into the wardrobe using a rotary tool. The artist's relationship to working with natural materials stems from their training in calabash art and their research into indigenous thought.

### Leti'guh (2022-2023)

[2 channel film, 9 minutes with open captions]

The 2-screen film installation comments on the process of gathering, having, holding, and letting go of ideas. The 9-minute film explores this act of letting go in two ways: As the launching and sharing of a new or old idea, allowing it to leave your mind, your heart and your sketchbook. And having to mourn for, bury and/or release an idea back into realms from where it came. *Leti'guh* features Philip Ambokele Henry, an artist, educator and Bishop's son. As Ambokele slowly taught Exodus how to make a slingshot, they discussed their relationship with religion, spirituality and the inevitable birth and death of ideas.

### Y: the symbol of man (2023)

[mixed media]

Crafted under the guidance of the artist's mentor and friend, Phillip Ambokele Henry, the fully-functioning slingshot sits amongst a plethora of naturally formed y shape tree branches. Made using rubber, leather and a branch from a tree in Port Antonio, Jamaica, the slingshot is personified in the film *Leti'guh* (2022-2023) by Ambokele as he describes the slingshot as a symbol for man. As western discourses on gender continue to be complex and inhibited, the collection of slingshots are expressions of the many versions of what the artist defines man, self and humanity to mean to them.

### Doing Duties for Miss Dell (2023)

[washing line, turf, clothes and bedsheet with text]

In late 2022, the artist woke up with a memory of them in the back garden of their maternal grandmother's home, which is also their childhood home. The artist remembers that they were doing their duty of hanging out the wet laundry on the clothesline.

Hanging on a line is a mesh vest (marina), boxer shorts and a bedsheet with the words "*and I'll never leave you, as long as God spare my life*" painted onto the fabric. This installation speaks to the relationship with the artist's matriarchal lineage, where chores and domestic duties were prioritised over or equated with the duty to love.

This work has offered a reflection on the artist's relationship with their sole maternal figure. As their grandmother ages, they are forced to reckon with her temporary presence on earth especially when their grandmother follows their goodbyes with the phrase '*as long as God spare my life*'.

The struggle to remember each detail of their dream became an act of trying to access the space between consciousness and unconsciousness; piecing together, tracing and holding on to what is temporary and sacred. "The word remember (re-member) evokes the coming together of severed parts, fragments becoming whole" (Bell Hooks, 1995).

**Exodus Crooks** is a British-Jamaican multidisciplinary artist, educator, and writer whose practice centres the relationship with self. Observing the results of fractious domesticity, despair and passion, their art tends to appear as questions of self-actualisation and the role that religion & spirituality play in that journey to enlightenment. Based between the Midlands and the North Jamaica, their art exists alongside their educational role. With themes of care, tenderness, and reimagination at the core of their practice, Exodus uses gardening, text, filmmaking & installation to further explore indigenous thought.