

# epiphany (temporaire)



## EXODUS CROOKS CURATED BY ORPHÉE KASHALA

9 FEBRUARY – 21 APRIL 2024  
WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY & BANK HOLIDAY  
MONDAYS, 11AM – 5PM  
IKON GALLERY  
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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 the self. On this path, the artist's imagination and self-determination intersect. Exodus places the creative process alongside that of self-discovery, searching 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-identification. The exhibition pauses on and probes the transitional moments of searching, finding and letting go, that punctuate Exodus' journey. It reveals that who we are and our thoughts are converging parallels, meeting on the horizon, and diverging as we get closer to them. Exodus is asking us to reflect on the fluidity, diversity and multiplicity of selves that occur when looking inward, thereby deconstructing the idea of a linear self and setting a precedent for a multidimensional exploration of creativity.

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

Exodus turns to heritage as a starting point in the search to uncover the markers left by their ancestors. They also draw from an ambivalent relationship to spirituality and family. Exodus intentionally gives enough insight into the work 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 vantage point, we see the sparks ignited by the profound questioning Exodus and I, as the exhibition curator, undertook together, as well as the contradictions and eclectic answers we 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 is a liberatory act that enables us to reject a state of stasis in order to access imagination. This non-rigid approach to creativity is fundamental to Exodus' practice of honesty and openness. 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. 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 which 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 unravel new and old thoughts, and 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. They undertake 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 Exodus is 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.

**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 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.

**Orphée Kashala** is a UK-based Pan-African and Diasporic art curator and cultural producer. Kashala was selected in 2021 for the Emergence(y) project in Birmingham, an Ort Gallery and ICF residency provision for emerging curators to develop their practices. His curatorial practice is a recourse to art and artists as mediums to lead the collective interrogation, interpretation and reckoning with human complexity. Kashala leans into contradiction and complication to untangle an intrinsically resistant, liberated, and decolonised counter-visibility.

"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 centres the 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 of conversing with a man. The photographic text piece suggests the importance of mistakes in a space that wishes you attain unattainable perfection. Exodus believes 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 enlightenment.

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

[Sketchbook pages, journals, notes and magazines]

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

### **Doing duties for Miss Dell (2023)**

[Washing line, turf, underwear and bedsheet with text]

In late 2022, Exodus woke up with a memory of them in the back garden of their maternal grandmother's home, also their childhood home. The artist remembers that they were doing their duty of hanging out the wet laundry on the clothesline. 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 hang on the line. This 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 maternal affection in Caribbean culture. 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 therefore sacred. "The word remember (re-member) evokes the coming together of severed parts, fragments becoming whole" (Bell Hooks, 1995).

### **Leti'guh (2022-2023)**

[2 channel film, 9 minutes long with open captions]

Filed in Jamaica, *Leti'guh* 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. Both explorations of letting go require vulnerability. *Leti'guh* features Philip Ambokele Henry, an artist and Bishop's son. As Ambokele slowly taught Exodus how to make a slingshot, they discussed their relationship with religion, spirituality and the life cycle of ideas.

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

[Mixed media]

Crafted under the guidance of Exodus' mentor and friend, Phillip Ambokele Henry, the fully functioning slingshot sits amongst a plethora of naturally formed Y-shape tree branches, also known as a crutch. 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 somewhat limited, the collection of slingshots are expressions of the many definitions of man, self and humanity that hold meaning for the artist.

### **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 small rug and a mahogany wardrobe, sourced from their childhood home, 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 carving and their recent research into indigenous thought.