

Los Angeles Filmforum and Ways of Seeing present

**Shaving Feet: The Premonition of Black Female Experimental Filmmaking**  
**October 15 – November 5, 2022**  
**Online**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest-running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2022 is our 47th year. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

**Program curated by Mariam Kere (Mars) of Ways of Seeing**

**Including a pre-recorded conversation with filmmakers Safiyah Chinere, Sonya Mwambu, Paige Taul, Sylvie Weber, and curator Mariam Kere!**

**Shaving Feet** inquires into how filmmaking is a practice heavily influenced by the values of premonition and thought, rather than industrial processes. This objective places film as a revolutionary act for psychic intervention -- birthed out of the knowledge that creating has insisted, for oppressed peoples, a limiting of ancestral pasts. Black people head moving political landscapes, create social trends, and new communal and kaleidoscopic futures through narrative forms. This use of ancestral history to create art, specifically films, is that of a prophetic nature.

**Shaving Feet** features documentary and narrative films from Black women, exclusively curated by Ways of Seeing, a project which aims to curate, canonize, and archive the artistic works of women of color. As a result, the filmmakers in this program come from Brazil, Germany, Canada, and the United States. This roster showcases mid-career filmmakers with previous exhibitions.

This roster, exemplified by Sylvie Weber's **The Prophetess**, shot and filmed in Congo, tells the story of the great mother spirit, Kumpa Vita, whose revolutionary myth allows for an all-female community to set out for a new future. Liliane Laborde-Edozen's **Saudade** implores the origins of Afro-Brazilian identity as a longing for African kindredness. Lastly, this program is personified by Sonya Mwambu's **circa**, which is an experimental reimaging of the infamous haunting of the Austin family, redefined as a legend that is Black and queer.

Each film in the collection, centered on the mythic, ghostly and psychohistorical, has been exhibited at Blackstar Festival, Toronto History Museums, Andy Warhol Museum, The Flaherty, as well as been under the tutelage of Director X. **Shaving Feet** by Ways of Seeing expands and coincides with other independent curatorial projects like New Negress Film Society, No Evil Eye Cinema, and as of recently Straight Lick. The program also seeks to continue the work and to elaborate on the visual language of filmmakers like Madeline Anderson of *I Am Somebody*, Julie Dash, Camille Billops of *The KKK Boutique Ain't Just Rednecks*, Ngozi Onwurah, and Cauleen Smith of *Drylongso*. Thematically, it excitedly explores how film is a fundamental aspect of an emerging Black spirit theory, coined by Akwaeke Emezi.

**Ways of Seeing** is a curatorial project meant to bridge the gap between three sectors—Black and women of color filmmakers, historic community spaces, and most importantly the communities and individuals they create for. Its basis is to elevate film culture in local communities by using

the iconoclast visions of women. In introducing community members to a burgeoning culture, it creates an immersive space for filmmakers to exchange services, time, and visibility between respective institutional spaces and themselves, demystifying mysteries around filmmaking and practice.

**Mariam Kere** (Mars) is a film programmer and curator. Her first curatorial program "FEMMES" premiered at the NYC Cultural Institutions Group, Weeksville Heritage Center. She has collaborated with the Schomburg Center for Black Research, Los Angeles Philharmonic, assisted the Brooklyn Academy of Art, and is a program assistant for the Northwest Film Forum in Seattle, Washington. A child of Ivorian and Burkinabe peoples, her film administration practice is a conviction about the liberatory relevance of African cinema and the amassed legacies of Afro-diasporic film cultures and auteurs. In line with lineage, she is invested in the speculative, the transcendental, the flying Africans, the unseen burial grounds of the diaspora. She develops an anthology series bordered by a concatenation of Andinkra symbols self-created in moments of reverence and joy. She is creator of Ways of Seeing, a film hub that canonizes, archives, and curates the work of Black women and women of color filmmaker.

### Program

#### **Why Do We Get Sick?, by Safiyah Chinere**

USA, 2019, 3 min.

Why do we get sick? We are dependent on systems. We see harmful images on television screens, social media and even witness what others do. Unsure about what to do with ourselves, we ask what does it truly mean to be alive?

**Safiyah Chinere**, whose work is grounded in the spaces between those whose stories we tell and those we don't, brings the stories of women, people of color, queer people, to the fore. Most often, Safiyah Chinere's subject matters exists at the intersection of all three. The specific space of her subject matter gives Safiyah Chinere firm footing to develop a visual style necessary to operate within the fertile interior spaces of these communities. Safiyah Chinere presents a stimulating and refreshing approach to capturing the faces, bodies, and various expressions of intimacy; slowing down the pacing and magnifying spaces to highlight that which is so often overlooked, dismissed, or delegitimize, all while maintaining her wholehearted and sincere storytelling.

#### **Too Small to be a Bear, by Paige Taul**

USA, 2020, 5 min. Los Angeles premiere

My mother recollects a profound event in her father's life. She reflects on the event being the possible cause for his demeanor. The second half features my grandmother, Dorothy Taul. She guides us through her memories of the players and the era that she met Cub, Jesse Taul, her husband.

**Paige Taul** is an Oakland, CA native who received her B.A. in Studio Art with a concentration in cinematography from the University of Virginia and her M.F.A in Moving Image from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She currently resides in Chicago, IL.

#### **The People Are the Light, by Alisha B. Wormsley**

USA, 2017, 17 min., Los Angeles premiere

The People Are the Light, is a documentary about the hood I grew up in, Homewood, and the black women who protect it, and who have always protected it. Black Womxn Magic.

**Alisha B. Wormsley** (Pittsburgh, PA, USA) is an interdisciplinary artist and cultural producer. Her work contributes to the imagining of the future of arts, science, and technology through the black womxn lens, challenging contemporary views of modern American life through whichever medium she feels is the best form of expression, creating an object, a sculpture, a billboard, performance, or film and thrives in collaboration. Her work has been exhibited widely. Most recently, the Oakland Museum, VCUArts Qatar, Speed Museum, Artpace, Times Square Arts and the Carnegie Museum of Art. Over the last few years, Wormsley has designed several public art initiatives including Streaming Space, a 24 foot pyramid with video and sound installed in Pittsburgh's downtown and several park designs. Wormsley created a public program out of her work, *There Are Black People In the Future*, which gives mini-grants to open up discourse around displacement and gentrification and was also awarded a fellowship with Monument Lab and the Goethe Institute. In 2020, Wormsley launched an art residency for Black creative mothers called Sibyls Shrine, which has received two years of support from the Heinz Endowments. Wormsley's newest project, *D.R.E.A.M. A Way to Afram*, with longtime collaborator Li Harris, was awarded a 2022 Guggenheim Fellowship. Awardee of the Sundance Interdisciplinary grant, Carol Brown Achievement award among others. Wormsley has an MFA in Film and Video from Bard College and currently is a Presidential Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University.

### **Saudade, by Liliane Laborde-Edozien**

Brazil, 2020, 15 min., US Premiere

For many Brazilians, saudade is a deep state of longing for the past. For Afro-Brazilians, an overused word adopts a new meaning—of grasping at a past that never was. *Saudade* traces a haunting undercurrent from the shores of Africa to Salvador, Bahia, Brazil's blackest state. *Saudade* follows three Baianos as they grapple with the collective phantom memory of Afro-Brazilian culture that is saudade. *Saudade* asks—is the unembodied sense a curse, or a gift?

**Liliane Laborde-Edozien** is a US-born French-Italian-Nigerian-Brazilian filmmaker and photographer whose work explores resilience, love, and collective memory. Her documentaries have picked up awards in the US and have been screened in major cities on four continents.

Previously, Liliane's films have explored defining love beyond language, escaping poverty and gang violence through sports, and most recently, collective memory within Brazil's African diaspora. She's drawn to stories that explore complicated human experiences and demonstrate our shared humanity.

### **The Prophetess, by Sylvie Weber**

Germany/Democratic Republic of Congo, 2018, 27 min.

A story of overcoming struggle through gumption and sisterhood in the eastern DR Congo. Furaha and Venantie have survived traumas we could never imagine, yet in each other they find strength. This strength, so great, empowers their entire female community to set out for a different future.

**Sylvie Weber** has told stories with vivid imagination since before she understood her own. Of German-Dominican descent, questions of belonging have been a driving force in her filmic exploration of humanity, its virtues and weaknesses. Her ability to seamlessly navigate between formats like narrative fiction, music video, documentary or commercials are fueled by a focus to amplify underrepresented voices and rework historical injustice. Weber's work begs us to shift our gaze by challenging our usual point of inquiry. "The Prophetess", her debut short, has won and traveled several film festivals around the world.

### **Soul on Fire, by Naomi Soquar**

USA, 2020, 3 min., Los Angeles Premiere

*Soul On Fire* is a brief, carefully curated film that serves as a visual essay, exploring themes of home, self-liberation and identity. The film questions the viewer to re-examine their preconceived notions of "home". Through archival clips of rituals, migration, worship, dance, and mourning, one can see how

collectivity is constantly forming and fracturing. This forming and fracturing positions people of African descent in a free-fall space while simultaneously facing pressure to exist in socially constructed identities. The film is constructed in dream sequences to raise questions about an individual's sense of self within and outside the collective.

**Naomi Soquar** is a writer whose work spans across digital archiving, experimental film, and critical cultural studies research to explore innovation and preserve memory work of the Black African diaspora. Specifically, she is interested in understanding the multiple ways new media imagines deterritorialize spaces for Black embodiment. She is a graduate from George Washington University. Her desire to synthesize and bridge significant scholarship in media studies, cultural studies, and innovation led her to design a major in Global New Media Studies. This interdisciplinary subject critically examines changing industries, cultures, and social trends from a diverse, intermedial perspective.

### **Circa, Sonya Mwambu**

Canada, 2020, 8 min. US Premiere

Using Spadina Museum as its visual and contextual backdrop, “circa” is a piece that reclaims the agency of Black identities and bodies in Toronto’s history. Now an empty space, what was once Spadina Museum offers a socially-loaded canvas to question the grey area between imagined and erased. The superimposition of imagined bodies rewrites their erased stories, they blend through the house’s shadows before regaining their individual identities when their faces meet the light. “circa” encourages a dialogue between present and past: as the filmmaker repaints the ghosts of the Austin’s family, the othered show us their eyes.

**Sonya Mwambu** is an experimental filmmaker and editor based in Toronto. Born in Kampala, they grew up in Canada and their work centres on the intersections of their identities through the exploration of race, language and the connections they find through their cultural identity and the experimentations of analog film. Mwambu holds a BFA in Film Production from York University.

Los Angeles Filmforum screenings are supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles, the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, and the California Community Foundation.. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming soon:

Oct 15 - Nov 5 Online - Shaving Feet: The Premonition of Black Female Experimental Filmmaking

Nov 5 – Colectivo los Ingávidos, at Whammy!

Nov 6 – Colectivo los Ingávidos, at 2220 Arts

Nov 20 – Lewis Klahr: Circumstantial Pleasures, at 2220 Arts

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