

LET THE
SONG
HOLD US

LET THE SONG HOLD US

24 March - 19 June 2022

FACT
88 Wood Street
Liverpool
L1 4DQ

OPENING TIMES
Wed - Sun / 11:00 - 18:00

For more information, visit fact.co.uk/song

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INTRODUCTION

From lullabies to the music of mourning, our lives are mapped by the songs we sing and the stories they tell. Whether collective choruses or intimate melodies, they have the power to develop and redefine our sense of belonging. Songs can feel deeply personal, but also remind us that we are part of something bigger. New generations remix these stories, and in doing so celebrate both the past and the future.

Let the Song Hold Us is a collection of new immersive artworks that reach between generations, and across geographic boundaries. The artists experiment with storytelling to consider how we might shape our own identities from the memories of those we have lost. Centred around song and music as a way to communicate ideas of family, hope, and belonging, the works reimagine the ways we create and share; what we inherit, and what we pass on. They represent both the daily rituals of our lives and the moments when we yearn for a deeper understanding of who we are.

This exhibition is part of *Radical Ancestry*, our current programme that looks at how our sense of belonging is shaped by the histories, geographies, biology and culture we inherit. Through a series of exhibitions, projects, artist residencies and events, the programme aims to question how technology can help us to explore a new way of thinking and experimenting with who we are.

The title for this exhibition is taken from an earlier artwork by Korakrit Arunanondchai: *There's a word I'm trying to remember from a feeling I'm about to have (let the song hold us)*.

KORAKRIT ARUNANONDCHAI & ALEX GVOJIC
ZINZI MINOTT
TESSA NORTON
LARISSA SANSOUR & SØREN LIND
EBUN SODIPO
RAE-YEN SONG

Fi Dem V - A Redemptive Song, 2022

Single-channel video with sound (17 mins), installation environment

Since 2018, artist and dancer Zinzi Minott (UK) has released a new version of her annual series *Fi Dem*. These moving-image works explore both the histories of the Windrush Generation, and broader histories and experiences of Blackness, migration, and living in the diaspora. Each iteration is a visual manifestation of a year lived: lives moved and moving. Within *Let the Song Hold Us*, we present the 2022 instalment: *Fi Dem V - A Redemptive Song*, developed in response to Liverpool.

Focusing on the city's Caribbean community, Minott explores Liverpool's history as a port and its part in the Atlantic slave trade, as well as amplifying the current struggles of Merseyside's Windrush community. Moments of dance, celebration and joy are contrasted and glitched with archival footage of the arrival of the Windrush generation, and discussion around the uncertain future of a community Caribbean Centre - highlighting the precarity perpetuated by political and civic systems in the UK.



Zinzi Minott, still from *Fi Dem V - A Redemptive Song* (2022). Courtesy the artist.

ZINZI MINOTT's work focuses on the relationship between dance, bodies and politics. Zinzi explores how dance is perceived through the prisms of race, queer culture, gender and class. She is specifically interested in the place of Black women's bodies within the form.

As a dancer and filmmaker, she seeks to complicate the boundaries of dance, seeing her live performance, filmic explorations and objects as different, but connected manifestations of dance and body based outcomes and inquiry.

Zinzi is interested in ideas of broken narrative, disturbed lineage, and how the use of the glitch can help us to consider notions of racism one experiences through the span of a Black life. She is specifically interested in telling Caribbean stories, highlighting the histories of those enslaved during the Atlantic slave trade and the resulting migration of the Windrush Generation.

Commissioned by FACT with funds from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council. With thanks to The Merseyside Caribbean Centre, and Windrush Pioneers Network, along with Zinzi Minott's family, friends and creative team.

LARISSA SANSOUR & SØREN LIND

As If No Misfortune Had Occurred in the Night, 2022

Three-channel video with surround sound (22 mins), installation environment

Larissa Sansour (Palestine/UK) and Søren Lind (Denmark/UK) have developed a new film installation featuring an Arabic-language opera, performed by Palestinian soprano Nour Darwish. Presented as a single aria, the opera revolves around loss, mourning and inherited trauma. In the film, a Palestinian mother mourns the loss of her daughter and the eternal succession of traumas passed on to future generations.

The composition fuses Palestinian and European musical pieces (*Al Ouf Mash'al* and *Kindertotenlieder*). *Al Ouf Mash'al* is an ever-evolving reflection of the Palestinian experience; its lyrics tell of disaster, exodus, and displacement. This is blended with an Arabic adaptation of Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*; an outpouring of sorrow after losing one's child.

Larissa and Søren's new arrangement uses these melancholic pieces to reflect on the effect of trauma on personal, collective and national identity, just as the piece explores the role of cultural ritual in the process of mourning and commemoration. The film poetically and musically laments a century of trauma, starting with the cataclysm of World War I which initiated a never-ending cycle of violence with dire consequences for the Palestinian reality, both for the region and wider international community.



Larissa Sansour & Søren Lind: still from *As If No Misfortune Had Occurred in the Night* (2022). Courtesy the artists.

LARISSA SANSOUR was born in East Jerusalem, Palestine, and studied fine arts in London, New York and Copenhagen. Her work is interdisciplinary, immersed in the current political dialogue and utilises video, photography, installation, the book form and the internet. Central to her work is the push and pull between fiction and reality. Recent solo exhibitions include Turku Art Museum in Finland, Photographic Center in Copenhagen, Galerie Anne de Villepoix in Paris, Kulturhuset in Stockholm, Lawrie Shabibi in Dubai, Sabrina Amrani in Madrid and DEPO in Istanbul.

SØREN LIND is an author, artist, director and scriptwriter, born in Denmark. With a background in philosophy, Søren wrote books on mind, language and understanding before turning to art, film and fiction. He has published novels and short story collections. His children's books are translated into several languages. Søren screens and exhibits his films at museums, galleries and film festivals worldwide. His

work with Larissa Sansour was shown at the Danish Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennial. Other recent venues and festivals include Copenhagen Contemporary (DK), MoMA (US), Barbican (UK), Nikolaj Kunsthal (DK), Berlinale (D), International Film Festival Rotterdam (NL) and BFI London Film Festival (UK).

Commissioned by FACT and co-produced with Bildmuseet at the University of Umeå. Supported with funds from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council.

Soprano: Nour Darwish
 Costume: Omar Nasser Khoury
 Composition: Anthony Sahyoun (based on Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and the Palestinian traditional song *Al Ouf Mash'al*)
 Additional lyrics: Søren Lind
 Translation: Carol Sansour & Leila Sansour
 Adapted to Arabic: Leila Sansour

KORAKRIT ARUNANONDCHAI & ALEX GVOJIC

Songs for living, 2021

Single-channel video with sound (21 mins), installation environment

Korakrit Arunanondchai's (Thailand/US) works bring together video, sculptures, and paintings with a form of storytelling that moves between reality and fiction. In *Songs for living*, a companion piece with his earlier film *Songs for dying*, the ghosts of our ancestors reconnect with life, in a desire to heal following personal loss and ecological upheaval. Through these works, Korakrit unfolds thoughts on the origin of the world, and its cycles of life and death, growth and decomposition.

Made in collaboration with cinematographer Alex Gvojic (US), *Songs for living* is a collage of visual languages and musical styles weaving together stories of grief, transformation, and spiritual power. Filmed mid-pandemic, mostly in a relatively abandoned New York, this abstract montage explores possible ways to move forward in the face of loss and grief: both personal and global.

Filled with rituals and scenes of consumption, the film's style references science fiction and horror (*The Crow*, *The Hunger Games*) as well as the Buddhist mythological bird-man *Garuda* that is part of the national symbols of Thailand. *Songs for living*'s rapid flow of images mirrors our sense of being overwhelmed by life's events. It seeks out the strength in feelings of collectivity, offering a twisted, fantastical hope for a different kind of future.

GALLERY 1 GROUND FLOOR



Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojic, still from *Songs for living* (2021). Courtesy of the artist, Bangkok CityCity Gallery, Bangkok, Carlos/Ishikawa, London, CLEAR IN G New York/Brussels, Kulkje Gallery, South Korea.

KORAKRIT ARUNANONDCHAI engages a myriad of subjects such as history, authenticity, self-representation, and tourism through the lens of a cultural transplant. Originally from Thailand, Korakrit now splits his time between Brooklyn and Bangkok. The artist's work seeks to find a common ground in artistic experiences through a pastiche of styles and mediums. He has had major solo exhibitions in the USA and Europe including Kunsthall Trondheim, Trondheim, Museu Serralves, Porto, Secession, Vienna, K11, Hong Kong, making his museum debut at MoMA PS1, New York in 2013. He's featured in major international biennials including Venice Biennale, Gwanju Biennale and Performa. He is also the organiser of GHOST festival of video and performance in Bangkok.

ALEX GVOJIC is a cinematographer based in New York. Alex focuses on the interdisciplinary crossing of art, fashion and music. His collaborations with other artists have been shown across museum and art

fair contexts, with recent exhibitions taking place in the Venice Biennale, Palais de Tokyo, and MoMA PS1. Gvojic's multimedia projects span from commercial video production (for the likes of Vouge, Vice and Warp Records), to environmental design installations.

Co-commissioned by the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst & Kunstverein Hamburg, and supported by FACT with funds from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council.

RAE-YEN SONG

≈≈aaaaaahmaaaaaa≈≈, 2022

Ceramics, drawings, stained glass with AR layer, sound (5 mins)

Rae-Yen Song (UK) works expansively across drawing, sculpture, costume, video, sound, performance and family collaboration to craft a personal visual landscape. Rae-Yen's practice is informed by autoethnographic exploration: a self-reflective process which places personal experience at the heart of an attempt to understand wider cultural meaning. In a new commission for FACT, the artist offers a glimpse into a world constructed from inherited memories of a distant maternal grandmother. Within the work, a congregation of images, voices and characters join together to form a sanctuary: at once a space of loss and growth, reflection and speculation.

At the heart of the installation sits a piece of stained glass, an allegory of a highly personal family story. Surrounded by a meditative choir of ceramic guardians, a series of drawings serve as a blueprint for the ritual observation of this story.

This snapshot is part of an ongoing archival project for Rae-Yen - a long-term exploration of self-mythology as survival tactic - which connects sculptural practice to the digital realm through a series of portals. The stained glass is one of these portals and can be activated using augmented reality (AR).

Scan the QR code in the gallery to active augmented reality.



Rae-Yen Song, ▷■●◁ (2021), Dundee Contemporary Arts. Photo: Ruth Clark. Courtesy of the artist.

RAE-YEN SONG is an artist based in Glasgow. Working expansively through drawing, sculpture, installation, costume, video, sound, performance, family collaboration and any other medium that becomes appropriate, Rae-Yen's practice explores the position of Other within our tangled reality, speaking broadly about foreignness, identity, and what it means to belong – or not.

Rae-Yen has been shortlisted for the 2022 Margaret Tait Award and has recently shown ▷■●◁, a solo exhibition at Dundee Contemporary Arts and *WORMB*, a duo exhibition at Quench Gallery, Margate.

Other selected projects include: *wūūwūūū*, a LUX Scotland moving image commission for BBC Scotland (2021); *Fabric of Society*, Glasgow International (2021); *songdynasty. life*, a nascent online archive, with videos commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival and Hunterian Art Gallery (2020 - ongoing); **may-may songuu**, a solo exhibition

at CFCCA, Manchester (2020); *Survey*, Jerwood Space, London (2018); *Human Rights Arts Festival*, JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo (2017). Recent residencies include with Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh (2019-21); Hospitalfield, Arbroath (2019); Sura Madura, Sri Lanka (2017).

Commissioned by FACT with funds from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council. With thanks to Michael Barr, Tessa Mackenzie and The Songs.

Following the Gourd, 2022

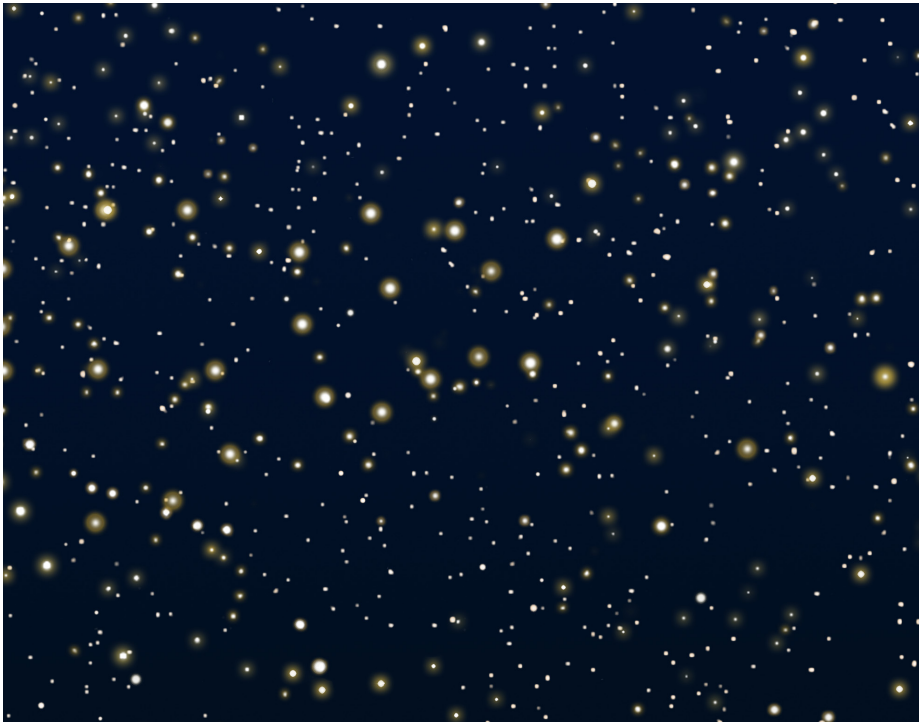
Interactive website, installation environment

Following the Gourd by Ebum Sodipo (UK) was developed in collaboration with young LGBTQ+ people online, led by a small group of Black trans people: The Cartographer's Committee. The work exists both as an online platform, and here as an installation. Taking its title from an African-American spiritual song of the same name, the work seeks to make Black trans voices heard and visible, through the building of an archive of stories and lived experience.

The original coded message within the song's lyrics allowed enslaved people to follow a safe path towards freedom: *"Well, where the great big river meets the little river, follow the drinkin' gourd"*. Referring to star maps and reading the night sky, Sodipo's work navigates the experiences of The Cartographer's Committee: the rituals they perform, the idols they follow, the things they possess, and the way these are shared with each other.

Together, these stories and digital artefacts act as a living archive of constellations: a collaborative proof of existence, community, and joy. As Ebum says, *"trans people of colour don't often have access to their history, and when they do, it's dark and full of pain. I want to bring a history that doesn't hurt, a history that heals"*.

Use the clicker to pan and zoom around the map to discover the hidden wisdom, or visit fact.co.uk/gourd to explore online.



Eburn Sodipo and The Cartographer's Committee, still from *Following the Gourd* (2022). Courtesy of the artist.

EBUN SODIPO is an artist based in London making work for those who will come after: the Black trans people of the future. Her interdisciplinary practice narrates her construction a Black trans-feminine self after slavery and colonialism. Through a process of fragmentation, collage, and fabulation, she devises softer, other ways of imagining and speaking about the body, desire, archives, and the past.

Commissioned by FACT as part of its Learning programme and in collaboration with VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow, Ireland. Funded by Artsformation, a European Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Produced with The Cartographer's Committee: Ana, Jolliff, Malia, Xavier Williams. Many thanks to GYRO, Hidayah UK, African Rainbow Family, Stonewall UK, Gendered Intelligence, and the D&D group at FACT. Website Developed by Florian Brueckner.

TESSA NORTON

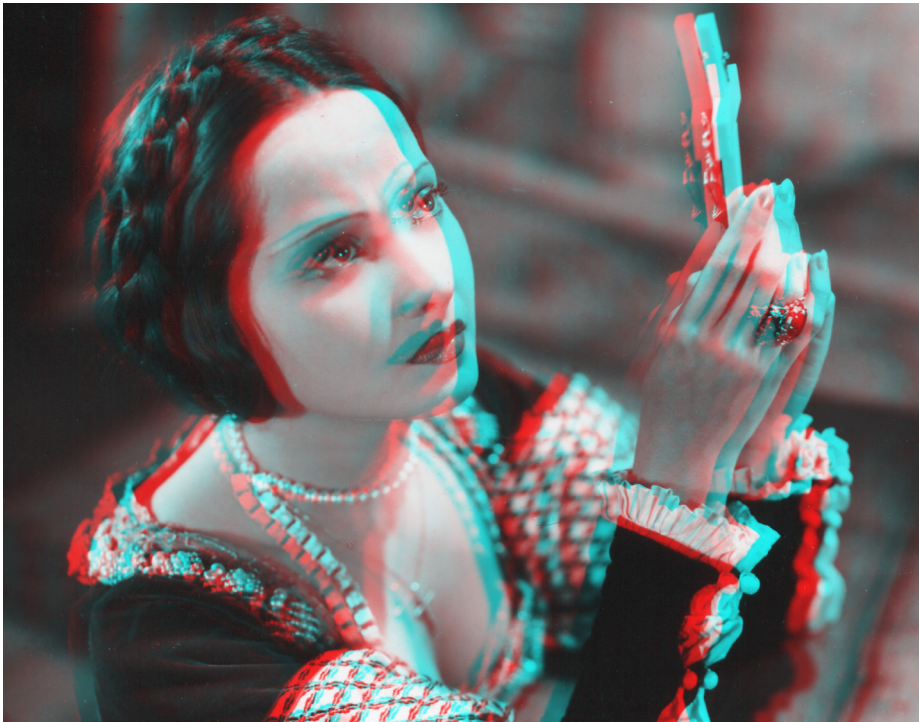
Dark Circles, 2022

Installation environment with text, sound, objects, two-channel video (20 mins)

Developed during her FACT artist residency, Tessa Norton presents a new multimedia installation exploring the ambiguity of Anglo-Indian identity; which, though a product of Empire, was marginalised within it. Tessa traces its contrasts and contradictions through the glamorous performances and fluid, ambiguous ethnicity of three Anglo-Indian actresses spanning the 'Golden Age' of Indian musical cinema and classic Hollywood.

Dark Circles explores the confusion and alienation inherent in the Anglo-Indian experience by drawing on the work of these female performers (Cuckoo Moray, Helen, and Merle Oberon) and their carefree movements. The work takes inspiration from music, song, and a culture of dances and social clubs where older generations described feeling a rare sense of belonging. It also explores the sometimes tense relationship between early cinema and feminine sexuality, which Anglo-Indian women were uniquely placed to attempt to negotiate. Bringing together archive film, costume, and a movie set-like installation, it references railway stations, waiting rooms, and a sense of being stuck somewhere 'in-between'.

An audio work of a new prose poem by Tessa is at the heart of the soundtrack, which draws on mixtape culture, from politically conscious American soul to classic rock's exoticisation of India. It is contrasted with field recordings of machinery and trains; the mechanical beat to which the empire ran.



Tessa Norton, still from *The Trouble with Dark Circles (A Mixtape)* (2021). Courtesy of the artist.

TESSA NORTON is an artist and writer based in West Yorkshire. Her work playfully explores cosmic and expansive worlds using unlikely theoretical frameworks like pop music, teen movies and ghost stories. Her publication *The Fields Here Are Full of Ghosts* was published by Wysing Polyphonic in 2019.

Her writing has appeared in various publications including *Tribune*, *The Wire* and *Burlington Contemporary*, and in exhibitions and events at *Rough Trade*, *Wysing Arts Centre*, *The Tetley*, *Liverpool Biennial*, *Flat Time House*, and more. She is co-editor, with Bob Stanley, of the book *Excavate: The Wonderful and Frightening World of The Fall* (Faber & Faber, 2021).

Commissioned by and developed in residency at FACT as part of the Jerwood Arts / FACT Digital Fellowship, supported by Jerwood Arts. Supported with funds from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council.

RELATED EVENTS

DO SOMETHING SATURDAYS WITH EBUN SODIPO

Sat 26 Mar, 10:00-12:00

Free, booking required

FACT

This special edition of our popular family workshop invites any family (and their allies!) who are part of the LGBTQ+ community to come along and meet Ebum to hear about the artwork she has created in collaboration with a group of young Trans people.

CURATOR TOURS

Sat 26 Mar, Sat 14 May, Sat 11 June,
15:00-16:00

Free, booking required

FACT

Join our team for a tour of *Let the Song Hold Us*. Take a closer look at each of the immersive artworks as we reveal the the research behind them, how they were made and the discuss the themes of the exhibition.

DO SOMETHING SATURDAYS

Sat 9 Apr, Sat 23 Apr, Sat 7 May, Sat
21 May, Sat 4 June, 10:00-12:00

Free, booking required

FACT

Take part in our family friendly activities designed for all ages. From hands-on making to high-tech VR experiences, these Saturday sessions will give your family a fun start to your weekend!



Do Something Saturday at FACT. Photo by Amina Bini.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT TOUR

Sat 9 Apr, 13:00-13:45

Free, booking required

FACT

Meet artists Rae-Yen Song and Tessa Norton as they unpack the themes and research behind their new artworks. Rae-Yen will discuss how mythology, family rituals and inherited memories are explored in the work whilst Tessa will discuss the ambiguity of Anglo-Indian identity and its contrasts and contradictions.

ZINZI MINOTT ARTIST Q&A

Thu 14 Apr, 18:30-20:00

Free, booking required

FACT

Join artist Zinzi Minott in conversation with Maitreyi Maheshwari, Head of Programme at FACT, as they discuss Zinzi's practice which explores the histories of the Windrush Generation and experiences of Blackness, migration and living in the diaspora.

To book onto any of our events, visit
fact.co.uk/whats-on



Zinzi Minott performing *IS IT IN IT* at SHS. Photo by Anne Tetzlaff



Larissa Sansour & Søren Lind: still from *As If No Misfortune Had Occurred in the Night* (2022).
Courtesy the artists.

SPECIAL EVENT

LARISSA SANSOUR & SØREN LIND LIVE PERFORMANCE

Tickets on sale soon

Venue to be announced

Larissa Sansour and Søren Lind present a special live performance of their new Arabic-language opera, *As If No Misfortune Had Occurred in the Night* (2022). Performed for an audience for the first time by Palestinian soprano Nour Darwish, you are invited to immerse yourself in an unforgettable live operatic experience.

Presented as a single aria, the opera poetically laments a century of Palestinian trauma, starting with the cataclysm of World War I. Nour Darwish's solo performance will envelop you as it is sung against the backdrop of the film created by Larissa and Søren.

Be the first to know when tickets go live by subscribing to our fortnightly newsletter fact.co.uk/newsletter

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