



Untitled (Unintelligible Yoruba prayer)
Performed by Raymond Pinto
Organized by Serubiri Moses

Friday, December 18, 2020, 7pm EST
participantafterdark.art

Video & Lighting Director: Glen Fogel
Production Manager & Camera: Jordan Strafer
Audio & Video Engineer: Lazar Bozic

Untitled (Unintelligible Yoruba prayer) combines research and performance – specifically drawing from archives and movement study – to enact processes of memory and commemoration around Black and sexually dissident experiences, past and present. The project takes two major figures, **Assotto Saint** (born Les Cayes, Haiti, 1957 – died, New York, US, 1994) and **Rotimi Fani-Kayode** (born Nigeria 1955 – died London, UK, 1989) as a starting point, and seeks to present an alternative art, literature, and performance history. The project is organized by **Serubiri Moses** and performed by **Raymond Pinto**, and includes research by both.

Assotto Saint and Rotimi Fani-Kayode were friends. They met in New York in the early 1980s. They exchanged letters, which have been archived at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. We know that Fani-Kayode photographed Saint, and that Saint went to London to perform an experimental theater work. Their friendship conjures meanings of solidarity across the Atlantic. The emphasis on Haitian Vodou, and Ifa Divination in each of their practices alerts us to their quotidian practice and wish for survival.

Research for this project, which started in 2019, primarily took place in New York, through the archives at the Schomburg Center, and through various libraries in the city such as the Library for the Performing Arts. It also included consultation with primary texts such as Saint's collection of poems *Stations* (1989) and Fani-Kayode's book of photographs *Black Male/White Male* (1988). The movement study was based on consultations with primary sources such as *Dances of Haiti* by Katherine Dunham, among others. Research on diasporic religion and sexuality included: Roberto Strongman's *Queering Black Atlantic Religions* (2019).

Specific figures of the 1980s gay and lesbian movement in New York have been elided by various historiographies of the time period. This alerts us to the necessity of commemoration in the present. However, a major question that is asked by South African art historian Ashraf Jamal is, "But, how to commemorate?" Avoiding a general commemoration of the '80s gay and lesbian movement with its official histories, the project pursues an artistic reflection rooted in contemporary art practices, establishing a space for memory. It aims at highlighting Saint and Fani-Kayode's distinct approaches to notions of Black diasporic spirituality as well as African spirituality in relation to sexual dissidence. It also aims at enacting the illegible and the non-linear.

Untitled (Unintelligible Yoruba prayer) follows the online event, *Shrine: DJ Set, Poetry Reading, and Public Discussion*, held in July 2020, which brought together curators and artists to celebrate Saint and Fani-Kayode. The speakers included: **Raymond Pinto, Pamela Sneed, Jaime Shearn Coan, and Kojo Abudu**, and the event was moderated by Serubiri Moses.

PARTICIPANT AFTER DARK is a virtual performance, screening, and event space launched by PARTICIPANT INC in October 2020. The site hosts artist projects commissioned specifically for the AFTER DARK web platform and remote viewing. PARTICIPANT invited artist **Glen Fogel** to design and develop AFTER DARK. Artists will work with Fogel through the Fall/Spring 2020-21 season, inhabiting the site and fully modifying it for their projects' specific needs. AFTER DARK is conceived of as a blank slate, removing as much institutional framework as possible. The site will only present current projects, and will often go 'dark' in between events.

Access: This performance will include open captioning

Image: Raymond Pinto, *Shrine*, 2020. Video still, digital video, color, sound, 4:7 min. [A close-cropped widescreen digital video image of the neck and shoulders of person seen from behind, slightly blurring and repeating against a black background.]

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