

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***Primordial Emanations, that which is brought forth follows the womb: a surrender to her luminous blackness***

A shared exhibition curated by Mahari Chabwera, featuring work by Adewale Alli, Hampton Boyer, Mahari Chabwera, Asa Jackson, Julianna Sidiqqi, and Nastassja E. Swift

**August 27 - October 4, 2020**

Extended Opening Reception: August 27, 2 - 7 p.m.



1708 Gallery is excited to present *Primordial Emanations, that which is brought forth follows the womb: a surrender to her luminous blackness*, a project curated by Mahari Chabwera, hosting the Contemporary Arts Network (CAN) and featuring work by Adewale Alli, Hampton Boyer, Mahari Chabwera, Asa Jackson, Julianna Sidiqqi, and Nastassja E. Swift.

In this shared exhibition, an entrance portal will open to a selection of recent paintings and sculptures by artists who are co-conspiring towards collective well-being, self-actualization, and self-fertilization. *Primordial Emanations, that which is brought forth follows the womb: a surrender to her luminous blackness* acts as both a Blacktism: a portal black through the beginning of us, and an initiation into the awareness that our inner reality creates our outer experience. This exhibition simulates a reentrance into the elemental womb. We left the placenta too soon.

*Primordial Emanations, that which is brought forth follows the womb: a surrender to her luminous blackness* emerged from a planned solo exhibition of new paintings and a ritual performance by Mahari Chabwera. As Chabwera's paintings are continually tracing black and moving forward in a journey of healing, self-revelation, respect and reparations, she decided to welcome the power of many with a project that demonstrates Blackness as the luminously mutable gift it is.

The works in this exhibition undo the oppressive sublimation and depression of Blackness. They radiate energy that sources and beholds the incomprehensible complexity of Black bodies, Black femininity, Black energy, Black mystery, Black celebration, Black adaptability, and the eternally creative Black reality. In this sensory and contemplative exhibition, a symbolic, vaginal-like passage protects, reveals, births, and cleanses the way for the exhibition itself. *Primordial Emanations, that which is brought forth follows the womb: a surrender to her luminous blackness* allows us reentry into a symbolic space of infinite creation. The birth portal must be pathed individually, rooting the inherent intention of the project to allow for a safe, socially distant viewing that will be moderated and paced organically.

Stationed in Newport News, Virginia, the Contemporary Arts Network (CAN) is a nexus of interconnectivity and development for a strong, enduring, harmonious arts community within the global art market. The CAN opened to the public on August 7, 2020, has maintained a residency program for the past several months, and has facilitated festivals, artist development exchanges, and exhibitions since 2015. While inhabiting 1708, this project and collaboration with our regional neighbor highlights the vital fertility in promoting interdependence between independent art spaces for collective empowerment.

As a soul-setting exercise leading up to this project, Chabwera has released *The Salt Eaters – Recitations*, a series of regenerative virtual readings to be listened to, held, and remembered. Past recitations can be listened to at 1708gallery.org. Additional programming will include online artist talks, exhibition walkthroughs, and other virtual events at 1708 and at the Contemporary Arts Network.

**For the duration of this exhibition, 1708 will maintain special open hours:**

Tu + Wed + Fri: 1-5 pm | Th: 1-7 pm | Sat: 1-4 pm

*Visitors are also able to make appointments to experience the exhibition.*

## Artist Biographies

### **Adewale Alli**

Adewale Alli is a Nigerian-American self taught visual artist based in Baltimore, Maryland. Alli's works explore the use of material in relation to the simple, yet powerful language of color. Through his work, Alli aims to bring to life the raw feelings and emotions reality creates, independent of reality itself. His art making process is influenced by his mental and emotional states that he expresses through color, form and texture.

### **Hampton Boyer**

Hampton Boyer is a self-taught abstract expressionist painter based in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Inspired by afro-futurism, Boyer uses historical references and context to create real world commentary in his simplistic, multimedia works. Boyer has completed multiple murals in the Hampton Roads region and beyond. Additionally, he has exhibited in a number of galleries and museums throughout Virginia, including but not limited to 670 Gallery, Brick Haus Gallery, Nobile and Amundsen, and the Virginia Museum of the Contemporary Arts. This month, Boyer will participate in a group show at Johansson Projects in Oakland, CA.

### **Mahari Chabwera**

Mahari is an artist and curator living and working between Newport News and Richmond, Virginia. Shortly after receiving her B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from VCU in 2017, she began cultivating communion rooted in black cosmic well-being. She's the 2019 - 2020 recipient of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Professional Fellowship, and the 2020 recipient of the Visual Arts Center Emerging Artist Award. Her practice is her salve; liberatory magic medicine making. To guide her work of spiritual maturation, she turns to the doctrine of Black Women writers like Tananarive Due, Alice Walker, Toni Cade Bambara, & Ntozake Shange. She is committed to self-fertilization and regeneration. She bears the weight of being well, well.

### **Asa Jackson**

Asa Jackson is a self-taught multidisciplinary artist based in Hampton Roads, Virginia. His work deals with anthropological, mythological, historical, and spiritual topics. Through the use of textiles from various

countries, cultures, and time periods, as well as clothing from his own experience, Jackson's compositions are anthropological studies, representing the lives of a myriad of people, their collective and individual stories, and their interactions. By sewing fabrics together, Jackson metaphorically mixes cultures, races, and genres of people into unified works of art.

### **Julianna Sidiqqi**

Julianna, a multimedia artist questions "how art matters" in a world wrought with controversy. Art, for her, is a transformative living experience. The interplay of art, symbols, and stigma is a composite of energy unleashed on society. Coming out of the darkness to experience the weight of light for many is a negation of "blackness." The nature of Anti Art inspires her to go beyond the acceptable, to look at the distorted, the broken to deconstruct the layers of an assumed aesthetic. Julianna ennobles the created as a product of the creator's own energy. Art gives Julianna agency to view and interpret the world through her own eyes. Her freedom lies in the mysterious realms of darkness, unrestricted by others' interpretation. This storyteller and visual artist emerged in collaborative exhibits at 670 Gallery in Hampton, Virginia, the Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA, Elixir Sensory Art Gallery in Hampton, Virginia, in public Murals in Newport News, Virginia, Hampton City Schools, and the Virginia Library System. She curated sensory experiences at Elixir Sensory Gallery from 2016 until 2018. She resides in Hampton, Virginia.

### **Nastassja E. Swift**

Nastassja E. Swift is a visual artist holding a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from Virginia Commonwealth University, and currently lives and works in Virginia. She is the owner and artist of D for Dolls, an online collection of handmade needle felted figures. Along with being a doll maker, she works with fiber, audio, performance, and film within her studio practice. Her short film, and first collaborative performance, "Remembering Her Homecoming," premiered at the Afrikana Independent Film Festival in Fall 2019, and screened at the Virginia Film Festival in Charlottesville and Current Art Fair in Richmond. Nastassja is the recent recipient of a Virginia Commission of the Arts Fellowship in Craft for the 2020 cycle. Her work is permanently displayed at The Colored Girls Museum in Philadelphia and currently at The Contemporary Arts Network gallery, Eleanor and Hopps, in Newport News, Virginia, where she is an artist in residence for the First Patrons Initiative. She has participated in several national and international residencies and exhibitions, including her first solo exhibit in Doha, Qatar in 2016, an exhibition at the Urban Institute of Contemporary Art in Michigan, satellite programs with 1708 Gallery, Quirk Gallery's Charlottesville location, and fellowships at the Vermont Studio Center and MASS MoCA.

This project was generously supported by Sherwin Williams in Carytown, Richmond. Special thanks to Joshua McMahan.

For more information, please visit [www.1708gallery.org](http://www.1708gallery.org).

Image: *Dadme la muerte que me falta*, Mahari Chabwera, paint and cowries on canvas, 2020. Photo courtesy of the artist.

1708 Gallery's 2020-2021 exhibition season is generously supported in part by the Allan and Margot Blank Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Virginia Commission for the Arts, Nupa Agarwal and Amit Acharye, Shelley and Richard Birnbaum, Sally Brown, Sara Burgess, Shannon Castleman, Sarah Eckhardt, Suzanna Fields and Rick Douglas, Mary Fleming, Kate Fowler, Kathryn Henry-Choisser, Steve and Wendy Humble, Karen and Patrick Kelly, Sandy and Hyen Kjerulf, Michael Lease, Haley and Matt McLaren, Lucy Meade, Kerry Mills, Samford and Leslie Mirling, Valerie Molnar and Yogi Singh, Julia Monroe, Pam and Bill Royall, John Ryan and Wesley Chenault, Gordon Stettinius, Leigh Suggs, Danuta Syska, Michael Taylor and Sara Powers, Marcia and Harry Thalheimer, Deborah and Thomas Valentine, Erin White and Courtne Wolfgang, and Caroline and Richard Wright.