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CONTACT: Park C. Myers, Curator

804.643.1708 or pmyers@1708gallery.org

Massa Lemu, He Who Gave Us Teeth Should Give You Art to See: A Patois Bourgeois P.arty Manifesto

October 26 - December 8, 2018

Richmond-1708 Gallery exuberantly welcomes *He Who Gave Us Teeth Should Give You Art to See: A Patois Bourgeois P.arty Manifesto*, an exhibition by Massa Lemu!

It is election season in Lemu's home country, Malawi. This is the time when the elites, whom Lemu calls the patois bourgeoisie, finally descend from their ivory towers and get busy in the dirt in campaigns for the people's votes. The incumbents in power seek to renew their tenure, while other aspirants fight for their turn. All available resources are mobilized to secure victory. This is a time of banners, slogans, promises, visions, and secret vows. It is also a time of colors, gifts, dust, pomp, and masquerade. Like in any election season, there is creativity, magic, genius, and beauty. There is also trickery, deception, desperation, and coercion. It is a season of gambles, odd alliances, sweetness, and light. It is also a season of bitter disappointment, betrayal, and disillusionment. In short, it is the year of the dupe! Everyone participates in the jamboree. Lemu, who is missing out, wants to join in the fun and has founded his own party, promising wonders in absentia, The Patois Bourgeois P.arty (PBP)!



He Who Gave Us Teeth Should Give You Art to See: A Patois Bourgeois P.arty Manifesto will simulate a postcolonial election campaign platform for the Patois Bourgeois P.arty. Extending from his project "Patois Bourgeois Minor Portraits" the title plays with the words 'petty' and 'patois'; the label alludes to the idea of the postcolonial bourgeoisie as a hybrid product of Western and African values. The installation is comprised of the requisite, preposterous, and necessary accoutrements of the political promotional performance. Grandiose and absurd sculptural elements critique the vulnerable persona of the political elite. As an activity of decolonization, Lemu both ratifies and undermines the already unstable election process. *He Who Gave Us Teeth Should Give You Art to See: A Patois Bourgeois P.arty Manifesto* is a spectacle of entanglement! Lemu is taking part of the excess and derision that is the postcolonial election -he is joining the party in Malawi from afar.

As part of the exhibition program a text will be released by Park C. Myers and Massa Lemu.

Massa Lemu is a Malawian artist and writer whose multi-disciplinary practice features text, performance and installations. Lemu is currently assistant professor of sculpture in the Department of Sculpture and Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

The Opening Reception will be held on Friday, October 26, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

He Who Gave Us Teeth Should Give You Art to See: A Patois Bourgeois Party Manifesto made possible by Sherwin-Williams.

For more information, please visit www.1708gallery.org.

IMAGE CREDIT: Massa Lemu and Chino Amobi

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