

Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE
LIBITA CLAYTON
QUANTUM GHOST
6 July to 8 September 2019
Preview: Friday 5 July, 6–9pm



Spike Island presents *Quantum Ghost*, a major new commission by Bristol-based artist and Spike Island studio holder Libita Clayton.

Comprising an immersive sound installation, a series of large-scale photograms and a programme of live performances, *Quantum Ghost* maps a journey through archives and territories related to the artist's heritage.

Digging deep into personal documents and oral histories, the exhibition unearths the subterranean histories and political undercurrents connecting the mining regions of Namibia and Cornwall. From mined ores and sedimentary rocks to precious metals and rare earths, it examines the raw materials at the core of capitalist extraction, revealing how the echoes of colonialism and diasporic migration reverberate through the deep-time of geology. It also reconstructs the paper trail left by the artist's late father, a member of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation, the political mass movement that fought for Namibia's liberation from Apartheid South Africa) who went into exile in the 1980s and studied mining engineering in Cornwall.

The project began with Clayton's residency at Gasworks in London during the summer of 2018, followed by research trips to Cornwall, Namibia and South Africa. During these trips she accessed various public archives, including the photographic records of the Camborne School of Mines in Cornwall, and the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle (AACRLS), held within the National Archives of Namibia. Clayton collected field recordings in places that are intimately bound with her family history, such as the Cornish tin mines and iron-ore heaps in Penwith



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(not far from where she grew up), and the pink salt lakes and uranium mines near Walvis Bay, Namibia.

Samples of these field recordings form part of the multi-channel audio installation (2019, 21 minutes), which was conceived as an exercise in sonic archaeology. In this work, Clayton summons a polyphony of ancestral voices in the form of a lament, while also exploring the unheard sounds of a mineral landscape haunted by the ghosts of colonialism and extraction. The often-inaudible rhythms of geological phenomena (from slow-moving magma to mineral growth and the radioactive decay of uranium into lead) resonate with the violent flows of natural resources and human bodies across history. Made through a shared process of collecting and looping, collaging and re-assembling a sonic archive in-the-making, the work was developed in collaboration with artists and musicians Demelza Toy Toy, Jol Thomson and Hannah Catherine Jones, and features contributions from Perivi Katjavivi and Memory Biwa.

Image: Libita Clayton *Quantum Ghost* (2019) Installation view, Gasworks, London. Commissioned and produced by Gasworks. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Andy Keate

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For further information and high-resolution images please contact Jane Faram, Communications Manager at Spike Island on jane.faram@spikeisland.org.uk or +44 (0)117 9292266.

Notes for editors:

- *Quantum Ghost* was commissioned and produced by Gasworks, London through the Freelands Gasworks Partnership. Supported by Freelands Foundation and Arts Council England.
- Libita Clayton is a British-Namibian artist who works across sound and performance. She also organises workshops and discursive events developed in partnership with DIY organisations, broadcasters and publishers. Recent exhibitions and performances include: *4717*, RCA/LUX, Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art, London; *Memento Mori*, Kalashnikovv 3.0, Johannesburg (all 2018); *DEBUNK*, Arnolfini, Bristol; *History Lessons: Fluid Records*, South London Gallery/Iniva, London; *Going Along Without a Body*, Iklectik, London; *Lexis Over Land—Towards a Feminist Geography*, Tremenhore Sculpture Gallery, Cornwall (all 2017). Her work was included in the Diaspora Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale, 2017.
- Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art and design, located close to Bristol's harbourside. It is a place where artists and the public can meet, enabling audiences to engage with artists' research and production. Within the 80,000 square foot building, Spike Island offers visitors a year-round programme of exhibitions, events and activities in the central gallery spaces, as well as providing working space for artists, designers and creative businesses.
- Spike Island is a partner of Tate as part of the Plus Tate network.
- The gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm. Entrance is free.



G A S W O R K S



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