

Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE



ADAM KHALIL AND BAYLEY SWEITZER WITH OBA
NOSFERASTA
5 February to 8 May 2022

Spike Island presents *Nosferasta*, a new commission by Adam Khalil and Bayley Sweitzer in collaboration with Oba.

Nosferasta is the first iteration of a Rastafarian vampire film project starring and co-written by Oba, a Trinidadian artist and musician based in Brooklyn. The film reimagines Oba's origin story; a nightmarish chronicle of colonial encounters dating back to 1492. Having been shipped as cargo from West Africa to the Caribbean, Oba is seduced and bitten by the vampire Christopher Columbus, ensuring an undying allegiance to the colonial project. Together this unlikely duo spread vampirism across the Western Hemisphere, pulling the strings of 'New World' geopolitics until Oba encounters Rastafarianism, an anticolonial religion, which, with a little help from the Devil's lettuce, enables him to finally break Columbus' spell.

The film combines cinematic period scenes with unscripted vignettes of Oba's post-vampiric, present-day existence. These portray his real-life struggles with the colonial bureaucracy that he helped devise, including his pursuit of U.S. citizenship and literacy. Flitting between film forms, timelines, locations and perspectives, *Nosferasta* tells the story of an ageing Rastafarian vampire reckoning with the impact of colonialism. It examines the guilt surrounding his complicity in imperial conquest, while acknowledging the extreme difficulty of unlearning centuries of vampiric conditioning. Ultimately, the film tackles an uncomfortable question: *How can you decolonise yourself, if it's in your blood?*

Watching over the exhibition space is a votive demon sculpture made by Oba, which whispers a timeline of the major events in



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vampire history that have shaped colonial modernity to this day. An upright, coffin-like form, its gory painted exterior depicts a vampire after a recent bite, dripping blood and bedecked with shells, crystals, jewels and sequins. Elsewhere in the gallery are a series of colourful hand-painted and stencilled t-shirts, also made by Oba, which reference key themes, phrases and iconography from the *Nosferasta* project.

– Ends –

Image: Adam Khalil and Bayley Sweitzer, *Nosferasta* (2021). Film still. Courtesy of the artists. Commissioned by Gasworks, London and Spike Island, Bristol

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

- **ADAM KHALIL AND BAYLEY SWEITZER**
Adam Khalil is an artist and filmmaker from the Ojibway tribe; and Bayley Sweitzer is a filmmaker from Southern Vermont. Khalil and Sweitzer's acclaimed debut feature film, *Empty Metal* (2018), is a science-fiction political thriller set against a backdrop of racialised police brutality and mass surveillance, delving into anti-colonial politics by weaving together indigenous histories and speculative imagination with a subcultural sensibility. Recent screenings include the Museum of Modern Art (2016), Anthology Film Archives (2019), and e-flux (2018) in New York; the Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis (2019); LACMA, Los Angeles (2019) and Tate Modern, London (2019). Their works have also featured at the Whitney Biennial, Toronto Biennial (both 2019) and Sundance Film Festival (2018).
- **OBA**
Oba is a multi-disciplinary artist, chef and actor born in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. His paintings, sculptures and t-shirts have been featured at Motel Gallery and Rumpelstiltskin, Brooklyn. He was lead singer of the avant-noise supergroup Dead Companionship from 2016-2018. He starred as King Alpha in Adam Khalil and Bayley Sweitzer's 2018 film *Empty Metal*. Oba's world-class corn soup has been slurped at the legendary Club Temptation in Flatbush, as well as fine establishments across the world.
- **NOSFERASTA: THE BOOK**
The exhibition is accompanied by a book that explores the ever-expanding vampiric universe of *Nosferasta*. Interspersed with excerpts from Oba's diaries, the book includes critical essays, speculative fiction and visual contributions from Peggy Ahwesh, Lou Cornum, Alex Esco, Sabel Gavaldon, Adam Khalil, Mutabaruka, Oba, Austin



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Sley Julian, Bayley Sweitzer, and Laura Vallés. Designed by fag tips (aka Virgil b/g Taylor).

- PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Nosferasta is commissioned and produced by Spike Island, Bristol and Gasworks, London, and is part of the European Cooperation project *4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, co-funded by Creative Europe and the Royal College of Art. The film is also supported by Creative Capital and Cinereach.

- ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND

Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.

Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.
www.spikeisland.org.uk

G A S W O R K S



4Cs - From Conflict to Conviviality
through Creativity and Culture



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