

New, Site-Responsive Commissions by Dineo Seshee Bopape Debut at ICA at VCU in June 2020

Tracing the Routes and Legacies of the Slave Trade between West Africa and the U.S., Exhibition Features Multimedia Work Connecting Richmond, New Orleans, Senegal, and Ghana

Richmond, VA – February 20, 2020 – This June, South African multimedia artist Dineo Seshee Bopape will present a suite of new, ICA-commissioned work at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University (ICA at VCU) in Richmond, Virginia. Focusing on sites that were involved in the transatlantic slave trade, Bopape’s exhibition deploys newly created film, sculpture, installation, and animation to connect histories of slavery, trauma, and memory across four places: Richmond, New Orleans, Senegal, and Ghana. Merging the artist’s interests in soil and architecture, the exhibition mines the natural and built environments in all four sites to explore the legacies of pain, spiritualism, resistance, and rebellion held within each. The exhibition will be on view at the ICA from June 26, 2020 through September 13, 2020.

“The ICA is delighted to support the creation of new work by talented artists like Dineo Seshee Bopape, especially work that offers a creative lens into our own local context as Dineo’s so insightfully does,” said Dominic Willsdon, executive director of the ICA. “Dineo’s project is steeped in Richmond’s local history—and confronts head-on the most challenging aspects of that history—while also zooming out to reveal more global connections that bridge disparate places, times, and cultures.”

Celebrated for her research-intensive explorations of place, history, and spirituality, Bopape—who co-represented South Africa at the 2019 Venice Biennale and has won the Future Generation Art Prize and the Sharjah Biennial Art prize, among other accolades—often roots her work in the material and metaphysical qualities of earthly elements like soil, clay, and dust. She continues this practice in her ICA exhibition, gathering clay and soil samples from four sites chosen for their locations as former slave routes or ports of slavery-related commerce—Richmond, New Orleans, Senegal, and Ghana—and incorporating them into each of her new works. Harnessing raw material and video footage from each of these places, Bopape explores their parallel histories and the interconnectedness of land, water, and body as sites of both trauma and commemoration.

Bopape is creating an entirely new body of ICA-commissioned work for this exhibition, including a video that animates 800 drawings of waterscape imagery created using clay collected from the four sites. The exhibition will also include a large-scale sculpture and additional media works that further probe the connections between these places and their relationships to slavery and colonialism.

“Dineo’s work offers both a reckoning and reprieve from some of history’s most brutal events. Her practice is not only material, it’s also spiritual—and it’s this sense of mysticism that Dineo employs to transform natural elements into objects and images imbued with intention and purpose,” said exhibition

curator Amber Esseiva, Associate Curator at the ICA. “From magic to rebellion, Dineo’s work moves audiences to consider the power of ritual and resistance and in doing so she produces installations that honor our ancestors who endured and defied the brutality of slavery and colonialization.”

About Dineo Seshee Bopape

Dineo Seshee Bopape (b. 1981, Polokwane, South Africa) lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Solo exhibitions of Bopape’s work have been presented at Art in General, New York (2016); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2016); Hayward Gallery Project Space, London (2015); and August House, Johannesburg (2014), among others. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at SFMOMA (2019); Sharjah Biennial 13 (2017); Marrakech Biennale (2016); Montreal Biennale (2016); São Paulo Biennale (2016); SeMa Biennale Mediacity Seoul (2016); Tate Modern, London (2015); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2015); Tropen Museum, Amsterdam (2014); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, U.S. (2014); Lyon Biennale, France (2013); Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town (2010); and the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2009).

Bopape’s awards include the Sharjah Biennial Prize (2017), Future Generation Art Prize (2017), Sam Art Award (2015) and Columbia University Toby Fund Award (2010). She has also participated in residencies at Hospitalfield House, Arbroath, Scotland (2015); NIROX Foundation, Krugersdorp, South Africa (2013); Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, U.S. (2011); Fountainhead Residency, Miami (2011); and Sommer Akademie, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland (2011).

She received a National Diploma in Fine Arts (2003) and a Bachelor of Technology in Fine Arts (2004) from the Durban University of Technology, South Africa and an MFA from the School of the Arts, Columbia University, New York (2010).

About the Institute for Contemporary Art

The Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University is a non-collecting institution that showcases a fresh slate of changing exhibitions and programs. The ICA is a place to explore new ideas, providing an open forum for dialogue and collaboration across the region and the world. Mirroring the increasing emphasis on cross-disciplinary studies across VCU, the ICA has created a new environment for artists and scholars from around the world to test ideas. As a university-wide resource, the ICA links campus, community, and contemporary artists by supporting local creative communities, engaging an international network of contemporary artists and organizations, and encouraging collaborations with VCU departments, faculty, students, and the Richmond community. The ICA is a responsive institution that offers a broad range of artistic perspectives from across the world, with the goal of questioning assumptions and encouraging critical discourse. For more information on the ICA, please visit icavcu.org.

About VCU and VCU School of the Arts

VCU is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in

217 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences, and humanities. One of the nation's leading schools of arts and design, VCU School of the Arts offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research, and pedagogical practice. Distinguished faculty members are internationally recognized in their respective fields, contribute significantly to the stature of VCU, and are committed to mentoring the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, scholars, and engaged citizens of diverse communities around the world. Its campus in Qatar provides students and faculty with a direct tie to the Middle East and underscores the school and university's commitment to global education and experience.

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