



InfiniteBody

art and creative consciousness by Eva Yaa Asantewaa

Friday, April 20, 2018

This Black Earth: jumatatu m. poe at GIBNEY



jumatatu m. poe
(photo courtesy of the artist)

Inspired by the hot brown granules in both desert dirt and beach sand, terrestrial is an examination of humans as earth and Black humans as having a long, continuing terrestrial history that far precedes—and will outlive—the past five centuries of white supremacy's specific oppressions. From beneath packed ground, vocal composition and choreography are unearthed to magnify the epic truths/fantasies/memories/dreams underneath the hot brown skin tones of the performers.

—from promotion for *terrestrial*, a work by jumatatu m. poe

Curated by dance artist [Marya Wethers](#), *Gathering Place: Black Queer Land(ing)* continues at the Lab at GIBNEY this week with, *terrestrial*, a three-hour performance installation by [jumatatu m. poe](#). Between 6pm and 9pm, audience members may come and go throughout the performance, but the door only opens for these transitions at 15-minute intervals. The Lab is also known as Studio A, the lobby-level sliver of space in which GIBNEY has often programmed intimate performances. Capacity is quite limited, and most seating is floorbound around the perimeter with just a few chairs available.

terrestrial's floor is covered in rumpled cloth that can slip under dancers' bare feet—and your feet, too, as you approach or leave your spot; take care. Once, I saw poe deftly catch and right his balance; at another moment, dancer [Samantha Speis](#) deliberately played with that slipperiness. This shifting surface is, I think, important to one's experience and understanding. A changing terrain can be treacherous and/or an opportunity to be shaped by one's intelligence and desire.

In any case, the mobile cloth is a marvelous sculptural element in poe's installation. Embedded in it are five round mounds of what appears to be rock salt the light olive-green of peridots, gemstones associated with ancient Egypt, the strength of the Sun and the banishment of toxicity. Interestingly, while I was there at least, none of the dancers' or viewers' movements disturbed these carefully-tended mounds. Even when Speis briefly rested her hands atop one hillock's curve, only a few crystals escaped

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Paul Hamilton in a new work by Oren Barnoy (photo: Scott Shaw) You'll find the name of the new trio by choreographer Oren Barnoy ...



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their circle.

poe, Speis and Brazilian vocalist **Rodrigo Jerônimo**--who also moves while the other two also often vocalize--perform essentially naked except for scanty, clear plastic wrappings. The wrap around poe's neck rustles as he moves and quickly brings to mind the situation of a creature stuck in a discarded shopping bag.

For the most part, the three did not directly interact--at least, during the time I watched--as they trod and plodded along individual pathways. Their often restrained, internalized, localized movements betrayed a condition of being limited in available space, though occasionally fighting that limitation (Speis's sudden agitation, arms and long dreadlocks flying, for instance). Their eyes looked sightless and strange; red contact lenses?

Their voices expressed bodily experience with gruff, primal directness, but they did not "speak" to or with one another. Land masses unto themselves, then?

In one passage, as performers curled up on the floor, maybe dreaming what would come next, the space erupted in an extended crescendo of Black vocalists--most, perhaps not all, women. The editing here is incredible, as if rapidly switching among a host of radio channels to capture dozens of these voices trilling, soaring, swooping, ululating and keening, each caught at the choice moment. (And, yeah, some of you might play a mental game of "Name That Tune.") There's no specific credit given for this brilliant, spine-tingling collage; I'm assuming that poe created it. **Tayarisha Poe** is credited with the elusive, splintered video design, and **Asami Morita** contributed delicate, alluring light effects.

One final note about this GIBNEY presentation:

While poe granted permission for *terrestrial* to be reviewed, he does not consider it to be a finished piece but, rather, an ongoing process of discovery.

terrestrial continues tonight, starting at 6pm, and will conclude tomorrow, Saturday, also starting at 6pm. Tomorrow's performance will be preceded by a 4:30 talk. For Friday ticket information, click [here](#). Advance tickets for Saturday are sold out; for wait list information, click [here](#).

Gathering Place: Black Queer Land(ing) concludes with performances by [I Moving Lab](#) (Apr 26--28). For information and tickets, click [here](#).

GIBNEY

280 Broadway (enter at 53A Chambers Street), Manhattan
Subways: 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall; N/R/W to City Hall; 2/3 to Park Place



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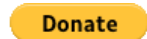
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