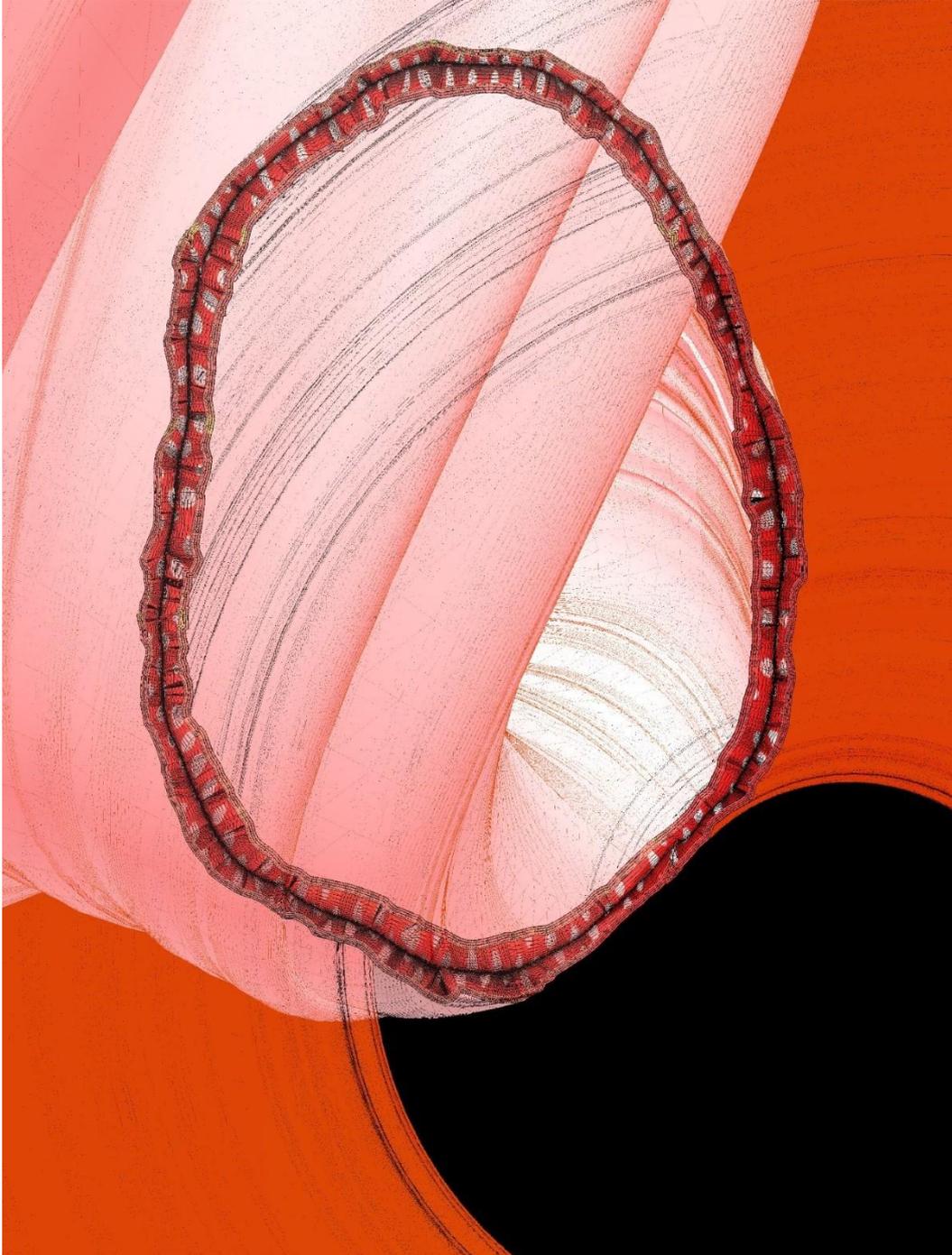


Open Call Showcase

Lola de la Mata





INTRODUCTION

NULLA 0, a monolith is a sound art project developed through conversations with 9 participants on their English speaking voices who identify across non-binary, womxn and women (cis/trans), and were either born in London or moved to the city for a duration of time.

The project is about agency- amplifying voices that are often othered while sharing narratives which have typically been omitted from our collective histories. Together, we challenge the word 'neutral' - a term regularly associated with whiteness, middle class and binary voices, casually employed to flatly describe the voices of AI personal assistants who maintain their coded interactions in a master/slave role play. Initially meant as a series of in-person group workshops, the pandemic changed the landscape of the project by shifting our discussions onto a digital platform. Here, we met as two strangers launching into an incredibly intimate and vulnerable subject - the voice. The rawness of these exchanges however, are full of laughter and openness, full of individuality and considered thought.

These 1:1 conversations focused on how the participants experienced their own voices intersecting with gender, race and class, while equally considering the disembodied voice as a sonic mask, one that rewrites the inner voice as an alternate persona in the mind of the one who hears it. Following the first exchange, we met once more, this time collectively and anonymously with just our voices to define us to questioned the notion of a 'common voice', and attempted to write a manifesto which could hold and celebrate our difference.

As it evolved *NULLA 0, a monolith* became a rich collaborative oral archive which resulted in a publication - a record and artefact of our otherwise ephemeral assembly, accompanied by a sonic composition from our conversations, fusing narratives and highlighting 'bad' sounds in the audio such as pops, clicks, reverb, hiss and silence.

The composition is diffused amongst photographic textile pieces inspired by mouths, tubes, saliva and skin alongside the publication. Commanding our attention in the centre of the space is a oversized C-mouth shaper, a sculptural work made in collaboration with artist Grace Woodcock, summoning soft and wet inner mouth forms and vocal cords, explicitly brought into our dimension using suedette, silicone, bolts, foam padding and perspex. Alongside this giant are three smaller works. One with biomorphic blown glass spheres held within an a cushioned table shaped like an open mouth is reminiscent of the scene in *My Fair Lady* where Professor Higgins forces elocution lessons on Eliza Doolittle (Eliza also being the given name of a MIT computer intelligence in the 60s after the same play, *Pygmalion*) by placing marbles in her mouth - essentially gagging her and preventing her from sounding like herself. The second is more abstractly a blown glass object inspired by a trachea and the third, a table for the publication surrounded by macro skin and held up by a Uvula.

Project collaborators

Publication - Samantha Whetton, Design. Print. Bind.

Preface - Lola Olufemi

Sculptor - Grace Woodcock

Glass Blower - Jahday Ford

Participants

Adèle Morand / Geaola Oluwakemi Adeyemi / Sven Ironside / Jasmin Kent Rodgman / Ruari Paterson-Achenbach / Kendall Perry / Shannon Latoyah / Joanna M Ward / Hannah Doucet



Chisara Agor

You Are There And Not There

by Chisara Agor

You Are There And Not There is an inter-disciplinary project that combines visual art, music and performance. It is an exploration into what it means to be seen and unseen and how we may choose to move in the world, with some of us existing somewhere in-between imminence and transcendence. This middle state reminds us that our existence is a participation in both, a reminder of our constant existential metamorphosis and our relation to reality and selfhood. Using recordings from short interviews with members of the public in Peckham, visual art and drawings inspired from those interactions and a performance exploring anonymity. This project touches on ideas of otherness, recognition, existentialism and the way our history informs our present, as one of the artists' participants had said in response: "Sometimes you are there and not there."

Project breakdown

Print Collage [1.5m x 3m]

3 mixed media collages hang from the ceiling, creating a backdrop for both the sound and performance piece. Linking together images created by the artist and quotes taken from the interviewees, the fabric pieces intend create connections between the physical and the surreal. Illustrating how humans can find themselves at once a person in a space and reflection of someone else's or societies desires.

Audio piece [6 mins]

Created from interviews taken place one day in March 2019 Chisara Agor asks members of the public on Peckham High Street about one point in their lives where they felt Seen and Unseen. The answers ranging from the everyday city experience to notions of race, class and metaphysics sit within a musical pallet that uses these voices as instruments of their own right.

Anonymous Performance piece [10 mins]

A live reimagined performance of Chisara's *Anonymous* a track made through using the recorded elements from the audio piece *You Are There And Not There*. Live instrumentation, looping and manipulation and vocal melodies the piece is built and deconstructed in front of a live audience.

Artist Film [tbc]

An experimental short directed and performed by Chisara Agor that seeks to create a physical manifestation of the themes explored in *You Are There* [...] By undergoing mask making and wearing the artist intends to explore ideas of ancestral recall through Afrodiasporic pre-colonial religions and gender fluid/ non-binary performance art through movement, film and poetry.

Image [1]

Chisara Agor, Headpiece and costume by Chisara Agor. "Maybe Others become mirrors because the vanity of the rulers require them to see themselves in every surface. For some to be invisible is to effect change in



the unseen, maleficent or not. An invisible cloak renders the wearer an omnipresent shadow free to construct their own reality" Chisara Agor

Image [2]

Same as above

Image [3] excerpt from drawing from fabric hanging by Chisara Agor

Anna Pool

"The Open Call theme of metamorphosis has proven to be prophetic, with the pandemic changing life as we knew it since launching Open Call in early 2020. Reflecting on this theme, how are you adapting to the crisis and how will the work have changed since conception when you present it at Rich Mix in July 2021?"

On the surface, everything about my piece has changed.

As the world shut down, so did many possibilities for archival research into the historic communities of Spitalfields, the site visits, the interview workshops which would form its structure and words. There could be no rehearsals, no schedules, no religious services, yoga classes or running clubs, all of which were essential to this piece; some of the links I'd hoped to establish would never be established as emails and calls were left, understandably, unanswered in the black pit of furlough. What was meant to become a mass gathering with a choir of 30 and an audience of 100 who would stand closely together and, wait for it, *talk to each other* as part of the performance, has shrunk into a duet between a singer (me!) and cellist, Maddie Cutter, helped along by a pair of loop pedals and audio segments.

On the surface, everything has changed.

But that doesn't mean that everything is lost. Large-scale interview workshops turned into an online questionnaire meaning I am armed with a Dropbox full of beautiful words written by members of Starling Arts and many individual East London residents. I still got a few in person (ish) Zoom interviews with members of the brilliant FEAST Tower Hamlets. From the deeply sacred routines of Ramadan to the transformative power of singing, I have the lovely problem of choosing which tiny fragments of text to use from a wealth of material shared. The decision to work with loop pedals, in itself an exciting metamorphosis of my performing and composing, has both profoundly changed the work and allowed me to emphasize a particular strand of my original pitch from 2019. I wanted to celebrate different belief systems, but also find the places where we are the same; our experiences, dreams, aspirations, hopes and fears. The nature of looping has allowed me to layer single, multiple lines of sung text and audio clips over which grow into ever-larger choruses of sound. I've unexpectedly loved the simplicity of this, with the process becoming its own meditative experience which I hope we can all enjoy.

The piece is still very much in flux and I am still unsure about exactly what is going to evolve for July 2nd but despite the myriad of changes that it has had to undertake, I think the core essence of what I was creating is still there. Just a bit different.