

# G A S W O R K S

PRESS RELEASE

## Adam Khalil and Bayley Sweitzer with Oba: Nosferasta

6 October – 19 December 2021



Adam Khalil & Bayley Sweitzer, *Nosferasta*, 2021. Film still.  
Courtesy of the artists. Commissioned by Gasworks and Spike Island.

Gasworks presents the first UK commission by Brooklyn-based filmmakers **Adam Khalil** and **Bayley Sweitzer** in collaboration with **Oba**. The exhibition launches their ongoing film [Nosferasta](#), a nightmarish chronicle of colonial encounters dating back to 1492.

*Nosferasta* is the first iteration of a Rastafarian vampire film starring and co-written by Oba, a Trinidadian artist and musician based in Brooklyn. Spanning 500 years of colonial destruction, human trafficking and blood sucking, the film reimagines Oba's origin story. In the late 15th century, Oba is shipped as cargo from West Africa to the Caribbean, where he is bitten and converted by the vampire Christopher Columbus, ensuring his undying allegiance to the colonial project.

Oba claims he has three birthdays: the day he was born, the day he was bitten, and the day he killed his master. There is a dark irony in the fact that Columbus is both a despotic father figure to Oba and his partner in crime. Engaged in unholy union, this unlikely duo spread vampirism across the Western Hemisphere, pulling the strings of 'New World' geopolitics until Oba's encounter with Rastafarianism, an anticolonial religion, enables him to break Columbus' spell.

In the film, period scenes are in tense dialogue with unscripted vignettes of Oba's post-vampiric existence in present-day Brooklyn. These portray Oba's real-life struggles with the colonial bureaucracy he once helped to build, including his quest for U.S. citizenship and literacy. Combining film forms and jumping across multiple timelines, locations and perspectives, *Nosferasta* tells the story of an ageing Rastafarian vampire at the decline of colonial empires. It examines the guilt of being complicit 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?*

*Nosferasta* shows alongside a votive demon sculpture by Oba. Within the sculpture Khalil and Sweitzer have included a sound installation that whispers a timeline of major events in vampire history which have shaped colonial modernity to the present day. and a replica of a mural by Oba, originally painted without permission to beautify Adam Khalil's apartment building in Brooklyn.

*Nosferasta* is commissioned and produced by Gasworks, London and Spike Island, Bristol, as 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 Cinereach.

The film will be presented at Spike Island, Bristol, in February 2022.

Gasworks commissions are supported by Catherine Petitgas and Gasworks Exhibitions Supporters.

**For high resolution images visit:** <http://www.gasworks.org.uk/about-us/press/> or email [sheena@gasworks.org.uk](mailto:sheena@gasworks.org.uk)

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#### **Listings Information:**

**Gasworks**

**Free admission**

**Open Weds - Sun 12-6pm**

[www.gasworks.org.uk](http://www.gasworks.org.uk)

**155 Vauxhall St, London SE11 5RH**

**Please visit [gasworks.org.uk](http://gasworks.org.uk) to see our covid safety measures.**

**Facebook/ Twitter/ Instagram/ Vimeo/ Soundcloud: @GasworksLondon**

**URL: <https://bit.ly/NOSFERASTA>**

**Hashtags: #nosferasta #GasworksLondon**

#### **Editor's Notes:**

#### **Artist Biographies**

**Adam Khalil** is a filmmaker and artist based in Brooklyn. He was raised as a member of the Ojibway tribe in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. He is a core contributor to New Red Order (NRO), and a co-founder of COUSIN, a collective that supports Indigenous artists expanding the form of film. His work has featured at the Whitney Biennial, Museum of Modern Art, Lincoln Center, and e-flux, New York; Tate Modern, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Toronto Biennial. Grants and awards include an Alpert Award in the Arts, Creative Capital, Sundance Art of Nonfiction Fellowship, Jerome Fellowship, and Gates Millennium Scholarship.

**Bayley Sweitzer** is a filmmaker based in Brooklyn. His work has featured at Film at Lincoln Center and Anthology Film Archives, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles; Other Cinema, San Francisco; Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate Modern, London; Bozar, Brussels; Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival; and the Berlinale. He is recipient of a Creative Capital Award. Sweitzer also works professionally as a focus puller and is a member of the International Cinematographers Guild, IATSE Local 600. He acts as a settler accomplice of the collective New Red Order (NRO).

**Oba 'the Artist and Musician'**. Born Wendell Scotts in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Oba is an artist, chef and actor based in Brooklyn. His paintings, sculptures and t-shirts have featured at Motel Gallery and Rumpelstiltskin, Brooklyn. From 2016 to 2018, Oba was lead singer of the avant-noise supergroup *Dead Companionship* alongside Austin Sley Julian, Adam and Zack Khalil. 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.

#### **About Gasworks**

For over twenty years Gasworks has played a unique role in the contemporary visual arts sector by working at the intersection between UK and international practices and debates. It does this by providing studios for London-based artists; commissioning emerging UK-based and international artists to present their first major exhibitions in London; and developing a highly-respected international residencies programme, mainly working with artists based outside Europe and North America. All programmes are accompanied by events and participatory workshops that engage local and international audiences with artists and their work.

Gasworks is also the hub of Triangle Network, an international network of small-scale arts organisations and projects that support and disseminate the work of emerging artists through artist-led workshops, residencies, exhibitions and outreach events. Gasworks and Triangle Network are registered as a charity in the UK under 'Triangle Arts Trust' and all their activities are free to the public.

#### **Supporters and partners**



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