

Yasmin Spiro: *Groundation*
May 1–Oct 7, 2023

About the Exhibition

Groundation, an installation by Chicago-based, Jamaican artist Yasmin Spiro, utilizes the fence at the Arts Club of Chicago as a structure to build a semi-transparent weaving that is an homage to Jamaican wicker weaver and Rastafarian Sylvester (also known as Bongo Silly) who created an immersive woven wicker environment in his home in St. Ann, Jamaica (1970s–80s) that also functioned as an important part of the local community. Originally called Lions Den, it was a gathering place for both locals and visitors, and as a Rasta, Sylvester viewed weaving as mediation and practice of communing with other planes of existence. The word “groundation” in Rastafarianism is a term for a ceremony or gathering that is meant to express the connection of a culture to its roots and the connection of an individual to its tribe.

This work is an extension of Spiro’s interest in the creation of sacred spaces, particularly ones that utilize vernacular architecture and craft, removed from traditional religious uses. It ties into her own cultural experiences and is a tribute to this early artistic influence that explores the act of making as a spiritual practice—not connected to art in the western or traditional sense—and community activity, as other weavers joined in the process of creating this environment.

Architecture is intertwined with the history of weaving, with the grid pattern and intersection of structures reflecting the skeletons of buildings and more directly in vernacular architecture, literally using weaving as its main form. Using the architecture of the fence and the environment of the garden for the creation of this weaving, the project is both an installation and performance as other weavers are invited to add to the work during the time it is exhibited.

About the Artist

Yasmin Spiro is a Jamaican artist, living and working in Chicago. Spiro’s work is multidisciplinary, primarily based in sculpture and immersive installation, with video, drawing and performance—exploring issues of cultural identity and socio-economic issues within the framework of architecture, personal history, spirituality, and memory—often through the lens of Caribbean culture. Much of the work is textile based, burlap, rope, and felt, with integrated cast elements of plaster, ceramic, and cement—creating forms that often reference vernacular architecture, and the knowledge

and memory that's held in those structures, as well as the history embedded in craft and making. Spiro attended Pratt Institute and has held residencies at the The Dora Maar Foundation in France, The Kohler Arts and Industry residency in Wisconsin, Vermont Studio Center, and the Hatch Chicago Artist Coalition residency.