



**Bubu Ogisi** is a textile fibre artist and Creative Director of the contemporary womenswear brand, IAMISIGO. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, she now lives between Lagos; Accra, Ghana; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; and Nairobi, Kenya. Ogisi's work explores how the body exists and interacts with space by creating wearable art pieces and installation art pieces with unconventional organic materials and ancient textiles traditions from all over the African continent. The idea of rawness, anti-'finishing' (and therefore anti-Eurocentrism) and functionality exist as strong conceptual design threads throughout her work. By exaggerating texture, structure and space she is able to break and transform the rules and expectations of what textiles can do.

**'My practice is solely driven by the belief in the works of our hands.'**

– Bubu Ogisi

*The exhibition is the culmination of The Tetley's Here, There & Everywhere partnership with New Art Exchange. Here, There & Everywhere is New Art Exchange's international programme, supported by Ambition for Excellence, Arts Council England.*



The Tetley is supported by:



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# Bubu Ogisi

## *I am not myself*

7 May – 29 August 2022

Artist Bubu Ogisi presents *I am not myself*, an exhibition exploring the spirituality of masquerading.

Drawing on the ritual use of adornments in various sacred African institutions, including the Nwantantay of Burkina Faso, the Bedu of Ivory Coast and the Ogbodo Enyi of Nigeria, Ogisi's works respond to complex symbolism represented by these practices.

Masquerading is presented as a tool for connecting with a mythic tradition that challenges present ideas of the self and our relationship to our bodies, environment and spiritual world.

Exhibition text continues overleaf →

Expanding out from the Shirley Cooper Gallery & Gallery 9, Ogisi's exhibition includes a large scale, handmade tapestry, hung adjacent to the Atrium, and is completed by four original flags, commissioned for The Tetley's roof.

### **Sacred Grove**

Ogisi invites you into an imagined 'sacred grove', a secret space where objects used in masquerading are stored outside of their use in rituals. To create this space, the artist transformed the Shirley Cooper Gallery & Gallery 9 and spread over a tonne of recycled shredded tyres, introducing the smell of rubber and a soft, uneven surface.

Rubber, plastic and other unconventional materials appear throughout Ogisi's practice, often combined with organic materials and techniques representative of traditional craft practices within different African cultures. Ogisi uses the interplay of tradition and innovation in her practice as a decolonial process, addressing and healing the trauma of colonialism.

The family of objects within the Sacred Grove represent the rites of passage or transition at critical times of life, signified by the use of colour: birth (red), growth (green), maturity (yellow) and death (black). This draws on a mythic tradition dealing with the origin and structure of the universe, the creation of man, animals and plants, of peoples and institutions, and the death of all things.

The adornments used in masquerade are also depicted outside of the grove in a series of images printed on fabric made from recycled plastic bottles, taken by photographer **Holly Marie Cato** in collaboration with Ogisi.

The masquerade made from silver PVC and metal was activated during a ritual ceremony performed by dance artist **Mayowa Ogunnaike** during the opening of the exhibition and then left in situ for the duration of the show. When used, the objects offers the possibility of spiritual transfiguration of the body and soul. The wearer, temporarily released from their own sense of 'self', is free to be guided by supernatural forces.

### **Tapestry & Flags**

Hung adjacent to the Atrium, Ogisi's tapestry was produced in collaboration with local makers in Leeds during her residency at The Tetley, February – May 2022. It combines traditional and inorganic recycled materials interwoven together. On top of the building, Ogisi has created four flags, printed on fabric made of recycled plastic bottles for The Tetley flagpoles. The flags use a language of colour and symbols taken from ancient African scripts, specifically Adinkra, Nsibidi and Bantu, to represent community and the bringing of different communities together.

### **Works list**

#### **Shirley Cooper Gallery & Gallery 9**

Bubu Ogisi, *I am not myself*, 2022

Installation and performance

Photographs: Holly Marie Cato

#### **Atrium**

Bubu Ogisi, *If you don't dance the spirit whose face you wear will eat you*, 2022

Tapestry, made using jute, sisal, raffia, PVC and mirrors

#### **Roof**

Bubu Ogisi, *Language as material*, 2022

Flags, made using recycled plastic bottles

*All synthetic materials are recycled or repurposed*