





P.L.U.A.
(Proposed Land Use Action)

JITE AGBRO

**FEBRUARY 1 - APRIL 30
2022**

ABOVE AND NEXT:
INSTALLATION VIEW OF *P.L.U.A.*



2 NEW APARTMENTS

FORWARD

Seattle-based print and collage artist Jite Agbro considers our changing and nuanced social, psychological, and physical relationships to the built urban environment in her MadArt Studio exhibition *P.L.U.A. (Proposed Land Use Action)*. This site-specific work comprises architectural textile prints that compositionally create a fragmented rendering of the public housing complex where Agbro grew up with her family in Seattle's Central District. Today the building still stands and remains home to its current residents; however, there are plans to demolish the existing structure to make way for a new mixed-use retail and low-income residential housing space. Though Agbro has not lived there since she was a teenager, news of the building's impending demolition, paired with her complex process of internally negotiating this loss, became the driving impetus for her work.

P.L.U.A. immerses viewers in a large, semi-transparent, graphic structure that utilizes the studio's steel supports to span both vertically and horizontally in succession across the space. Influenced by the structural characteristics of the actual housing

complex, the panels are an amalgam of cut graphic fabric designs textured with the artist's hand-printed-and-sewn ornamentation. This creation was drafted from Agbro's memory and conveys dreamlike characteristics such as off-scale features, melancholic blue hues, and ephemeral materials. Housed in a protected space in the far corner of the studio is a series of figural panels that are reminiscent of Agbro's broader body of work. The figures are larger than life, requiring visitors to gaze up to take in the collaged design motifs that define these bodies, and which are repeated throughout the exhibition. Acting as a pillar of *P.L.U.A.*, this area imbues the work with life and calls attention to the human presence within urban architecture and the often unseen comings and goings of domestic life. With the addition of an audio recording of Agbro's personal recollections of growing up in Seattle's Central District, it is hard not to reflect on one's emotional connection to place and how memory tethers itself to the physical world.

Much of Agbro's work incorporates the human form to comment on



cultural inheritance that is passed down through history and familial understanding. At the start of this project, Agbro was interested in expanding on this concept to consider the structural influences—physical, institutional, ideological—that inform one's lineal circumstance. However, it was through the creative process and recalling of childhood memories that the work came to represent much more. As a personal

story, *P.L.U.A.* offers insight into the importance of place, and how a community's culture and heritage, alongside amenities and resources, shape the lived experience. Further, the show invites viewers to consider how a sense of place is preserved within rapidly changing urban landscapes.

EMILY KELLY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR + CURATOR
MADART

BELOW:
DETAILS FROM *P.L.U.A.*



CURRENT:
INSTALLATION VIEW OF *P.L.U.A.*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jite Agbro is a Nigerian American print artist who grew up in Seattle, WA. Her colorful figurative work features layered patterns, sharp contrast, and fabric-like textures. She uses traditional and non-traditional printmaking techniques such as collage, sewing, and encaustic to transform paper and fabric into bold silhouettes with striking backgrounds.

Conceptually, her work focuses on nonverbal communication and the process of exchanging shared cultural, historical, and familial cues between individuals and groups, often using garments and gestures to reference culturally significant symbolism.

Since 2015, Agbro has completed several solo exhibitions, most of which include large-scale, site-specific installations, in museums and commercial galleries around the Northwest. Her recent exhibitions include *Deserving* at Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (2019), And *Skap-got* at 4Culture Gallery (2018).

Agbro has also been included in notable group exhibitions throughout the Northwest including the Gates Foundation 20 Year Anniversary exhibition at The Gates Foundation Visitor Center (2020) and the Edwin T. Pratt Commence Installation at The Northwest African American Museum (2019).

Agbro studied fine art at Cornish College of the Arts (Seattle, WA) and California College of the Arts (Oakland, CA) before completing a B.A. in Environmental Design at Evergreen State College and an M.S. in Design and Engineering at the University of Washington.

Seattle-area organizations whereby Agbro has received support and project funding include Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, The Neddy Foundation, 4Culture, Artist Trust, Shunpike, Pratt Fine Arts Center, and The James & Janie Washington Jr. Foundation.

RIGHT:
AGBRO IN FRONT OF P.L.U.A.





EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH SHELF LIFE COMMUNITY STORY PROJECT

THE SHELF LIFE COMMUNITY STORY PROJECT RECORDS ORAL HISTORIES WITH CURRENT AND FORMER RESIDENTS OF SEATTLE'S CENTRAL DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD. SHELF LIFE LIVES AT WA NA WARI, A CENTRAL DISTRICT HOME FOR BLACK ART, STORIES, AND CONNECTION.

"It's a special place to have grown up. I don't know another spot in Seattle that's that rich with interesting diversity. Down the street, there's an established Japanese neighborhood that throws this festival every year. Up the street, there was the Juneteenth Festival that we would go to every summer. We would regularly go see shows at Langston Hughes. There was a nationally recognized art center in the park. And I used to take classes there, when I was a kid, for free. Because I stumbled into it.

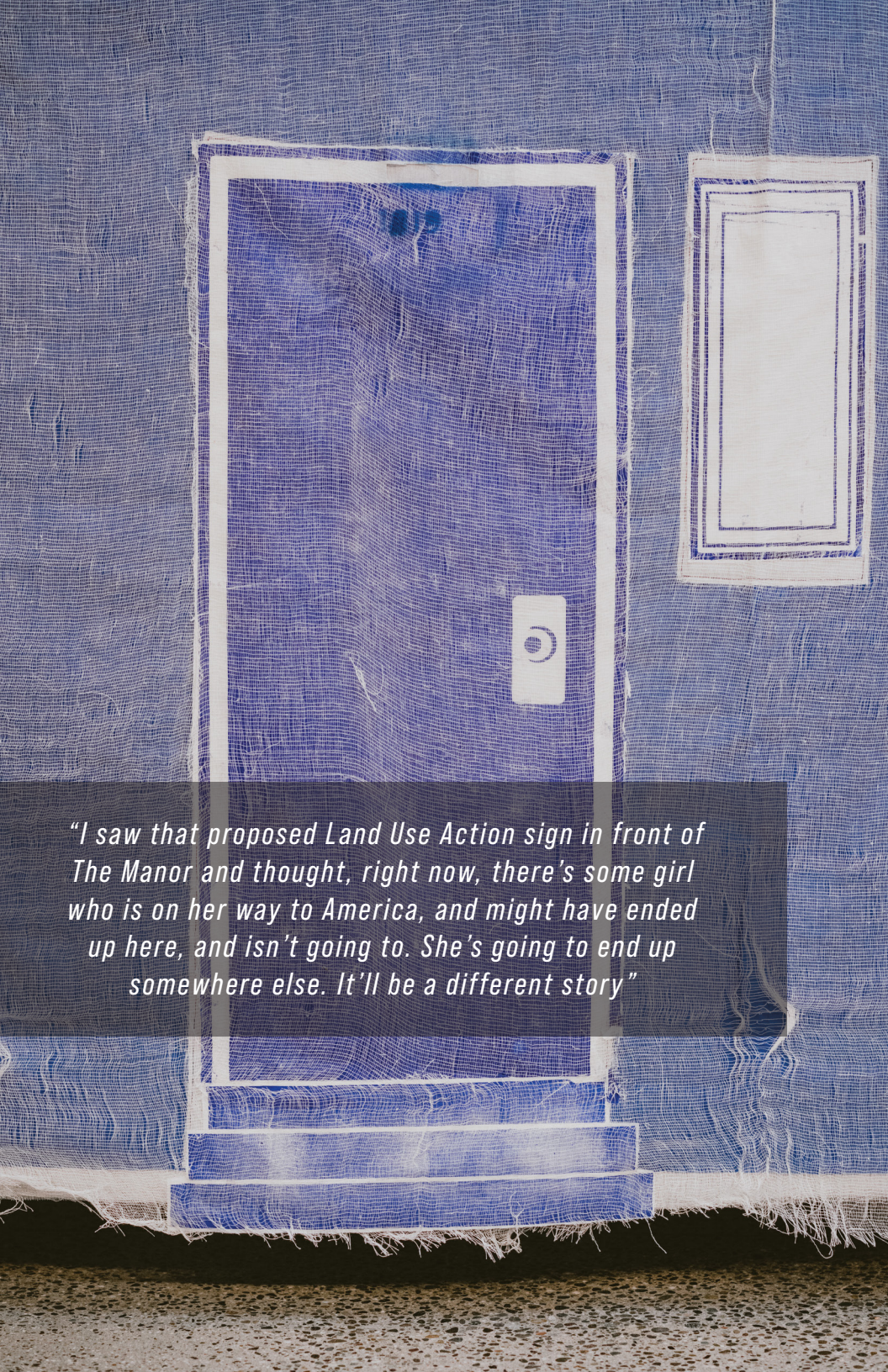
One of my earliest memories of walking around the park, is just getting up in the morning and smelling the donuts that were baking. Gay's Bakery was just across from Pratt Park. So, you'd wake up in the morning, you'd smell these donuts. And then you could go for a walk by Pratt.

The garage would be open on Saturdays. They would teach free art classes, and whoever was the teacher might say, "Hey, come on in. Let's print some stuff, and it doesn't cost anything, and come on in." Having that place so close to The Manor was pivotal for me because that's the only reason I went to college. And the director at the time was just a kind man. And he helped me take regular classes there. I kept taking classes all the way through. The only form of school that I didn't absolutely hate. And he encouraged me to go to art school.

I don't know that I would've become an artist had I not ended up there. Because the space and the proximity to Pratt, and the people that I met within that timeframe are so pivotal that that, and becoming an artist, are just intertwined.

I got sucked into Pratt because it was welcoming, and not all of the spaces were welcoming. Even The Manor, which had been my home, I wouldn't say that it felt particularly welcoming, all the time. I don't know. I can't romanticize because not everything about it was good. We were a semi-

LEFT:
FIGURATIVE PANELS IN *P.L.U.A.*



"I saw that proposed Land Use Action sign in front of The Manor and thought, right now, there's some girl who is on her way to America, and might have ended up here, and isn't going to. She's going to end up somewhere else. It'll be a different story"



**LEFT AND ABOVE:
DETAILS FROM *P.L.U.A.* INCLUDING WOODBLOCK PRINTS
(LEFT) AND STENCILED PRINTS (RIGHT)**

immigrant family, so we didn't fit in right away. And we got hazed, especially my older brother. He still had an accent. I don't think that the first families that were coming over from East Africa, who ended up there, had an easy time blending in. I remember one of the kids I grew up with making fun of the spices that he could smell coming from one of our neighbor's houses, cooking Ethiopian food, making fun of it, the way that it smelled. And then two years later, eating Ethiopian food.

I thought it was really valuable to watch that happen. Not only in my own family, but to watch that happen to other families. To see the evolution of acceptance. At a young age, to see people start to understand the things they like about those differences. In this kind of relatively short arc of time.

There was this woman who we all loved. She was this amazing kind of charismatic, beautiful spirit. She would sometimes just let us hang out in her house. And I realized how valuable that was. This is a single mother who was letting a bunch of kids hang out in her house, that she did not give birth to. There was generosity there. And she was so kind, and she was so sweet, and we all wanted to be like her, when we grew up as an adult.

There are some things about growing up there that were terrifying, and not

so great. But if I had not experienced them, I wouldn't have had this greater understanding about life, before I was 15. I got all that stuff when I was a kid.

I don't know what the value of that is in real time, knowing that there are all these different walks of life, and there are all these turns and twists, that can happen during one's life.

One of the lessons was that life can take you all these different places, including prison, or death, or to an art studio. These are all possibilities. The good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful. And I saw that proposed land use Action sign in front of The Manor and I thought, *Right now, there's some girl who is on her way to America, and might have ended up here, and isn't going to. She's going to end up somewhere else. It'll be a different story.*

But the experience, that I can now understand as valuable, isn't going to be passed on to somebody else who probably could have used it. And it just made me feel sick. And it does say that it's going to be replaced with low-income housing. I don't know what that means though, but I also don't know if that low-income housing is going to welcome immigrants in the same way that The Manor did. It really does feel like a loss to remove this place."

RIGHT:
**P.L.U.A. CLOSING PERFORMANCE
FEATURING AKOIYA HARRIS**



DANCER AKOIYA HARRIS, BORN AND RAISED IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICT, ILLUMINATES THE STORIES OF HER COMMUNITY THROUGH MOVEMENT. IN THE CLOSING PERFORMANCE OF P.L.U.A., HARRIS EXPLORES THE IMPACT OF A CHANGING URBAN LANDSCAPE ON LONG-TERM COMMUNITY RESIDENTS, AND THE INTERCONNECTED NEGOTIATION BETWEEN MEMORY AND LOSS.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING

CREATIVE COLLABORATORS:

AKOIYA HARRIS, CLOSING PERFORMANCE

WA NA WARI AND THE SHELF LIFE COMMUNITY STORY PROJECT

WILLOW FOX, COSTUME DESIGN

FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION SUPPORT:

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CATALOG PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JAMES HARNOIS

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GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT WAS PROVIDED BY MADART