

EMPAC

**NEW YORK
LIVE
ARTS**

MEDIA CONTACTS:
DOROTHY DÁVILA-EVANS
EMPAC
empac.pr@rpi.edu

TYLER ASHLEY
NEW YORK LIVE ARTS
TASHLEY@NEWYORKLIVEARTS.ORG



Photo courtesy of EMPAC / Sara Griffith

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ARTIST JAAMIL OLAWALE KOSOKO PRESENTS
ALTERNATIVE REALITY EXPERIMENTS ON EARTH
DAY, *CHAMELEON (THE LIVING INSTALLMENTS)***

**New project employs three years of artistic research to
create space online for a collective experience.**

APRIL 22, 2020

New York, NY & Troy, NY (April 7, 2020) — **Jaamil Olawale Kosoko** and a team of collaborators including **Everett-Asis Saunders**, **Nile Harris**, and **mayfield brooks** present a series of remote events on Earth Day, April 22, 2020. *Chameleon (The Living Installments)* is presented by The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer and New York Live Arts. The event is a response to the postponement of Kosoko's *Chameleon: A Biomythography*, which was planned to have its premiere at both institutions this month. *Chameleon* is a multimedia live artwork that explores the ever-evolving ways in which digitality intersects the fugitive realities and shapeshifting demands that Black queer people employ to survive and heal within the contemporary moment. The project, originally a co-commission by EMPAC, New York Live Arts, the Wexner Center, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, and Tanz im August/HAU has been in development for over three years and feels particularly prescient in the current moment.

In the hold of the novel coronavirus and subsequent live performance cancellations, Kosoko and collaborators seek to locate space for healing both online and off. They will host a series of events that aim to hold grief while also centering themes of liveness, beauty, humor, care, and joy. The setting features live and recorded performers who embody, film, document, and re-embody sources of curated archival imagery.

This will be a remote performance, but not one that mimics an in-person event. Allowing the platforms to quite literally move them, the artists plan for a schedule (below) that incorporates a virtual sit and vocal performance, the release of *Chameleon: A Syllabus for Survival*, and sneak peak content from Kosoko's upcoming art film—a collaboration with Finnish artist and filmmaker **Ima Iduozee**. Disillusioned by the lag and oversaturation of platforms such as Instagram and Zoom, the artists participated in a remote residency with EMPAC in March to develop a *chameleonic* environment within a platform called Discord, which is popular in gaming communities.

The events will be live streamed to YouTube Live. Audience members interested in an interactive experience can join Kosoko and collaborators in Discord, which will offer a shared online space for witnessing in situ artistic collaboration and—perhaps most importantly during this time—an opportunity for performers and audience to collectively be together. All event and access details can be found at empac.rpi.edu and newyorklivearts.org.

Chameleon (The Living Installments)
April 22, 2020 - EARTH DAY

Additional events may be added. Please follow empac.rpi.edu and newyorklivearts.org for the latest schedule and [@chameleon_coalition](https://twitter.com/chameleon_coalition) for updates.

- 11:00am EDT – Launch and Publication of online zine *Chameleon: A Syllabus for Survival*
- 11:30am EDT – Testify: A Conversation between **Bill T. Jones** and **Jaamil Olawale Kosoko**

- 12:00pm EDT – World Premiere of original art film *Stank* from *Chameleon: A Visual Album* (film excerpt)
- 1:00pm EDT to 2:00pm – Break
- 2:00pm EDT – *Pidgin Chorus* performance by Chameleon collaborators followed by Kosoko in conversation with guests and Q&A

Chameleon (The Living Installments) is one day of public engagement within an expansive series of programming by Jaamil Olawale Kosoko (jaamil.com). The artist hosts the podcast, [American Chameleon](#), and a weekly remote convening, *Radical Reimaginings*. Kosoko's holistic practice proposes an alternate pedagogical approach for our new world. The April 22 Earth Day events will include participation from online classes at several universities including Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Princeton University, UCLA, Pratt Institute, Berkeley Center for New Media at the University of California, Berkeley, Cornell University, the University of Michigan, and more. Faculty interested in attending the events with their online classes can contact the EMPAC Box Office (empacboxoffice@rpi.edu).

ABOUT

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko is a Nigerian American choreographer, performance artist, poet, and curator originally from Detroit, MI. He is a Lecturer at the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University, a 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Fellow in Choreography, 2019 NPN Development Fund Award Recipient, a 2019-21 Movement Research Artist in Residence, a 2018-20 Live Feed Artist at New York Live Arts, a 2017-19 Princeton Arts Fellow, 2019 Red Bull Writing Fellow, 2018 NEFA NDP Production Grant recipient, 2017 MAP Fund recipient, and a 2017 Cave Canem Poetry Fellow. His creative practice draws from Black study and queer theories of the body, weaving together visual performance, lecture, ritual, and spiritual practice. His most recent works, *Séancers* (2017) and the Bessie nominated *#negrophobia* (2015), have toured internationally, appearing in major festivals including: Tanz im August (Berlin), Moving in November (Finland), Within Practice (Sweden), TakeMeSomewhere (UK), Brighton Festival (UK), Oslo Teaterfestival (Norway), and Zürich MOVES! (Switzerland) among others. He is the author of two chapbooks and his poems and essays have been included in *The American Poetry Review*, *The Dunes Review*, *The Broad Street Review*, among others. His interview-based podcast, *American Chameleon*, is in its first season and can be found on all podcast platforms. jaamil.com / @chameleon_coalition on Instagram

THE CURTIS R. PRIEM EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (EMPAC)

at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is dedicated to the commissioning, production, and presentation of ambitious performances and time-based artworks that foster meaningful engagement among artists, artworks, and audiences. EMPAC is committed to the in-depth support of artists over extended periods of time to realize complex projects that require not only EMPAC's acoustic, spatial, visual and theater technological infrastructure in conjunction with digital technology, but also the interdisciplinary expertise of its curatorial, production, and administrative staff. EMPAC's artists-in-residence generate a diverse range of events that provide visitors with a breadth of experiences from theatrical productions, concerts,

audio and video installations to a rigorous interdisciplinary program of films, talks, and workshops.

NEW YORK LIVE ARTS

Located in the heart of Chelsea in New York City, New York Live Arts produces and presents dance, music and theater performances in its 20,000 square-foot home, including a 184-seat theater and two 1,200 square-foot studios. New York Live Arts offers an extensive range of participatory programs for adults and young people; it supports the continuing professional development of performing artists. New York Live Arts serves as home base for the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company; it is the company's sole producer, providing support and the environment to originate innovative and challenging new work for the Company and New York's creative community.

The Live Feed creative residency program is a laboratory for the development of new commissioned work directed toward the Live Arts theater. The Live Feed program is supported in part by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Partners for New Performance.

FUNDING

Chameleon is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by EMPAC / Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY; the New York Live Arts Live Feed Residency program; and the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, in partnership with Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), Tanz im August/HAU Hebbel am Ufer, and NPN. New York Live Arts' Live Feed Residency program is made possible with additional support from the Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts, the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council with special thanks to Council Member Corey Johnson, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Jerome Robbins Foundation, the Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the Scherman Foundation, and the Shubert Foundation. *Chameleon* is also made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional development support was provided by Bates Dance Festival, Gibney DiP, pOndersoa, D.O.C.H., Within Practice (Stockholm), the Centre for the Less Good Idea (Johannesburg, South Africa), PassaPorta International House of Literature (Brussels), Studio 303 (Montreal), the National Center for Choreography (Akron, OH), and Red Bull Arts Detroit.

EMPAC Spring 2020 presentations, residencies, and commissions are made possible by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Support for New York Live Arts is provided by the Arnhold Foundation, Ed Bradley Family Foundation, Con Edison, Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, Marta Heflin Foundation, Hyde and Watson Foundation, Alice Lawrence Foundation, Samuel M. Levy Family Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, MAP Fund, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, National Performance Network, New England Foundation for the Arts, New Music USA, Otter, William Penn Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Jerome Robbins Foundation, The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Scherman Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and Tito's Handmade Vodka.

Public support for New York Live Arts is from Humanities New York, National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Correction, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Dance/NYC's New York City Dance Rehearsal Space Subsidy Program, made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

###