

Rhys Hollis, Andrea Baker, Divine Tasinda & Kheanna Walker

OMOS

5.3.23 – 30.7.23

Curator:
Kathrin Becker

OMOS, 2022
Video, 20:16 min.
German Premiere

OMOS (2022) celebrates contemporary Black performance and pays tribute to Black performers at the Scottish court in the 16th century, and connections to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The twenty-minute work is the first film work by cabaret artist Rhys Hollis, well known as an influential figure in London's queer art scene, and was created in collaboration with opera singer Andrea Baker, dancer Divine Tasinda, and pole performer Kheanna Walker.

OMOS features a visual journey of performances through Puck's Glen forest and Stirling Castle, Scotland, partly taking the format of a queer cabaret. The locations provide a link to William Shakespeare's play as well as to a historical performance at Stirling Castle for King James VI and lesser known Black history in Scotland. At the performance a lion was supposed to pull a chariot through the castle's main hall, but this was regarded as too dangerous. Instead, the chariot was pulled by an unnamed Black man – one of many Black people who featured in performances at the Scottish court. The film pays homage to this history, whilst reclaiming the story.

The name *OMOS* was originally an acronym for the phrase "O monstrous! O strange!", a quote from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As the project developed, this phrase has been morphed to stand for "Our Movement, Our Stories". Now, the film has an ambiguous title of solely *OMOS*. In *OMOS*, the artists occupy space as they both draw on the past and look to the future.

Discursive Programme

15.7.23, 20:00

Shades: Queer Black Cabaret

Cabaret Night with Rhys Hollis and Andrea Baker

Pepsi Boston Bar at SchwuZ (Rollbergstraße 26, 12053 Berlin)

Free admission

Rhys Hollis (* in London, where they live) is also known as Rhys's Pieces. They are a cabaret performer and lead artist directing the project *OMOS*, as well as being one of the performers in the film. Rhys Hollis is described as a one-person cabaret troupe; they are a performance artist, dancer, rapper, lipsyncer, cabaret host, genderbending drag artist and burlesque act. Rhys was crowned 2018's LipSync1000 Champion. In 2019 they were awarded the title of best Variety Act by *QX* magazine. They have performed at London galleries including Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum and Historic Royal Palaces and performed as themselves in the play *The Sound of the Underground* at The Royal Court, London in 2023. They host cabaret nights across the UK, including their own creation, *Queerdos Cabaret*.

Andrea Baker (US-American by birth, Scottish by choice) is an internationally renowned mezzo soprano. In addition to her work on the opera stage, she is the creator and producer of the award-winning, one-woman show *Sing Sistah Sing!* – a joyous, soulful celebration of the African American female voice that has toured to sold-out audiences around the world. Follow up show *Tales of Atlantic Freedom* is touring the US in 2023 after rave reviews. As a broadcaster and documentary maker she can be heard regularly on BBC radio.

Divine Tasinda (* in Kinshasa, lives in Glasgow) is an artist, dancer and choreographer trained in Hip hop, Afro, Dancehall, Commercial and Experimental Dance. She also works in fashion and modelling and is one of the owners of Three60 street dance company. Recent projects include Netflix's *Dance100* (2023), *Wings* at Breakin Convention (2022) and *World's Evolution* at Dance International Glasgow, Tramway (2022).

Kheanna Walker (* in Montreal, lives in Glasgow) is an international pole instructor, performer and judge. Alongside working as a trainer, she is also the Creative Lead at a global polewear brand, Pole Junkie. Kheanna started her poledancing journey in 2015 in her hometown of Montreal, Canada. Since then, she has performed, competed and won several titles in Australia, the UK and Canada. Kheanna continues to teach classes and workshops across the globe.

OMOS is produced by Pollyanna and funded by Historic Environment Scotland and The National Lottery through Creative Scotland and National Lottery Heritage Fund.



KINDL