

*Exotic Trade is love is anger is pain is healing on screens  
Exotic Trade is hardrive memory is forgotten memory is  
unearthed potential  
Exotic Trade is a diagnosis is a remedy is caring  
Exotic Trade is trying  
Exotic Trade is for you is for us  
Exotic Trade is harnessing the power of vibration  
Exotic Trade is sharing fluids of survival  
Exotic Trade is wet and juicy love  
Exotic Trade is contradiction is complicity exposed  
Exotic Trade is struggling with self-love  
Exotic Trade is self-commodification is self-realisation is  
self-doubt  
Exotic Trade is me for sell*

# TABITA REZAIRE EXOTIC TRADE

GOODMAN GALLERY JOHANNESBURG  
18 MAY – 17 APRIL 2017

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GOODMAN GALLERY

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Tabita Rezaire  
*Dilo*, 2017  
Lightbox  
100 x 188 cm  
Edition of 5



# EXOTIC TRADE

*The Internet is exploitative, exclusionary, classist, patriarchal, racist, homophobic, transphobic, fatphobic, coercive and manipulative. We need to decolonise and heal our technologies. Healing is resistance.*

Tabita Rezaire

*Exotic Trade* is Tabita Rezaire's first solo exhibition in which she deploys 'digital healing activism' as a strategy to envision decolonial technologies through which we can 'holistically connect to ourselves, to one another, to the earth and to the multiverse' (Rezaire).

This otherworldly exhibition digs into the histories, politics and memories of information and communication technologies (ICT), exposing the violence and erasure carried by our current networks and unearthing possibilities for spiritual technologies.

Through video installations and digital prints, the artist responds to a perceived need to reconnect body, 'womb-mind' and spirit to heal the 'oppressive colonial hierarchies of knowledge systems which define the dominant narratives of our time' (Rezaire).

*Exotic Trade* explores 'alternative' means of receiving, creating and sharing information through spiritual interfaces by accessing what Rezaire terms the 'cosmos database' - from communicating with ancestors to embracing water, the womb and teacher plants as 'primal-portals' for 'downloading' knowledge.

In the show, Rezaire draws parallels between the layout of submarine optic cables (the very architecture of the Internet) and colonial trade routes to point to the powerful symbolism underpinning 'electronic colonialism' whereby the Internet has literally been built on routes of Black pain.

Tabita Rezaire

*Exotic Trade* installation view, 2017





For Rezaire, 'the irony is that the technology of the Internet would not exist without the influence of African spiritualities because the origin of computing science has, in fact, been traced back to African divination systems'. Rezaire uses screen interfaces within her practice to remember the 'space-time' where technology, the biosphere and the spiritual world connect.

Exotic Trade will be arranged in the shape of a womb to create a 'nurturing space that connects us to the source', says the artist. This composition relates to the intention behind key pieces, which celebrate the resilience of Black womxn in the face of colonialist and capitalist exploitation. Rezaire seeks to mark the contribution of Black womxn to the advancement of medical science and technology – often unwillingly and painfully, such as with gynaecology – and confront the erasure of Black womxn from the dominant narrative of technological achievement.

Rezaire grapples with inherited traumas that burden Black womxn's 'soul-bodies' and re-construes Black, femme erotic power as a creative and transformative energy. Her mission is 'to reimagine a politics of pleasure driven by unapologetic desire, spiritual awakening, love and compassion' (Rezaire).

By undertaking a dedicated excavation of the healing potential of forgotten technologies and asserting their relevance to our present age – a process that Rezaire calls 'network archaeology' – Exotic Trade advocates for the possibility of nurturing a 'mind-body-spirit-techno consciousness' that counters our current state of disconnection.

Tabita Rezaire  
*Exotic Trade* installation view, 2017





# DEEP DOWN TIDAL

*Deep Down Tidal* explores transoceanic networks examining the political and technological affects of water as a conductive interface for communication. From fibre optic cables to sunken cities, drowned bodies, hidden histories of navigations and sacred signal transmissions, the ocean is home to a complex set of communication networks. As modern information and communication technologies (ICT) become omnipresent in Western lifestyles – rebranded global to further implement Western domination – we urgently need to understand the cultural, political and environmental forces that have shaped them.

Looking at the infrastructure of submarine fibre optic cables that carries and transfers our digital data, it is striking to realize that the cables are layered onto colonial shipping routes. Once again the bottom of the sea becomes the interface of painful yet celebrated advancements masking the violent deeds of modernity.

Deep Down Tidal navigates the ocean as a graveyard for Black knowledge and technologies. From Atlantis, to the 'Middle passage', or refuge seekers presently drowning in the Mediterranean, the ocean abyss carries pains, lost histories and memories while simultaneously providing the global infrastructure for our current telecommunications. Could the violence of the Internet - inflicted upon Africa and more generally Black people lie in its physical architecture?

Research suggests that water has the ability to memorize and copy information, disseminating it through its streams. What data is our world's water holding? Beyond trauma, water keeps myriad of deep secrets, from its debated origin, its mysterious sea life of mermaids, water deities, and serpent gods, to the aquatic ape theory, and sacred water spirits celebrated in many cosmologies.

Deep Down Tidal enquires the complex cosmological, spiritual, political and technological entangled narratives sprung from water as an interface to understand the legacies of colonialism.

Tabita Rezaire

*Deep Down Tidal* installation view,  
2017

HD video

Edition of 3

Online viewing:

<https://vimeo.com/213318165>

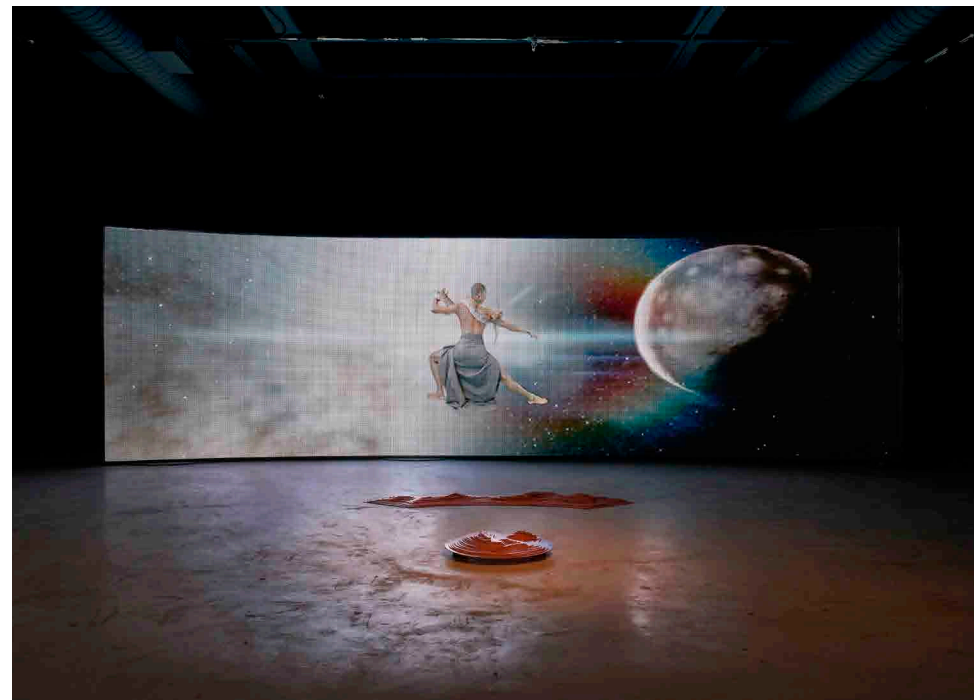
Password: deep





Tabita Rezaire  
*Deep Down Tidal* installation view,  
 2017  
 HD video  
 Edition of 3

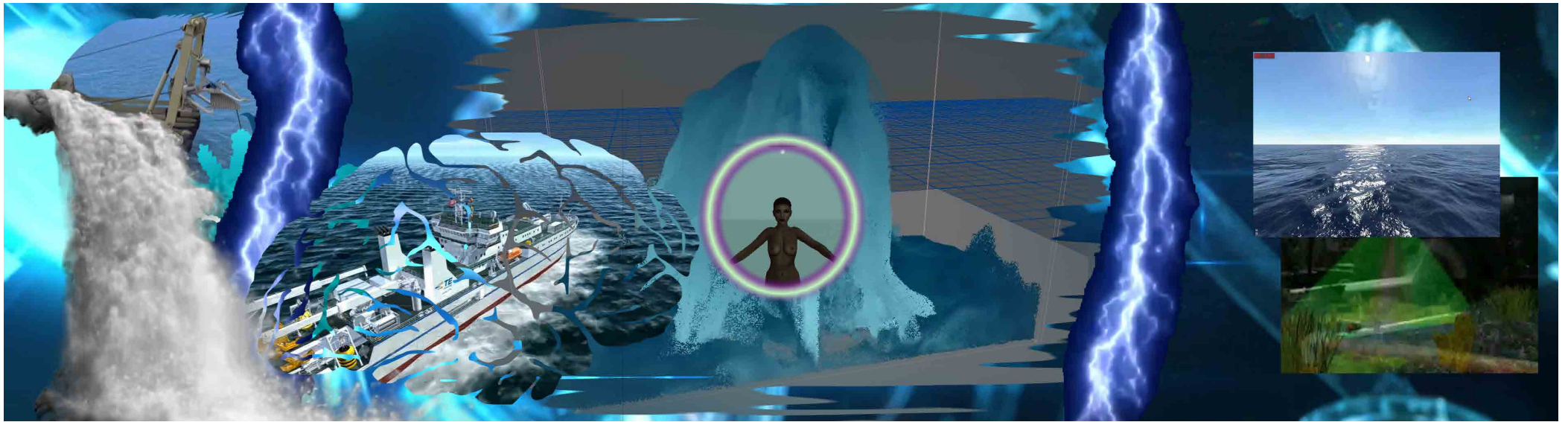
Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213318165>  
 Password: deep



Tabita Rezaire  
*Deep Down Tidal* installation view,  
 2017  
 HD video  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213318165>  
 Password: deep





Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Deep Down Tidal*, 2017  
 HD video  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213318165>  
 Password: deep

Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Deep Down Tidal*, 2017  
 HD video  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213318165>  
 Password: deep

# PREMIUM CONNECT

*Premium Connect* envisions a study of information and communication technologies (ICT), exploring African divination systems, the fungi underworld, ancestors communication and quantum physics to (re)think our information conduits. Embracing the idea that ICT acts as a mirror of the organic world, capable of healing or poisoning depending on its usage and users, *Premium Connect* investigates the cybernetics spaces where the organic, technologic and spiritual worlds connect. How can we use biological or esoteric systems to fuel technological process of information, control and governance? Overcoming the organism/spirit/device dichotomies, this work explores spiritual connections as communication networks and the possibilities of decolonial technologies.

Contrary to the Eurocentric-biased thinking, our information super highway might find its roots in African spirituality. Significant research attributes the birth of computing sciences to African divination systems such as the Ifa system of the Yoruba people of East Africa, which appears to be the origin of binary mathematics, today the functioning principle of computing sciences. Once again the origin of knowledge has been erased in favor of Western achievements.

We have much to recover in terms of connectivity and its potentialities. As science recently discovered the role of underground fungi networks used by plants to communicate and transfer information, ancient tradition have long known how to communicate with nature and download its knowledge. Meanwhile our cherished technologies are the results of institutional violence and until now reproduce them continually.

This study of dynamic networks from artificial, spiritual and biologic environments digs into the politics of possibilities, where a mystico-techno-consciousness could nurture a mind- body-spirit-technology symbiosis.

Tabita Rezaire

*Premium Connect* installation view,  
2017

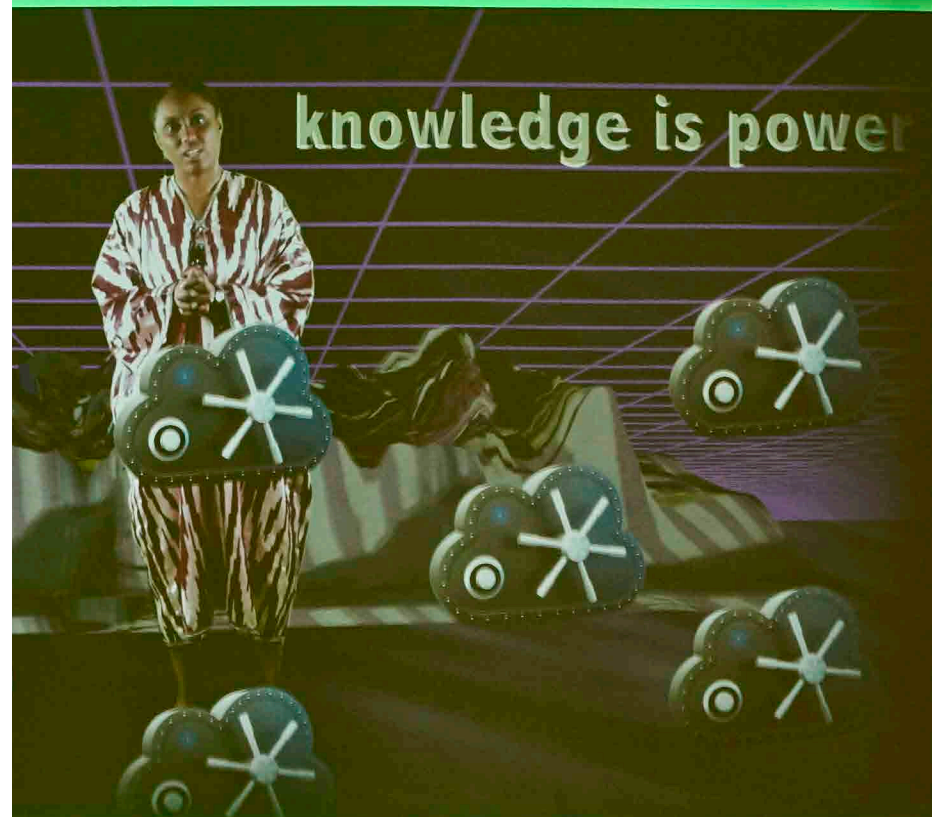
HD video, 13min04s

Edition of 3

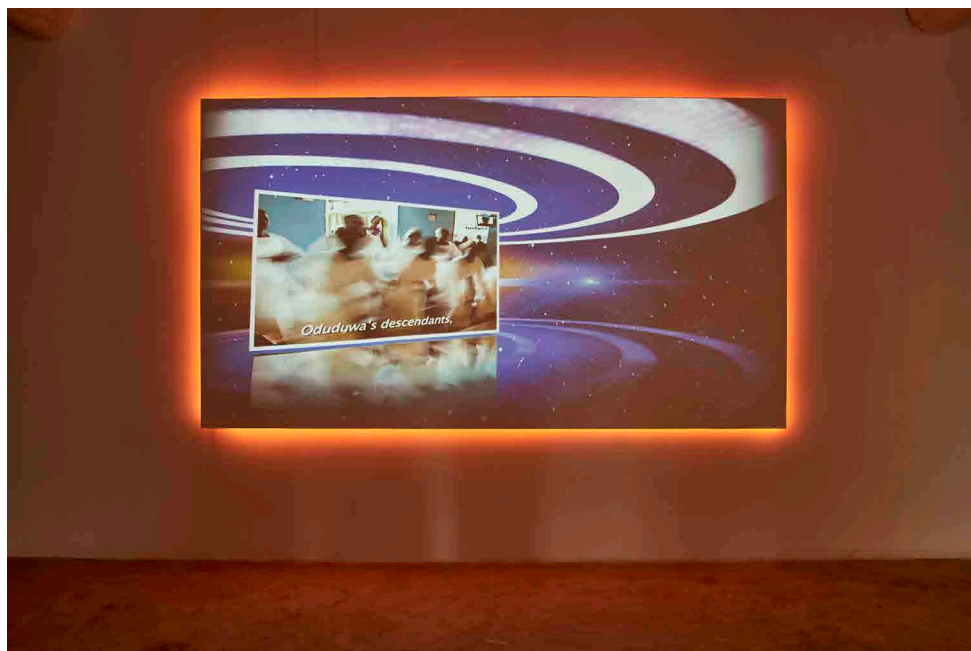
Online viewing:

<https://vimeo.com/213072636>

Password: premium







Tabita Rezaire  
*Premium Connect* installation view,  
 2017  
 HD video, 13min04s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213072636>  
 Password: premium



Tabita Rezaire  
*Premium Connect* installation view,  
 2017  
 HD video, 13min04s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/213072636>  
 Password: premium

# ULTRA WET

'The pyramid of Ultra Wet harnesses healing energy from its tip, while its four faces retell urgent stories from pre-colonial Africa', writes Rezaire. The work's imagery travels from Credo Mutwa (South African traditional healer)'s village to sandy landscape of Egypt amid computerize emanations to reclaim the legacies of feminine energies. As storytellers chant their litanies for survival towards womxnhood, gender and sexuality in the age of celebrated toxic masculinities, Ultra Wet celebrates the power of the erotic as a creative and transformative force to be nurtured and cherished.

The pyramid echoes the remembrance a time-space where gender was not bound to an arbitrary binary, where the ways of practicing sex did not need to be an affirmation of identity, where the feminine was praised and nature revered. 'Viruses then spread into our brains, lands and computers to lead us with fear and shame', says the artist.

Exploring networked sexualities, this work digs into ancient African knowledge and current cybersexual practices, searching for ways of existing as a Black sexual femme body. How can we reclaim a politic of pleasure and resistance? How can we develop sexual autonomy outside of exploitative and oppressive structures? How can we use our sexual energy to shift consciousness?

As an answer Rezaire writes: 'We need to bring our minds and our wombs back together to fight, to heal and to create communities where consent, respect and desire coexist.'

Ultra Wet is an ode to the fertile ground we have been and can still be.

Tabita Rezaire

*Ultra Wet* installation view, 2017

Projection mapping installation

6min48s

Edition of 3





# HOETEP BLESSINGS

In the video, *Hoetep Blessings*, Rezaire makes an offering to what she calls 'Black spiritual femmeness'. Rezaire writes, 'As a remembrance celebrating spiritual knowledge(s) and Black femme technologies, it acts as an oracle from the divine power of the c\*nt, as a litany for survival and pleasure, and a means to weaponize the our melanated femmeness.' Hoetep seeks to reinstall the power of the kemetic-bantu word 'hotep' (htp) – meaning to be at peace – against what it has recently come to signify on the Internet : 'a problematic category of Black men', Rezaire writes.

Hoetep Blessing excavates htp's meanings in various fields from the Hypertext Transfer Protocol – foundation of data communication online – to the neurotransmitter 5-HTP found in the Griffonia seeds – which increase serotonin and inner connectivity.

According to Rezaire, Hoetep 'rescues the spiritual power of the c\*nt, of femmeness, of the 'hoe', within Blackness, that which the troll economy tries hard to disgrace.' The Kemetic adage, 'As for us, we do not use words but sounds filled with power' teaches us that Ho(e)tep is one we should respect.

Tabita Rezaire  
*Hoetep Blessings* installation view,  
2016  
Installation and HD video,  
12min30s  
Edition of 3





Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Hoetep Blessings*, 2016  
 Installation and HD video,  
 12min30s  
 Edition of 3



Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Hoetep Blessings*, 2016  
 Installation and HD video,  
 12min30s  
 Edition of 3



# SUGAR WALLS TEARDOM

*Sugar Walls Teardom* explores the contributions of Black womxn's wombs to the advancement of modern medical science and technology. On *Sugar Walls Teardom*, Rezaire writes, 'During slavery, Black womxn's bodies have been used and abused as commodities for laborious work in plantations, sexual slavery, reproductive exploitation and medical experiments. Anarcha, Betsey and Lucy, were among the captive guinea pigs of Dr. Marion Sims - the so called 'father of modern gynecology' - who mutilated and tortured countless slave womxn in the name of science.'

Unacknowledged, Black womxn's wombs have been central to the biomedical economy as the story of Henrietta Lacks - who had her cervix cells unknowingly stolen, after which they became the first immortal cells leading to medical breakthrough - reminds us. Biological warfare against Black womxn is still pervasive in today's pharmaceutical testing, forced sterilizations, contraceptive experiments, among other malicious health practices.'

*Sugar Walls Teardom* commemorates 'herstory' and celebrates womb technology through an account of coercive anatomic politics. Rezaire asks, 'Whose body is exploitable? By who? For who?' *Sugar Walls Teardom* pays homage to these womxn - their contributions have not been forgotten.

Tabita Rezaire  
*Sugar Walls Teardom* installation  
view, 2016  
Installation with HD video,  
21min30s  
Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/171318210>  
Password : sugarwalls





Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Sugar Walls Teardom*,  
 2016  
 Installation with HD video,  
 21min30s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/171318210>  
 Password : sugarwalls



Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Sugar Walls Teardom*,  
 2016  
 Installation with HD video,  
 21min30s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
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# SENEB

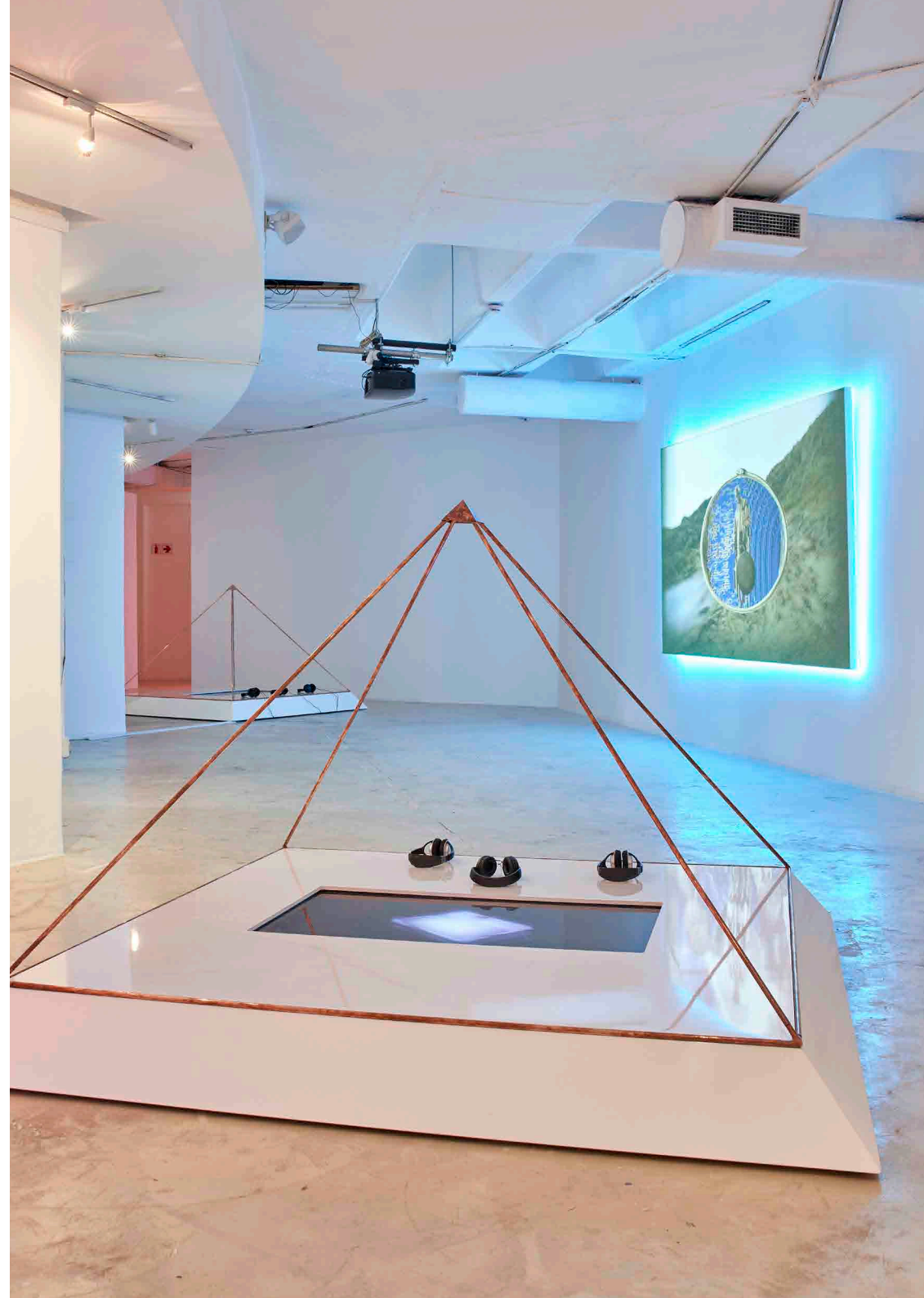
'Seneb is a House of extraordinary babes invested in healing', says Rezaire.

The term 'seneb' has its origins in the ancient Kemetic word/symbol meaning health, but it can also mean 'sound', or rather 'to be sound' or 'to have soundness'. Rezaire writes, 'the power of sound to heal is deep, wise and ancient.' Seneb seeks to harness the power of vibration to heal wounds - whether they be physical, emotional, technological, historical or spiritual.

According to Rezaire, the house of Seneb 'is a community of souls engaged with African and Diasporic healing technologies, an energy center for us to remember, feel, (re)connect, share and vibrate the cosmos to nurture our health, energy and wisdoms.'

Tabita Rezaire  
*Seneb* installation view, 2016  
HD Video,  
7min31s  
Edition of 3

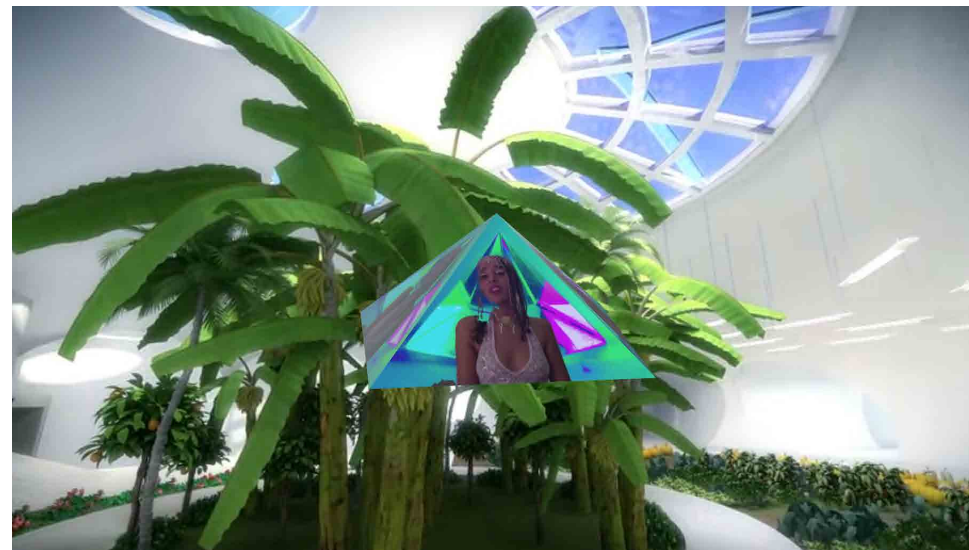
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Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Seneb* installation view,  
 2016  
 HD Video,  
 7min31s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/171298063>



Tabita Rezaire  
 Film still from *Seneb* installation view,  
 2016  
 HD Video,  
 7min31s  
 Edition of 3

Online viewing:  
<https://vimeo.com/171298063>



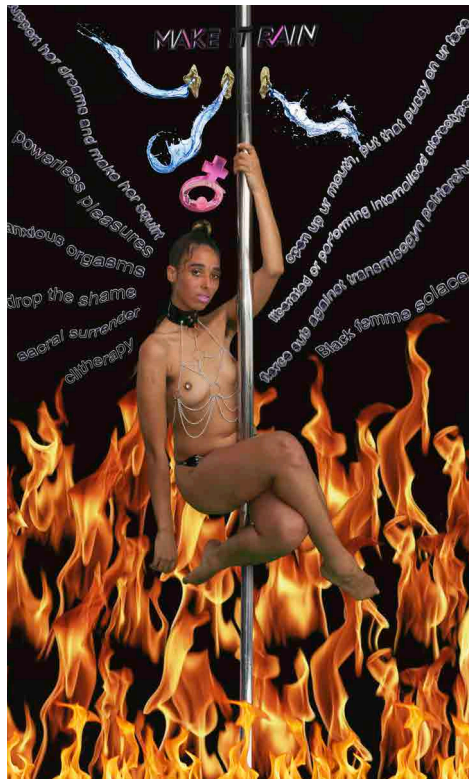
# INNER FIRE SERIES

Inner Fire is a series of five life-size digital self-portrait collages exploring the politics of the artist's identities, aspirations and contradictions. The five images respectively embody an archetype of the black womxn as regard to race, sex, spirituality, technology and capital, mapping how those narratives affect her own as well as collective imaginaries and identities.

Tabita Rezaire  
*Inner Fire: Pimp My Brain*, 2017  
Diasac print  
170 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5







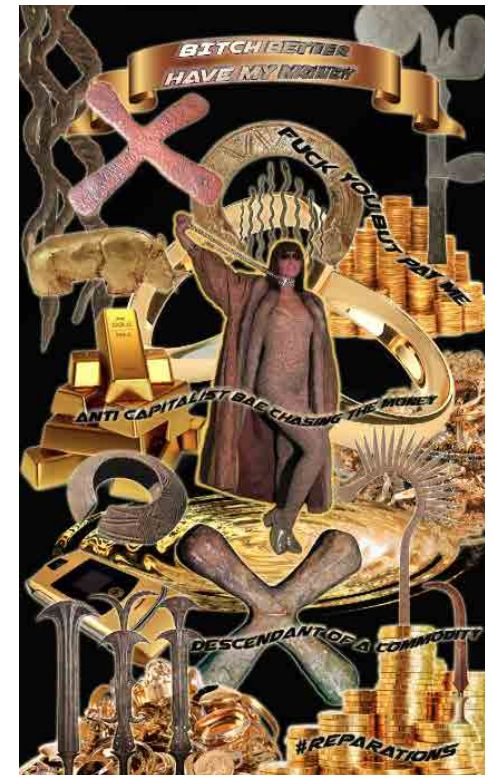
Tabita Rezaire  
*Inner Fire: Make It Rain*, 2017  
 Diasec print  
 170 x 100 cm  
 Edition of 5



Tabita Rezaire  
*Inner Fire: Inner Fire Bow Down*, 2017  
 Diasec print  
 170 x 100 cm  
 Edition of 5



Tabita Rezaire  
*Inner Fire: Shadelicious*, 2017  
 Diasec print  
 170 x 100 cm  
 Edition of 5



Tabita Rezaire  
*Inner Fire: BBHMM*, 2017  
 Diasec print  
 170 x 100 cm  
 Edition of 5