

Alphawood Exhibitions at Wrightwood 659 Presents

John Akomfrah: *Four Nocturnes*

Sept 27, 2024 – Feb 15, 2025

**Three-Channel Video Installation by
Pioneering Artist and Filmmaker John Akomfrah**



(CHICAGO, IL, September 3, 2024) —This fall Alphawood Exhibitions at Wrightwood 659 presents John Akomfrah: *Four Nocturnes*, an exhibition comprised of two installations by London-based artist and filmmaker, Sir John Akomfrah. Mesmerizing and haunting, his works are characterized by their investigations into memory, post-colonialism, temporality, and aesthetics, often exploring the experiences of migrant diasporas globally. Installed in the second floor galleries, the exhibition is on view from September 27, 2024 – February 15, 2025.

Four Nocturnes is an immersive three-channel, HD color video installation which explores the complex relationship between humanity's destruction of the natural world and the destruction of mankind. Using Africa's declining elephant populations as its narrative spine, *Four Nocturnes* is staged as a set of impressionist meditations. In the 52-minute film, Akomfrah—who was born in Ghana—questions mortality, loss, fragmented identity, mythology, and memory through a montage of archival footage and staged scenes surveying the landscape of African cultural heritage.

Four Nocturnes is the third in a trilogy of films, which included *Vertigo Sea* and *Purple*, and was commissioned for the inaugural Ghana Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019. The series reflects on global warming as a hyperobject, or something so vast it is difficult to see and thus understand. When discussing *Purple*, Akomfrah stated, “I want people to be aware of the ways in which their lives are touched by things unseen and bear witness to these creeping environmental disasters and emergencies.” From depicted scenes of the desertification of West Africa to the Genocide of the Herero, *Four Nocturnes* makes visible the consequences of expansive temporal issues such as climate change and colonialism through the perspectives of those most impacted.

A second Akomfrah work will also be on view, *Toxic Cloud*, an installation inspired by the filmmaker’s experience growing up next to a coal-fired power station in London. Comprised of over 1000 plastic jugs suspended overhead, the installation captures the vast scale of the polluted atmosphere.

Both works remind viewers of the losses brought about by environmental abuses and devastation.

John Akomfrah: *Four Nocturnes* is presented by Alphawood Exhibitions at Wrightwood 659.

About the Artist

Akomfrah (b. 1957) lives and works in London. He is a founding member of the influential Black Audio Film Collective (1982–1998) and its offshoot, the film and television production company Smoking Dogs Films (1998–present). His work has been shown in museums and exhibitions around the world including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the New Museum, New York; the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Serpentine Gallery, London; and Tate Britain, London, among others. He has also been featured in many international film festivals, including Sundance Film Festival, Utah, US (2013 and 2011) and Toronto International Film Festival, Canada (2012). He was awarded the Artes Mundi Prize in 2017 and a Knighthood for services to the Arts in 2023. In 2024 Akomfrah presented a new body of work entitled *Listening All Night to the Rain* in the British Pavilion in Venice, commissioned by the British Council for the 60th Venice Biennale.

Also on View this Fall at Wrightwood 659: *Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now*

Opening on November 8, 2024, *Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now* will feature 28 contemporary artists from the Himalayas, Asia, and diaspora whose work will be presented in dialogue with objects from the permanent collection of the Rubin Museum of Art in New York. With 18 commissions as well as recent work across mediums—including painting, sculpture, sound, video, and installation—the exhibition reimagines the forms, symbols, and narratives found within the living cultural heritage of Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and other Himalayan regions. Organized by the Rubin Museum of Art in New York on the occasion of its 20th anniversary, *Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now* is presented at Wrightwood 659 by Halsted A&A Foundation through February 15, 2025.

About Wrightwood 659

Founded in 2018, Wrightwood 659 is a private, non-collecting institution. Located at 659 W. Wrightwood Avenue, in Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood, it is a new kind of arts space devoted to presenting exhibitions on architecture and socially engaged art, including issues facing the LGBTQ+ community, and Asian art and architecture. Wrightwood 659 was designed by Pritzker Prize winner Tadao Ando, who transformed a 1920s building with his signature concrete forms and poetic treatment of natural light. Acclaimed as one of Chicago’s

“hidden treasures,” Wrightwood 659 offers visitors a chance to engage with the pressing issues of our time in an intimate and beautiful space. For additional information, please visit wrightwood659.org.

About Alphawood Exhibitions

Alphawood Exhibitions is an affiliate of Alphawood Foundation, a Chicago-based, grant-making private foundation working for an equitable, just, and humane society.

Wrightwood 659 Hours of Operation

Fridays 12 noon-7 pm; Saturdays 10 am-5 pm.

Tickets

Admission is \$15 and is available online only at <https://tickets.wrightwood659.org/events>. Tickets go on sale September 5, 2024. Please note, admission is by advance ticket only. Walk-ups are not permitted.

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Image:

John Akomfrah, *Four Nocturnes*, 2019. Three channel HD colour video installation, 7.1 sound, 50 minutes. Installed in The Unintended Beauty of Disaster, Lisson Gallery, London, 2021. © Smoking Dogs Films; Courtesy Smoking Dogs Films and Lisson Gallery.

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