

t r a n s f o r m e r

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CONTACT: Victoria Reis/Katie Lee
202.483.1102 / info@transformerdc.org

Azikiwe Mohammed

*Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea:
An Open Platform For Discussion*

April 9 – May 21, 2022

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 9, 12 – 6pm
Programming details below.



Transformer proudly presents *Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea: An Open Platform for Discussion*, a site-specific installation by New York-based artist Azikiwe Mohammed for his first DC exhibition. Featuring the Auntie / Uncle Julius family – wooden sculptural figures that are a reoccurring cast throughout Mohammed's works – as they share a meal around the dinner table, this exhibition explores concepts of togetherness, time, and dialogue.

Mohammed's thoughtful, nuanced installations center around the experiences of Blackness in America, ultimately creating spaces for Black people to collectively engage in learning, celebration, retreat, and rest. *Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea* is a continuation of Mohammed's reflections upon Black people's relationship to time – a scarcity and luxury for many as they navigate the responsibilities and demands of living – and presents a scenario in which the time and dedication to a communal gathering centered around food is given priority. Within the installation are depictions of common, familiar Black household items, such as a painting featuring Crystal hot sauce, and neon sculptures of collard greens and steak, that highlight the rich history of Black cuisine and culture.

Through recordings that Mohammed facilitated with his friends and family, the Auntie / Uncle Julius family share with each other stories about their days, dreams, and discussions of current events depicting the possible conversations that take place in a dinner setting. The artist extends this dinner invitation to the public, asking the DC community to contribute to these conversations, which provide a platform for historically voiceless people and communities. Sharing their own audio about their days and experiences, DC participants will help shape the dialogue, which will be added to the ongoing, durational conversation throughout the course of the exhibition. Thoughtfully taking into considerations the ongoing challenges and physical limitations that the pandemic imposes, these discussions will be available for the public to stream via FM radio.

In presenting *Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea* in Washington, DC, colloquially known as the 'Chocolate City', the Auntie / Uncle Julius family serves as an analogy for thousands of households within DC's dynamic community, and simultaneously provides a reminder as to how Black families are disrupted and separated due to policing practices and a pandemic that has disproportionately affected communities of color. *Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea: An Open Platform For Discussion*, presented as part of Transformer's 20th anniversary schedule, includes several public programs that align with Transformer's mission of engaging and empowering the DC community through partnerships with fellow non-profit organizations.

Highlighting the vital community services of Bread for the City and N Street Village, exhibition programming includes two raffle programs, hosted by The New Davonhaime Food Bank – a traveling food bank that services a wide variety of communities. The New Davonhaime Food Bank is named for an eponymous fictitious city created by Mohammed in

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t r a n s f o r m e r

2015 that imagines a self-dictated future for Black people, and currently operates as the site of community-centric actions. New Davonhaimé's name is derived from a linguistic combination of five American cities with the highest Black-population densities, as determined by census data (Birmingham, Alabama; Savannah, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Detroit, Michigan; and Jackson, Mississippi). All raffle proceeds will be donated to Bread for the City and N Street Village. Raffle winners will receive an original sculptural artwork by Azikiwe Mohammed.

Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea: An Open Platform For Discussion is organized by Katie Lee, Transformer's Exhibitions and Programs Manager.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING:

Sat., April 9, 2022,
12 – 6pm: **Opening Day & Raffle Time #1 w/ The New Davonhaimé Food Bank**
Meet Azikiwe Mohammed, learn more about the exhibition, and participate in a raffle that benefits Bread for the City and N Street Village. This raffle will run from April 9 – May 13, 2022; the winner of this raffle will be announced on Saturday, May 14th at 3pm.

Bread for the City is a local non-profit that supports Washington, DC residents living with low income to develop their power to determine the future of their own communities. They provide food, clothing, medical care, and legal and social services to reduce the burden of poverty.

N Street Village is a local non-profit that supports women in Washington, DC experiencing homelessness by offering a broad spectrum of services, housing, and advocacy in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Wed., May 4, 2022,
5:30pm: **Artist Talk**
Tune in to @transformerdc to hear Azikiwe Mohammed in conversation with curator Katie Lee as they discuss Mohammed's multidisciplinary practice, as well as elements of the exhibition.

Sat., May 14, 2022,
1 – 3pm: **Let's Eat: Sustainable Means of Feeding The Fam**
Meet the partnering peer non-profit organizations at a communal picnic, hosted by Transformer at Logan Circle Park. Bring your own meal and learn more about each organization, as well as more about The New Davonhaimé Food Bank. Presented in partnership with Logan Circle Main Street. The winner of Raffle Time #1 will be announced during the program at 2pm.
In the case of inclement weather, this program will be presented virtually on the same date / time.

Sat., Mar. 21, 2022:
12 – 6pm: **Closing Day & Raffle Time #2 w/ The New Davonhaimé Food Bank**
Meet the Auntie / Uncle Julius family one last time during the closing day. All proceeds from this final raffle will benefit Bread for the City and N Street Village. The winner of Raffle Time #2 will be announced at 6pm.

ONGOING:

How Was Your Day

Partake in the Auntie / Uncle Julius family dinner by contributing your own audio recording to be included in the exhibition. These recordings will be paired with soundscapes created by the artist and will be updated regularly throughout the course of the exhibition. Leave a voicemail by calling 771-201-6999, or send your voice recording to howwasyourday@uncleauntie.com, and record answers to the following prompts:

How was your day?

Where are you coming from, what are you returning to?

Can you describe what a good day for you entails?

t r a n s f o r m e r

ONGOING: Raffle Time w/ The New Davonhaime Food Bank

Why not turn fake food into real food for people? – Azikiwe Mohammed

Participate in the two raffle programs to win an original food sculpture created by Azikiwe Mohammed. All proceeds will be donated to Bread for the City and N Street Village. To participate, Venmo \$20 to @newdavonhaimefoodbank, please be sure to leave your email address in the comment of Venmo transaction.

Raffle Time #1: April 9 – May 13, 2022. This raffle will end on Friday, May 13, at 11:59 EST. The winner of this raffle will be announced on Saturday, May 14, at 3pm EST during the Let's Eat: Sustainable Means of Feeding The Fam program. The winner must be present to pick up the artwork on Saturday May 14, otherwise another winner will be selected.

Raffle Time #2: May 14 – May 21, 2022. This raffle will end on Saturday, May 21, at 6pm EST. The winner of this raffle will be announced on Saturday, May 21, at 6pm. The winner must be present to pick up the artwork on Saturday May 21, otherwise another winner will be selected.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

A 2005 graduate of Bard College where he studied photography and fine arts, **Azikiwe Mohammed** received the Art Matters Grant in 2015, the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist Grant in 2016 and a Rauschenberg Artist Fund grant in 2021. Mohammed is an alumnus of Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, New York and Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, New Jersey. Mohammed has held a number of solo shows at locations including the Knockdown Center, Maspeth, New York; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA; Ace Hotel Chicago, Illinois; Anna Zorina, New York, NY and Mindy Solomon, Miami, FL. He has participated in group exhibitions at MoMA PS1, Queens, New York; Antenna Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana; Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, California and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Mohammed's work has been featured in [The New York Times](#), [Artforum](#), and [Art21](#).

Exhibition Hours at Transformer: Wednesday – Saturday 12–6pm, and by appointment. Masks are required.

Image Credit: Azikiwe Mohammed, *Cajun-Fried Catfish Dinner*, 2022.

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Shared Words, Split Catfish and Sweet Tea: An Open Platform For Discussion's Exhibition Partners include:

