

IWA LEWA Art Intervention

#IwaLewaArtIntervention

[Iwa Lewa (eewah·lehwah): Yoruba for "Beauty is Character," as in the worth of an artwork lies in the character of the artist. Opposite of "Obu Rewa," meaning "uglified," as in an artwork can be tainted by the character of the artist. "Iwa Lewa" is a term used in Yoruba when discussing art aesthetics.]

IWA LEWA is a series of peaceful **art interventions** at mainstream art institutions, staged by **people of color, women of all races**, people who identify as such and allies. The project is a response to the ongoing gross underrepresentation of **women artists** and **artists of color** in the mainstream art world. The merging of the two marginalized groups of artists (women of all races and people of color) is in the spirit of the joining of forces and sharing of platforms between women suffragists and abolitionists who included formally enslaved Black people such as Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass.

NEXT IWA LEWA ART INTERVENTION:

@ Gagosian Gallery

456 N Camden Dr.

Beverly Hills, CA 90210 PARKING:

<http://www.beverlyhills.org/citygovernment/parkingservices/parkinglocationsmap/>

This Friday Evening, 9/16/16, 7:15pm

During Helen Frankenthaler Opening Reception

In Celebration of Her Work and Spirit

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTE: Please do not publically post this event, as it must be kept secret until it happens. Share only with WOMEN ARTISTS OF ALL RACES, ARTISTS OF COLOR, people who identify as such and allies whom you think may be interested in participating. This private event page will become public after the intervention, in order to allow interested parties access to our intent and process.

IWA LEWA INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION:

Come dressed as you desire, in any color and style. Please consider wearing white as a unifying symbol of peace. At 7:15pm we will meet on the sidewalk immediately outside of Gagosian Gallery, and review our following plan of action.

Bring with you a concealed work of art created by you or a loved one, hidden in your garment or in a bag large enough to accommodate it. Please consider attaching a poster board to the back of your artwork with the words in large print that appear at the very bottom of this description. Please also feel free to bring any small percussive or musical instrument which you can play with one hand while holding your artwork in the other. There will be two sets of percussive instruments that emulate the sound of a rain storm and thunder -- for the warrior Orishas (Yoruba deities) Oya-Yansa and Chango who control rain storms, thunder, lighting and tornadoes for truth and justice sake.

Please also bring with you your business cards, post cards or fliers to any exhibitions or art events in which you are participating, and/or any images or messages in writing that you would like for Gagosian to have. Included in the bag will be a formal invitation for Gagosian to schedule a group discussion with us, as a follow-up to the intervention. We will place all these contents in a small brown paper bag marked "Iwa Lewa Art Intervention" and leave them with the gallery receptionist.

We will separate into two groups with equal numbers of people in each, and enter the gallery. Each group will form a loose huddle in the center of each of the two main rooms in the gallery. One person in each of the two groups will be designated as the "Leader." The Leader in Group 1 will sound the percussive instruments that emulate a rain storm and thunder. When the crowd silences, the Leader in Group 1 will recite loudly the following quote by Helen Frankenthaler, saying her name afterwards: **"There are no rules. That is how art is born, how breakthroughs happen. Go against the rules or ignore the rules. That is what invention is about." - Helen Frankenthaler.** The Leader in Group 2 will then do the same. Then, simultaneously, both Leaders will shout loudly, **"IWA LEWA! Helen Frankenthaler, we celebrate you! Gagosian we thank you!"**

All people in both groups will then immediately chant **"Iwa Lewa"** repeatedly, as we all sound whatever instruments we have for a few seconds. We will then cease chanting, stow the instruments in our pockets and quietly reveal our artwork, holding it high in the air (as in "hands up don't shoot").

Maintaining our artwork held high, we will disperse the huddle and silently walk towards the periphery of the room, where we will space ourselves evenly along the 4 walls of each room, facing our artwork inward with our backs a couple of feet from the wall. It is important that we place ourselves and our artworks in between Frankenthaler's paintings, if possible, and not obstruct them. We will stand in this posture for a few seconds. We hereafter remain quiet for the rest of the performance, unless otherwise stated, so that people can focus on our art.

We will begin to quietly walk around the periphery of the room in one direction (clockwise), facing our art inward, with our backs towards the wall a few feet behind us. While maintaining equal space between one another, we will snake around the entire gallery in such fashion, without stopping – rotating around the gallery in a clockwise direction -- until we cluster at the end of the snake in a group, all the while holding our art high. We will then pose as a group for pictures, with our art held visibly.

At the sound of the African percussive instrument, we begin chanting "Iwa Lewa" continuously throughout while we recess as a group and exit the gallery. We then line up like soldiers, just outside of the gallery, on either side of the sidewalk, evenly spaced out and display our artwork inward, held in our hands, as people leave the gallery and walk through us. The opening reception ends at 8pm. If asked to leave prior to finishing our performance, we will comply without resistance.

Iwa Lewa is a project organized by Lili Bernard and made possible by a free flowing collaborative of artists of color, women artists of all races, people who identify as such and allies.

Special thanks to artist/professor Moyo Okediji for suggesting the name **"Iwa Lewa"** and the chanting.

Below is the suggested poster which you can paint or print and affix to the back of your artwork. Hashtag:

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HELEN FRANKENTHALER

we celebrate your work and spirit!

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

we thank you for this exhibit!

THIS IS AN

I W A L E W A

A R T I N T E R V E N T I O N

in response to the ongoing gross underrepresentation of

Artists of Color & Women Artists of All Races.

Artwork by _____

(Insert name of artist.)

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