

Mimosa House

bingenTV

27 October - 8 December 2023

Press Preview: 6:30-9pm, Thursday 26 October 2023
Mimosa House, 47 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8SP



Fig. 1 still from *bingenTV*
Alice Morgan-Richards as Gardenia

(London, 27 October 2023): Mimosa House is pleased to present *bingenTV*, an ambitious new exhibition about alternative queer histories conceived by artists Naomi Woo and Sophie Seita, in conversation with The Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions, and produced by Queer Art Projects. *bingenTV* opens to the public at Mimosa House on 27 October 2023 and runs until 8 December 2023.

The exhibition centres on three episodes of a fictional talk show, *bingenTV*. Playful, flirty, and delightfully weird, the talk show immerses audiences in the world of The Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions, a queer-feminist collective originally founded by the German mediaeval mystic and musician Hildegard von Bingen in the 12th century. The talk show's charismatic host Gardenia (played by Alice Morgan-Richards)

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interviews “members of the society”: a cast of queer characters real and fictional, past and present, in a whirlwind jaunt through space and time.

Underneath the over-the-top 80s aesthetic and patent absurdity, the work is also a sharp commentary on how history is recorded, whose stories are allowed to be told, and how we know about the past. Drawing on speculative archives and techniques of autofiction, the artists ask: if there *had been* such a queer talk show, would it have been allowed to air, or would the archive have been lost to history? The artists point to the fact that queer communities of care have always existed, and have always been engaged in political and social struggle—their histories simply haven’t always been recorded.



Fig 2. still from *bingenTV*
Steffi Walker as Edith

Naomi Woo and Sophie Seita say: “Since 2020, we have engaged in research into The Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions, founded—we believe—in the 12th century by saint, botanist, mystic, and musician, Hildegard von Bingen. The society lived on throughout the centuries and across the globe, emerging under different names, in different languages. Tracing its origins and propagations therefore hasn’t been an easy endeavour, as no written record of the society exists. As such, we have relied heavily on gossip, goodwill, and reading between the lines to conduct our research”.

The artists claim to have discovered *bingenTV* in the course of their research into the society. Their speculative history of the show stresses the social and political contexts under which queer stories have been actively suppressed. Filmed over the course of 1987, *bingenTV* was ultimately cancelled because of Section 28, a law introduced by

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Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in December 1987 (and effective from May 1988), that prohibited the public 'promotion of homosexuality'.

"People often ask us if *bingenTV* and Hildegard's society really existed. We feel this is not the most interesting question to ask about the canon and queer community. How can we know about histories and stories that have been continually hidden and pushed aside? For us, like the talk show host Gardenia, 'fandom is the better kind of history'." —Naomi Woo and Sophie Seita

In addition to the film *bingenTV*, the exhibition also features new textile works, writing, photographs and installation pieces that reflect on hidden and forgotten voices in queer history and beyond.

For the duration of the exhibition, the space will be activated through readings, workshops, and performances.



Fig. still from *bingenTV*

Left to right: Milla Harding, Ishmael Kirby, Alice Morgan-Richards, Naomi Woo

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Fig. still from *bingenTV*. Left to right: Jacqui Bardelang, Tuna Erdem, Christy Edwall

At the preview of *bingenTV*, between 6:30-9pm on 26 October 2023, there will be a reading by Sister Steve of Ophelia Drowning (Kell w Farshéa), poet, and co-founder of the London House of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence; followed by drinks and music.

The exhibition is funded by Canada Council for the Arts, Arts Council England, Department of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Exhibition Dates: 27 October - 8 December 2023

Press Preview: 26 October, 6:30 - 9pm

Location: Mimosa House

Address: 47 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8SP

Opening Times: Wednesday – Saturday, 12:00-6pm

<https://www.mimosahouse.co.uk>

<https://www.mimosahouse.co.uk/upcoming-1>

Work List:

***bingenTV* (2023) (HD video, running time 43 minutes 43 seconds)**

Director: Sophie Seita

Writers: Sophie Seita + Emma Attwood

Producers: The Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions + Queer Art Projects

Executive Producers: Sophie Seita, Naomi Woo, Seda Ergul

Cast: Alice Morgan-Richards, Steffi Walker, Milla Harding, Ishmael Kirby, Jacqui Bardelang, Naomi Woo, Sophie Seita

Extras: Tuna Erdem, Amira Dabboussi, Sophia Shaw, Lucy van de Wiel, Joanna Pidcock, Cerulean Bezzina, Jayson Fowler, Klara Du Plessis, Ghazal Mosadeq, Christy Edwall, Amelie O'Brien

Cinematographer: Katarzyna Perlak

Editor: Sophie Seita

Animation and Colour Grading: Jack Barraclough

Composer: Ashley Au

Sound Recording: Jonathan Eato

Sound Editing and Mastering: Rupert Clervaux

Set Design: Laura Cobb

Assistant Director: Naomi Woo

Lighting Design: Omar Radwan

Casting Director: Celine Lowenthal

Costume Design: Laura Cobb, Sophie Seita

Set Assistant and Digital Technician: Ruby Reding

Set Construction: Florence Uniacke, Laura Cobb, Seda Ergul

Make-Up & Hair: Alice Morgan-Richards, Steffi Walker, Milla Harding, Ishmael Kirby, Jacqui Bardelang

Closed Captioning: Collective Text (special thanks to Tom and Bea)

Filmed at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama; The Women's Art Library;

Goldsmiths, University of London; The Goldsmiths Allotment; a private East London garden

***bingenTV* has open captions to make it fully accessible.**

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To Tend, To Sow..., 2023

Yael Ort-Dinoor, Sophie Seita, Naomi Woo

Material: Digital knit (100% soft acrylic yarn), acrylic tube

Dimensions: 100x264cm

Flowers Are Our Currency, 2023

Yael Ort-Dinoor, Sophie Seita, Naomi Woo

Material: Digital print on recycled polyester, acrylic tube

Dimensions: 80x120cm

Unlearn what it means to move in this garden, 2023

Sophie Seita & Naomi Woo

Materials: vinyl, yarn, pins

Dimensions: variable

And I will sing beautifully for my companions, 2020-2023

Sophie Seita & Naomi Woo

Materials: archival prints on acetate

Dimensions: variable



Fig. still from *bingenTV*. Ishmael Kirby as Cornelia.

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Public Programme at Mimosa House during the exhibition:

Opening event, 26 Oct: with a reading by Kell w Farshéa, poet, co-founder of the London House of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/profile/kell-w-farshéa>

Nov 11, 5-6pm: Performance by and Q&A with Youngsook Choi, artist

<https://youngsookchoi.com>

Nov, 22 4.30pm: Workshop with Taey lohe

<https://taey.com>

Dec 6, 5pm: Artist Talk and listening party with Ashley Au, composer <http://www.ashleyau.com>

Dec 7, 7pm-9pm: Closing lecture performance with Sophie Seita and Naomi Woo

PRESS CONTACT

For additional information, interview requests or images please contact:

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Seda Ergul: seda@queerartprojects.co.uk

THE HILDEGARD VON BINGEN SOCIETY FOR GARDENING COMPANIONS

The Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions transplants, reroots, and propagates a queer, feminist gardening society imagined to be founded by 12th century mystic and musician Hildegard von Bingen. The contemporary iteration of the Society brings together an international collective of artists, gardeners, archivists, researchers, as well as members of the public to investigate how performance and public art allow us to share knowledge, build community, enhance creativity, and decrease loneliness. Since 2020, in response to the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has hosted online and in-person community gatherings, produced an opera, a website, a zine, allotment workshops on permaculture, and a writing group for people from low-income backgrounds. The project gives voice to hidden and forgotten queer history, interspecies and environmental care.

<https://hildegardsgardeningcompanions.cargo.site/>

@hildegardsgardeningsociety

LEAD ARTISTS

Sophie Seita and Naomi Woo have worked together since 2018 and have developed projects that re-imagine and translate the work of neglected historical female and queer artists, musicians, writers, and philosophers into experimental performances that blend music, poetry, research, and live art. Between lecture-performance and love letter, their performances forge an imagined collective spanning varied cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds.

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Naomi Woo

Canadian conductor and pianist Naomi Woo is a widely sought-after symphonic and operatic conductor and the 2022 winner of the Canada Council's prestigious Virginia Parker Prize. After a successful four-year tenure as assistant conductor of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra she will join the Orchestre Métropolitain Montréal as Artistic Partner from the 2023-24 season and the Philadelphia Orchestra as assistant conductor for the 24-25 season.

Highlights of her auspicious 23-24 season include conducting engagements with the Orchestre Métropolitain, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Toronto Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, and National Arts Center Orchestra; two appearances with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, where she is a music director finalist; and an extensive tour of England leading English Touring Opera's *Cinderella*. As an assistant/cover conductor Naomi works with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, and Orchestre Métropolitain, and she conducts classical subscription concerts with the Orchestre Symphonique de Laval, Orchestre Symphonique de Trois-Rivières, Orchestre symphonique de la Côte-Nord, Symphony Nova Scotia, and the Thunder Bay Symphony.

Engagements in previous seasons include the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic, Ann Arbor Symphony, Orchestra NOW (New York), Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, and Regina Symphony, and her debut at LSO St. Luke's in London with the ensemble Tangram Sound. On the opera stage, she has conducted the Canadian premiere of Du Yun's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angel's Bone* in Vancouver and the world premiere of Ellis Ludwig-Leone's *The Night Falls* in New York City. In fall 2022, she assisted the world premiere of Oliver Leith's opera *Last Days* at Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

Naomi is a member of Tapestry Opera's Women in Musical Leadership program and was chosen by her mentor Yannick Nézet-Séguin as a member of the Orchestre Métropolitain's inaugural orchestral conducting academy. Naomi holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, where she was a Gates Cambridge Scholar. She has also studied mathematics, philosophy, and music at Yale College, the Yale School of Music, and Université de Montréal.

<http://www.naomiwoo.com/>

@woonaomiwoo

Sophie Seita

Sophie Seita is an artist and researcher whose work swims in the muddy waters of language, explores materiality, texture, and gesture, and the speculative potential of the archive. She regularly performs and shows work across multiple media, publishes books, makes textiles and graphic scores, leads experimental workshops around voice, touch, translation, and queer performance, at national and international venues such as Nottingham Contemporary, [space], Flat Time House, the Arnolfini, Bold Tendencies, the Serpentine, the Royal Academy of Arts, La MaMa Galleria (NYC), UP Projects, Literarisches Colloquium Berlin (Germany), Kunsthalle Darmstadt (Germany), JNU (New Delhi), Women's Art Collection Cambridge, Grand Union, Taller Bloc (Santiago de Chile), Ruta del Castor (Mexico City). She's received grants and awards from Arts Council England, the Canada Council, British Council, DAAD, Creative Scotland, amongst others. In 2022, she was a Dorothea Schlegel Artist in Residence in Berlin, and in 2023 was a Visiting Artist at Brown University. She is a Lecturer in the Art Department at Goldsmiths and in

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2024 will hold the Werner Düttmann Fellowship at the Akademie der Künste (German Academy of the Arts). Her latest book is *Lessons of Decal* forthcoming from the 87 Press in December 2023.

www.sophieseita.com

PRODUCER

Queer Art Projects

Queer Art Projects (QAP) is an artist led creative production company that creates art projects like exhibitions, performances, screenings, talks and workshops, commissioning new work from queer artists on cutting edge contemporary issues and bringing existing work together in contexts that underline their relevance and resonance. QAP has an online gallery qap.digital selling contemporary queer art.

<https://www.queerartprojects.co.uk/>

Related Public Programme:

6 October, 4:30-5:45pm: Grand Union, Birmingham: Queer Listening Workshop and Sound Walk, led by Sophie Seita and Seda Ergul

6 October, 6pm, eco ritual performance by Niya B.

10 October, 6.-7.30pm: Nottingham Contemporary, Performance and artist talk 'Beethoven Was a Lesbian', by Sophie Seita and Naomi Woo