

n Performance: Mamela Nyamza, Black Privilege (The Present is Not Enough)



By [Jamison Edgar](#) on July 5, 2019 | [No Comments](#)



Black Privilege

[Mamela Nyamza](#)

[The Present is Not Enough](#), HAU2

June 25-26

From a black void emerges the glimpse of a goddess.

Mamela Nyamza, appears perched on top of a bronze wheeled-staircase. Her own bronzed body in the warm light reflects the gold jewelry that adorns her head, ears, wrists and ankles. A second performer, Sello Pesa, catches the eye only a few seconds later when his cumbersome red and black magisterial robes bunch together as he physically pushes Nyanza's mobile pedestal.

Black Privilege embodies the dark irony of the title's contradiction. A saturation of iconographic sonography contrasts Nyanza's subdued choreography. The resulting performance seduces a gaze only to return the bright bite of a hot sun. We squint while bearing witness to her tragic fall from grace.

"Please Rise". Nyanza stands holding a gold spear while a metallic set of scales balance on her head. We observe Lady Liberty in silence. She looks past us while the scales move precariously around her bare chest. Afterwards, a vibrating exercise machine is plugged in with a long black extension cord. When the machine is activated, a familiar electric beep ruptures the shows theatrical illusion. Standing on the platform, Nyanza exhibits her now gyrating body. At one moment while laying horizontal and stiff on top of the machine, she exhales a pained bit of laughter while jewelry is shaken off of her head.

"Please Rise". Nyanza crouches at the base of the stairs. Her wet eyes look up to meet ours. With authority in his voice, Pesa asks us to leave the theatre. We are rushed out without a curtain call.

Moments prior, Nyanza dismounted from her high post, and once laying on her back, inched her body forward as a computerized voice guided her with navigational directions around the checkered floor of the theatre. Her gilded body-paint smears a visible wake in her path. It is not until after returning to the stairs and lifting her upper body from the ground that we realize that this is no longer a monument, but an auction block. Her eyes hold the trauma of our silent looking.

Exiting the theatre, I feel punctured – slightly deflated – a testament to the performance's sharp visual clarity. Leveraging the utopic with the traumatic, Nyanza summons the past in a radical present. The result conjures a temporal whiplash that extends beyond the theatre doors.

Photo: Yazeed