

Presented by Arts House

# Sonic Hieroglyphs

## Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe

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Image: Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe

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1pm–7pm, Sat 29 Jul  
1pm–7pm, Sun 30 Jul  
This is a durational event – you can  
come and go as you please

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[artshouse.com.au](http://artshouse.com.au)

**Creator, Scribe, Performer  
& Archivist:**

Stéphanie Kabanyana  
Kanyandekwe

**Converser, Lounge Facilitator,  
Artist's Elder:**

Stephen Harrison

**The Importance of oral testimony, and  
culture as a continuum**

“Whether testimony is defined as oral history, life stories, or ethnography is irrelevant; what is crucial is that the voice of the witness is prominent.”<sup>1</sup>

Testimony within oral history is about memory mapping, ancestral memory (epigenetics), unearthing new information and contextualising a group's experience regarding a particular event, or cultural structure.

I am interested in how culture is perceived as only existing before us, particularly in the western context, but not necessarily seen as actioned in the present. I chose to create recorded narrative ceremonies engaging with oral history centred on cultural past and future as a method of activism against the homogenisation and appropriation of culture. Creating and engaging in narrative ceremonies enables us to be mindfully conscious in the act of continuing/contributing to a cultural history and shaping its trajectory whilst being present in a contemporary setting.

Through the durational performance of *Sonic Hieroglyphs* exploring the concepts of ‘Ancestry’ and ‘Legacy’, each over a 6 hour period, there is a liminal moment between artist and audience/participants. By questioning the audience, interpreting their oral history responses and transcribing them into graphic scores ready for performance, together we identify

and compose what is culturally valued in the present, and what is predicted or wished for in the future. This action enables all to have agency in continuing their cultural identities.

**Sonic Hieroglyphs in action**

I call upon three elements to present *Sonic Hieroglyphs*: my ongoing research into Rwandan glyph systems; tertiary training in western music composition; and my synaesthesia (sound/colour/texture, auditory-tactile, auditory/emotion). Combining these allows a unique methodology in enquiring and listening to people's stories, seeing/hearing/feeling their responses, and transcribing what I have experienced onto a roll of paper as a graphic score. I then relay this information musically or conversationally to others entering the space. After an interaction, I cut of their section of paper and invite the audience member to hang this transcription on the wall, providing a portrait that contributes to our global lounge room we are in physically and metaphorically.

— *Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe*  
[www.kabanyana.com](http://www.kabanyana.com)

<sup>1</sup> — Professor Alan Wieder “Testimony as Oral History: Lessons from South Africa.” *Educational Researcher*, Vol 33, Issue 6, pp. 23 – 28. First published date: July-01-2016.

**Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe**

Creator, Scribe, Performer & Archivist

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Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe is a Rwandan-British composer and multidisciplinary artist. Through her viewpoint as a synaesthetic ‘Third Culture Kid’, her research-based arts practice focuses on the composition and archiving of culture, within the framework of transcription through artistry.

Stéphanie artistically expresses her ongoing research findings in graphic music scores and textiles, narrative and performance ceremonies, and cultural contextualisation through public cross-generational conversations.



**Stephen Harrison**

Converser, Lounge Facilitator, Artist’s Elder

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Stephen Harrison is the father of the artist. His role within this work is as the lounge facilitator, artist’s elder and converser, engaging in cross-generational conversations with audience members in wait or after their interaction with the artist. Stephen has been a key influence in the development of the artists’s thinking on archiving and categorising culture, having had an international career at the forefront of IT introduction into academic libraries in non-western countries before settling in Australia.

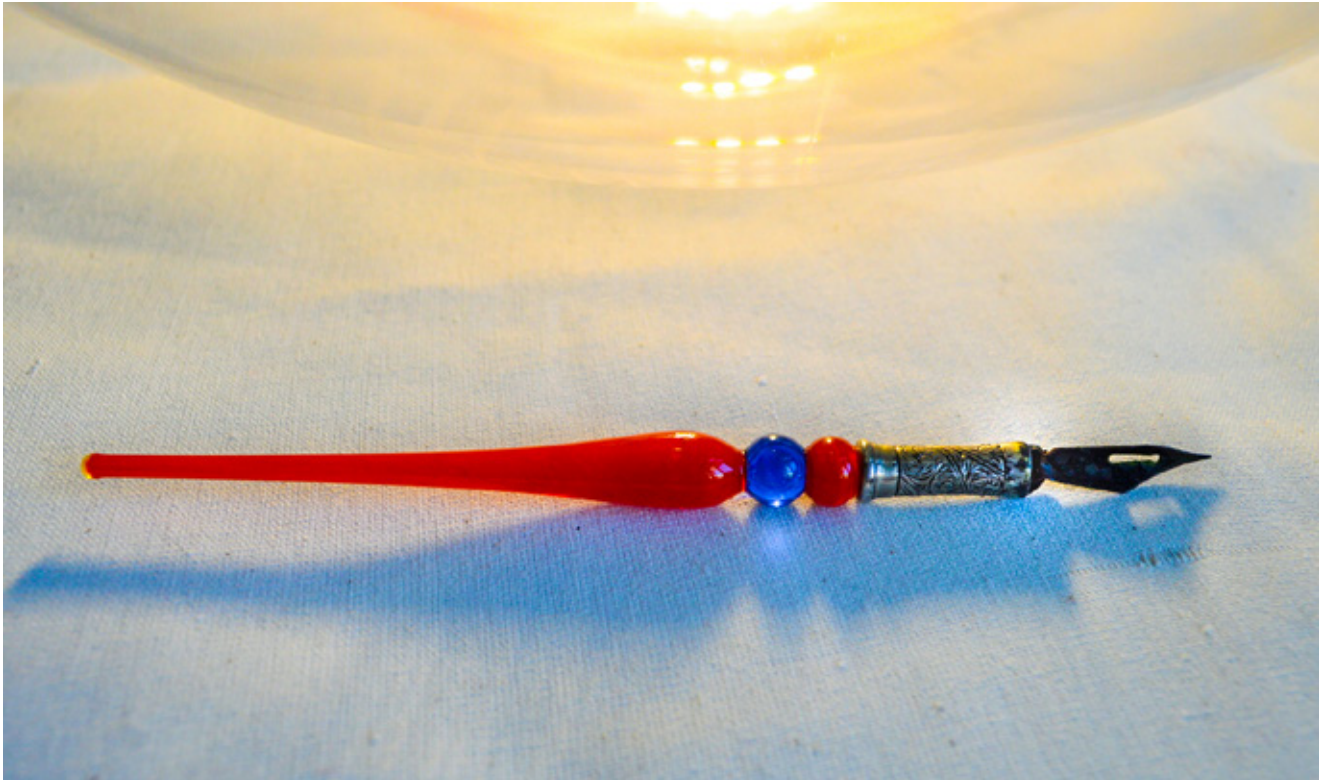


Image: Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe

Thank You

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HOUSE**

**M** CITY OF  
MELBOURNE

First and foremost my respects to the Sovereign First Nations Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples on whose unceded land I am humbled, honoured, and thankful to be working and residing.

My ancestors, from my Mother: the Abasinga clan descended from the line of Kanyandekwe of Rwanda; and from my father: the Harrison sept from Clan Gordon of Scotland, and Haworth family originally of the Cornovii tribe and later Norman Vikings of England.

Linda of Present Story, Jess & Ruby of NOIR Darkroom, Chris of Red Cross Shops and Antoniette of Heavy Metal Jewellers: your support and energy is priceless. I am indebted to you all.

My family and friend family: I love and thank you.

Lastly, and integral to the creation of *Sonic Hieroglyphs*: all of you who come to and become the work. May it stimulate you to enquire further, and feel active within you cultures. Murakoze Cyane / Thank you so much.

Arts House, as a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne's contemporary centre for performance and interactive artforms. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

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[artshouse.com.au](http://artshouse.com.au)

Bookings:  
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(03) 9322 3720

Arts House acknowledges the traditional land upon which we are located, of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and pay our respect to Elders both past and present and, through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

