

# locustprojects

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Leila Weefur at Locust Projects. Photo by World Red Eye

## Leila Weefur: *PLAY+PREY*

*PLAY+PREY*, a gospel by artist, writer, and curator Leila Weefur (He/They/She), is a multi-channel film experience that recounts a relationship between God, the Church, and a queer Black child. The four-part film, and its accompanying architectural display, explore the playful impulses, innocence, and underlying violence implicated in the experience of queer Black children in the Christian Church. Beginning with an overture to the story of queer Biblical reclamation, this film builds a spiritual narrative that contemplates the structures, literally and metaphorically, and the rules imposed on pleasure, play, and sexuality under the rigidity of Black Christianity.

**“We go to the cinema to escape so that the film can swallow you whole and let your daily life dissolve. I hope to do the same with my films. To create video installations that evoke the sensorial experience of cinema. Telling stories translated through my own experience, I can create narratives that allow people to feel something uniquely personal and ensure that my practice also feeds into an eco-system of queer and BIPOC communities.”**

– Leila Weefur

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The narrative takes inspiration from four lyrical sermons from James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombone: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*:

*In that great day,  
People, in that great day,  
God's a-going to rain down fire.  
God's a-going to sit in the middle of the air  
To judge the quick and the dead.*

— "The Judgement Day" *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, James Weldon Johnson

In the second collaboration with KYN (Josh Casey & Yari Bundy) and with contributions from vocalist Sandra Lawson-Ndu, the film's original soundtrack recreates elements familiar to Christian gospel, combined with contemporary influences, to create a textured and personal touch. Filmed in the Havenscourt Community Church (Oakland, CA), where Weefur was baptized, the semi-autobiographical work also brings architectural structures common to the church into the installation.



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Leila Weefur (He/They/She) is an artist, writer, and curator based in Oakland, CA. Through video and installation, their interdisciplinary practice examines the performativity intrinsic to systems of belonging. The work brings together concepts of sensorial memory, abject Blackness, hyper surveillance, and the erotic. Weefur is a recipient of the Walter & Elise Haas Creative Work Fund and the MSP California Black Voices Project. Weefur has worked with local and national institutions including The Wattis Institute, McEvoy Foundation, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, SFMOMA, Museum of the African Diaspora, and Smack Mellon. Weefur's writing has been published in SEEN by BlackStar Productions, Sming

Sming Books, Baest Journal, and more. Weefur is a lecturer at Stanford University.

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## ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects is Miami's longest running nonprofit alternative art space. We produce, present, and nurture ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a leading incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national and international artists. We invest in South Florida's arts community by providing artists with project grants and empower creative careers by supporting the administrative work of being an artist through an onsite artist resource hub and access to pro bono legal services.



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## ART HAPPENS HERE.

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