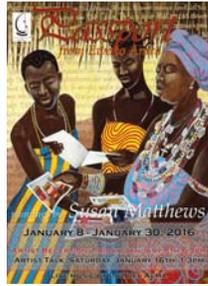


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Who: Susan Matthews

What: “Passport from Ewe to Arará”

When: January 8 – January 30, 2016

Opening Reception: Friday, January 8th 6-9pm

Live Music by Luz Del Alma

Artist Talk Saturday, January 16th 1-3pm

Where: Joyce Gordon Gallery

406 14th Street Oakland, CA. 94612 (12th St. Bart)

www.joycegordongallery.com

For more information please contact:

Gallery Curator, Eric Murphy

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Joyce Gordon Gallery presents “**Passport from Ewe to Arará.**” This selection of paintings by Susan Matthews links the traditions of the Arará peoples of Cuba with the Ewe peoples of the Volta region in Ghana and in Togo.

The paintings in this exhibit, “**Passport from Ewe to Arará**” represent selected works from Susan Matthews, one of seven artists chosen for a collaborative project called *Secrets Under the Skin*. In 1996, during one of Susan Matthews’ first trips to Cuba, she met Dr. Jill Flanders Crosby, professor of dance at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Eight years later, Flanders Crosby flew down from Alaska to see Matthews’ 2004 Cuba themed exhibit at Latham Square in Oakland. Shortly afterward she asked Matthews to join *Secrets Under the Skin*, an arts based research project linking Arará peoples of Cuba with the Ewe peoples of the Volta region. For further information on the Secrets Under the Skin project please see:

<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/spotlight/secretsundertheskin/>

By 2006, Dr. Flanders Crosby, a dancer and researcher, already had a long association with several Ewe villages in Ghana and Togo. While studying Afro-Cuban dance in New York, she noticed striking similarities between the ritual music and dance of the Arará peoples of Cuba and the Ewe peoples of Ghana and Togo. She decided to investigate.

Her inquiry led her to Perico, and Agramonte, Matanzas province, Cuba, where she again witnessed rhythms, dance steps, and gestures similar to those from Ghana and Togo. Digging deeper, she was invited to visit shrines and attend rituals, where she experienced concrete evidence that the Arará peoples currently living in Matanzas province Cuba had continued to practice the West African traditions of their ancestors of Ghana and Togo. The *Secrets Under the Skin* team set out to document this connection through shared stories, interviews, paintings, photography, and video. The paintings, manuscripts, and videos in this exhibit are part of that artistic documentation.

The paintings by Susan Matthews at Joyce Gordon Gallery delve into the African roots of Cuban folklore, and are based on first-hand observations of sacred spaces and rituals. Matthews has made many trips to rural towns in Matanzas province, Cuba, and recently, to Ghana and Togo, to observe and experience the links between Arará ritual culture in Cuba, and Ewe ritual culture in Ghana/Togo. The paintings and manuscripts in this exhibition document the Cuba-West Africa connection as seen through the artist's eye. As a result of the artist's collaborative team, a priestess in Dzodze, a traditional village in Ghana has been able to communicate directly with a religious practitioner from a rural town in Matanzas Province, Cuba.

Susan Matthews was raised in an African American and Latin American neighborhood in East Oakland. She first traveled to Cuba in 1995 to study music and folklore. Because of her East Oakland roots, she felt at home in the Afro-Latin environment of Cuba. For years she studied percussion every summer in Cuba. Inspired by the flourishing traditions on the island, she created a large body of paintings on the subject of folkloric music and dance in street performances. Her paintings were based on dancers and drummers she had studied with throughout the island. In 2004 she exhibited that series at Latham Square, exhibited by Pro Arts Gallery.

Joyce Gordon Gallery is a commercial fine art gallery located in the downtown district of Oakland, California. It exhibits art that reflects the social and cultural diversity of the Bay Area and international artists. The aim of the gallery is to respect the creative pursuits of the individual and seeks to make such work accessible to a broad audience.