



More performance art! Chukwuma Agubokwu looks for redemption at (e)merge

By Philippa P.B. Hughes on Oct 1, 2012



Images by Wilmer Wilson IV

I'm looking forward to seeing all the performance art at (e)merge art fair this year, but one in particular stands out: Chukwuma Agubokwu. He will explore failure and rebirth in his performance after having nearly lost his art at last year's fair when cleaning people destroyed his work believing it was trash. He's a performance artist on the rise and I am thrilled that I got a chance to work with him this summer when he performed at St Elizabeths hospital.

The east campus of the hospital had been closed off for several years and is now slated for major development. The development will take years to complete so while plans are still being formulated, the city hosted a series of activities over the summer that allowed visitors to peek inside one of the most beautiful and mysterious properties in DC. Art will be a major component of the development, so in that spirit, art became an important and prominent element of the summer events. I wanted to share with you the piece that he performed, which was called *Come and Go (Go)*. Here's Chuk's description:

Come and Go (Go) will be a short and jarring relational aesthetics piece engaging in the aspects of music, movement and performance related to the context of community and culture in Washington, DC.

Come and Go (Go) situates itself in the art historical lineage of works including Allan Kaprow's Happenings, Adrian Piper's Funk Lessons, and Nick Cave's Soundsuit street performances.

Come and Go (Go) engages in the cultural context of DC, with it's proximity to hotbeds of Go-Go music culture such as the Berry Farm, Anacostia, Congress Heights and Ward 8 in general.

The contents of the performance are as follows:

The artist DJs classic Go-Go hits, starting abruptly and without announcement.

Agents simultaneously make themselves present in the crowd of attendees through which they quickly disperse themselves. They perform improvised choreography of a style whose origin lies with Go-Go culture.

The agents' presence and dancing, in connection with the music ignites a participatory dance party.

At the height of the minutes-long happening, the music cuts to a spoken mantra - a meditation - a pallet cleanser.

During the mantra, the agents exit the space.

Once the mantra ends, the piece ends.

Chuk performed the piece after several city officials (including Mayor Gray, Deputy Mayor Hoskins, and Council Member Barry) spoke to the crowd about what a great boon the St Elizabeths development would be for Wards 7 and 8. They seemed quite startled when a bevy of young black men seemingly came out of nowhere and started dancing go go in front of the stage. Go go dance doesn't have the best reputation in some circles yet it's integrally part of DC culture and probably shouldn't be ignored, much less squashed, as some have tried to do. Once everyone realized it was a performance, several people joined in and city officials relaxed a bit.

Chuk ended with the mantra: "Whose community is of value?" which got a lot of people talking. It's a topic of discussion that doesn't wrap up nicely with a solution and it can be a very polarizing as well. I love that this art piece keeps the dialogue alive in a powerfully visual and dynamic way, as good art should do.

Chuk will be performing his new piece at (e)merge on Sunday at 1PM and 3 PM. See the full schedule of events [here](#).





