
THESEUS TEMPEL



Shannon Alonzo
Washerwoman

16 May until 5 October 2025
Theseus Temple, Volksgarten Vienna

With *Washerwoman*, Weltmuseum Wien is presenting a work by interdisciplinary artist Shannon Alonzo (born 1988, St. Joseph, Trinidad and Tobago) for the first time in Austria. In her mixed-media sculpture, she explores the theme of women's labour, which usually remains invisible. The life-size faceless figure made of resin, beeswax, clothes pegs and brown cotton represents an archetype of the working Caribbean woman.

With *Washerwoman*, the artist explores her personal history and emphasizes the silent power that lies in strenuous domestic work – such as washing clothes – which is traditionally associated with women. The work from 2018 is a tribute to generations of women whose contribution to our cultural heritage has so far received little visibility.

Alonzo impressively combines artistic form with socio-cultural and historical reflection. Her work encourages thinking about role models, collective memory and the invisible foundations of social structures.

Artist's Statement

Shannon Alonzo made *Washerwoman* in her grandmother's house in Trinidad. The work is thus imbued with the intimacy of a matriarchal dialogue. Alonzo describes her experience of making the sculpture:

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‘Somehow the *Washerwoman* became an old friend through the creation process. I sat with her, setting clothes pegs and modelling the wax. I meditated on her story, which is not written down in any book, and hoped that it might reveal itself through the rhythm of my hands working with hers. I think of garments as a kind of time capsule: They literally soak up our blood, sweat and tears. They absorb our essence. Although the woman washes constantly, she cannot remove the remnants of the past, whether they are seen or unseen.

Washerwoman is the result of an attempt to get to know our ancestors through the work of our hands, which move silently and over time alongside them. Through them we catch a glimpse of the everyday moments of our ancestors' existence, so closely interwoven that they create our own reality.’

Washerwoman was curated by Hanin Hannouch (Weltmuseum Wien) and is the first edition of the new format *WMW Contemporary*, with which the Weltmuseum Wien is focusing on contemporary art, design, and new media in order to negotiate topics such as neo-colonialism, global economies or identity and memory – with a special focus on artists from the so-called ‘Global South’.

The installation can be viewed from 16 May to 5 October 2025 in the Theseus Temple in Vienna’s Volksgarten. Admission is free.

Shannon Alonzo

Shannon Alonzo (b.1988, St Joseph, Trinidad and Tobago) is an interdisciplinary artist who focuses primarily on drawing, sculpture, and performance. Her work explores themes of collective belonging, sense of place, and the importance of carnival rituals to the Caribbean consciousness. She has worked in various areas of the creative industry since 2011, including visual art, costume design, and production design.

Alonzo graduated with a BA from London College of Fashion in 2012 and an MRes in Creative Practice from the University of Westminster in 2021.

Previous exhibitions and highlights: Wellcome Collection London (2025), Liverpool Biennale 2023, documenta fifteen in Germany (2022), Ambika P3 and London Gallery West in the UK, Alice Yard, Loftt Gallery and Black Box in Trinidad and Tobago as well as Atlantic World Art Fair auf Artsy.

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THE THESEUS TEMPLE

The neoclassical building was constructed between 1819 and 1823 according to plans by the court architect Peter von Nobile (1774-1854). Its original purpose was to house Antonio Canova's sculpture *Theseus Slaying the Centaur*. This white marble masterpiece stood inside the Theseus Temple for almost seventy years until it was moved to the newly completed Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1890, where it still stands today on the grand staircase.

Since 2012, the KHM-Museumsverband (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Theatermuseum, Weltmuseum Wien) has been showing a single important work of contemporary art in the Theseus Temple every year. 2025 the Weltmuseum Wien is continuing this tradition with the first edition of the new exhibition series *WMW Contemporary*.

Further WMW Contemporary projects 2025/26:

Tabita Rezaire. Calabash Nebula: Cosmological Tales of Connection
17 September 2025 until 11 January 2026

The Colours of the Earth. Modern Textile Art in Mexico
22 October 2025 to 6 April 2026

Indah Arsyad. The Ultimate Breath
26 November 2025 to 25 May 2026

EVENTS

Tue, 20 May, 6:30 p.m.

Washerwoman Expanded: Stories of Power, Art, and Global Asymmetries

Artist talk and panel discussion (in English)

Shannon Alonzo, Magdalena Buchczyk (Humboldt University, Berlin), Rina Alluri UNESCO Chair for Peace Research, University of Innsbruck, and Hanin Hannouch discuss how artistic, curatorial, and craft practices can make historical and contemporary power structures visible and critically question them.

Moderation: Claudia Isep, Austrian UNESCO Commission

During the event there will be a graphic recording (a live recording of the core statements supported by drawings).

This event is a co-operation between the Weltmuseum Wien and the Austrian Commission for UNESCO.

Location: eltmuseum Wien, Forum

Free participation with a valid museum ticket, limited number of participants

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PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

In the press section on our website, you can download press texts and press photos for current reporting free of charge:

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press/shannon-alonzo-washerwoman/>



Shannon Alonzo. *Washerwoman*

Exhibition view, Theseus Temple, 2025

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Opening Hours Theseus Temple

daily 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

free entry

More about the exhibition and about the Theseus Temple:

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/exhibitions/shannon-alonzo/>

<https://www.khm.at/en/exhibitions/theseus-temple>

Press contact

KHM-Museumsverband

Mag. Sarah Aistleitner

T +43 1 525 24 4025

Tanja Stigler

T +43 1 525 24 4019

presse@khm.at