



# Akosua Adoma Owusu

FILMMAKER / PRODUCER / CINEMATOGRAPHER

The universal appeal of filmmaker, producer and cinematographer Akosua Adoma Owusu's work, means it's been screened internationally and translated into many languages. Here she talks about her forthcoming debut feature, *Black Sunshine*, and working out of her comfort zone.

Why is film your chosen artistic medium?

Filmmaking is a major part of who I am and has given me the opportunity to connect with people and embrace different perspectives. I want to challenge how people define Blackness. It's not just one fixed thing and my films reflect this.

What does 'home' mean to you? How do you present this in your work?

I believe there is a universal desire to connect with a place. This plays out in my films, especially as a Ghanaian-American myself. At first, I filmed in Ghana and my processes were about shooting in Africa; I was searching for my identity, but I have since resolved this. I learned I was searching for home, but I don't have to, because it's always been within me.

Does having your work translated into many languages impact on the message?

I don't think so. It's been a great privilege to make films that have allowed me to connect with different audiences. My films have a universal appeal and I invite viewers to see the world through my lens.

What have you noticed about the new generation of filmmakers?

This new generation, specifically Black and African filmmakers, are telling our stories and transforming the meaning of cinema with the resources available to them now. They are committed to experimenting and borrowing from history to honour our ancestors. Look out for up-and-coming filmmaker P. Sam Kestie. She's a true chameleon, constantly evolving in her craft.

For your new film, *Black Sunshine*, you travelled to Brazil, which was unfamiliar. How does that affect the film? Does being out of your comfort zone help the process?

I travelled to Brazil this summer to continue working on the script for my upcoming feature. I found the culture in Bahia very much like Ghana. In Brazil, I saw everything for the first time just like a

child would. I also met one of my favourite filmmakers there, Isaac Julien. Watching his work was inspiring. I brought some Super-8 film with me and practiced shooting every day. I produced a short film essay in Salvador, which I hope to release in the new year.

Where do you find your inspiration?

Beauty in everyday life. In the past, I borrowed from history. I think I was doing that from fear of shooting. I'm a cinematographer, and filming in Brazil helped me realize that I'm not as bad as I thought. My films refer back to my past films.

Do you represent your 'triple consciousness' equally or some more than others?

It's manifested and represented in different forms with the overlapping of cinematic styles. I have no idea how I'm going to represent it until I begin shooting, borrowing from text or collecting from history and archive footage.

How did you get into film?

Filmmaking found me a time when I was at a crossroads in college figuring out my identity. I got into Film & Fine Art at the California

Institute of the Arts. I learned how to be self-reliant and this was liberating because it allowed me to be creatively self-sufficient and produce quality work with limited resources.

Who do you admire in the industry?

Dennis Lim, Director of Programming at the Lincoln Center in New York. He's one of the most innovative curators. He approached me about programming my work at the Robert J. Flaherty Film Seminar. I was so young and didn't even know what it was! He opened the door for me.

What is the most challenging aspect of filmmaking?

I think the most challenging aspect of filmmaking is producing experimental films on the Black experience that are socially conscious and engaging. I'm interested in being playful with content and form to challenge viewers, so I'd like to think I'm searching for a cinematic truth by developing my own Black film aesthetic and language.