

Ebun Sodipo,
Press

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On Eburn Sodipo

Kezia Kurtz · 19th July 2026 · [long.takes]

The collage films of Eburn Sodipo both invite and resist easy watching. In *Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)* (2024), clips of supermodel Connie Fleming and reality star Tiffany Pollard appear side by side on top of a larger video of a raging fire, while a snippet plays from Megan Thee Stallion's fast-paced, high-energy and bass-heavy hip-hop song *Captain Hook* (2020). These are bookended by low-resolution footage of a car crash and a video extract from the 1987 animated adaptation of manga classic *Devilman: The Birth*, in which Devilman descends from the sky, flexing his eagle-like talons. The sequence resembles and explodes the one-after-another logic of social-media scrolling: video clips appear and disappear, but they also expand and contract, overlap and obscure one another and, often, the wrong size for the frame, interact with the negative space of the black screen.

Born in London in 1993, Sodipo grew up as the internet came of age. Facebook was launched in 2004, YouTube in 2005 and Tumblr – her confessed teenage favourite – in 2007. For Sodipo, a British-Nigerian transgender artist, social media platforms quickly became a way of finding work by other Black and transgender people. 'I'd been on Tumblr since I think 2011,' she tells Habi Diallo in an interview for the *British Journal of Photography*. 'In 2012 I really started collecting with purpose, thinking about Black production, Black creative and cultural production online. I was thinking about how to

archive these things.’ Fished out of their online context and projected onto art gallery walls – in the case of *Nasty Girl 2*, first at Soft Opening in 2024, then at the ICA as part of Frieze London in late 2025 – even ephemeral, one-second-long viral videos take on a solidifying presence as historical artefacts in a shared past.



Installation view of *First Moment of Contact* (right, 2025) in *The Fountain Overflows* at GRIMM; photo by Stephen White & Co.

But Sodipo’s work also communicates a profound scepticism about the state of online cultural production. At the start of *Nasty Girl 2*, a repeated notification sound alternates with a menacing, low-register timbre and the ominous rhythm of a tense heartbeat, so dopamine is inflected by doom. In this way, she engages critically with the aesthetic culture of the so-called information age, and particularly with the dominance of what Anna Kornbluh calls ‘immediacy style’. In

her 2023 book *Immediacy: Or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism*, Kornbluh observes how contemporary culture is overtaken by media that promotes an unmediated stream of self-expression and fulfilment over slow, critical thinking. The danger, she argues, is the way immediacy parades as effortless transparency, yet hides its socially mediated character. The ‘ease of one-click buying covers up a human hamster wheel’, and the ‘spontaneous shimmer’ of user-friendly interfaces obscures their material make-up: code, lithium-ion batteries, chip microprocessors, and behind these things, server farms, mines and labourers.

Sodipo finds subtle ways to convey through collage the shifting power relations between visible surface and invisible depth. In her 2025 Soft Opening exhibition, *An Ominous Presence*, three out of five collages juxtapose mylar – a tinfoil-like material – and images of closed doors. The viewer is invited to look, attracted to the mylar’s shiny, metallic appearance, but then, upon closer inspection, is refused entry, shut out by the closed door and spat back by the mirror-like mylar into the world external to the artwork. Meanwhile, in *This Much I know*, the central subject is shrouded in darkness. The bottom half of her face is hidden, and a shadow partly obscures the top half. The curls of her hair extend into the curves of the bendy mylar above her, the contours of her figure lost to the realm of empty reflection. The verb ‘know’ is even lowercase in the piece’s title, as if the statement loses confidence in its already limited knowledge halfway through being uttered. In contrast to the display of continuous presence simulated by much online activity – most recently generative AI’s performance of instant (often inaccurate) knowledge – surfaces, reflections and shadows appear with

force across Sodipo's work, her subjects mediated by the obstructions that condition the act of looking.



Ebun Sodipo, *Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)* (film still), 2024, Single-channel video, HD, sound. Image courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by Eva Herzog

This is the bold vision of an artist who has had to forge her own identity amid and against the online image stream. Sodipo began transitioning in 2021 and, with a heightened attention to questions of what it means to be a woman, re-evaluated the understanding of womanhood she had received from contemporary media. “As I was transitioning,” she tells Diallo, “I was drawn to these images of femininity, but there was a tension for me as an African woman thinking about how these images are like particular anti-Black images as well, and about the denigration of Black femininity.” In the title of *Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)*, Sodipo summons the sexualising (‘nasty’), infantilising (‘girl’) and barbarising (‘beast’) stereotypes of Black, transgender women that appear

across pornographic films and popular culture, but only to counter and complicate them in creative ways.

Take, for example, the slow recitation of the poem ‘For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf’ (1976) by Ntozake Shange (b.1948): ‘bein alive & bein a woman & bein colored is a metaphysical dilemma / I haven’t conquered yet’. Sodipo cuts a clip of a transgender content creator saying ‘tranny’ over the top of the word ‘woman’, playfully opening up an already revisionist statement to further acts of editing. She then deletes every other frame to produce a flickering effect, so the video wavers as it transitions to a black screen, a structural shake that figures the instability of identity formation. But the intrusion of the black screen represents a blank canvas that exists beneath the social media noise. A new song begins on the soundtrack at this exact moment; light, upbeat, ethereal, it signals the entrance of new creative potentialities. For Sodipo, questions of ‘being’ never settle but require continual exploration and reexploration, something *Nasty Girl 2* presents as both daunting and liberating.



Ebun Sodipo, *Sometime / All I Know Is* (2025), mylar, digital prints, resin. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by Eva Herzog.

The response to Sodipo's collage work has tended to focus on her process of collection or 'citation', often without mention of how she edits and arranges things. This critical emphasis – reinforced by frequent reference to her as an 'archivist' of Black, transgender contemporary history – implies that representation alone can correct discrimination and exclusion. It is symptomatic of the Western world's wider preoccupation with 'representation' and 'visibility' in place of proper social analysis – an on-demand, surface-level fix to centuries-deep issues. Sodipo does not just reel off clips one by one, like discrete entries in a visual library. She finds ingenious ways to edit disparate elements together, so their meanings interact and impact one another. In *An Other Ending* (2024), for example, a collage film about finding new avenues of critical thought and action, she employs a split screen, so each clip appears with a direct alternative. A close-up of someone wagging around a bullet plays next to a serene video of a young pufferfish leisurely swimming, culture at its most destructive next to nature at its most peaceful. In *Nasty Girl 2*, clips from reality TV play next to, over the top of and after footage of extreme weather, the spectre of the climate crisis competing for your attention with the world of easy entertainment. The distracting always-something-else-to-watch element of online activity is redeployed to put pressure on where we choose to look.

This pressure is at its greatest in *An Other Ending*, when Sodipo exploits the critical interplay between audio and video. A voiceover exposes what the social-media-sourced visuals

alone cannot, such as the fact that African ‘children used to work the mines for coltan’. Primarily found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, coltan is an ore used to make certain components in electronic devices, particularly 5G gadgets. And, despite it becoming illegal for children to work in coltan mines in 2017, the Institute for Security Studies notes their employment has continued. ‘There is a fear in me’, the voiceover slowly states, ‘that those who hold the monopoly over violence will simply continue to create the conditions for their own survival.’ Even as Sodipo communicates a belief in the power of online content to connect ‘Black people around the world’, she confronts technology’s place in a global economic order that continues to extract and exploit African resources and labour, this time to produce the ‘spontaneous shimmer’ of the internet.

But the film’s title is *An Other Ending*, not *Another Ending*: a sign of revolution, not resignation. Sodipo does not simply condemn or condone the world of online cultural production. She uses collage to articulate the complexities of the online user experience, in which liberating representation and new forms of oppression go hand in hand. With each cut, she asks us to look closer, look harder, look again, and, when it comes to the hidden human cost of technology, to acknowledge when looking isn’t enough.

Ebun Sodipo’s First Moment of Contact and We’re heading in / Violence Enlightens are on view at GRIMM Gallery as part of The Fountain Overflows until July 25, 2026. To find out more, visit their website.

Mousse Magazine, 2026

Ebun Sodipo: Folding Time by Amy Jones

“Transition pleats time, and in so doing transforms our relational capacities.”
—Julian Carter¹

In her 2019 film *Fuckeries*, Ebun Sodipo layers internet clips related to the appropriation of Blackness, and recontextualizes them to make their violence and absurdity clear. Sodipo’s humor runs throughout, but it is also an early example, sedimented in the frames of a film, of her use of images, and specifically collage, to reconfigure the ways Black people’s stories are shared and preserved. This movement, layering and fragmenting of images has become persistent in a multifaceted practice that also includes live performance, sculpture, and writing.

In her most recent series of collages, Sodipo brings together images of Black life collected over the years from sites like Tumblr and are.na, drawing from memes, music, art history, fashion, film, and beyond. Each image collapses its own creation, the conditions through which people decided to reshare it online, and its presence in the many folders of images archived intuitively by the artist for her future use. Brought together in Sodipo’s works, these seemingly disparate fragments function as what Saidiya Hartman has termed “critical fabulations.”² Looking to restore absences in historical narrative, Hartman deals with a material lack, building new narratives about the lives of enslaved people from what she describes as “scraps of a life”—fragmented records, uncovered in the margins of the archive. Indexing the unfolding present and excavating the past, Sodipo deals with an overlooked excess, drawing from millions of potential images circulating online, to create intricate, multilayered portraits of Black life.

Her collage *Femmes for Class Revolution* (2024) evidences this approach. It combines a manga clip—a woman in skin-tight, thigh-high black boots stands calmly in the foreground as an explosion erupts behind her—with a photograph of seemingly defiant, clenched marble hands from the Rodin Museum, a waterfall, and an image of radio and TV host Charlamagne interviewing Cardi B, gleefully recaptioned by an internet user to suggest Cardi B is revealing that her song “Bodak Yellow” (2017) is about the role of femmes in the class revolution. While not strictly the case, the song does celebrate Cardi B’s new-found financial security, connecting it to her time as a sex worker. Sodipo’s associative logic builds a complex portrait of resistance and its many faces.

The collage images are printed with inkjet on regular printer paper. Each is layered carefully on top of folded or scrunched Mylar—a durable, tear-resistant, silver-colored polyester film capable of withstanding temperatures from -70°C to +150°C, used for a range of applications, from food storage to space travel. Sodipo first devised this combination of materials in 2021, while experimenting with bringing herself into the image making process more directly; she made a rare appearance on screen in a video experiment she made for an open studios event at Gasworks, London, during her residency there that year. Her collages also appeared for the first time, as she experimented with handwritten notes placed on top of the Mylar, or sometimes pinned to draped scaffold netting. Appearing to be loosely attached, the images and fragments of text would quiver and bend, exposed to the conditions of the room.

Over time, these notes were replaced by found fragments of printed text, and the fluttering, exposed compositions became protected and fixed in place by pouring resin on top of the images. Creating a hardened surface, the process also renders many of the images underneath semi-translucent. *Octavia St. Laurent* (2025) enshrines the AIDS activist and model active in New York’s Black

202 Ebun Sodipo, *Wet Memories* installation view at Shmorévaz, Paris, 2025.

Courtesy: the artist and Shmorévaz, Paris. Photo: Raphaël Massart

205 Ebun Sodipo, *It won’t save me* (detail), 2025. Courtesy: the artist and

Soft Opening, London. Photo: Eva Herzog

206–207 Ebun Sodipo, *Wet Memories* installation view at Shmorévaz, Paris, 2025.

Courtesy: the artist and Shmorévaz, Paris. Photo: Raphaël Massart

208 Ebun Sodipo, *Wet Memories* installation view at Shmorévaz, Paris, 2025.

Courtesy: the artist and Shmorévaz, Paris. Photo: Raphaël Massart

209 Ebun Sodipo, *Self Portrait / I am my ancestors’ tongue* (detail), 2026.

Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo: Eva Herzog



and Latin ballroom scene in the 1980s and 1990s. Layered on top of St. Laurent's portrait is a pair of bejeweled hands, a recurring motif in Sodipo's practice. They reach up adoringly, while other images in the collage, obscured by the resin's effects, appear to collapse into one another, becoming barely legible, slipping in and out of meaning.

Like exporting or "locking" an edit of a film, this layering and fixing becomes a means of sedimenting new historical narratives. Alongside this almost practical impulse, the works maintain a quality that remains just beyond comprehension. *Sometime / All I Know Is* (2025) focuses on the figures of musician Area Scatter, a trans woman who lived in Imo State, Nigeria, in the 1970s, and the Oscar-winning US actress Cicely Tyson. Shown in *An Ominous Presence* at Soft Opening, London, in 2025, it is part of a body of work that considers the idea that trans women represent danger and destruction. An unsettling blood red reoccurs across the collage, compounded by a trailing-off fragment of text: "All I know is sometimes . . ." Appearing under spotlights in an otherwise dimly lit room, the Mylar folds shimmered and sparkled seductively as viewers moved closer. This luminescence momentarily restored the cinematic origins of Sodipo's collages. Evoking Eliza Steinbock's foundational text on the ways transgender identity is rendered on-screen—"The shimmering body is never quite 'there' in the sense of being a finished, static object for the viewer to master"—the movement imbued the collage with an ineffability that oscillates between transcendence and foreboding.³ Sodipo's collages unfold in their own time, collapsing histories, cultural references, and realities through combination and material sedimentation. Rather than creating a series of distinct fragments, Sodipo creates moments of folding. The artist's own presence connects with that of her ancestors, random internet users and the viewer. As performance theorist Julian Carter has imagined, time in her practice is not a line, but a fabric.⁴ Perhaps it's even Mylar, scrunched, folded, and touching up against the edges of the frame. Folding for Sodipo is a mode of fragmentation that enables us to reshape the whole while also moving toward something else. The folds, pleats, and layers of the collages gather to form a practice of being and remembering that endeavours to be in contact with all sides of itself.

- 1 Julian B. Carter, "Dancing in the Folds of Time," in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15, no. 2 (2009): 298.
- 2 Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1–14.
- 3 Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 32.
- 4 Carter, "Dancing in the Folds of Time."

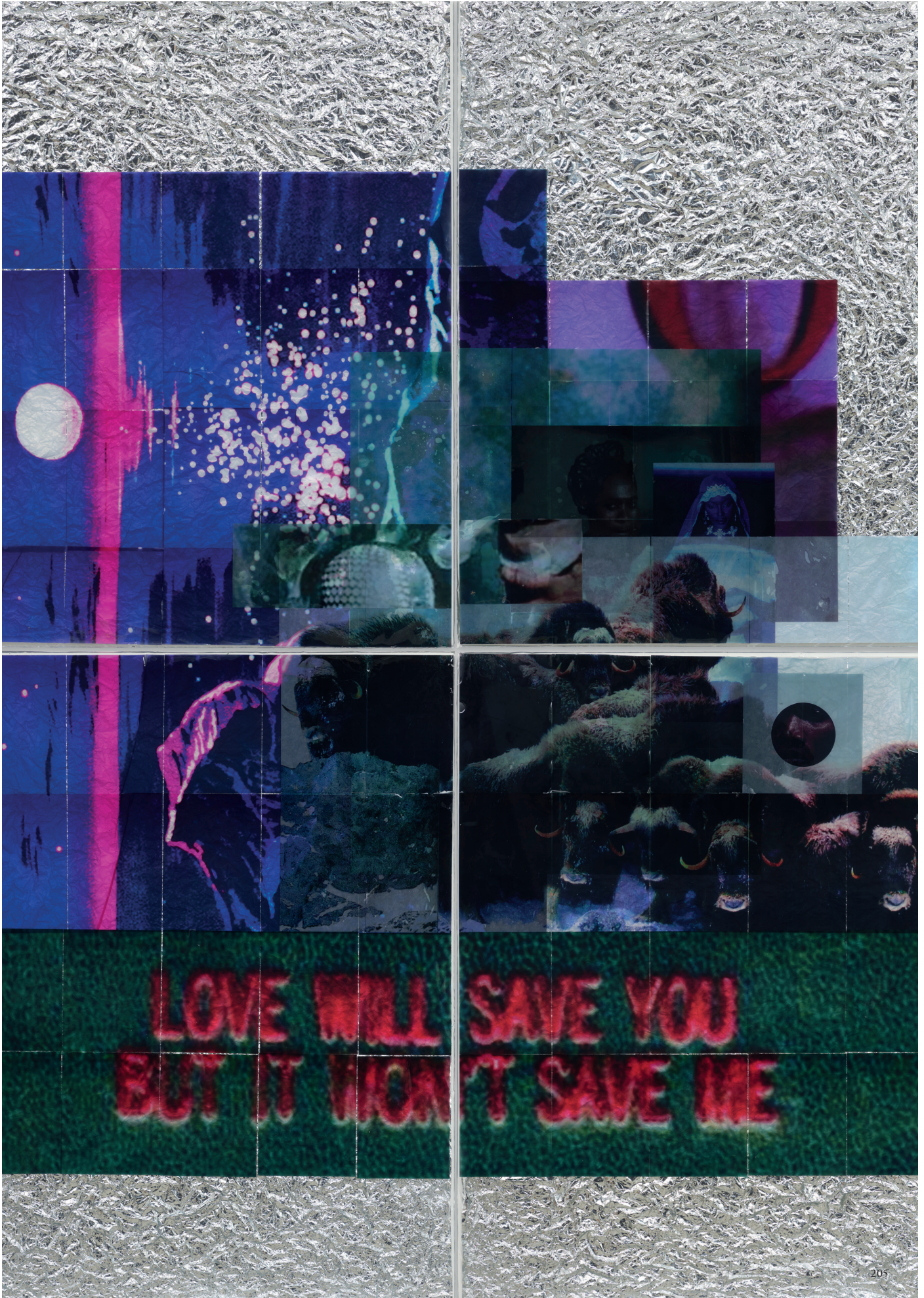
EBUN SODIPO'S

(b. 1993, London) work has recently been included in exhibitions at Shmórévaz, Paris (2025); Aspex, Portsmouth (2025); Soft Opening, London (2025); Cooke Latham Gallery, London (2025); Soft Opening at Paul Soto, Los Angeles (2024); CCA Derry–Londonderry: The Centre for Contemporary Art, Northern Ireland (2024); g39, Cardiff, Wales; Southwark Park Galleries, London (2024); Site Gallery, Sheffield and Collective, Edinburgh, as part of Jerwood Survey III (2024); Inter. pblc, Copenhagen (2024); Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2024); Hauser & Wirth, Somerset (2024); Nevven, London (2024); VITRINE, Basel (2023); VO Curations, London (2023, solo); Phillida Reid, London (2023); Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022, solo); VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow (2022); FACT, Liverpool (2022); and the Block Museum of Art, Evanston, Illinois (2021). The artist has performed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2025); Walk&Talk–Arts Biennial, São Roque (2025); the Performance Art Museum, Los Angeles (2024); the Edinburgh Art Festival (2024); Live Collision International Festival at Project Arts Centre, Dublin (2023); Bergen Kunsthall (2022); Turner Contemporary, Margate (2022); Camden Arts Centre, London (2021); Frieze Art Fair, London (2021); South London Gallery (2020); and Auto Italia, London (2019).

AMY JONES

is a curator, writer, and editor based in London. She is currently curator of exhibitions at Studio Voltaire, London. She was previously associate curator at Chisenhale Gallery, London, and the curator at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK, where she also cofounded the project space Partial Versions. Jones has curated first UK solo exhibitions by Aki Sasamoto (Studio Voltaire, London, 2026), Tiphanie Kim Mall (Partial Versions, Cambridge, 2025), Simnikiwe Buhlungu (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2024), Lotus L. Kang (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2023), and Nikita Gale (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2022), among others. As an editor, her projects include award-winning first publications by Joshua Leon (*The Process*, Mousse Publishing, 2024); Benoit Piéron (*Slumber Party*, Mousse Publishing, 2023), and Ayo Akingbade (*Show Me the World Mister*, Bookworks, 2023). She has previously held curatorial positions at FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) and the Liverpool Biennial, and served as director of the Royal Standard, Liverpool.

Mousse Magazine, 2026



Mousse Magazine, 2026





Ebun Sodipo (Editorials)

'The photographs presented here are editorial works that I have created in collaboration with various magazines and campaigns that specifically centre the queer community. For me, these images are far more than commissions; they signify a continuation of my photographic journey, a journey that began in the most intimate of spaces: my own living room'

Share



Art Basel, 2025



8 emerging artists to seek out at Art Basel's 2025 Swiss edition

They pose poignant questions about the body, intimacy, and the limits of their medium

By Tara Anne Dalbow | May 19, 2025 | 7 min read

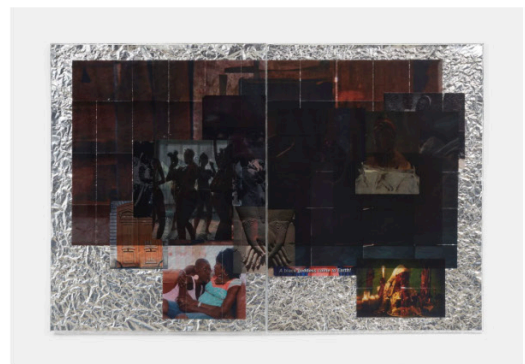
The human body looms large in presentations by emerging artists at this year's Art Basel: Is the body primarily a physical organism or a repository for personal and historical memory? Can a body be a site of oppression and resistance? What does it mean to be embodied in an increasingly digitized world? Here are eight artists who, through mediums as diverse as painting, textiles, collage, illustration, and installation, pose critical questions and offer poignant insights along the way.

Ebum Sodipo (b. 1993, United Kingdom)
***Soft Opening*, United Kingdom, Parcours sector**

For the past decade, multidisciplinary artist Ebum Sodipo has been assembling a Black trans archive for future generations. Her large-scale collages combine images sourced from films, social media, and historical records to visualize factual and imagined narratives of Black transness. Guided by a her interest in feminism, Sodipo layers images that transform and recontextualize notions of trans identity intersecting with desire, sexuality, beauty, race, and rage. At Art Basel, her collages, constructed from resin and paper and mounted on shimmering Mylar, will refract dappled light across the vitrine in which they will be shown as part of the city-wide Parcours sector.



Ebum Sodipo, *An Ominious Presence*, 2025. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph by Eva Herzog.



Ebum Sodipo, *What if Laure Was / A Black Goddess Come to Earth*, 2025. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph by Eva Herzog.

Art Monthly, 2025

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Good Vibrations

Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader
interviewed by Hannah Wallis

Peripheral Vision

Bob Dickinson

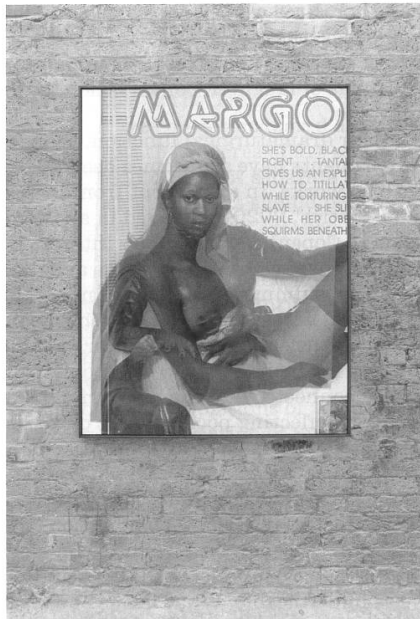
Afterburn

Maja and Reuben Fowkes

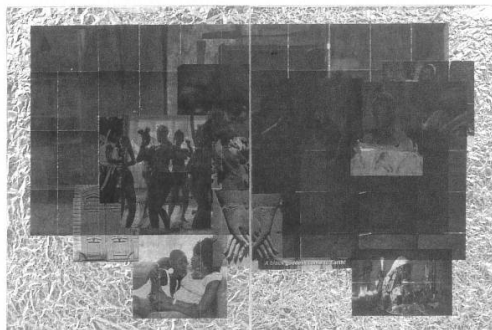
Ebun Sodipo

Profile by Tendai Mutambu





'I Found Venus and She Was Transsexual', installation view, Goldsmiths CCA, 2022



What if Laure Was / A Black Goddess Come to Earth, 2025



Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast), 2023, video, Soft Opening, Los Angeles

Profile

Ebun Sodipo

Using primarily collage and montage, the London-based artist looks to the future via history, both official and unofficial, where she seeks out a genealogy for black femme and trans lives.

Ebun Sodipo's assemblages are crammed with art-historical fragments, ancient and modern, placed next to low-resolution images from mass media. An 1867 etching of Édouard Manet's *Olympia*, 1863, an image of the snake woman from the anime film *Ninja Scroll*, 1993, heavy shrouds of smoke from an unseen source, a cannily cropped gay sex scene, an ancient bas-relief of two hands holding: these are some of the images the artist draws into two-dimensional communion and conflict.

It is the meme, however, that takes centre stage in Sodipo's work, a form that careens through timelines and phone chats, accruing and losing meaning, multiplying at high velocity before its eventual obsolescence. While it may seem absurd, when Tiffany Pollard, aka New York, one of reality TV's most compelling characters, appears in the photocollage *the earth also moves*, 2019, Sodipo summons not only her immediate expression but also a vast catalogue of her gestures that are diverse enough to make up an entire lexicon. The image of black femme expression – from its most impassive to its most ornate – has become something of a genre, a lingua franca to be learned, or a mask for all and sundry to wear.

If images of blackness appear in Sodipo's montages as fragments of numerous vernacular expressions and gestures, then the grid attempts to hold them together. While emblematic of colonial modernity, industrialisation and standardisation, for Sodipo the grid is less a constraint and more a tool to use and distort as required. In her work, images of varying sizes overlap, locked in a battle between chaos and order, repetition and difference. Sodipo disrupts her own intimations of the grid with irregularities, such as the tiny slivers of other images that appear when some layers slightly lift, owing to an interplay between the underlying adhesive and the resin poured on top. This gives the illusion of images floating above luminous metallic backdrops that vary in texture, from the smooth in *This Much I Know*, 2025, to the craggy in *Infinite Economic Growth*, 2025.

In *Children of Goldie Williams*, 2023, the artist pairs a contemporary image of actress Amanda Seales's sardonic upturned moue with a 19th-century mugshot of the scowling sex worker Goldie Williams. Both women wear comical yet defiant expressions: one in response to live on-air sexist remarks by self-styled bad boy dating expert Steve Santagati, the other as a defence against the carceral gaze. What Sodipo captures here is a rhyme, an affinity between these two black women separated by over a century.

It is in the annals of history, both institutional and unofficial, that the artist has sought a genealogy for black femme lives including those of trans women. For her first UK solo exhibition at CCA Goldsmiths, 'I Found Venus and She Was Transsexual' in 2022, *Madeleine et Margo*, 2022, combined two black women in a composite image: Madeleine, from Marie-Guillemine Benoist's *Portrait of Madeleine*, 1800 – identified simply as *Portrait of a Negress* until 2019 – and Margo, a trans sex worker with little recorded history.

Some historians have suggested that Madeleine, a slave-turned-servant from Guadeloupe, is painted in the guise of Marianne, goddess of liberty – the irony of which should not go unremarked. It's an idea supported by the colour and composition that brings to mind the French *le tricolore*, her classical garments and her portrayal as bare-breasted. The painting's history is a fascinating one: from its appearance at the Louvre's 1800 Salon, a 'black stain' in the words of one conservative critic, to a 2012 Spanish magazine cover in which Michelle Obama's face is superimposed onto Madeleine's body and, later, its inclusion in Beyoncé and Jay-Z's 2018 music video for 'Apeshit', set in the Louvre. In contrast, Margo's historical footprint is faint: Sodipo discovered her image on a Tumblr page that archives trans women's representations in media.

For Sodipo, Tumblr has been more than a source from which to build her vast cache of images. Like many young black people who came of age in the early 2010s, the microblogging and social networking site offered an education in the heady world of black studies and schools of thought such as Afropessimism. It was on Tumblr that Sodipo encountered the work of queer Kenyan scholar Keguro Macharia, the Jamaican philosopher, novelist and dramatist Sylvia Wynter, and black studies luminaries such as Tina Campt, Saidiya Hartman and Christina Sharpe – figures crucial to her intellectual formation.

Hartman's term 'critical fabulation', a redressing through storytelling and speculative methods of silences in historical records of enslaved lives – as proposed in her 2008 essay 'Venus in Two Acts' – has inspired many of Sodipo's recuperative archival forays. For example, a pair of 19th-century-style leather boots on a wooden plinth imagine those worn by the enslaved Ellen Craft as she escaped the American South by dressing as a white man, while a prosthetic leather vulva is 'a totem to Mary Jones', a trans sex worker and soldier in pre-civil war US who used a similar item – one among many technologies, in Sodipo's words, that have allowed trans women to define themselves.

It is Vitoria, an enslaved transgender woman in 16th-century Lisbon, who has become foundational to Sodipo's practice. A healer and sex worker before her imprisonment by the Portuguese Inquisition, she is the subject of *Vitoria: Buraco* and *The Way Her Teeth Settled*, both 2024, performances that revivify her story. Recently, Sodipo was invited to develop a performance in São Miguel in the archipelago of Portuguese Azores where Vitoria was first taken after her abduction from Benin. The new work will examine slavery's legacy on the Iberian Peninsula and how, in the wake of such terror and dispossession, Vitoria defied its constraints. As Sodipo tells me, Vitoria is a source of personal strength – someone whom the artist conjures to mind to get through the day.

For the installation *General Partitions – Precursor [Vitoria] Arrangement*, 2024, Sodipo fashioned a small ritual site in Vitoria's honour: an octagonal space enclosed in clear PVC strip curtains onto which images of trans women's and transfeminine people's left hands – all friends of the artist's – are printed. 'To enter the space,' the exhibition material reads, 'is to be touched by the hands of sisters, trans women, and trans femme people who have sustained my existence.' Inside, orange peels, stones, red ribbon, Nigerian honey and Agege bread – elements related to Vitoria's history – are placed on one of two low-lying, quadrant-shaped altars inspired by the Benin royal throne circle. Like the

victuals and coral-red carpet, the colour of Beninese ceremonial beads, these altars ground the work in West African practices. The installation pulses with audio recordings of laughter, conversation, birdsong, wind and waves.

Beyond their dramaturgical function, the artist's textual experiments have sometimes been displayed as stand-alone works. In an excerpt from the poem 'Surface Aesthetics', 2020, displayed in a vitrine at inter.pblc in Copenhagen, Sodipo's interest in the sensuousness of ornamentation became apparent – words such as 'shimmer', 'glisten', 'glimmer' and 'glitter' sprawled across the page, like objects bobbing up and down on the ocean's surface. Her current solo exhibition, 'An Ominous Presence', at London's Soft Opening, also connects us to the mercurial, her spot-lit assemblages reflecting pools of light onto the gallery floor with watery luminosity, an effect also present in several of the performances in which Sodipo places herself against vast swathes of mylar.

For the art historian Krista A Thompson, 'shine' in black artists' work can be a device to impede unwanted intimacies; it deflects the gaze and renders interiorities impermeable. What forms of capture or fetishism are evaded by all that shine and shimmer in Sodipo's practice? In her video *And The Seas Bring Forth New Lands*, 2018, the sateen sheen of a silvery-pink CGI pearl call to mind the novelist John Cheever's 'sexual iridescence', his term for the indeterminacy of his attractions – or, better yet, the nacreous abundance in Shola von Reinhold's sumptuous debut novel *Lote*, not least the cover of its US edition. When Mathilda, the protagonist, first encounters Erskine Lily – a sybarite who holds court on histories of the rainbow and the queerness of iridescence, namely peacock feathers and Venus (the Sister of Pearls and Mother of Mother-of-Pearl) – the latter is described as dusted in fine pearlescence.

While Sodipo has made shine, allure, glamour, beauty and luxury central to her métier, she does so with a knowingness that torques our pleasures to reveal their cost, as in *And The Seas Bring Forth New Lands*, 2018, which includes a television news segment on cobalt and coltan mining in the Congo. Hers is not an encomium to blackness, transness or womanhood – the Borromean knot that is her identity – as positions of unalloyed virtue or victimhood. Sodipo refuses to plunk the tired notes from respectability's playbook, her moving-image works drip with villainy, soapy operatic drama and sex.

'All this cat and all this ass. Yeah, bitches can't get with the programme,' purrs one woman a few minutes into her video *Nasty Girl (The Sharpest Girl in Town)*, 2023. She's a vision of cocksure, high-femme realness, dressed in a single-shouldered, single-legged leopard-print unitard, a lollipop in one hand and a white cup in the other as she hymns her own head-turning physique. 'Just like if you see a UFO in the sky, you gonna be like, "ahh I'm scared". That's how bitches be when they see me,' she declares, deftly capturing the heady mix of seduction and inscrutability, familiarity and alienness at the heart of Sodipo's project.

Ebun Sodipo's 'An Ominous Presence' continues at Soft Opening, London to 26 April.

Tendai Mutambu is a writer and film programmer based in London and Barcelona.

AGENDA, RACE & REPRESENTATION, TECHNOLOGY — 2 DAYS AGO

Inspired by the Internet's rabbit holes, Ebum Sodipo interrogates Black creativity

by HABI DIALLO



All images © Ebum Sodipo

The artist's latest show *An Ominous Presence* explores the tension between desire, identity, and the act of image-making

For those who grew up online during the early 2010s, Tumblr was a site which became a space to rewrite the rules of photo archiving. A whole generation used it to collect, curate, and remix images that reflected personal and political awakenings and, in turn, find a way to make sense of the world.

For London-based artist Ebum Sodipo, Tumblr provided a space to find her original references. But prior to being a teenager online, Sodipo's creative journey began after relocating to the UK from Nigeria. At ten, she started writing stories, and eventually her fascination with drawing manga shed light on her artistic abilities. "One of my tutors saw me drawing and was like, 'Oh, you should do an art GCSE.'" But similar to many artists, the journey was not linear. After temporarily pursuing a trajectory in psychology, in sixth form she realised she holding people's lives in her hands was too heavy a responsibility. Art, however, allowed her to explore human complexity without the same burden.

British Journal of Photography, 2025

"I'd been on Tumblr since I think 2011, before I went to uni," she says to me over Zoom, reflecting on her past on the site. "I think in 2012 I really started collecting [images] with purpose, thinking about Black production, Black creative and cultural production online. I was thinking about how to archive these things." It was an era of digital consciousness-raising, where young Black creators and thinkers were finding each other, developing a shared visual language. "It was also a moment where a lot of Black people my age, a bit younger, a bit older, were also becoming kind of politically aware and awakening a Black political consciousness." The images they shared – mundane, poetic, urgent – became part of a collective aesthetic, a form of self-archiving.



"I was thinking a lot about grids at the time – grids as a way of thinking about human progress"

That impulse to gather, to piece together meaning from found material, currently lives on in her collage work, which was originally birthed from her work with video. "I was really obsessed with the way that black people, black teenagers and young adults, were making their own original content online," she says. Vine, in particular, fascinated her. "At first, it was a desire to collect and show these things, not so much as my own art but to be like, 'look at all these amazing, really funny and creative stuff that Black people are making right now.'"

British Journal of Photography, 2025

An Ominous Presence is an invitation to linger in that tension, to feel it, to question it, to recognise its pull. "I make images to make people feel pleasure in some way, whether that's aesthetic pleasure or intellectual pleasure," Sodipo says. In doing so, she doesn't just archive a moment, she constructs a mythology, one that pulses with life, inviting us all to step inside.



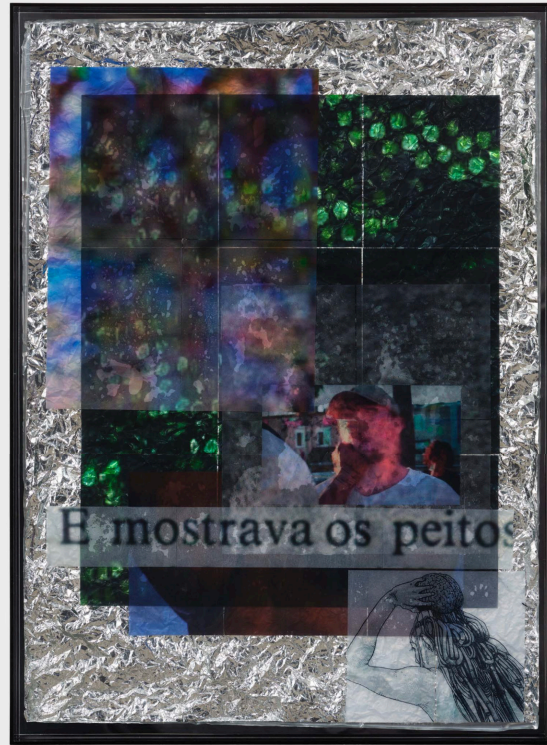
An Ominous Presence is on until 26 April at Soft Opening, London

Ebum Sodipo "An Ominous Presence" at Soft Opening, London

28.03.2025

READING TIME 2'

PREV



Ebum Sodipo, *E mostrava os peitos*, 2024; Ebum Sodipo at Soft Opening, London, 2025. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo: Eva Herzog

In "An Ominous Presence", Ebum Sodipo presents her largest works to- date, with a suite of new collages centred around an interpretation of the gothic that offers a re-framing of both social and art history. Traversing ideas of horror, the end of the world, death, fear, mystery, mythology, ghostliness and the unknown, these unsettling new works extend the artist's exploration of the idea that the trans woman represents a threat of danger and destruction.

Arranging images across a reflective metallic surface and encasing them in a thick layer of clear resin, Sodipo immortalises the figures, phrases and scenes that she assembles. While the glimmer and shine of her materials offers an allegory for the aesthetic expressions of transformation, Sodipo deliberately obscures self-reflection and stacks her images to complicate their clarity, their translucency enabling their contents to merge and generate new meanings. With every image carefully selected and positioned, the works in *An Ominous Presence* seek to reimagine the way we conceive of the past, time and history through images.

Titling the exhibition after a collage that includes the phrase "I'm an ominous presence the shape of a girl", Sodipo prefigures an atmosphere of uneasiness among the works, a reverberating sense of foreboding that the trans woman presents in the world. Incorporating references from contemporary visual culture, architecture and history, "An Ominous Presence" borrows the visual language of gothicism and the ruin to posit that queerness could be capable of dismantling entrenched heteropatriarchal systems of belief.

at Soft Opening, London
until April 26, 2025



ART

The Best Exhibitions To See In London Right Now

Oyinkansola Dada, founder of The Dada Gallery, shares her guide to the most exciting shows in the capital this spring.

BY OYINKANSOLA DADA
13 March 2025

Vogue, 2025

Ebun Sodipo's solo exhibition *An Ominous Presence* is now open at Soft Opening (until 26 April). I first encountered Ebun on a gorgeous summer afternoon in Tuscany organised by MQBMBQ. Guests walked through the gates of Villa Lena, parasols in tow, and gathered around an open field where Ebun took centre stage and delivered a spoken-word piece. Her performance was assured and captivating. In this solo show, she borrows the visual language of the Gothic to posit that queerness may well be capable of dismantling entrenched heteropatriarchal belief systems.

Public Gallery presents *HangTime*, a solo exhibition by Taylor Simmons (until 29 March). Painting from reference images and "turning Black reality into Black mythology", Simmons's practice serves as a powerful reminder of how archives of cultural memory can shape our collective identity. His practice anthologises decades of creative Black subcultures, canonising their relevance in ways that challenge mainstream appropriation.



"Sugar" by Ebun Sodipo (2024) Courtesy of Soft Opening

Thirsty Thursday: “What if we kissed in the Pret X Emalin Gallery smoking area?”

07/03/25 10 min read Words: [Billy Parker](#) [Izzy Bilkus](#) [Dora Densham Bond](#)

Billy Parker, Izzy Bilkus and Dora DB are back with another Thirsty Thursday of gallery openings, where they're met with old friends, new lore and empty beer buckets



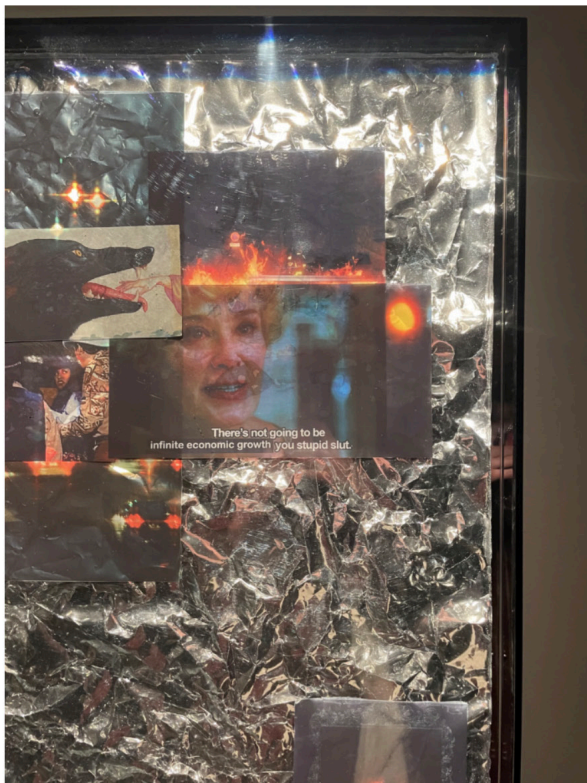
Plaster, 2025

Features Reviews Opinion Interviews Watch

PLASTER

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Down the road, Soft Opening welcomed us with open arms, cold beers and 'An Ominous Presence', an amazing show by Ebun Sodipo. A far cry from last Thirsty Thursday's eye surgery-inducing fluorescent lighting at Herald St, the lights at Soft Opening were switched off. Who can blame them? With the recent announcement of the TFL price increase this Sunday, every little helps. Save those pennies, Ms Marsh. Jokes aside, we were mesmerised by the show. The walls were adorned with illuminated collages featuring various appropriated online images, all laid delicately on a bed of glistening metal, reflecting water-like refractions across the concrete floor. Sodipo entombed the pieces in a thick layer of clear resin, immortalising the atmosphere of unease. The exhibition gave us shivers and reminded us of [Arthur Jafa's](#) *Love is the message, the message is Death*, in which he weaves together images of an apocalyptic sun – like the doomsday planet hurtling towards earth in Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* – between video snippets of Black American history. Both artists mine internet and pop culture – like Sodipo's use of a Jessica Lange 'There's not going to be infinite economic growth you stupid slut' meme and Jafa's footage of Beyonce's 7/11 music video – to remind us that the world keeps spinning against a backdrop of impending armageddon.



Ebun Sodipo at Soft Opening



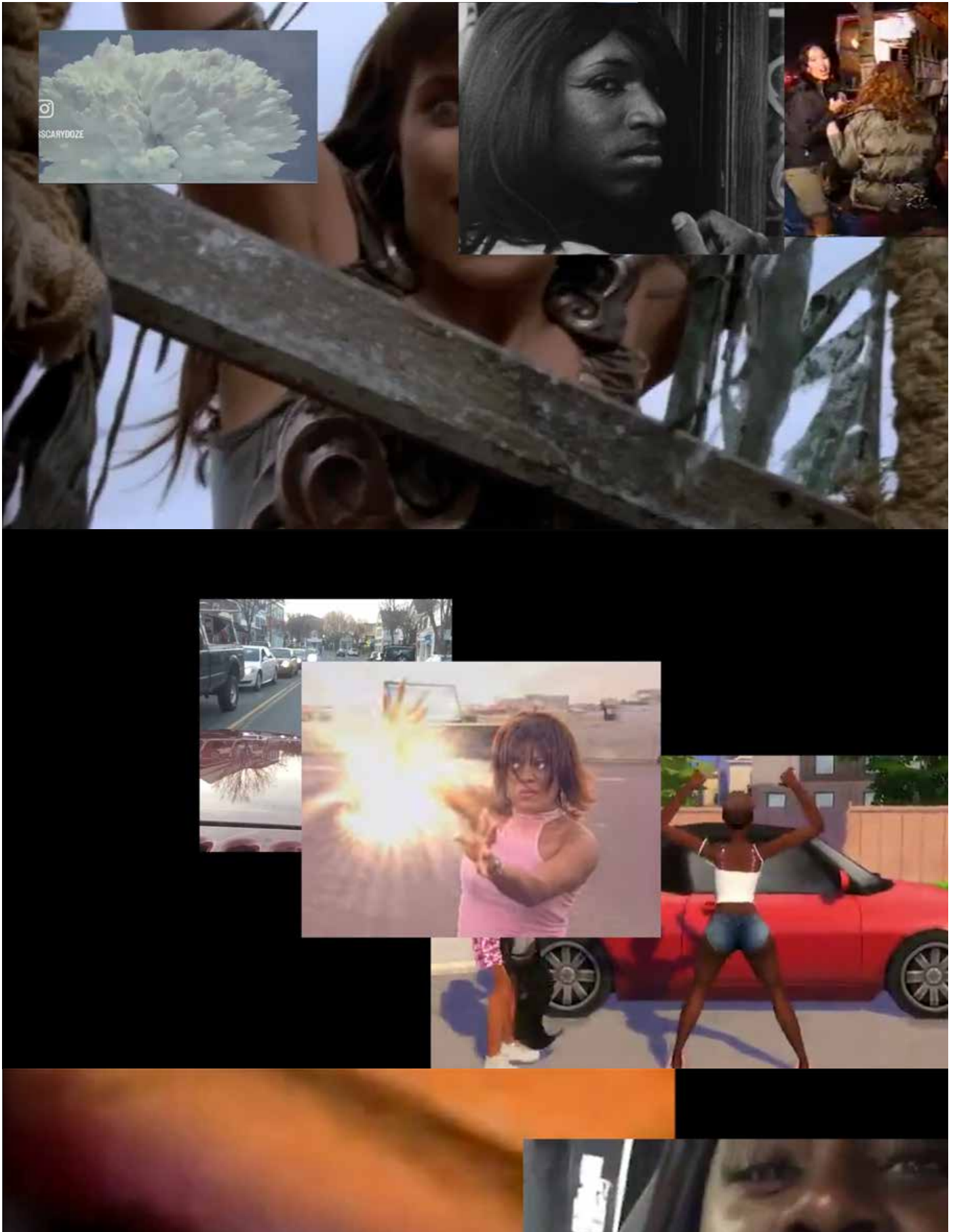
'An Ominous Presence' is on view until 26th April

Nasty Girl Kills English Language

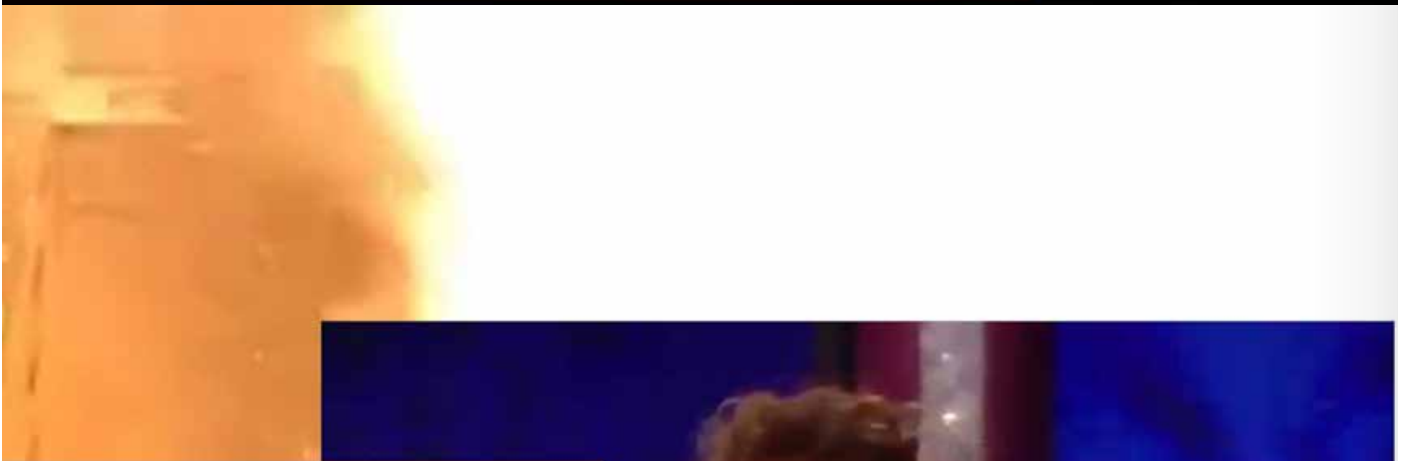
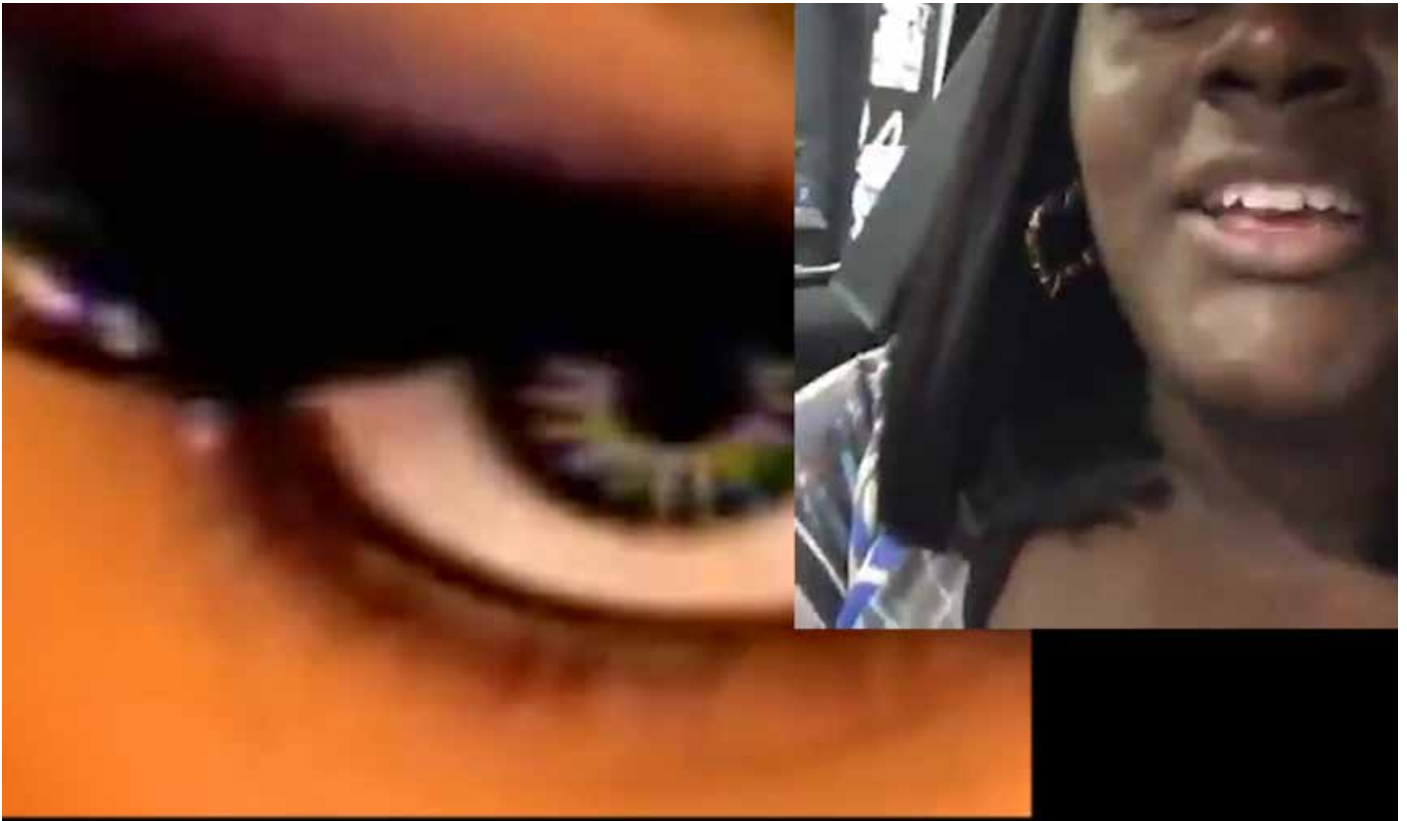
Start with the opening scene of Spike Lee's 1996 comedy *Girl 6*, in which an as yet no-name aspiring actress, portrayed by Teresa Randle (who had already achieved "it girl" status at the time of the film's release), sits down for a screen test in hopes of landing a starring role with an impatient Quentin Tarantino, played by himself. Tarantino, performing his real world celebrity persona, asks Randle, performing what we can imagine might have been her former self, to say some lines. She does; he's unenthusiastic. He then says something like, "Okay, cut to the chase: take your top off. It's needed for the role." No-name Randle pauses and replies, "What? My agent didn't say this is part of the gig." Tarantino, annoyed, whitemansplains that yes, it *is* part of the role. He "needs" to see her tits as a part of the business, and he has upwards of fifty other Black women outside that door aspiring to play the part. So, if she doesn't want to strip, she should stop wasting his time and find another profession.

EBUN SODIPO
WORDS BY
TAYLOR LE MELLE

Flash Art, 2025



Flash Art, 2025



No-name Randle's initial reply is one of insolence. She thought that she was in the room with Tarantino because she was good at her art. But then she acquiesces, as she *needs* this gig to pay rent, and so down both shoulders, slowly, she slides her blouse, as if it was cotton blended with slime. Tarantino, and we as viewers, observe her discomfort and her nudity for a few seconds before she exclaims, "I can't do this!" She pulls up her shirt and bursts out of the rehearsal room and through the crowd of, as Tarantino promised, about fifty other Black women with no name waiting to be *SEEN*.

What happens next — and for the rest of the film — is that this no-name actress decides the most efficient way to earn money at the least expense to her dignity is to become a phone sex operator rather than aspiring to the fine art of being a serious actress. Thus, under the tutelage of a savvy and bossy madam played by a very hot 1990s Jennifer Lewis (who today is many scrollers' favorite great-aunt on the internet for her original meme-song "I-don't-want-nobody FUCKIN-wit' meeeee / in-these-streets!"), no-name actress rebrands herself as the eponymous Girl 6.

This film is just one of the many citations that appear in Ebun Sodipo's *Nasty Girl (The Sharpest in Town)* (2023) and *Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast)* (2024), a duo of video works that collage together found footage that she has sourced from the far corners of Tumblr, one of the places where Black culture lives on the internet. Where and what is Black internet culture, exactly? A possible response: I can't tell you; you just had to be there. Another possible answer: the Black internet does not exist in a specificity of form or in the aesthetic of an image, but in the mechanisms of circulation through which the image travels. Meaning, Black internet perhaps does not exist in a stable format, but simply arises when (at least) one Black user transfers data to (at least) one other.

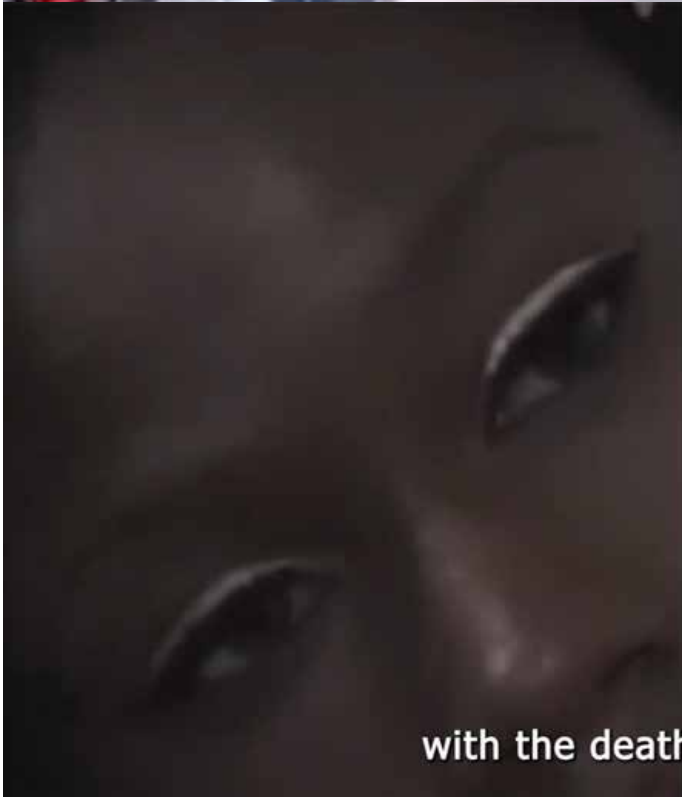
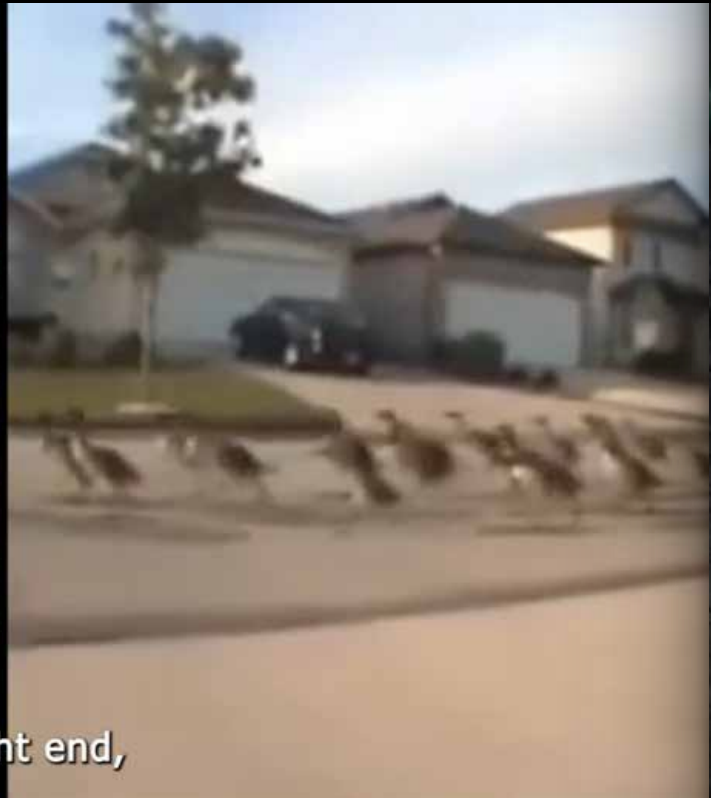
Sodipo also cites a clip from *Girl 6* in *Nasty Girl 1* (2022), in which one of the girls (Girl 75 in this instance) is on the phone, talking or rehearsing how to construct a compelling sexual fantasy for a listener who she hopes to keep on the line because the longer he listens, the more money he pays. Sodipo's video works could be interpreted as rehearsing or processing or trying to communicate this complex meeting point — call it an intersection — of three big problems for the single Black woman in a modern/postmodern metropolis. First, the compulsion to generate capital (I *need* this gig!). Second, the slimy fact of being viewed as a disposable object of desire by the dominant power structure that controls the remittance of that capital (Tarantino's impatience for an actress's discomfort). And third, a language problem — how to use your voice, and to whom you bother to speak your condition.

Girl 6 and Sodipo's *Nasty Girl* series, along with much of the Black feminist literature that Sodipo devours, articulates this intersection of dilemmas in a capitalist patriarchy where Black womens' presence is required for society to function, albeit as an object of resentment. What I have noticed in this literature that Sodipo reads, such as Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), is that Black women have tended to open possibilities for themselves through activating the mechanism that is also a site of the violence inflicted upon them: their own bodies. And in many cases, using the body to network language, by way of the voice, or in a more general sense the creation of text. So, the no-name actress generates her necessary capital, building a support structure for her survival, by speaking as a sex object on the phone. A phone which today has been replaced by the internet, where Sodipo, also an avid consumer of internet culture, is using her artwork to speak to and through the same dilemma that she herself is certainly deeply implicated within, as an emerging artist in an

Flash Art, 2025



It might end,



with the death of whiteness.



Flash Art, 2025



Can we seek another ending of this world



human to object.



Flash Art, 2025

Nasty Girl Kills English Language



Bring chaos and misfortune



Ebun Sodipo by Taylor Le Melle

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art world which, despite its representational acquiescences, remains tethered to the surpluses of global racialized capitalism. I do not bother to state this as a criticism, but as the simple fact of a condition.

In Sodipo's *An Other Ending* (2023), the voice is layered over a rolling barrage of disparate internet-quality images and speculates on what it would take to see the death of whiteness, and this voice links whiteness and capitalism as co-constituted. To paraphrase: perhaps whiteness will end when the last coal furnace breaks; perhaps it will end when great thinkers admit that violence against women is always eroticized; and perhaps it will end when the last English-speaking person dies. It is a seductive proposition to think that this language of the British, and of the international art world, could become extinct, obsolete, and no longer necessary. Sodipo returns often to these speculations of mythic proportions where the world as we know it breaks. In her film works, where she herself (as in *Celeste – She of the Sea*, 2023), her friends (*Atlantic Cruises – A Rest Stop*, 2021), and her favorite Tumblr meme girls appear, women come to the city hoping to live long enough to see the end of capitalism while at the same time knowing they will never survive if they don't have some money. Perhaps this is Sodipo's exposition on what a Nasty Girl actually is: one who confronts the metaphysical dilemma of compulsory participation in one of Europe's most insidious inventions—modernism—with the relentless unattachment of a phone sex worker. To survive the city, she becomes like a jellyfish, a gorgeous supple predator like the one who appears in *Nasty Girl (The Sharpest Girl Town)* out on the street, with her friend, exclaiming "WE SUCKIN' EVERYBODY'S DICK! WE TAKIN' EVERYBODY'S MAN!" Hers is a carefree, brash obscenity that respectable people tend to shy away from because they don't want to risk their status in the capitalist hierarchy. A Nasty Girl maybe does not see a risk as a risk at all, because what is the worst that could happen? The end of this order of things?

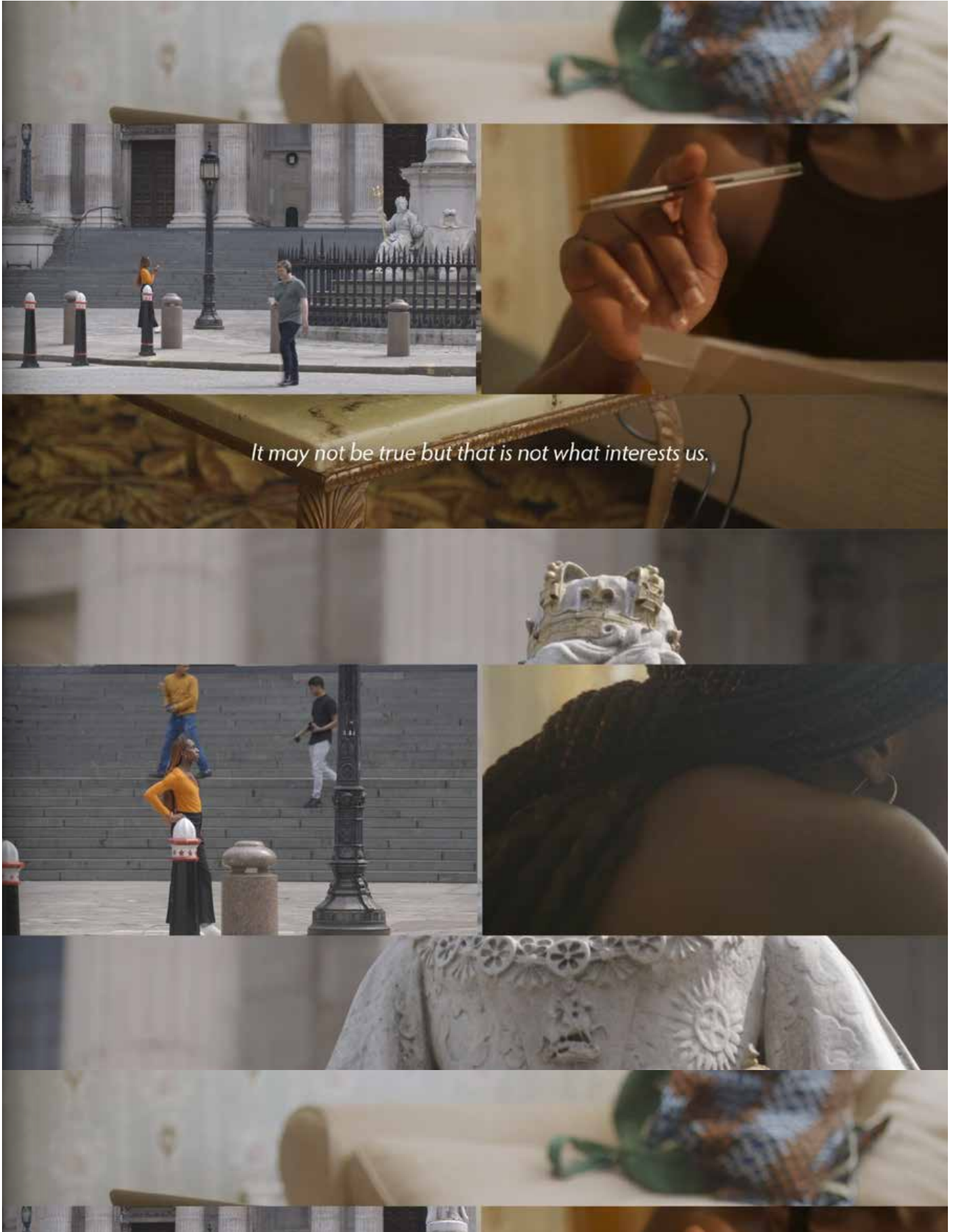
I told Sodipo that I find the figure of a Black woman artist in the international art world these days fascinating, given the discourse now circulating within it — particularly the increasing inclusion of Black studies in museums and galleries. Why would this be weird? Because a defining feature of Black study is an examination of the fallout of one of the biggest and most lasting violences on Black women—the transatlantic slave trade and the capital that Europe extracted from it—and a lot of this value is still, to this day, being held in the form of artworks. So how ironic is it that art can still also be seen as a liberatory mechanism by those who theorize oppression? How can art be a form that concretized the violence of capital, while at the same time serve as an opening for the possibility of joy, of creation, of ecstatic experience? Who would choose to be an artist in the midst of this metaphysical dilemma?

When I spoke with Sodipo, who is working across a variety of mediums besides video, also collage, installation, and performance, she located her investment in art not in any particular form or technical process but rather in a desire to communicate. Here, again, I find myself, through Sodipo, tapping into the network and noting how the transfer of information and text creates both community and possibility. Like I mentioned earlier in this text about theories of the Black feminine, I recognize in Sodipo's work, and also in her position as an artist making that work in this international art-world context, a compulsory position of needing to open a possibility for herself, and doing so by activating the mechanism that is also the site of the violence. I do not yet have language for why desire, seduction (Sucking everybody's dick! Taking everybody's man!), and obscenity is such a frictionless route to creating this opening, but if pressed to speak, I would, thanks to

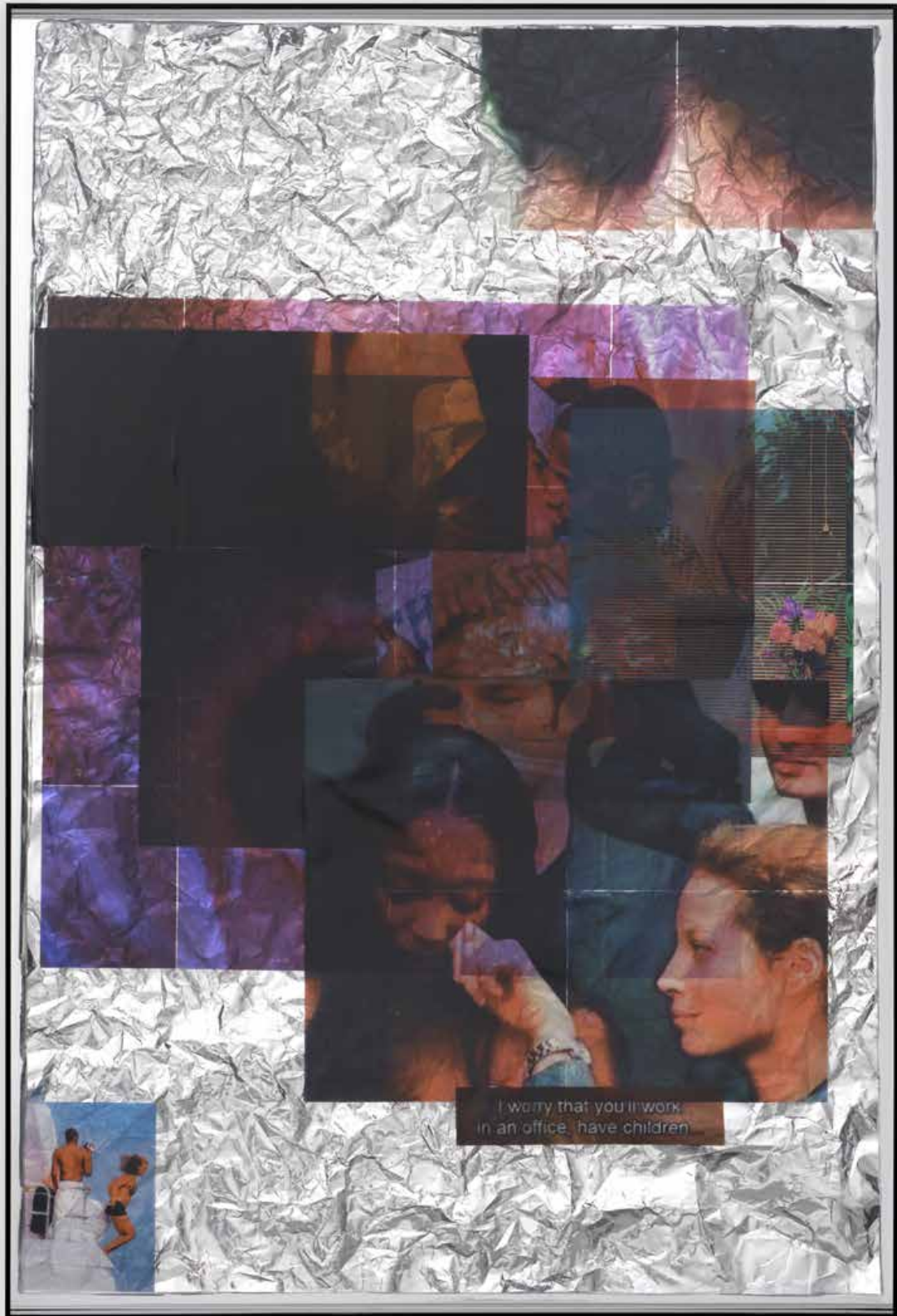
Flash Art, 2025



Flash Art, 2025



Flash Art, 2025



I worry that you'll work in an office, have children, 2024. Mylar, digital prints, resin, and acrylic. 120.7 × 84.5 × 5.7 cm. Photography by Paul Salveson.

Flash Art, 2025

Ebun Sodipo by Taylor Le Melle

Sodipo, simply flick through the pile of Tumblr images she has assembled in the *Nasty Girl* series. These images, to Sodipo, are not Black because of the people represented inside the frames, but become Black through the transfer of these images from the computer of one person living inside the racial construction of Blackness to another person situated somewhere else inside that construction. A collaged network of situatedness. Because these situations are not fixed in place, and for that matter nor is the construction, the metaphysics of living in that condition of being would necessarily have to include openings and possibilities only if through the momentary accident of many disparate parts being in a state of motion simultaneously. And this lack of fixity, as Sodipo's *Nasty Girls* display, might be what makes it possible for the site of the violence — the process of extracting capital from an eroticized brutality — to also be a location where those withstanding that violence can experience joy. An obscene proposition, but this obscenity, I think, protects us from any misplaced optimism that the world — yes, even the art one — changes its logics of racial capitalism by increasing its inclusion of Black images.

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comfort begot by blood, 2024. Mylar, digital prints, resin, and acrylic. 48.7 × 28.7 × 5 cm. Photography by Eva Herzog.

Video stills from:

Atlantic Cruises – A Rest Stop, 2021. 21' 22". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

Celeste – She of the Sea, 2023. 6'. Single-channel video, HD, sound. Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

Nasty Girl [The Sharpest Girl In Town], 2023. 23' 57". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 2 + 1 AP.

Nasty Girl 2 (The Beast), 2024. 13' 46". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 2 + 1 AP.

An Other Ending, 2024. 7' 44". Single-channel video, HD, and sound. Edition of 3 + 2 AP.

All images courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London.

Ebun Sodipo (1993, London) lives and works in London. Sodipo's interdisciplinary practice narrates her construction a Black trans-feminine self after slavery and colonialism. Through a process of fragmentation, collage, and fabulation, she devises softer, other-wise ways of imagining and speaking about the body, desire, archives, and the past. Recent solo exhibitions include: Soft Opening at Paul Soto, Los Angeles; inter.pblc, Copenhagen; never, London; V.O Curations, London; Vitrine, Basel; Goldsmiths CCA, London; and a space arts, Southampton. Her work has been included in group shows at CCA Derry-Londonderry; Hannah Barry Gallery, London; Hauser & Wirth Somerset; Southwark Park Galleries, Touring; Espacio Gallery, London; Philippa Reid, London; and FACT, Liverpool. Sodipo's solo show will be on view at Soft Opening, London from March 7, until April 26, 2025.

Taylor Le Melle is turning this body into one that can finish a novel. She's drinking a lot of wet flowers and living between Amsterdam and Louisiana.

Ten Artists to Watch in 2025

We highlight the artists – each with major presentations this year – poised to shape the art scene this year

F

BY FRIEZE IN OPINION | 07 JAN 25



Ebun Sodipo, *Sugar*, 2024, mylar, digital prints, resin and acrylic, 64 x 44 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London; photography: Eva Herzog

Ebun Sodipo is a London-based artist whose interdisciplinary practice encompasses performance, film, sculpture and collage. Her work narrates the construction of a Black trans-feminine self in the aftermath of slavery and colonialism, aiming to create narratives for Black trans people of the future. Guided by Black feminist study, Sodipo employs collage and fabulation methodologies to explore themes of identity, desire and the body. Her work has been exhibited at Hauser & Wirth Somerset (2024) and V.O Curations, London (2023). In February, she has a forthcoming solo show at Soft Opening, London.

Ebun Sodipo

Interview

by

Olukemi

Lijadu

Born 1993

Ebun Sodipo's (b.1993, London, UK) work has recently been included in exhibitions held at Shmórévaz, Paris (2025, forthcoming solo); Aspex, Portsmouth (2025, solo); Soft Opening, London, Soft Opening at Paul Soto, Los Angeles (2024); g39, Cardiff and Southwark Park Galleries, London as part of Jerwood Survey III (2024); Inter.pblc, Copenhagen (2024, solo); Hauser & Wirth, Somerset (2024); VO Curations, London (2023, solo); Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022, solo); VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow (2022); FACT, Liverpool (2022) and The Block Museum of Art, Evanston (2021) among others. The artist has performed at venues including Performance Art Museum, Los Angeles (2024); Edinburgh Arts Festival, Edinburgh (2024); Live Collision International Festival at Project Arts Centre, Dublin (2023); Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2022); Turner Contemporary, Margate (2022); Camden Arts Centre, London (2021); Frieze Art Fair, London (2021); South London Gallery, London (2020) and Auto Italia, London (2019).

Infinite Economic Growth, 2025 Mylar, digital prints, resin, acrylic 73.3 x 58.2 x 5 cm (28 7/8 x 22 7/8 x 2 inches) Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London Photography Eva Herzog



Ebun Sodipo's London Studio Photography by Jaden Richer

I'm thinking about your work as both a visual artist and as a writer. I'm curious about your process. What comes first for you, the written word? Or the image?

For performances, it's probably a mixture of both. I'll get images of what things should look like, how they should feel, perhaps some movements or things I want to create visually. I also write fragments of text. These begin the process, then I write more fully and build everything around the text. Because my practice is so varied, it really depends. Sometimes it's, "Oh, I have this mood and I want to write about it, or make something about it," or there's something I'm curious about. I might go away and do some reading, and then have responses from that reading. So it really depends, but I do write a lot, and I come back to those little fragments I've written, using them in other work. Particularly in video work and performance, they help guide things.

In your video work although it may seem absurd, *the earth also moves* (2021), I found myself drawn to your looping of a fragment of Whitney Houston's singing the refrain 'impossible'. How does being a poet, and your relationship with rhythm impact the sound in your work?

With video and performance, I'm concerned with the voice especially - its timbre, its movement, how it's controlled, and how it can carry a narrative on its own. I think about how to hold people's attention, evoke particular emotions, elicit desire, or mimic different moods. In the video works, I create sonic collages within the video collage. Sometimes the sound carries a tone or a mood that shapes the piece. For example, in *Nasty Girl 2: The Beast*, there's a snippet from Hiroyuki Nasu's anime film, *Devilman* (2004) that repeats throughout.

It has an ominous tone, and returning to it structures the film around that mood. There's the way sound conveys time in my work, the cycles, the layering, the moments that loop back on themselves. It's a way to speak about a non-linear sense of time, breaking away from a forward-moving narrative, weaving back in, folding over itself. In that way, sound becomes a narrative device.

I've noticed in your more recent work - as in your most recent show *An Ominous Presence* at Soft Opening - that the metallic surfaces, upon which in your earlier pieces were often smooth and liquid, now appear as crumpled and distorted. Is there something in how your practice has developed that speaks to this disruption of that earlier fluidity?

The material I use is called Mylar - aluminium-coated plastic. It's everywhere in daily life, from food packaging to insulation, but most people don't notice it. I was drawn to that mix of ubiquity and invisibility. It's tough yet fragile, able to resist tearing but quick to pick up imprints. I love that duality - hardy but delicate - and the way it reflects light. Unless you smooth it completely, your reflection is always distorted, which for me, as a trans person, feels resonant.

In earlier works, the Mylar was smooth, almost like a liquid mirror. Recently, I've started crumpling it, sometimes very finely, then smoothing it so the wrinkles become subtle traces. That shifts how the surface catches light, how much of yourself you can see, and the mood of the piece - dynamic and shimmering or soft and contemplative.

As a Tumblr kid, whose work layers material from disparate locales, how has the internet influenced the way you think about and create work within a borderless context?

The internet has been formative to my political consciousness. I started using platforms like Tumblr to collect material during a moment when conversations about Black identity were very active, roughly between 2014 and 2018. This became an archive of that political and cultural moment, a time when consciousness was being formed, realities were being challenged, and cracks were appearing in how many people understood the world. The future felt intangible, but there was a glimpse of it online, and I wanted to capture that in my work. At the same time, I also wanted to address the silences on the internet, the ways certain histories or perspectives aren't embedded in the images, sounds, memes, or language that circulate. My work tries to take these fragments and reassemble them, putting images in new relationships



What if Laure Was / A Black Goddess Come to Earth, 2025 Mylar, digital prints, resin
160 x 120 x 1 cm (63 x 47 1/4 x 3/8 inches) Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London Photography Eva Herzog



Ebun Sodipo's London Studio Photography by Jaden Richer



Ebun Sodipo's London Studio Photography by Jaden Richer

to tell stories that often go untold or evoke different emotions than they do online casually.

It's important for me to reflect how my Blackness was formed. I'm Nigerian, Yoruba; my early experience was shaped by living in Nigeria for eleven years. My consciousness also developed through proximity to Black America and diverse Black communities worldwide. The question of "How am I Black?" connects me to many others across the globe, even beyond Africa and the traditional diaspora.

At your 2023 CCA show *I Just Get Mine Quietly*, I recognized the fingers of Nigerian musician Area Scatter playing a stringed instrument. In the documentary *Konkomba* (2000), from which that image comes and circulated on Tumblr, her identity isn't addressed, leaving a linguistic vacuum. How do you think 21st-century language around the trans experience can - or cannot - capture the nuances of these histories? And how does your work with these historical women engage with the ineffability of language?

First, I want to respond to what you were saying about the limitations of language and how we build connections across time. This is where images play a huge role. They let us connect, feel a sense of familiarity, even recognize a body that resonates with us. Another way I think about transcending time is through performance and writing. I often treat the body as a way to make time feel porous - to connect with people we haven't met by imagining their existence, what they might have been doing, and focusing on that presence.

Their impact, even years later, reaches me. Kelechi Okafor once said, during a Tarot reading about ancestors, that maybe ancestors are thinking about us, too. That idea made me think about the future and descendants, like MLK's "I have a dream," which links past and future. This connection isn't only through words but through feelings and bodily knowledge. Recognizing sensations in our bodies allows us to relate across time. The body becomes a conduit, a way to pierce time, even if we don't know someone's name. That's how I think we work around the limits of language.

Language in the 21st century cannot capture the full complexity of human experi-

ence. Humans are chaotic, unpredictable, and responsive, yet language demands order and fixed categories. When we consider history - post-slavery, post-criminalization, the rise of the West - we see that language, particularly English, evolved from subjugation, erasure, and control. Every term carries the weight of that history. For example, "trans" emerges from a European context and cannot fully reflect African histories and embodiments that shape someone like me using that word. How bodies are understood depends on a post-slavery world where power defined identity and embodiment.

Take Vitoria, a woman I'm researching. She describes her body in ways that defy Western logics of embodiment. She names parts differently, relates to her body uniquely, and points to others like her in Benin and Nigeria. This shows what's been lost: ways of being, moving, and relating that language today can't fully capture. I consider myself a descendant of Vitoria.

As a Nigerian child, I remember being scolded for offering my left hand. The left hand recurs in your work - in your sculpture *Left Hand of the Sisters* (2024) and in *The General Partitions* (2023). Could you speak about its significance in your practice?

It began with Rodney Needham's essay on the Mugwe - spiritual elders of the Meru people in Kenya. Their left hands were said to hold such power that seeing it without initiation could cause harm or even death. Across many African cultures, the left hand is often coded as weak, disrespectful, or feminine, while the right is linked to authority and masculinity. But in the case of the Mugwe, the left hand disrupts that hierarchy. Needham also draws connections to spiritual figures from other cultures, some of whom take husbands or wear women's clothing - what today might be called trans or trans feminine identities.

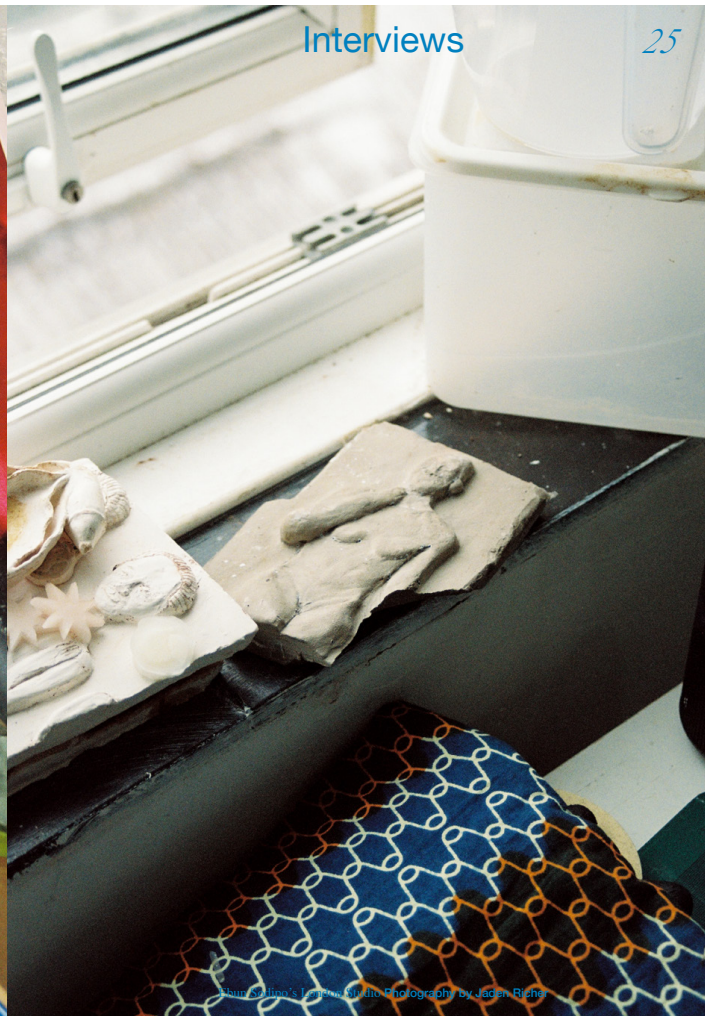
While the Mugwe are not trans women, a later misattribution cast them as precursors to trans women. Kenyan trans women have embraced this mythologized history as cultural and political validation.

I'm fascinated by how myth and imagination can sustain marginalized identities, especially when historical records are absent or erased. My work uses the left hand as a symbol of trans women's spiritual and

Ebun Sodipo *First Moment of Contact*, 2025 Mylar, digital prints, resin, acrylic 68.3 x 53.2 x 5 cm (26 7/8 x 21 x 2 inches) Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London Photography Eva Herzog



Ebun Sodipo's *First Moment of Contact* Photography by Jaden Richer



Ebun Sodipo's *First Moment of Contact* Photography by Jaden Richer

Emergent, 2025

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Ebun Sodipo



Installation View, An Ominous Presence, Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, 7 March–26 April, 2025.
Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening

Interviews

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Installation View, An Ominous Presence, Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, 7 March–26 April, 2025.
Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening

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Ebun Sodipo



This Much I know, 2025, Mylar, digital prints, resin, acrylic, 28.2 x 18.2 x 5 cm (11 1/8 x 7 1/8 x 2 inches)
Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London, Photography Eva Herzog

Interviews

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magical power, and as a tool for proposing alternative histories that challenge the idea that trans women only emerged in recent decades. In my sculptures and installations, the left hand holds power and memory, marking sacred space and resisting erasure.

There's also a link to the Benin Bronzes - my cast bronze-like hands reference the circulation and reinterpretation of Black histories, and how Black trans women create from what is accessible or missing. Once, I accidentally scanned right hands instead of left, which made me think about misreadings as creative acts and ways to trouble history and shift power.

For me, reinterpreting and destabilizing history is a way to open up space for those it has excluded. The left hand becomes both a vessel of memory and a disruption of the narratives we've been given.

Wow. With Black history, the archive is often so contested - it's hard to untangle 'fact' from 'fiction'. How do you wrestle with the bravery of interpreting history in light of the inevitable gaps?

When I think about the body as a portal through time, I feel you have to believe it. Logic or proof can be useful elsewhere, but not always in this space. Narrative is a tool we use to move through the world, to open possibilities. That's what Hartman's method of critical fabulation does. It's not about whether something did happen, but that it could have happened, and what that imagining does for people now.

Like Glissant says, it may or may not be true, but that is not what interests us. What matters is the impact, how it connects us, sustains us, and resists the shrinking effect of certain histories. For me, as a Black trans woman, this belief is also a way of sustaining myself. I have to believe my work, unearthing, imagining, re-telling, is important. That belief is what allows me to keep going.

In this political moment of what feels like profound regression, where everything feels very urgent and difficult. How do you grapple with the role of the artist in these times?

A lot of us have been feeling paralysed. We go to protests, repost things, link to donation pots, but part of my frustration

is that a lot of people let this happen. Even in the early 2000s and 2010s, when people were coming to political consciousness online, there was always the other side. Reddit, for example, was full of violent rhetoric, but it was dismissed as harmless discourse. People didn't take it seriously.

Most don't understand how fascism emerges, its ties to capitalism, or the dynamics of minority struggles. Then identity politics became a dirty word. We weren't taking history seriously, and that left us unprepared for the cycles we're now seeing.

I saw a Bree Newsome graph showing American history - slavery, Jim Crow, Reconstruction - marked red, yellow, green. Someone edited it to show most of history is red. That's why we need to understand that most of the time, the world has been terrible. We get small windows to act, to intervene, to do work. Understanding history allows us to destabilise the present and question the categories we occupy.

In my work, I want to show that who we are isn't fixed, that it's contingent, and connecting across time and space is possible. The cycles repeat - the veil lifts, then falls. My work patches up a depleted reservoir, creating little oases in a desert of cycles. It lasts through repetitions, even when the world doesn't. I want it to allow reflection, resistance, and hope.

History doesn't bend itself; hands bend it. Liberalism lets power be subtle, sophisticated, seductive, relentless. Free speech and neutrality aren't enough. Words and actions have weight. Desire constructs imagination, imagination constructs possibility. Archives, history, and culture need intervention. People have to do the work.

Emergent, 2025

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Ebun Sodipo

Bio

Yvo Cho

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Ebun Sodipo's London Studio Photography by Juliet Fisher



Yvo Cho 83 x 77 x 19 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Neue Alte Brücke

Yvo Cho (b. 1994) is an artist living and working in Cologne. He studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Trisha Donnelly and Christopher Williams and graduated from the

The Face, 2024

The queer artists taking over Art Basel Miami Beach

It's no secret that Miami Beach is queer as folk. Aside from legendary gay bar Twist, Gianni Versace's mansion and the year-round display of speedo-clad himbos, this month the city is home to many new queer art exhibitions.



Welcome to the world's glitziest (and campest) art fair: [Art Basel Miami Beach](#). Hot on the heels of [Art Basel Paris](#), this year's Floridian outing promises a sizeable contingent of historical and contemporary queer art, spanning surrealist, non-binary artist Claude Cahun all the way through to radical trans collagist [Eboni Sodiipo](#).

Of course, where there's an art fair, there'll be queer representation in 2024. In this spirit, Art Basel has put its Nova section to good use – here, emerging galleries focus on new work from up to three particular artists – spotlighting everyone from the Olly Shinder-modelling artist [Michael Ho](#), to Tumblr heroine-turned-radical-art-DJ [Juliana Huxtable](#), whose name you might recognise from Berghain or the cooler dance festival line-ups.

Ebun Sodipo, Soft Opening

After spending nine years of her childhood in Lagos and two in Abuja, artist Ebun Sodipo came to London in 2004. Her parents both worked, so her grandmother and cousins spent a lot of time caring for her, introducing the artist to bible stories and West African mythology.

“I suspect these stories influenced how I see history now: as stories and narratives disseminated by a particular power structure, concerned only sometimes with ‘fact,’” she explains. “My upbringing was very religious. Both my parents were leaders in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and yet they combined this colonial way of seeing the world with some traditional religious practices, such as belief in babalawo [Yoruba healers] and witchcraft.”

Ebun’s practice – which spans collage, performance, installation and poetry – owes a lot to the syncretic nature of her family’s faith, which she applies to her own Black transness. In this vein, she takes inspiration from varied sources – be it Yoruba culture, old Naomi Campbell moments (*I worry that you’ll work in an office*, 2024) and even vlogs of hair-braiding clips (*Illustrations for Libations, Attestations, Affirmations*, 2020) – to give found imagery and phenomena new meanings. Her assemblages, pulled together with printed paper and mylar, sealed in epoxy resin, serve as what she calls, “survival strategies of the marginalised, particularly the uses of anger and memory”.

Having shown with some of London’s cutting-edge galleries, including [Neven Gallery](#) and [VO Curations](#), Ebun recently took to LA for a solo show with [Soft Opening](#). Throughout her work, she merges imagery from online – often social media – to build an archive for trans women of the future. Subtlety reigns supreme for Ebun, whose practice never gives itself away on first viewing.

“I think people expect a kind of [spectacle] with my work, and the work of POC people in general, that I deliberately avoid,” she says.

Art Basel, 2024

Galleries collaborate to showcase global talent at Art Basel Miami Beach

This year, eight galleries will host joint presentations. Four of them discuss the benefits of these temporary alliances

By Rob Goyanes | Nov 29, 2024 | 4 min read

Most Art Basel booths are occupied by a single gallery, but collaborations enable surprising synergies and conversations. Four gallerists discuss their collaborative booths: **Fabian Lang** (Zurich) and **Espacio Valverde** (Madrid), who will show a joint presentation of Spanish artist Elena Alonso's large-scale wall panels, sculptures and paintings. **Soft Opening** and **Emalin**, both from London, will show bronze sculptures and mosaics by Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev and the work of Ebun Sodipo, a multidisciplinary artist in London who excavates visual material to probe possible trans futures.



Evgeny Antufiev, *Untitled*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Emalin, London. Photograph by Jan Kolsky.



Ebun Sodipo, *E mostrava os peitos*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph by Eva Herzog.

Antonia Marsh, founder of Soft Opening
Lucy Cowling, head of exhibitions of Emalin

Why did you decide to pursue a joint booth? I like that you're also answering these questions with one voice.

It's essential that the character of each gallery comes through distinctly, while a clarity of vision is maintained. As two galleries from the same city, it felt exciting for us to bring our programs together in a way we haven't yet had the opportunity to, considering our close physical proximity to each other in London

Art Basel, 2024

and ways in which our approaches relate – an ethos of mutual support, attention to detail and commitment to supporting artists with utmost care.

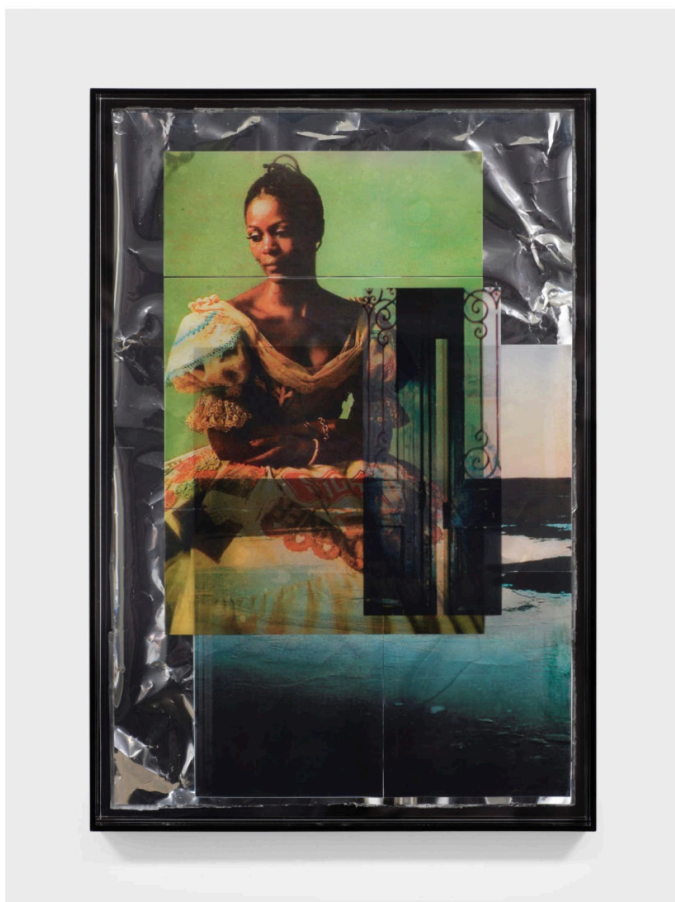
Tell us a little bit about who and what you'll be showing.

Emalin's presentation of Evgeny Antufiev includes new vessels cast in bronze, encrusted with semiprecious stones, and mosaics that draw from ancient craft and stone setting techniques. Antufiev's laborious treatment and sourcing of materials leaves a tactile trace on the objects, like bronze caked with his fingerprints. In his critical engagement with mosaics, Antufiev explores the entanglements of imagined imperial aesthetics with Soviet identity-building and the violence of contemporary expansionism.

Soft Opening plans to present a group of wall-based assemblages by Ebun Sodipo. The images are made from an extensive visual archive of still and moving digital imagery sourced online. Building these into large-scale collages arranged across reflective Mylar, the artist then coats the works in a layer of clear resin and frames them in thick crystalline acrylic and mirror-backed boxes. Sodipo's compositions at once allow a restoration of neglected figures from the past and plot a trajectory for trans futures.

Antufiev and Sodipo might appear to have very divergent practices. Do they share more in common than meets the eye?

Both Antufiev and Sodipo mine material culture for alternative and critical histories of image-making, and in doing so, explore an archaeology of representation, narrative, nostalgia and adornment. Of course, while the practices are very distinct, when seen in relief, they will illuminate each other materially, conceptually and



Ebun Sodipo, *Sugar*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photograph of Eva Herzog.



Evgeny Antufiev, *Untitled (detail)*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Emalin, London. Photograph by Jan Kolsky.



CULTURE | EXHIBITIONS

Meet the most exciting young artists in London right now

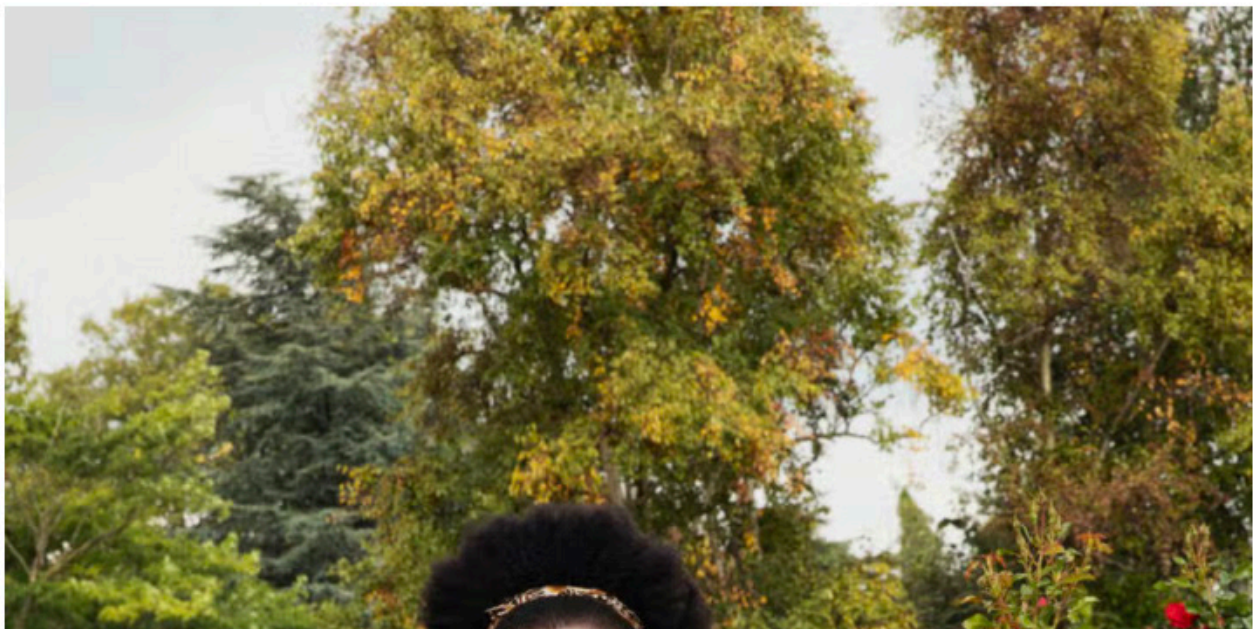


From specialising in massive sculptural installations and folklore-inspired canvases to textile collages... these are the creatives to watch

NANCY DURRANT @NANCYDURRANT
15 OCTOBER 2024

This month, London has been the focus of the art world as Frieze brought artists, collectors and punters flocking to Regent's Park. But what's new? Who are the young artists emerging into the capital's art scene, who we're backing to be big at Frieze in the future? We've rounded up some of the most exciting.

Ebun Sodipo (31)





ELLIOTT MORGAN

Eburn Sodipo makes work “for black trans people of the future”. Guided by black feminist study, she uses sound, performance, text, installation, video, and sculpture to tell stories (her passion – she started writing a novel aged nine) about Black trans women’s presence and selves in the past, present and future. “My work is motivated by a desire to give to others, particularly Black trans kids, what I didn’t have growing up,” she says. She tries to fill in the gaps, excavate lives in a more considered, empathetic way than historical record allows.



Interview with Artist Ebun Sodipo

27/09/2024

Can you provide a short one-paragraph introduction to your life and work?

I am a London-based multidisciplinary artist. With my work, I try to bring forth narratives of black trans women's lives, particularly our interior lives, across the past and present, all so that trans people, specifically black trans women, will be able to build their selves up in ways I and other women living now could not. I always say I make work for black trans people in the future. I write, recontextualise images, draw out figures from the archive, and produce sculptures from historical imagination.

When did you first know you wanted to become an artist?

When I realised making art came easier than anything to me, when I realised how much pleasure it gave me. I must have been about 16 or 17. Before that, I wanted to be a psychiatrist but I was encouraged to explore painting and drawing by an art teacher at the school a couple of years earlier and really enjoyed it. But it wasn't until sixth form that I really sat down and asked myself which path would be best for my heart and soul that I realized how much I loved the researching, questioning, and experimentation art-making allowed.

Can you name 3 people who have inspired/informed your artistic practice?

Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, Martine Syme

How has your identity formed your work?

I've always been a curious person, prone to questioning, mistrustful of authority, and dissatisfied with most accounts of the world. I think growing up I really needed to know why violence was occurring and allowed to occur. I am a migrant, I moved to the UK when I was 11; I am queer, and I am black. These factors pushed me to do a lot of reading the moment I was able to about common sense, about how we ended up with the world that we have, how we've come to the identities that we either take up or have placed on us. My work comes out of all that reading and questioning.

RAW, 2024



Left Hand of the Sisters (2024)

What materials are you the most interested in working with?

I work across several mediums so it's not the easiest question to answer. I think I'm known for my performances and my collages. With my collages, I work with found still and moving images. My physical collages are made with paper, Mylar, and epoxy resin. So maybe... I'm interested a lot in the production of images, how they in turn produce emotions, narratives, and ideology and how they can be rejigged to tell stories about/of trans women. I also work with archival fragments or fragments of history, I build them into stories and images. I try to bring forth these accounts of black trans women into the world in diverse ways.





General Partition – Precursor [Vitoria] Arrangement (2024)

If you could own one work of art from any period, what would it be and why?

Probably anything depicting and/or made by black transwomen from before the 16th century. There are images and objects depicting Gala priestesses from the 25th Century BC in Ancient Mesopotamia, Galli priestesses from 2000 years in Greece, and Rome (there was a grave uncovered a decade or so ago in York, UK) so I'm sure somewhere there is a depiction of African persons we would now call trans but due to a combination of colonisation, historical theft, and virulent queerphobia those objects are nowhere to be found. Someone needs to go into the archives and find these objects!

Can you tell us about a past project/collaboration you are particularly proud of?

I am most proud of my ongoing research project into the life of the enslaved African trans woman, healer and sex worker Vitoria. She lived in 16th century Azores and Lisbon and was kidnapped from Benin in modern-day Nigeria. She attracted the attention of the Portuguese Inquisition, who sentenced her to perpetual imprisonment as a rower on the King of Portugal's galleys. In her trial, she stated that there were women where she had lived who had bodies like hers, gesturing to an alternative gender system and way of relating to the body.

The outcomes of this project have included a theatrical performance Vitoria: Buraco, which premiered in Dublin in April 2024 as part of the LIVE Collision Festival. Developed using the transcripts from her trial, and scholarship on her life, the performance centres on my relationship to this archive and what it means to find Vitoria. Taking place between Benin, Lisbon, my bath, dream space and the hole in the sky, the story of Vitoria was told in a non-linear narrative using monologue, movement and sound.

I also created an installation, 'General Partition: Precursor [Vitoria] Arrangement' at Hannah Barry Gallery. This work was an enclosed octagonal space separated from the 'world' by PVC strip curtains, which had the left hands of different transwomen and trans-feminine people in my left printed on the surface. In this space were two altars, abstracted from the altar at the Oba's palace in Benin. One emitted sounds that Vitoria might have heard or made whilst in Lisbon, the other held items that were mentioned in the court trial: orange peels, bread and honey, a red ribbon, and stones.

Can you tell us about your upcoming projects/direction you'd like your work to take?

I'd love to produce another film, perhaps feature-length, about Vitoria, or maybe another black trans figure from deep history. And I also want to begin producing works that speculate on the future of black transwomen.



Inside the Exhibition Spotlighting Britain's Artists of Tomorrow

As an ambitious group show of British art opens at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, five artists – Victoria Cantons, Joseph Yaeger, Ebum Sodipo, George Rouy, and Sang Woo Kim – unpack their work

FEBRUARY 05, 2024

TEXT Violet Conroy

LEAD IMAGE Sang Woo Kim, *You're looking at me*, 2023. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Damian Griffiths

What does the zeitgeist of British art look like at the moment? A bold, eclectic new group show at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, ***Present Tense***, aims to answer this question, showcasing the work of 23 artists both emerging and mid-career. With a mix of sculpture, painting, drawing, collage, video, and installation, there's much to take in: fresh from his ICA solo show at the end of last year, there's the uncanny, colourful sculptures of Gray Wielebinski; glitchy, tumultuous compositions by George Rouy; sensual collages by Ebum Sodipo, vast, cinema-inspired painting by Joseph Yaeger; a series of hallucinatory pigment dye transfers by Sang Woo Kim depicting glowing figures in nature; and much more.

Although there's a fair amount of sculpture in the show, painting reigns supreme here, ranging from the abstract, angsty canvases of Daisy Parris, all the way to the figurative, confrontational work of Victoria Cantons, which deals with the artist's lived experience as a transgender woman (Parris's work draws obvious parallels to Tracey Emin, and Cantons to Jenny Saville – two titans of British art). As a contemporary survey of emerging British artists, in theory, the 'next' Emin and Saville are in this Hauser & Wirth show, too.

AnOther, 2024

Speaking a few days after the opening, Isabella Bornholt, the show's curator, says she's noticed a real return to skill and craft in the art of recent years. "All the artists in the show have real conceptual gravitas to their works, but they also execute it with a skill," she says, "which I think is very much indicative of what's happening in the art world right now."

Another key theme that emerged, she believes, is self-reflection. "In a world where we consume so much imagery and information on a day-to-day basis via our phones and our laptops, it's a really new, hyperactive way to live," she says. "And so many of these artists are looking inwards and self-reflecting to pose and answer questions."

As a mega-gallery with locations in London, New York, Paris, Zurich, LA, Hong Kong and more, *Present Tense* offers an exciting opportunity for younger artists to show at Hauser & Wirth – none of whom are currently on their roster – and a refreshing chance to show outside of London, where most of the UK's art-world action usually takes place. Located in the picturesque town of Bruton, which boasts top-quality restaurants and hotels (Rochelle Canteen's Margot Henderson does the food at The Three Horseshoes, a 17th-century pub opened by Phoebe Philo's husband, Max Wigram, last year), a weekend trip down to Somerset to see the show is well worth the journey.

Below, five artists featured in the show – Victoria Cantons, Joseph Yaeger, Ebun Sodipo, George Rouy, and Sang Woo Kim – talk in their own words about their work.

Ebun Sodipo

"I pull the images for my collages from this archive I've been building since 2014. From 2014 – 2018, I would go on Tumblr for a certain amount of time every day, and I would collect anything that was posted by a Black person that came across my feed. I basically grew up online. Tumblr kind of determined what it meant for me to be Black. It informed my politics when I was younger, and it's a place where I found myself, so that context is really important.

"These collages are about trying to describe a particular emotion, thought or desire that I have. I also like to think about the ways that we use these images and the Internet to communicate with each other, and to determine who and what we are through this relationship that is mediated by images. These images impact you in a way that you can't describe. It's like pre-thought; you don't really think about them, you feel them.

"Water, the sea, and the Atlantic is a really important aspect of my practice. I started making this work thinking about what it means to be Black, and part of that has to do with the Atlantic, or now, in contemporary times, the Mediterranean and the Gulf. I am thinking about what happens when a body moves from Africa into a non-African space via the sea, and the kind of transformations that happen. The psychological phenomenon of looking at the shifting feel of light and water, the kind of meditative states that it can get into, is really interesting to me. There's a theory that one of the reasons why we are drawn to shiny and glittering surfaces is because they remind us of water on a deep instinctual, lizard-brain kind of level. Our body is trying to quench a thirst that has been with us for a very long time, but you can never actually quench the thirst, and the desire is deeply embedded in your body in your DNA. That suddenly becomes a metaphor for thinking about transness and transfemininity, and this desire to move the body or to follow the desire to a certain point. That's why I use the motif of water and reflective surfaces in shine and shimmer, to get your attention and draw you in."

Frieze, 2021

LIVE 2021: A Programme of Performance Curated by Languid Hands

Frieze London's LIVE will feature performances by Rebecca Bellantoni, Ebun Sodipo and Ashley Holmes exploring themes of embodiment, transformation and grief



This year's LIVE programme is curated by **Languid Hands**, a London-based artistic and curatorial collaboration between **Rabz Lansiquot**, filmmaker, programmer and DJ, and **Imani Robinson**, interdisciplinary writer, editor and live artist.



Rebecca Bellantoni, *Untitled*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist

Frieze, 2021

The duo have been curatorial fellows at Cubitt Artists since January 2020, presenting *No Real Closure*, a platform for experimentation and development of black artistic practice across exhibitions, moving image, text, performance and public programming.

Their LIVE programme extends this method of inquiry, and will be available to view online, with performances by **Ebun Sodipo, Rebecca Bellantoni & Ashley Holmes**.

The performance programme will be hosted online on frieze.com from **Thursday 14 October**.

Metal, 2021



In her work visual and performing artist **Ebum Sodipo** takes us into her world of freedom and self-expression. Sodipo delves into the intricacies of her journey into confidence. She explores the fluid cosmological joy of being true to yourself. With themes surrounding gender, race and sexuality, Sodipo discusses safe art spaces and artistic symbolism as a means to extend conversation and spend more time together with artwork.

Hi Ebum, could you present yourself for our readers?

The most important things to know about me are that I am an artist and writer. Here are some less important things about me, in no particular order: I am a green fingered lover of anime and period dramas sets in imperial courts; I am a tall black trans woman living by the sea, enjoying the distance from the heart of an empire; I am Yoruba; a migrant with dual nationality; I consider myself a black abolitionist; I was raised in a middle class pentecostal Christian Nigerian household; I could stare at the sea for hours on end; I'm single, and I've had chicken pox twice.

Metal, 2021

Growing up did you always know you wanted to be an artist?

Not quite. My parents are both accountants, and in true post colonial middle class fashion wished for their children to go into STEM. They weren't into the arts either and didn't really have any friends who were creative. It wasn't until I was 16 or 17 that the desire for this path arose. I was quite good at drawing and painting and my art teachers at school persuaded me into doing an Art GCSE, and then an A-Level. After that it simply made sense for me, it felt like the best way to articulate myself.

I was always interested in storytelling from a very young age though. I devoured books from a very young age and started writing a novel when I was 9. I read constantly: in classes, on the bus on the way home (sometimes I'd be so engrossed in a book that I'd stay on the bus till its last stop hours from home). My parents tried, unsuccessfully, to confine my reading to the evenings, but obviously that didn't work. I think of my practice as storytelling, in different forms. There is always a narrative present in and between my works. Developing an artistic practice is in many ways simply learning different modes of

Your work depicts such a broad range of beautifully constructed, multi-disciplinary focuses. How do you come up with your varied projects?

I usually go with my body. So many of the things I've made were responses to things I was reading, watching, seeing. I might write something down somewhere and return to it in order to pull out ideas. Or an image forms and I flesh that out, seeing what is possible and realisable right now, and what will remain a dream, like what budget do I have, what's the best way to display it. Sometimes I isolate particular ideas, conduct some research and then build a performance, film or text around them. If its a text then, how should it be put out into the world: via sounding, or reading? If reading, a book, a website, a leaflet? Which form best guides the audience along the narrative I'm forming, which medium best lends itself to the affective terrain I want to explore? There are core ideas I have that ripple across different works, embedding themselves without my knowledge.

Metal, 2021

A lot of your work touches on themes surrounding race, sexuality and gender. How have your own personal experiences influenced the outcome of your work?

My experiences have led me to seek and answer questions, for example: what are black gestures; what is the place of imagination in self-fashioning; where do I begin and where do I end; how can you communicate the simultaneity of trauma and joy, the history that hurts and heals? Most of my works attempt to answer these questions, with long meandering answers, a drawing out and dwelling in the sensations of answering, using bodily sensations to take my audience somewhere: the feeling of being in the black mass, or an encounter with an image that sparks gender euphoria and realisation.

You tend to depict striking and evocative visuals that communicate these themes in a way that isn't always so literal. How did you get into this symbolic visual exploration?

In part the world taught me this. Like how so much of visual culture - i.e. images, films, adverts - subliminally communicate ideas about good and bad, the right type of people and life, and the bad kind: a brightly lit suburbia vs a dark and orange toned ghetto; lighting with a silky texture and the most pleasant of sounds when a muscular able bodied white man comes into frame makes us know him as attractive; unthinking, uncaring bad lighting transform a black man into a monstrous hulking shadow; multi hued lighting that reflects off sheening dark skin triggering erotic and nonerotic hunger. For me, film and video can be spaces to resist these techniques, to construct new ways of being impacted by seeing and listening, to upend ways of connecting with the world: can a disharmonious staccato burst of images and sound feel tender and calming?

Metal, 2021

Some of your projects include set designs such as The Black House, where you create warm familiar spaces that engage with those who visit. What encourages you to create these types of spaces?

I wanted really to replicate the space I'd found myself in as I leaned into my blackness and queerness. Myself, Heidi Sincuba, and Kefloe Siwisa wanted very much to counteract the emotions and thoughts that can arrive in one's body in mostly white spaces. I had just finished university and was still recovering from the pervasive whiteness and anti-blackness of that space, grappling with the gentrification I could see happening where I lived in Camberwell, and in Elephant and Castle, in Brixton, a pushing out of poor black folk. We knew that so many spaces made by black people had been closed down so we wanted to mitigate that in some way, build and work towards a permanent space that held black creativity, aided respite, laughter and joy, healing, learning.

Over the past few months, we've been in and out of lockdown. How did this affect the way you work?

The pandemic really slowed things down for me. I was blessed to have a hospitality job at the time of the initial lockdown so I was furloughed. This gave me the opportunity to focus almost solely on my creative practice. I started revisiting and reworking old work, taking things apart and pulling out the golden kernels. I thought and experimented with my moving image work, trying to bring a heavier trace of my presence. I wrote a lot: more poetry, essays, fiction (which I hadn't done since my fanfiction days more than a decade ago), and it's upped my confidence there... I'm far more playful with text and language than ever before. I think I was also able to look more at other people's work, and speak to people (so many Zooms!) which developed my own visual practice.

A lot of your work focuses on the much-needed representation of the LGBTQ+ community. What are you looking forward to the most in the art industry as a queer artist?

I'm looking forward to the art industry being made more accessible, and to new networks that prioritise marginalised people. And perhaps less engagement with established institutions in favour of newer, small collectives and individuals. There are so many questions in need of answering like, how do you make an art career a realistic and sustainable option for young people from non-white, working class backgrounds?

Metal, 2021

you've displayed an amazing array of projects thus far, so what can we look forward to from you in the future?

I just started a series of performance works titled *my body reminds us of water*, that have taken place at different venues around the UK, at small and major institutions: Kings College, Porthmeor Studios in St Ives, Frieze, Camden Arts Center in November. There are a couple more iterations coming up: Oxford in December and at Auto Italia. These performances think through image culture, desire production, the body as an archive, gender as ancestral communication. I've started work on a large scale project called *Following The Gourd*, which thinks through astronomical knowledge, cosmologies, archival practices, and will have multiple outcomes and realisations. One of these is a web based interactive map of a fictional night sky that also doubles as an archive of trans existence, created with a small group of Black Trans youth, with FACT Liverpool and VISUAL Carlow, in Ireland. I'm also writing a small collection of poetry to come out in 2022.



Illustrations for Libatons, Attestations, Affirmations. 2020. Performance, video.

Metal, 2021



Atlantic Cruises. Embassy Gallery with Rosa Johan Uddoh - 2010. Performance.



She tore fire from the sky

and

Sent it lashing to the ground

She tore fire from the sky.

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