

ART

Monthly

No. 485 April 2025 £7.50 €8 \$9

Good Vibrations

Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader
interviewed by Hannah Wallis

Peripheral Vision

Bob Dickinson

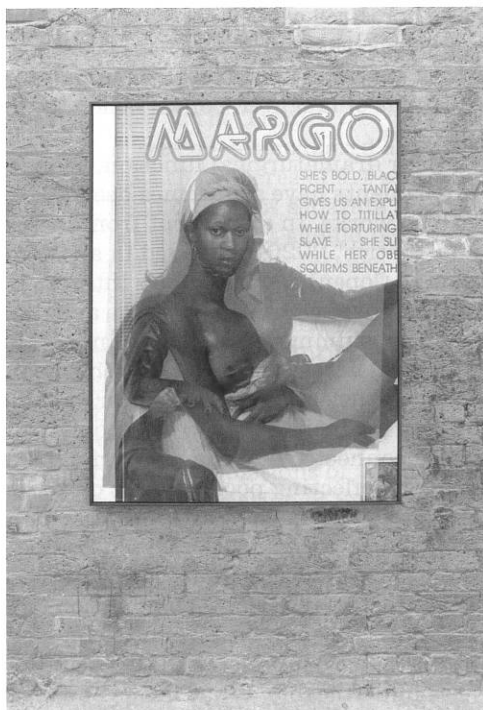
Afterburn

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.