

INNERSCAPES

REMARKS BY KRAIG YEARWOOD, CURATOR

When Artists Alliance Barbados invited me to get some artists together who are working in fresh, exciting ways, develop a concept and curate a show, I gave it some thought and said yes.

This show was originally scheduled for March 2020 – i.e. pre-Covid19 pandemic – and from the beginning, I invited artists who were working introspectively. What stories do they have to tell? What makes them tick and fuels their practice? How do they navigate their inner-space, whatever that may mean to them as individuals? The title of the show arose from there.

However, after the profound impact of the pandemic and its ripple effects on physical and mental health globally, the thoughts behind the show evolved to be two-fold. During lockdown, many artists became even more introspective, questioning their value and place in society in the face of extremely challenging circumstances. On the other hand, society turned to the arts during lockdown for respite, comfort and self-care, or simply a desire to engage more deeply and find meaning and connections despite what was happening in the world.

In some ways, artists were simultaneously being uplifted or celebrated while combatting their own feelings of futility, all the while continuing their internal struggles. This show became a chance for artists (whether they had been prolific or dormant during this time) to reflect on these and many other societal situations; holding mirrors up to ourselves and by extension our communities, ultimately led to even more interesting, thoughtful pieces – I think it is a better show now than it would have been before lockdown.

Artists Alliance Barbados is thrilled to work with both artists who have shown with them previously as well as welcoming new creatives into the mix. Thank you to Walter Bailey, Ancel Daniel, Alanis Forde, Anna Gibson, Versia Harris, Dominique Hunter, Juliana Inniss, Katherine Kennedy, Jaryd Niles-Morris, Shari Phoenix, Kia Redman, Russell Watson, Akilah Watts and Ronald Williams. All of the participating artists are inspirations to me.

I am proud to be working with Artists Alliance Barbados, and grateful for the opportunity to add “Curator” to my CV. I am also super thankful to The Frame & Art Co. for hosting me; it is an honour to be trusted with the task of curating a show in such a great space with a reputation of showcasing work of a very high calibre. Thank you to Kelly Gibson and the whole Frame & Art Team.



Walter Bailey

Things Left Unsaid, Hopes and Dreams, All Things Considered and Acts of Kindness, Graphite on Paper, 2021



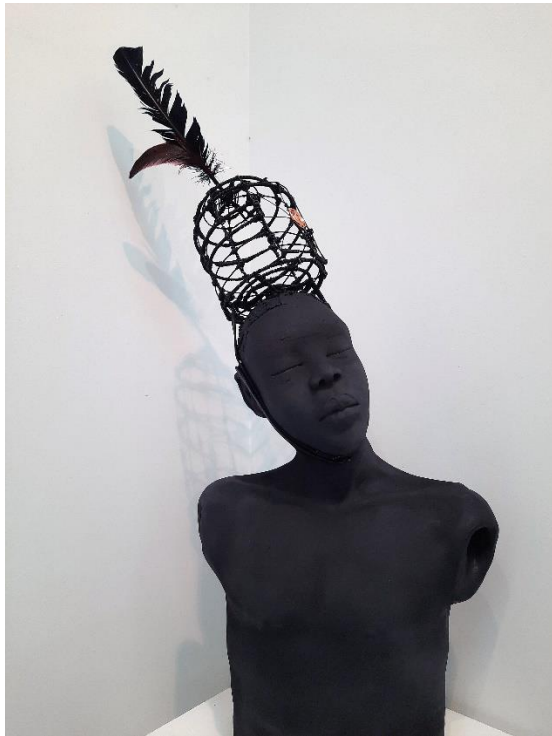
Statement:

Recent global events have affected every corner of life and has become what feels like a hiccup in reality. For a few it has brought profound grief, more have suffered its economic shockwave and most of us have had to question ourselves on some level.

This work embodies some of the thoughts I had during this prolonged period. My intention was to represent a metaphor of a simple idea. It is my hope that these symbols resonate with thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during this time, and as we look to return to 'normal' ask ourselves "why"?

Ancel Daniel

Dark Times, Clay Sculpture, 2021



These are dark times my love
A time for the hunt and the hunted.
Keep your sons under the watchful eyes of prayer, for
they are the prey. These are dark times my love. we
need a place to hide our sons and daughters, in baskets,
not caskets. Like Jochebed hid Moses.
These are dark times, my dark skin.
A time to weep and mourn.
Do not sit by your window, with your finger pressed
against your lips, Speak Up!
These are the darkest times my friend, It may soon come
to your door and knock.

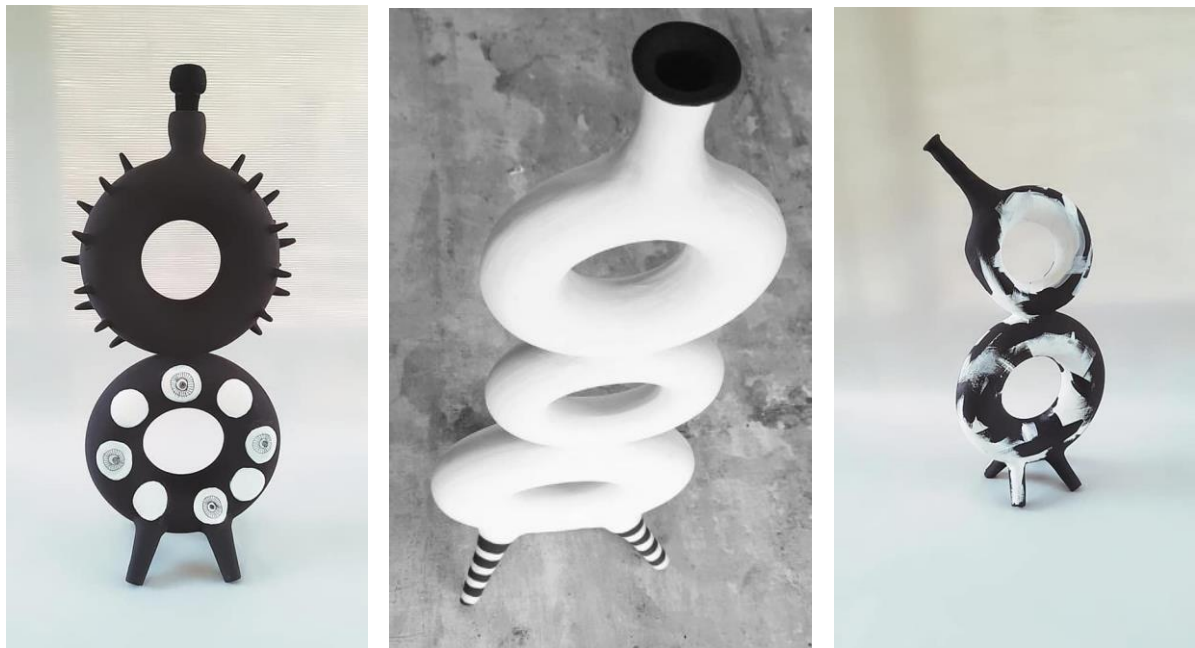
Ancel Daniel

Statement:

Inspired by my rich South American/Caribbean sociocultural heritage, my body of work is textured with motifs from the past and present interactions within a space layered with multi-racial traditions. My artistic research is rooted in this complexity, as the building blocks for my conceptual ideas. Lately, culture as we know it is being redefined due to the global act of human preservation through isolation. During the period of isolation, many are forced to revisit how the conversation around blackness is framed, and what it means to be a black or brown person within the social and economic chain of our global society; a conversation initiated through poetry, visual arts, movies and on the frontline of global protest. The black body and what it means to be free, was the inspiration for the poem *Dark Times*, written during the Black Lives Matter protest on the streets of Bridgetown in 2020.

Using clay as the medium of sculptural expression, *Dark Times* became a 3D interpretation of Blackness in a pensive and meditative mode. This sculpture is accessorised with a wired birdcage as a mesophotic language from the black body, who wishes to be mentally free from the constant bombardment of wondering who is watching and repetitively analysing its right to be present.

Clothes Pins – From the Dark Times Series, Ceramics, 2021



Statement:

The Ceramic bottles are conceptual pieces inspired by the creole phrase, "Ghall yuh like clothes pin, as soon as yuh get squeeze yuh open yuh legs"

These clay bottles were designed to create a sense of elegance yet a pinch of humour, hinted in the sprawled, striped legging like stockings. Making subtle references to the black body conversation. The clay bottles were glazed in a matted black and white underglaze, with tribal marks to connect the narrative to the creole cultural lingo. The conversation on the black body is expressed in the circular shape and spikes decorated on the surface of the form.

Alanis Forde

A Proxy Displayed, Oil Paint and Glitter on Canvas, 2020



Statement:

My proxy, Bubbles, characterized by her blue wig and red lips, lounges among glittering birds of paradise. There is a performative display of sexual energy and bravado as she appears aware of the male gaze. This painting plays on dual ideas of the proxy, Bubbles being 'a bird' in paradise while being liberated from the male and foreign fantasy of how Caribbean women are perceived as objects of pleasure or servitude.

Anna Gibson

Bared Cocoon, Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 2021



Statement:

My work is rooted in exploring women's bodies and their relationship between our cultural, racial, and social environment. Focusing on insecurities, my artwork explores and exposes the vulnerabilities women have about their differences to each other, and how they seek to physically mask or morph their bodies, to achieve acceptance in an obsessive process of evolving, using various beautification methods.

In my paintings the female figure grows more distorted as they evolve through self-manipulation. These explorations also mirror nature's process of growth, using regurgitated personal inflictions as the watering process. Inspired by the rebirth story of the Narcissus flowers, which sprouted from Narcissus' death while infatuated with his reflection, the painting '*Bared Cocoon*' creates a space that revisits the mental state after alteration. The figures are transported to decorative gardens that mirror rebirth and obsession from a surreal perspective.

I'm Questioning the re-evaluation of self after changing, is there a gain in confidence, or an unsatisfied need for more change?

Versia Harris

The More and the Lesser, Mixed Media, 2021

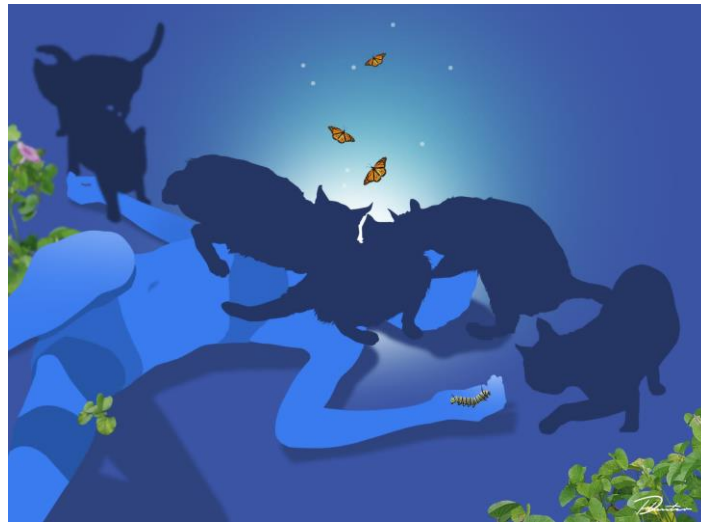


Statement:

Two girls sit on two rocks, facing each other.

Dominique Hunter

Unbecoming and Seemingly, Limited Edition Digital Prints, 2021



Statement:

Over the past seven years my creative practice has expanded from examining asexual and hypersexual stereotypical representations of the black female body in print and television media, to exploring those portrayals alongside intersecting themes of migration and black female fragility.

Images of the beach morning glory plant (a deep-rooted coastal creeping vine that is considered invasive in some regions and important to existing sea defense systems in other regions) from my own photographic archive, have become central to my framing of persons who, while rooted in a very particular space, find relief and discomfort existing at the cusp of both *here* and *there* (two spaces traditionally considered in the Caribbean as polar opposites, with the latter viewed as an escape from the former).

Unbecoming is part of an ongoing series titled *Cusp*, that has evolved to include personal strategies for coping with the anxieties that both precede as well as follow the constant uprooting and resettling of what I refer to as “mini migrations,” by exploring the value of self-care practices to an improved mental health and quality of life. The result of this evolution has allowed for an additional and often under-examined facet of the black female experience to be brought to the fore, that is, unexploited vulnerability in all of the many ways it can manifest.

Juliana Inniss

Spouted Vessel – Divine Guidance and Protection and Spouted Calabash 1 – Perseverance and Commitment, Clay Vessels, 2021



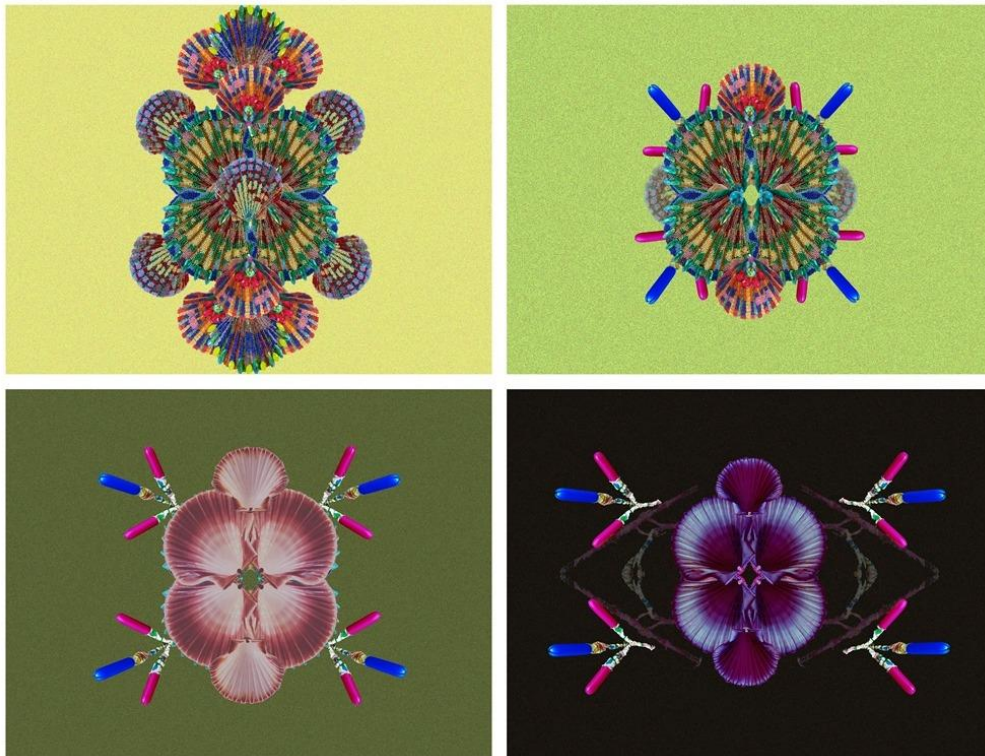
Statement:

These works, with their wide open bowls and elongated spouts allude to the idea of collecting and sharing. These vessels represent me as maker, teacher and mother – collecting or being “filled up” with knowledge, skills, wisdom, patience, memories..... these precious contents can then be poured out, sharing their sustenance with others around me.

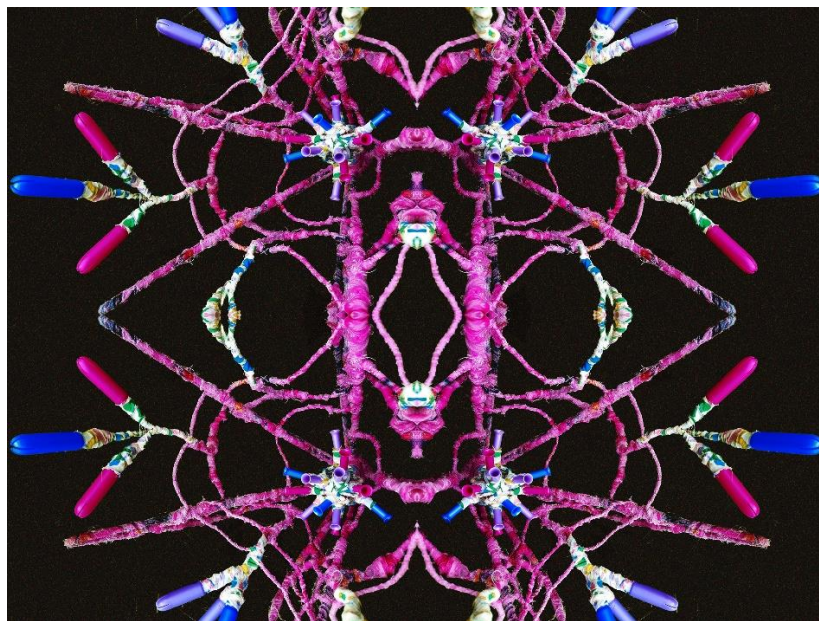
Inspired by ancient milk bowls, clay pipes and calabashes, each of these objects provide the function of containment-the holding or storing of milk, tobacco and grain respectively. Research on sixteenth century clay pipes indicate that the bowl of the pipes were quite small and were referred to as “little ladles”, while the calabash , once a prized Barbadian household possession for holding water or food. I therefore see these vessels as a place for containment and storage of heritage. I use two Adinkra symbols (a form of symbolic writing from Ghana) in my work that speak to perseverance and commitment, and the other to divine protection and guidance. As an Afro-Caribbean potter these symbols connect me to my African ancestry.

Katherine Kennedy

Plexus Stills 1-4, Limited Edition Digital Prints, 2021



Plexus, Stop motion animation with hand-beaded shells, mixed media sculpture and sound, 2 min 24 secs, 2021



See video on Vimeo here: <https://vimeo.com/555269714>

Subjective Lens 3, Mixed Media Sculpture and Lightbox, 2021



Statement:

Plexus and *Subjective Lens 3* sit within a body of work collectively titled 'Invasive Species', which explores environments and relationships shaped by an "exotifying" gaze. The series attempts to internalize or reconcile existing in "paradise", when we are bound by the lived realities of that space. The limitations we have all experienced over the course of 2020 and 2021 so far have added another layer to what it means to be confined, not only by shorelines and external expectations, but to the very narrow scope of our homes, minds and physical beings.

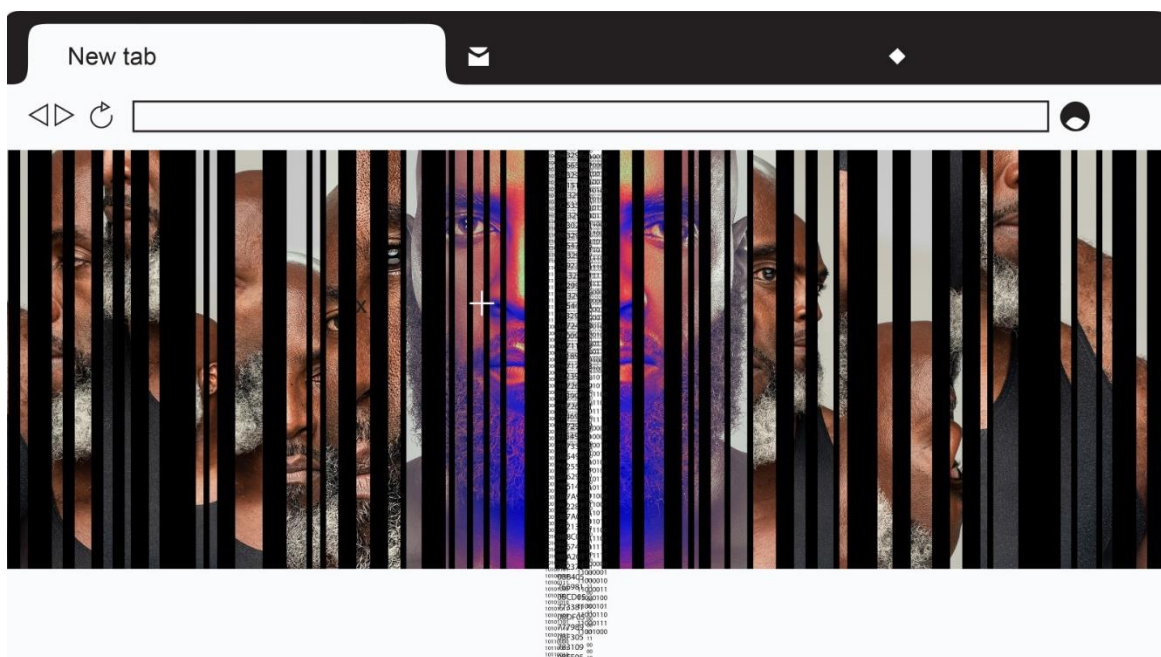
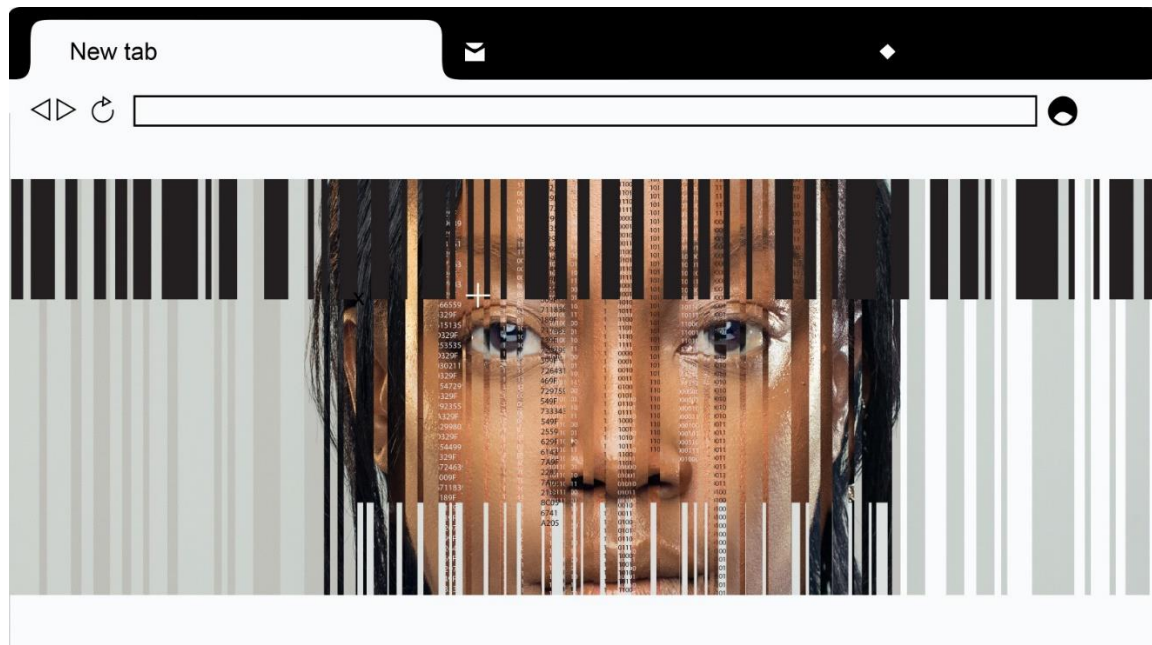
Plexus arose from my exacerbated experience of restriction. It draws on biological plexuses as hidden, intricately branching internal networks of vessels or nerves that connect to keep a body operative and aligned. In some meditative or religious practices, the solar plexus chakra is also the focal point of the body which is responsible for confidence, self-esteem and being in control of your life and free will. All of these concepts have been thrown into more disarray than usual; Barbados and the world have been confronted with circumstances which have exerted strain on mental and physical health in ways that we could not run from or ignore, inciting feelings of powerlessness.

The beaded shells – used in this series as symbols of life cycles – contract, stagnate and fade while haunting, distorted sounds recorded from my limited surroundings grow louder and more invasive. A web grows in their place, something which keeps me alive, yet remaining trapped by circumstance, and marked by objects that allude to biological cycles and the monthly passage of time. This plexus holds a necessary duality: a system representing a functional body, but one prone to being ruled by frayed nerves, as the constriction and anxiety around the state of affairs remained.

The *Subjective Lens* works are named for a play on words, as the objective lens of a microscope is the one closest to the specimen being examined, from which light rays are collected and focused through the lens to produce the "real image." Within the realm of the 'Invasive Species' series, these works attempt to alter the gaze cast on the "specimens", as well as implying that the specimens might be staring back, especially with this work in which the species is actively breaking the confines of its display case.

Jaryd Niles-Morris

Data and Binary, Limited Edition Digital Prints, 2021



Statement:

'Machine Identity' is a project which examines an individual's digital identity. Every time we interact with modern, digital technology it is recorded and monitored. Our website interactions, clicks, purchases, preferences, interests, even our voices over time, all fuse to form a very real and honest picture of who we are. But a picture only a machine can see.

Binary and *Data* are 16:9 format images which look at the humanity in between these fragments of information.

Shari Phoenix

Are you offended yet? I and II, Watercolour and Gel Ink Pen on Paper, 2020



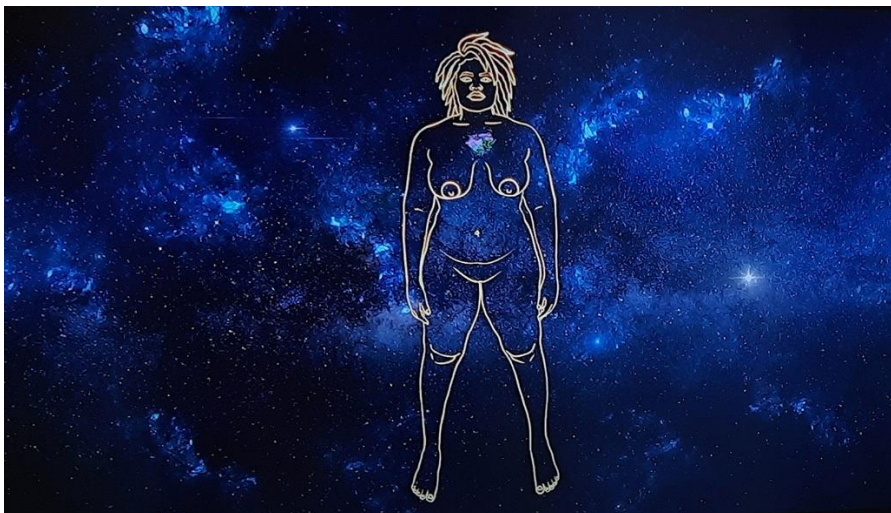
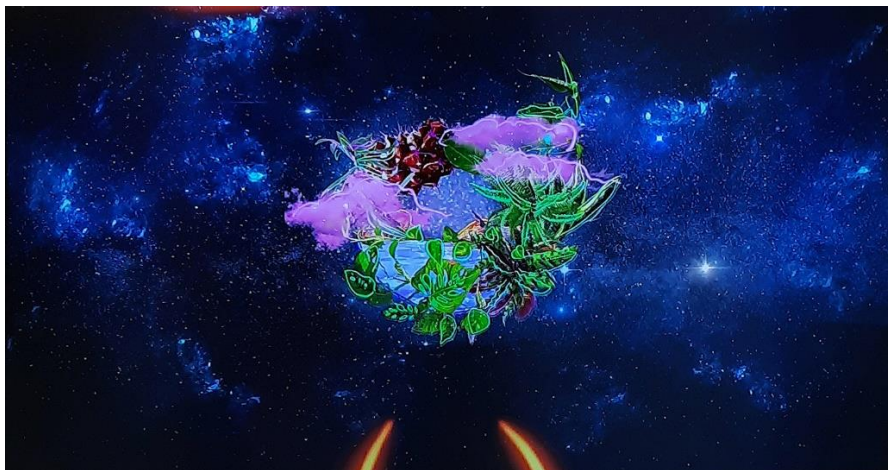
Statement:

The 'Are you offended yet?' series uses Black caricature and Eve's grotesque face masks to disrespect the classical representation of whiteness, out of anger of the destruction of murals and billboards advocating that Black lives matter. The disrespect becomes an entry point to question the use of racist imagery and slurs to attack people of a different ethnicity.

This body of work is meant to offend and appall the viewer. The interchangeable faces emphasize the "yet?" of the title; if I used this face instead, would you be offended? Would you be angry at what is being done to the representation of the figure?

Kia Redman

Soul Searching, Video Animation with Sound, 1 min 44 secs, 2021



See the full video here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j3rDHyBqYJWu-6h4FUXziaR5-pV-bs_u/view?usp=sharing

Russell Watson

Adeykun's Chamber 01, Framed Monitor with Video Animation and Sound, 8 min loop, 2021



Statement:

With this series I am considering the world of dreams, the space between the conscious constraints of social conformity and the world of ungovernable projection, imagination and remembering. When I think of this place, when I am in this place, there are many moments of figurative representation and discernible legibility. But sometimes there is just that beautiful comfort of abstract infinite darkness like one sees in the night sky or the ocean depths. This work attempts to visualize the latter.

Akilah Watts

This is Me, Acrylic on Canvas, 24" x 30", 2021



Statement:

This is Me is a piece that examines the different ways in which one person is perceived. One perception is from the onlookers' perspective while the other is from the subject herself. As she looks at herself in the mirror she sees exactly who she is, for no-one knows her better than she knows herself – and she is happy. She has been through a lot in her life so far; she's experienced both love and loss and has come out stronger for it. But as the viewer looks on to the scene, they cannot know who she truly is and what she's been through, so they judge/see her based on what society says she is.

Ronald Williams

God's Gift, Limited Edition Digital Print, 2021



Statement:

God's Gift was created out of a piece of criticism about my character that eventually led to a period of introspection and resulted in the amalgamation of two stories; Jesus walking on water and Narcissus becoming spellbound by his own reflection.

Conceptually, it's meant to convey the idea of one's self-perception not aligning with the way others may see that person. Qualities like aloofness or indifference to matters of significant importance to the common man may be things we attribute to a spiritual prophet, like Jesus, but seen through the wrong lens could very easily be interpreted as loftiness and narcissism. It's the blurred lines between these two distinct and contrasting personalities that the work aims to explore.

Visually, the colours of the suit resemble the red and Marian blue robes seen in religious iconography while the cross pattern helps reinforce the allusions to Christ. The daffodil/narcissus flower is symbolic of the flowers that grew at the watery site of Narcissus' death while also being a symbol of rebirth in some cultures therefore sharing links to the resurrection of Christ.

The title, God's Gift also points to a connection between the two stories, but can be interpreted as contrasting sentiments. At once, it references Christ being that gift from God according to Christian doctrine while conversely alluding to the haughty mentality of a narcissistic personality disorder.