

Artist Statement

I paint my loved ones connected with nature, abstraction and vibrancy to dissolve negative associations viewers may have with Black, queer and differently-abled beings. By portraying intersectional identities in this way, I reclaim the multifacetedness of the human being, thereby producing work about acceptance and empathy. As a Nigerian-Polish artist drawing from my experience as a second-generation American, I manifest concepts of duality and multiplicity through intertwining my subjects or rendering them as literal mirrors of each other. These interwoven positions subsequently form larger shapes that withstand, resist, and bleed through the most conspicuous aesthetic of my paintings: the bold, bright, thick coats of color found behind, within and atop the subjects of my compositions. Combining the realistic and the representational, this mixed media reflects my own racial and queer identity. By juxtaposing layered surfaces of lifelike figures in oil with bare canvas and abstract blotches and lines of acrylic, graphite and crayon, I adhere to no particular style. Instead, I interrogate categorizations of completion and perfection and partake in a nuanced exploration of development. In my most recent works, I am continuing this navigation by weaving truth and myth through the usage of the “Legend of the Flying African” as a visual analytic to connect historical and contemporary instances of displacement in my family and extended bloodline.

Marcela Adeze Okeke

Group Exhibitions

- 2023 *Synergy: A Group Show*, Dragonfly Gallery, Chicago IL
- 2022 *Perspectives: Figuration and Abstraction in Contemporary Black Art*, ARC Gallery, Chicago IL
The First Rotation, FORTUNEHOUSE Art Center, Chicago IL
Feminist Biennial, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago IL
Age of the Bimbo, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago IL
Deeply Rooted, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago IL
Young Blood II, The Holy Art Gallery, London UK, Online
Black Creativity, The Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago IL
- 2021 *Together We Rise*, Visionary Art Collective, Brooklyn, Online
Visionary Art Gallery, Hairpins Arts Center, Chicago IL

Bibliography

- 2023 *Braided Magazine*, Issue 3, “What It Means To Be Human”
- 2022 *New American Paintings*, No. 161, “Midwest Issue”
- 2020 *North by Northwestern*, “Big on Imagination,” Evanston IL
- 2019 *Blackboard Magazine*, “New Black Aesthetic,” Evanston IL

Professional Experience

- (Upcoming) Commission for Record Breakers, Chicago IL
- 2023-22 Studio Assistant for artist Sherwin Ovid, Chicago IL
- 2022 Commission for Podlasie Nightclub
- 2019 Internship with artist Bobbi Meier, Chicago IL
- 2017 Commission for Gigi’s Playhouse

Award/Grants

- 2022 Chicago E(art)h Grant Finalist