

A HUGE PILE OF CORPSES

WEATHER PROCESSES IN THE FACE OF SHARED NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis delves into the complex relationship of identity, looking at how posters and colour act as transference connecting and defining identity beyond the boundaries of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, space, and time. While it tends towards individualism, it also informs our collective identity and shared narratives. Likewise, it also illustrates the cyclical nature of these narratives. Placing them in a constant state of repetition and transformation. As a result, this thesis draws inspiration from Christina Sharps's work *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* as a 'Weathered Condition.'

The thesis also looks at the potential of these posters and colours to evoke memories as they display the tendency of photography and influence how we interact with past and future occurrences. Focusing on the work of Susan Sontag's "*On Photography*," Guy Debord's "*The Spectacle of the Society*" and Roland Barthes' insightful discourse on the emotional impact of details in a photograph, a profound emotional response of the viewer's interpretation.

Informing my artistic practice and the project, a huge pile of corpses. Which reflects on the singularities of occurrences, the repetition and transformative aspects of occurrences that define identity. Involving the appropriation and incorporation of the aesthetics from my immediate environment, from aged posters, signs, and countless elements. Also, the appropriation, of historically documented images associated with pivotal moments of the slave trade, apartheid, and the civil rights movement, as a backdrop to tell stories about the human condition across time, which envelops us like the weather.

Through the lens of colour, weathered posters, memory, and appropriation, this thesis examines how these diverse aspects collectively shape one's sense of self and influence interactions with the world. Focusing on colour, historically documented images and elements present in weathered posters as an emotional trigger to evoke reflections and conversations on the transformative, collective, individualistic and singularities of identity in different geographical regions and the repetition of these narratives.

Inspired by the storytelling tendency of Kumawood posters, movies, and artists such as Andy Warhol, Godfried Donkor, Yinka Shonibare and Zohra Opoku, from their use of materials, interaction with the environment and history. And outlining my creative process, which involves incorporating various artistic techniques, including handmade painting, textile printing, and wood engraving.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Narratives

As an artist, I am particular about the narrative, and storytelling tendency of colours, textures, forms, and posters to communicate our individual and shared experiences. This translates into my textile print and wood engraving as storytelling using the concept of photography to evoke emotion and interactions.

In my eyes, you can see that even though my narratives are not yours, it is interesting to know that you sometimes resonate with my tales. At the same time, you find your narratives in the tales I present to you. With time, my drums may seem not to reflect yours, but the essence of war, joy, and happiness remains the same.

Well, my eyes have seen you on wall surfaces, and sometimes I stop to observe, finding myself reliving in the joy, happiness, and pain that decorates you. As I gaze into your radiant, stormy, and tear-filled eyes, my own stories and reality resound in my ears. You are like the falling leaf of a tree and a sprouting plant. But in your inhuman existence is the cyclical nature of our being, life, and death. The process of our being that decorates you, the transformation and recurrences of history, the individual, and collective tales. Like a passing storm soon to be forgotten, you linger as a shadow, holding and representing the traces of history and life itself, a silent testament.

Yes, I am a testament to the light, hope, violence, war, and strength, but it is about the eyes that see me. In one moment, I am the colour of the morning sun, and in the next moment the setting sun. Think of me like the weather, my presence will befall you, and the next moment I am gone. With time I may become history, a distant memory that exists on the wall surfaces you pass by, and the walls of your smart devices. As I become memories and history my presence will linger as the light of the day, and in the night, a ghost. But again, never think of me only as a nightmare, or as the vengeful spirit of your ancestors, who they said needed to be saved. Because I am also the one, who will light up the candle to the darkness and propaganda of our world. Even though I am presented as a single event in each time and space, something that is solitary, individual, or separate from others. Think of me as unique experiences within broader systems. While also acknowledging my interconnectedness and shared experiences within our societies. I am a singularity, you can think of me as a rhizomatic crop, I can exist as a unique reality not only to you, but also to someone else, and in my uniqueness is our shared reality. And in our shared reality you will find multiplicity.

Reverberating Christina Sharpe

As I explore my artistic practice, I am a single print, printed or engraved in different gradients or pallets of colours on fabrics, and blocks of wood, among others. In my universality of context exists my multiplicity of interaction and reaction. I present myself to you as a singularity reverberating the singularity as presented by Christina Sharpe in *“In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.”* With Sharpe likening social and political issues, particularly the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its aftermath of racial abuse, death, police brutality, and discrimination to weather conditions. As a metaphor, to provide and anticipate conditions that shape our understanding of societal and political dynamics. In her work, Sharpe indicates that these atmospheric conditions mirror and reflect the recurrences of social, political, and cultural climates that shape our very being.

Sharpe believes that the effect of slavery did not end with abolition. She proposes viewing it as a “singularity”¹ due to the traumatic tendency of slavery that keeps defining the experience of black individuals. Indicating its effect keeps visiting and is a life in contemporary Black lives. Affecting not just one person but the collective realities of black people which keeps reoccurring. Understanding the reality of this recurrence and thus linking it to the weather as a metaphor.

Thereby challenging us on the temporality of slavery as a one-time occurrence, presenting us with the lasting effect, and asking us to look beyond the fixed timeline of slavery which still holds black life in a singularity. Sharpe illustrates this by emphasising that, in the aftermath of slavery, Black lives are placed in an encompassing force. It creates what she terms an "atmosphere of antiblackness"² transformative freedom that she claims envelops Black lives even after emancipation.

¹ ‘Christina Sharpe - In the Wake_ On Blackness and B_231114_141854, 76.

² ‘Christina Sharpe - In the Wake_ On Blackness and B_231114_141854, 80.

This resonates with me as my use of colour, shades, gradients, and appropriation of historical narratives (archival images), the circulation and consumption of information, and weathered visual elements (posters) in my environment. Provide a compelling narrative on how colour, history, and representation suggest the recurrences of events as they unfold in different temporality and situations beyond the black community. In this context, my art practice centre on the reoccurring singularities that arise from the eras of the Transatlantic Slave trade³, Apartheid of South Africa⁴, and the Civil Rights movement⁵ and Colonialism and Neo-colonialism⁶ specifically their effects such as assassinations, coups, wars, genocides, racial abuses and the persistent toll reflected in the body bags that continue to plague black communities, as a backdrop to illustrate and discuss occurrences of other narratives or situations in communities beyond the black communities.

³ Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440 - 1870* (Simon and Schuster, 1997).

⁴ David Welsh. *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009., n.d.

⁵ 'The Civil Rights Movement | The Post War United States, 1945-1968 | U.S. History Primary Source Timeline | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress | Library of Congress', accessed 29 November 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/post-war-united-states-1945-1968/civil-rights-movement/>

⁶ Lionel Tiger and Kwame Nkrumah, 'Neo-Colonialism. The Last Stage of Imperialism', *International Journal* 22, no. 1 (1966): 161, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40199801>

Posters

In viewing these events either as singularity or as one-time events, is exemplified by the interaction between newer and weathered visual elements (posters). Where weathered posters either become a visual testament of the faith that awaits or fade into obscurity, devoid of any testament to the newer ones. This can be seen in situations, where newer posters are either pasted over or juxtaposed against older ones, presenting a singularity of ageing and time. The representation of these events as single events can also be seen in the act, where older posters are completely removed and replaced with newer ones. This for me places the newer posters in a void and removes them from the realities of the histories of those before them. Considering this, the conversation with newer posters that are pasted over or juxtaposed against older ones creates a singularity. Even though completely covering older posters with newer posters creates a singularity, it is only inherent to that poster in its confined space, for instance where an activity or occurrence of a group of people in a specific geographical region will only be viewed as an occurrence of that group but not to other occurrences. But when juxtaposed, it creates a singularity that is interconnected even in their individuality and situations.



Figure 1&2: Poster, Oslo Township

Source: Photograph by Victor Kojo Aubyn



Figure 3: Poster, Oslo Township

Source: Photograph by Victor Kojo Aubyn



Figure 4: Poster, Oslo Township

Source: Photograph by Victor Kojo Aubyn



Figure 5: Poster, Oslo Township

Source: Photograph by Victor Kojo Aubyn



Figure 6: Poster, Oslo Township

Source: Photograph by Victor Kojo Aubyn

By leveraging the representational, universal, and individualistic nature of posters, colours, and the metaphorical power of weather, both in Sharpe's theoretical exploration, my visual expression, and the interaction with my environment, I aim to engage viewers in a contemplative dialogue about the ever-changing, yet interconnected, nature of our shared narratives, amidst individuality.

Binding Force

In exploring this, I employ the binding force of symbols, signs, textures, forms, and the paradoxical nature of colour as a transference, emotional imprint, and trigger as both an individualistic expression and a binding atmospheric force. Consider your interest and dislike of some colours, you may be a lover of the red rose or the pale, purple-blue periwinkle, or the yellowish-red sunset. Beyond our personal preferences, there are societal associations that we attribute to colours, symbols and signs which reflect cultural ties, religious beliefs, and affiliation with social and political groups that perpetuate a complex, atmospheric bond.

For instance, the Black Star of the Ghanaian national flag stands for the lodestar of African Freedom, symbolising African emancipation and unity in resistance to colonialism, standing as an inspiring beacon for nations across the African continent and black communities all over the world. A shared idea from the Black Star Line, a shipping line facilitated by Marcus Garvey, operated from 1919 to 1922. Likewise, the history of racial categorization based on skin colour, an institutionalised form of traumatization that echoes through generations. Where artists like Tomashi Jackson have leveraged the properties of colour perception as an aesthetic strategy. To investigate the desegregation in the history of schools in America and the resegregation of public spaces.

In this atmospheric condition colour reflects the social, cultural, and political conditions and situations of our lives. It is a binding force that connects and defines our individual and group experiences. Where, in one moment, it is the red colour of a traffic light asking you to stop, in another the blood of your ancestor, or the red roses, even your blood. Which can be expressed through art or the lens of societal analysis, reflecting the common things to the broader social, political, and cultural climate, which is central to my practice.

For me, these visual narratives and colour hold us in a metamorphosis condition, especially for those who may not naturally identify with specific phenomena or histories. A condition that connects our sense of bonding, empathy, and the well-being of others in the face of repetition and transformation. It is the hopeful mode of the children, dancing or running which is illuminated in my prints. By overlapping greens and blues that suggest a sense of calmness amidst panic expressions, and brutality that is illustrated in my red-dominated prints.



Figure 7&8

Title: "You Me US" Year: 2023, Size: 64 x 72 cm Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio (Reception Gallery and Print studio)

In this aspect, my approach aligns with Angela Y. Davis's perspective in her book 'Freedom is a Constant Struggle,' emphasising the ongoing struggle for collective freedom and understanding, regardless of individual backgrounds or affiliations.

“I think that movements, feminist movements, other movements are most powerful when they begin to affect the vision and perspective of those who do not necessarily associate themselves with those movements. So that the radical feminisms, or radical antiracist feminisms are important in the sense that they have affected the way especially young people think about social justice struggles today”⁷

In these atmospheric conditions of transformation and repetition that envelopes, black communities. These singularities extend beyond the chains that held and hold black lives in the belly of the whale. Which sailed across the oceans separating our souls from our umbilical cords but also that which keeps scavenging our mother nature. But to individuals and groups that find themselves in similar singularities, all these individual singularities are interconnected. With the monsters of the irrationality of segregation, prejudice, and racism existing beyond the confines of the black community.

⁷ Angela Y. Davis and Frank Barat, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2016), 57.

CHAPTER TWO: REFLECTIVE NOTE

Distorted Realities, Reflective Truth

Imagine walking through a new or familiar land, where the landscape itself seems to whisper stories of the past. As you move through this terrain, you encounter posters, graffiti, and other forms of visual communication that serve as silent witnesses to the struggles, triumphs, and everyday lives of those who have inhabited the space before and with you. These remnants, carry the imprint of human experiences, capturing moments of joy, sorrow, resistance, and resilience, a reminder of the past, and laying claim to a sentimental feeling that can be associated with your reality (the truth or propaganda) or a distant past. Mimicking the “pseudo-presence and the token of absence,”⁸ of a photograph. Putting you in a state where these images become souvenirs that rekindle and maintain an ongoing cycle of emotional connection and perception associated with life. Considering this, whether these weathered visual elements lay claim to distorted truth or the reflected reality, the emotional response they provoke remains. Drawing from the work of Susan Sontag’s “On Photography”⁹, the role of photography in shaping our perception can be applied, and extended to prints and posters. To elaborate on their ability to distort reality or to authenticate the truth. For me, as newly and weathered visual elements become souvenirs, they provide us with the space to question narratives. In their abstracted, rhythmic nature, vibrant and then listless colour patterns, and forms created by the interaction of weather patterns, human activities, and other living organisms, we can question narratives and identity. With this, it is a way for my audience to question the narratives I provide, whether they resonate with my stories, and if not to question the narratives they see and associate with. As you do so I would like you to think of the work of Guy Debord’s “The Society of the Spectacle”¹⁰. This reflects on how the mass media (images) is used to reshape individual experiences and identity and how I believe it can also be used to question shared, and individual narratives and identity.

⁸ ‘Sontag-Susan-Photography, accessed 14 February 2024

⁹ ‘Sontag-Susan-Photography.

¹⁰ ‘Debord_Guy_Society_of_the_Spectacle_1970, accessed 14 February 2024

This system of coding is reflected in my use of repetition, to replicate the recurrences of narrative and how it connects our shared reality despite individual situations. In this regard, I find my work reminiscent of several artists whose work deals with the complexity of consumer culture but most significantly Andy Warhol. This is due to his use of existing images from popular culture such as advertisements and newspapers. Where he uses the visual language of repetition by placing these images in multiple variations, through his iconic silk screen printing.

The multiple variations of the representation of his print create a partial abstraction that alters and distorts the various representations, suggesting an alternative perspective or reality. With Warhol's idea of placing these images in a state of repetition suggesting a numbing¹¹ feeling the public embraces, due to the constant engagement with these events. Even though this is true, the various situations are also viewed as single or separate events from the other, therefore limiting our collective understanding of these situations. But if viewed as a weathered event, there will be an understanding of how these events are connected, even in their transformation in situations, space, time, and mode of happening. And believe this will place us in a condition to identify our interconnectivity despite our individuality.

¹¹ 'Andy Warhol and Ralph Nader | Car Crash Series | Unsafe At Any Speed', accessed 26 March 2024, <https://artsology.com/warhol-car-crash-paintings.php>

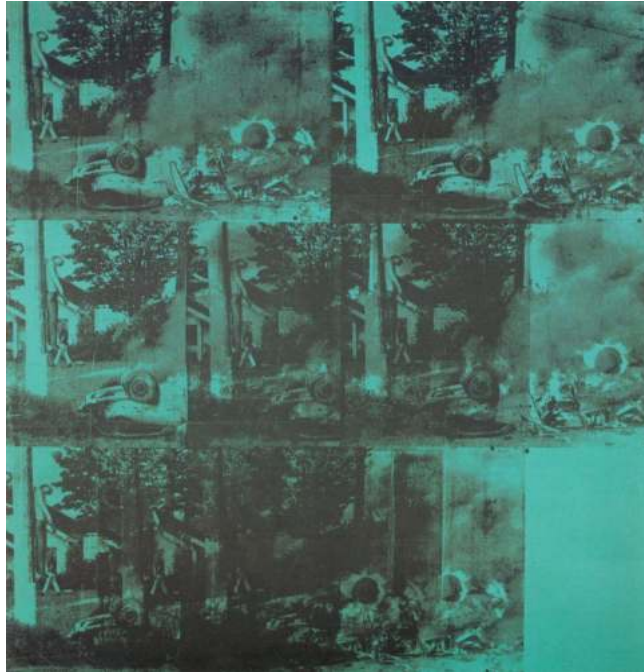


Figure 9

Andy Warhol – *Green Car Crash*, 1963 (detail), acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 90 x 80 inches (228.6 x 203.3 cm), photo: Rob McKeever/Gagosian

<https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-andy-warhol/articles/andy-warhol-death-and-disaster-series>



Figure 10

Andy Warhol – *Twelve Electric Chairs*, 1964, acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, 92 x 88 1/3 in, installation view, *Venus Over Manhattan*

<https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-andy-warhol/articles/andy-warhol-death-and-disaster-series>



Figure11

Andy Warhol – *Tunafish Disaster*, 1963, from *Death and Disaster*, silkscreen ink and silver paint on linen, 132.1 x 132.1 cm (52 x 52 in), photo: Christie's

<https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-andy-warhol/articles/andy-warhol-death-and-disaster-series>



Figure12

Andy Warhol – *Race Riot*, 1964, acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, in four parts, overall 152.4 x 167.6 cm (60 x 66 in), photo: Christie's

<https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-andy-warhol/articles/andy-warhol-death-and-disaster-series>

So, I wonder if this singularity of black lives, from slavery, colonialism, death, survival, and hope can be relegated to a month because of its numbing capabilities. In this context, photographic and printed images of slave ships, chains, protests, police brutality, and corpses that reflect the atmospheric continuities of slave history, culture, victory, and hope that shape collective consciousness and evoke emotion should not be subjected to a one-time event. If so these images in their paradoxical nature will reflect the atmospheric condition of a Medieval Church. Where the angelic presence of the Church is devoid of the happenings of the world and one's problems. Placing these images in a state of eternity as a one-time event rather than a continuation. But if placed in a state of eternity, there should be an acknowledgment that there is an atmosphere of change and continuity that is not devoid of the present occurrences or situations. They do not exist in a void but rather in a constant state of change.

For me, this subjection of black month narratives provides me with the grounds to question the spectacles of society and identity. Likewise, inviting my audience to question the narratives they draw from the fabric of my artworks. In doing so I would like you to think of how, weathered posters in a constant state of singularity, provide newer ones with a compelling narrative of a supposed reality and certainty.

There is a form of singularity, true or false, that exists in the images and stories we are presented with, which is reflected in the visual element that collages our environment. With this, the role of photographs may be an act of marketing to cover the truth or alternative data of what we know¹². The circulation and documentation¹² of these images hold us in an atmospheric bond of nostalgia of singularities to the past and a guide to the future.

As the weather condition keeps changing, so too do the occurrences of the society. Posters in their inhuman nature tell stories of our society. Each piece of poster is part of the larger story. Through quiet observation and reflection, we can start to make sense of the narratives these posters communicate. Weathered posters serve as a testament, a representation of the interconnectivity of the past, present, and future. A window to view and reflect on our individual and shared narrative. As posters become silent storytellers, they communicate our own experiences and others before us. In this context, the vibrant and listless colour pattern that collages my artwork also becomes a silent storyteller reflecting individual and shared tales.

¹² 'Debord_Guy_Society_of_the_Spectacle_1970, 32, accessed 14 February 2024

Colour-Intersecting Realities

Colour in my practice is a symbolic gesture that communicates with our emotions, it is a way of staging the recurrences of narratives which is encountered in the variation of colour tones in my work. For me, this is a way to dramatise the recurrences of narratives. In the struggle against Apartheid colour was not only a visual element but also a symbol deeply linked to racial identity and social hierarchies enforced by the apartheid regime.

Just like the Apartheid, the Civil Rights Movement in America also rides along the same road. We can also look at the genocide of Rwanda,^{13 14} which was institutionalised. An act that saw the death of over 800,000 people due to classification by colour. And the extermination of the Jews during the Nazi campaign of WW2¹⁵. The ongoing Israel and Palestine crisis^{16 17 18}. I do not intend to say that this is an issue based on colour, but an issue if not already will foster ethnic identity conflict. You may not rock in the same boat as I do, but the rate of outbursts may result in another genocide of Rwanda. With the death toll numbering in the thousands, this may not be far from the case. If I refer to the death tolls, I do not only refer to the death tolls in Gaza¹⁹ but also Israel^{20 21}. I say this because, depending on when and where you start to measure time, the narrative always seems to change. As the effect of war and death, do not only shape regional consciousness, but also individual consciousness.

¹³ 'The Genocide of the Tutsis – The Holocaust Explained: Designed for Schools', 4 January 1933, <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/what-was-the-holocaust/what-was-genocide/the-rwandan-genocide-the-genocide-of-the-tutsis-1994/>.

¹⁴ 'Welcome_to_Genocide_Archive_Rwanda - Genocide Archive Rwanda', accessed 22 April 2024, https://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=Welcome_to_Genocide_Archive_Rwanda.

¹⁵ 'The Holocaust', The National WWII Museum | New Orleans, accessed 22 April 2024, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/holocaust>

¹⁶ 'Israel Gaza War: History of the Conflict Explained', 14 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-44124396>.

¹⁷ 'Israel War on Gaza | Today's Latest from Al Jazeera', Al Jazeera, accessed 22 April 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/tag/israel-palestine-conflict/>.

¹⁸ Linah Alsaafin, 'What's the Israel-Palestine Conflict about? A Simple Guide', Al Jazeera, accessed 22 April 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>.

¹⁹ QNA, 'Death Toll from Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip Rises to 32,490 Martyrs, 74,889 Wounded', Fana News, 27 March 2024, <https://www.fananews.com/language/en/death-toll-from-israeli-aggression-on-gaza-strip-rises-to-32490-martyrs-74889-wounded/>

²⁰ Saranac Hale Spencer, 'Dozens of Children Died in Hamas' Oct. 7 Attack on Israel, Contrary to Online Claim', *FactCheck.Org* (blog), 16 November 2023, <https://www.factcheck.org/2023/11/dozens-of-children-died-in-hamas-oct-7-attack-on-israel-contrary-to-online-claim/>

²¹ Omer Bartov, 'In the Israel-Hamas War, Children Are the Ultimate Pawns – and Ultimate Victims', *The Conversation*, 30 October 2023, <http://theconversation.com/in-the-israel-hamas-war-children-are-the-ultimate-pawns-and-ultimate-victims-216411>

With this, visual elements(posters) provide an understanding of how our consciousness and interactions are shaped, which reflects how we associate with past and future occurrences. Posters in this state reflect a lens of a photograph. It can document authentic and inauthentic narratives. While exploring our emotional connections to these narratives. They unveil layers of stories, as we relive these narratives through observation. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Roland Barthes²², in his narratives on Garden photograph, illustrates this feeling.



Figure 13 © AP Photo/ Michel Euler

Mass Burial at Kibumba Camp near Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-genocides-rwanda-crime-102ab59171b81eec6702df2a274da024>

²² 'Barthes_Roland_Camera_Lucida_Reflections_on_Photography, accessed 28 November 2023



Figure 14 © AP Photo/ Jean-Marc Bouju

Nyabimana, 26 year shows machete wounds

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-genocides-rwanda-crime-102ab59171b81eec6702df2a274da024>



Figure 15 © AP Photo/ Ben Curtis

Skulls and bones of some of those who were slaughtered inside and outside of the Catholic Church, in Ntarama 1994 genocide laid out as a memorial

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-genocides-rwanda-crime-102ab59171b81eec6702df2a274da024>

Photography (prints and images) have the ability to capture and evoke emotions and memories.²³ With this, there is a dual focus on colour and photography (weathered posters and printmaking) within my artistic practice mirroring the repetitive yet transformative nature of our shared experiences. Just as the weather shapes landscapes and narratives, my work endeavours to weave together visuals, history, and colour, drawing parallels with the enduring impact of weather, rituals, and customs passed down through generations to probe the boundaries of identity, becoming a shared space where individual and collective narratives intertwine. Identity in this formation presents itself as a rhizomatic crop that is without any predetermined structure or fixed origins, it flows and connects through an array of factors and conditions. These shared spaces emphasise the nonlinear and decentralised nature of identity.

This nature of photography is reflected in print and posters. Even though print and posters are sometimes placed in a state of dramatisation, they also invoke emotions and memories that define our identity. This is reflected in how the appropriation and transformation of images and texts are integral to understanding society. With groups and individuals, expressing their thoughts and emotions about events as they incorporate these images and text in their visual language. These visual languages persist even beyond their initial purpose, reflecting the atmospheric continuities of occurrences, while also evoking memories, linking us to the past and defining our future.

Much like text and images, colour is also an essential element of identification. Throughout history, colour has been used to shape our perception and interaction. Even to the point of informing how people are, should and be treated. It is rooted in tribalistic divisions and ethnic and racial systems of segregation. Just as it is rooted in institutions of segregation, it also serves as an institutionalised indicator against these systems. With colours like red, black, green, and gold holding specific meanings, that are deeply rooted in African nationalism, and unity. As colours speak to our identity, reflecting on our struggles, resilience, freedom, and celebration of life. It also reflects the graceful and aesthetic nature of our individual and shared experiences. Which are embedded in the newly and weathered posters that collages our environment.

²³ 'Barthes_Roland_Camera_Lucida_Reflections_on_Photography, accessed 28 November 2023

Despite the stark differences in historical and cultural contexts, the 'singularity' of posters remains consistent. They serve as visual artefacts that reflect the socio-political dynamics, cultural values, and power structures of their respective contexts. Whether used as instruments of oppression, resistance, or entertainment, posters possess a singular ability to capture the imagination, convey messages, and shape collective consciousness. By examining the 'singularity' of colour and posters across these diverse contexts, we gain insights into the complexities of history, culture, and identity, and the enduring power of visual communication.

CHAPTER THREE: CREATIVE PROCESS

Practice / Project

My project's development has always revolved around the continuous repetition and transformation of social, political, and cultural narratives in black communities from systemic racism, police brutality, food insecurity, environmental injustices, and war, among others. This involves the future mirroring the past and how it intersects with colour to impact our perception of the world. During my master's studies, my practice has not only centred on repetition and transformation but on how these occurrences interconnect and translate to other geographical regions and individuals despite the different conditions and times of occurrence.

This can be the occurrence of two separate groups in the same geographical region or different regions as well as individuals in the same or different regions. This is to explore collective and individual identities through, representation, and interaction which will vary, based on what memories and associations are interpreted. This way of thinking and allowing for deliberation and interpretation is illuminated by the Kumawood Movie industry in Ghana. Known for its unique reflection of the culture, history, and values of the local community using bold and vivid colour schemes. Which often use a wide spectrum of colours, from bright reds and yellows to deep blues and greens, playful fonts, figures, and objects. Influencing some choices of colours in my work and the idea of interpretation and deliberation. These posters often exaggerate depictions of film characters and scenes, reflecting the sensational and humorous nature of Kumawood films. Signifying an emotional bridge that impactfully connects Ghanaians despite ethnic affiliations. A unifying force counter to the historical divide and conquer colonial approach. This fostered my appreciation for the aesthetics of posters, wall surfaces, and various elements in my surroundings, revealing how they silently tell stories about the human condition across time.

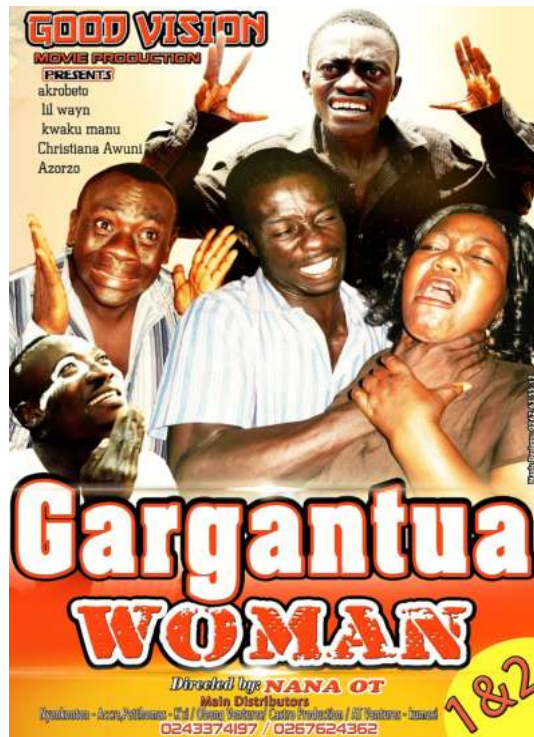


Figure 16: Gargantua woman

Source: Bismark Osei Gyamfi, the producer and director of Nannis film production house, 2018

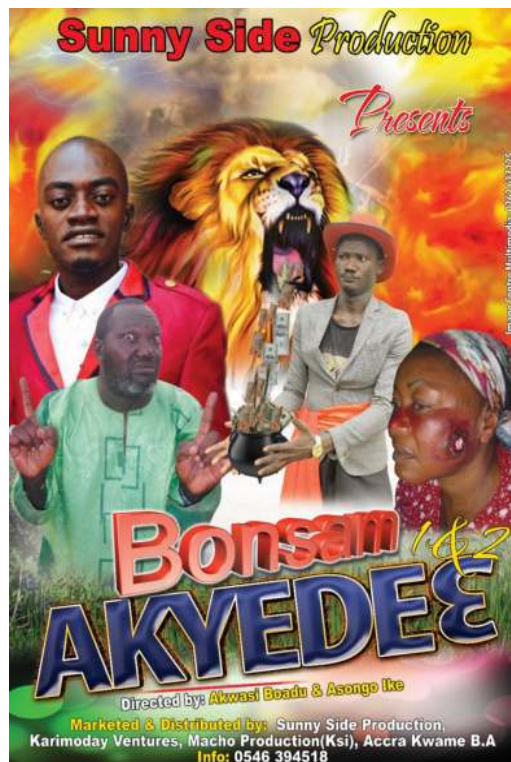


Figure 17: Bonsam Akyedee

Source: Bismark Osei Gyamfi, the producer and director of Nannis film production house, 2018



Figure 18: Ento woa da

Source: Bismark Osei Gyamfi, the producer and director of Nannis film production house, 2018

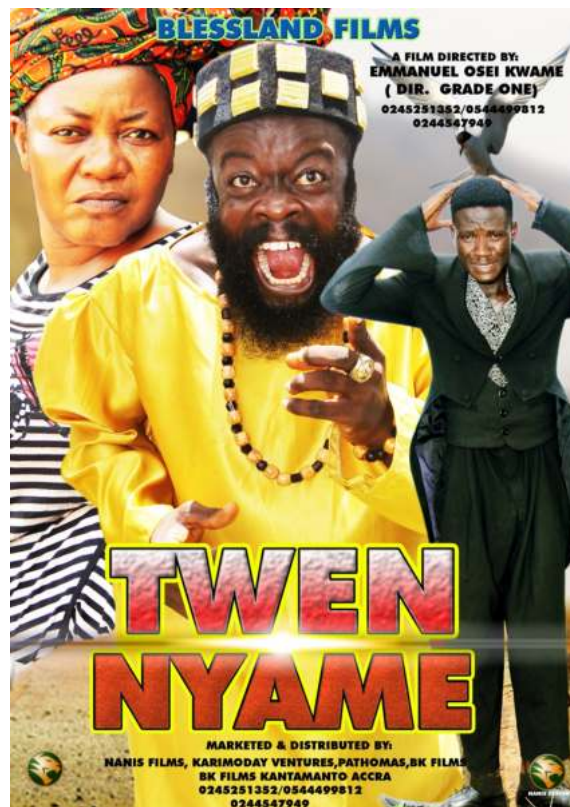


Figure 19: Twen Nyame

Source: Bismark Osei Gyamfi, the producer and director of Nannis film production house, 2018

To initiate my process, I utilise a phone camera to capture old visual elements in my environment. These visual snapshots serve as inspiration and reference for my artistic process and the singularities of our lives. From these captured moments, I extract elements that resonate with me, whether they are textures, colours, or forms. These elements become reference materials for my artistic expression. Infusing them with accessible materials (images, posters, and signs) gathered from the internet. Which involves close-up shots, cropping of the image, and mixed media exploration from painting, drawing, and image transfers. These materials are of popular historical events, from the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Apartheid of South Africa, the Civil Rights movement, Colonialism, and Neo-colonialism.

Recently, my work has utilised woodblock printing and editing software like Adobe Photoshop to abstract and compose these images. The composed file is then loaded into a laser cutter software for adjustment if needed, to allow for the laser cutter to etch the design onto the block of wood. This is then preceded by inking the etched wooden block. With the aid of an etching press, the design is transferred onto a dyed fabric or a plain clean fabric. One of the questions I ask myself is what will be the outcome of printing on dyed fabric as against a plain one? Again, how do I achieve the shadows, textures, and feel of these old posters? With this, accidentals and experimentation are ideas I embrace in the production of prints using splashing, spraying, and painting techniques to capture the physical outlook of my environments.

My experimentation sometimes begins with the pre-dyeing of the fabrics which is done by mounting or stretching a plain white fabric on the walls of my studio space. With the aid of tools like painting brushes and spray guns: water, colour, and bleach simultaneously are sprayed, and splashed on the fabric to dye the fabric. This process includes several stages, occasionally involving pouring running water over the dyed fabric. Also washing out some of the colours of the fabric after dyeing which is done under cold water to make sure the colours are not fixed since I am using reactive dyes. In some cases, after the initial dyeing of the fabric, the design is printed before it is washed out and re-printed over it again to achieve the shadows and layered effect. Some of these washed fabrics are stored in a sealed bag for a week or two resulting in discolouring. In some cases, the print is done on plain fabric and dyed by spraying and splashing colour around the printed section of the fabric without necessarily spraying the back section. And sometimes, spraying only the back section. At times, the printed fabric is crumpled together, and colour is sprayed and splashed over it. In some instances, I also use white glue to coat sections of the fabric before colour is applied. And during the application of colour, white glue is simultaneously painted over the wet fabric or mixed with the colour and painted.

As I appropriate the physical outlooks of objects in my environment through painting, spraying, and printing. One method I also often used was to take a direct print of the surfaces of these materials. Particularly is the use of old plywood due to the patterns created as a result of the weather and insect activities. Where the cloths are either soaked with both starch or colour and wrapped around the plywood or rusted metals to capture the patterns and marks. This for me is a way of creating abstractions that speak to the visual, mental, and emotional state of our experiences, that bear traces to our daily activities, and is a way of revealing the truth of reality that is rooted in the way you experience the work or resonate with it.

Another interesting aspect to be is the accidentals that happen on the press bed, from the smudging of colour because of my carefree interaction with the inked plate and printed prints. The occasional movement of the plate under the press, which is a result of me not using a pair of runners, strips of lino sheet, cardboard, or wood placed at the edges of the press bed to keep the plate and the roller in contact. This sometimes creates subtle movement resulting in after images in the prints, or the misalignment of the plates against the first which also creates after images. Due to the inconsistent pressure, the print goes through to find the correct pressure. To the folds in the print that happen as the fabric goes through the press and the marks that are created because of loose threads of the fabric.

With this, my creations in most cases take the form of prints on textiles, through experimentation with vat dye, reactive dye or colour, textile printing paste, bleach, rust, cassava starch, or white glue, and occasional experimentation with slips, glazes, on clay slab (screen printing), and metals (enamel techniques) which are yet to become a core element in my practice.

This exploration presents a range of abstracted and sometimes slightly abstracted images, with each similar yet subtly different, due to the colour composition of each piece, experimentation, with water, and sometimes bleach, and the accidentals that arise during the process of printing. This process is a way of staging the interaction of human activities and natural occurrences that impart weathered posters as a metaphor for the singularities of our existence. It provokes questions about our nature and how these events reoccur, interconnect, and the agencies that affect it. In both cases, these abstract images invite viewers to engage and interpret. They present a window through which one can view different moods and information about the scene and conditions.



Figure 20&21

Title: Untitled, Year: 2024, **Size:** 31 x 76 cm **Media:** Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) **Location:** Khio (Print studio)



Figure 22,23,24&25

Title: Untitled, Year: 2024, **Size:** 31 x 76 cm **Media:** Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) **Location:** Khio (Print studio)

These partially or slightly abstracted images sometimes feature figurative figures without faces, only bodies, and multiple layers displaying an overstimulated state. Whether they depict urgency, panic, or people running in the rain. They evoke a sense of alarm and danger, calmness, while the lines suggest a playful yet sinister quality. Many of the works reveal images unfolding in a mirrored background or a completely different pictorial representation, yet with underlying similarities. This layering creates diverse interpretations and narratives, unveiling the intricate layers of the subject of singularities through colour.



Figure 26

Title: "You Me US" Year: 2023, Size: 64 x 72 cm Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio (Reception Gallery and Print studio)

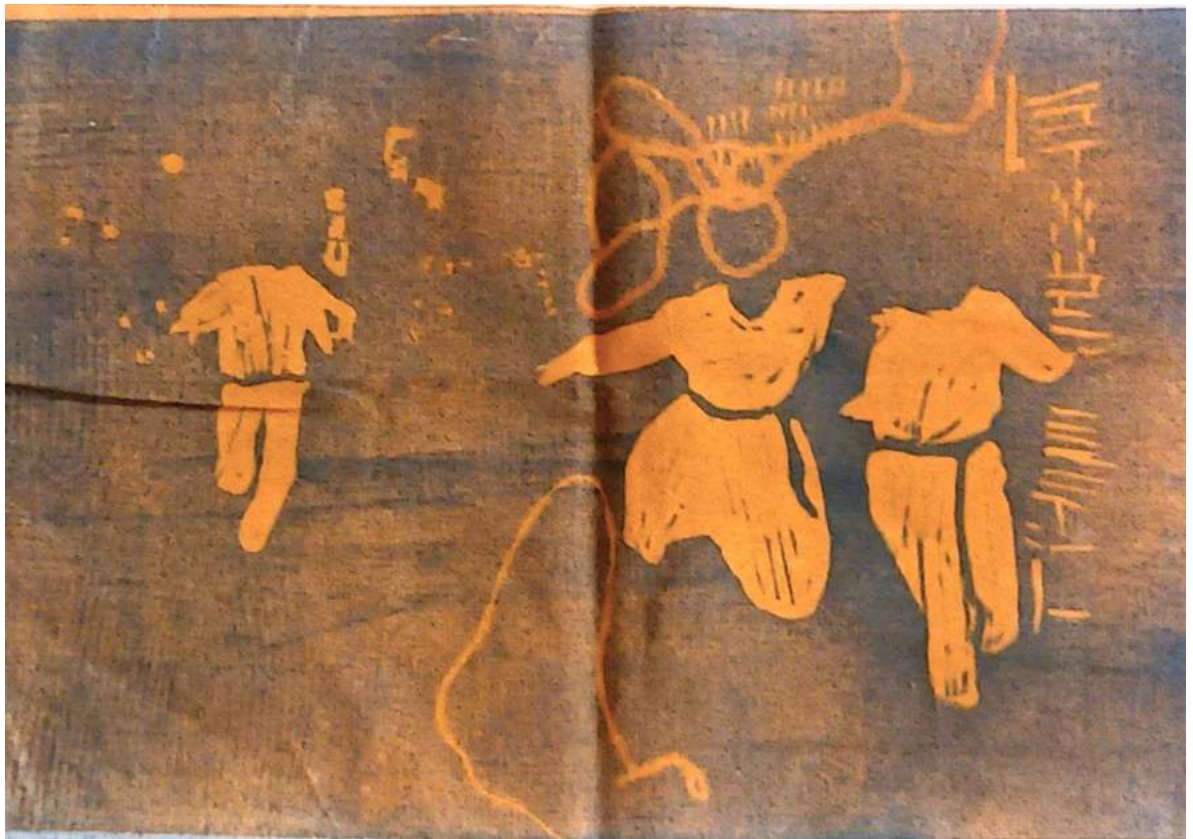


Figure 27

Title: "You Me US" Year: 2023, Size: 64 x 72 cm Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio

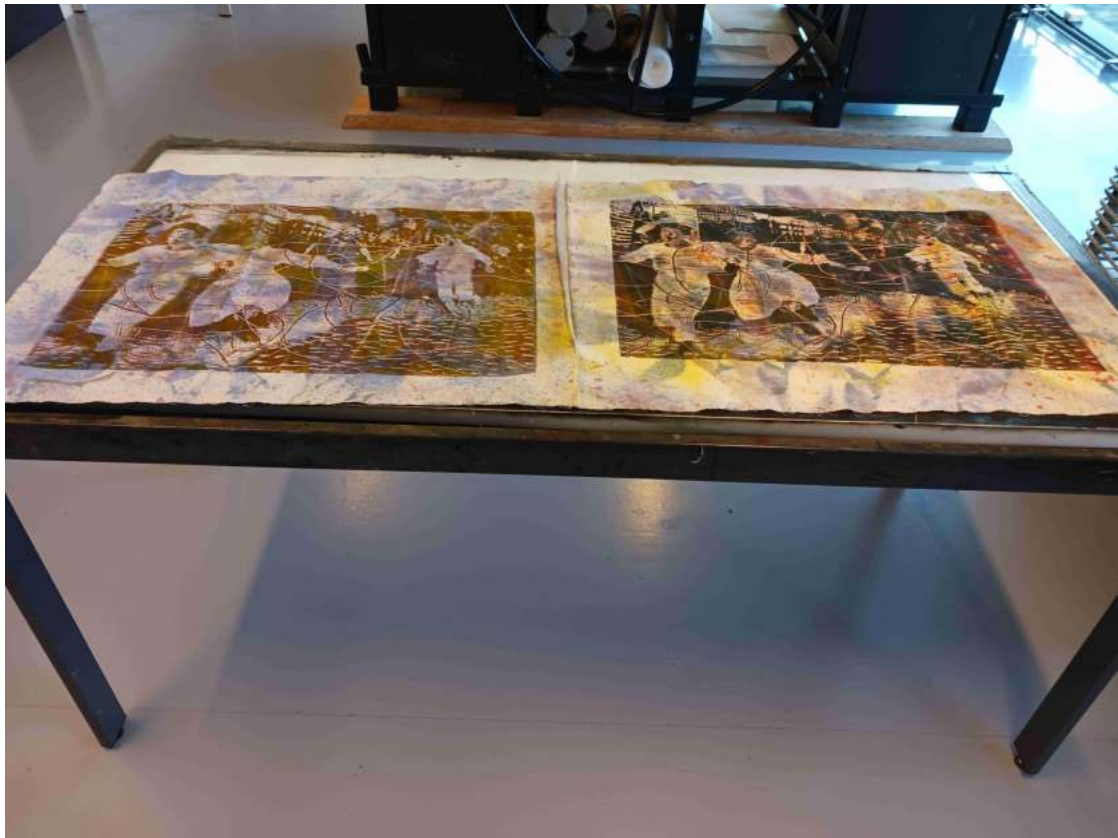


Figure 27 & 28

Title: "You Me US" Year: 2023, Size: 64 x 72 cm Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio (Reception Gallery and Print studio)



Figure 29

Title: “You Me US” Year: 2023, **Size:** 64 x 72 cm **Media:** Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) **Location:** Khio (Reception Gallery and Print studio)

For me, these accidentals and experimentation situate the various prints in a singularity despite the different encounters and dynamics of the individual prints. This, for me, serves as a visual language or medium to bridge the past and present. As my process transitions into editing it evolves into visual coding, bridging historical narratives with contemporary expressions of my environment. Providing the platform for reinterpretation and reimagination of these narratives, a space to stage these events. And to contemplate the continuity and the preservation of these singularities as reminders. Creating a seamless connection between the past and present through the merging of different elements from different temporalities. This for me is contradictory to my initial process where abstractions were direct imprints, taken from weathered visual structures in my environments. But a way to examine the repetitions of narratives that exist in the transformative spaces, time, mode of occurrences, transmission, and representation of these narratives. To do this is my probing of wood as a direct material for the representation of these narratives and to probe singularities beyond multicoloured prints on fabric, leading to my final project, A Huge Pile of Corpses.

A Huge Pile of Corpses

With this, my final work titled 'A Huge Pile of Corpses,' draws inspiration from the destructive yet captivating ice finger of death phenomenon in the polar regions. This natural occurrence freezes everything in its path to death. Serves as a metaphor for the devastating physical violence, and abuse in the wake of slavery on Black individuals, communities and communities and individuals beyond the black community and the enduring influence of colonial and imperial powers. Moreover, it reflects the authoritarian tendencies of imperial powers who seek power at any cost. The process behind these pieces delves into the perpetuating cycles of oppression and violence. Rather than remaining entirely abstract, it is a figurative pictorial representation with a bit of abstraction. While my production has been reliant on textiles, this project displays engraved wooden squares and textile prints. My textile prints have always been reliant on laser-cut wooden blocks. Through my printing with these wooden blocks, I have always wondered how these wooden blocks reflect human conditions. This led to interrogating how the application of different shades of paint on the wooden block for printing suggests singularities. That arises in the transformation and repetition of the application of colours, on the block of wood and printing. Metaphorically suggesting the reoccurrences and interconnectivity of occurrences that exist not just in the application of colour to the wood but also in the transfer from the wood to the fabric. Likewise, the multiple times the wood is engraved for the printing reveals the repetition of narratives and the transformation in occurrences of the narratives, in how dark the wood is burnt and cut into in each sequence, present a singularity. Like the second-hand white bed sheet (textiles) that is my material for printing due to its location of origin and its purpose to be reused.

Which finds resonance, with Zohra Opoku²⁴²⁵, a German/Ghanaian artist based in Accra who examines the politics of personal identity formation through historical, cultural, and socio-economic influences. Investigating the industry of second-hand clothes in the Ghanaian market. The unwanted materials shipped to Africa from Europe, which is tied to the livelihood of Ghanaians and their identity, beyond the cultural affiliation. She examines this through her love for photography and screen printing. An interplay of history, culture, and the occurrence of her surroundings to imagine new realities of identity.

²⁴ 'ABOUT', Zohra Opoku Studio | Accra, Ghana, accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.zohraopoku.com/>

²⁵ Zohra Opoku – 'Time Is the Best Friend for an Artist' | Tate, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRJtlcdzx9w>



Figure 30

BOB'S CLAN |2017, Screenprint on cotton, thread, wool

Variation of 1/2, Artist proof 1, 139 × 186 cm

<https://www.zohraopoku.com/unraveled-threads>



Figure 31

BOB'S CLAN |2017, Screenprint on cotton, thread, wool

Variation of 2/2, Artist proof 1, 139 × 186 cm

<https://www.zohraopoku.com/unraveled-threads>



Figure 32

NANA AFIA SERWAA BONSU I, APPIADU HEMAAH |2016

Cyanotype on bedsheet, Unique, 186 x 124cm

<https://www.zohraopoku.com/queen-mothers>



Figure 33

NANA YAA ADUTWUMWAA II, BRONGAHAFO KENYASI No.1 |2016

Cyanotype on bedsheet, Unique, 194 x 143cm

<https://www.zohraopoku.com/queen-mothers>

Wood for me at this point in my practice also ties into my investigation of how it reflects the brutal realities of resource extraction. On both the environment and indigenous populations by imperial bodies which links to the politics of colonial violence. The last stage of imperialism, described by Dr Kwame Nkrumah. One such activity is the rubber trade in Congo by Belgium in the 19th century, and how it reflects the economic exploitation of cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today. If you think of me, think of the devastating inhuman and environmental conditions that exist in the wake of marginalised communities. Moreover, the examination of wood engraving as a printing method for me finds resonance with banknotes. Which reflects the overlapping reality of economic and imperial systems. Exemplified in the bilateral relationships that exist between formal or emerging imperial bodies and less political and economically dominant bodies.

With this I also find myself drawn to the work of Yinka Shonibare ²⁶ particularly in his use of African print. This is very much in line with the Politics of the material, the conversation the material holds in history, and how these materials interconnect us and suggests the interplay of colonial or Imperial influence. Likewise referencing the past and the act of appropriation. Beyond this is His idea that irrationality and unreason are present in different cultures and races, which is depicted in his work, "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters America 2008" and "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters Africa 2008" "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters Asia 2008" , an appropriation and restaging of Goya's painting "*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*" in five variation which resonate with my idea on the singularities of our life.

²⁶ *Contemporary Conversations: Yinka Shonibare & Tim Marlow*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpAlzbluFQY>



Figure 34

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Asia) 2008, Chromogenic photographs, Edition of 5

Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and James Cohan Gallery, New York

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/shonibare/monsters.html>



Figure 35

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Africa) 2008, Chromogenic photographs, Edition of 5

Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and James Cohan Gallery, New York

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/shonibare/monsters.html>



Figure 36

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (America) 2008, Chromogenic photographs, Edition of 5
Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and James Cohan Gallery, New York

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/shonibare/monsters.html>



Figure 37

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Europe) 2008, Chromogenic photographs, Edition of 5
Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and James Cohan Gallery, New York

<https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/shonibare/monsters.html>

Likewise, Godfried Donkor ^{27 28 29 30} a Ghanaian artist famously known for his collages utilising newspaper and gold leaf in a religious-like imagery. I am interested in his idea where he investigates past narratives to ongoing occurrences. Evident in his use of archival images and his interest in the social and historical relationship of Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean culture and history. The idea is to combine images from the slave era, colour from his environment, and contemporary themes.

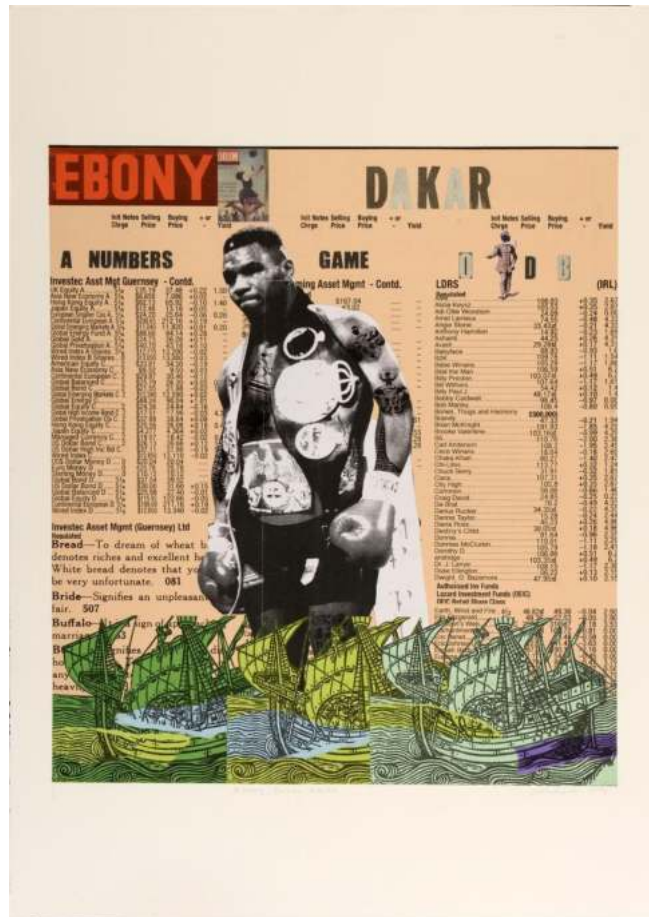


Figure 38

Godfried Donkor, EBONY DAKAR EDITION, 2003

Collage on Paper, 28 x 39 in 70 x 100 cm

<https://www.gallery1957.com/artists/34-godfried-donkor/works/824-godfried-donkor-st-michael-2019/>

²⁷ Ayodeji Rotinwa, 'Godfried Donkor', *Artforum* (blog), 1 November 2019, <https://www.artforum.com/events/godfried-donkor-245938/>

²⁸ 'Godfried Donkor: A Painter Who Happens to Make Collages', accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.raquelvillarperez.com/godfried-donkor-a-painter-who-happens-to-make-collages>

²⁹ *Godfried Donkor, Art Discussion: In Conversation with Adelaide Damoah*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yblmW7LqJCA>

³⁰ *1:54 FORUM | 17 October 2013: Artist Talks | Godfried Donkor*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuchXhiIFOY>



Figure 39

Godfried Donkor, *Olympians XVII*, 2018

Oil and Acrylic on Paper, Framed: 221.5 x 145 cms, 87 1/4 x 57 1/8 inches

<https://www.gallery1957.com/exhibitions/48-godfried-donkor-a-collection-of-works-on-paper-london/>



Figure 40

Godfried Donkor, *ST GEORGE*, 2019, Oil, Acrylic, Ink and gold leaf on paper,

93.5 x 143.7 cms

<https://www.gallery1957.com/artists/34-godfried-donkor/works/838-godfried-donkor-st-george-2019/>

With this my final project A Huge Pile of Corpses will be an installation consisting of two square wooden structures of four feet by four feet that alternate between three and two-dimensional sculptures, due to the position of these structures in a free space, allowing viewers to move around it. Each of these squares is made up of sixty-four squares of fifteen cm by fifteen cm plywood in a four feet by four feet grid puzzle and a chessboard. The two wooden structures will sit beneath, the circular textile prints, measuring two feet in diameter and will be hung nine feet off the ground, reminiscent of tree shade or canopies. This design draws inspiration from the umbrellas commonly used by women in traditional African markets for shade, against sunlight and rain.



Figure 40

© Nipah Dennis/Bloomberg

The Kaneshie Market Complex in Accra, Ghana. (Ed) Photograph

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-20/key-african-economies-to-slow-rate-hikes-with-inflation-peaking>

The wooden pieces are engraved, with images that for me represent the violence and brutality that unfold in marginalised communities because of the exploitation of emerging or imperial bodies. It is a reflection on the hardship children in these communities' encounter, from permanent disabilities and even to the death of these children. One of the pieces is the engraved image of Impongi who has one of his hands and foot cut off due to the failure of his village to meet the rubber quota in Congo in the 19th century. There are thirty-two of these engraved images which are juxtaposed against the image of Gordon, an escaped slave man whose back is disfigured with raised scars from the brutal whipping from his slave master, an image published in Harper's Weekly in 1864.

The second piece displays the grid image of Mola and Yola, also from the 19th century Congo, with one hand of Mola cut off and the other deformed and Yola who stands beside Mola with hand cut off.



Figure 41

Image © Vintage Everyday

Photograph of Impongi

<https://www.vintag.es/2022/11/congolese-hands.html>



Figure 41

Image © The New York Public Library

The furrowed and scarred back of Gordon

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-bc4e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>



Figure 42 & 43

A Huge Pile of Corpses

Engraved image of Impongi and Gordon



Figure 44

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 122cm x 122cm

Media:Laser engraving (wood) Location: Khio



Figure 45&46

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, Size: 122cm x 122cm

Media: Laser engraving (wood) Location: Khio



Figure 47

© BBC, Photograph of Mola and Yola”Colonial officials amputated and mutilated Congolese people, including children, as punishment”<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53017188>

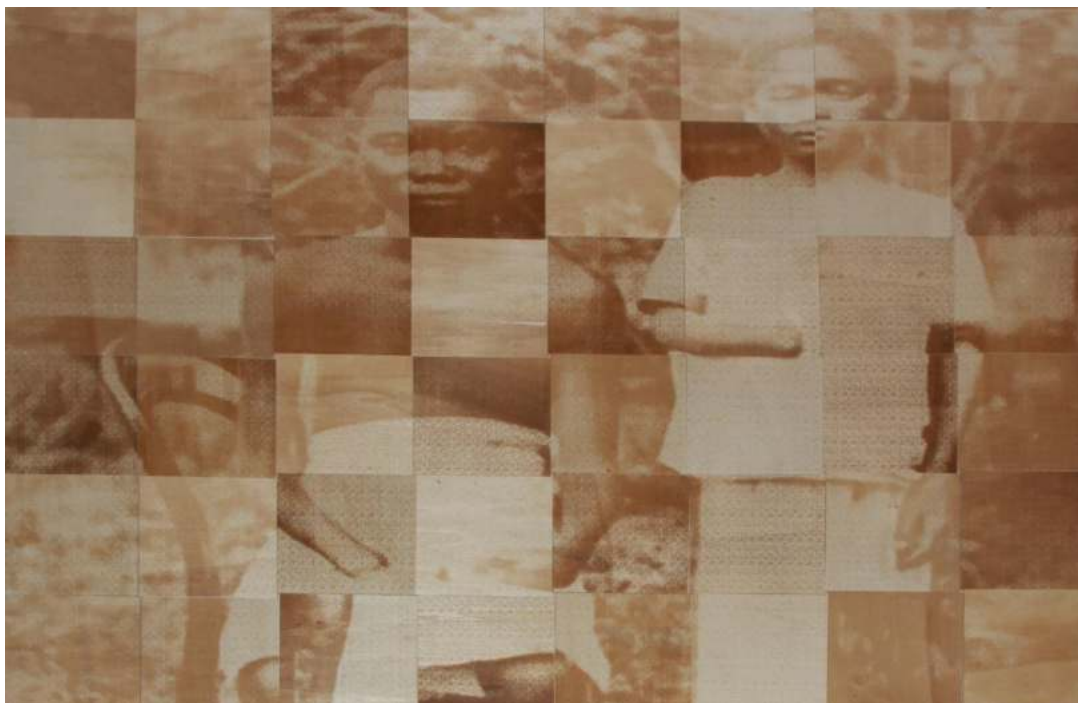


Figure 48

Title: “A Huge Pile of Corpses” Year: 2024, **Size:** 122cm x 122cm

Media:Laser engraving (wood) Location: Khio

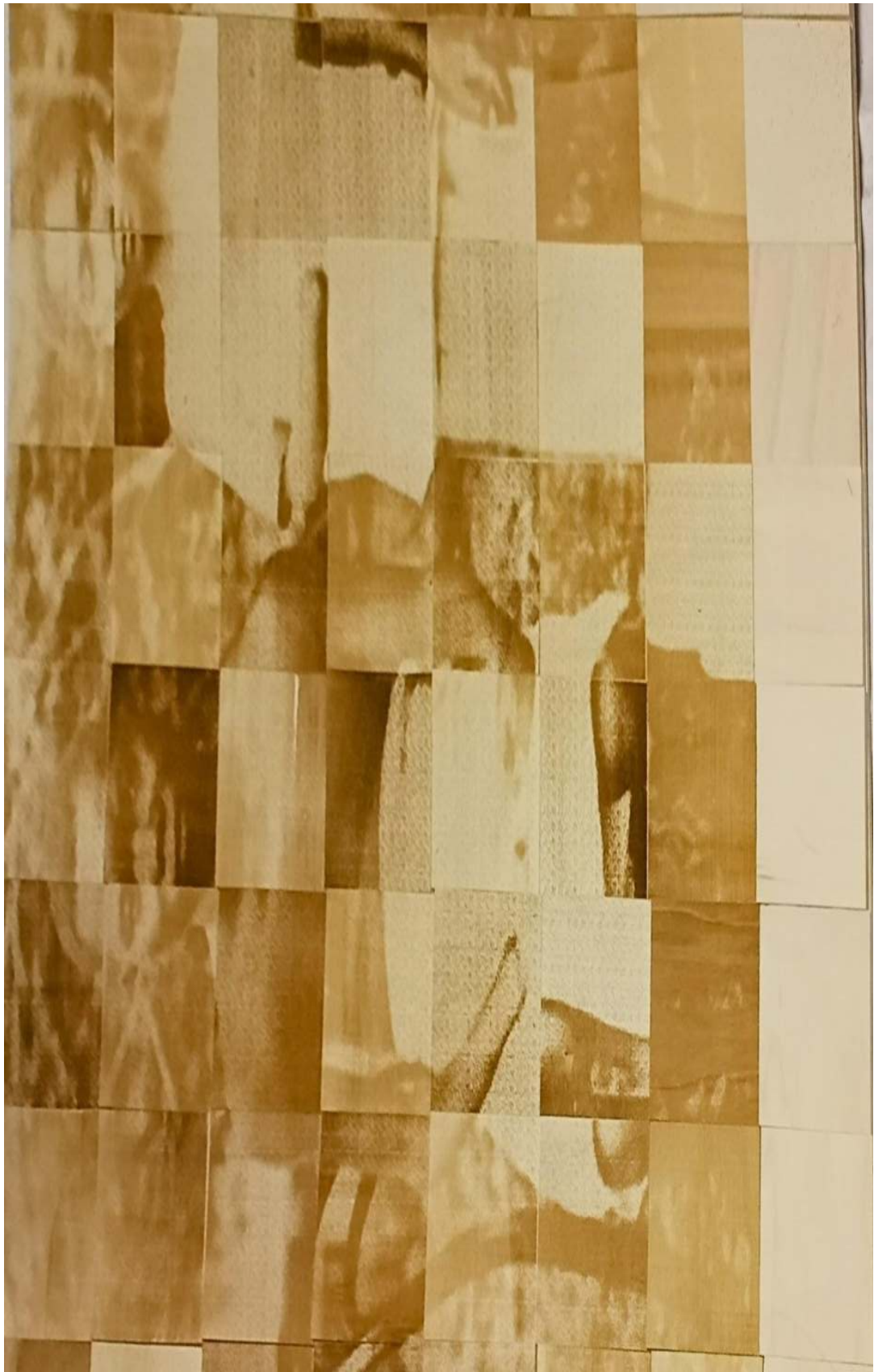


Figure 49

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 122cm x 122cm

Media:Laser engraving (wood) Location: Khio

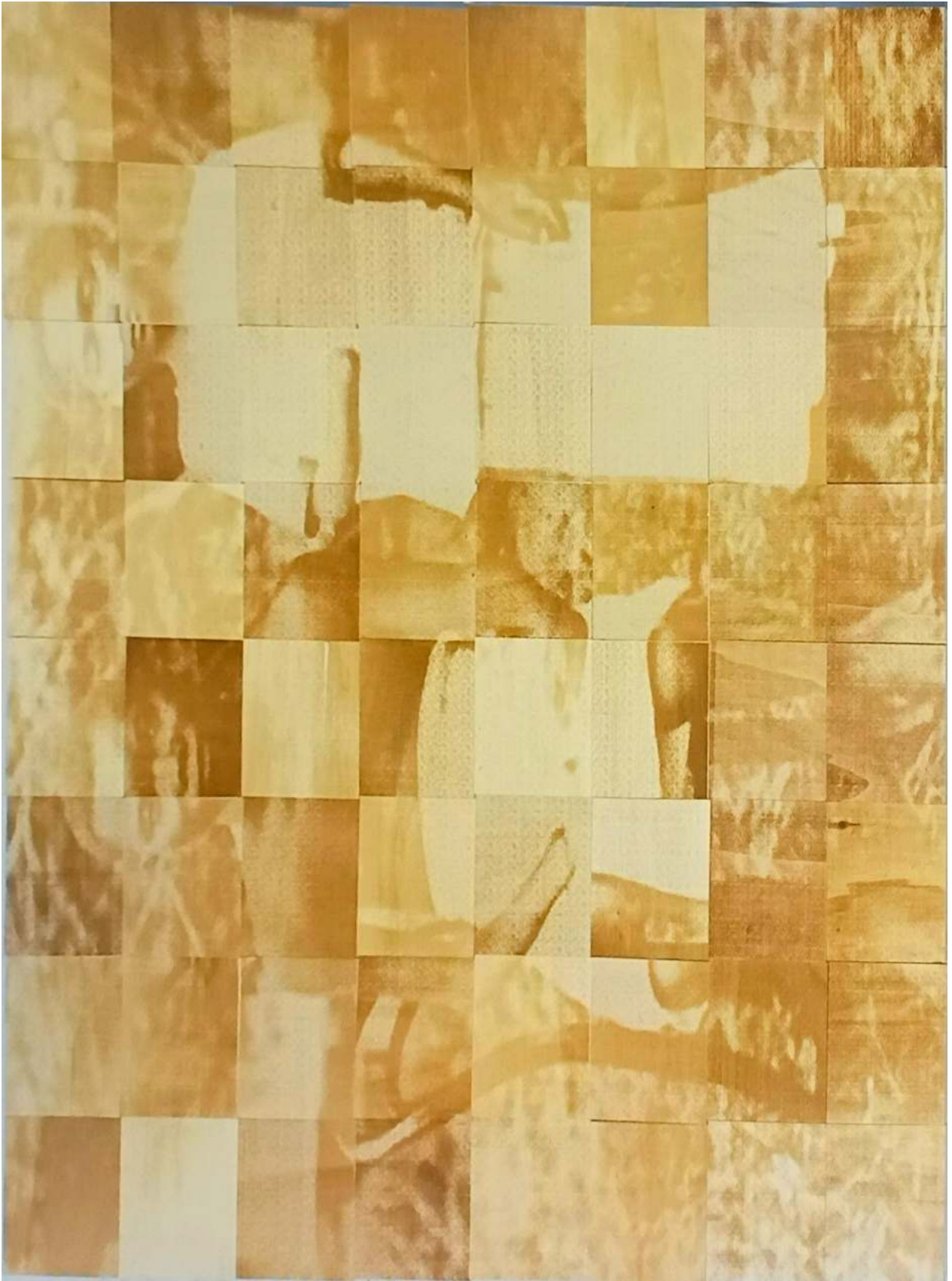


Figure 50

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, Size: 122cm x 122cm

Media:Laser engraving (wood) Location: Khio

The last piece is a textile print of Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman, who was exhibited as a freak show in the 19th Century in England and Paris due to a binding contract she signed despite her inability to read and write, during the period of the abolishing of slavery. Exhibited with circuit animals, was sexually abused, and ridiculed for her exaggerated hips and a large amount of fat in her buttocks, which contradicts the perfect female body type by European standards. Even after she died in 1815, her body was subjected to study, and body parts were placed on display until March 6, 2002, after South Africa's former President Nelson Mandela made a request in 1994 for Baartmans remains to be returned to her motherland for burial.

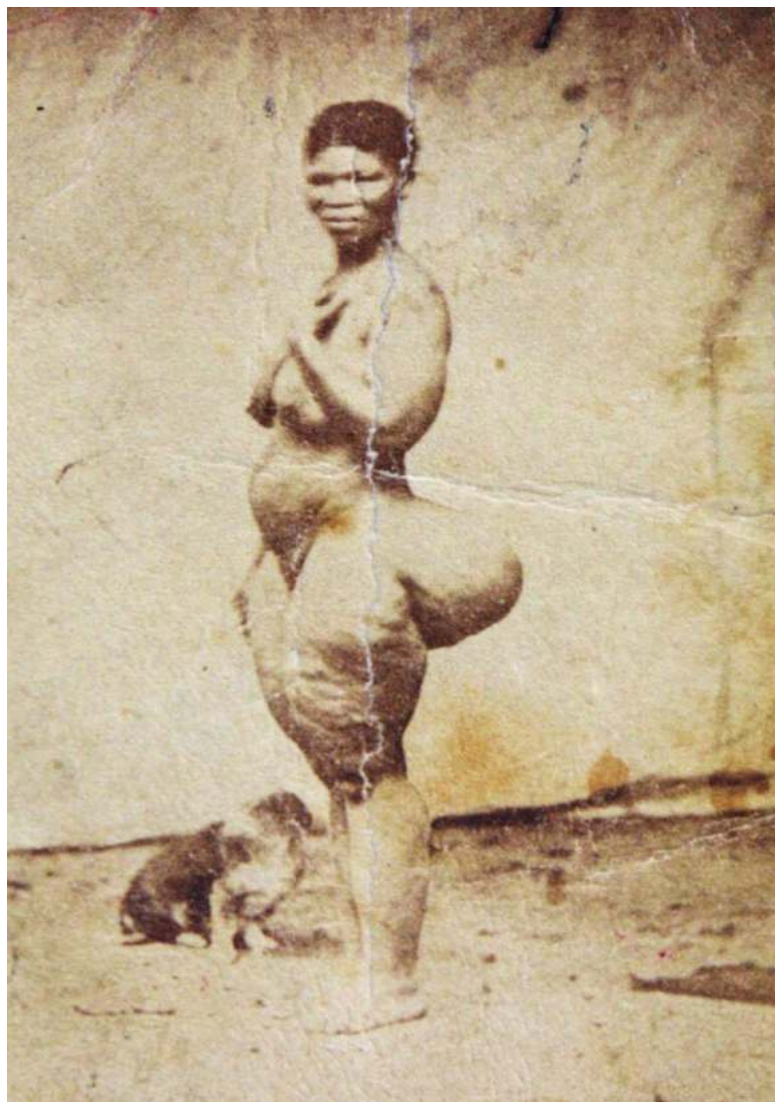


Figure 51

© The Africa I Know, Photograph of Sarah "Hottentot" Baartman from the 1800's

<https://www.theafricaiknow.org/articles/Tragedy-of-Sarah-Saartjie-Baartman>



Figure 52

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, Size: 61 cm

Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio



Figure 53

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 61 cm Variation 1/65

Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio



Figure 54

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 61 cm Variation 15/65

Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio



Figure 55

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 61 cm Variation 16/65

Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio



Figure 56

Title: "A Huge Pile of Corpses" Year: 2024, **Size:** 61 cm Variation 6/65

Media: Textile Print (Reactive dye and printing paste) Location: Khio

While the installation will serve as a sanctuary, it also evokes the ominous presence of the ice finger of death. The circular prints, resembling a canopy, remind us of the enduring presence of the sails of slave ships. Serving as a lingering reminder of Africa's history of exploitation, physical violence, sexual abuse, and displacement that may resonate with you in your narrative. The chessboard and grid puzzle metaphorically reflect the pull and push of imperial bodies in less dominant communities and the effect that is reflected in the physical abuse, and death. 'A Huge Pile of Corpses,' invites viewers to confront the recurrences and transformations of the complexities of narratives of imperial power, war, physical abuse, death, and displacement that manifest in different situations, and define our identity as groups and individuals.

Much like preparing for changes in the weather with different clothing for each season, the weathered condition of print just like our clothes mirrors changes with age, growth, time, and space. Photographs, prints, and images perpetuate their cycle, serving as a constant reminder of the weathered conditions embedded in the narratives of these posters infused with time and space. Going beyond their intended narratives, transforming into archival documents, photo albums, or notices on the surfaces of walls or structures. This weathered condition communicates the recurring and changing nature of our experiences, both as individuals and communities. While maintaining its repetitive foundation, it undergoes unique transformations in each manifestation, seamlessly shaping the intricate fabric of our environment and identity and serving as a consistent reminder of the fate that awaits us all.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the core component of my practice has always revolved around the idea of the future mirroring the past. With repetition and transformation as elements in my interrogation of social, political, and cultural narratives. Commentary has also been an aspect of my investigation, in subsequent development colour became a binding element in my approach, where it can exist as an individual expression or a binding one connecting groups of people amidst cultural, racial, and geographical differences and affiliations. My focus and interest in colour during my master's study led to my understanding of how past and present events in their state of repetition and transformation in one geographical region reflect another despite the time, place, and conditions of occurrences. Developing my interest in Christina Sharpe's text *"In the Wake: On Blackness and Beings"*. One of the numerous texts and writings suggested to me, by my tutors due to my interest in the reoccurring narratives of assassinations, coups, wars, genocides, racial abuses, displacement, and death among others that keep plaguing black communities even after the eras of colonialism, trans-Atlantic slavery, the civil rights movement in America, and the Apartheid of South Africa. And how it repeats in other communities in the wake of transformations.

Another aspect of my practice is also my interest in visual elements (weathered posters) in my environment, where I am particular about the colours, textures, forms, and narratives these posters communicate. Being a testament to our individual and shared narratives and a medium to shape our perception, question, and evoke memories. A way of thinking fostered by my interest in the Kumawood movie poster which allows for the interpretation and deliberation of cultural, social, and political occurrences in Ghana. Building my interest in Susan Sontag's work *"On Photography,"* Guy Debord's *"The Society of the Spectacle"* and Roland Barthes's concept of photography.

With this, my process has been about capturing the visual element in my environment. Using photography and the process of painting and image transfer methods from stencilling, screen printing, and subsequently, woodcut on textile (second-hand cloth), and wood engraving. To create a pictorial representation using experimentations and accidentals. To uncover and represent the singularities of narrative as a weather condition. Using the event of the black communities as a backdrop to illustrate and discuss those occurrences of other narratives or situations in communities beyond the black communities.

In my artistic practice, I have sought to create a dialogue between historical narratives and contemporary expressions. In this journey besides the Kumawood movie industry, I have drawn inspiration from several artists but currently, artists like Andy Warhol, Godfried Donkor, Yinka Shonibare, and Zohra Opoku, have shaped my approach to colour, texture, repetitions, material politics, form and the interplay between history and present occurrences. Guiding me towards a deeper understanding of the complexities of the singularities of our shared human experience.

This led to my final work, 'A Huge Pile of Corpses,' which serves as a visual representation of the enduring legacy of oppression, violence, and exploitation faced by marginalised communities throughout history. Through engraved wooden structures and textile prints.

In the subsequent investigation I hope to explore the connection of the weather directly to my practices by weathering the work in the open environment especially the wooden structures to expand on these narratives. Also collaging other narratives with that of the black communities.

APPENDIX

Dialogue and Reoccurrences

If we start to examine and challenge the notion of slavery as a single event and view it as a singularity, a metaphor for weather conditions, there is a realisation and understanding that black lives are held in a state of repetition and transformation even after the era of emancipation. And can be associated with other events beyond.

This state of repetition and transformation can be seen in police brutality, resulting in the movement Black Lives Matter. We can look at cases like George Floyd in May 2020, Daunte Wright in April 2021,³¹ Philando Castile in July 2016, and Amir Locke in February 2022,³² which illustrates the continued effect of slavery that keeps marginalising and oppressing Black individuals. Also, the work ‘Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments. Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval, by Sadiya Hartman, also provides a compelling narrative into the social and political prejudices, black individuals, and communities face, emphasising that

“The entanglement of violence and sexuality, care and exploitation continues to define the meaning of being black and female.”

Likewise, the work, Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route also by Sadiya Hartman

“If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery--skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment.”

With this, the metaphorical use of weather finds resonance in historical events like the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism. A key theme in my artistic practice. The representation of imperialism in its final stages, as described by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1965. Elaborating that this may take many forms which will hold formal colonised states in a

³¹ ‘Report: Black People Are Still Killed by Police at a Higher Rate than Other Groups’, NBC News, 4 March 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/report-black-people-are-still-killed-police-higher-rate-groups-rcna17169>

³² Ed Pilkington, ‘US Must Tackle Police Brutality against Black People Head-on, UN Experts Say’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2023, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/05/us-police-brutality-un-experts-george-floyd>

continuous economic and political subjection and subservience. By formal colonialist and other emerging or imperialist bodies. By contrasting these historical events to contemporary occurrences like ongoing wars and assassinations, we can gain a better understanding of the movement, changes, and displacement to new realities that are inherent to the repetition and transformation of events.

Intersecting Realities

With this the final stage of imperialism of 1965,³³ echoing Dr Kwame Nkrumah's description of a more dominant and direct oppression to a more subtle, persistent influence that persists even after political independence provides a compelling narrative. It illustrates the interference of imperial and European powers, even after the Berlin conference in 1884 and 1885,³⁴ which saw countries like the British, French, Belgians, Spaniards, Germans, and Portuguese, convene and divide the African continent into respective zones of control. The liberation struggle was marked by the celebration of independence and the apparent departure of imperial power. But Sharpe's ideas remind us to question if their exit was just merely a physical departure. Echoing the last stage of imperialism (neo-colonialism), in its wake assassinations, coups, displacements, and the persistent toll reflected in the body bags continue to plague the (dark continent)³⁵, of Africa.

Even though this will illustrate the occurrences of the African continent. It is to elaborate on the consistency of the repetition of events that can in some ways resonate with you either on a personal or communal level. In many ways, I can assure you that each of us encounters acts of spite perpetrated against others. These can range from personal instances of ethnic discrimination to broader forms such as institutionalised or racial segregation and environmental injustices. There is a touch of trauma in every space and inhuman brutality. The reality is that this trend extends beyond just individuals, reaching the communal and national levels.

Where the hand of the gods can manifest through the person beside you, the nation you border, or anyone who perceives you as a potential threat to their power if left unchecked.

³³ 'Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism by Kwame Nkrumah', accessed 29 January 2024, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/index.htm>

³⁴ Jan Nijman, Peter O. Muller, and Harm J. de Blij, *Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 286.

³⁵ 'Why Was Africa Called the Dark Continent?', ThoughtCo, accessed 29 January 2024, <https://www.thoughtco.com/why-africa-called-the-dark-continent-43310>.

With stories often than not narrated by the victors can we deny the possibility of other alternatives? As we are placed in a state to question the dissemination and authenticity of information, which in most cases aligns with the party in control.

So, can we deny US involvement in Iraq and Libya or the political unrest that lives on between US and Iran? Likewise, the current ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians or the political tension between Ukraine and Russia. As 'other narratives and voices' that were previously drowned out by dominant society gain agency. Our

individual and collective consciousness is shaped, due to the integration of modern technology, specifically the use of mobile phones for dissemination of information by 'others.'

So, this is my starting point, the term 'Dark Continent,' used to describe Africa, is, in my view, a deliberate political statement. Introduced to paint an image of a barbaric land in need of salvation from its own culture and history. This label was employed to create the 'other',³⁶ a narrative justifying the imposition of rationality for the pursuit of power and exploitation. I talk of this because I wonder if Africa was truly liberated. And if identity is a justification for an impending doom³⁷.

Africa was truly fated when the conference in Berlin in the years 1884 and 1885 carved up the continent among European powers. Setting the stage for a complex legacy of colonisation, exploitation, and the subsequent struggles for independence that would shape its history for decades to come. Yes, indeed the years 1885 to 1908, The Congo Free State,³⁸ as it was called, witnessed inhuman brutality, exploitation, and rubber trade. When King Leopold II, claimed it as his property, gave birth to inhuman rights abuse and economic exploitation. As, the people of Congo according to Mark Dumment, a former BBC Kinshasa correspondent in an article published in February 2004, indicated that the right hands of the Congolese were chopped off by colonists to prove their superiority over the people of Congo. Beyond this are the body bags of the deaths of over 10 million innocent people.

³⁶ 'Post-Colonial Studies_ The Key Concepts, S - Bill Ashcroft.Pdf', Google Docs, 154,155, accessed 3 February 2024,
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hgdMDSqFv-pNSY7d1BT42dbTHr2Upr9b/view?usp=sharing&usp=embed_fac ebook

³⁷ *Gravitas: Western Media's Racist Reportage on Ukrainian Refugees*, 2022,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBRwmTVVKQk>

³⁸ 'King Leopold's Legacy of DR Congo Violence', 24 February 2004,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3516965.stm>

Like many African countries Niger, Sudan, Togo, Mali, and Ghana among others faced their share of inhuman brutality. Where the Gold Coast, known today as Ghana, endured the impact of British colonisation, marked by the exploitation of natural resources such as gold and cocoa, also labour abuses, and disruptions to traditional societies. Significantly altering the social, economic, and political dynamics of Ghana and other African nations.

Laying the groundwork for the struggle for independence that eventually saw Ghana's liberation in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Subsequently, presenting the echoes of guns leading to coups and assassinations across the African region, a historical precedent that continues to influence the trajectory of nations across the African continent like a storm.

Military Coups

Just as Dr Kwame Nkrumah foresaw the influence of colonial powers, like a storm gathering on the horizon, the winds of coup and assassination also swept through Africa, ushering in a new wave of the sounds of guns and body bags, echoing Sharpe's concept of singularities. To mark the beginning of this singularity was the assassination of Patrice Emery Lumumba in Congo (1961)³⁹. The first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa, by Colonel Joseph Mobutu, with the CIA,⁴⁰ instigating the coup, as indicated by Godfrey Mwakikagile in his book “Militocracy vs Democracy in West Africa 1960-1990” in the African continent. The birth of another sphere of influence. It is also apparent to understand that the sphere of influence created a lot of displacement and ethnic tensions reflecting and repeating the result of the Berlin conference.

Just like Lumumba, Pierre Mulele, another son of Congo was also assassinated by Colonel Joseph Mobutu in October 1968 with his body chopped into pieces and fed to the crocodiles in the Congo River,⁴¹ yet another body bag. Besides, this is Sylvanus Olympio of Togo in 1963, who was also assassinated. A storm of military coups and assassinations materialised across Africa to be institutionalised.

³⁹ Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Militocracy vs. Democracy in West Africa 1960s – 1990s* (New Africa Press, n.d.), 301.

⁴⁰ Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Africa 1960-1970: Chronicle and Analysis* (New Africa Press, 2009), 94, 95; Mwakikagile, *Militocracy vs. Democracy in West Africa 1960s – 1990s*, 302.

⁴¹ Mwakikagile, *Militocracy vs. Democracy in West Africa 1960s – 1990s*, 40; Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Nyerere and Africa: End of an Era* (New Africa Press, 2007), 485.

The occurrences of this coup and assassination in Togo marked the beginning of the actual birth of military coups. Gnassingbe Eyadema was responsible for the 1963 coup and 1967 after Nicolas Grunitzky took over as president. And later becoming president the “notoriety as the longest- rulers dictator in the entire African Continent”⁴². But sometimes I wonder why the hand of the gods did not intervene, just as it was done in Libya in 2011 against another dictator as the story goes. Was Chinua Achebe right in his book *Things Fall Apart* when he wrote:

“Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger.”

Well, it is either you are affirmed or denied of their support. France was a pillar for Eyadema⁴³. With the tone set, we can talk about Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania formerly, Tanganyika and Zanzibar which were joined together in 1964. A similar example is the then-formal British Togoland now the Oti and Volta region after the 1957 referendum joining the then Gold Coast to be Ghana.

The list of assassinations and coups goes on and on with the likes of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau (1973), Sankara, and even Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, who foresaw this trend, leading to a series of five successful coups between 1966 and 1979 in Ghana.

But did the guns go to sleep even after the 1900s, the body bags, and assassinations and coups, were alive for Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, which they say is an intervention from a Dictator. Stories are always told by the Victors. This is the case, but I seem to wonder if that is the case for Libya after the death of the Dictator.

⁴² Mwakikagile, *Militocracy vs. Democracy in West Africa 1960s – 1990s*, 204.

⁴³ Mwakikagile, 318.

As the narrative always goes, the body bags were not their intention. He was killed by his people^{44 45 46 47}. And that is a narrative and a weathered condition that has been the narrative of the assassinations of the 1960s. Did the narrative of the Coup d'état end with Muammar Gaddafi? Like a weathered condition, it still plagues us, in Sudan, in 2021 by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Then Guinea in September 2021 by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, Burkina Faso in 2022 by Ibrahim Traore. Even as independence was gained, the presence of external forces persisted. Perhaps the coup in Burkina Faso and Niger illustrates a new dimension to the rejection of formal and imperialist control. As France's refusal to remove its ambassador in Niger, highlights the ongoing influence of former colonial powers and other international bodies have over the arbitrary partition of Africa.

Arbitrary Partition

Did this arbitrary partition only erode Africa of its natural resources, this I believe is far from the case as the era of Slavery illustrates a different dimension. Just as Slavery eroded the African continent of human resources, so did the partition, creating ethnic tensions and subsequently displacement. We can turn our attention to the genocide, of Rwanda a mass murder that occurred between the Hutu population and the Tutsi population in April- July 1994^{48 49 50}. You may wonder what this has to do with the 1844 conference. Even though the Hutu and Tutsi could be identified by physical appearance, where the Tutsi were seen as light-skinned and tall while the Hutu had dark skin and were short. This was not always the case due to intermarriage and the use of common language.

⁴⁴ Peter Bouckaert, 'Death of a Dictator', *Human Rights Watch*, 16 October 2012, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/10/16/death-dictator/bloody-vengeance-sirte>

⁴⁵ Adam Taylor, 'Would Libya Have Been Better off If Muammar Gaddafi Had Been Captured?', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2014, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/28/muammar-gaddafi-death-impact-libya>

⁴⁶ 'Obama: Aftermath of Gaddafi Overthrow, "worst Mistake as President" | Africanews', accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.africanews.com/2016/04/11/obama-aftermath-of-gaddafi-overthrow-worst-mistake-as-president/>

⁴⁷ AfricaNews, 'Six Years since Muammar Gaddafi Was Killed - Photos, Facts and Quotes', Africanews, 20 October 2017, <https://www.africanews.com/2017/10/20/photos-5-years-on-muammar-gaddafi-12-top-photos-facts-and-quotes>

⁴⁸ 'The Genocide of the Tutsis – The Holocaust Explained'.

⁴⁹ 'Welcome_to_Genocide_Archive_Rwanda - Genocide Archive Rwanda'.

⁵⁰ 'Rwandan Genocide - Facts, Response & Trials', HISTORY, 19 May 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/rwandan-genocide>

But in the colonial era, both the Germans and Belgians adopted a perceptive that sought to categorise ethnic ties, on a perceived physical characteristic making the relationship between Hutu and Tutsi more rigid and less fluid. During the period of German colonial governance spanning from 1898 to 1916, an indirect rule policy was instituted. This strategy not only strengthened the dominance of the Tutsi ruling class but also bolstered the absolutism of its monarchy. Resulting in systematising and institutionalising the social structure based on ethnic differences.

Following World War I, the Belgians assumed control of Rwanda as its colony and operated under the mandate of the League of Nations. Also adhering to the concept of indirect rule, sustaining the pre-established ethnic classifications and its support for the Tutsi ruling monarchy. Thus, deepening the divisions between Hutu and Tutsi, aligning with the original framework of divide and conquer by the colonial powers. With the introduction of identification cards centred on ethnic origins. The enduring impact of this approach was the 1994 genocide which saw the displacement of 2, 000, 000 people and the death of over 800, 000 people, adding up to the list of body bags.

And when we talk of the list of body bags then the Germans in Namibia, cannot be excluded. One can say the first genocide in the 20th century was in 1904, in the land of Namibia formally known as Southwest Africa from 1884 to 1915.^{51 52 53}

This is the effect of the Berlin Conference in 1844. Just like many other African countries, it is a story of inhuman activity against a fellow human, it is one that is characterised by colonialism, and a shocking level of racism, A struggle for freedom met with unthinkable brutality and oppression. Where the baboons of Namibia, a name given to the people of Namibia by the Germans. To justify their inhuman act against the proud tribes of the Herero, the Nama, and the San, led by the leadership of Samuel Maherero and Captain Hendrick Witbooi in the quest for their freedom.

⁵¹ 'The Herero and Namaqua Genocide – The Holocaust Explained: Designed for Schools', 4 January 1933, <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/what-was-the-holocaust/what-was-genocide/the-herero-and-namaqua-genocide/>

⁵² 'Herero | Herero Tribe, Namibia, Genocide | Britannica', accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Herero>

⁵³ 'Nobel Peace Center', The German genocide you've never heard of, accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.nobelpeacecenter.org/en/news/undefined>

Were met with unthinkable brutality leading to widespread death because of hunger and dehydration. Subsequently, the death of thousands in concentration camps because of diseases, abuse, and other lethal conditions, a symbol of their victory as hunters. October 2nd, 1904 is a moment in history that saw the extermination order by General Lothar von Trotha under the direct command of Kaiser Wilhelm II in Berlin. And when we talk about genocides, we cannot forget the extermination of the Jews during the Nazi campaign during WW2 also by the Germans.

In examining Sharpe's concept of singularity, there is an acknowledgment that the cyclical of oppression, displacement and socio-economic disparities continues even as there are changes in power dynamics and structures. In examining Sharpe's concept of singularity, there is an acknowledgement that the cyclical oppression, displacement, and social economic disparities continue even in the changes of power dynamics. The examination of coups, assassinations (body bags), and external influences reveals a pattern of instability, genocidal violence, and manipulation that continues. Like the weather condition, it is well and life today. So, I examine the repetition and transformation of these singularities, as narrative and a way of working utilising the pivotal history of Africa as a backdrop to explore these themes further.

With this in mind, through the process of appropriation and abstraction, I reinterpret, and critique, pivotal black narratives, by combining archival images with the visual elements of posters in my environment, exploring themes of memory, nostalgia, and cultural identity by juxtaposing historical imagery with weathered posters or visual elements in my surroundings, blurring the boundaries between past and present, personal and collective memory, and individual and societal experiences.

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