





**Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju** is a Nigerian-American artist and author based in Berlin. She graduated with distinction from New York University, where she studied studio art and social and cultural analysis. She is also an alumna of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Through painting, writing, performance and installation, she balances intimate experiences of connection, violence, and healing against broader observations on cultural distortion and identity. She has done extensive curatorial and editorial work with SAVVY Contemporary and Archive Books, among others. *Earnestly* (2022, Archive Books) is her debut collection of writing. She is currently a participant of BPA// Berlin program for artists.





**Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: BloodLetter**  
Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, Germany, 2024-25

*BloodLetter* is the first solo institutional exhibition by Nigerian-American artist Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, centered around her handcrafted, leather-bound artist's book of the same name. The book, which serves as the conceptual core of the exhibition, explores themes of ancestry, memory, grief, and migration through poems, essays, and personal reflections. It is presented within a unique installation made from "breeze blocks" – clay elements inspired by the cement blocks used by her grandfather in the construction his home. This pavilion creates an intimate space within the exhibition itself, both protective and porous, while also highlighting the artist's book as both a physical and conceptual center of the exhibition.

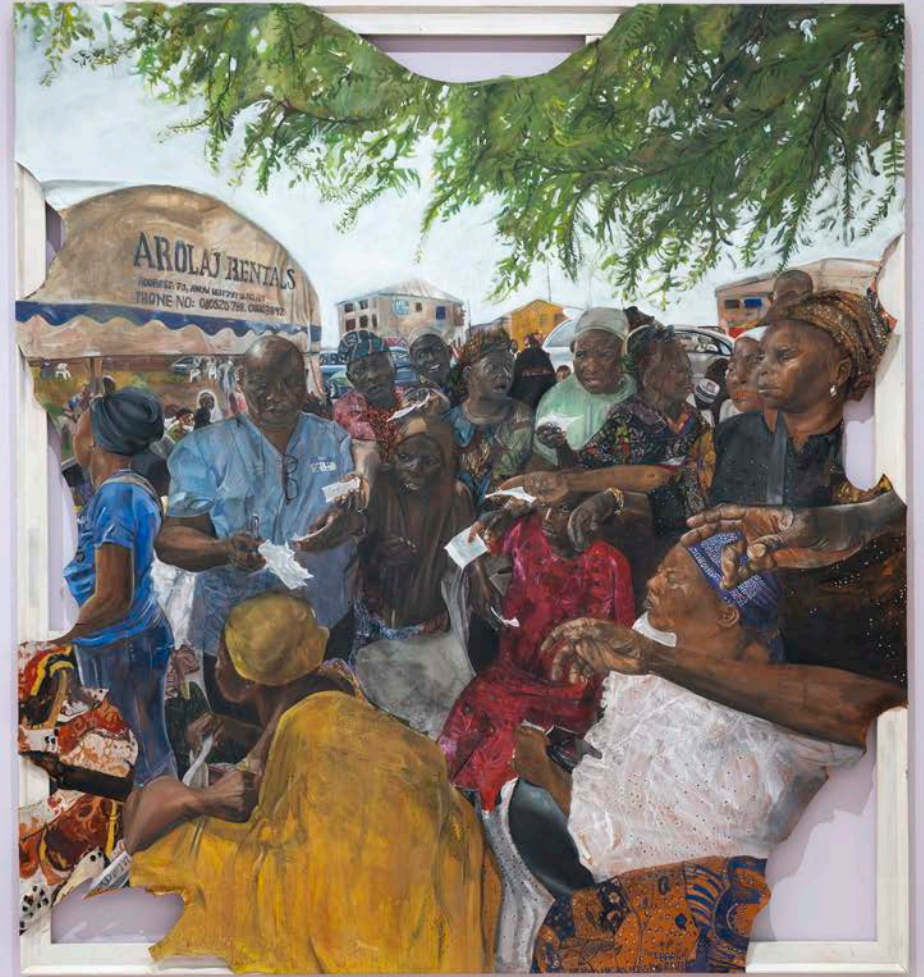
The exhibition focuses on Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju's large-scale paintings on leather and small sculptures made of birch, whose symbols and personal motifs expand the thematic range of the exhibition. Ilupeju combines painting, installations, and text in her practice, making visible the fractures and overlays of memory through unconventional media and surfaces modified with scratch marks and pyrographic techniques. Her works link personal and collective narratives, questioning traditional archiving while opening spaces where stories can be told in depth. In particular, the relationships with her family and thoughts on homeland and diaspora are a common thread throughout her works.





Installation view from *Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: Bloodletter*, Kestner Gesellschaft, 2024



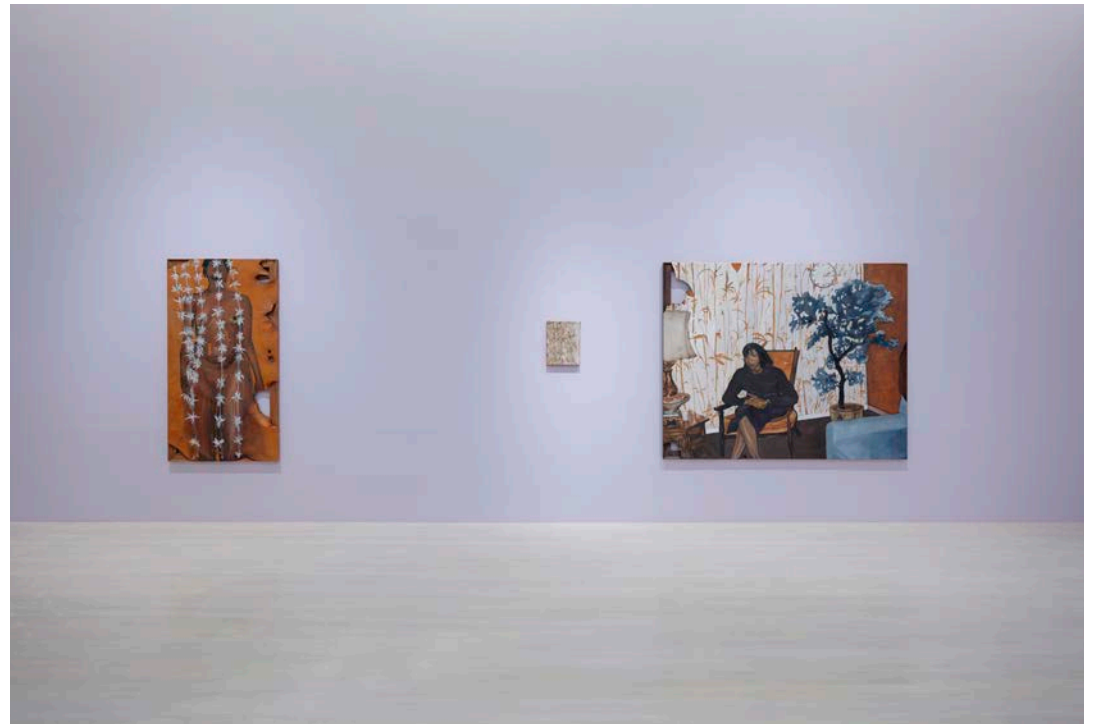


*NCNMOUSA Medical Mission (Ibadan, July 2023)*, 2024  
oil and pyroengraving on cowhide, 240 x 220 cm

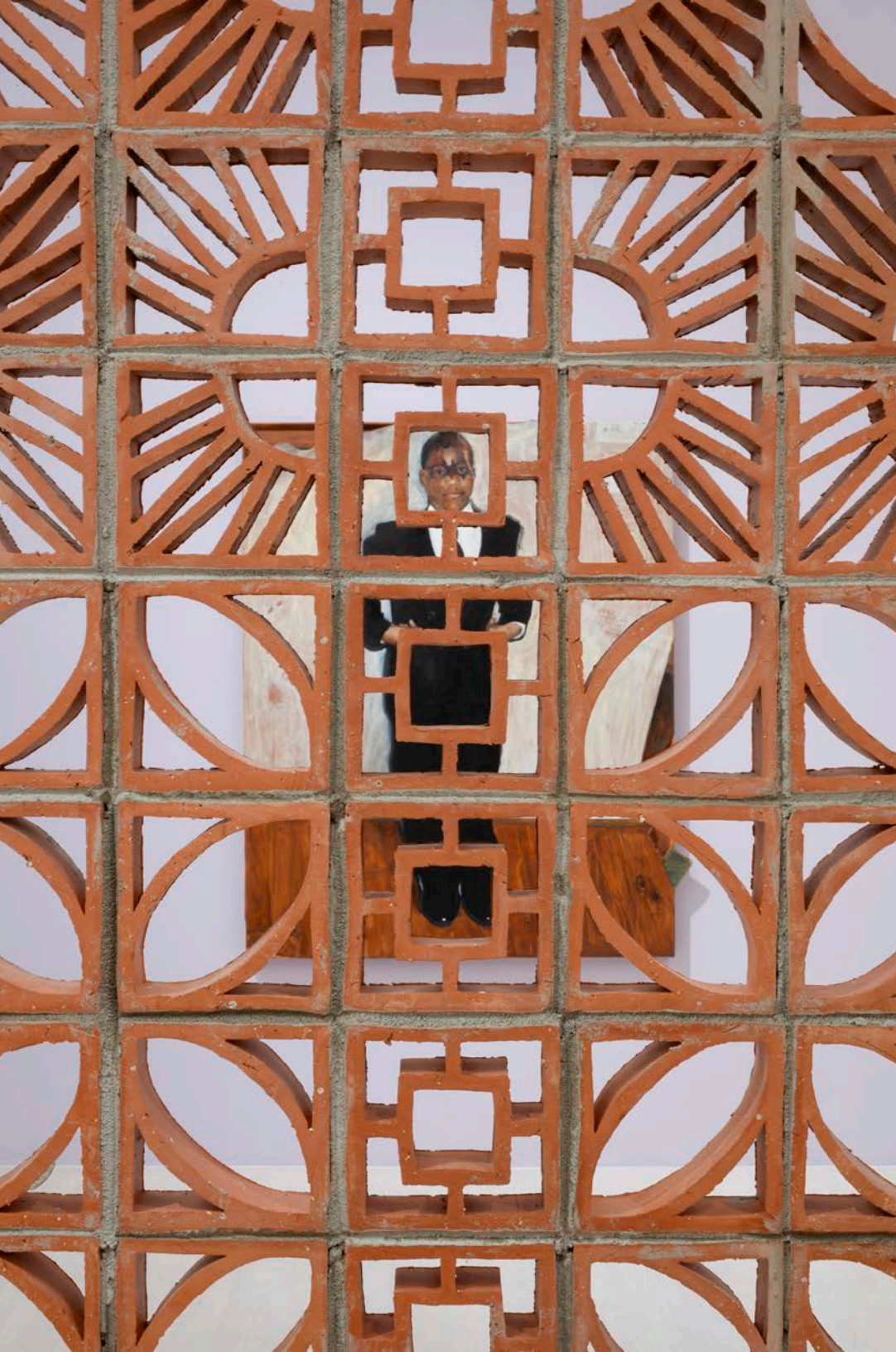


Installation view from *Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: Bloodletter*, Kestner Gesellschaft, 2024





Installation view from *Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: Bloodletter*, Kestner Gesellschaft, 2024



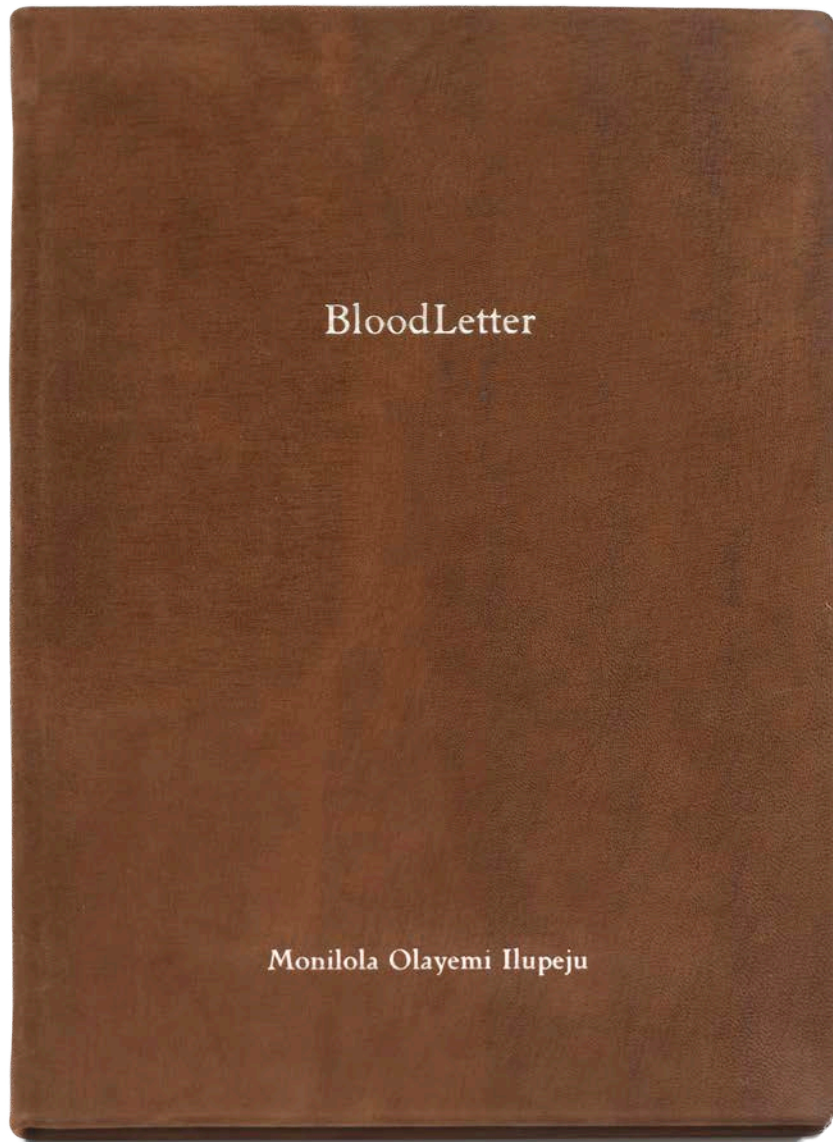
*big man  
small world  
soda can car  
touchdowns and tailgates and torn ligaments and  
sugar and spice.  
the green pocket bible  
bookmarked on John 3:6  
in the trunk under a mountain of scratched DVDs  
and red solo cups,  
the bed that became an ocean  
and in the garage, two neat rows of unworn shoes;  
there was no dust.  
saliva slinging screams  
salt shard tears  
sketching cuts on flushed cheeks  
circling the moment a star becomes  
a wishing well.*





Installation view from *Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: Bloodletter*, Kestner Gesellschaft, 2024





*BloodLetter*, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju  
2024, 82 pages



## BloodLetter

PSM, Berlin, Germany, 2024

“Blood remits to color, vitality, paint, family and violence; letter to language, communication, traces, healing, and so on. One’s own creation (blood, kin) becomes inseparable from creative acts (letter, writing). This is an important force animating both Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju’s practice and *BloodLetter*’s many meanings. Her new works on leather, canvas and birch function like a sort of family album, often depicting the artist’s close relatives, interspersed with other motifs and scenes complementing the family story. Bloodletting—the deliberate drawing of blood for relief or health—operates like a metaphor for art about one’s kin. [...]

*Grandpa’s Balcony* reveals less some innate truth about Ilupeju’s family history and more the importance of writing for the artist, who refuses lingering hierarchies among the arts. The writings on the paintings are largely undecipherable, functioning like a claim to opacity invested in decorating and conveying, in this specific painting, the historical excess populating the seemingly empty balcony of her grandfather. It is as if a dense chaos of information lives on beneath the surfaces—a delirious mess of tracings and memories from all the stories once told on that balcony, some of which can be read in the artist book in an interview with the artist’s father. It is this cacophony that a traditional family album tries to contain through carefully stored photographs and commemorating special dates, which *BloodLetter* complicates, revises and fictionalizes. The show becomes a blood letter, a letter of blood, written in blood, about blood, for blood, and just like that, the stories begin to pour out, as Ilupeju writes, ‘drop by drop.’”

— José B. Segebre, excerpt from exhibition text





*breeze blocks  
bare toes  
dripping water  
peeling turquoise  
eyelet lace dancing on concrete.*

*morning prayers on the roof  
after-school tutoring on the balcony  
movie nights in the parlor  
oh man.*

*grandma buried in the backyard, next to the other  
wives  
drying clothes spread out across the lawn like a fleet  
of  
warm shadows.*

*to know you is to love you.*

Excerpt from *BloodLetter*, p. 16,  
Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, 2024

***Grandpa's Balcony***, 2024  
oil and coloured pencil on leather, 190 x 115 cm





*V. & Blue Tree*, 2024  
oil and pyro engraving on leather, 180 x 225 cm



Detail, *V. & Blue Tree*, 2024  
oil and pyro engraving on leather, 180 x 225 cm







*dust floating above my head like gnats in a daze*, 2024  
oil and pyro engraving on cowhide leather, 24 x 30 x 4.5 cm





Installation view from *BloodLetter*, PSM, 2024





*Custody*, 2024  
oil and pyro engraving on birch wood, 6 x 9 x 78 cm/2



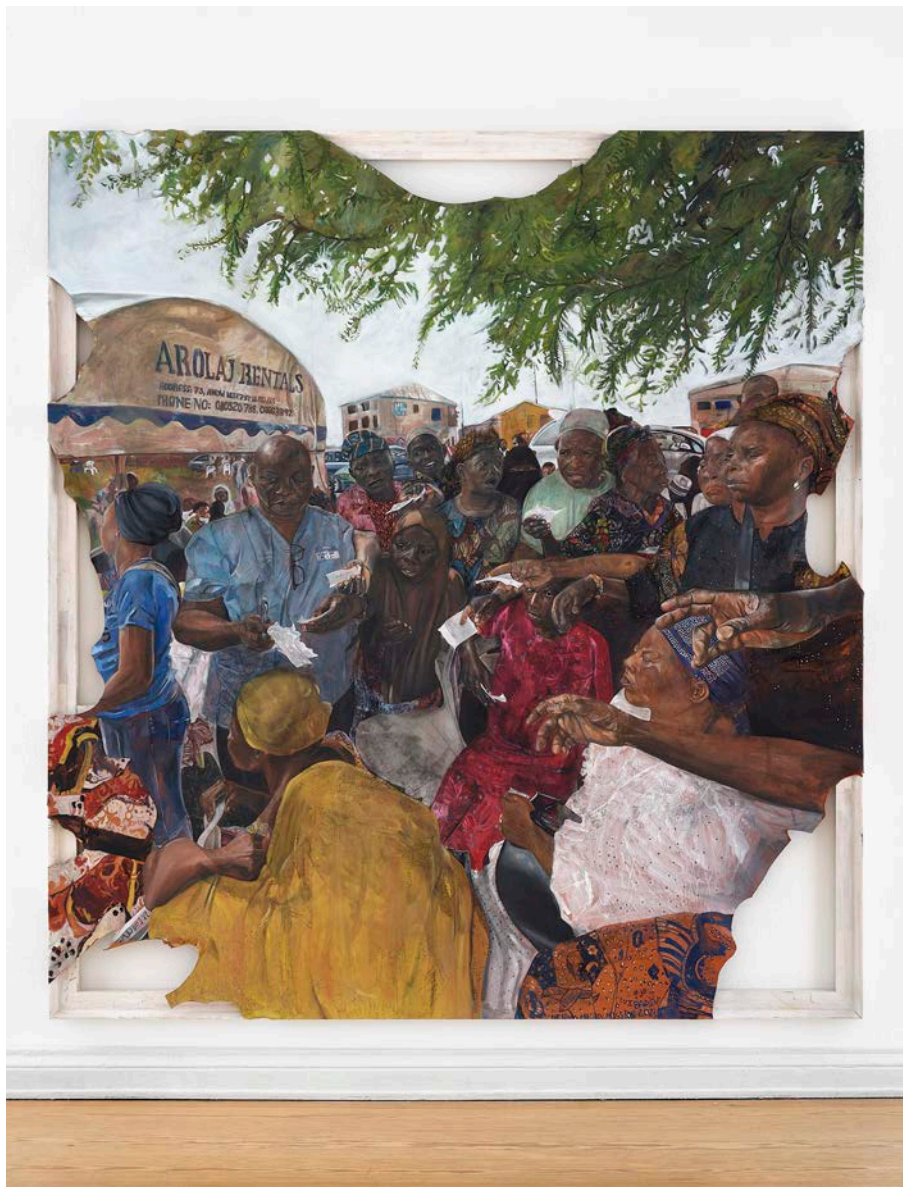
*Box Braids at Uncle Arba'in (40 Day Prayers)*, 2024  
oil and pyro-engraving on cowhide leather, 185 x 125 x 4.5 cm





Details, *Box Braids at Uncle Arba'in (40 Day Prayers)*, 2024  
oil and pyro-engraving on cowhide leather, 185 x 125 x 4.5 cm





*NCNMOUSA Medical Mission (Ibadan, July 2023)*, 2024  
oil and pyroengraving on cowhide, 240 x 220 cm



Details, *NCNMOUSA Medical Mission (Ibadan, July 2023)*, 2024  
oil and pyroengraving on cowhide, 240 x 220 cm







“Aware that the archive always speaks to irretrievable absences, the exhibition insists that there must be an archive that accommodates memory, grief, beauty and the im/possibility of belonging: BloodLetter as an archive that remembers to forgive the unchangeable and returns to the body, to the skin, to one’s own blood to muster the courage healing necessitates. This healing potential is paired in the exhibited works with the burdensome privilege and political obligation of retelling stories, especially one’s own, in art or other languages. This exhibition which is an archive that is a family album is also a testament to what the outpourings metaphorized in bloodletting might bring. And what comes out are not the irrepresentable torments of this or every family but the images that offset it, the blood letters that seem unrelated, the portraits that open the past for repair and atonement. And just like that, the stories pour out. So we draw some blood and let it out.”

— José B. Segebre, excerpt from exhibition text

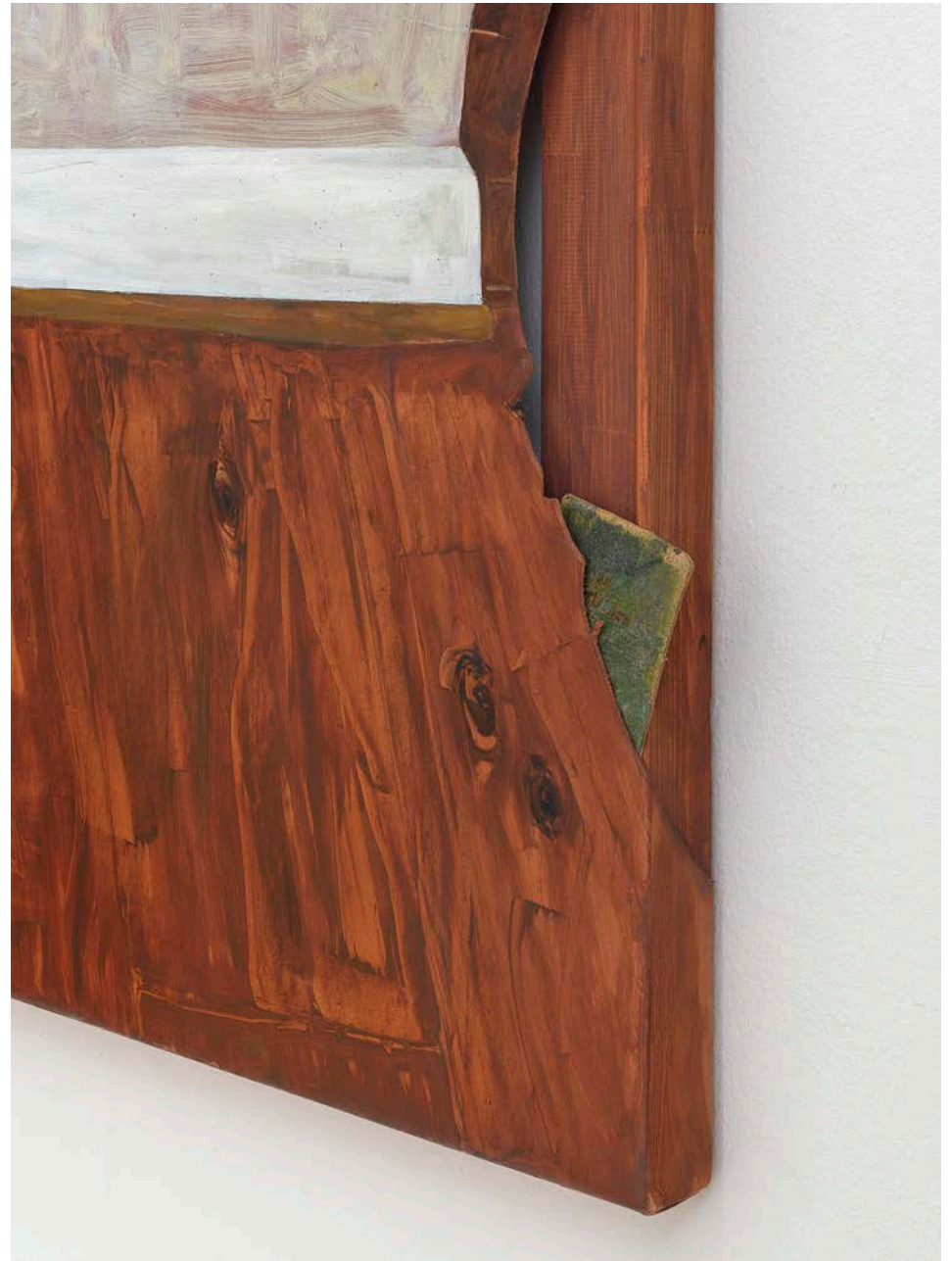






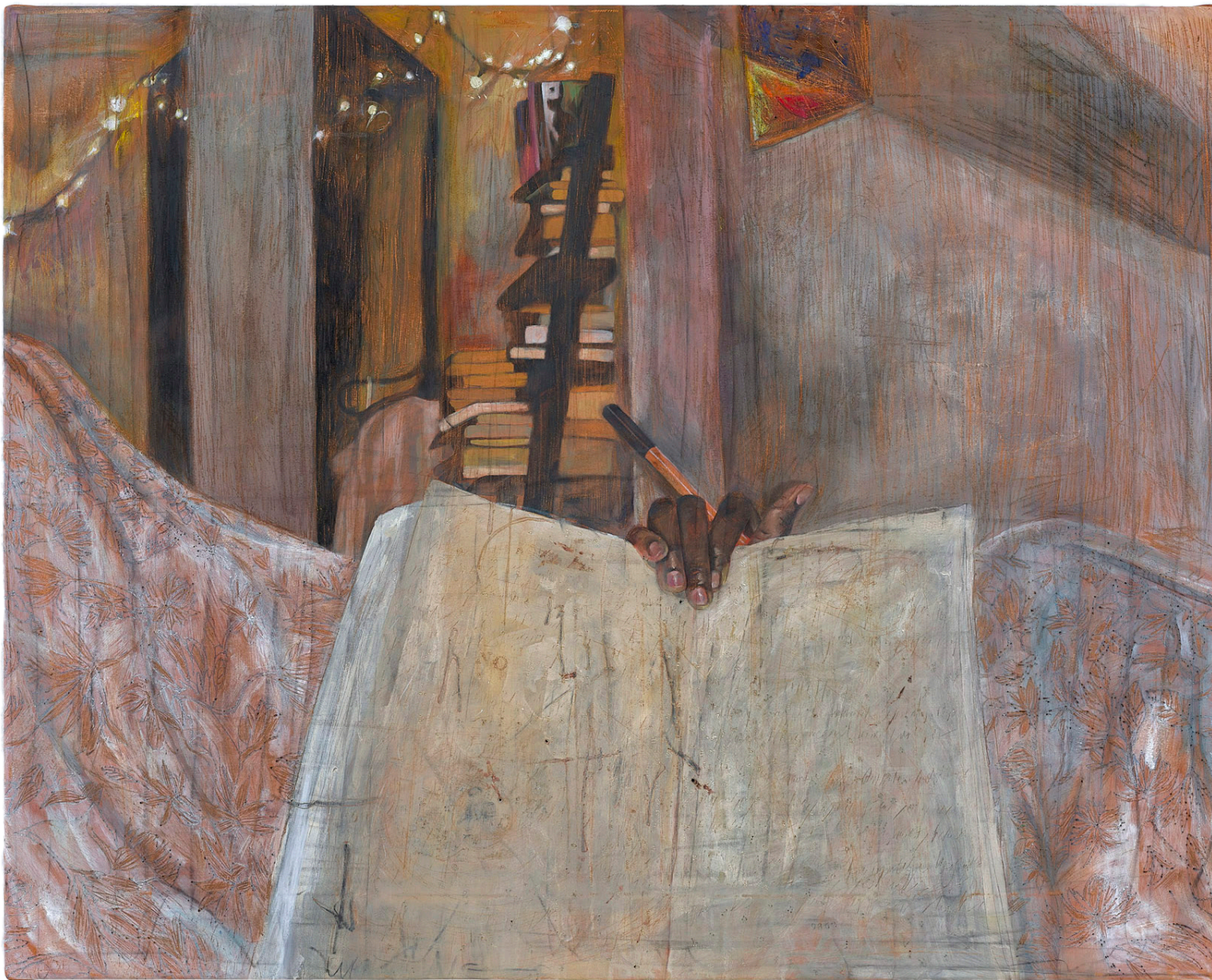
***Big Man***, 2024  
oil and acrylic on cowhide leather, 150 x 120 x 4.5 cm





Details, *Big Man*, 2024  
oil and acrylic on cowhide leather, 150 x 120 x 4.5 cm





**(No) Fear, 2024**  
oil and pyro engraving on cowhide leather, 80 x 100 cm





Installation view from *BloodLetter*, PSM, 2024





*communing with her ghosts under rainwater, speaking in forgotten tongues*, 2024  
oil and pyro engraving on cowhide leather, 40 x 30 cm





*Shower*, 2024  
oil and oil pastel on cowhide leather, 185 x 100 cm





Installation view from *BloodLetter*, PSM, 2024



**Saint V.**

Tarte Vienna / Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Vienna,  
Austria, 2023

V.

*as in Venus*

*as in Vision*

*as in Voice*

*as in Visitor*

*as in Veronica*

*as in Virgin Mary*

*as in Void*



*Saint V.* is the first solo exhibition of Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju in Austria and brings together a new body of work.

The eponymous oil painting *Saint V.* (2023) portrays Ilupeju's mother at 21, the age she migrated from Oyo State, Nigeria to Maryland, United States. Raised in an interfaith family between Islam and Christianity, Ilupeju's work explores religious iconography and the link between creative process and spiritual salvation.

Through painting, writing and installation, Ilupeju revisits personal places and objects to reconfigure their forms and contents. Expanding on the classic genre of the nude self-portrait, as in the life-size cut out figure *In the Light of Day* (2023), the artist is drawn to intimate found objects (*Black Hole*, 2023) as carriers of embodied memory, history, and energy.

— Miriam Bettin, excerpt from exhibition text





*Saint V.*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 24 x 30 cm





Installation view from *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna / Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, 2023



“The meditative scribbles and scratches on a discarded, deconstructed and pierced leather backpack, which the artist carried throughout her adolescence, serve as a portal to connect moments in time and modes of being. Reminiscences are inscribed into the resilient animal skin, understanding scars as traces of growth rather than wounds. *Pale of Crabs* (2023), so the title, refers to the tragic parable of a crab trying to crawl out of a bucket, only to be pulled back down by its own species. In another light, the piece refers to vulnerability of the backpack which, despite having long ago lost the drawstrings that kept it closed, never had an item lost or stolen; a reminder of the virtues of open-heartedness and that things are held together even without one’s control.”

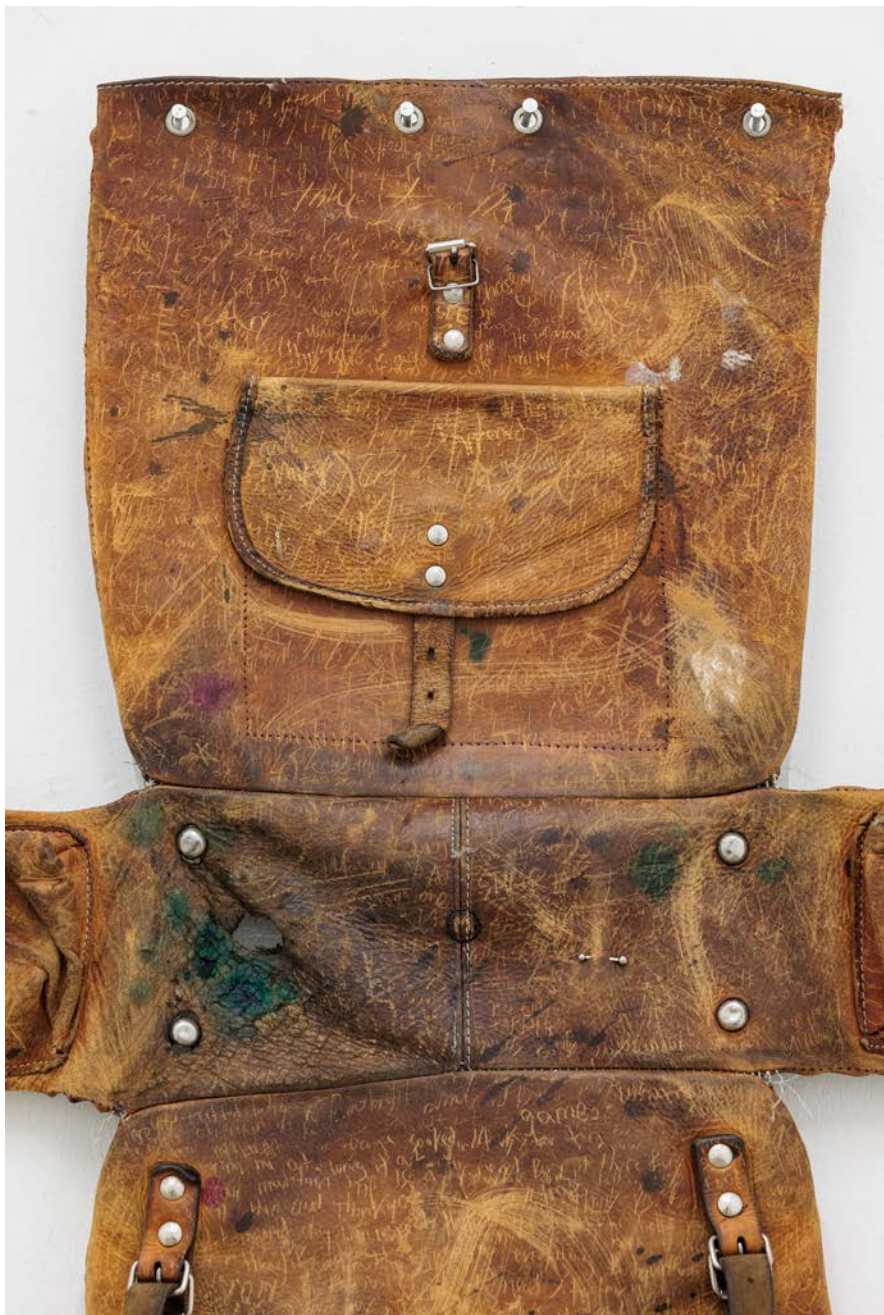
— Miriam Bettin, excerpt from exhibition text

***Pale of Crabs*, 2023**

mixed media, nipple piercing on deconstructed leather backpack, 95 x 113 cm







Details, *Pale of Crabs*, 2023  
mixed media, nipple piercing on deconstructed leather backpack, 95 x 113 cm





***Birth of a Horologist*, 2023**

cyanotype, watercolour and coloured pencil on paper, each 44.7 x 33 cm  
1 and 2 of a series of 8 unique editions





Installation view from *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna / Galerie  
Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, 2023



*All The Way*, 2023  
oil on recycled vegetable leather, 43 x 32 cm





*Collateral*, 2023

oil and coloured pencil on recycled vegetable leather, 20 x 60 cm





Installation views from *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna / Galerie  
Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, 2023





Installation view from *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna / Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, 2023





***“Crucifixion*** (2023) presents a transcendental state of body and mind in which the nude figure dissolves into the void. It is a void that is more than the end or nothingness. Rather, it is a void that opens up new possibilities and reactivates what Audre Lorde would describe as follows:

‘Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves—along with the renewed courage to try them out.’

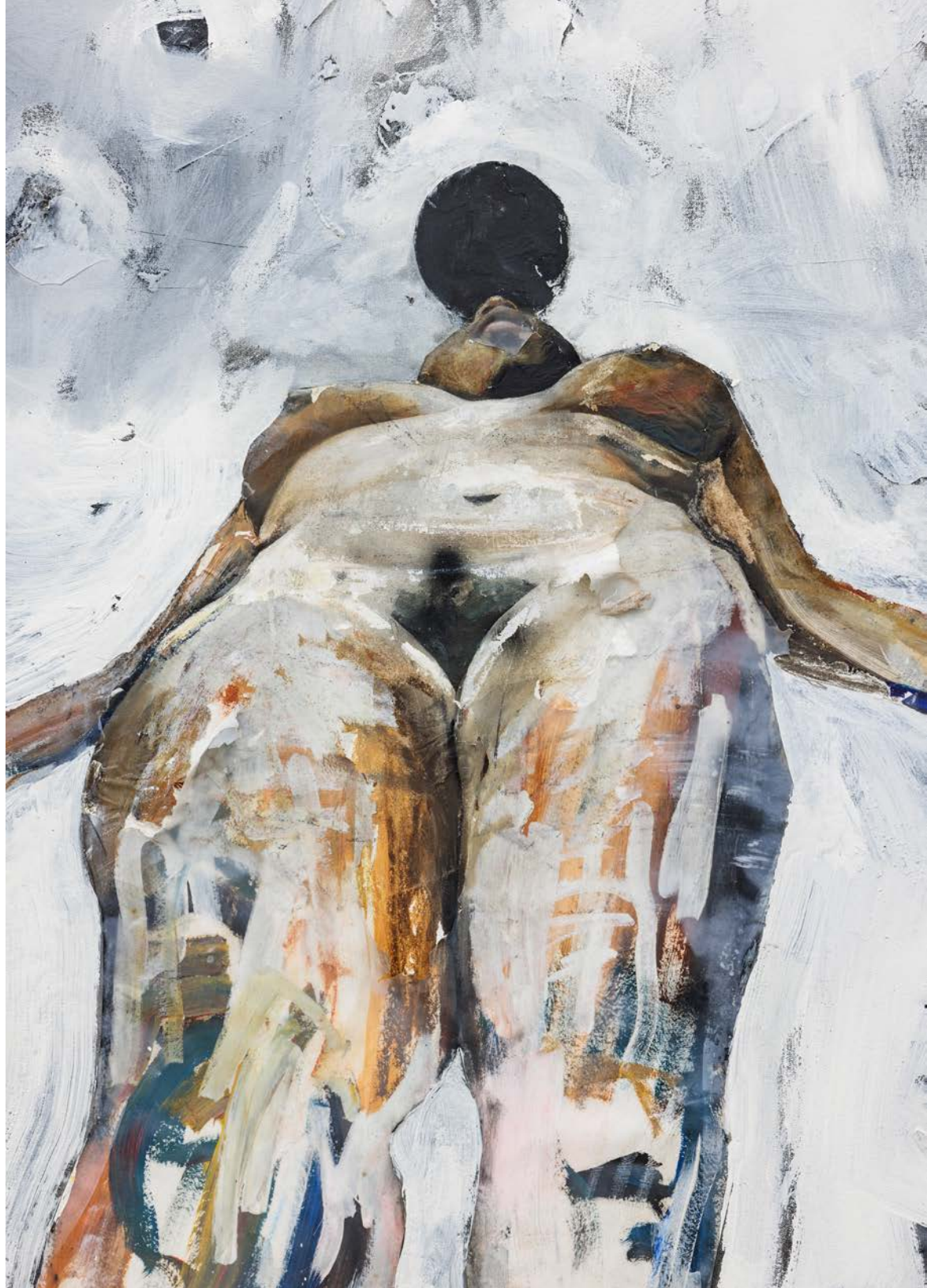
—Audre Lorde, *Poetry Is Not a Luxury*, 1985”

— Miriam Bettin, excerpt from exhibition text

***Crucifixion***, 2023  
oil, acrylic, glue, pastel, Virgin-Mary pendant, charcoal,  
plants and collage on canvas, 170 x 110 cm



Detail, *Crucifixion*, 2023  
oil, acrylic, glue, pastel, Virgin-Mary pendant, charcoal,  
plants and collage on canvas, 170 x 110 cm







***Black Hole***, 2023  
oil, acrylic and spray paint on brick, beaded glass





Installation view from *Saint V*, Tarte Vienna / Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, 2023





*Lost Hiker*, 2023

oil, coloured pencil and enzian flower on recycled vegetable leather, 56 x 51 cm





*In the Light of Day*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 45 x 200 cm





Detail, *In the Light of Day*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 45 x 200 cm





## **Gymnasia**

A Plus A Gallery, Venice, Italy, 2023

*Gymnasia* is the first solo exhibition in Italy by Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju. The Nigerian-American artist presents an installation with new paintings, drawings, and sculptures created between her studio in Berlin and her residency in Venice.

Inspired by the many contradictions and double meanings of the gymnasium, Ilupeju transforms the gallery into an arena with nude figures and iron sculptures that reference ancient and modern gym apparatuses. Embodying varying postures of exertion and recovery, the bodies are painted on loose canvas and paper. Once dried, they are cut out, released from the parameters of the rectangle and free to interact with the pliable armatures and architecture of the gallery space. In this way, the relationship between the figures and the environment becomes sharper, and depending on the way the canvas curves or folds, different visual possibilities for the paintings emerge.

*Gymnasia* is the plural of 'gymnasium', which is derived from 'gumnazo', meaning exercise, and 'gumnos', meaning naked or loin-clothed. A gymnasium is at once a setting for play, sensual enjoyment, and collective experimentation. Yet, it is also a place rife with immense physical suffering and competition, where bodies are put through a series of predetermined tests and often pushed beyond their limits. In the current socio-political landscape – with the continuities of colonialism, facism, and nazism still deeply embedded in the structures of many of its institutions - the gymnasium then becomes a metaphor for the world, in which marginalized bodies must find and forge creative and nimble ways to move within it to survive. Resisting a single static form, the cut out figures stretch into poetic and at times violent shapes, urging the viewer to examine the snaky and inventive characteristics of distortion as they are projected onto bodies and proliferate throughout society. Contortions, twists, and turns of the psyche and body are enacted – dancing in atmospheres of smoke and mirrors, bringing us to ask which movements are of our own desire, and which are absorbed obtrusions of intimidations from the outside.





*Bridge*, 2022  
oil and acrylic on paper, 135 x 97 cm





*Prey P.O.V.*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 107 x 222 cm





*Untitled Figure (Forward Fold)*, 2023  
acrylic on canvas, 65 x 155 cm







Installation view from *Gymnasia*, A Plus A Gallery, 2023





*Body Builder*, 2023  
acrylic on canvas, 60 x 190 cm



*Untitled Figure (Standing Back-Bend)*, 2023  
acrylic on canvas, 112 x 137 cm









Installation view from *Gymnasia*, A Plus A Gallery, 2023





*Blue*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 56 x 213 cm



*The Dancer*, 2023  
acrylic and colored pencil on canvas, 80 x 215 cm





Installation view from *Gymnasia*, A Plus A Gallery, 2023





*Helter Skelter*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 106 x 194 cm



*Untitled (Singlet Series No. 2)*, 2023  
mixed media on canvas, 31 x 109 cm





*Untitled Figure (Cross and Uncrossed Legs)*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 98.5 x 156 cm





*green and white and green and red and white and blue (Singlet Series No. 1), 2023*  
mixed media on scorched canvas, iron, 35 x 110 cm









*Truce*, 2023  
oil and colored pencil on canvas, 96 x 168 cm



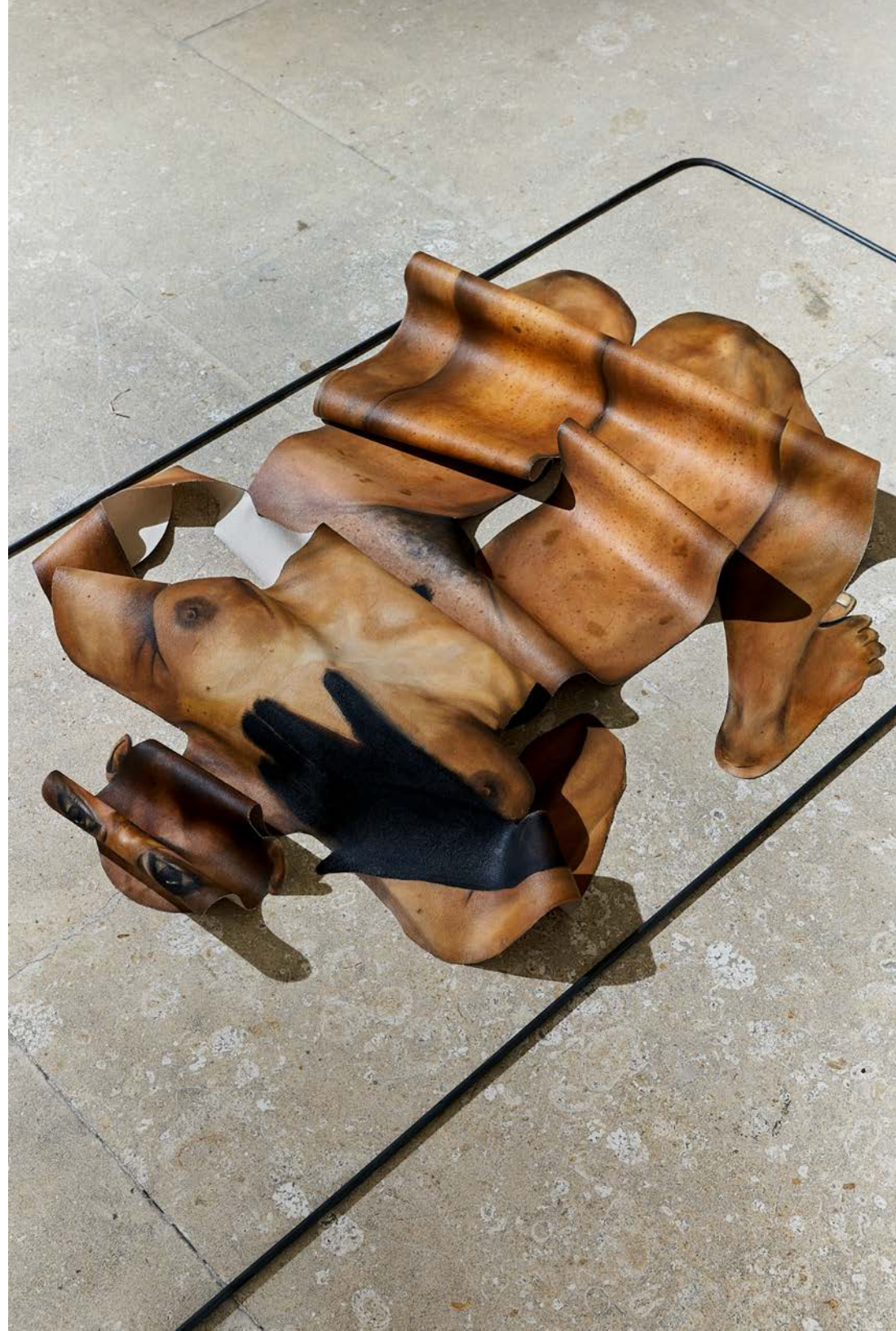


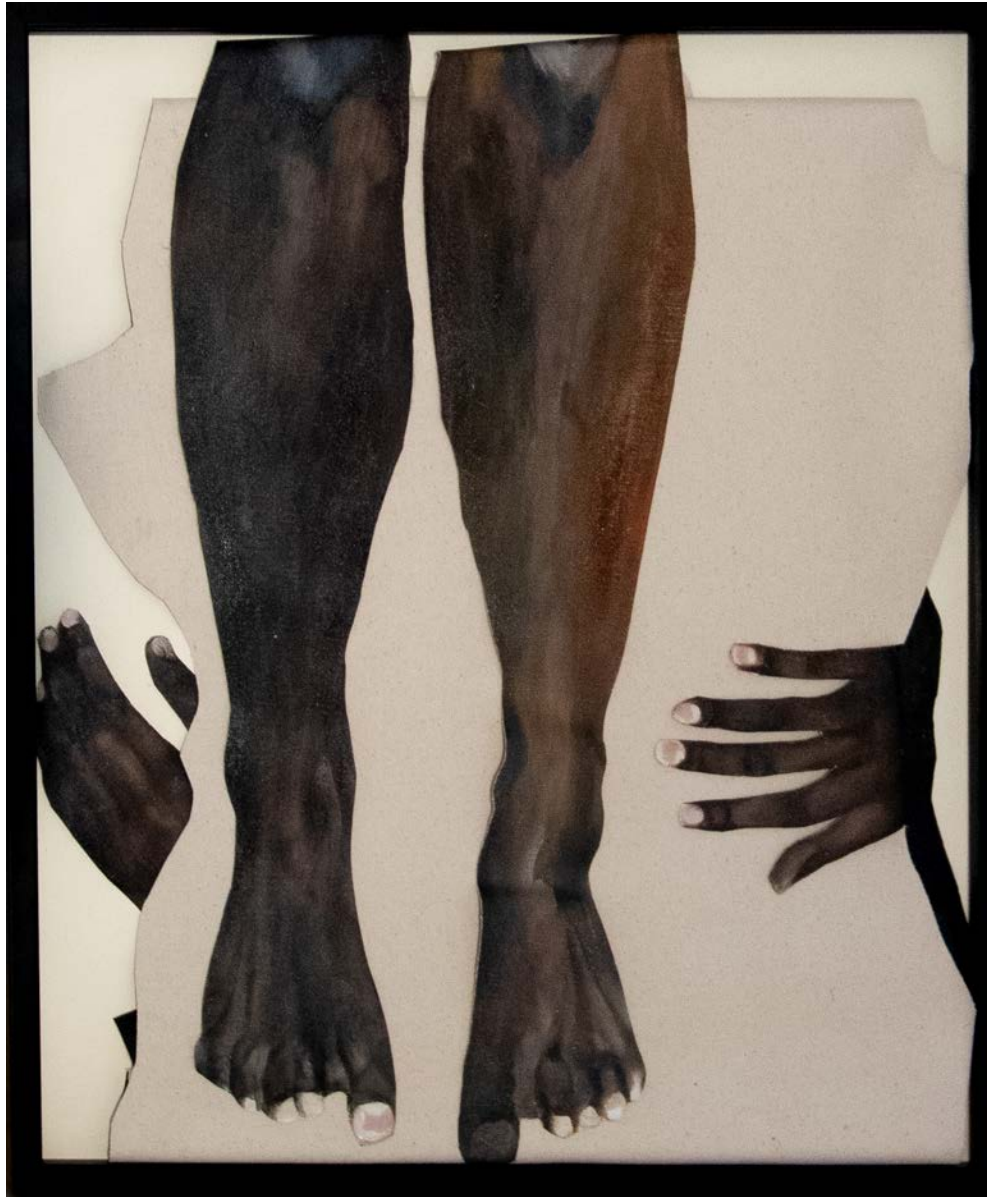
Installation view from *Gymnasia*, A Plus A Gallery, 2023





*warm gloves for the way home, 2022*  
oil and colored pencil on paper, 154.5 x 71 cm





*Untitled Figure (Folded in Frame)*, 2023  
oil and acrylic on canvas, frame, 45 x 62 cm





*Pendulum Seed Diptych*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 111.5 x 51 cm (side), 62 x 89 cm (front)



*Clown*, 2023  
oil on canvas, 47 x 215 cm



*Untitled Figure (Charcoal Mask, Sock)*, 2023  
oil and acrylic on canvas, 81 x 91 cm





Installation view from *Gymnasia*, A Plus A Gallery, 2023



*Face Study No. 1 (Body Print Series), 2022*  
charcoal and graphite on paper, 27 x 37 cm



*Face Study No. 2 (Body Print Series), 2022*  
charcoal and graphite on paper, 27 x 37 cm





*Masturbation Study No. 1 (Body Print Series)*, 2022  
charcoal and graphite on paper, 27.5 x 35 cm



*Masturbation Study No. 5 (Body Print Series)*, 2022  
charcoal and graphite on paper, 27 x 36 cm



# EARNESTLY

Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju

## **Earnestly**

Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju

192 pages

Published by Archive Books

In collaboration with Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien

Edited by Corinne Butta

Designed by Kyla Arsadjaja

In honest, crystallizing language, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju reckons with her changing Body and the afterlife of trauma within the tangle of race relations, sexual politics, and family history. *Earnestly* collages texts from the artist's transdisciplinary practice, modeling different lenses through which to navigate the social and emotional dimensions of body dysmorphia, girlhood, and longing. Across all, Ilupeju celebrates embodied writing for its self-transformative power and for the gentle revelations made possible through its sharing. She welcomes the reader into her world and her Body as she attempts to escape what she terms “the house of hard distorting mirrors” and move towards joy, presence, and connection. Along this journey, she finds a way into self-recognition that is prismatic—multivalent and refracting.

Cover image: Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, *Mirrors*, 2019, digital photograph.



“I look up to Black women who aren’t afraid to die so I became a machine for dismembering fear,” writes Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju in her audacious autoportrait, *Earnestly*. Through Ilupeju’s writing, photographs, and paintings, we are taken into the place that is often denied existence: the interior life of the Black woman. A place that holds not just the friction of joy and pain but also confusion, desire, embarrassment, humor, anger, curiosity, orgasms, the grotesque, and the perseverance to be seen as one who contains multitudes. In other words, to be seen as a person. In Ilupeju’s sharp and specific recounting of her own personal history, I feel not only let in, but validated in my own experience as a Black femme person. Often, I am ashamed to admit that I am afraid to rest because of the nightmares that haunt me. *Earnestly* not only comforts my feelings of shame and terror, but reminds me that there is a way to find dreams once again.”

— Shala Miller

“It is hard to reckon with the vehicle that propels us through life—the one that bears all our first and last times, and everything in between. This body, a deep well we hardly know the depth of. There is no world in which another would be able to look in the water and discern the number of stones at the bottom or the waves that ripple under the surface. Mine are different from yours. But that doesn’t matter. Ilupeju’s texts beckons us to gaze only at the surface, at the murky reflection of our own faces in the waters of her body. She tells stories of the stones in ways that reveal universally felt moments of triumph, deep sadness, euphoria, and ultimately perseverance, leaving me with a haunting thought that we share more kin than we do differences. It is a text that eases my loneliness, warms my walks home, and shows me more of myself.”

— Marilyn Chang

“Ilupeju’s writing brings forth matters from the belly. Every line cuts crisply yet resists easy reductions of some of the most difficult, human experiences. There are facts in biographical texts. There are truths when we tell narratives of our pasts. We are complete without either. *Earnestly* asserts that one can hold the beauty, the agony, the gore, the regret, and the endurance of the everyday without settling for safety or security. It is a text that will stay with me as a marker for the validity of not knowing.”

— Malcolm Peacock



### **Hands Full of Air**

Galerie im Turm, Berlin, Germany, 2020-21

Where do the edges of the individual end and those of the community begin? How can this reflexive relationship be used to recover knowledges and techniques that can resist and transmute the corruptions of oppressive systems?

In *Hands Full of Air*, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju explores intuition and vulnerability as a starting point for a practice of collective care. Influenced by the ephemeral nature of blanket forts, the immersive installation comprises altered bedsheets and textiles contributed by her friends and artists from around the world. Each piece embodies an affective moment, a trace of intimacy, or a gesture of love. Into this collaborative support structure, Ilupeju weaves her own videos, paintings, fabrics and objects, in which she examines the formation of the self within constructed epistemologies of sexuality, history, and representation.

Ilupeju's work is an attempt to dwell in the ambivalent space between exposure and isolation, to find recognition in the discomfort of shared vulnerabilities. By blurring the lines of authorship and borders, the artist reflects on the constitution of identity and on empathy as a tool of resistance. The subversion of the fort structure demonstrates the ways in which collective fragility and porosity can generate spaces where different forms of seeing and listening unfold and where vulnerability is transformed into resilience and self-empowerment.

WITH FABRIC CONTRIBUTIONS BY Sharmeen Anjum, Peter Basma-Lord, Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, Lu Rose Biltucci, Ellie Lizbeth Brown, Federica Bueti, Lucia Pedroso Cabrera, Olivia Chou with Ally Zhao, Binta Diaw, Nathan Storey Freeman, Bambi Glass, Danny Greenberg, Riya Hamid, Nile Harris, Samhita Kamisetty, Avantika Khanna, Byron Kim, Eleanor Kipping, Beverly „KöTA WALi“, Kelly Krugman, Cooper Lovano, Markues, Adam Milner, Emily Velez Nelms, Luiza Prado, Thomias Radin, Elliot Reed, Djibril Sall, Lorenzo Sandoval, Lili Somogyi, among others.





Installation view from *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, 2020-21





Installation view from *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, 2020-21





“Intuition is a knowing that runs deep within the body. It is a compass by which we make crucial decisions, the heirloom we are constantly trying to re-excavate and protect. Oftentimes, we think of intuition as something we are born with; formed in early childhood and remaining with us for the rest of our lives, inherited after generations of ancestors. But there is some difficulty there. I do wonder about corruption, what happens when intuition has been compromised by abuse, oppression, neglect. I feel that my intuition has been partially muffled and marred by many outside forces, and I am currently in the process of reclaiming a sense of being and making that feels more honest.



For me, the blanket fort embodies a form of intuition. This activity epitomizes the beauty and innocence of childhood; doing things not because you fully understand them, but because you must. Blanket forts are temporary structures, usually composed of sheets and comforters, that hold our dead skin cells, our dream life, our existential dread, bodily secretions, loved ones, our rest. There is something to learn from their ephemeral quality and how close people must be to enjoy that space together. This type of fort is usually built within a more physically stable structure, like a house or an apartment, which provides a base of safety. It is interesting to think of intuition as something that does not only concern the individual. Decisions can be made collectively, with everyone in mind. This type of synergy brings forth something new, better, sprung from collective effort”

— Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, excerpt from Interview with Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju by Mayra A. Rodríguez Castro, 2020





Installation view from *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, 2020-21





Installation view from *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, 2020-21



## Wayward Dust

45 min.

Performance at Deutsches Technikmuseum, Berlin, Germany, 2020

Video link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GNNNdRpe8s>

On August 23, 2020, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju debuted *Wayward Dust*, a performative intervention in which she collected the dust that had been accumulating for 17 years inside of the highly criticised Brandenburg-Prussian Slave Trade installation at the Deutsches Technikmuseum.

The performance was part of a larger project developed in collaboration with Dekoloniale. The project took up the difficult task of taking down an installation designed by Hans-Jürgen Buchert, a white German set designer, in the 90's that rendered an inaccurate representation of the inside of a slave trade cargo ship. The installation was situated within "Lifeworld Ship", the exhibition of the Navigation and Shipping Department of the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin, with the intention of introducing the role of Brandenburg-Prussia in the Transatlantic slave trade and contextualizing Europe's booming shipping economy within the framework of colonialism. The installation contained 82 life-sized figurines placed behind a metal cage, depicting representations of the enslaved in humiliating, casual, and inaccurate ways. In its failed attempt to metaphorically interpret the idea of "the human being as an object of trade", the installation, situated within an educational context for younger audiences, violently inserted a false, visual narrative of history into Germany's public consciousness. The installation was open to the public for 17 years and was publicly criticized for the last several years by activists and civil society groups. In June of 2019, it was finally officially closed upon the initiation of the project.

*Wayward Dust* reflects on decay and regeneration, highlighting the physical and intangible remnants of history. A reminder of the inhumanness of these figurines, the dust is a residue created by the visitors, employees, and workers of the museum over the past 17 years; every time someone stepped into the installation, they left a piece of themselves behind. Next to this record of presence, the dust speaks to the shapeshifting temporal nature of colonial practices, but also of liberation. Today, the dismantled installation leaves a void in the museum, opening space for new possibilities.



Performance documentation from *Wayward Dust*, Deutsches Technikmuseum, 2020





Performance documentation from *Wayward Dust*, Deutsches Technikmuseum, 2020







Performance documentation from *Wayward Dust*, Deutsches Technikmuseum, 2020





***My Mourning Routine 2019 | Ad***

35 min.

Performance at PS120 Berlin, Germany, 2019

Waking up as a disorienting experience; the mo(u)rning routine as a way to repossess the self and grieve the losses in its wake.

...slippers, glass of water, partially unread prayer text from my mother, yoga, warm shower, vaseline, a gifted Nike™ sneaker filled with saliva and toothpaste, journaling, meditation, breakfast...

“Composure can be seen as the deferral, a kind of self holding that keeps open the possibility of finding an environment in which the composure itself could be relinquished [...] Composure seeks its negation.” —Adam Phillips, *On Kissing Tickling, and Being Bored*

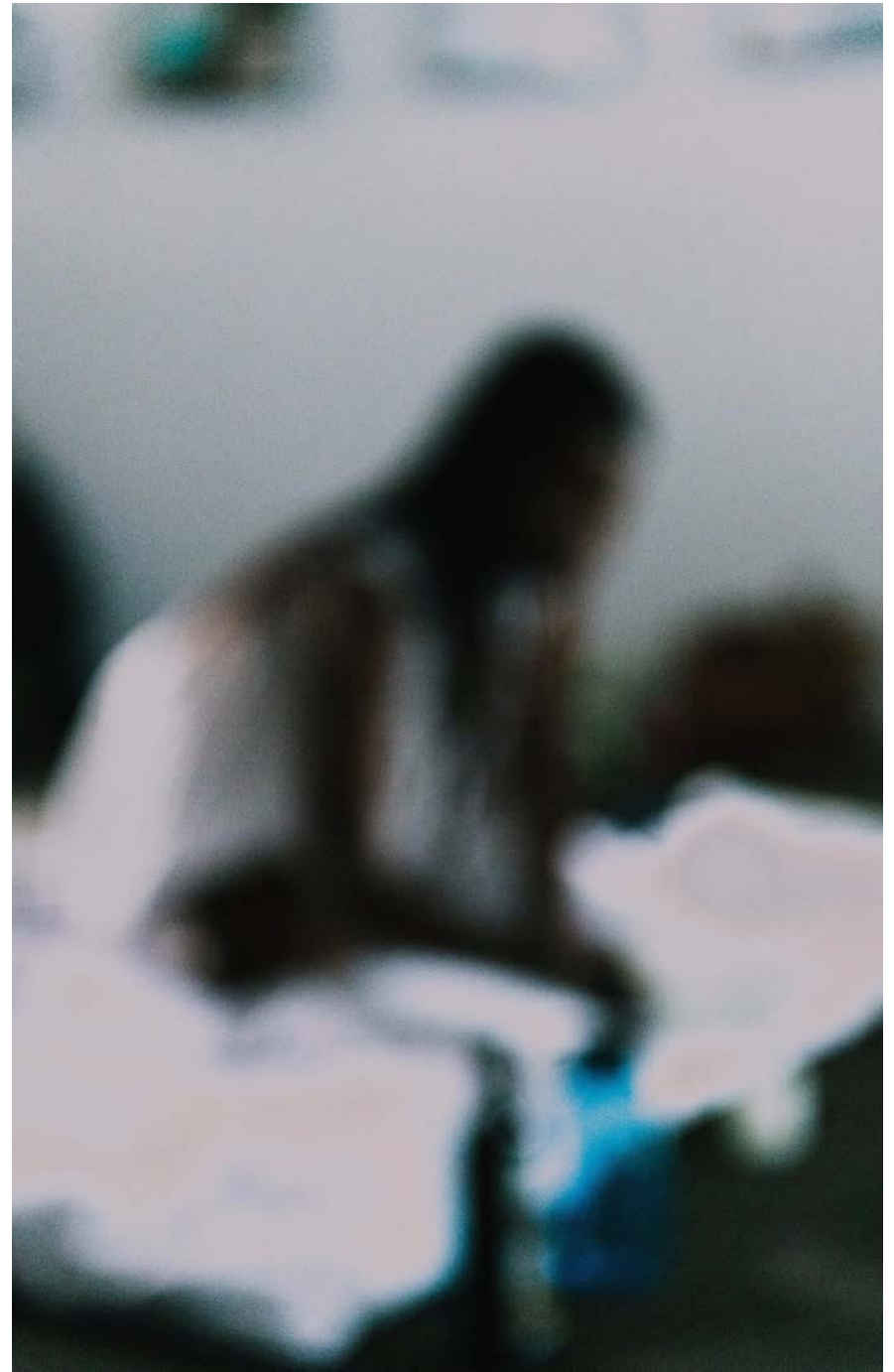
Performance documentation from *My Mourning Routine 2019 | Ad*,  
PS120 Berlin, 2019



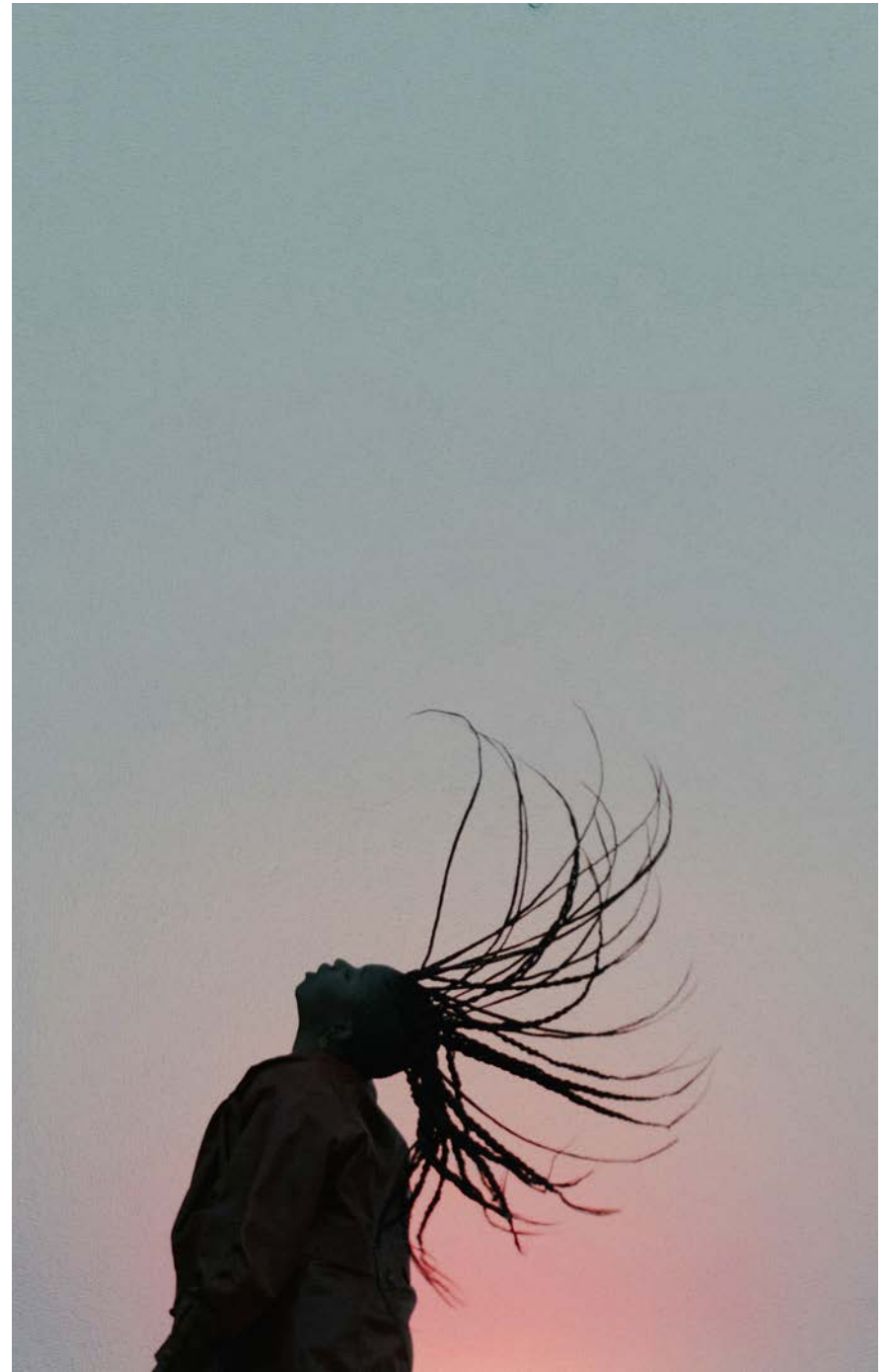
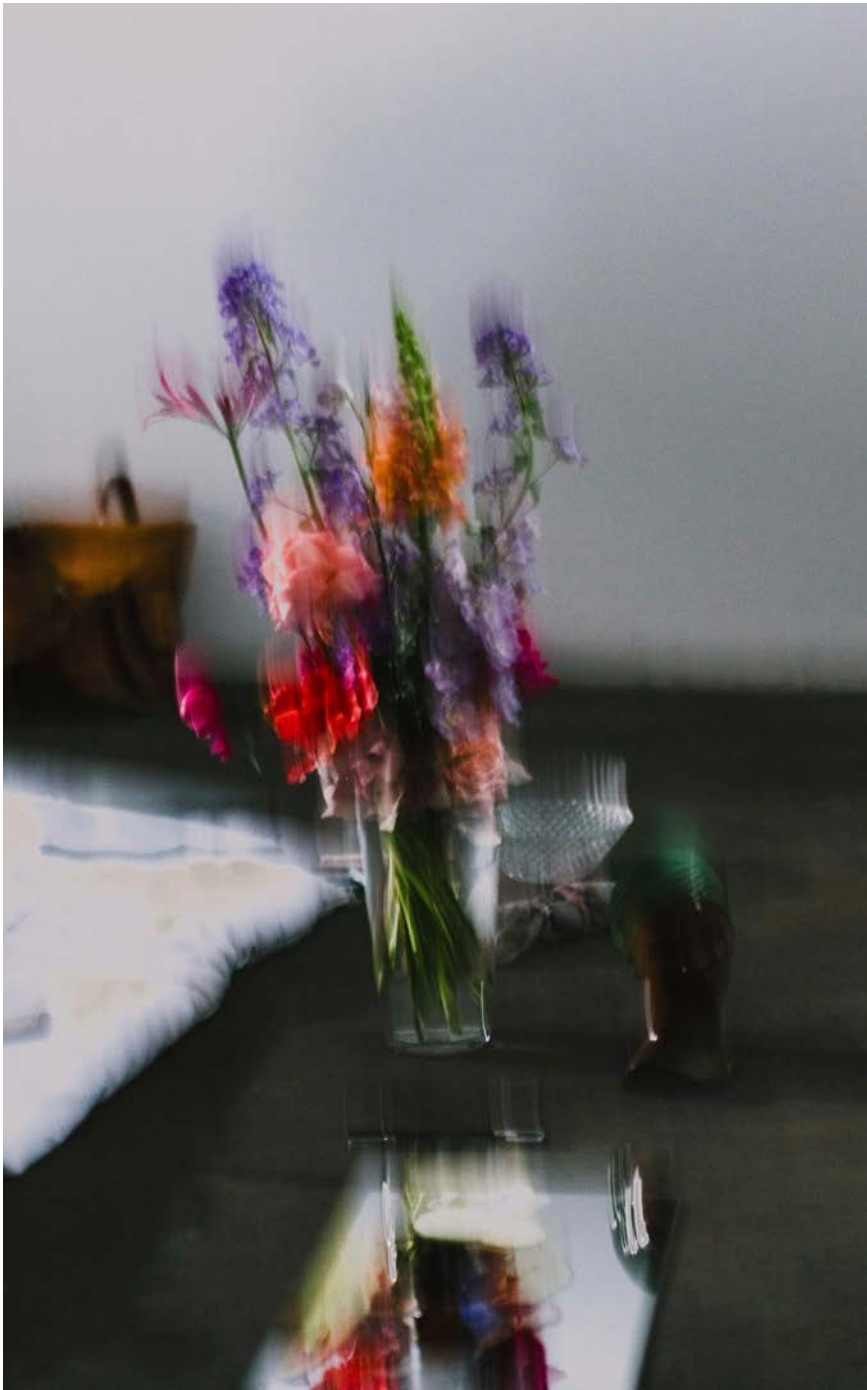


Performance documentation from *My Mourning Routine 2019* | Ad,  
PS120 Berlin, 2019





Performance documentation from *My Mourning Routine 2019* | Ad, PS120 Berlin, 2019



Performance documentation from *My Mourning Routine 2019* | Ad, PS120 Berlin, 2019



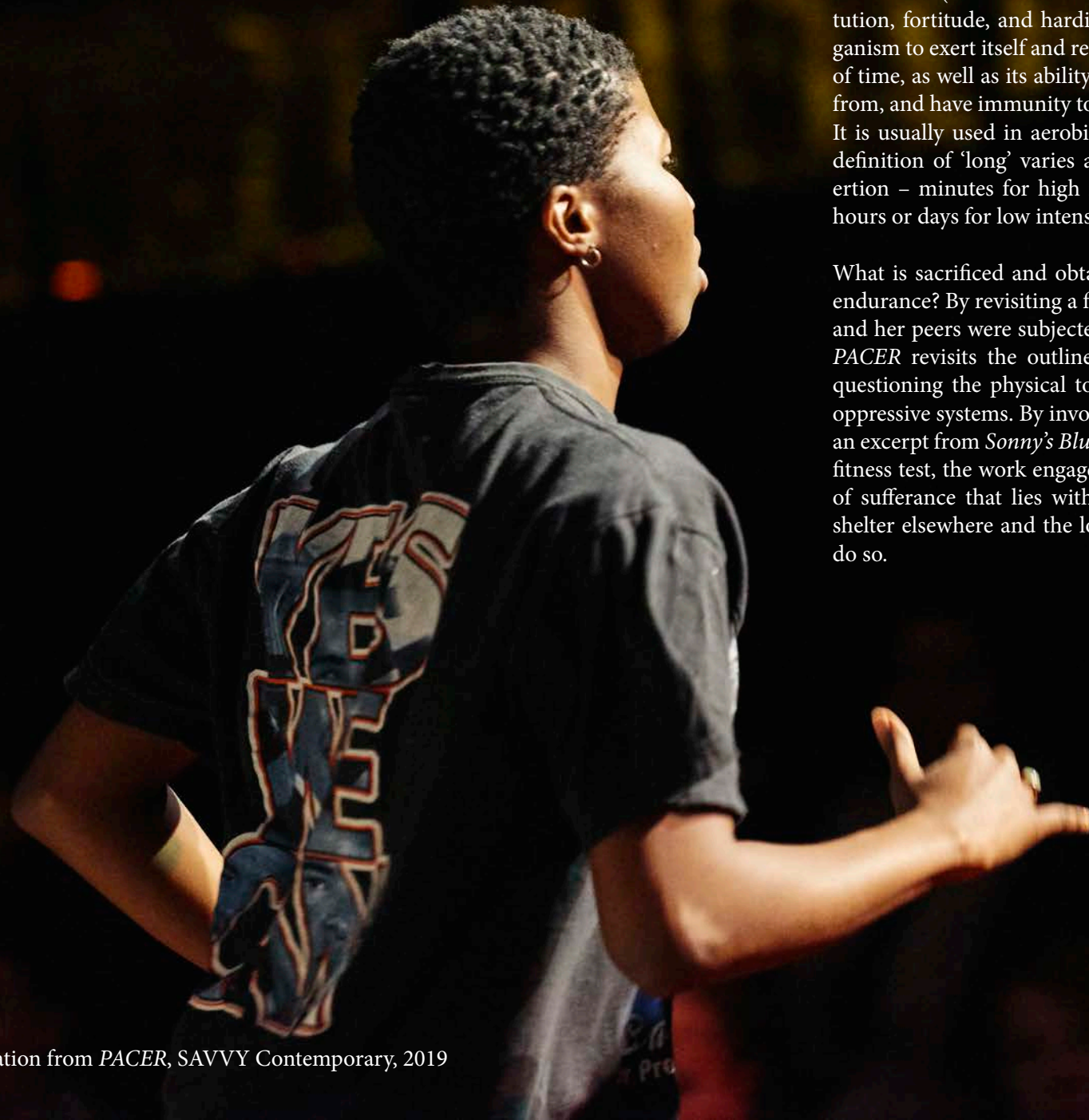
**PACER**

25 min.

SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany, 2019

Endurance (also related to sufferance, resilience, constitution, fortitude, and hardiness) is the ability of an organism to exert itself and remain active for a long period of time, as well as its ability to resist, withstand, recover from, and have immunity to trauma, wounds, or fatigue. It is usually used in aerobic or anaerobic exercise. The definition of 'long' varies according to the type of exertion – minutes for high intensity anaerobic exercise, hours or days for low intensity aerobic exercise.

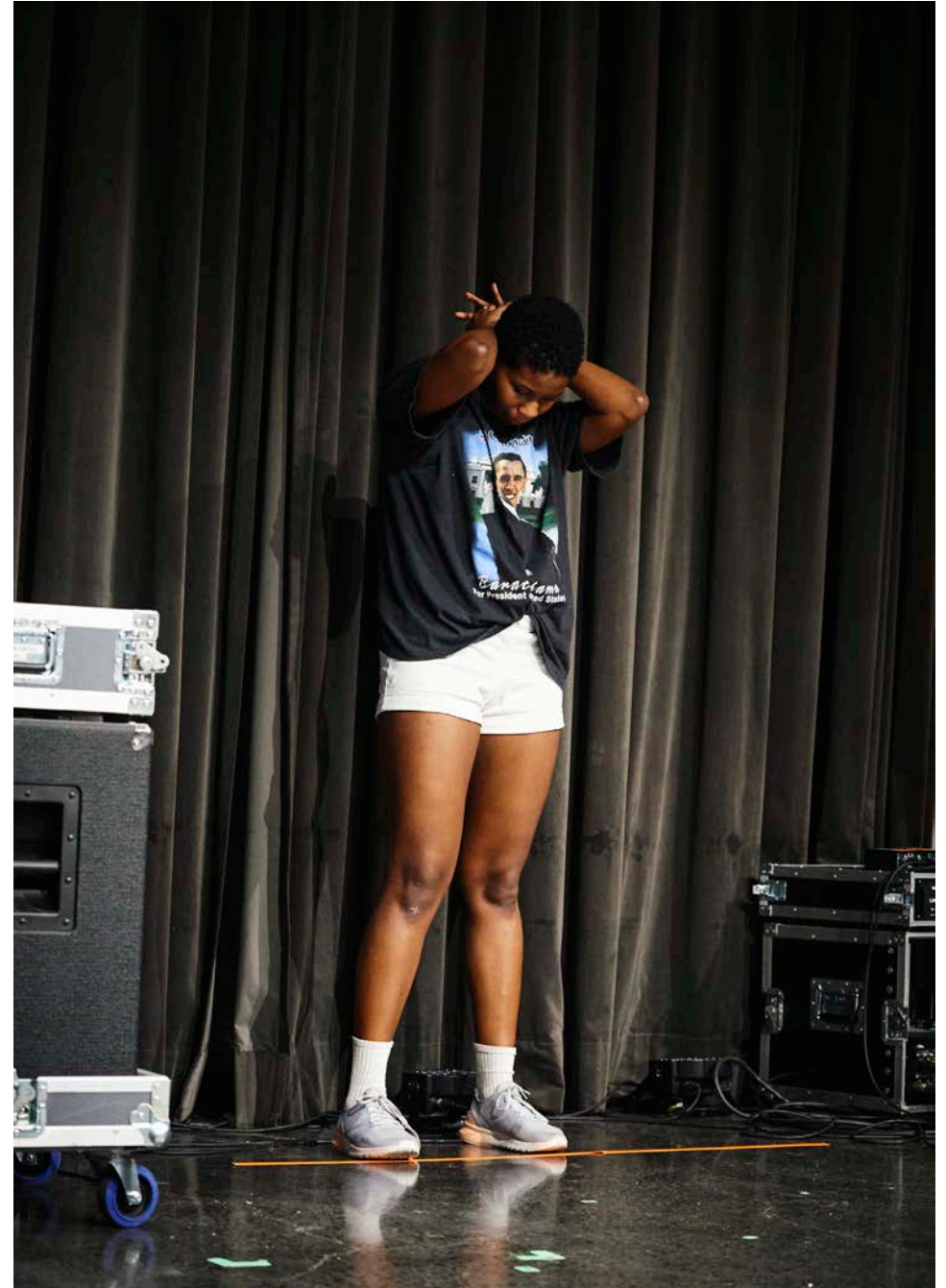
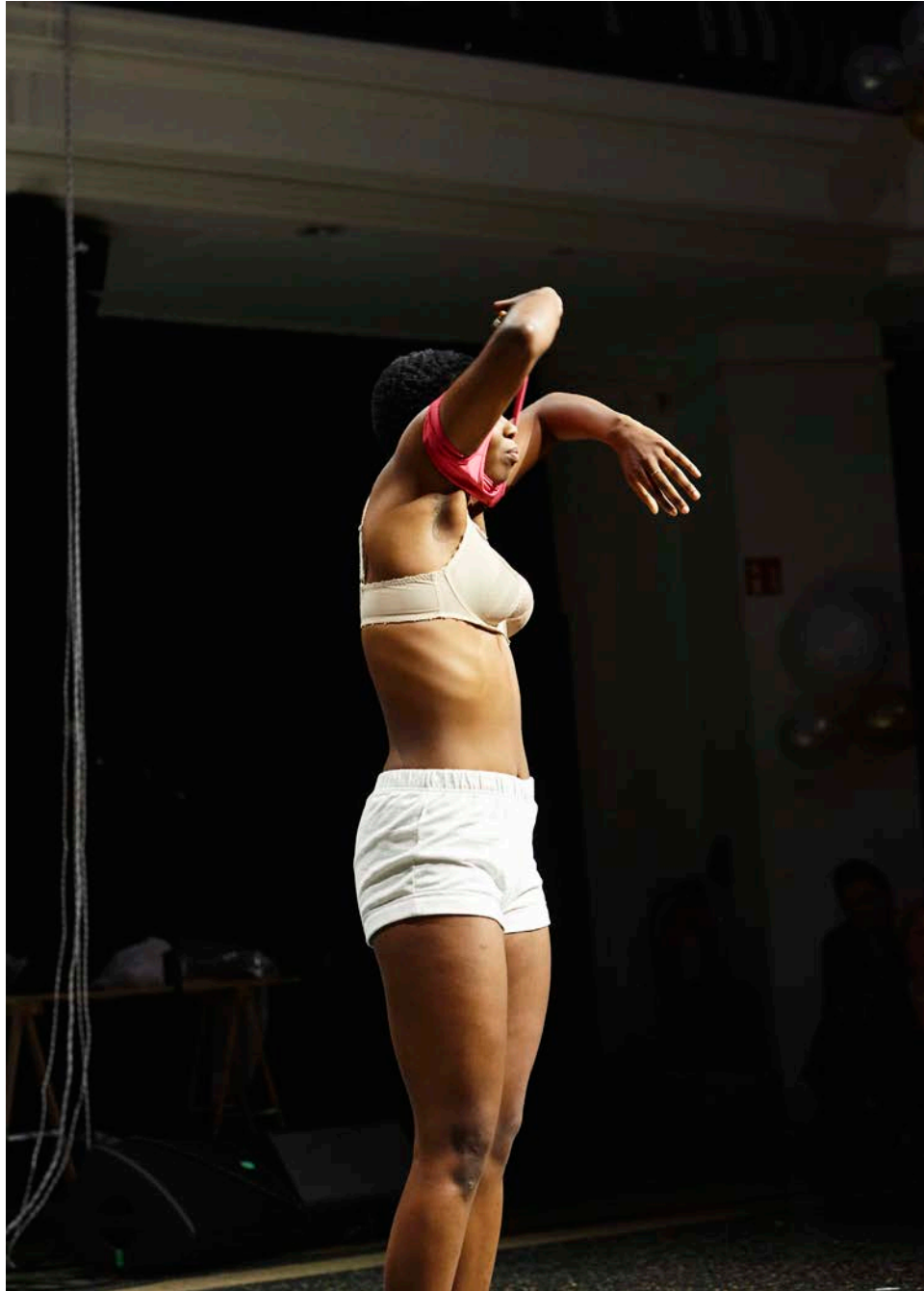
What is sacrificed and obtained in the maintenance of endurance? By revisiting a fitness test to which Monilola and her peers were subjected to during early education, *PACER* revisits the outlines of a younger body while questioning the physical toll exerted on bodies within oppressive systems. By invoking James Baldwin through an excerpt from *Sonny's Blues* read immediately after the fitness test, the work engages with the connective tissue of sufferance that lies within all Black people seeking shelter elsewhere and the loss of innocence required to do so.





Performance documentation from *PACER*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2019





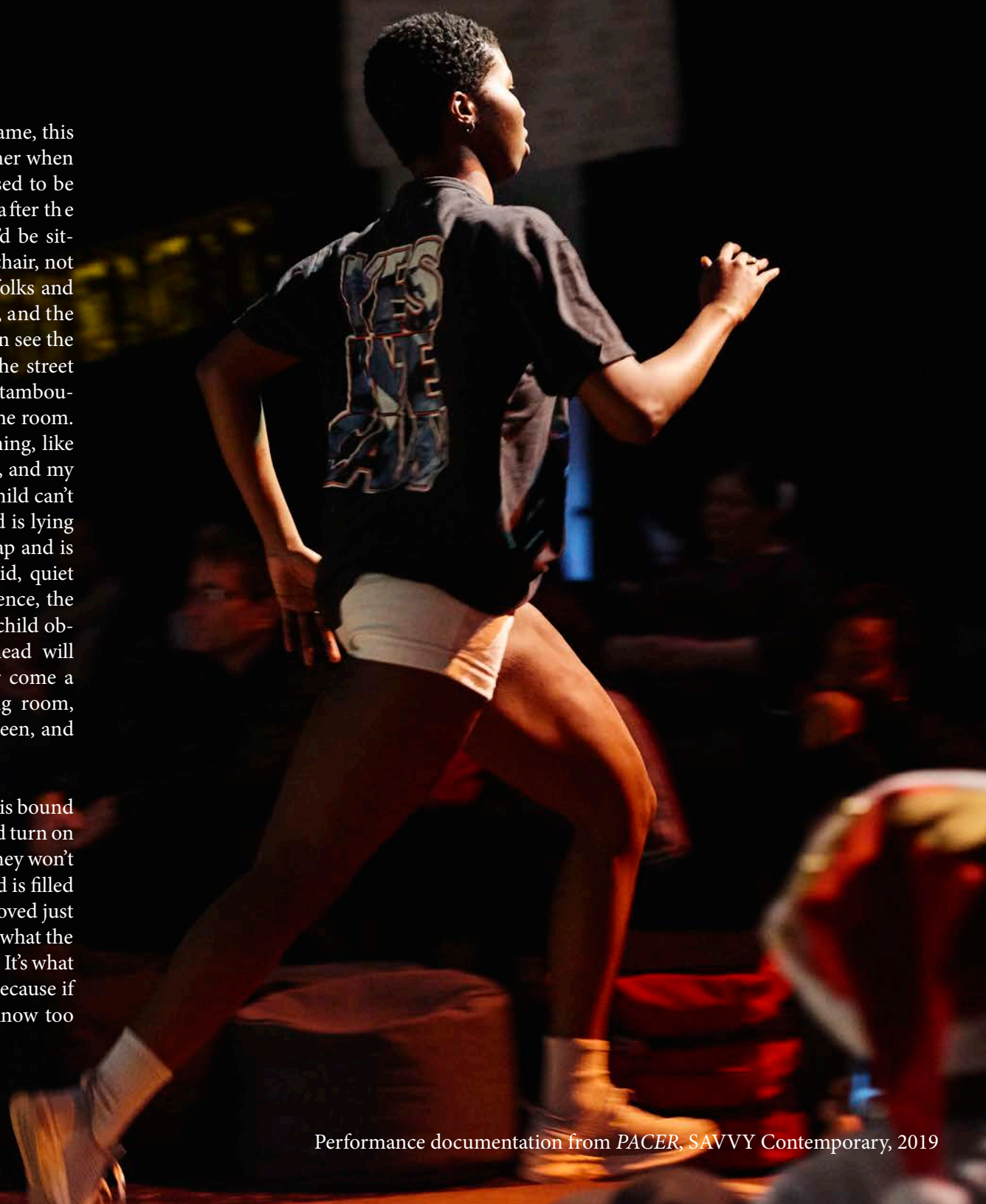
Performance documentation from *PACER*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2019

Excerpt read after pacer test:

“This was the last time I ever saw my mother alive. Just the same, this picture gets all mixed up in my mind with pictures I had of her when she was younger. The way I always see her is the way she used to be on Sunday afternoon, say, when the old folks were talking after the big Sunday dinner. I always see her wearing pale blue. She’d be sitting on the sofa. And my father would be sitting in the easy chair, not far from her. And the living room would be full of church folks and relatives. There they sit, in chairs all around the living room, and the night is creeping up outside, but nobody knows it yet. You can see the darkness growing against the windowpanes and you hear the street noises every now and again, or maybe the jangling beat of a tambourine from one of the churches close by, but it’s real quiet in the room. For a moment nobody’s talking, but every face looks darkening, like the sky outside. And my mother rocks a little from the waist, and my father’s eyes are closed. Everyone is looking at something a child can’t see. For a minute they’ve forgotten the children. Maybe a kid is lying on the rug, half asleep. Maybe somebody’s got a kid in his lap and is absent-mindedly stroking the kid’s head. Maybe there’s a kid, quiet and big-eyed, curled up in a big chair in the corner. The silence, the darkness coming, and the darkness in the faces frighten the child obscurely. He hopes that the hand which strokes his forehead will never stop—will never die. He hopes that there will never come a time when the old folks won’t be sitting around the living room, talking about where they’ve come from, and what they’ve seen, and what’s happened to them and their kinfolk.

But something deep and watchful in the child knows that this is bound to end, is already ending. In a moment someone will get up and turn on the light. Then the old folks will remember the children and they won’t talk anymore that day. And when light fills the room, the child is filled with darkness. He knows that every time this happens he’s moved just a little closer to that darkness outside. The darkness outside is what the old folks have been talking about. It’s what they’ve come from. It’s what they endure. The child knows that they won’t talk anymore because if he knows too much about what’s happened to them, he’ll know too much too soon, about what’s going to happen to him.”

— James Baldwin, *Sonny’s Blues* (1957)



Performance documentation from *PACER*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2019





Performance documentation from *PACER*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2019



*Das Gift / The Poison*

10 min. 26 sec.

2020

Stitching together a collection of personal and found footage, *Das Gift / The Poison* depicts an ambivalent journey through the difficulties, triumphs, and transmutations of unrequited love.

Special thanks to Gary Smalls for his video submission (3:30 - 4:45)



*Stampede of Champions*

4 min. 35 sec.

2018

“...that combination of panic and intoxication, of groupthink and mob behaviour, that can overtake a crowded place when the mood turns desperate or reckless. With the food fighting scenes in mind, this discomfiting background noise creates an atmosphere of violence—the violence of consumption and excess and indulgence, counterpoint to the violence of privation and poverty and hunger.”  
— CHRIS THURMAN, BusinessDay



*Innocence*

7 min. 34 sec.

2017

Viewer discretion is advised.



# MY SEXUAL HISTORY

Vol. 1 AGES 4-17

*My Sexual History Vol. 1*

6 min. 19 sec.

2017



Judgement isn't always necessary  
How it feels to slice my head through space

*Berlin 2007 / 2016*

4 min. 14 sec.

2016



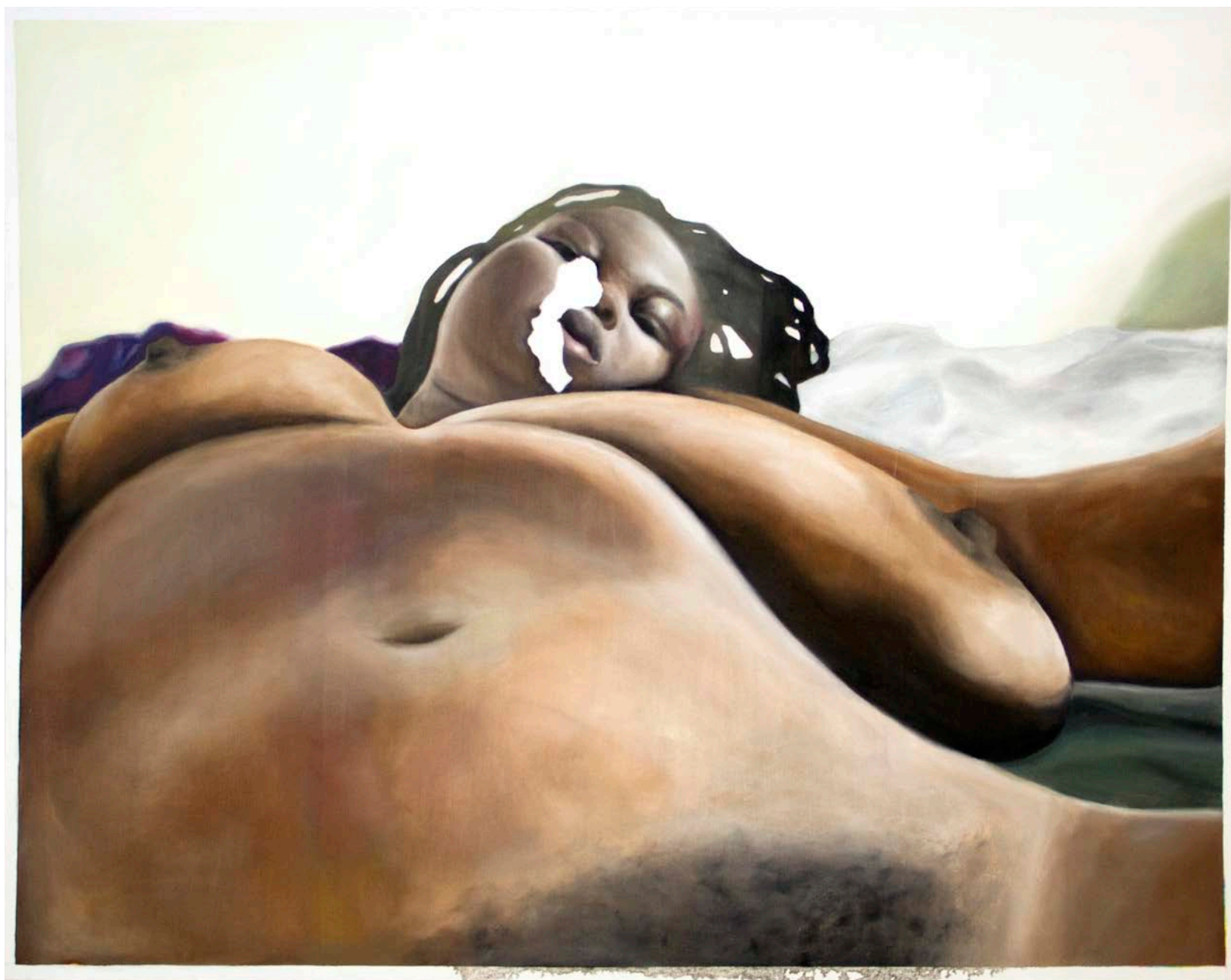
*Intimacy Study*

In collaboration with George Spica

13 min. 37 sec.

2016

This work serves as documentation of a collaboration rooted in the union of contrasting identity and common instinct. The bodily compositions presented and layered over an audio track of a personal conversation between the two participants aim to transcend a social acknowledgment of these compositions as sexual, and rather define them as a sculptural method of inciting intimacy and physical conversation.



*Untitled Self Portrait No.1 (to live freely in this Body)*, 2017  
oil on canvas, 122 cm x 152 cm



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## EDUCATION

2024 - 2025 BPA// Berlin program for artists, Berlin, Germany

2018 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

2018 BFA with distinction New York University, New York, USA

Studio Art (Honours Studio), Social and Cultural Analysis

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 Art Basel: Statements, PSM Gallery, Basel, Switzerland {forthcoming}

2024 *Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju: BloodLetter*, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, Germany

2024 *BloodLetter*, PSM, Berlin, Germany

2023 *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna, Vienna, Austria

2023 *Gymnasia*, A plus A Gallery, Venice, Italy

2020 *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, Berlin, Germany

2020 *Eve of Intuition*, The Institute for Endotic Research (TIER), Berlin, Germany

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 *Musafiri: Travellers and Guests*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany {forthcoming}

2025 *edging — bodies without orgasms*, Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt, Austria {forthcoming}

2024 *Politics of Love*, Kunsthaus Hamburg, Germany

2024 *SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS*, Savvy Contemporary, Berlin, Germany

2024 *Twilight is a Place of Promise*, Esther Schipper, Berlin, Germany

2024 *INVERSION-CONVERSION*, BPA// Raum, Berlin, Germany

2024 *Double Take*, A Plus A Gallery, Venice, Italy

2023 *OPEN*, MaHalla, Berlin Germany

2022 *non playable character*, The Farest X The School for Curatorial Studies, Venice, Italy

2021 *Let experiments become attitude*, The Fairest x Direkte Auktion, Berlin, Germany

2021 *my whole body transformed into something else*, Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2020 *Weitertragen*, HVW8 Gallery, Berlin, Germany

2020 *where will I be buried?*, Flux Factory, New York, USA

2019 *ENTF*, Bark K Gallery, Berlin, Germany

2019 *Queer Intimacy and States of Emotion*, Human Resources, Los Angeles, USA

2019 *Migrant Mothers*, Cunsthaus-Tempus Projects, Tampa, FL

2018 *From the Cradle to the Boat*, C24 Gallery, New York City, USA

2018 *Dia: B acon*, Commons Gallery, New York, USA

2018 *Do you begin where I end?*, Two Person Exhibition, 80WSE Gallery, New York City, USA

2017 *tuck me in*, Commons Gallery, New York, USA  
2017 *Panning to Public*, 80WSE Gallery, New York, USA  
2017 *Juxtapositions*, Commons Gallery, New York, USA

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2024 “Loc Journey” in *Grow It Show It: A Look at Hair from Diane Arbus to TikTok*, edited by Miriam Bettin, Clara Bolin, Sonja Palade, and Thomas Seelig, Distanz Verlag, Berlin, Germany  
2023 “Eat Your Calf” in *Sibyl’s Mouth: A Pure Fiction Publication*, Rosa Aiello, Ellen Yeon Kim, Erika Landström, Luzie Meyer, Mark Von Schlegell (Eds.), Sternberg Press, Berlin, Germany  
2022 “A Day in Ha(a)rlem” in *The Art of Critique*, edited by Melanie Bühler, Lenz Press & Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands  
2022 *Earnestly*, Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju, Archive Books, Milan, Italy

## SELECTED PERFORMANCES

2024 *Poetics of Encryption* Reading Performance: “Secret Words and Related Stories with Jonna Kina, Shade Théret and Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju” at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany  
2022 *Milli’s Ghost* in collaboration with Natasha A. Kelly at I AM MILLI, Hase29, Osnabrück, Germany  
2020 *Wayward Dust* at the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin x Decolonize Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2020 *PACER* at SPACED OUT x PSM Gallery, Brandenburg, Germany  
2019 *PACER* at Why Do You Fly From Me? Listeners in the Echo Chamber, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany  
2019 *My Mourning Routine 2019* at Innocence, PS120 Berlin, Germany  
2019 *Eat Your Calf* at Affect/Effect: Performance Prosthesis, transmediale & CTM 2019 x SomoS, Berlin, Germany

## PANELS, READINGS, WORKSHOPS, AND LECTURES

2024 Guest Tutor, *Art & Ideas: Art World Today – Berlin & Beyond*, New York University Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Reading, *Earnestly*, Hopscotch Reading Room, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Panel, *Art of the Global South in German Exhibition Spaces: Development, conditions, hope*, Berlin Global Village, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Panel, *Ugly as Sin: Beauty, Morality, and the Politics of Prettiness*, Creamcake, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Conversation, *JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN WITH JULIANA HUXTABLE*, Fotografiska Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Panel, *The Restorative Power of Documentation*, A Wa Nibi, Kampnagel, Hamburg, Germany  
2023 Guest Tutor, *Art & Ideas: Art World Today – Berlin & Beyond*, New York University Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2022 Book Reading, *Earnestly*, Cashmere Radio, Berlin, Germany  
2022 Workshop, *Resonant Limbs: Radiophonic Writing Workshop*, Cashmere Radio, Berlin, Germany  
2023 Panel, *The Art of Critique Book Launch*, CCA Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2022 Artistic Talk, *A Day in Ha(a)rlem*, The Art of Critique Series, Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, NE  
2022 Panel, *The Impact of Social Practice*, The British Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy  
2022 Book Presentation, *Earnestly*, Galerie Wedding, Berlin, Germany  
2022 Tour, *Special Tour with Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju of the exhibition ‘Zanele Muholi’*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany  
2021 Workshop, *Reading the Body: A Performative Writing Workshop*, Somatic Charting, The Institute for Endotic Research (TIER), Berlin, Germany  
2021 Workshop, *Transatlantic Synergies: Building a Diverse and Inclusive Culture of Remembrance* (DAICOR), Cultural Vistas x Dekoloniale, Berlin, Germany



2020 Workshop, *COOP study group: Performing the Living* ))((Living the Performing w/ Akinbode Akinbiyi & Arlette-Louise Ndakoze, Dutch Art Institute x Sonsbeek 2020, Arnhem, Netherlands  
2019 Lecture, *Untold (Hi)stories*, M. Embassy x HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany  
2019 Artist Talk & Class Visit, New York University Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
2019 Panel, *Collectivity, Collaboration, Cooperation*, Karlsruhe University of Arts & Design, Karlsruhe, Germany  
2019 Reading, *The more I study my Body, the less I care for nature*, Assembly Room, NYC  
2019 Panel, *Politics of Love*, Sophiensaele, Berlin, Germany

## RESIDENCIES

2022 Cashmere Radio, Cashmere Radio Basisförderung Residency, Berlin, Germany  
2019 Performance Intensive, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania  
2017 Currents Residency, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

## HONOURS & AWARDS

2021 BBK Berlin Studio Grant  
2018 Skowhegan Fellowship Full Grant  
2018 New York University Artistic Practice Award  
2017 New York University Artistic Practice Award  
2017 New York University Senior Honors Studio, Exhibition and Thesis  
2017 Dina Wind Grant for Artists Working in Video, Sculpture or Assemblage  
2014 Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship  
2014 Harry Redlich Essay Scholarship, 1st Place

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

2022 Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands

## CURATORIAL

2024 “Siren Songs” in *Is it cold in the water?*, Creamcake, Berlin, Germany  
2022 *The Impact of Social Practice*, Venice Art Biennale, British Council x Therme Art, Venice Italy  
2021 *From Non-Extractive to Regenerative Architectures: Growing a Symbiotic City*, Venice Architecture Biennale, VAC Foundation x Therme Art, Venice, Italy  
2019 *I am not on the Blacklist* with Hyoung-Min Kim and Gabriel Galindez Cruz, SAVVY Contemporary x Tanzfabrik Open Studios, Berlin, Germany