

Seeing Lumumba

A performative installation by Modou Dieng Yacine

June 28 – July 12, 2024

Curated by Ayrika Hall, Black Artists Network is thrilled to announce *Seeing Lumumba*, a performative installation by artist Modou Dieng Yacine. This exhibition, previously on view in Brussels and Paris, will be on view at our West Town Pop-Up gallery at 1901 W. Chicago Ave from June 28 – July 12, 2024, with an opening reception on Friday, June 28, 5-10 pm.

Seeing Lumumba seeks to honor the former Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba's legacy, while interrogating the dynamics of historical representation and collective memory. Dieng Yacine's practice involves acts of visual restitution and repair, reconfiguring colonial images through strategic erasure, augmentation, and recontextualization. Dieng Yacine challenges the "anthropological gaze"¹ that accompanies colonial representations by decolonizing Lumumba's image, dismantling the Eurocentric perspective that traditionally objectifies African figures, and instead presenting Lumumba as an "omnipresent everyman²," a multi-dimensional, autonomous individual. Through these visual strategies, Dieng Yacine emphasizes Lumumba's profound humanity and his significance beyond colonial paradigms, challenging viewers to reconsider the ways in which history and identity are constructed and perceived.

Through the repetition of Lumumba's image, particularly his gaze, *Seeing Lumumba* interrogates the constructs of heroism, the attributes we project onto our heroes, and the persistence of their memory. Dieng Yacine's work invites a critical reflection on the act of seeing and being seen, revealing the mirrored reflections of our own identities within the figures we venerate. By persistently representing Lumumba's image, this series accentuates the enduring potency of Lumumba's legacy and highlights the continuous relevance of his struggle for justice and independence. Through this visual discourse, Dieng Yacine fosters exploration of the lasting impact of colonial histories on contemporary life and the intricate ways in which our heroes inform and reflect our historical consciousness.

The exhibition features an interactive component, inviting guests to engage with the show's thematic exploration of reflection through portraiture by drawing or painting on a large backdrop. These contributions will be subsequently incorporated into new artwork by Modou Dieng Yacine after the completion of the show.

For further information, please contact the gallery at blackartistsnetwork@gmail.com.

¹ Mpoma, Anne Wetsi. "Modou Yacine, decoloniser l'image en effacer le regard anthropologie." In *Modou Dieng Yacine*, Cahiers Picmol, 193 Gallery, 2023

² Old Friends Gallery

Biography

Modou Dieng Yacine received a French-Catholic education, while the majority of Senegal was Muslim. This created a foundational bond with France and its culture but also bred a deep alienation from his Senegalese and African identities.

Alongside his entry into the National School of Art in Dakar, he participated in the first Dak'Art African Art Biennale through which he was able to attend workshops with Joe Overstreet, Mildred Thompson, Leonardo Drew, Frank Bowling, and Mary Lovelace O'Neal. Inspired, he began to personally explore the depth and possibility presented by a canvas, the imaginative lines and multiplicity of layers which can be continuously applied to its surface.

Moving to the United States he earned his MFA at SFAI in San Francisco. Moving past the perspective he gained while in Dakar, he began to open up his practice to new mediums. His paintings became, and have since remained, a performative act themselves. The topic, emotions, and concept dictate the medium.

While accepting a position at PNCA, Portland, which he held for a decade, he began a deep exploration of the underground subcultures presented by the Pacific Northwest and its histories. Looking back on his experiences at SFAI and his time spent with Okwui Enwezor, he founded a gallery that would last for a decade as well.

In his current studio practice, using and appropriating the history of both painting and photography as two unique contemporary mediums, he is able to layer, sample, mix, and play on the theater of his newly found Black diasporic voice.

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Ayrika Hall is a Chicago based art historian and scholar specializing in African American modern and contemporary art and museum studies. Hall's scholarship centers re-evaluating the interpretative frameworks applied to African American art, employing a multidisciplinary methodology that examines the intersections of art, culture, and philosophy. Her research and curatorial projects leverage the museum as a site for interrogating the complexities and dynamics of broader socio-political systems, investigating the historical trajectories of curatorial challenges and their implications for future representations of Black art. With a primary objective to preserve and historicize the rich micro-histories within contemporary black counter-publics, Hall's research engages with the historiography of Black art and its interaction with contemporary realities. Hall critically assesses established methodologies to foreground the multifaceted connections between Black art, society, and politics.

Hall has held curatorial, research, and programming roles at the Smart Museum of Art, Anthony Gallery, The Floating Museum, the Chicago Architecture Biennial, Evoke Chicago, Gallery 400, and Black Artists Network. Hall received her Master's degree in Art History with a curatorial distinction from the University of Chicago in 2021, and her BA in History of Art and Architecture, Studio Art, and Museum Studies from DePaul University in 2020. She is

currently a doctoral student in Art History at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Black Artists Network is a collective dedicated to expanding and fostering community for black creatives across all mediums. Resisting the confines of access, BAN's mission is to widely showcase the creative and intellectual contributions of black artists and to provide a space for connection and collaboration.