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A MUFFLED SOUND UNDERWATER

Featuring works by

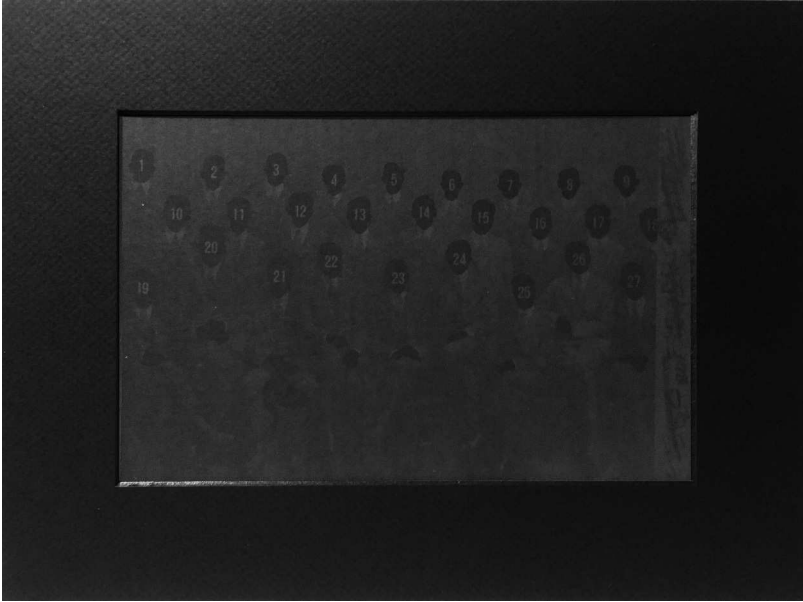
Dominique Duroseau, Torkwase Dyson, Alteronce Gumbay,
Tsedaye Makonnen, Tariku Shiferaw, & Marvin Toure´

Essay by Niama Safia Sandy

February 21 - March 20, 2020
LatchKey Gallery | NY

"If you were on the Moon, which has no atmosphere, the sky would be black both night and day."

- The StarChild Team at NASA



LatchKey Gallery is pleased to present *A Muffled Sound Underwater*, an exhibition that critically engages the cultural and historical perceptions of the color black through the lens of abstraction and how these preconceived notions directly/indirectly transfer to Blackness.

The exhibition is a culmination of a three-year investigation between Alteronce Gumby and Tariku Shiferaw whose visual language echo a parallel in their use of color and abstraction to discuss culture. Through their analysis, Gumby and Shiferaw bring together artists Dominique Duroseau, Torkwase Dyson, Tsedaye Makonnen and Marvin Touré whose work share a commonality in relation to the color black or to the oppositional disposition of Blackness in multiple western societies.

An iteration of the exhibition will continue to Mehari Sequar Gallery in collaboration with the Smithsonian Museum in June, 2020.

A MUFFLED SOUND UNDERWATER

The color black has been perceived in many ways throughout different cultures. To some, it's a void, an abyss, a blackhole in which everything gets lost. It's fearsome. It is the night. To others, it's the color of beauty, wisdom, strength, and pain. It attracts heat. It is the color through which the African American culture is conceptualized and simultaneously "Othered." Fred Moten describes Blackness as a form of radicalism, yet it is muffled as an underwater sound. Perhaps, silencing such loud and radical sound is only logical to those who don't feel the syncopated rhythm of Blackness echoing through the depths of the dark universe.

Such vibration hits differently beyond the boundaries of cultures within the United States - it is habitually tied in with the misconception of danger or evil. A curse, even. Normality is a societal construct, where perception is skewed against a tone that shines dark-blue in the moonlight. Blackness only becomes a subject matter when in opposition yet transcends melancholy amidst kindred spirits. There is no gaze that's not oppositional in Western society, where Blackness becomes the object of spectacle."

- Alteronce Gumby, Tariku Shiferaw & Marvin Toure´

We were sent — by history, Lorna Goodson says — not to be a single being, and David Kazanjian has established that we are flashpoints in the water, in the blessed inassuranc and joyous profanation of Little Walter’s sacred harp, misshaped notes as the informal, to be read and misread at sight, in the ongoing mishappening where (il)legal record, manifest and log become our saturated hymnal....The undercommons, the underlanguage, underground, underwater, which is the people’s macrophone — wants to know/make the relationship between form and instability, when informal becomes a form of life precisely in so far as it is where forms of life come from....What would it mean, will it ever have been possible, to be central to, or to authentically body forth the diaspora, its disciplines and discourses? Can centrality and authenticity, as any diasporic centrality and authenticity will have had to be, predicated on irreducible marginality? How would such interplay move? How would it operate and what would it make possible, even in the field or out of the depths of its inhabitation in ongoing, radical interdiction?

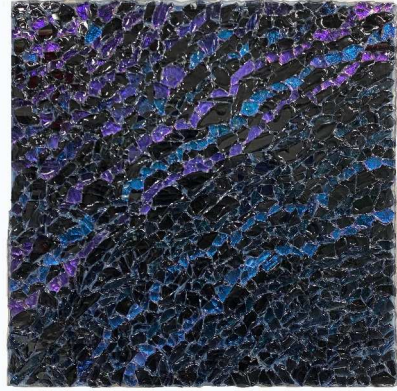
Fred Moten
Black and Blur

Organized by abstractionists Alteronce Gumby and Tariku Shiferaw, *A Muffled Sound Underwater* — a group exhibition featuring the pair's work alongside that of Dominique Duroseau, Torkwase Dyson, Tsedaye Makonnen, and Marvin Touré — is at once an engagement with/activation of the legacy of the color black in the history of art and a celebration of the multivalent culturalities employed in the Black Diaspora. The exhibition's name is inspired by a passage in Fred Moten's seminal text *Black and Blur*. Moten discusses the position of Blackness in modernity, the codification of language through which Black people — and thereby, Black cultures and its multifarious arms — have been suppressed, obscured, at once in/visible, in/audible. He imagines the collective voice of Black people distorted through the waters (a la M. Nourbese Philips), the ocean that brought many of ancestors here and changed the manner in which Black skin is seen. The show seeks to be an unmuzzling, shifting a distant echo into a cacophony of Black voices and beating Black hearts.

Individually, these bodies of work ask questions of the function of black, as a color, as a value, as a stand in for culture, identity and the environment. For each artist, the hue functions as a signifier for formal considerations within the material elements of their work toward the formation of a new canon. *A Muffled Sound Underwater* is a conversation about form, energy, experience, and space itself. It is a reference of a reference of a reference; a study of how methodologies of representing Blackness shape-shift toward the absorption and reflection of historicity, emotion, and the ideas we hold and transfer about ourselves and each other. It is about the strategies for how we have, will, and shall continue to get over.

Working almost exclusively in a palette of black and blue, in his ongoing series of "One of These Black Boys," Shiferaw's visual language is characterized by the interplay between his marks and the paint itself and the luminance of the rich colors he uses on his unconventional vinyl canvases. Each work in the series borrows its name from a composition created by contemporary Black musicians. This naming is an effort for each painting to inherit the unique emotions, references, identities, and experiences portrayed through the selected song.

Alteronce Gumby uses a spectrum of dark greens, blues, and reds to make tonal narrative paintings. At a first distance glance, they often read as though they are simply black. The work aims to beckon a viewer closer, to challenge their eyes to see the own sense of individuality - apart from line, shape and mood. Gumby endeavors for each painting to be deeply seen in the



way that he himself wants to be, as a collection of dynamic moments, signs, and signifiers "that tell a story" worth listening to. His intent is to transgress the relationship people have with art and perhaps also the prism through which they view Black bodies.

Torkwase Dyson too disrupts the tradition of viewer ship through her abstracted references to geology and improvisation. Her approach exhausts the possibilities and questions about form and what it means to produce objects and ideas given that our physical environment is at the mercy of the volatile economic and political climates of the Anthropocene.

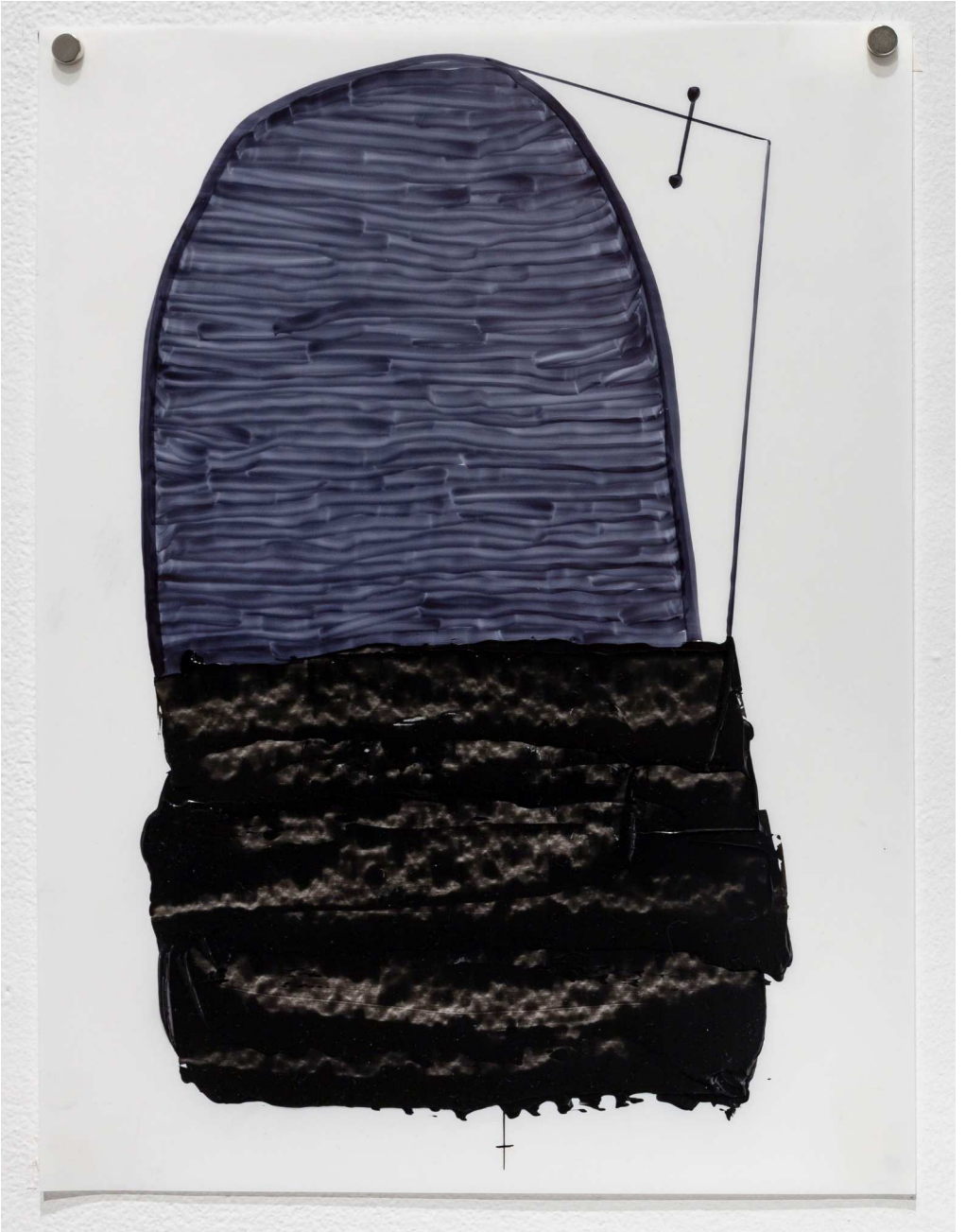
Through line and scale, Dyson images water as the pathway through which Blackness has come and been carried through time and space. She hints at the density and beauty of the practically infinite biologies and ecologies sub/merged to bring us here.

Marvin Touré's monochromatic works are a meditative exploration of innocence, nostalgia, truth and wisdom. His current body of work makes emotion — traumas and the responses they illicit — manifest as physical mutation on objects; each object seemingly dipped in an amorphous black substance. The mutation itself is a nod to the age old notion of black bile. In the medieval period, it was believed that black bile in the body was the source of melancholy. He pursues these visualizations with wall diagrams, action-figure customization, and kitbashing with whatever may be on hand to suit his needs. Touré's black bile works endeavor to create a visual pathway to expressing concerns about trauma and its role of mental and overall health in global Black communities.

Dominique Duroseau maps and restructures multiple media and textures to create monochromatic abstractions signifying the nuance and multiplicities of Black cultural and political strategies. For Duroseau, the palette offers an opportunity for viewers to note and engage with shape, form, and light in a manner working with color would not. Across mediums, her working with the color black is an effort to flatten the distance between the peoples of the Black Diaspora by bringing the distance in cross-cultural perceptions.

Multidisciplinary artist Tsedaye Makonnen invokes the metaphysical protective powers of traditional *netela* fabric found in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is believed that a *netela* scarf should be worn when traveling away from home to offer protection. Her light sculptures are embodied homages to Black American women who have been victims of state-sanctioned and extra-judicial killings and migrant African women who have died at various stages of the often treacherous passage from Africa to Europe. The geometric shards laser-cut out of the sculptures are then affixed to *netela* scarves and cloaks allowing the artist to link the histories and patterns of enslavement, forced migration, colonization, and displacement as having long leveraged Black bodies as collateral.

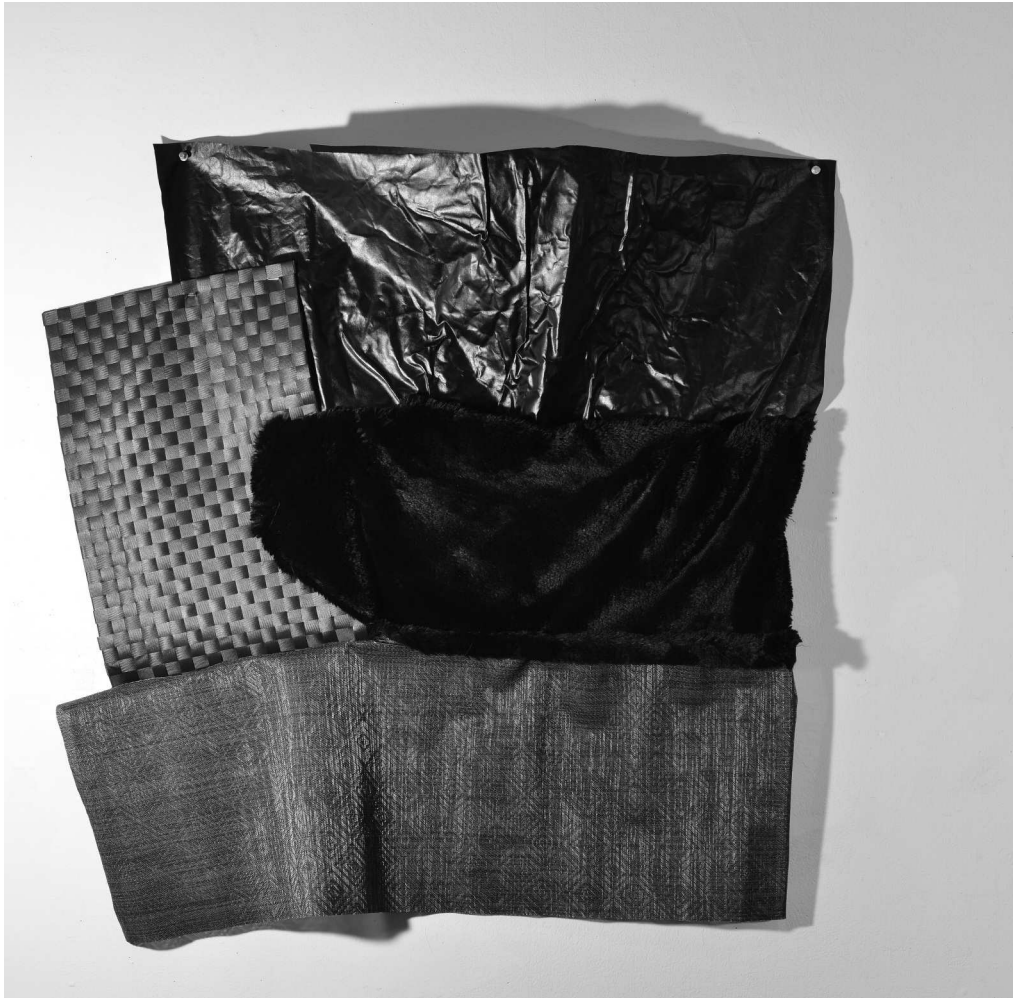
- Essay by Niamey Sofia Sandy





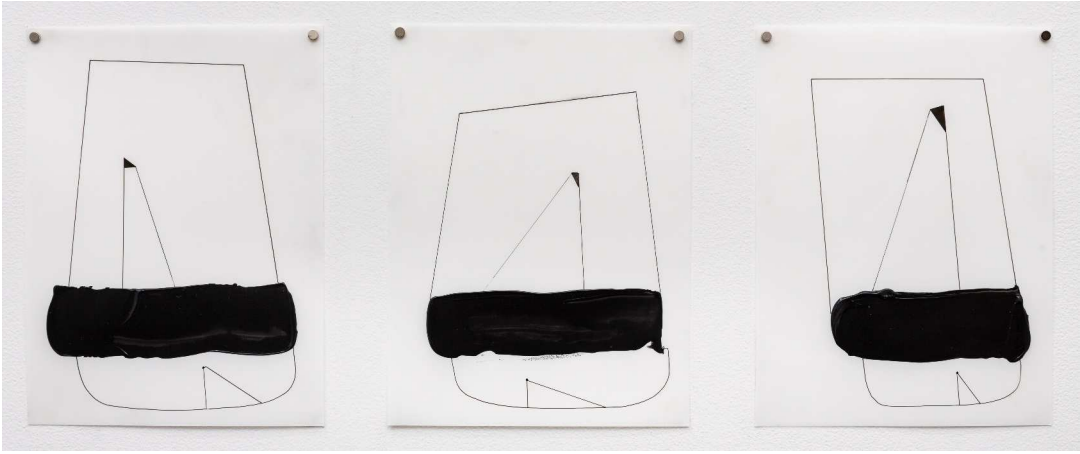
Dominique Duroseau is a Newark-based artist born in Chicago and raised in Haiti. Her interdisciplinary practice explores themes of racism, socio-cultural issues, and existential dehumanization. Her exhibitions, performances, and screenings include SATELLITE ART and PULSE Play in Miami; The Kitchen, The Brooklyn Museum and the New Museum (BAA for BL), El Muse led Barrio, A.I.R. Gallery, Rush Arts Gallery, and Smack Mellon in New York City; The Newark Museum, Index Arts, Project for Empty Space, and Gallery Ferro in Newark, NJ.

Her recent exhibitions and talks include: solo exhibition at A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, panelist at Black Portraiture[s] at Harvard and lecturer at Vassar. She was a fellow at A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, and received artist residencies from Gallery Ferro, Index Art Center, the Passaic Project and Shine Portrait Studio; and was recently awarded residency at Massimo, BARS Foundation, and Artists Alliance Inc. Roseau holds a Bachelor of Architecture and a Master of Arts in Fine Arts.



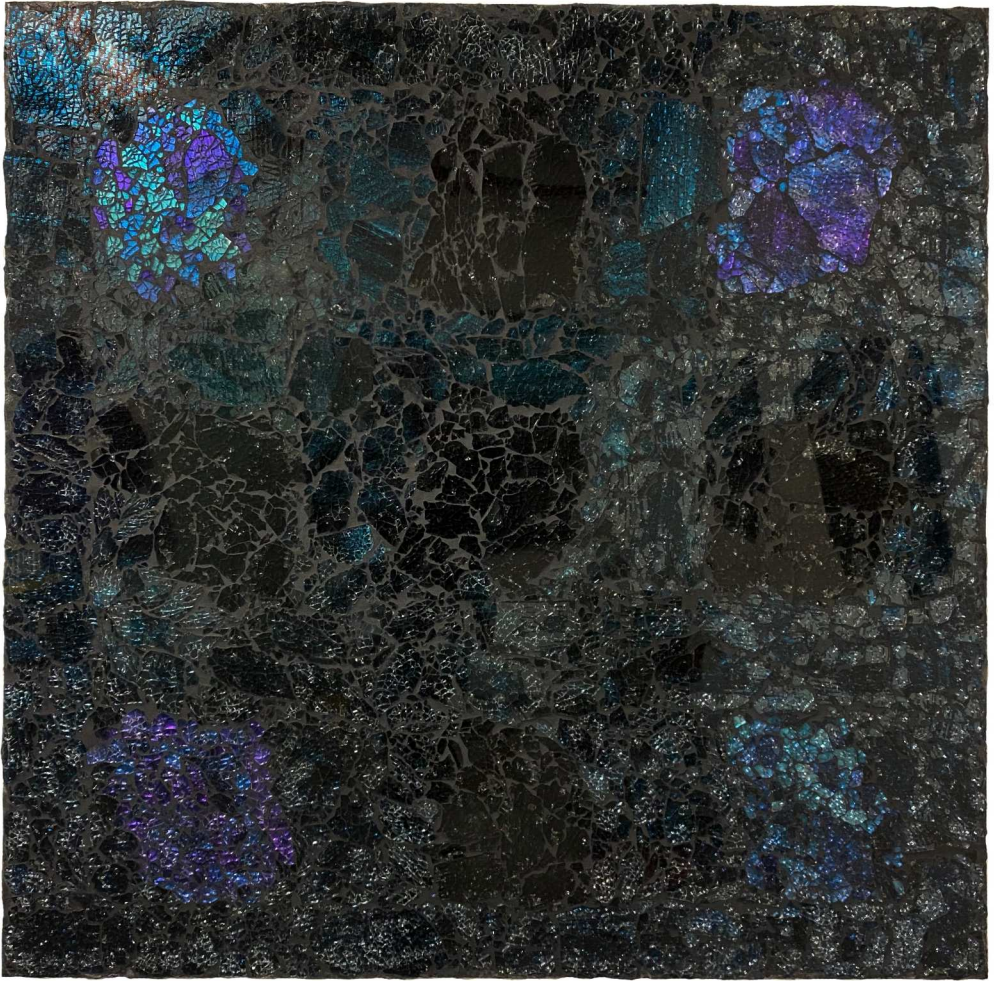
Though working in multiple forms, **Torkwase Dyson** describes herself as a painter whose compositions address the continuity of movement, climate change, infrastructure, and architecture. For Dyson, these subjects in relation to each other produce abstractions that explore the history and future of black spatial liberation strategies and environmental racism.

Dyson considers spatial relations an urgent question both historically and in the present day. Through abstract paintings, Dyson grapples with ways space is perceived and negotiated particularly by black and brown bodies. Explorations of how the body unifies, balances, and arranges itself to move through natural and built environments become both expressive and discursive structures within the work.



Alteronce Gumby is an artist and local of New York City. His artistic practice ranges from painting and ceramics to installation and performance. His work has been exhibited at galleries such as Gladstone Gallery, American University Museum at the Katz en Arts Center and Camden Arts Center. In his recent exhibition *Catching the Holy Ghost* at Chaparral Heineken Gallery in Los Angeles, CA, Gumby explores color as it refers to transcendence from the physical, to the idea of the spiritual. Painting becomes the undeniable language of awareness, as an act of transcendence, offering a form of liberation and tranquility through color.

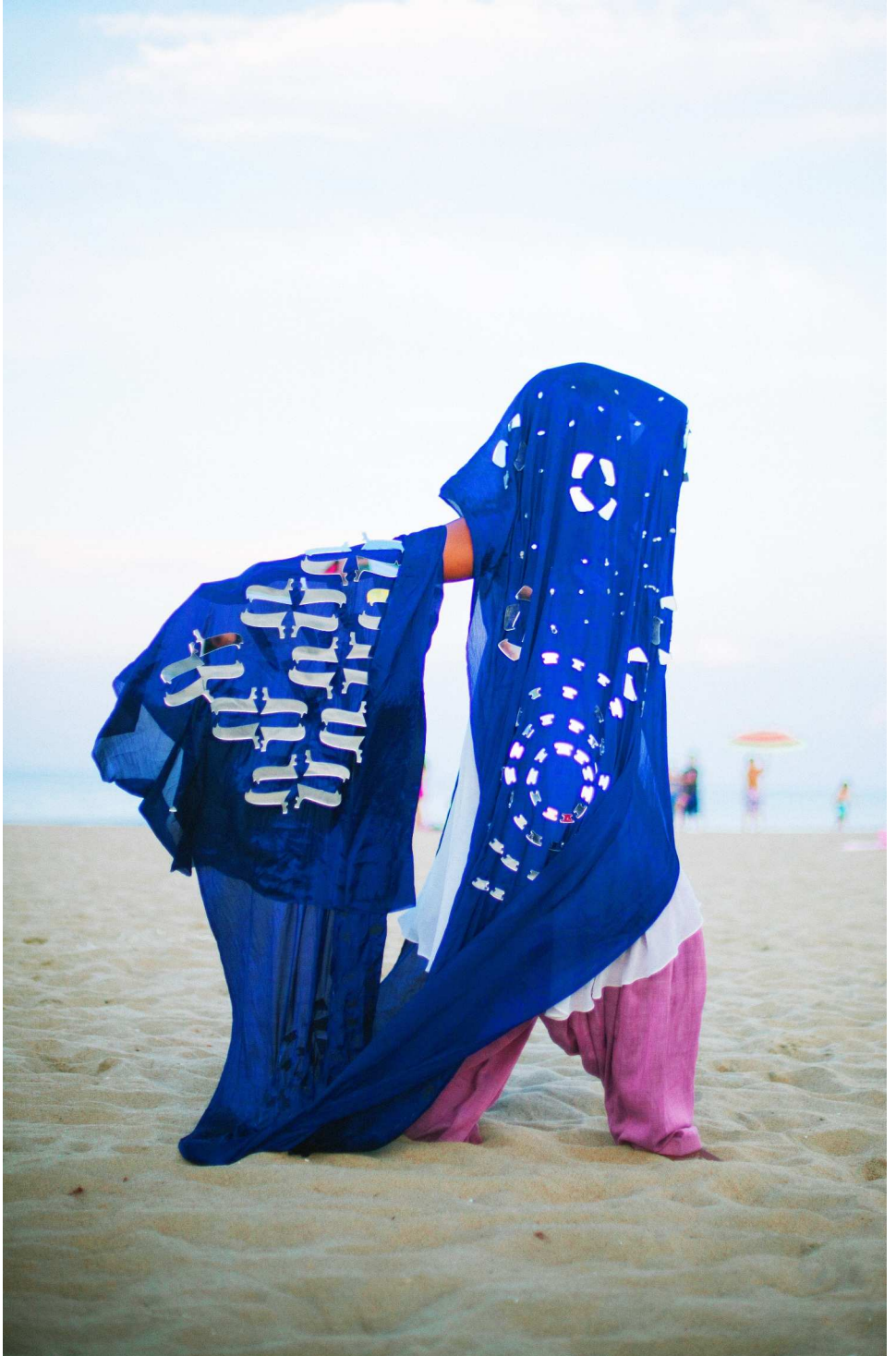
Gumby graduated from the Yale School of Art with an MFA in Painting and Printmaking in 2016. He has won notable awards such as the Austrian American Foundation/ Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts and the Robert Reed Memorial Scholarship. Gumby has also participated in numerous international artist residencies such as the Rauschenberg Residency (2019), London Summer Intensive (2016), Summer Academy in Salzburg, Austria (2015), 6Base (2016), and as the 2016 recipient of the Harriet Hale Woolley Scholarship at the Foundation des États-Unis in Paris. His work was featured in publications such as *New American Painting #123 MFA Annual 2016* and *BOMB Magazine*. Gumby has also curated exhibitions such as *Sunrise/Sunset* at Infinity Room Gallery and *To Dream Avante-Garde* at Hammond Harkins Galleries.



Tsedaye Makonnen is a multidisciplinary artist who exhibits internationally. Her primary focus is on countries within the Americas and African continent. She explores her hyphenated identity as a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants and a black American woman through her studio and research-based practice. Her approach attempts to convey the African Diaspora's response to forced migration and the effort to recreate the Self within new territories.

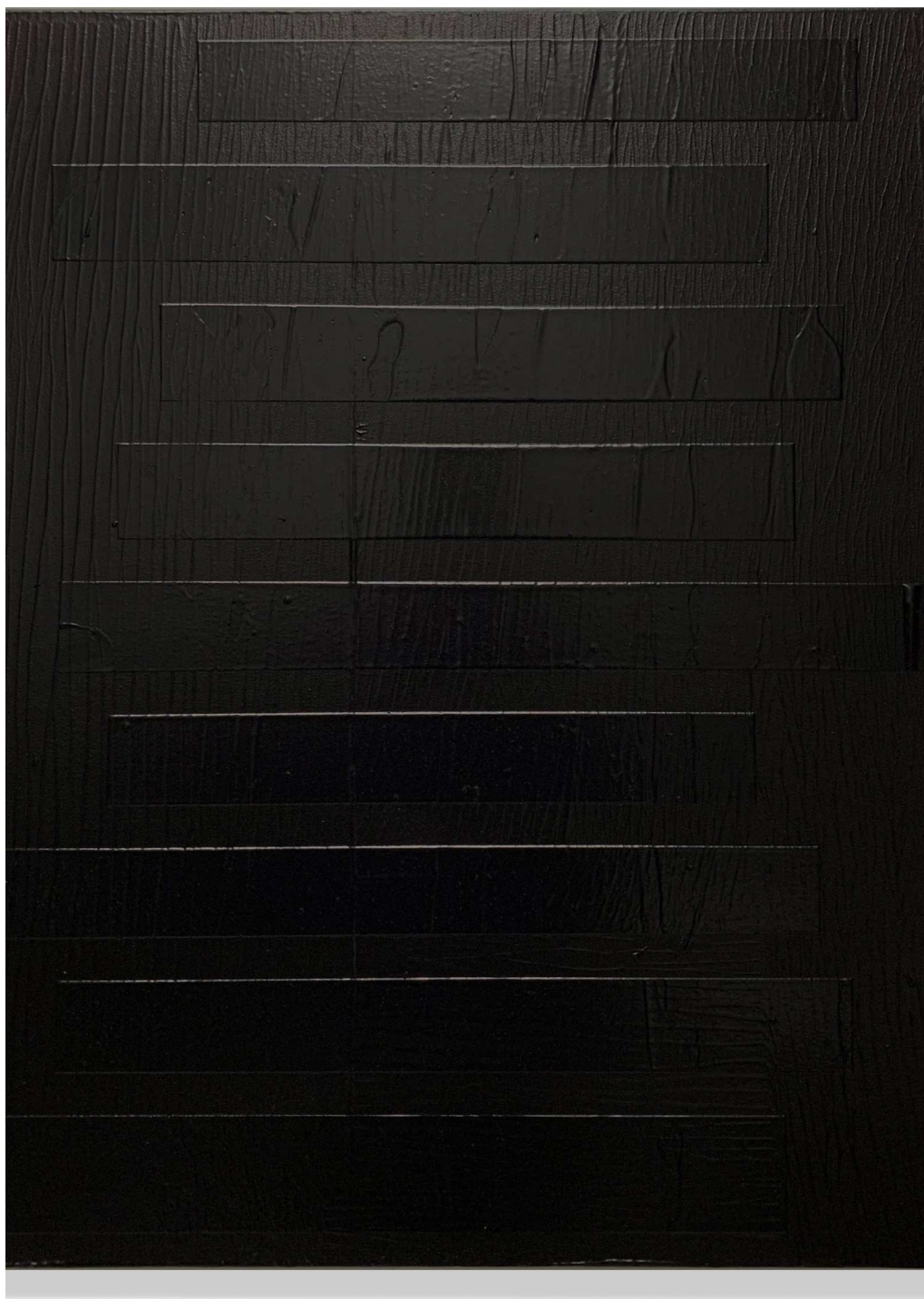
Tsedaye Makonnen's studio and research-based practice explores the blurring between and transience of borders and identities, often using her body as the conduit and the material. Further creating new visual language that portrays our geographic and ancestral connectivity across manufactured borders and circumstances. As of late, her work is an abstracted participatory intervention drawing from universal designs from the Horn of Africa and found throughout the Diaspora that is both an intimate memorialization and protective sanctuary for black lives.

Makonnen's multidisciplinary practice recently includes a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, DC Public Library Maker Residency, an Oral History Project Grant, and the Savage-Lewis Artist Residency on Martha's Vineyard. She has performed at the Venice Biennale, Art Basel Miami, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, El Museo del Barrio, Queens Museum, Festival International d'Art Performance in Martinique, Chale Wote Street Art Festival in Ghana, Fendika Cultural Center in Ethiopia and more.



Tariku Shiferaw is a New York-based artist who explores “mark-making” through painting and installation in order to address the physical and metaphysical spaces of painting and societal structures. His recent exhibitions include *Men of Change*, a nation-wide traveling exhibition with the Smithsonian Institution; and *Unbound*, a group exhibition at the Zuckerman Museum of Art. Other exhibitions include the *2017 Whitney Biennial*, as part of Occupy Museum’s Debtfair project; *A Poet*hical Wager*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland; *What’s Love Got to Do With It?*, at the Drawing Center in New York; *Erase Me*, at Addis Fine Art, London; and *This Ain’t Safe*, at Cathouse Proper in Brooklyn. In May 2020, his work will be presented in a solo exhibition at Frieze Art Fair New York through Addis Fine Art.

Shiferaw has participated in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2019). He is a current participant of Open Sessions at The Drawing Center, NY (2018-2020) and an artist in residence at the LES Studio Program in New York City. In March 2020, he’ll start an eight-month art residency at the World Trade Center through Silver Art. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Washington Post*, and *Art in America* among other publications.



Marvin Touré is an Ivorian-American artist who uses objects of innocence (artifacts and stories from his childhood Atlanta, Georgia) as a vehicle to interrogate themes of race and mental health. In 2014 he received a B.A. in New Media Arts with a minor in Architecture from Southern Polytechnic State University (now Kennesaw State University) in Marietta, Georgia. In 2016 he received an M.F.A. in Fine Arts from The School of Visual Arts in New York City and completed a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Touré has also completed residencies at the Franconia Sculpture Park as an FSP/Jerome Foundation Fellow (2018) in Shafer, Minnesota and SVA MFA Fine Arts, Life on an Island on Governors Island, New York (2019). Touré's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at The AC Institute in New York, New York (2018), and Haul gallery in Brooklyn, New York (2019). His work has also been included in group exhibitions at Jan Brandt Gallery (2015) in Bloomington, Illinois, Mini Bar as part of an art and curatorial project at the Material Art Fair in Mexico City, Mexico (2016), the PRIZM art fair (2016) in Miami, Florida, Project for Empty Space at Gateway Project Spaces in Newark, New Jersey (2016), Smack Mellon (2017) in Brooklyn, New York, the University of Connecticut-Stamford (2018) in Stamford, Connecticut. In 2019 His work was also exhibited at Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania, and the August Wilson Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



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