

GOWEN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



WITH MY BODY

Bruno Gadenne
Ayana V. Jackson
Roméo Mivekannin
Sophie Ryder
Marta Zgierska

Show Presentation |

September 18 - November 29 | 2025



This Autumn, GOWEN is excited to unveil ***With my Body***, a group exhibition centred around a deliberate artistic choice: each of the five international artists featured in the show uses their own body as a means of representation and particular enquiry. While the works are rooted in their individual exposure, they move far beyond the conventional notion of self-portraiture.

Through this embodied approach, the artists channel complex, experiential storytelling - personal, political, emotional - in which the body becomes equally a site of presence, projection and imagination. Despite their contrasting visual languages, techniques, and themes, they are connected by this shared commitment to the body as medium, expression and meaning.

With a broad range of technique spanning painting, photography and sculpture, the works explore universal themes connecting memory of history, generational representation, the natural environment, mythology, spirituality, human experience, trauma and beauty.

Around 30 works are included in the exhibition including from private collections.

The gallery would like to extend its thanks to Galerie Barbara Thumm for their kind cooperation.



Often present in the atmospheric scapes of French artist **Bruno Gadenne** (b. 1990) is the nude male figure, featuring the artist himself. Travelling solo and spending extended periods in remote, untamed environments, Gadenne draws directly from these lived experiences to create paintings that open up disconcerting, almost oneiric portals into landscapes that are as much psychological as they are physical. Primal and uncanny, these scenes allude to a pre-civilized state of being, an exploration of the origins of humanity, of man alone in nature.

His mastery of light, especially through the use of *nuit américaine* (day-for-night technique), blurs temporal and perceptual boundaries. The viewer is suspended in liminal moments, between sunset and nightfall, between dream and wakefulness, when the mind begins to surrender to instinct, memory, and imagination.

As Gadenne explains, *"I feel more legitimate depicting my own body in the paintings, which are stories I'm telling myself, first and foremost. I travel and live alone so it's easier to work with myself as the model. There is also the idea of solitude or loneliness present in some of my paintings."*

Bruno Gadenne's work resonates beyond its formal beauty or technical finesse. His paintings offer a radical reimagining of the male body: not as dominant or heroic, but as elemental, isolated, reflective. By inserting himself into these wildernesses, the artist collapses the boundary between self and landscape, suggesting that identity is not fixed, but continually shaped by solitude, nature, and the unconscious. In doing so, Gadenne not only reclaims the male nude from its historic idealization, but positions it within a contemporary context of introspection and existential inquiry. His work stands as a quiet yet powerful meditation on embodiment, belonging, and the often fragile link between humanity and the natural world.



Bruno Gadenne (French, 1990)

Le bassin vert, 2021

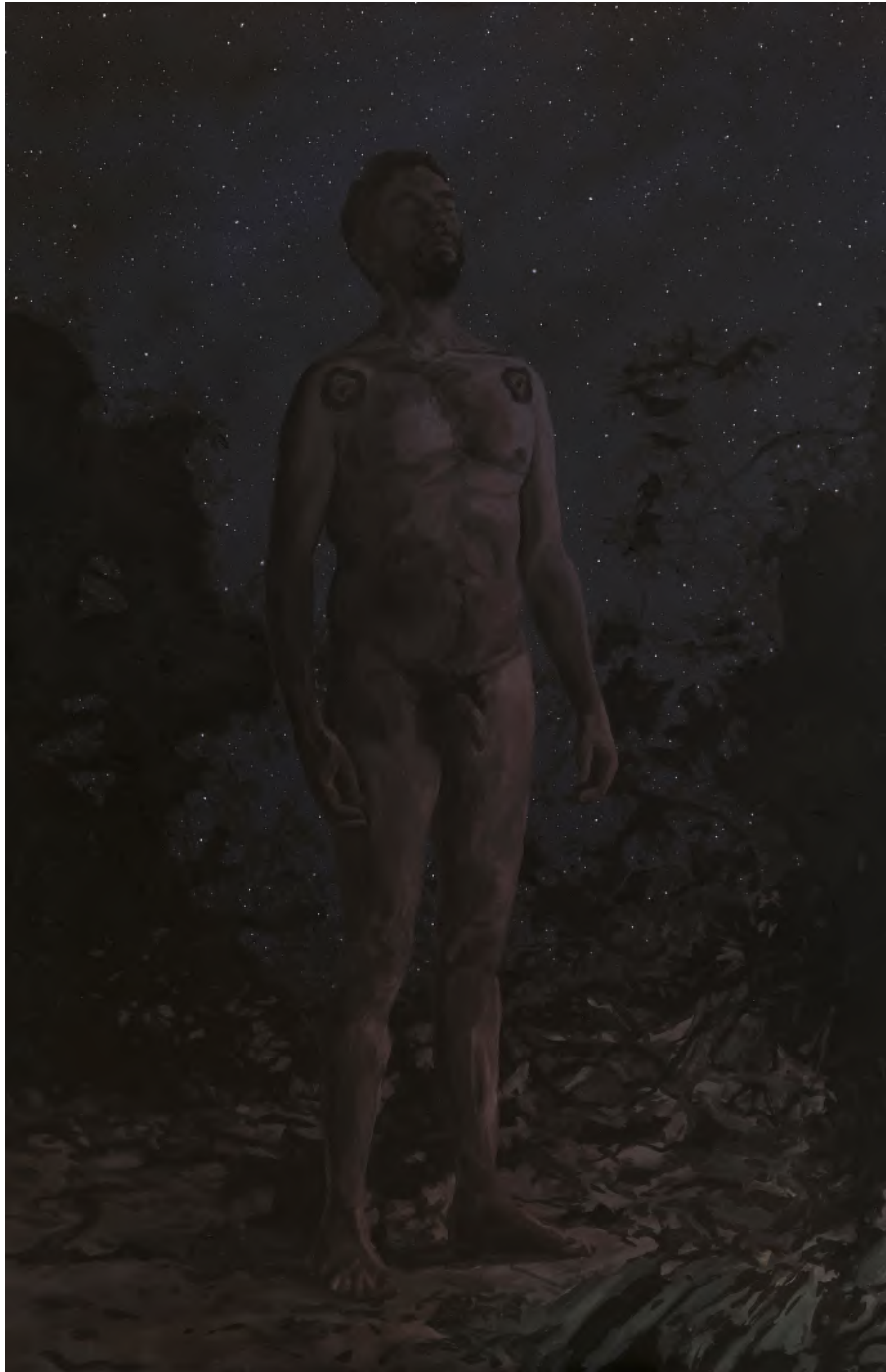
Oil on canvas

130 x 160 cm

51.2 x 63 in

BGa10

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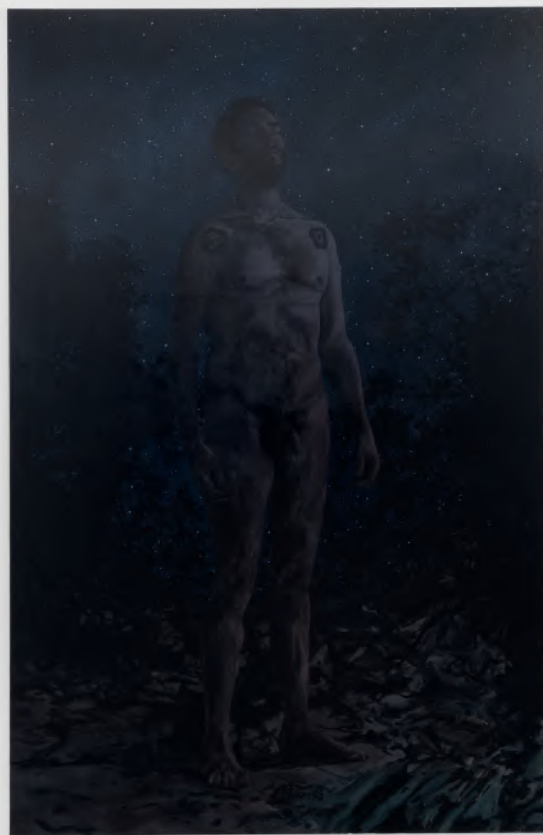
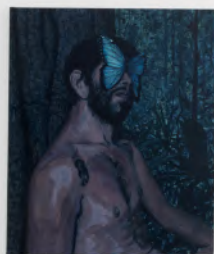
Bruno Gadenne (French, 1990)
Le chant des étoiles, 2023
Oil on canvas
200 x 130 cm
78.7 x 51.2 in
BGa09

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Bruno Gadenne (French, 1990)
Le sommeil, 2022
oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm
23.6 x 19.7 in
BGa05

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

American photographer **Ayana V. Jackson** (b. 1977, New Jersey), a descendant of one of the earliest African families to settle in the northeastern United States, explores the construction of racial and gender identity through photography. Her work critically examines the role of historical imagery, particularly 19th and early 20th century black portraiture, in shaping the Western gaze and reinforcing colonial and white male-dominated narratives. Drawing on archival material and sociological research, Jackson challenges these visual legacies by staging her own body within meticulously composed portraits that function as both re-appropriations and counter-narratives.

By reversing the perspective traditionally imposed on the black body, often exoticized, primitivized, or reduced to ethnographic spectacle, Jackson reclaims agency. In her seminal series *The Becoming Subject*, she disrupts dominant iconographies by embodying a multiplicity of historically silenced identities. Her use of self-portraiture is not merely personal; it is political and transformative. Her own body becomes a site of inquiry, resistance, and representation, in which she simultaneously performs, directs, and captures each image.

This commitment to using her own body as the sole subject continues in her more recent work, particularly in *From the Deep: In the Wake of Drexciya*, a central focus of the current exhibition. Developed during a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and recently shown at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C., the series expands her practice into the realm of speculative mythology and collective memory.

Inspired by *Drexciya*, a myth conceived in the 1990s by Detroit-based techno duo James Stinson and Gerald Donald, Jackson imagines an underwater civilization descended from pregnant African women who were thrown or jumped overboard during the transatlantic slave trade. She transforms this narrative of tragedy into one of resistance and rebirth, constructing what the Smithsonian described as "an immersive, feminist, and sacred aquatopia" inhabited by powerful African water spirits - Olokun, Yemayá, Mame Coumba Bang - who midwife and protect the Drexciyans.

Drawing on iconography of West African water deities - particularly the Mami Watas - Jackson's imagery reflects research conducted during travels across Angola, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and the wider Gulf of Guinea. Her collaboration with Senegalese designer Rama Diew brings together embroidered textiles, feathers, Dutch wax fabrics, and recycled plastics. These materials are not merely decorative: they function as protective layers, symbolic of both ecological awareness and spiritual safeguarding.

In Jackson's complex compositions, references to precolonial textile exchanges, such as those between Portugal and Senegal, intertwine with art historical codes of portraiture. By evoking the aesthetics of aristocratic or royal portraiture, she simultaneously honours African histories and critiques their erasure or complicity in colonial systems. Her work thus moves seamlessly between reverence and confrontation, intimacy and mythology, self and collective memory, merging historical consciousness with fantastical reimaginings of survival and sovereignty.

In a direct collaboration with the artist, this exhibition features works from several of her most critical series dating back to 2011, alongside four recent pieces newly edited for the show.



Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Sea Lion 2019
Archival pigment print on German etching paper
156 x 110 cm
61.4 x 43.3 in
Ed. 7 of 8 (+ 3 AP)
Framed
AJ033

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Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
It is only when you lose your mother that she becomes myth, 2020
Archival pigment print on German etching paper
160.7 x 187.6 cm
63.3 x 73.9 in
Ed. 4 of 8 **SOLD** / Ed. 5 of 8 Available
Framed
AJ030

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Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Cascading Celestial Giant I, 2019
Archival pigment print on German etching paper
187.5 x 150 cm
73.8 x 59.1 in
Ed. 8 of 8 (+ 3 AP)
Framed
AJ032

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Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Black Rice, 2019
Archival pigment print on German etching paper
109 x 106.3 cm
42.9 x 41.9 in
Ed. 8 of 8 (+ 3 AP)
Framed
AJ031



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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.



Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.



Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Destruction, 2011
Pigment print
145 x 148.5 cm
57.1 x 58.5 in
ed, 6 of 6
AJ026

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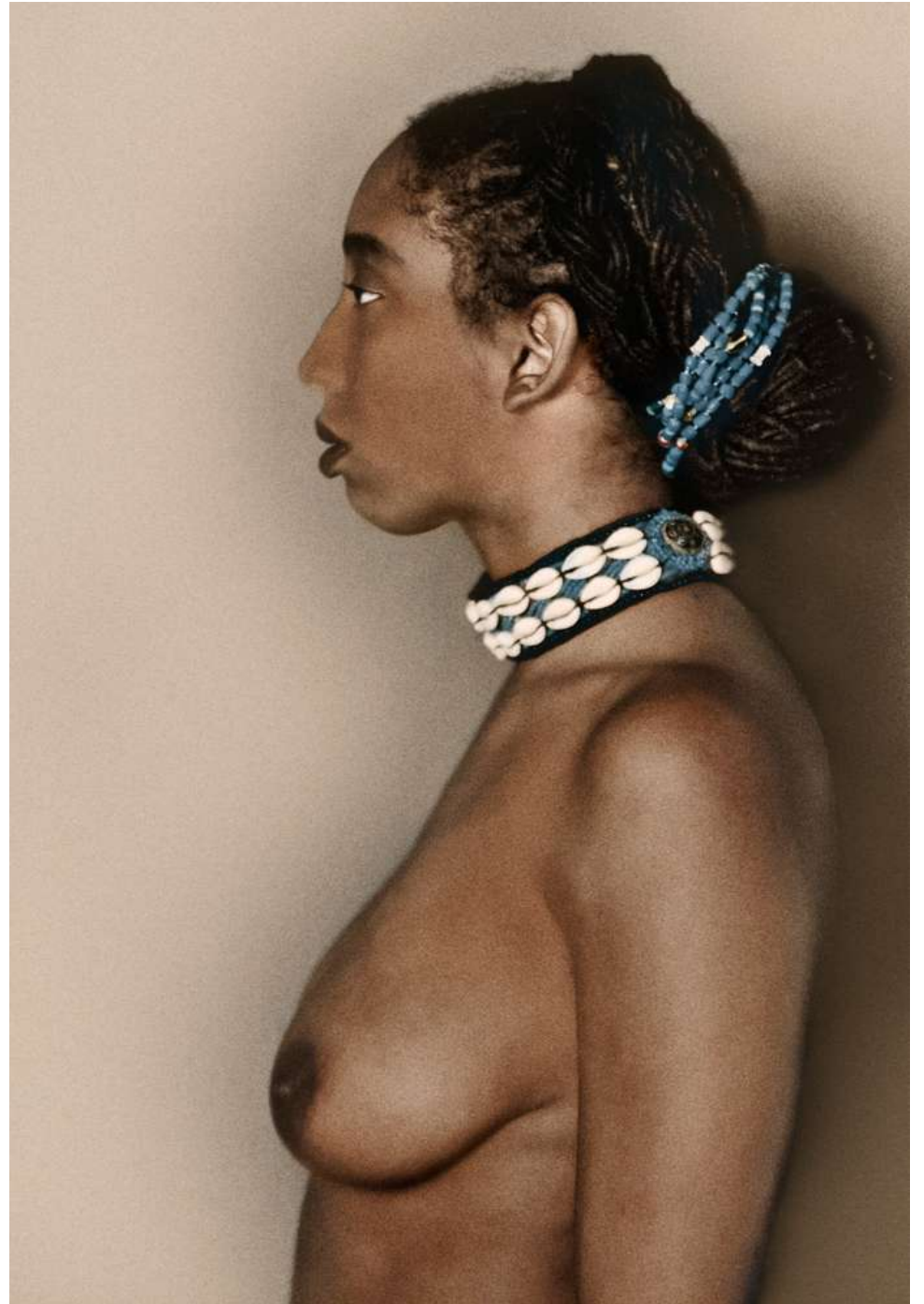


Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Drop your right hand/ Why can't turn around, 2012
Pigment print on Hahnemühle
111 x 144 cm
43.7 x 56.7 in
AJ016

SOLD (Availability of other editions and prices to be confirmed)

Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Case #33 : I, 2013
Pigment print
105 x 110 cm
41.34 x 43.31 in
AJ023

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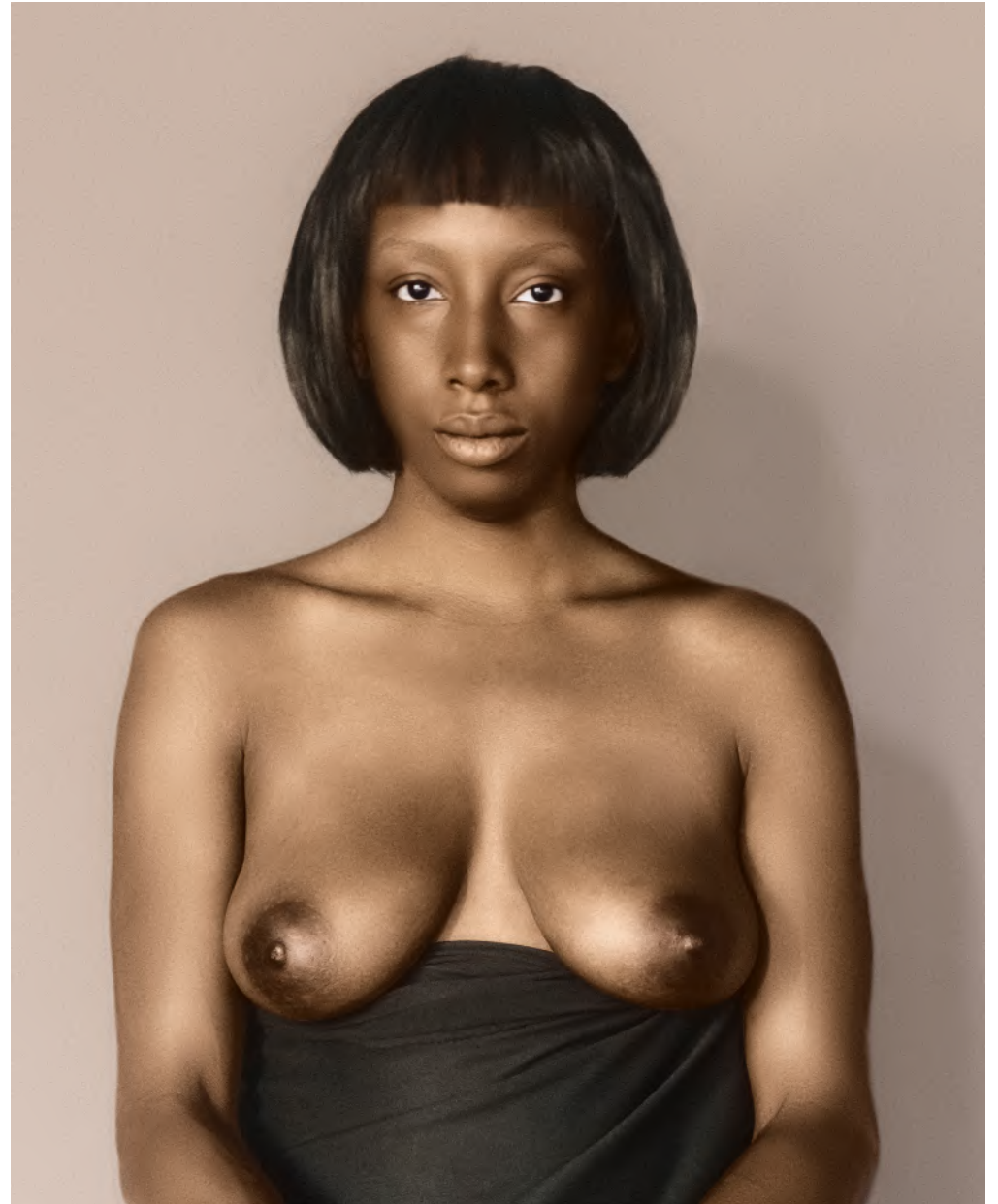


Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Case # 33 : III, 2013
Pigment print
80 x 60 cm
31.5 x 23.6 in
AJ024

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Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Case #33 : V, 2013
Pigment print
80 x 60 cm
31.5 x 23.6 in
AJ025

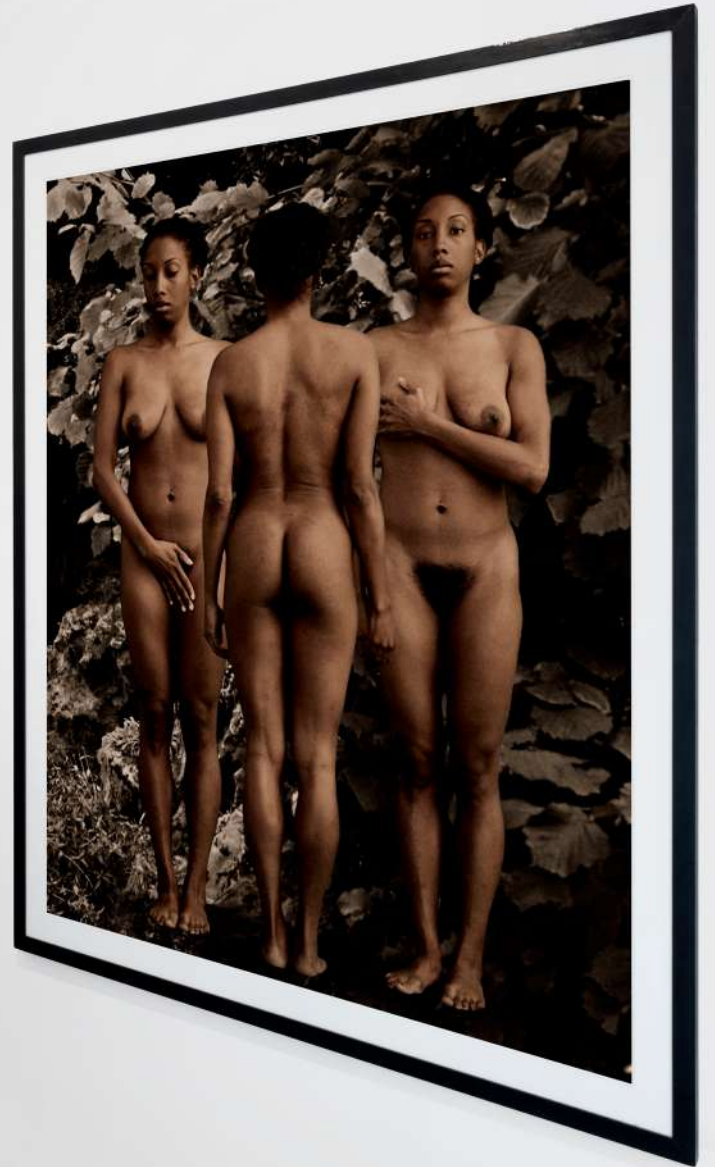
SOLD (Availability of other editions and prices to be confirmed)





Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
Devotees and demons I, *Archival Impulse*, 2012
Pigment print
105 x 110 cm
41.3 x 43.3 in
AJ027

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.



Ayana Jackson (American, 1977)
*Diorama II et III (from Palais Royal to Jardin d'Acclimatation) Archival
Impulse*, 2012
Pigment print - Dyptique
90 x 70 cm
35.4 x 27.6 in
AJ028

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

The practice of **Roméo Mivekannin** (b. 1986, Bouaké, Ivory Coast) engages with themes of memory, identity, and the legacy of colonialism through powerful reinterpretations of Western art historical imagery. Working primarily in painting and installation, he draws upon archival materials to expose the colonial gaze imposed over the historically underrepresented, erased (the non-dits), or unspoken narratives. At the heart of his work lies what he calls the “memory of history”, a literal and symbolic engagement with the past as a means of critical reckoning and reappropriation.

Two seminal exhibitions in Paris profoundly shaped Mivekannin's artistic inquiry: *L'invention du sauvage* (Musée du Quai Branly, 2011) and *Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse* (Musée d'Orsay, 2019). These encounters led him to question not only his personal history but also the broader essentialization and objectification of African identity within the Western canon. His response is both intimate and confrontational: through a process he describes as “visual irritation”, Mivekannin intervenes in historical artworks by replacing the original subjects' faces with his own black-and-white portrait. This unflinching gaze reclaims presence and agency for figures long rendered passive, commodified, or invisible, forcing viewers into a direct engagement with the power dynamics embedded with the works.

Mivekannin's portraits revisit iconic Western works such as *Olympia* by Édouard Manet, slave market scenes by Jean-Léon Gérôme, and 19th-century colonial photographs. Through these appropriations, he critically examines how the black body has been depicted in Western white dominant visual culture, primarily through the lens of slavery, colonial domination, and exoticism.

As Mivekannin states:

“It's political because it speaks to the construction of my body in relation to otherness. A body that has been subjected, terrorized, stereotyped, commodified, dominated, because enslavement passed through it. I wondered: how can I live with this body, which automatically projects an image that is not mine? How can I go on knowing that the being I am doesn't correspond to the image I give, or that others perceive? How can I live with this body that is not me?”

Mivekannin's canvases are often crafted from found materials, such as used bedsheets, traditional batik fabrics, and burlap, soaked in mixtures of pigments, spices, and elixirs inspired by Beninese voodoo rituals. This process imbues the works with profound spiritual and ancestral resonance, transforming the surface into a site of both ritual and resistance. He then paints with acrylic, creating high-contrast compositions that disrupt familiar historical scenes and assert new narratives.

In what he calls both an homage and an effraction, a respectful tribute and a deliberate intrusion, Mivekannin inserts himself into the pictorial frame “like a forgotten black figure.” This act becomes a gesture of reclamation, challenging viewers with his gaze to ask: Who paints? Who is painted? Who is present in the image, and who is absent?

Ultimately, Mivekannin's work is an act of repair. Through a complex layering of materials, memory, and self-representation, he reframes the visual history of the black body, offering a contemporary space for healing, resistance, and reflection.



Roméo Mivekannin (Beninese, 1986)
Kimono Rouge after George Hendrik Breitner, 2024
Acrylic and elixir bath on canvas
200 x 240 cm
78.7 x 94.5 in
RM01

SOLD

With my Body
Bruno Delmonne, Ayana V. Jackson, Romane Mandelstam, Saphy Kyan, Paula Zipfel

The artist's body is a central element in the work of the artists. It is a body that is not only a physical entity but also a cultural and political one. The artists explore the relationship between the body and the world, and how the body is shaped by social and cultural forces. The work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.

Bruno Delmonne (1970) is a French artist who works in various media. He is known for his work on the body and the relationship between the body and the world. His work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.

Ayana V. Jackson (1972) is an American artist who works in various media. She is known for her work on the body and the relationship between the body and the world. Her work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.

Romane Mandelstam (1970) is a French artist who works in various media. He is known for his work on the body and the relationship between the body and the world. His work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.

Saphy Kyan (1970) is a French artist who works in various media. She is known for her work on the body and the relationship between the body and the world. Her work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.

Paula Zipfel (1970) is a French artist who works in various media. She is known for her work on the body and the relationship between the body and the world. Her work is a reflection on the body as a site of resistance and transformation.





Roméo Mivekannin (Beninese, 1986)
Après Vallotton Femme à la Rose, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
140 x 180 cm
55.1 x 70.9 in
RM02

SOLD



Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.



Roméo Mivekannin (Beninese, 1986)

Jeune Couple Ouled Nail, 2025

Acrylic and elixir bath on canvas

250 x 250 cm

98.4 x 98.4in

RM03

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (Beninese, 1986)
La Chanteuse de Rue after Manet, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
230 x 140 cm
90.6 x 55.1 in
RM04

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

The contemporary practice of **Sophie Ryder** (b. 1963, London) draws inspiration from mythology and the natural world, weaving timeless narratives with personal storytelling. Certain themes and archetypal figures, often hybrids, such as the Lady Hare and the Minotaur, emerge as iconic, recurring motifs in her work, serving as powerful symbols for exploring the human experience. For the Lady Hare, the human parts are based on the artist's own body.

Dealing with identity, the interplay between masculine and feminine energies, and the dynamics of human relationships, Ryder's sculptures are a striking reflection of her artistic language and conceptual inquiry, embodying her ongoing exploration of form and meaning, particularly through her mastery of wire, a medium she has embraced as one of her primary means of expression.

Sophie Ryder's work stands out for its emotional resonance and its ability to bridge the mythic with the deeply personal. Her reflective approach invites viewers to question the boundaries between human and animal, strength and vulnerability, self and other. As one of the few contemporary sculptors to consistently bring to the fore hybrid mythology through such an idiosyncratic material language, her practice remains vital to conversations about identity, embodiment, and the enduring relevance of myth in contemporary art.



Sophie Ryder (British, 1963)
Girl with knees up (bronze maquette), 2011
Bronze maquette
43.5 x 19.5 x 34 cm
17.1 x 7.7 x 13.4 in
ed.1 AP of 9 + 2 AP
SR 03

Ed. 1 to 9 **SOLD** / Edition 1 AP Available

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Installation View, *With my Body*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud.

Through a practice rooted in performance and photography, **Marta Zgierska** (b. 1987, Lublin) creates a deeply introspective body of work in which her own body is the only one ever represented. This radical, consistent choice transforms her entire oeuvre into a complex form of self-portraiture, sometimes direct, sometimes abstracted or conceptually reframed. Her visual language, minimal and precise, emerged following a life-altering event: a serious car accident in 2013 that profoundly redefined her relationship to image-making.

Out of this trauma came the critically acclaimed *Post* series (2016), which marked a turning point in her practice. Each photograph metaphorically evokes a fragment of personal history through a clinical, restrained aesthetic. These frozen, nearly silent images articulate a visual language of survival, stripped to its bare essentials. The body, here, is both archive and instrument, at once a site of fragility and resistance.

Subsequent series reflect a shift in focus, from internal pain toward broader societal critique, while still anchoring the work in Zgierska's own figure. In *Afterbeauty*, the self-portrait becomes abstract: she constructs sculptural forms from used facial masks, applied repeatedly to her own skin until they cause harm. These objects, photographed in sparse compositions, embody the physical and psychological toll of beauty rituals. The body, though absent, remains present—transformed into material, stripped of identity and gender, reduced to pure form.

This tension is carried further in *Votive Figure* (2019), where Zgierska covers her body in a wax shell, turning herself into an offering to what she calls a modern deity: beauty. As she explains,

"In the modern world, beauty is a god. A divinity who demands frequent sacrifices. I make votive wax figures to implore the divinity to make me beautiful. By covering my own body with a wax shell, I myself become a votive figure. I am making a sacrifice of my body to this new god."

Zgierska's work reflects on how, in today's world, the body - and particularly the female form - has become a commodity, subjected to endless performance and commodification. Yet by using her body as both subject and medium, she does not disappear. Rather, she confronts this reality head-on, transforming personal vulnerability into a powerful critique of contemporary ideals. Her practice stands as a visceral, unflinching meditation on survival, image, and the cost of conformity.

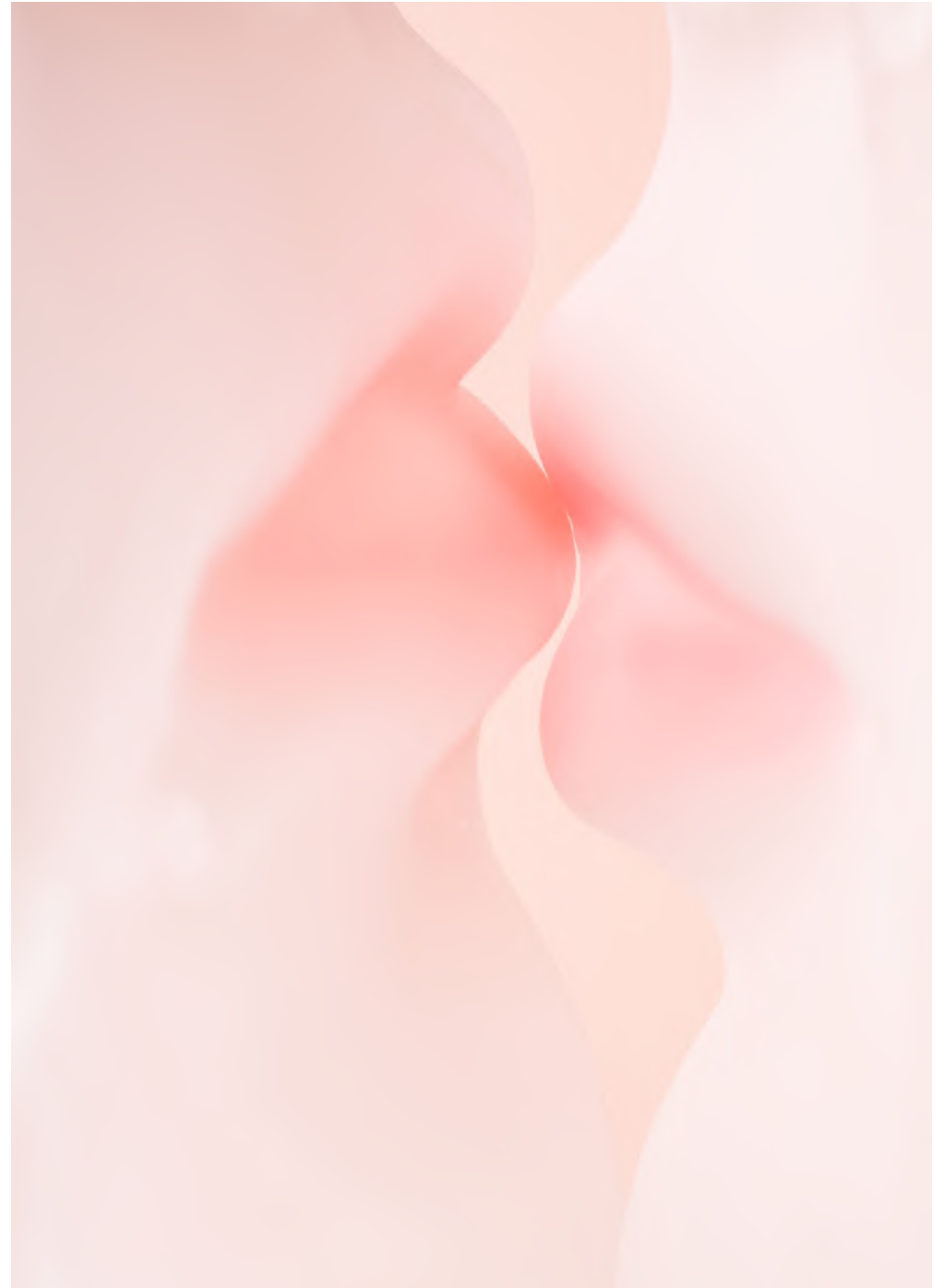


Marta Zgierska (Polish, 1987)
Votive Figure VI, 2019
Pigment print, Hahnemühle Photo Rag Pearl, signed and numbered;
mounted on Dibond, framed with wooden oak frame with a glass.
57.2 x 80 cm
22.5 x 31.5 in
Ed. 2 of 5 (+ 2 AP)
MZ049

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Marta Zgierska (Polish, 1987)
Selfkiss I, from the Votive Figure series, 2019
Pigment print, Hahnemühle Photo Rag Pearl, signed and numbered;
mounted on Dibond, framed with wooden oak frame with a glass.
130 x 92.9 cm
51.2 x 36.6 in
Ed. 1 of 3 (+ 2 AP)
MZ050

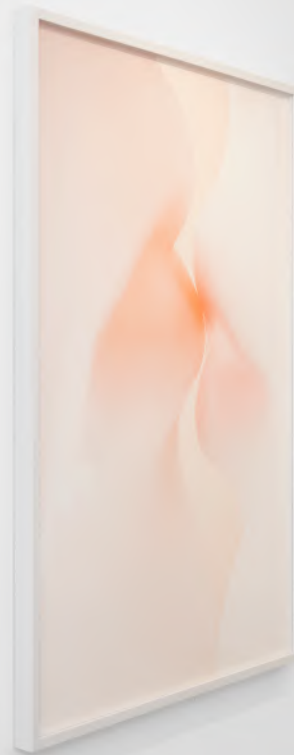
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Marta Zgierska (Polish, 1987)
Untitled, from the Post series, 2016
Pigment print, Hahnemühle Photo Rag Pearl
130 x 92.9 cm
51.2 x 36.6 in
Ed. 2 of 3 (+ 1 AP)
MZ052

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