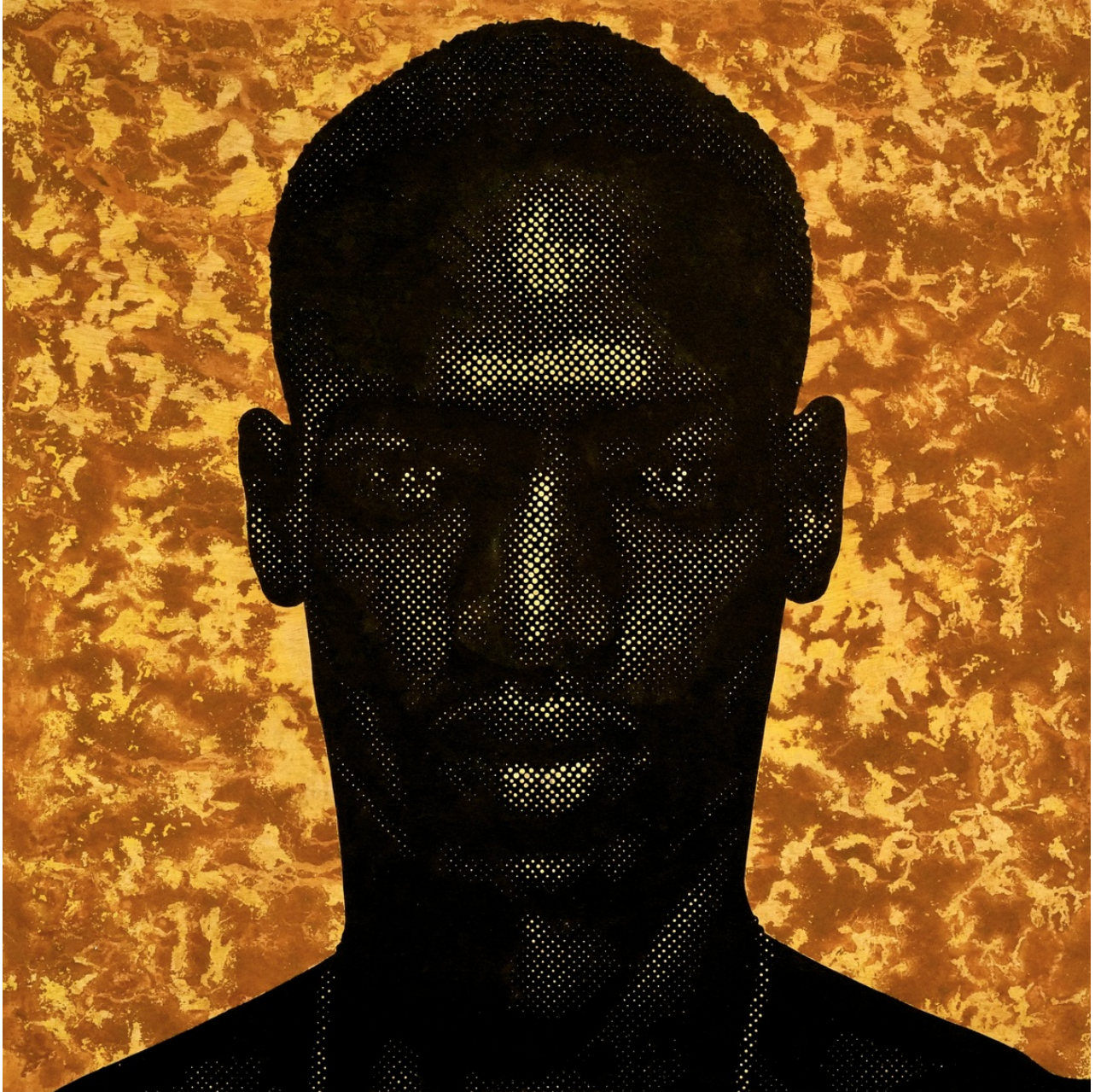


Your ultimate guide to exhibitions by Black artists in London in October

 obatala.co.uk/blog/art/your-ultimate-guide-to-exhibitions-by-black-artists-in-london-in-october/

By admin



Alexis Peskine, Moto wa Uhanini, 2020. Mixed media, 150 x 150 cm. Courtesy the Artist and October Gallery, London

Museums and art galleries in London have slowly emerged from the shadows that Covid-19 plunged them into in March. Even if the threat of the pandemic and the economic hardship it has brought are still lurking, so far, the contemporary African scene has been resilient and weathered the storm. Case in point, the specialist art fair 1:54 Contemporary African Art will be the odd one out when it opens the doors of Somerset House to African art collectors.

In contrast, other fairs – including Frieze – have retreated online. Despite the scaled-down nature of 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair this year, there is a sense of cautious optimism in the air sustained by a flurry of new exhibitions featuring works by African artists and, by and large, Black artists.

Provided you feel ready to emerge from behind the digital screens and enjoy a direct encounter with works of art, here is a guide to help you navigate the exhibitions dedicated to Contemporary African Art in London this October.

Fire Figures / Alexis Peskine / October Gallery

Alexis Peskine's solo show "Fire Figures" is a continuance of his inaugural show "Power Figures" at the October Gallery in 2017. Peskine's latest figurative works, made in his Nkisi-inspired trademark style of shimmering nails hammered into wood, explore the experiences of the African diaspora. Drawing on his lived-experiences, he is quoted saying, "We're invisible. I've lived it, we've always lived it. In *Fire Figures* I am expressing resistance and transcendence." The show will constitute a visual commentary on the "violence, racism and displacement" faced by the Black Diaspora. It is a timely exhibition whose theme resonates with the protests for social justice that erupted in Minneapolis and spread throughout the world after the killing of George Floyd in May.

"Fire Figures" at the [October Gallery](#) will run from October 2nd to November 14th.

In Plain Sight / Tavares Strachan / Marian Goodman Gallery

The theme of invisibility takes center stage in Tavares Strachan's immersive show "In Plain Sight" at Marian Goodman Gallery. The new and existing works encompassed in the exhibition reference a broad range of disciplines, history, biology, aeronautics, and more. Combined, they constitute a searing commentary on the erasure of Black figures and their contributions from history. According to the gallery, the exhibition's point of departure is the life story of Matthew Henson, the Black man who was the first person ever to reach the North Pole in 1909.

"[In Plain Sight](#)" at Marian Goodman Gallery continues until October 20th. Admissions by appointment only.



Tewodros Hagos, Untitled 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

The Desperate Journey/ Tewodros Hagos / Kristin Hjellegjerde's Wandsworth space

It is another type of forgotten story that unfolds in the Wandsworth space of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery. Ethiopian artist Tewodros Hagos turns viewers' attention back on to the plight of young immigrants as they embark on perilous journeys across the sea. Hagos's paintings are consumed with the haunting expression and desperation in his characters' faces, particularly poignant in the close-up portraits. The artist questions the society's response – or lack of – to tragedy and our gradual insensitivity as one human

tragedy chases the other from the relentless news cycle.

“The Desperate Journey” at Kristin Hjellegjerde’s Wandsworth space will conclude on October 10th.

Esprit Reveur/ Jean David Nkot / Jack Bell Gallery

Migration is a central theme in the practice of young Cameroonian artist Jean David Nkot. His exhibition titled *Esprit Reveur* (Dreaming Spirit) evokes the dreams of those who leave their homes in the hope of a better life. The title dramatically contrasts with the harsh reality these young men face once they relocate. Against a detailed cartography backdrop, Nkot depicts with incredible realism the industrious lives of the young migrants, their despair, and their resilience.

“Esprit Reveur” at Jack Bell Gallery continues until October 30th. By appointment only.



Jean David Nkot, www.goldplanner.com, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Bell Gallery

Ndakavata pasi ndikamutswa nekuti anonditsigira / Portia Zvavahera/ David Zwirner

Zimbabwean artist Portia Zvavahera transports viewers away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life into the realm of the unconscious. The title of the exhibition translates as, “I took my rest in sleep and then I awoke for He sustained me.” And through the five large-scale paintings encompassed in this solo exhibition, Zvavahera opened a portal onto the creatures, feelings, and emotions that inhabit her dreams.

The exhibition is on the upper floor at David Zwirner and will run until October 31st. (by appointment)

A Countervailing Theory / Toyin Ojih Odutola / Barbican

At the Barbican, Nigerian American artist Toyin Ojih Odutola has elaborated a captivating fictional story of an ancient African civilisation. It rhythmically unfolds to the sounds of drums in a soundscape created by artist Peter Adjaye. *A Countervailing Theory* draws on the fundamentals of written fiction to recount a transgressive heterosexual love story in a pre-colonial society whose structure is the opposite of modern societies. Through the 40 drawings, the artist challenges social stereotypes and questions the knowledge held of pre-historical Africa. She also masterfully demonstrates her draftsmanship with a minimalistic palette made with shades of black and white.

“[A Countervailing Theory](#)” is a long-running exhibition that will conclude on January 24th, 2021. Online booking is essential to access the building.

In the Court of the Crimson Queen or White Lady on a Horse / Umar Rashid / Tiwani Contemporary

Los-Angeles-based artist Umar Rashid (Frohawk Two Feathers) also takes a storytelling approach to his soon to open exhibition at Tiwani Contemporary. Through an eclectic range of medium, artefacts, drawings, maps, including flags reminiscent of Ghanaian Asafo flags, the artist narrates the history of a fictional empire, Frenglish, which ruled over a large part of the world between the 17th century and the 19th century.

The exhibition, *In The Court of the Crimson Queen or White Lady On A Horse*, is set to open on October 8th and will run until November 21st, at [Tiwani Gallery](#).

The Medium is the Message / Group Show / Unit London

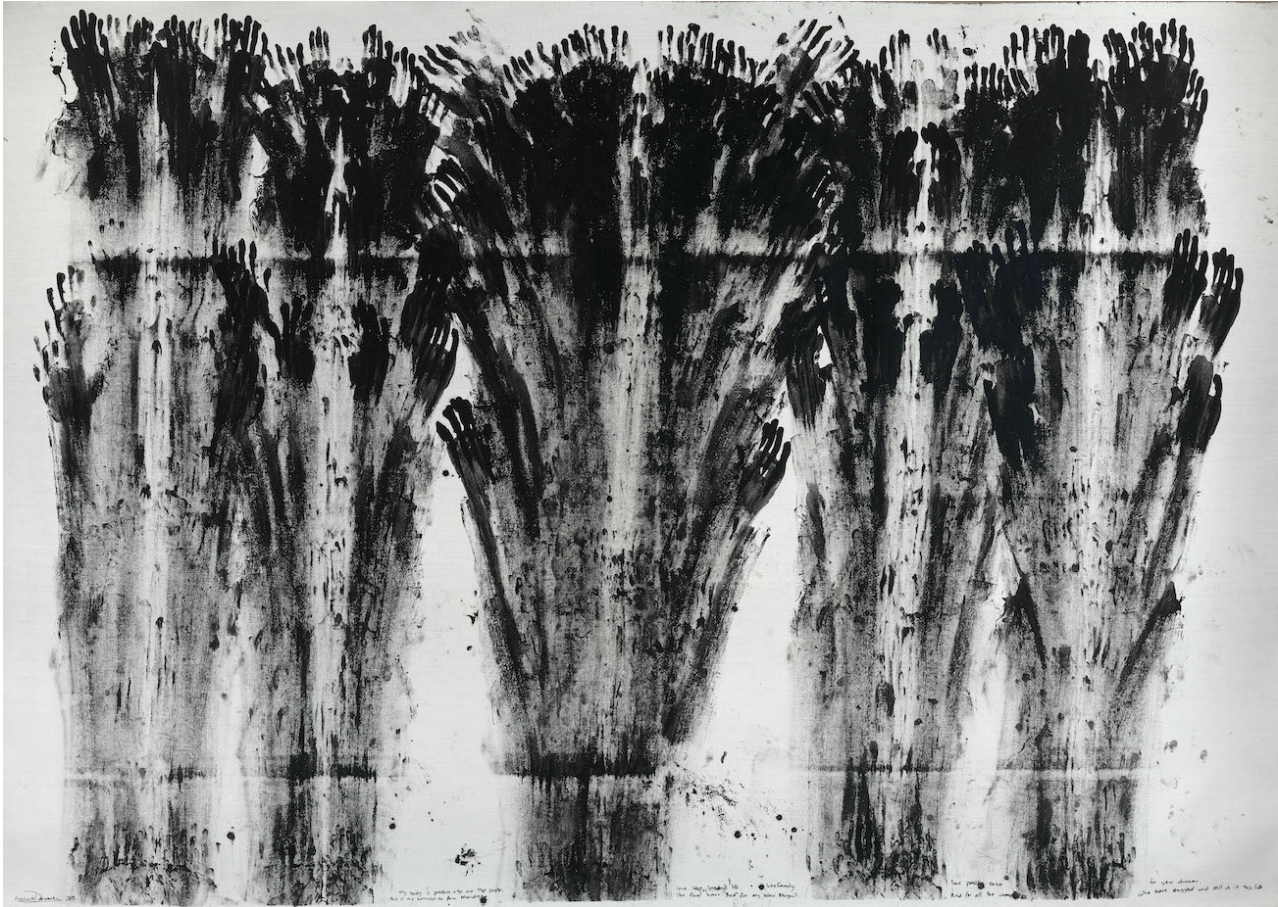
“The medium is the Message” seeks to examine a nuanced, multi-layered depiction of Blackness through the figurative works of 18 artists. It is a glimpse into the practices and processes of young and up-coming Black artists and how they illustrate, paint and render Black people through various mediums. The show is a visual investigation into the different technical modalities of the depiction of Blackness. The question here is not so much what does it mean to be Black, but first and foremost, how do you represent Blackness?

The [exhibition](#) will run from October 2nd until November 14th.

Becoming as well as being / Kwesi Botchway / 1957 Gallery

Against a vivid monochromatic background, Kwesi Botchway’s characters, painted with the darkest hue of black, are a relentless investigation of what it means to be Black and African. Botchway’s upcoming exhibition “Becoming as well as being” curated by Ekow Eshun, will be the inaugural show of Gallery 1957 in their London outpost.

The show will run from October 23rd to November 23rd at Gallery 1957, 1 Hyde Park Gate, London, SW7 5EW.



Adelaide Damoah, My Body is Present Homage to Ana Mendieta, oil and pen on canvas. Bloomsbury festival

Negritude Reembodied / BBFA Collective / Hoxton 253

Negritude, the positive affirmation of Black values, may seem obvious today, but when the literary and artistic movement emerged in the thirties, its rebuttal of colonialism and calls to embrace African systems of thoughts and expressions were revolutionary. Eight decades later, three artists of the Black British Female Artist Collective (Adelaide Damoah, Ayesha Feisal, Enam Gbewonyo) are re-examining the concept of “Negritude” through their unique diasporic perspective.

“*Negritude Reembodied*” will run from October 7th to October 17th at Hoxton 253 Art Project Space. Hoxton Street, London, N15LG

Bending Culture / Group Show / Demif Gallery-Hoxton 253

Demif Gallery will take over Hoxton 253 to present a group show encompassing eleven artists from Africa and the Diaspora. The exhibition will explore the artists’ engagement with their environments and how their works contribute to the public discourse on race, culture, and identity issues.

Bending Culture, Inside Out, Understanding Iconoclasm in an Era of multiculturalism will run from October 22nd to October 25th at Hoxton street.

Jesture / Jade Fadojutimi / Pippy Houldsworth

At Pippy Houldsworth, Jade Fadojutimi's solo show "Jesture" plunges the viewer into the materiality of paint. The layers and layers of paint that Fadojutimi uses for her large-scale paintings have created textural surfaces, which pulsate with creative energy. Look closely, and sometimes you will see some of the artist's gestures, circular motions engraved in her bold and colorful paintings.

"Jesture" will conclude on October 31st

Waves / Rachid Jonhson / Hauser & Wirth

American Artist Rachid Jonhson is taking over both exhibition spaces at Hauser & Wirth in London with his latest show titled "Waves." It features monumental mosaics made of broken glasses, a continuance of the Broken Men series exhibited in New York in 2019. In an interview with the Guardian, Jonhson explained that the series was a commentary on the #Metoo movement and how it "effectively started breaking down the structure of Machismo" and a broader examination of the human condition.

"Waves" is a long-running exhibition that will conclude on December 23rd.

Immanence|Transcendence / Angus Taylor / Everard Read London

The human condition is also at the center of Angus Taylor's sculptural practice. His solo exhibition Immanence / Transcendence will open at Everard Read London on October 9th. In a departure from his previous work, the artist turns his attention to the female forms cast halfway through their transformative process, from raw material to human. "Immanence / Transcendence" is a month-long exhibition and will conclude on November 7th.

Denzil Forrester in Rome / Stephen Friedman Gallery /

The usual scenes of nightlife in London prevalent in Denzil Forrester's work and exhibited at the gallery in 2019 have been recast in a new context in Rome, where the artist was in residency in the eighties. These large-scale works were slated to be exhibited at Frieze Master but are displayed in an additional space on Burlington Street. Also, for its 25th anniversary, the gallery has staged a group show that occupies its usual two spaces on the same street. It includes work by Yinka Shonibare, Kehinde Wiley, Deborah Roberts, among others.

"Denzil Forrester in Rome" continues until October 31st.

Editor's note: safety measures may vary from one gallery to the other. We recommend you check online the measures implemented by each organisation along with the conditions of access prior to your visit.

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