

PRESS RELEASE

September 7th, 2021

VOLTA Basel Art Fair Presenting British-Nigerian artist: SOLA OLULODE

September 20 - 26, 2021



ARTPOWHER Contemporary is thrilled to announce its participation at VOLTA Basel 2021, staging the solo show 'I LOVE SHARING THE BED WITH YOU' by British-Nigerian artist Sola Olulode. This is the artist's first exhibition in Switzerland and her first solo presentation outside of the UK.

ARTPOWHER Contemporary is a collaborative art project initiative, that places focus on female-identifying and non-binary creatives in the arts.

Anna Maurrasse, the Founder of ARTPOWHER Contemporary, is proud to announce the participation at VOLTA Art Fair 2021 in Basel, with the solo presentation 'I Love Sharing The Bed With You' by British-Nigerian artist, Sola Olulode.

Olulode is a London based artist who works across the medium of paint and textile influenced by Yoruba Adire textiles, an indigo-dyed fabric made in Nigeria by Yoruba women, using a variety of resist-dyeing techniques. The artist reinterprets images of majoritively Black Womxn expressed through diverse reflections of feminine energies, and inspired by her own identity as a queer Black woman.

For her first show in Switzerland and her first solo show outside of the UK, Olulode conceived over the last few months smaller works on paper and larger paintings on canvas, experimenting with new forms of presentation.

'I Love Sharing The Bed With You' focuses on the beauty of the romance between Black Womxn and is imbued with loving scenes and intimate moments of rest and reflection. Like much of Olulode's work, the paintings in the series are centred in care. Although Olulode creates works which are innately political due to the intersectionality of her own identity as a queer Black woman, it is rooted in joy. In a time where sexuality and gender-based violence is rife and the pandemic causing us to engage more with the media online; thus confronting countless images of devastating images of the Black body, Olulode's work is critical. Born out of her own experience, it offers a gentle insight into the queer Black (British) communities through the lens of Olulode's reinterpretation of images that display queer Black intimacy in mainstream media. The works in this show are different to Olulode's previous bodies of work as the focus is on the energy transferred between the subjects within the painted scenes. They are framed as extreme close-ups, which is intentional as the two bodies are presented as one loving force.

"It is uncommon to see images of Black Womxn resting in bed. I think a lot about representation in my work, and see creating these images as my small way of activism and healing in wanting to make visible images of Black people that we don't normally see in the media," says artist Sola Olulode.



Studio view: Goodnight Kiss, 2021

The artist uses commercial Black aesthetics taken from TV shows such as Pose and Orange is the New Black, screenshotting scenes, to create a base for sketching out her ideas which manifest into larger works later. By directly referencing current popular queer culture, her work aims to recontextualise and prioritise a range of Black subjects, characters, themes and intersections. Her work pushes past the boundaries and limitations of the stereotypical notions of queer sexuality. It embraces the fluidities of gender outside of the imposed heteronormative rhetoric. The piece *Goodnight Kiss* represents Olulode's decision to create a body of work dedicated to the reality of the Black British queer communities with a focus on non-binary people and Black women. Laced with embodiments of tender, feminine energies, love portals and romance at the center of this series, Olulode's contributions to the wider canon of Black British artists who create work with a similar sensitivity such as Lubaina Himid or Claudette Johnson, is undeniable.

From smaller pastel sketches to larger textile paintings, the materiality of Olulode's work is diverse. Her relationship with the colours blue and yellow is vibrant and concise – along with the use of pastel, assemblage and batik, makes her work aesthetically distinctive. Olulode's use of blue, indigo dye and having created many bodies of work in blue adds to a global visual language evident across a culture of Black artists' practices. This technique allows the viewer to have a less biased approach to understanding the themes, sociocultural references and true nature of the work – it is neutralised as the colour of the subject's skin is no longer a point of reference.

Olulode's paintings present candid moments of time, which appear to be centered in the midst of a longer story and history. This methodology refers to the ancient techniques of tapestries, wall hangings and drawings as a method of storytelling and archiving historical events. For the first time, Olulode is experimenting with new forms of presentation to express this new relationship between her work and these ancient methodologies – taking the paintings away from the 'traditional' stretched canvas on bars, to free flowing wall hangings. In addition to the attention to the freeness of movement of the bodies Olulode illustrates in the work, her reference to traditions of old masters paintings, specifically classic European portraiture reveals her efforts to disrupt the typical methods of fine art painting and is integral to her practice.

– Excerpt from the catalogue essay, written by Art Writer Pacheanne Anderson

NOTES TO EDITORS



New publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue of Sola Olulode's new body of work, created for the show by ARTPOWHER Contemporary, featuring an essay by Art Writer Pacheanne Anderson (he/they), www.pacheanne.com/about.

Concept & Copyright: Anna Maurrasse-Tomaiuolo, ARTPOWHER Contemporary

Photos: Luzie Zoe Lazarus: www.lzrs.de

Design: Giò Black, LYOR, www.lyor.ch

COLLECT ART — COLLABORATE

ARTPOWHER Contemporary is a collaborative art project initiative, which shines light on the incredible Womxn shaping the art world.

The CEO Anna Maurrasse, founded ARTPOWHER in October 2019, with the aim of raising awareness about gender stereotypes and gender inequality, while inspiring change through creativity and collaborations. ARTPOWHER's mission is to contribute to increasing the representation of female-identifying (Womxn) creatives in the arts. The initiative strives to promote and present a varied-media selection of work from national to international emerging and mid-career artists, offering a cross-cultural exchange, and engaging different audiences of all genders.



Glossary

The term Womxn is an alternative spelling of the English word woman. It is used to explicitly include transgender and non-binary people.

Artist Bio

Sola Olulode, b. 1996, is a London based British-Nigerian artist who works across the medium of paint and textile. She reinterprets images of majoritively Black Womxn expressed through diverse reflections of feminine energies. She has exhibited works internationally and graced panels across multiple London galleries and art fairs including VO Curations, Carl Freedman Gallery, Christie's Education and Lisson Gallery. She often employs bright colour to address themes of love, light and positivity. Olulode's work is very focused and direct in its bold and honest approach to the display of the wholesome and tender nuances of black queer relationships.

The artist was featured in Artsy's 2021 "Portrayals of Black Joy" campaign, which saw her work presented by ARTPOWHER Contemporary "Laying in the Grass II," appear on public screens within the transit systems of several major U.S. cities.

Olulode received a BA in Fine Art Painting from the University of Brighton in 2018. Since graduating she has succeeded residencies with solo shows in London: Moving in the Bluish Light, von Goetz, (2018); Hold My Hand (2019), Lewisham Art House; Where the Ocean Meets the Beach (2020), V.O Curations; and featured in the V&A's In the Palm of Your Hands (2020). Various group exhibitions include: BBZ BLK BK: Alternative Graduate Show (2018), London; Twilights of the Idols (2020), Alice Black, London; Blacklisted: An Indefinite Revolution (2020), Christie's Education, London; An Infinity of Traces (2021), Lisson Gallery, London; Breakfast Under The Tree (2021), Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, Kent; Home Body (2021), Sapar Contemporary, New York; In Heavenly Blue, Pacers Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria (2021)

About VOLTA

VOLTA is an international Art Fair that fosters galleries in staging ambitious solo and group presentations, refining the experience to its essential elements: the artists and their work. VOLTA is widely known and recognised for its eclectic and dynamic solo presentations and multiple artists in curated conversations. VOLTA has three editions per year, in Basel, Miami and New York and it is directed by Kamiar Maleki.

Location VOLTA Basel

ELYS, Elsässerstrasse 215a, 4056 Basel, Switzerland, ARTPOWHER BOOTH: A02

DATES

Private Preview & Press: Monday, September 20, 10 am – 2 pm, by invitation only

Public Hours: Monday, September 20, Public Vernissage: 2 – 8 pm
Tuesday, September 21 - Saturday, September 25, 10 am – 6 pm
Sunday, September 26, 10 am – 5 pm

Press contact & accreditation

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For more information:

ARTPOWHER Contemporary: www.artpowher.com

Sola Olulode: www.solaolulode.co.uk

VOLTA Art Fair: www.voltaartfairs.com