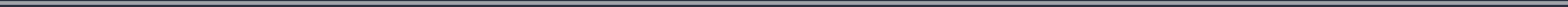


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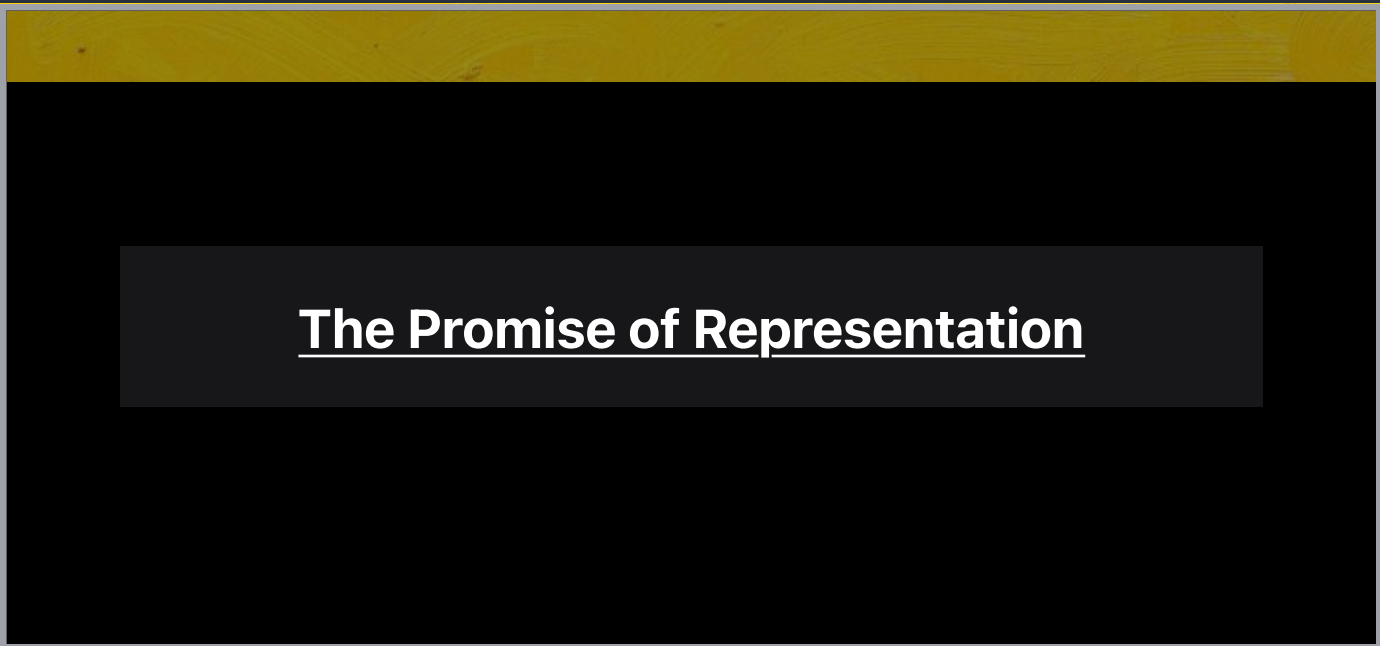
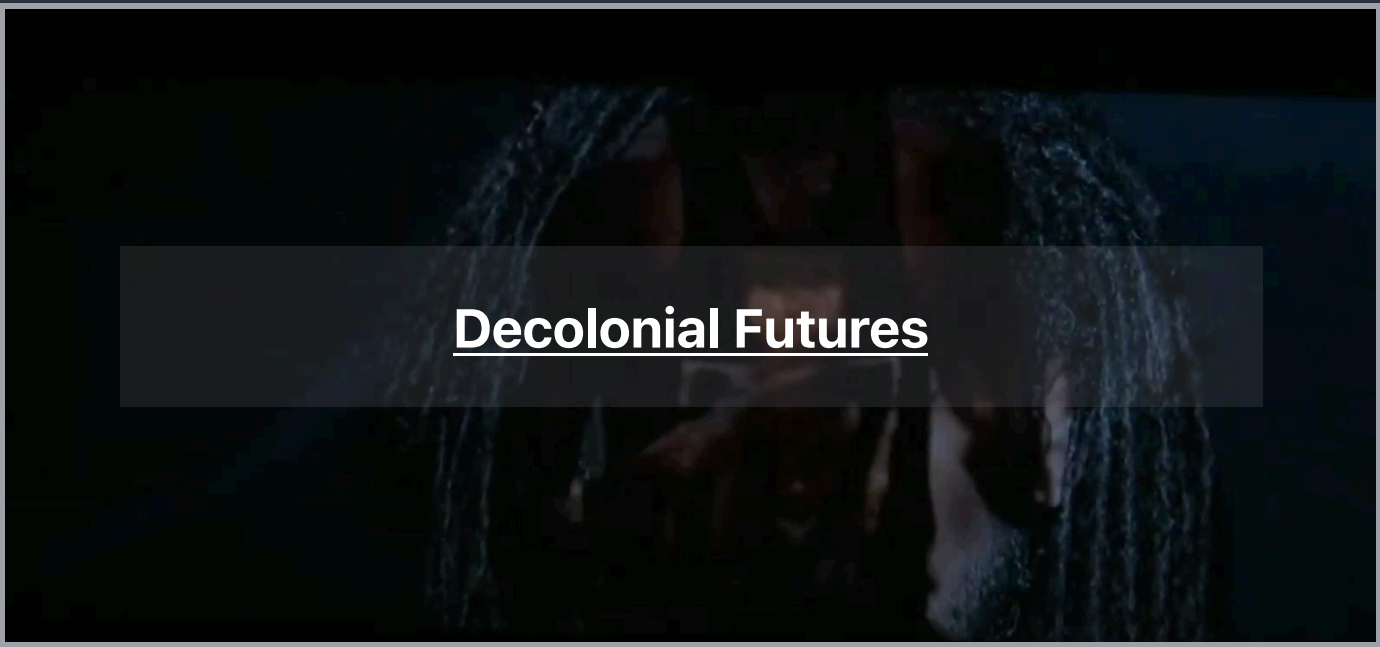
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# Galleries

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# Decolonial Futures

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Theo Eshetu – Atlas Fractured



Matthew Angelo Harrison – Dark Silhouette:  
Couple Transfigured



Matthew Angelo Harrison – Bareness of the  
Physical Model (Dogon)

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# Dark Silhouette – Couple Transformed



Harrison explores what might have happened to African artifacts if history had unfolded differently. He finds the wooden sculptures he uses in his artwork on second-hand sites, all of them originally made in Africa for tourists or home decoration. He encases these sculptures in resin and then carves out designs with a CNC machine, a carving tool typical for industrial production. By making things we’re familiar with strange, Harrison invites viewers into a new relationship with history.

Harrison, Matthew Angelo. *Dark Silhouette – Couple Transformed*, 2018.

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Published November 28, 2022  
By [Krsna Santos](#)

Categorized as [Uncategorized](#)

[← Previous post](#)  
**One of Me: Unaltered Photo**



# Atlas Fractured

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Theo Eshetu – Atlas Fractured (Athens version), 2017

*Atlas Fractured* is a work that asks viewers to have, as the artist has said, a “healthy disorientation” when it comes to race (Eshetu). For this work he brought models into his studio and projected everything from Italian Renaissance paintings to nuclear explosions onto their faces. Often it is even hard to tell whether what we see is a person, an artwork, or some haunting mix of the two. When we lose that ability to identify another person by the way they look, what possibilities are created for how we see each other? This is the challenge Eshetu’s disorienting artwork gives us.

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# Bareness of the Physical Model (Dogon)

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For this work Harrison did 3D scans of several sculptures from the Dogon people of West Africa and combined all their characteristics into one 3D image. He then used a custom-made 3D printer to print that 3D image with clay. The artist often explores a connection to African cultures, despite not knowing exactly where his own ancestors are from, because of the transatlantic slave trade. What kind of connection can a sculpture like this make possible?

Harrison, Matthew Angelo. *Bareness of the Physical Model (Dogon)*, 2018

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# The Promise of Representation

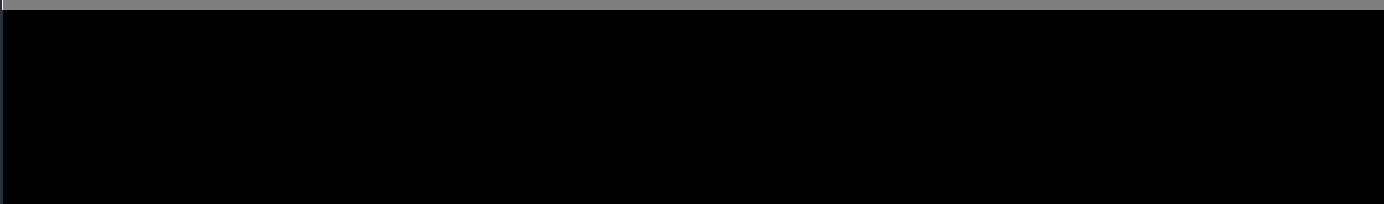


**[Eva Leitolf: German Images](#)**



**[Eva Leitolf – Postcards from Europe](#)**

Orange Grove



**[Eva Leitolf – Postcards from Europe](#)**

Vendicari



**[Amoako Boafo: Reflection 2](#)**



**[Amoako Boafo – Ghana Must Go](#)**



**[Amoako Boafo – Cobalt Blue Earring](#)**



**[Conrad Egyir – Qhirstine Me’usa](#)**



**[Conrad Egyir – Primogenitors of the  
Potentate](#)**

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# Primogenitors of the Potentate



Reflecting on his naturalization in the US, Egyir said to immigration officials “We are ‘Amantramanmienu’[...] a royal title from the Ashanti Kingdom in Ghana which means ‘He (or they) that bestride two worlds’” (*Conrad Egyir – Artist*). This piece also focuses on the theme of being in many worlds; for example we see four representations of the same person. There are references to royalty, such as *Negus*, an Ethiopian word for ruler or king. We also see what could be a school teacher on the bottom right and a figure on the upper left that looks divine and supernatural. From one subject a kaleidoscope of identities emerges.

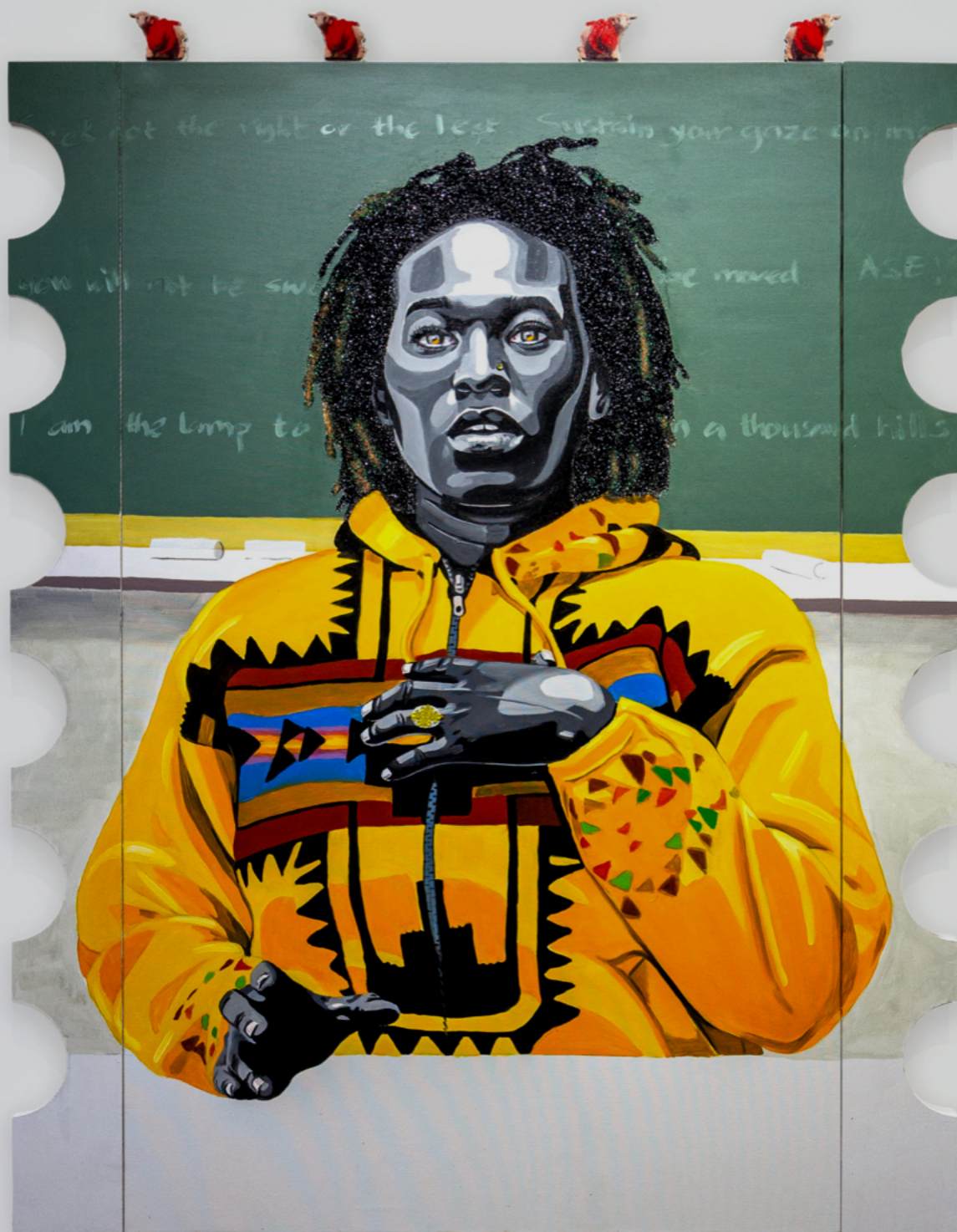
Egyir, Conrad. *Primogenitors of the Potentate*, 2018.

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# Qhristine Me'usa



Egyir strives to avoid any clichéd readings of Black people by creating pieces with rich layers of meaning. Notice the hands of our subject, placed in a way that references Renaissance paintings of Christ. The skin and eyes have metallic, unearthly tones and the hair, textured with glitter, appears to contain a galaxy of stars. Meanwhile the schoolroom backdrop, with Bible quotes, bring the painting back to Earth. The hoodie with a South American indigenous design adds another layer of culture. Egyir mixes rich layers of meaning to create figures that look like nothing we are used to seeing and yet are anchored by everyday items and settings

Egyir, Conrad. Qhristine Me'usa, 2018

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# Cobalt Blue Earring

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Bofo, Amoako. Cobalt Blue Earring, 2019.

Bofo said, speaking of his collaboration with Dior Homme fashion designer Kim Jones, “[i]n many ways, the fashion and art worlds are similar [...] [t]hey convey genuine messages about being and self-worth, much of which aligns with why I create—to elevate individuals and to define oneself” (*Meet the Ghanaian Painter*). Bofo’s signature sculptural layers of color, and the bold style of his subject, all signal a person who is confident and self-assured.

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# Boafo – Ghana Must Go

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Boafo, Amoako.. Ghana Must Go, 2017.

Here we have a nude figure reading a novel by Taiye Selasi, an author who helped give shape to the concept of Afropolitanism, which she has described as “the refusal to oversimplify.” This reclining nude embodies that spirit. A Black male, often portrayed in the media as dangerous or powerful, is presented here as vulnerable, gentle and bookish. He is even lying on a surface covered in butterflies.

Click [here](#) to read more about Boafo and his use of European Modernist techniques

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# Boafo & Modernism



Matisse, Henri. The Window, 1916.

Amoako Boafo began his art career in Ghana, but moved to Vienna with his then girlfriend to study art. Vienna was a center of cutting edge art around 1900, including being home to painters like Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele who strove to make art that moved beyond only reflecting the natural world. One of the big stylistic markers of European modernist painting was a flattened or titled perspective. So unlike say Italian Renaissance paintings with a clear line that fades into the horizon, modernist paintings often had tables with such an unnatural tilt that it looked like everything on it would fall off. See, for example, this piece by French artist Matisse from 1915. Notice how the table has an unnatural forward tilt and how patterns on the wall, rug and chair seem to blend together.

Boafo's painting takes similar modernist trademarks. Notice how the butterfly background behind the reclining nude has an aggressive forward tilt as though it could be wallpaper even though Boafo's nude is clearly lying flat upon it. Also look at how the figure's shadow does not bend, even though the butterfly background and wall suggest a flat and then horizontal surface. Lastly, notice the ear, neck and some of the locks of the figure fade into the background, similar to the blurry borders we see in Matisse's piece.



Boafo, Amoako.. Ghana Must Go, 2017.

Boafo here is taking modernist European techniques to further challenge conventions. Boafo does not only blur the borders of what is and is not masculine, he also literally confuses perspective and blurs borders to further place the piece outside of any external expectations of what should and should not be.



# Reflection 2

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Boafo, Amoako. Reflection 2. 2018.

When Amoako Boafo moved from Ghana to Vienna for art school, he was met with stereotypes of African men as either criminal or hyper-sexual. As a response to that he started painting artworks that embodied the way he wanted to be perceived. In this work the artist portrays himself contemplating his own richly colored face and figure while at home. He layers colors and then carves out designs with his fingers to create the look of the skin in his works.

See the video below of Boafo describing his story and showing his unique finger painting technique.



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# Postcards from Europe

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Leitolf, Eva. Postcards from Europe, since 2006.

*Vendicari Nature Reserve, Italy 2010*

*On 27 October 2007 two walkers came across several shoes washed up on a beach in the nature reserve of Vendicari. During the following days seventeen corpses were found there. On their own initiative the couple obtained a list of the names of the dead from the authorities, contacted the relatives in Egypt and Palestine and arranged for a Muslim funeral to be held. About one hundred people attended the ceremony officiated by the imam of Catania on 1 November 2008, including relatives of the dead and local police. The events led to the founding of Borderline Sicilia. Eva Leitolf ©*

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# Postcards from Europe



PfEO482-1T-27010

**Orange Grove, Rosarno, Italy 2010**

In January 2010 the price obtained by Calabrian citrus growers for their Moro and Navel oranges was five euro cents per kilogram. They paid their mostly illegally employed and undocumented African and Eastern European seasonal workers between €20 and €25 for a day's work. Depending on the variety and the state of the trees a worker can pick between four and seven hundred kilograms of oranges in a day. The business was no longer profitable and many farmers left the fruit to rot. During the 2009–2010 harvest there were between four and five thousand migrants living in and around Rosarno, most of them in abandoned buildings or plastic shelters, without running water or toilets. On 7 January 2010 local youths fired an air-gun at African orange-pickers returning from work and injured two of them. The ensuing demonstration by migrant workers ended in severe clashes with parts of the local population, during which cars were set on fire and shop windows broken. Accommodation used by seasonal workers was burned and hundreds fled, fearing the local citizens or deportation by the authorities. On 9 January, under police protection from jeering on-lookers, about eight hundred Africans were bussed out to emergency accommodation in Crotone and Bari. *A Season in Hell: MSF Report on the Conditions of Migrants Employed in the Agricultural Sector in Southern Italy, January 2008; tagesschau.de, 10 January 2010; interviews with orange farmers and seasonal labourers, Rosarno, 27–29 January 2010*

Eva Leitolf, Postcards from Europe, work from the ongoing archive

Leitolf, Eva. Postcards from Europe. Since 2006.

For this series Eva Leitolf traveled to the borders of Europe and researched often violent events involving migrants that happened there. We see photos of scenes without people and captions that describes what occurred in the empty photographs. Leitolf's work is about what happens when viewers are asked to think of migrants without a visual depiction of them. For this series she wants viewers to think critically about what happens at borders.

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# German Images: Hirschgarten



Leitolf, Eva. Deutsche Bilder – Eine Spurensuche (German Images – Looking for Clues), 1992/94, 2006/2008.

*Hirschgarten, Munich, 2007*

*On 10 August 2000 the Green group on Munich city council organized a minibus tour of the city’s ‘centers of right-wing extremist activity’ for the press. The itinerary included the headquarters of a rightwing student fraternity, the offices of a right-wing intellectual magazine and the home of the leader of the DVU party. According to the press release, right-wing extremist structures in eastern Germany had been built and funded from Munich and Upper Bavaria. Hirschgarten was identified as a meeting place for right-wing extremists where many violent attacks had occurred. ©Eva Leitolf*

In her project *German Images* Eva Leitolf wants viewers to think critically about the power of photography. To do this she presents images without any descriptions. Then viewers can find printed out captions of a far-right act that occurred in each image. She hopes this can provide viewers with a kind of blank canvas to project their own ideas about what happened in the photos. How do you see the photograph differently after reading the caption?

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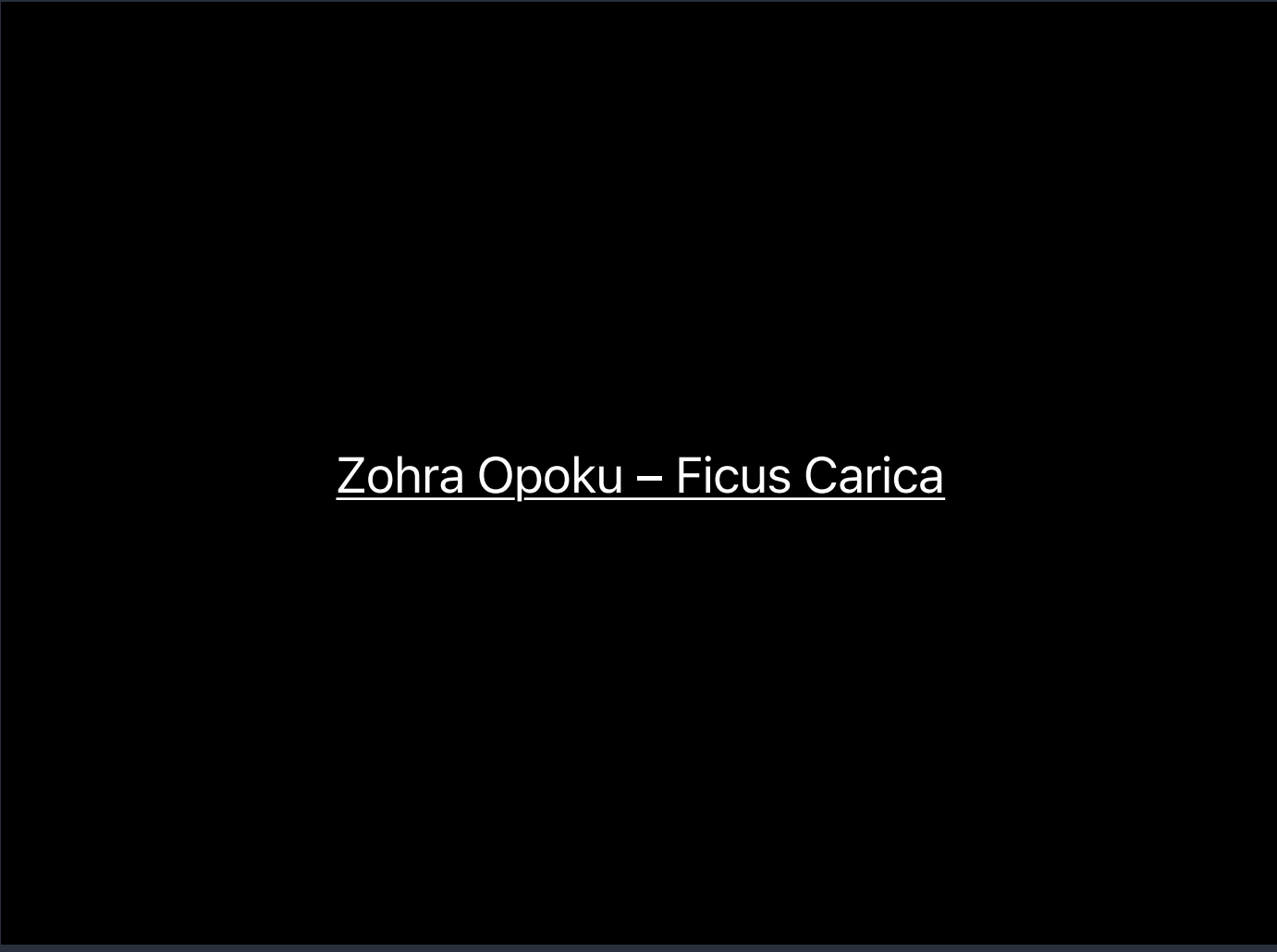


# Making New Homes

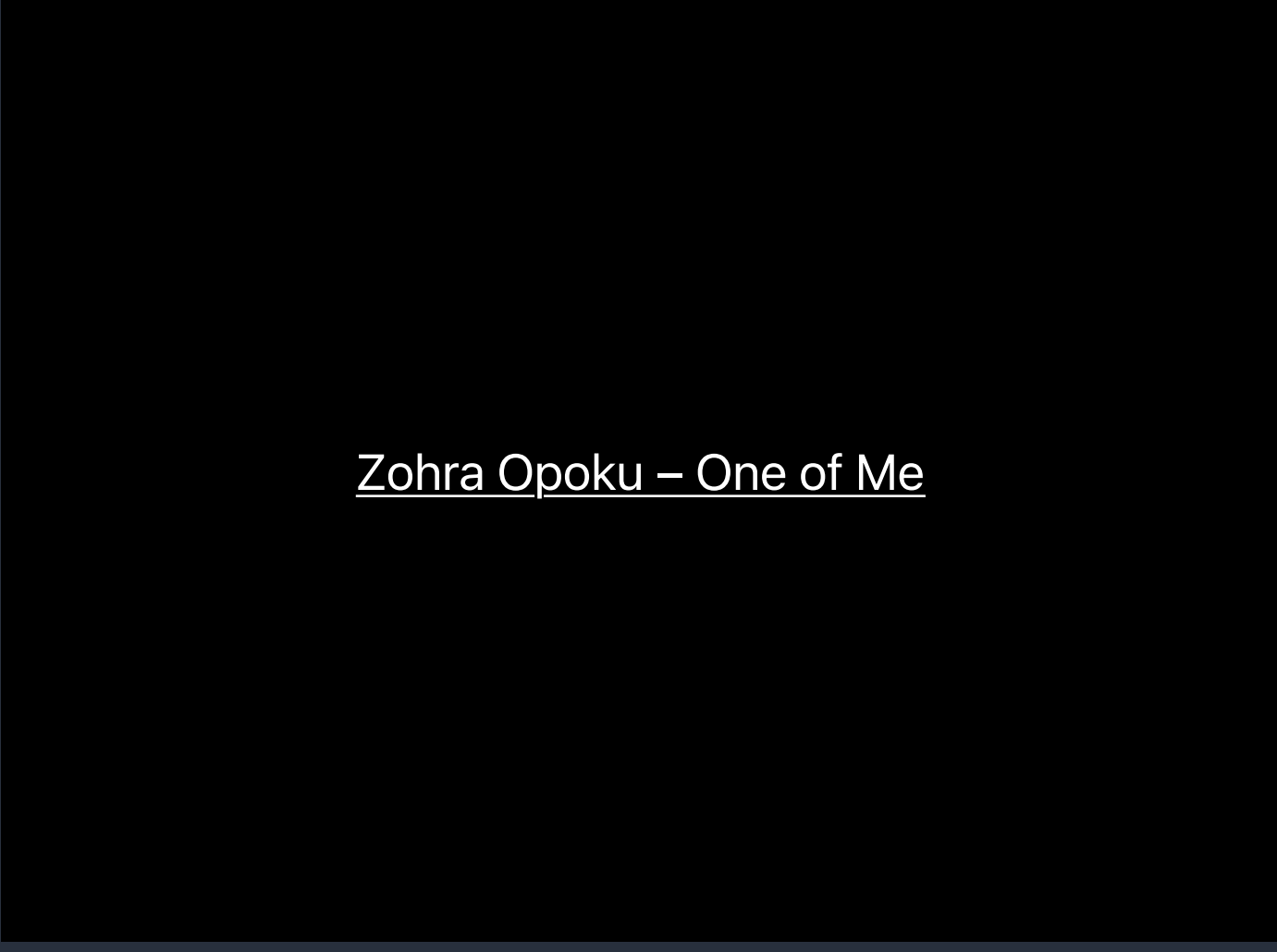
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[Zohra Opoku – Pyracantha](#)



[Zohra Opoku – Ficus Carica](#)



[Zohra Opoku – One of Me](#)



[Zohra Opoku – Malisa & Bob](#)



[Emeka Ogbah – Song of the Germans](#)



[Tiff Massey – Ain't No Future in Your Front](#)

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# Ain't No Future in Your Front

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Massey, Tiff. Ain't No Future In Your Front, 2017.

Detroit-based artist Tiff Massey made this piece while reflecting on the Trump era and who has been included, and excluded, from the story of building America. Her artistic practice has consistently turned to the very stories about African Americans that go untold or are intentionally hidden. The background of the work is mirrored acrylic. We literally see ourselves in the work. While on initial glance the piece says "this is not for you," a closer look reveals the words "this is you" sticking out further towards us. Where can you see, or not see, yourself in this potent American symbol?



# Emeka Ogboh – Song of the Germans

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Ogboh, Emeka – *Deutschlandlied (Song of the Germans)*, 2015

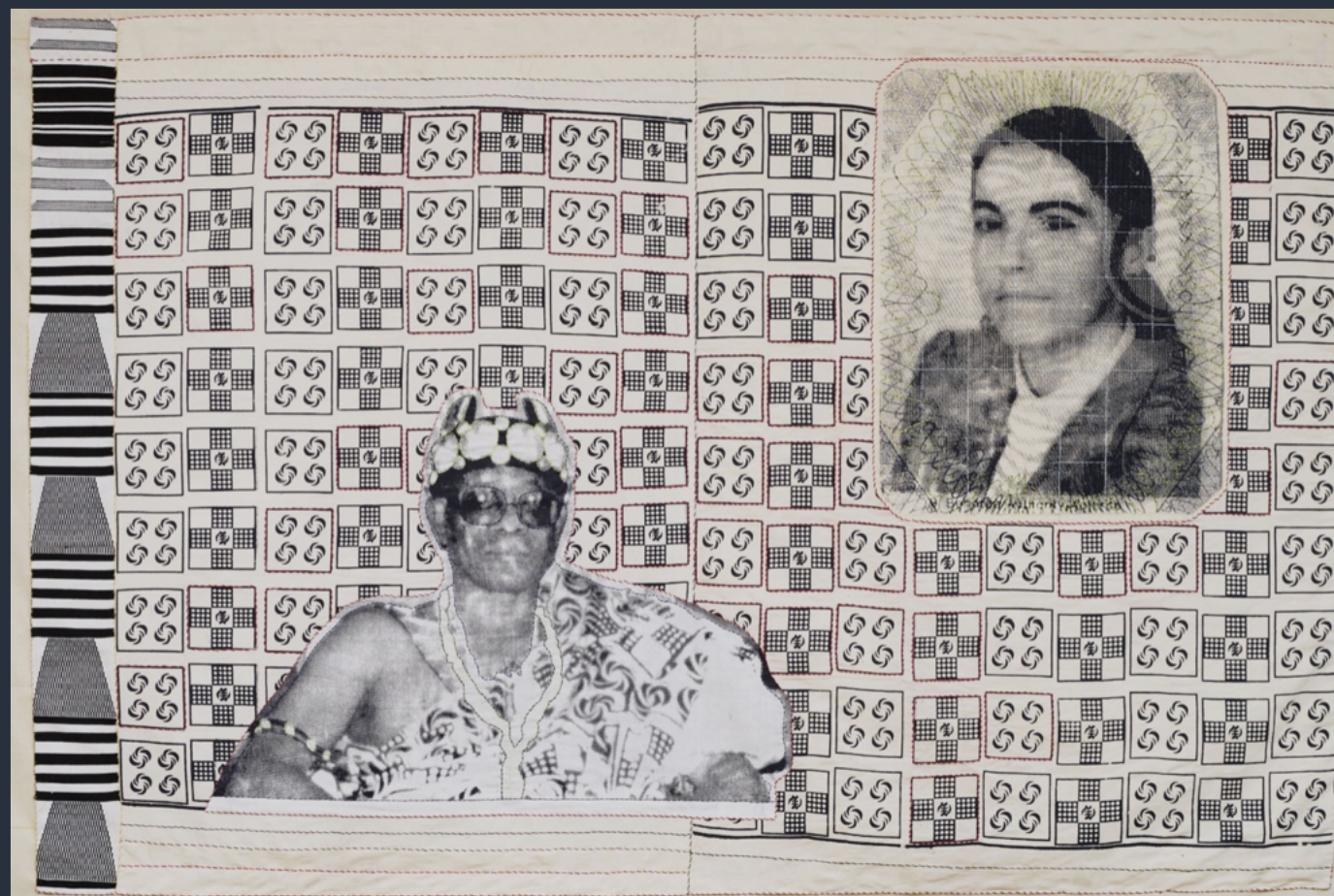
Emeka Ogboh’s work often explores how immigrants try to create home when they move abroad. For this work he asked 10 singers of an African choir in Berlin to sing the German national anthem in 10 different Central and West African languages. In the work he placed 10 speakers at the height of each singer. Then a program randomly layers each voice, one at a time, until they all sing at once. How does this contrast with how we normally experience a national anthem?

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# Malisa & Bob



Opoku, Zohra. *Brigitte Gerda Marlies Thiede & Dr. George Bob Kwabena Opoku*  
(Or Malisa & Bob). 2017.

This artwork weaves together photos of Zohra Opoku's parents. They met in East Germany while studying together, but eventually her father had to return to Ghana and her mother was never able to visit. The background is a Kente cloth that looks similar to what Opoku's father is wearing in the photo. The photo of her mother, in the upper right, is likely from a passport photo or government ID. While never able to reunite before Opoku's father died, here they are back together.

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# One of Me



After moving to Accra, Ghana the German-born artist, who earned a degree in fashion, gravitated towards the cloth she saw in markets and old family photos. In this self-portrait we see the many sides and complexities of her identity. From a black denim background to the bold, richly colored Kente cloth on the lower right, Opoku literally mixes fabric from Europe and West Africa. If we look closely, we also see the artist's hand in creating her own story. The black and white photograph is from 2017, but is aged to look much older. Furthermore the two panels on the left of the work are in fact mirror images of one another. Lastly, the Kente cloth Opoku is wearing in the photograph is the same colorful cloth sewn onto the artwork. Past and present, archival and newly created, Opoku gives us a window into how identity for someone from two cultures can be woven together.

Opoku, Zohra. *One of Me*, 2017.

Click [here](#) to see the photograph Opoku used to make this piece

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# Ficus Carica

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Opoku, Zohra. Ficus Carica, 2015.

Our subject is gently submerged in a blend of shadows and clusters of leaves. Notice how she is in focus, but still hidden, how her shirt almost blends into the environment, how bursts of color from her beaded necklace and lipstick contrast with the spread of green leaves. Look at how green, not yet ripe figs hide her eyes. Between coming forth and disappearing, between self-representating and shying away, between blending in and bursting out is our subject.

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# Pyracantha

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Opoku, Zohra. Pyracantha. 2016.

*“You can choose, you know, how much you want to share and you can choose what you want to keep for yourself [...] my disguised pictures, where I always play with the identity, what is visible, what do we want to reveal, what do we want to keep for ourselves. It is definitely in our own power and that’s very important that we can choose it in real life.” – Zohra Opoku (Handmade Photography Today).*

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The quote above speaks to one of the key themes in Zohra Opoku’s work, Black people having the choice to tell their own story. In this work we see a balance of self-expression and disguise. Opoku’s self-presentation — hair gathered into buns, arched eyebrows, deep blue velvet outfit and atypical jewelry — gives us a window into her personality. At the same time she hides half of her face and much of her body by holding the fruit-filled branches of the pyracantha plant, meaning fire thorn in Greek. In a world so interested in representation, what power lies in withholding a part of ones identity?

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