

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

1977 in Cayenne, French-Guiana, lives and works in Sète, France

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc's work reconstructs the unfinished film *Guns for Banta* (1970) by Sarah Maldoror, the legendary French director from Guadeloupe. The film told the story of the struggle and death at a young age of Awa, a country girl who joins the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde and fights for the liberation of Guinea-Bissau. Maldoror's film was commissioned by the Algerian government, but a conflict between the director and the client prevented it from ever being completed. The only material evidence of its existence consists of photos taken by war photographers on the film set. Abonnenc's work seeks to restore the collective memory of Maldoror's unfinished film, whose main goal was to portray the involvement of women and children in the struggle for independence. The photos are complemented by a voiceover conversation between Abonnenc, the director, and the latter's ex-partner, Angolan writer Mário Pinto de Andrade.

Omar Ba

1977 in Dakar, Senegal, lives and works in Dakar, Senegal

This work by Omar Ba is an impressive painted memorial to the era of African decolonization and to Cheikh Anta Diop as one of the leading intellectuals of that movement. Against the backdrop of a world map and Western buildings from the era of imperial modernity, such as the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben, we see three figures in West African dress. In between them, artworks from ancient Egypt are depicted on narrow pedestals. Omar Ba is alluding here to the academic research carried out by the Senegalese anthropologist and historian Diop, who posited a historical connection between the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa and those of Egypt, which Western discourse has always described as white or Hamitic. Starting in the nineteen-fifties with publications such as *Nations nègres et culture* (The African Origin of Civilization), Diop characterized Egyptian civilization as Black and attempted to demonstrate its influence on Greek antiquity. Diop's anti-colonial historical scholarship, also referred to as "Afrocentric," had a major impact on liberation movements on the continent and in the African diaspora, bolstering efforts to develop postcolonial concepts of identity and history.

Radcliffe Bailey

1968 in Bridgeton, USA – 2023 in Atlanta, USA

Black history and cultural lore are the central themes of Radcliffe Bailey's art. Exploring subjects ranging from traditional African art and the history of slavery, to the anti-colonial revolutions and liberation movements in the USA, and onward to African American music, the artist has since the nineties dealt with many different facets of this history of violence and resistance in his paintings, sculptures, and installations. Bailey conceives of memory as a medicine for treating the disease of racism. His sculpture *Untitled* (2010) commemorates the Haitian revolutionaries Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who around 1800 overthrew French colonialism and founded the first free Black Nation in the Americas. Bailey's use of glitter in his work alludes to the spiritual and healing practices of Haitian voodoo. *Mahalia* (2021) is a pictorial tribute to the gospel singer and civil rights activist Mahalia Jackson. The structure of the image was inspired by the famous quilts of Gee's Bend in Alabama. Characteristic of Bailey's process is the fusion here of musical and textile techniques of Black resilience, for which he also draws on his childhood memories of living in his grandparents' home.

Yto Barrada

1971 in Paris, France, lives and works between Tangier, Morocco, and New York, USA

In the tumultuous summer of 1966, Yto Barrada's mother, a twenty-three-year-old Moroccan student, was one of fifty "Young African Leaders" invited by the US State Department on a tour of the USA. Through play, poetry, and humor, the film *Tree Identification for Beginners* explores this staged encounter between North America and Africa and the burgeoning spirit of disobedience that would shape an entire generation—as expressed by the Pan-African, Tricontinental, and Anti-Vietnam War movements. The film combines 16 mm stop-motion animation using Montessori toys with voiceovers by Barrada's mother and other Crossroads Africa participants, as well as by historical figures such as Black Panther Stokely Carmichael. *Untitled (Nougat Cross Section Flavor Sampler) (2016)*, Barrada's sculptural work made of Moroccan candy, relates to sculptures from the nineteen-sixties by Lebanese artist Saloua Raouda Choucair, now considered a central figure in Arab modernism.

Mohamed Bourouissa

1978 in Blida, Algeria, lives and works in Gennevilliers, France

In his photographs and films of the last two decades, Mohamed Bourouissa draws on his own personal experiences to examine the issues of migration and the exclusion of minorities, especially young men in the French suburbs, portraying their precarious living conditions and forms of cultural expression. For *The Whispering of Ghosts*, Bourouissa visited a mental institution in his hometown of Blida, Algeria, where Frantz Fanon worked as a psychiatrist in the fifties before joining the Algerian resistance movement against French colonial rule. In the film, the artist talks with Bourlem Mohamed, a former patient at the hospital, about his experiences as a freedom fighter in the anti-colonial war and also about the garden of the psychiatric institution, which he planted in 1969 and tended for many years. For Fanon, who as a doctor agitated against the segregation of French and Algerian patients at the clinic, gardening alongside others in therapy was a way to overcome the colonial dividing lines. "Bourlem Mohamed's work," writes Argentine curator Carlos Basualdo, "exists as a testimony of Fanon's clinical reforms, the embodied echo of an emancipatory gesture."

Diedrick Brackens

1989 in Mexia, USA, lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Diedrick Brackens sees himself as a weaver. In contrast to the vast historical legacy of painting and sculpture, Brackens conceives of weaving as a liberating practice for a queer Black artist. His extremely tactile works deal with issues of racism, queer identity, illness, and death using their very own language of forms and symbols. Derived from West African weaving techniques, the by turns abstract or figurative pieces reference African American cultural traditions and the symbolic worlds and rituals of the American South, as well as the material of cotton, which is inextricably linked to slavery. Brackens is interested in relationships between shapes, rhythms, and the tonal qualities of patterns, and also in how a young artist today relates to ancestors in the realms of both art and activism. He communes with such ancestors in his textiles, from Aaron Douglas of the Harlem Renaissance, to the rural modernism of the quilt-makers of Gee's Bend, Alabama, to Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Serge Attukwei Clottey

1985 in Accra, Ghana, lives and works in Accra, Ghana

Serge Attukwei Clottey is known for his object paintings made from pieces of yellow plastic canisters, which reflect the legacy of colonialism in the horizon of ecological problems and the everyday life of people in Ghana. In addition to these “afrogallonist” works, Clottey’s more recent paintings reference the first generation of photographers of African decolonization, particularly the studio photography of Seydou Keïta in Mali. Using a particular duct tape, however, the artist also recalls a case of racist state violence in Austria, where Clottey had an artist residency ten years ago. In 1999 the Nigerian asylum seeker Marcus Omofuma was killed by police during a detention flight after his mouth was taped to silence his protest. Clottey uses this material of oppression to paint images of liberation and African self-determination, as expressed in Keïta’s photographs of the nineteen-fifties.

william cordova

1969 in Lima, Peru, lives and works in Lima, Peru, Miami, and New York, USA

The stage from the last Sex Pistols concert in 1978 and sentences from a speech given by Malcolm X in 1964; the steps of the Manhattan courthouse and Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys touting the song *Voodoo Child* in 1969 as the "Black Panthers' national anthem": In his short films from the last twenty years, some of them only a few seconds long, william cordova combines audio and video fragments from music events and instances of political activism to create dialectical scenes of civil disobedience and subcultural rebellion. He draws here on techniques and aesthetic concepts from revolutionary schools of film, in particular Soviet cinema of the nineteen-twenties and Latin American Third Cinema from the sixties and seventies. In his miniatures, originally shot on Super 8—often making use of bootlegs—cordova experiments with diverse conceptions of time and forms of storytelling as he interrogates the complex cross-fertilization between movements for political and artistic liberation.

this one's 4U (pa' nosotros), a wooden scaffolding turned sideways to symbolize altered perception and function, incorporates a video projector and a large white sheet that relate to concepts of Third Cinema, the genre coined by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in 1969. Third Cinema is the urgency to reject Hollywood film values in order to create, discuss, and invent examples that reflect a true representation of the quotidian life. The work provokes parallel narratives by simultaneously projecting two films: visually projecting, *Tupac Shakur: Thug Angel, the Life of an Outlaw* (2002) by Peter Spirer and, audio projecting, *Tupac Amaru* (1984) by Federico Garcia Hurtado. Garcia's *Tupac Amaru* is a cinematic narrative of the Andean leader's indigenous and African slave-led uprising in Peru against Spanish rule in 1780. *Tupac* by Peter Spirer documents the life and times of the often-misunderstood activist and Rap artist Túpac Amaru Shakur, who was named after the Andean Tupac Amaru. Both the eighteenth- and twentieth-century Tupacs are associated with civil disobedience and helped raise social political consciousness in the Americas, the Caribbean, and beyond. How we interpret bodies, ethnicity, languages, landscapes, *race*, the past, and presence is an increasing part of our changing reality.

(william cordova)

Atul Dodiya

1959, Mumbai, India, lives and works in Mumbai, India

Atul Dodiya's pictures quote elements from the paintings of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, which are superimposed over motifs from the political life of Mahatma Gandhi. Early twenty-first-century Indian society has been marked by the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP party and its policy of identifying Indian culture with the Hindu religion. Against a backdrop of intolerance, oppression, and violence, especially against Muslims, Dodiya's art persistently harks back to the concepts of a secular society and nonviolence from the era of India's independence movement. The works presented in *Avant-Garde and Liberation* come from a series in which the artist invokes the media presence of Mahatma Gandhi: "There are images of Gandhi everywhere. Every second street is named after him, his face is on stamps, on currency, in government offices, but his spirit is nowhere. As I reflected on him I began to realize that Gandhi had much in common with a new art technique called conceptual art. The series changed my life, and my concerns shifted to the social arena. Today, I feel Gandhi is more relevant than ever before." Of apparent equal topicality for the artist is the cosmopolitan spirit of Tagore, who understood India's identity as consisting in the unification of all cultural differences. Atop scenes from Gandhi's campaigns, Dodiya paints motifs lifted from Tagore's abstract calligraphic pictures from the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, which form a poetic counterpart to Gandhi's performative politics of liberation.

Robert Gabris

1988 in Hnúšťa-Likier, Slovakia, lives and works in Vienna, Austria

In *Insectopia*, Robert Gabris responds to the impositions and attributions that an artist whose work evokes the experience of a queer Rom*nja person must face in many art institutions in a society marked by racist and sexist notions. The body prints allude to scientific and police practices of collecting and classifying plants and animals—and ultimately also humans, who have been made into exhibits and study objects as a way to exert control and power over those who deviate from the bourgeois and heterosexual norm. The artist expresses his “skepticism about anthropology, ethnography, and the institutional power of museums” in works on paper, large fabric panels, and a video of a performance in Florence. Using the technique of the body print, Gabris recalls the *Body Prints* made by the African American artist David Hammons as part of the Black Arts Movement of the nineteen-sixties. Gabris’s own transformation into an insect in the drawings and performances of *Insectopia* can be understood as an expression of resistance to the social and institutional power of classification and as an assertion of self-determination: “I don’t emigrate, I don’t assimilate, I don’t integrate. If you want to identify my fingerprints, you have to go through my *Insectopia*.”

Jojo Gronostay

1988 in Hamburg, Germany, lives and works in Vienna, Austria

The political awakening of African countries during the independence era brought with it new forms of expression in literature, film, art, and photography, as well as a specific building culture. As in the other arts of decolonization, the architecture of the nineteen-sixties and -seventies features forms and concepts that stood for liberation and pointed to the future of African societies after the end of colonialism. In *Avant-Garde City* (2023), Jojo Gronostay looks at examples of avant-garde architecture in cities such as Accra, Abidjan, and Dakar. Modernist and brutalist buildings dating from the independence era appear here—as if casually taken from the movement—among examples of profane functional construction and built manifestations of globalized capitalism. Gronostay, who for many years has been examining neocolonial aspects of the circulation of people and goods between Europe and Africa, shows us the architectural avant-garde of decolonization in an urban context. The way the work is displayed in the exhibition space furthermore calls to mind the freestanding video walls that ply us in popular shopping streets with moving advertising images.

Leslie Hewitt

1977 in New York, USA, lives and works in Houston, USA

Leslie Hewitt's photographic and sculptural works raise complex questions regarding temporality, memory, and history. Displayed in heavy wooden frames leaning against the wall, the photographs show still-life arrangements, likewise placed against a wall, made up of photos, books, plywood panels, and stones or shells. Similar to seventeenth-century Dutch still lifes, in which objects are what they are but at the same time function as symbols—of life's transience, among other things—while also making reference to the global Dutch trading empire, Hewitt's works trigger a gradual process of decoding, even though it often seems that the objects are trying to turn away from the viewer's gaze. This resistance to a consumerist mode of perception is underscored by Hewitt's citations of publications by the pan-African publishing house *Présence Africaine*, founded in Paris in 1947, and of stories written by the Afro-Surrealist author Henry Dumas, a member of the Black Arts Movement of the nineteen-sixties. In the postcolonial still life, the internationalism of Black art and liberation politics takes the place of colonial trade in its seventeenth-century counterpart.

Iman Issa

1979 in Cairo, Egypt, lives and works in Vienna, Austria, and Berlin, Germany

The four displays by Iman Issa exhibited in *Avant-Garde and Liberation* are part of an ongoing series of self-portraits as others or, as their title suggests, proxies that take on a life of their own. Bordering on abstract, these works neatly encapsulate the problem dealt with in this exhibition: How can we describe or represent the way in which contemporary artists are engaging with key figures in decolonial modernism? What does it mean to identify with a historical personality and their art, or with their position in relation to society? Issa's (self-)portraits start with a schematic head shape that is modified to fit the particular individual she is portraying herself as. The objects on view refer to Doria Shafik, a leading figure in the mid-twentieth-century Egyptian women's movement; the poet Georges Henein, a founding member of the Cairo Surrealist group *Art et Liberté* in the nineteen-thirties; the Egyptian poet and educational reformer Taha Hussein; and the philosopher of art and religion Ananda Coomaraswamy, who was involved in the Swadeshi Movement for Indian independence and sought to reconcile Western and Eastern thought. Issa's *Self-Portraits* are accompanied by short texts that tell us a little about the artist's relationship to these personalities but do not explain it. Most of us know what it feels like to identify with someone else, even if we cannot put it into words. As the artist says: "I relate exactly but at the same time I don't fully understand."

Janine Jembere

1985 in Magdeburg, Germany, lives and works in Vienna, Austria

For the photo series *Channelling (Vienna)* (2023), Janine Jembere photographed artists in Vienna with their eyes closed. As viewers, we look into the faces of the portrait subjects but not into their eyes, giving us the feeling that they see more than we do. As if they were in spiritual contact with deceased or distant persons, the sitters meld with artists, musicians, and poets from the liberation movements of the twentieth century, including the anti-colonial filmmaker Sarah Maldoror and the African American artist Faith Ringgold. Jembere made her analogue photographs after speaking with each portrait subject about the respective historical person who inspired them. *Channelling (Vienna)* thus serves to spotlight the continuity of resistance movements and the strength gained from community. “My intent is twofold,” says the artist: “to create a record of ‘who is here,’ and to acknowledge those who are present with us—in a broader sense—our ancestors in spirit or those whose dreams we cherish and whose work we continue. I also hope for new connections to emerge through shared (or newly found) references and desires.”

patricia kaersenhout

1966 in Den Helder, Netherlands lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands

Artistic engagement with contemporary forms of racism in the Netherlands (and Europe in general) has over the past twenty years led patricia kaersenhout to critically reexamine the history of slavery, colonialism, and anti-colonial resistance. In her new film, the artist places the women of the Négritude Movement at the center of a historically speculative reflection on emancipatory Black identity concepts and constricting gender relations. Taking the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956 as her springboard, kaersenhout addresses the invisibility of Black women on the stages of the Pan-African Liberation Movement. Embodied by actresses, Suzanne Césaire and the sisters Jeanne and Paulette Nardal, who along with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire were among the co-founders of Négritude in the thirties, meet up with the artists Josephine Baker and Frida Kahlo to discuss Surrealism, decolonization, art, and sexuality. A poetic-aesthetic tribute to the female Black avant-garde between Paris, Martinique, Mexico, and Mississippi.

Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński

1980 in Vienna, Austria lives and works in Vienna, Austria

In the video work *O.T., K.T.C.I.* (2022/2024), Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński performs wearing a black jumpsuit, so that only her forearms and face stand out against the dark background. Using sign-like body language, the artist writes a short sentence with outstretched arms that spells out what the initials of the title stand for: “Kill the Cop Inside” is a call to free the mind from the power of oppressive violence. The phrase comes from the Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal, who in the nineteen-sixties developed a performative art of liberation he called the “Theater of the Oppressed.” Boal coined the notion of the “cop in the head” as an image of internalized oppression that prevents many people from participating in any form of political resistance. Against the backdrop of current police violence against Black people, the language of outstretched arms and clenched fists that the artist uses to represent the call to self-liberation invokes the Black Power gesture of the sixties. “The stories of yesterday are the tools for today and the answers for tomorrow,” wrote Cindy Sissokho of Kazeem-Kamiński’s practice of taking up and carrying forward historical movements to decolonize consciousness.

Zoe Leonard

1961 in New York, USA, lives and works in New York, USA

For *Tipping Point*, Zoe Leonard collected fifty-three copies of the first edition of James Baldwin's book *The Fire Next Time* (1963) and arranged them in a stack. The number of books corresponds to the years that elapsed between the publication of Baldwin's book on the destructive power of racism in the USA and the execution of Leonard's work. The artist, whose work has since the eighties subtly addressed instances of oppression and resistance, had long been preoccupied with Baldwin's famous warning to American society. Appalled by the numerous police killings of unarmed Black people in the twenty-tens, Leonard then felt compelled to turn Baldwin's book into a work that, like few others, articulates both simply and yet with deep complexity the timeliness of historical struggles. The form taken by the sculpture is reminiscent of Minimal Art objects that came to the fore simultaneously with Baldwin's *Fire Next Time*, also calling to mind their seriality. In *Tipping Point*, however, the motif of repetition is to be understood politically: How many more times does this warning, voiced frequently since Baldwin, still have to be repeated? And when will the social tipping point be reached?

Vincent Meessen

1971 in Baltimore, USA, lives and works in Brussels, Belgium

In Jean-Luc Godard's feature film *La Chinoise* (1967), about a Maoist group that took part in the student movement in France, Omar Blondin Diop plays a militant African philosophy student and, by extension, himself. A short time later, Diop, who was inspired by the Situationists, conceived an African theater of life. He also wrote about Andy Warhol's film *Chelsea Girls* (1966) and co-founded a Marxist-Leninist group that agitated against neocolonial policies in Senegal under Léopold Sédar Senghor. Convicted of participating in a plan to free imprisoned comrades, Diop died in prison in Gorée in 1973 under unexplained circumstances. Vincent Meessen's film *Juste un Mouvement* was shot in Dakar with amateur actors and Diop's relatives as well as former companions, including the artist Issa Samb. The film updates Godard's *La Chinoise* as a reflection on the liberation movements of decolonization and on the global uprisings of the late sixties, on African-European-Chinese relations today, on the persistence of Omar Diop's political ideals, and on the revolutionary potential of art and cinema.

The Otolith Group

Founded in London, United Kingdom, in 2002 by Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun

Anjalika Sagar, 1968 London, lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Kodwo Eshun, 1967 London, lives and works in London, United Kingdom

The film begins with the recitation of a poem written in Bengali in the late nineteenth century in which Rabindranath Tagore wonders about how the here and now will figure in the future, and about how art will be viewed in a hundred years. A century later, *O Horizon* responds by looking back at the Indian poet's progressive educational projects. The Otolith Group view their film as a study of learning, showing us people practicing and learning everything from dancing to Chinese to history to gardening. Tagore developed his holistic, socially and ecologically oriented schools and the cosmopolitan Visva-Bharati world university in Santiniketan as an alternative to the British educational system. Now that the university has come under threat from the Modi government's Hindu nationalist policies, *O Horizon* reminds us of the liberating potential of learning, as embodied by Ramkinkar Baij's avant-garde sculptures on the campus of this institution of decolonization.

Fahamu Pecou

1975 in New York, USA, lives and works in Atlanta, USA

Fahamu Pecou's works explore the image of Black masculinity in the visual culture of US society, from the allegedly threatening youth, to the cool rapper, to the spectacle of Black death in the media. The artist sees his paintings as an interrogation of the Black body, mind, and spirit, represented respectively by concepts of hip-hop culture, Négritude, and Ifá (Yoruba spiritual cosmology). With the titles *Fire!!*, *Revue du Monde Noir*, and *The Crisis* the paintings on view in the show quote the covers of important publications that expressed the new Black self-confidence of the Harlem Renaissance and the Négritude Movement of the nineteen-twenties to -forties. The artist projects himself into the historical scenarios as an elegantly styled young man accompanied by African sculptures. Titles such as *Real NEGUS do Real Things* play on variations on the names of hip-hop numbers—in this case one by Notorious B.I.G., Negus being the title of the Ethiopian king—while others, such as *Return to My Native...* refer to classics of anti-colonial poetry, here Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, published in 1939.

Fahamu Pecou's drawings from the series *Egun Dance* are based on a performance that combined elements of hip-hop dance with Yoruba rituals for ensuring life after death. In the 2016 performance titled *New World Egungun*, the artist commemorated victims of anti-Black violence since the days of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He performed in front of Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where nine worshippers were shot dead by a white man in 2015; their names were incorporated into the performer's clothing. The short film *Emmett Still* (fifteen-year-old Emmett Till was murdered by white men in Mississippi in 1955) likewise deals with the historical continuity of Black deaths under conditions of white supremacy. It reflects on the daily fear instilled in young Black men in the face of constant murders of Black people at the hands of violent police or self-appointed "authorities." The film, for which the artist wrote and performed songs with rapper Killer Mike and others, integrates excerpts from a speech by James Baldwin on never-ending white terror. *Emmett Still* confronts the racist death toll with the redemptive power of Yoruba spirituality, hip-hop, and art.

Cauleen Smith

1967 in Riverside, USA, lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

A group of twelve women in colorful robes walk at dawn through the sprawling grounds of the outdoor museum in the California desert created by African American artist Noah Purifoy. Holding up banners, the women listen on transistor radios to Afrofuturist music and spiritual texts by Alice Coltrane, as well as to phrases from the Combahee River Collective's 1977 manifesto against the multiple forms of oppression faced by Black women. The title of the short film refers to Black feminist Sojourner Truth, one of the most famous fighters against slavery in the nineteenth century. *Sojourner* is about the continuation of these struggles in the twentieth century and on into the present, highlighting successful community-building projects promoting liberation from sexist and racist oppression. In the artist's own words, the film revolves around "demonstrations for an abolitionist feminism, radical generosity, and utopian projects." *Sojourner* builds on a complex assortment of allusions that meaningfully connect historical and recent liberation movements—from the abolition of slavery and the early women's movement, to the intersectionally oriented Combahee River Collective of the seventies, to the abolitionist feminism of today—with radical aesthetic practices in the art and music of the nineteen-sixties and -seventies.

Maud Sulter

1960 in Glasgow, Scotland died 2008 in Dumfries, Scotland

Hysteria (1991) is an early and significant example of an artwork that demonstrates the importance of Black artists of the past to the struggles of Black artists today. The Ghanaian-Scottish artist Maud Sulter belonged to the generation of the Black British Arts Movement in the nineteen-eighties, which came together in a racist society and an exclusionary art world to critically engage with colonial history. Drawing on her own experiences and aspirations as a Black artist in Britain, Sulter evokes in *Hysteria* the transcultural life and career of Edmonia Lewis, an African American and Native American sculptor who died in 1907 after living many years in Rome, whose work was devoted to the abolition of slavery and to Black liberation politics. Sulter's multipart work, whose title recalls the psychopathological studies carried out by Jean-Martin Charcot, which were influential for Freud's psychoanalysis, consists of marble plaques bearing the names of the protagonists, as well as large-format photographs resembling a storyboard that hark back to the style of nineteenth-century studio photography.

Due to conservation reasons, *Hysteria* is currently unable to travel. We are therefore presenting a selection of photographs and documents relating to the work, compiled by Deborah Cherry (The Estate of Maud Sulter) and Malcolm Dickson (Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow)

This series of large Polaroid photos is among the most significant works produced by the Ghanaian-Scottish artist and poet. The title refers to the poem *The Jewels* from the cycle *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) by Charles Baudelaire, in which the French poet paints an exotic picture of his Haitian-born lover Jeanne Duval by describing her as clad only in jewels. Duval was also painted by Édouard Manet and photographed by Nadar and is usually cited in Western cultural history as the "muse" of white artists while little mention is made of her own career as a dancer and actress. Intrigued by this figure, Maud Sulter devoted many years of research to trying to gauge the scope of action available to a Black woman within the avant-garde art milieu of her time: "My ongoing visual fascination with Jeanne Duval began in 1988 with a visceral response to a Nadar photograph captioned *Unknown Woman*. There she stared at me willing me to give her a name, an identity, a voice. So for over a decade, I have been image making with her in mind." The photographic search for an alternative way of looking at the personality of her predecessor is reflected in Sulter's self-portraits in the guise of Jeanne Duval, which display a kind of lexicon of gestural and facial expressions evoking the struggle against the restrictions imposed by colonial gender roles. Sulter dons in these images various pieces of jewelry that are charged with stories of slavery and the global colonial economy.

Vivan Sundaram

1943 in Shimla, India – 2023 in New Delhi, India

Over the last twenty years of his life, Vivan Sundaram frequently dealt in his work with prominent figures in Indian modernism. From a personal stance of rejecting violence, the politics of exclusion, and the Hindu nationalist movement's narrow view of history, Sundaram focused attention on progressive and cosmopolitan artists from the era of the Indian independence movement. In addition to the painter Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941), his aunt, to whom the artist dedicated years of research, publications, and a series of digital photomontages entitled *Re-take of Amrita* (2001–02), the sculptor Ramkinkar Baij (1906–1980) was another important reference point. In the group of works *409 Ramkinkars*, Sundaram reinterpreted several sculptures by the Bengali modernist. Like *Mill-Recall* is *One and the Many* part of this complex, consists of 220 terracotta sculptures that Sundaram executed in a cross-generation dialogue with a group of young fellow artists. These pieces take their cue from Ramkinkar's monumental sculptures *Santhal Family* (1938) and *Mill Call* (1956), with which the avant-garde artist honored the political role of subalterns in the Indian struggle for liberation. "I passionately desire a connection with Ramkinkar," wrote Sundaram. "He prods me to make radical choices—as he did in his time, and so valiantly."

Moffat Takadiwa

1983 in Karoi, Zimbabwe, lives and works in Harare, Zimbabwe

Moffat Takadiwa makes sculptural images from materials he collects from dumping grounds in Zimbabwe. Using keys from discarded computer keyboards and referencing anti-colonial thinkers such as the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who published the influential book *Decolonising the Mind* in 1986, Takadiwa's workshop creates objects that offer a critique of the colonial politics of language and education on the African continent. From these elements of deconstructed European language, the artist develops forms and signs that in turn refer to the aesthetics of almost eradicated local traditions or to musicians such as Thomas Mapfumo, who played an important role in the liberation political struggles in Southern Africa.