

Toyin Ojih Odutola

Toyin Ojih Odutola (born 1985) is a Nigerian-born, American visual artist known for her vivid multimedia drawings and works on paper.^{[1][2][3]} Ojih Odutola produces multimedia drawings that engage in the complexity and shape-ability of identity. Shown in her unique style of complex mark-making, her lavish compositions rethink the category and traditions of portraiture.^[4]

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Toyin Ojih Odutola	
Born	1985 (age 33–34) <div>Ife, Nigeria</div>
Nationality	Nigerian, American
Education	California College of the Arts <div>University of Alabama in Huntsville</div>
Occupation	Visual artist
Website	toyinojihodutola.com (http://toyinojihodutola.com)

Early life and education

Ojih Odutola was born in 1985 in Ife, Nigeria, where both her parents were teachers. In 1990, her family moved to Berkeley, California, where her father was doing research and teaching chemistry at the university. After four years in Berkeley, the family moved to Huntsville, Alabama, where her father became a professor and her mother a nurse.^[5] She is of Yoruba and Igbo descent from her paternal and maternal heritage, respectively.^[5]

She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art and Communications from the University of Alabama in Huntsville in 2008.^[6] In 2012, she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from California College of the Arts. She is represented by the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City, where she lives and works.^{[7][6]}

Career

Forbes featured Ojih Odutola in its 2012 list of 30 notable individuals under 30 in the category "Art & Style."^{[8][9]}

Her work was also the featured cover story for Juxtapoz Magazine in November 2017, on the occasion of her museum solo exhibition, *To Wander Determined*, at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.^[10]

She was appointed the *Lida A. Orzeck '68 Distinguished Artist-in-Residence* for the academic year of 2017 to 2018 at Barnard College in New York.^[11]

In September of 2018, she was nominated as one of the 21 shortlisted artists for the *Future Generation Art Prize* for 2019.^[12]



Lonely Chambers (T.O.), 2011, pen ink and marker drawing on paper, by Toyin Ojih Odutola

For The New York Times Magazine's annual *The Lives They Lived* issue, Ojih Odutola was invited to create a tribute portrait of the late singer, songwriter and pianist, Aretha Franklin, for its cover, published on December 30, 2018.^[13]

Style and influences

Ojih Odutola is best known for her highly-detailed portrait drawings, entirely or primarily done in black pen ink. Her more recent work has expanded to include charcoal, pastel, and pencil.^[14] She credits her high school art teacher, Dana Bathurst, for introducing her to African American portraiture artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett, Romare Bearden and Barkley L. Hendricks.^[15]

Selected exhibitions

- 2011: *(MAPS)*, at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, which marked her first solo exhibition at the gallery and in New York City.^[16]
- 2013: *My Country Has No Name*, her second solo exhibition at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, which dealt with themes on the malleability and suspicion regarding identity and how a portrait can only be a fragmented oversimplification of a person.^[17]
- 2013—2014: *The Constant Wrestler*, at Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (iMOMA), Indianapolis, Indiana, her first museum solo exhibition. The show was later profiled by Julie Bramowitz for Interview Magazine, published December 3rd, 2013.^[18]
- 2014: *Like the Sea*, her solo show at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. The exhibition title is inspired by an aphorism from Zora Neale Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, where Hurston writes, "Love is lak de sea. It's uh movin' thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore."^[19]
- 2015: *Untold Stories*, Ojih Odutola's second major museum exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Missouri.^[20]
- 2015—2016: *Of Context and Without*, marked her fourth solo exhibition at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. The exhibition was profiled by Emily McDermott for Interview Magazine on December 20th, 2015.^[21]
- 2016—2017: *A Matter of Fact*, her solo exhibition of portraits depicting a fictional Nigerian family at the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), in San Francisco, California, following a two-month residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts in California's Marin County, that same year. The show would the beginning of a series of exhibitions involving this family, emphasizing themes of wealth, travel, and how status and power were totems of idealism and not indicative of equality and how humanity is perceived and experienced. The architect, David Adjaye, named the exhibition as one of the Best of 2016 in the December issue of Artforum International Magazine.^[22]
- 2017—2018: *To Wander Determined*, her first solo museum show in New York, opened at Whitney Museum of American Art.^[23] The exhibition was profiled by Zadie Smith for British Vogue in their June 2018 issue.^[24]
- 2018: *Testing the Name*, Ojih Odutola's fourth solo museum exhibition held at the Savannah College of Art and Design's (SCAD) Museum of Art, in Savannah, Georgia, which was included in the *SCAD de:FINE* exhibition series for that season.^[25]
- 2018: participated in the 12th Manifesta Biennial, hosted in Palermo, Italy, with her solo exhibition, *Scenes of Exchange*, held at the Orto Botanico di Palermo.^[26]
- 2018: *The Firmament*, at Hood Museum of Art, of Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire.^[27]
- 2018: *When Legends Die*, her fifth solo exhibition with Jack Shainman Gallery, in New York.^[28]

Ojih Odutola has also participated in group exhibitions at various institutions, including:

- *Show Me as I Want to Be Seen*, at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, (2019).^[7]
- *For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn*, at The Drawing Center, New York, (2018).^[7]
- *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas (Afro-Atlantic Stories)*, at São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo, Brazil, (2018).^[7]
- *Disguise: Masks and Global African Art*, at Brooklyn Museum, New York, (2016).^[7]
- *FORE and Black: Color, Material, Concept*, at Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, (2015, 2012, respectively).^[7]
- *Ballpoint Pen Drawing Since 1950*, at Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, (2013).^[7]

- *The Progress of Love*, at the Menil Collection, Houston, (2012).^[7]

Collections

Ojii Odutola's work is held in many public collections, including:

- Museum of Modern Art, New York^[7]
- Whitney Museum of American Art, New York^[7]
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York^[7]
- Birmingham Museum of Art, AL^[7]
- Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland^[7]
- Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire^[7]
- Mississippi Museum of Art, MS^[7]
- New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana^[7]
- Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania^[7]
- Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey^[7]
- Spencer Museum of Art, KS^[7]
- Honolulu Museum of Art Spalding House, Hawaii^[7]
- National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.^[7]

Publications

- *Alphabet: A Selected Index of Anecdotes and Drawings*, 2012.^[29]
- *The Treatment, 2015—17*, Anteism Books, 2018.^[30]
- *For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojii Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary*, The Drawing Center, Exhibition catalogue, 2018.^[31]
- *Toyin Ojii Odutola: A Matter of Fact*, Museum of the African Diaspora, Exhibition catalogue, 2019.^[32]

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