

EXHIBITION GUIDE

EBUN SODIPO

I Found Venus and She was Transsexual

30 Nov 2022 – 12 Feb 2023

'To pass through into the space of the show is to be touched by the powerful, magical, ghostly left hands of sisters, trans women and trans femme people, who have sustained my existence and enable other trans people's existences.'

Ebun Sodipo

For her first institutional solo exhibition, Ebun Sodipo presents a new body of sculptures and collages that explore and reinterpret Black trans historical presence. Following writer and theorist Saidiya Hartman's methodology of critical fabulation, Sodipo summons historical figures who subvert notions of race and gender. The stories of Mary Jones and Ellen Craft, for instance, are recuperated, through objects and image, for their potential to root contemporary Black trans existence.

In her practice, Sodipo questions where the record of black trans feminine experience exists within the archive of Black experience, and thus what trajectory is plotted for the contemporary and future moment. The title of the exhibition refers to Saidiya Hartman's essay, *Venus in Two Acts*, which outlines her method of critical fabulation as a tool to counter the gaps and silences in archival records pertaining to Black life, which violently encode racialised power relations.

Sodipo collages social and art history, and recent visual culture, charged fragments of which juxtapose to create new bodies of knowledge and potential identities. Neglected figures and pioneers of trans identity are imaginatively excavated through storytelling, from a partial archive, that has been authored through domination. Their experiences, in Sodipo's work, are written through mundane everyday practices, without recourse to episodes of violence that have characterised the story of Black subjects, and indeed are usually the only reason for their record in the archive in the form of judicial record and economic transaction.

Sculptural presences in the exhibition space enact a restoration of trans figures. A pair of shoes, typical to the nineteenth century, are presented. These are similar to those worn by Ellen Craft, an enslaved person who travelled 100 miles with her partner, dressed as a white man in order to escape the American South. A prosthetic vulva sits nearby, a totem of Mary Jones, an American soldier and trans sex worker born in 1802,

who wore such an item. Another figure is quoted in documents that form part of a framed image; Vitoria, an enslaved African woman, working as a healer and sex worker in Lisbon who was eventually imprisoned by the state.

A series of interventions divide the exhibition space from the rest of the building, stressing thresholds, and crossings into and out of the space. Silver Mylar is stretched across upper windows and balconies, rippling with the movement of visitors and eddies of air. The material is semi-transparent, preventing total oversight of the space. PVC curtains hang across the doorways into the gallery, bearing images of left hands. The left hand is special across African cultures, symbolising women and children, femininity, weakness, magic and night. Sodipo's images also refers to a group of male bodied spiritual figures who would dress as women and marry men in the Imenti tribe, and whose left hands held ritual power.

EVENTS

12 Jan, 7–8pm

ARTIST TOUR

Join artist Ebun Sodipo for a special tour of the exhibition at the CCA. She will reflect on the various historical figures and cultural fragments that make up this new work, and talk about her upcoming projects.

02 Feb, 7–9pm

TALK

*I FOUND VENUS AND SHE WAS
TRANSSEXUAL: READINGS*

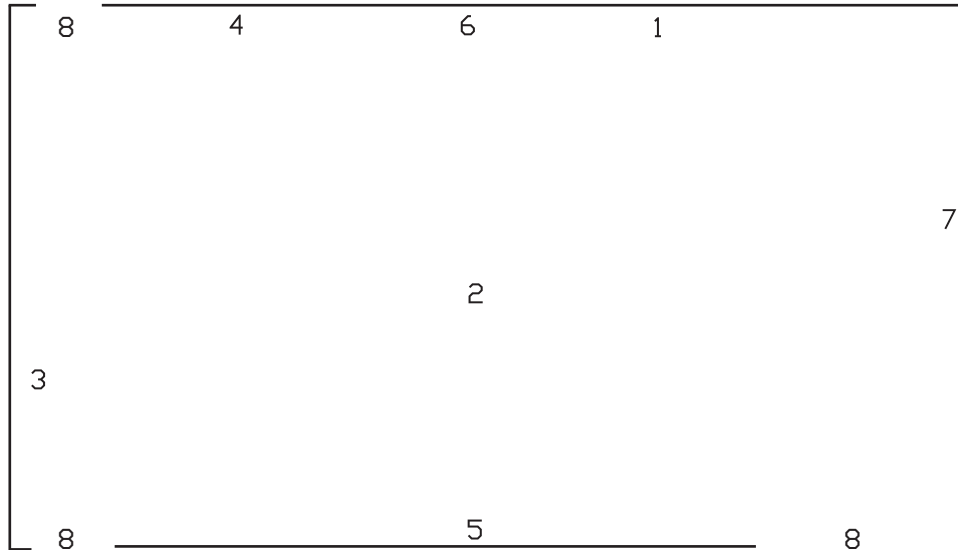
Join us for an evening of talks and readings staged in response to *I Found Venus and She was Transsexual*, a new series of works by Ebun Sodipo. Two readings will be staged in the exhibition space itself, followed by a discussion between filmmaker, photographer and visual artist fari green, and artist, poet, and performer Chloe Finlani. Each has a longstanding engagement with Sodipo's practice and will share their interpretation of her commission for Goldsmiths CCA. Readers include artist Kumbirai Makumbe and E.M Williams.

To book tickets, or for more information on CCA's public programme, please visit www.goldsmithscca.art

FLOORPLAN

OAK
FOUNDATION
GALLERY

BASEMENT



LIST OF WORKS

1. All works in balconies and windows,
General Partition, 2022.
Mylar, timber, metal

2. *Prosthesis for freedom - Mary Jones' 'piece of cow [leather?] pierced and opened like a woman's womb'*, 2022
Leather, timber and birch plinth

3. *Prosthesis for freedom - Ellen Craft's 'pair of very high-heeled boots'*, 2022.
Leather, timber and birch plinth

4. *when placed next to a historical canon*, 2022.
Mounted print

5. *A Million Infinite Riffs*, 2022.
Mounted print

6. *Madeline et Margo*, 2022.
Mounted print

7. *I Just Get mine Quietly*, 2022.
Print on vinyl

8. All works in doorways
General Partition, 2022.
PVC curtains