



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

In the Black Fantastic

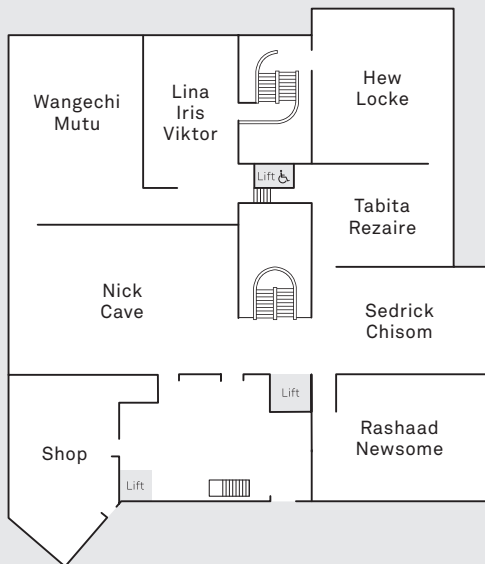
29 JUNE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2022

**HAYWARD
GALLERY**

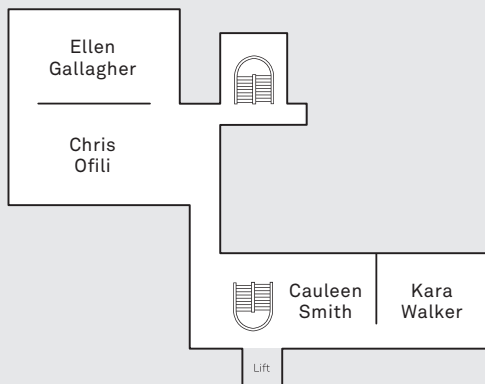
EXHIBITION GUIDE

SCALE OF MILES
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Lower Galleries



Upper Galleries



Introduction

In the Black Fantastic is the first major exhibition to gather together artists from the African diaspora who embrace myth and science fiction as a way to address racial injustice and explore alternative realities. The Black fantastic doesn't describe a movement or a rigid category so much as a way of seeing shared by artists who grapple with the racial inequities of contemporary society by conjuring new narratives of Black possibility. Beyond visual art, it encompasses many other works, from the spectacular imagery of Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and the movie *Black Panther* to the enthralling novels of Toni Morrison and Octavia Butler. In all these instances, we see Black culture at its most wildly imaginative and artistically ambitious.

But why now for the Black fantastic? After all, the long history of bigotry suffered by Black people in the West makes an unlikely context for art that looks to myth and fable. All the more so in the era of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter. But I'd argue that the turn to the fantastical has nothing to do with escapism. On the contrary, it suggests a refusal to live within the constraints of a society that defines Black people as inferior and alien. It shares an understanding of race as a socially constructed fiction rather than a scientific truth, albeit one that perniciously shapes popular perceptions and behaviour. Ultimately, it offers a thrilling invitation to embrace fantasy as a zone of creative and cultural liberation. The Black fantastic is what freedom looks like.

Ekow Eshun, Exhibition Curator



Nick Cave

Born 1959, Fulton, Missouri, USA
Lives and works in Chicago, Illinois, USA

Nick Cave made the first of his wearable sculptures called *Soundsuits* in 1992, when televised footage of police officers in Los Angeles brutally beating an African American man named Rodney King sparked city-wide uprisings. The *Soundsuits* were Cave's response to this traumatic period and his own feelings as a Black man of being 'devalued, less-than, dismissed'. The costumes obscure the body with pattern and colour, confounding easy recognition. 'It erases gender, race and class', the artist explains, 'it forces you to look at things without judgement'. *Soundsuit 9:29* responds to the murder of George Floyd in 2020 by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Commemoration, collectivity and hope for the future underlie the other works in this installation. A new commission, *Chain Reaction*, comprises linked resin casts of the artist's own forearm. Two wall-sculptures also feature arm casts, entwined with tole flowers. Cave acknowledges the ceremonial quality that his works embody: 'They've become altars, shrines – these alternative relics that hold a spirit'.

Image: Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2014.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



001

Wangechi Mutu

Born 1972, Nairobi, Kenya
Works in New York, USA, and Nairobi, Kenya

Wangechi Mutu describes making collages as 'a way of destroying a certain set of hierarchies that I don't believe in.' These hierarchies, relating to gender, race and class, are often evident in material Mutu uses in her collages, from car magazines to pornography. The artist layers this imagery with pools of paint and ink, creating fantastical female figures and engaging in her own form of myth making.

The screamer island dreamer references the *Nguva* from East African folklore, which wanders along the coast and appears to be a regular person while interacting with and eventually charming people into the sea.

To create her series of *Sentinel* sculptures, Mutu collects natural materials – horn, soil, stone, shell – from her travels. The sculptures allude to divine, feminine forms and guardians. 'They look like they are guarding me, guarding language, and the earth that they're made from,' she comments.

For *The End of eating Everything*, Mutu wanted to create 'a film that felt like the collages had come alive'. Singer and songwriter Santigold features as a gluttonous planetary figure, a metaphor for humankind's overconsumption. She represents the Earth at the end of time, evolving into something both grotesque and spectacular.'



002

Image: Wangechi Mutu, *The screamer island dreamer*, 2014 (detail).
© Wangechi Mutu. Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro

HAYWARD GALLERY



Lina Iris Viktor

Lives and works in Naples, Italy, and London, UK

'I am looking at ancient cultures to tell the story of our place in the universe,' explains Lina Iris Viktor. The artist's use of gold is partly inspired by ancient Egyptian funerary traditions, in which the precious metal was meant to serve as a conduit between heaven and earth. For Viktor, the colour black represents the 'materia prima', the original material from which all the universe was created.

Inspired by a range of West African sculptural traditions, including Akan and Dogon art, Viktor's *Diviner* sculptures represent figures who communicate knowledge across time. Titled *The Watcher*, *The Listener*, and *The Orator*, the sculptures are positioned at a height which invites you to communicate with them. The artist describes them as 'vessels for your stories and secrets'.

The series *A Haven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.* relates to the history of Liberia, a West African country founded in 1822 by the American Colonization Society to resettle free-born and emancipated Black people. The artist appears in the guise of the Libyan Sibyl, a prophetess from Greek mythology who reputedly foresaw the transatlantic slave trade and was a reference for some groups in the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement.



003

Image: Lina Iris Viktor, *Second*, 2018 (detail).
© Lina Iris Viktor. Courtesy the artist

HAYWARD GALLERY



Hew Locke

Born 1959, Edinburgh, UK
Lives and works in London, UK

'Survivors on horseback in a dystopian, burnt-out landscape, heading to the future.' This is how Hew Locke describes *The Ambassadors*, a group of sculptures which build on his interest in disrupting the way we memorialise historical figures. Decked out in elaborate regalia, with military medals and an image of the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture, the four riders evoke both public statues and living men carrying a weighty colonial history. 'They come from some empire, some imaginary state,' Locke comments.

In a series of photographs titled *How Do You Want Me?*, the artist appears dressed up as an array of sinister figures. Although partly inspired by the large, domineering portraits found in stately homes, the photographs here are hung against the backdrop of traditional Guyanese houses. The portraits try to act out a visual performance of power, but the cheap gold and plastic make clear that their apparent wealth and status could crumble at any time.



004

Image: Hew Locke, *Saturn*, from the series *How Do You Want Me?*, 2007 (detail).
Courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, London

HAYWARD GALLERY





Tabita Rezaire

Born 1989, Paris, France

Lives and works in Cayenne, French Guiana

Tabita Rezaire's installation; explores the possibility of a world beyond duality and normative concepts of masculine and feminine. The artist describes 'a time-space of feminine-masculine alignment', echoing our 'longing to expand, to overcome our boundaries, and to be free'.

Rezaire's film is projected onto a pyramid, a shape believed to be sacred in many ancient cultures including those of Egypt, Sudan, Mexico, Peru, Guatemala and China. The work's seven narrators refer to a more fluid understanding of gender which was common in certain pre-colonial cultures. Binary gender, the artist asserts, circulated globally with colonialism. With *Ultra Wet – Recapitulation*, Rezaire cautions that 'a world of them and us – whatever the criteria – will always breed more violence and suffering.'



005

Image: Tabita Rezaire, *Ultra Wet – Recapitulation*, 2017.
© Tabita Rezaire. Courtesy the artist and Goodman Gallery, South Africa

HAYWARD GALLERY



Sedrick Chisom

Born 1989, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Rooted in North American culture and history, Sedrick Chisom's paintings present scenes from a post-apocalyptic future in which all people of colour have chosen to leave Earth. The humans left behind are afflicted with a fictitious disease called 'revitiligo', which darkens the pigmentation of their skin. These ghostly characters are depicted roaming barren and scarred landscapes. 'I think of these images as "visions" or "premonitions" of sorts', Chisom explains, 'like a cautionary tale about a world that we seem to inevitably be headed towards.'

The artist parodies a variety of sources including ancient Greek mythology, *The Boondocks* animated television series, alt-right texts and western art history. The charcoal drawing *The Wholly Avoidable Death of Mighty Whitey, The Last Drunk Dionysian Hero, AKA The Wholly Tragic Birth of Fragile Narcissus*, makes reference to Caravaggio's painting *Narcissus* (1599), reinterpreting the mythical scene of a man figure transfixed by his own reflection.



006

Image: Sedrick Chisom, *Medusa Wandered the Wetlands of the Capital Citadel Undisturbed by Two Confederate Drifters Preoccupied by Poisonous Vapors that Stirred in the Night Air*, 2017 (detail).

© Sedrick Chisom. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London. Photo: Mark Blower

HAYWARD GALLERY



Rashaad Newsome

Born 1979, New Orleans, LA, USA

Lives and works in New York and Oakland, CA, USA

Rashaad Newsome samples and reconfigures imagery relating to pop culture, traditional African sculpture, and the Black Queer community. The artist describes his work as 'a jumping-off point to discuss ways we can liberate ourselves from systems of oppression and class domination'.

The video, *Build or Destroy*, brings to life a bejewelled performer who vogues while fire consumes a fictional cityscape. Newsome describes this act of destruction as 'a state of mind' where artificial hierarchies and established structures are obliterated, creating space to build new, alternative realities.

For Newsome, collage is the connective tissue between all of his work and a way of constructing a new cultural framework of power. The collages on display in the exhibition depict cyborgs created through a combination of CGI, found imagery and photography. Their frames are covered with automotive paint, evoking the aesthetics of car culture associated with the Black working class of the American Deep South.



007

Image: Rashaad Newsome, *Twirl*, 2019 (detail).

© Rashaad Newsome. Courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery

HAYWARD GALLERY



Cauleen Smith

Born 1967, Riverside, California, USA
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California, USA

Cauleen Smith explores the utopian possibilities of community and artistic expression. Smith is frequently inspired by African American artists, including speculative fiction writers and pioneering musicians. *Epistrophy* shares its name with a composition by the jazz pianist Thelonius Monk. It is also a literary term, meaning a phrase in music or literature that is repeated for emphasis. The found objects assembled on the table are each of personal significance to the artist who describes them as an 'archive of associations, travels, affections, desires, questions, and longings'. They are inserted via live-feed projections into video footage of vast landscapes, elevating the everyday into something transcendental.

Smith's watercolour paintings are part of a series called the *BLK FMNNST Loaner Library*. The paintings present the covers of books 'personally beloved' by the artist, many relating to race and gender liberation struggles. Each worn copy is held up for the viewer's attention by an anonymous hand. Smith began the project as an attempt to introduce young activists to the texts that informed her own political and social consciousness. 'I wanted these books to be noticed and, in our photo-saturated world, drawing them slowed people down and invited renewed interest.'



008

Image: Cauleen Smith, *Epistrophy*, 2018. Installation photograph,
Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2020-21.
© Cauleen Smith. Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

HAYWARD GALLERY



Kara Walker

Born 1969, Stockton, California, USA
Lives and works in New York, USA

Kara Walker uses cut-paper silhouettes to craft fantasias of sex and violence which provocatively expose America's racist history. For *Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies*, the artist has used this distinctive animation to re-enact infamous white supremacist crimes from modern US history, including Timothy McVeigh's 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 1998 murder of the James Byrd in Texas. The work's title alludes to *The Turner Diaries*, an abhorrent racist novel which inspired McVeigh and which the Walker describes as a 'race war fantasy combination of Nazi Germany and Antebellum South'. The artist notes that she was moved to create this film by the rise of racist rhetoric within contemporary US political discourse. Images of Donald Trump and the rattlesnake emblem of the alt-right emphasise the ways in which these events of the past are reverberating in the present.

The film's musical score, composed by Minneapolis-based musician and artist Lady Midnight, fuses diverse genres of American music including marching band, ragtime, rock, funk and soul.



009

Image: Kara Walker, *Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies*, 2021 (detail).
© Kara Walker. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co. and Sprüth Magers

HAYWARD GALLERY



Chris Ofili

Born 1968, Manchester, UK
Lives and works in Trinidad

Chris Ofili reimagines scenes from two foundational texts of European culture – Homer’s *Odyssey* and the Bible. In the Greek epic, Odysseus is kept prisoner by the goddess Calypso on her enchanted island in the Aegean Sea. Ofili relocates their encounter to Trinidad, the Caribbean island where he has lived since 2005. ‘I didn’t want to illustrate the stories’, the artist explains, ‘I wanted to see if another story could be created from it’. The pair are shown as lovers within unearthly and sumptuous landscapes. Ofili was partly inspired by the Saint Lucian poet Derek Walcott whose narrative poem *Omeros* used characters from *The Odyssey* to discuss the troubled legacies of colonialism.

The sculpture *Annunciation* takes as its subject the visitation of Mary by the angel Gabriel, announcing the coming of Jesus. Ofili imagines their meeting as a carnal tryst between powerful supernatural beings. The artist has engaged with Christian iconography since his earliest work, often re-casting its narratives with characters, imagery and materials drawn from a rich variety of cultural and mythological sources.



010

Image: Chris Ofili, *Odyssey 11*, 2019 (detail).
© Chris Ofili. Photo: Anna Arca

HAYWARD GALLERY



Ellen Gallagher

Born 1965, Rhode Island, USA
Lives and works between Rotterdam, Netherlands and
New York, USA

Ellen Gallagher's *Watery Ecstatic* watercolours and *Ecstatic Draught of Fishes* paintings envision an underwater realm inhabited by the descendants of enslaved pregnant women thrown overboard during the ocean crossings from West Africa to the Americas. The aquatic world pictured by Gallagher is inspired by a mythic Black Atlantis called Drexciya. Gallagher draws on this powerful Afrofuturist narrative of survival and transformation to imagine a sunless realm populated by myriad underwater species. The artist has used oil, pigment, and paper on canvas, as well as the precious metal palladium, to portray shoals of female creatures whose features are based on ritual sculptures of Central Africa. Techniques of erasure, including cutting, abrading and layering evoke the ever-changing landscape of the sea floor.

In 1630, the Dutch captured an area of northeast Brazil profitable for sugar-cane production. Under the governance of Prince Johan Maurits, this colony saw the first widespread use of slave labour in Dutch history. Alongside her own work, Gallagher has chosen to present an historic painting by Albert Eckhout (c.1610–1665), who travelled to Brazil in the court of Maurits, to document the people, plants and animals of the new Dutch colony. 'I consider these Eckhout paintings commodity maps', comments Gallagher. 'They are forensic evidence of the coming into being of the Dutch slave-labor camp.'



011

Image: Ellen Gallagher, *Ecstatic Draught of Fishes*, 2020 (detail).
© Ellen Gallagher. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Tony Nathan

HAYWARD GALLERY



Curator's reading list

Elizabeth Alexander, *The Black Interior: Essays* (Graywolf Press, 2004)

Jayna Brown, *Black Utopias: Speculative Life and the Music of Other Worlds* (Duke University Press, 2021)

Octavia E. Butler, *The Xenogenesis Trilogy* (Doubleday, 1979–87)

Maryse Conde, *Segu* (Penguin, 2017)

Samuel R. Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (Bantam Books, 1984)

Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (Quartet Books, 1998)

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 1967)

Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006)

Marlon James, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* (Riverhead Books, 2019)

NK Jemisin, *Broken Earth Trilogy* (Orbit, 2015-17)

John Keene, *Counternarratives* (2016)

Kameelah L. Martin, *Envisioning Black Feminist Voodoo Aesthetics: African Spirituality in American Cinema* (Lexington, 2018)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Knopf, 1987)

Fred Moten, *Consent Not to be a Single Being trilogy* (Duke University Press, 2017-8)

Nnedi Okorafor, *Binti: The Complete Trilogy* (Tor.com, 2019)

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008)

Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (Doubleday, 1972)

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016)

Amos Tutuola, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (Faber, 1952)

Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (Faber & Faber, 1990)

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (Fleet, 2016)

Curator's playlist

Art Ensemble of Chicago, 'Theme de Yoyo' (1970)
Erykah Badu, 'Mama's Gun' (2000)
Pastor T. L. Barrett and the Youth for Christ Choir, 'Father I Stretch My Hands' (1976)
Don Cherry, 'Organic Music Society' (1972)
Chic, 'At Last I am Free' (1978)
Alice Coltrane, 'Journey in Satchidananda' (1971)
The Comet is Coming, 'Trust in the Lifeorce of the Deep Mystery' (2019)
Roy Davis Jr. and Peven Everett, 'Gabriel' (1997)
Drexciya 'Neptune's Lair' (1999)
Donny Hathaway, 'Someday We'll All Be Free' (1973)
Kendrick Lamar, 'To Pimp a Butterfly' (2015)
Laraji, 'Moon Piano' (2020)
Pharoah Sanders, 'Elevation' (1973)
The Revolutionaries, 'Kunta Kinte Dub' (2007)
Sault, 'Untitled (Black is)' (2020)
Shabaka and the Ancestors, 'We Are Sent Here by History' (2020)
Nina Simone, 'Strange Fruit' (1965)
Solange, 'A Seat at the Table' (2016)
Soul II Soul, 'Keep On Movin' (1989)
Sun Ra, Space is the Place (1972)

Summer: In the Black Fantastic

Across the Southbank Centre

Thu 30 Jun

In the Black Fantastic: Artists' Talk

Curator Ekow Eshun and artists Sedrick Chisom, Cauleen Smith and Lina Iris Viktor.

St Paul's Pavilion, Level 6, Blue Side, Royal Festival Hall

Sat 2 Jul

Writing Poetry with Belinda Zhawi: Online Workshop

Online poetry led by writer Belinda Zhawi.

Sun 10 Jul

Jeff Mills Presents: Tomorrow Comes the Harvest

The figurehead of the Detroit techno scene brings us his Afrofunk-electro-jazz ensemble.

Royal Festival Hall

Fri 15 Jul

Hew Locke in-conversation

Hear Hew Locke discuss his artistic practice.

Purcell Room

Fri 15 Jul

Poetry + Film / Hack: Supa Modo

Watch Likarion Wainaina's film Supa Modo and hear live poetry readings.

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Fri 15 Jul

In the Black Fantastic R.A.P Party

A night pairing poetry inspired by myth, fantasy and Afrofuturism with top-notch hip-hop.

Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

Sat 16 Jul

Jazz Legends

Performing live: Sun Ra Arkestra, Norman Connors, Jean Carne & Gary Bartz.

Royal Festival hall

Sat 16 Jul

DEADCORP Presents CASISDEAD

The masked rapper formerly known as Castro Saint, Castro, and Cas calls a DEADCORP conference.

Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

Sun 17 Jul

Cosmic Quadraphonic

Hear incredible albums on the quadraphonic sound system they were designed for.

Purcell Room

Sat 30 & Sun 31 Jul

In the Black Fantastic: Live

Live performances and striking visuals, inspired by the exhibition.

Purcell Room

Sat 6 Aug

Pink Siifu + Goya Gumbani + muva of Earth

The unpredictable, ultra-talented rapper, singer and producer.

Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

Thu 12 Aug

Kinetika Bloco: Through the Fire

Glorious music and dance from 150 young people for the finale of Kinetika Bloco's Summer School
Clore Ballroom, FREE

Fri 27 Aug

In the Black Fantastic x Tawiah + Al Moore

In alt-soul trailblazer Tawiah's second album, Ertha, created in collaboration with Al Moore.

Purcell Room

Fri 2 & Sat 3 Sep

John Glacier

The London-based rapper and producer carves soundscapes with her punk-poet electronic songs.

Purcell Room

Thu 15 Sep

Writing In the Black Fantastic

Writers Courttia Newland and Michael Salu discuss the fantastical in their work with Allah Wakatama

Level 5 Function Room, Green Side, Royal Festival Hall

Riverside Terrace Stage

Throughout the summer, join us for free DJ takeovers, live music, dance on the Riverside Terrace.

Visit the Southbank Centre website for more details
and to book tickets

In the Black Fantastic: Visionary Films of Afrofuturism, Myth and Speculative Fiction

BFI Southbank

In the Black Fantastic at the BFI brings together movies by visionary filmmakers from the African diaspora who draw on elements of fantasy to address racial injustice and explore alternative realities.

Fri 1 Jul

The Brother from Another Planet
6:05pm & Wed 6 Jul 8:45pm

Sat 2 Jul

Sankofa + intro by June Givanni,
June Givanni Pan African Cinema
Archive*
2pm* & Wed 20 Jul 8:35pm

Sat 2 Jul

Daughters of the Dust
8:30pm & Wed 13 Jul 8:40pm

Sun 3 Jul

Yeelen
3:50pm & Thu 14 Jul 8:40pm

Mon 4 Jul

Top of the Heap
6:10pm & Sat 30 Jul 8:45pm

Tue 5 Jul

In the Afrofuture (a trio of films
exploring Afrofuturism)
6:20pm & Sun 17 Jul 4pm

Thu 7 Jul

Atlantics
8:40pm & Sun 31 Jul 3:40pm

Sat 9 Jul

Kuso
8:50pm & Fri 22 Jul 6:10pm

Wed 13 Jul

In the Black Fantastic
introduction by Ekow Eshun +
Touki Bouki
5:50pm

Fri 15 Jul

The Burial of Kojo
6:30pm & Thu 28 Jul 8:40pm

Mon 18 Jul

The Black Atlantic + Q&A with
Rhea Storr*
6:15pm* & Sat 30 Jul 12 noon

Tue 19 Jul

Eve's Bayou
8:45pm & Thu 28 Jul 6:00pm

Wed 27 Jul

Touki Bouki
8:50pm



Exhibition credits

In the Black Fantastic is curated by Ekow Eshun

Assistant Curator: Thomas Sutton

Curatorial Assistant: Debbie Meniru

Exhibition Registrar: Stephanie Busson

Senior Technicians: Archie Bell

Installation Manager: Juliane Heynert

Installation technicians: Matthew Arthurs, Philip Gardner, Gabriel Humberstone, Mark Melvin, Dave Miles, Mike Newman, Joe Richards, Jacopo Sarzi, David Spicer, Chloe Windsor

Indemnity Coordinator: Alison Maun

General Manager: Urszula Kossakowska

Operations Administrator: Andrea Obinna Pelagatti

Senior Visitor Experience Manager: Leonie Warner

Hayward Gallery Coordinator: Maya Baker

Publications Manager: Lucy Biddle

Curatorial Intern: Alayo Akinkugbe

Former Assistant Curator: Phoebe Cripps

Former Senior Technicians: Nick Davies and Chloe Brooks

Graphic design: Nina Jua Klein Studio

Build: Sam Forster Ltd.

Lighting: Lightwaves Ltd.

In the Black Fantastic is generously supported by the U.S. Embassy London, Gagosian, Cockayne - Grants for the Arts and The London Community Foundation, Victoria Miro, David Zwirner, Pilar Corrias and Sprüth Magers.



COCKAYNE



Bloomberg Connects

For additional exhibition insights, including audio commentary by curator Ekow Eshun, download the free Bloomberg Connects app and open the Hayward Gallery guide. To listen, plug in your headphones, tap the Lookup tab at the bottom of the screen and enter the relevant number.



Scan this QR code with your phone camera, or search 'Bloomberg Connects' in the App Store or Google Play

A large print version of this guide is available at the ticket desk in the Hayward Gallery foyer.

If you do not want to keep this guide, please deposit it in the box in the foyer to be recycled.

Cover image:

Lina Iris Viktor, *Eleventh*, 2018.

Courtesy of the artist

@hayward.gallery



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