

**monopol**  
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# Precious Okoyomon – ONE EITHER LOVES ONESELF OR KNOWS ONESELF

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Photo: Markus Tretter, © Precious Okoyomon, Kunsthaus Bregenz

Precious Okoyomon’s works traverse art, poetry, and performance. They investigate identity, colonial history, spirituality, and people’s relationship to things and the living environment. Intimate personal questions are linked with political and social issues.

Even before the pandemic, Okoyomon was invited to exhibit at Kunsthaus Bregenz – the youngest artist in the institution’s history, then just twenty-seven years old. Okoyomon gained the attention of a broad public with installations that incorporate materials such as soil, plants, and animals. At the Venice Biennale in 2022, the artist transformed the hall of the Arsenale

into a lush, rampant ecosystem. Expansive sculptures, densely growing climbing plants, and small watercourses set in a tropical atmosphere created an experiential space that linked the processes of nature with afro-futuristic visions – and at the same time addressed the migration history of plants as well as their displacement.

For Kunsthau Bregenz, several new works have been developed that investigate diverse themes. Located on the ground floor are two offices that recall the consulting rooms of the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. Furniture from around 1900 creates an atmosphere that is at once familiar as well as impersonal. Existential detectives in adorned lab coats engage visitors in dialogue and pose questions about dreams, memories, and hidden feelings. Questionnaires and watercolors invite visitors to silently contribute their confessions to the artwork. A bookshelf holds books on subjects such as love, cooking, philosophy, and Arabic poetry but also volumes by Édouard Glissant, whose work points to creative interactions between cultures. The pattern on the wallpaper is composed of drawings by Okoyomon. The hybrid figures with large heads, dolllike bodies, and fiery eyes appear to be both lost in dream and demonic, inviting us to delve into the depths of our own psyche.

The Kunsthau Bregenz stairwells have been darkened for Okoyomon's exhibition. An additional, lowered ceiling constricts the stairway upward, creating a new spatial feeling of suffocation.

On the first floor, stuffed animals hang on nooses from the ceiling. Handcrafted from used toys and outfitted with real feathers, they seem like angels, childlike, playful beings subjected to a destructive fate. As is often the case in Okoyomon's work, that presented here deals with dreams and hybridity, fragility and affection, care and hurt. Cuddly stuffed animals protect children; they are companions and friends, provide comfort, and serve as a projection surface for children's fantasies.

A huge teddy bear on the second floor, strewn, forgotten, at the edge of a plush pink carpet. Its teardrop-shaped eyes, the hearts on its paws, and its anxious gaze prompt us to experience moments of self-forgetfulness and daydream. The installation is supplemented by music by the sound artist Takiaya Reed, whose ethereal pieces evoke trance-like states and accompany the transition into the world of waking dreams.

On the third floor of Kunsthau Bregenz visitors find themselves in an enclosed garden. Along with pupated caterpillars in the process of metamorphosis, butterflies that have already hatched flutter through the air.

Flickering outside of the warm humid habitat is a movie showing a flight over the suburbs of Okoyomon's home state, Ohio. The film was produced for the exhibition at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Okoyomon themselves pilots the plane, reading their poetry out loud to the sky. The images convey a feeling of boundlessness and freedom, characterized by a sense of an ego that views both things and life in the material world as a source of spiritual inspiration. But the viewer is forced to remain behind the mesh, with the butterflies.

In addition to expansive installations, Okoyomon has earned a reputation with their poems, which are often integrated into performances. In their second volume of poetry, "But Did You Die?", published in 2024, Okoyomon attempts to resist the forces of structural violence that surround us, with vitality and mischief. Their poems are tender, unembellished, and naïve, as intimate as they are uncomfortable.

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Precious Okoyomon (b. 1993, London) is a Nigerian- American poet and artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. They have had solo exhibitions at the Fundación Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Madrid in 2024, at the Aspen Art Museum and at Performance Space New York in 2021, at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main in 2020, and at Luma Westbau in Zurich in 2018. In 2024 Okoyomon participated in the Nigerian Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale; in 2023 at the 11th Sequences Biennial, Reykjavík; and the Thailand Biennial, Chiang Rai; in 2022 at the 59th Venice Biennale and the Okayama Art Summit; in 2021 at the 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale; and in 2018 at the Baltic Triennial 13, Tallinn. They took part in group exhibitions at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel in 2024; Luma Arles in 2022; and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2021. In 2019 they realized performances at the Serpentine Galleries and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, both in London. Okoyomon was the 2021 recipient of the Frieze Art Fair Artist Award as well as the Chanel Next Prize. In 2024, "But Did You Die?" their second book of poetry, was published.