

Final Hood Downtown Exhibition Features Toyin Ojih Odutola's Drawings



Hanover, NH, May 18, 2018—Toyin Ojih Odutola poses questions with her drawings. She asks her viewers to consider how conceptions of race are established and promulgated. She demonstrates how those very conceptions can and do shape experience. Her work is elaborate, provocative, poetic, and charged—revealing the details of people's lives while only alluding to their lived experience. Ultimately, Ojih Odutola's *Firmament* reminds us both of “what could have been” and “what should be”—a world where difference, individualism, compassion, and civility are the norm and not distant ideals.

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, presents *Toyin Ojih Odutola: The Firmament* in the Hood Downtown exhibition space from June 8 through September 2, 2018, and invites campus and community audiences to hear the artist introduce her work in a talk and reception on Saturday, June 23, from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. The exhibition was organized by the Hood Museum of Art and generously supported by Kristy and Robert Hartevelde '84 and Linda and Rick Roesch. It includes a fully illustrated brochure, available in the exhibition space.

In this new series, Toyin Ojih Odutola has created a possible Nigeria, one whose inhabitants thrive, having long ago arrived at a state of comfort unfettered by the enduring legacy of colonization. “Why not?” she asks. Why not imagine an alternative and natural historical progression of a Nigerian royalty? Her cast, the stars in her firmament, enjoy old wealth. They are comfortable in trappings of their own design. They have neither need nor desire to prove anything. Their station is assured and assumed.

Ojih Odutola uses bright color and bold pattern, often in large scale, to depict her subjects. She establishes a compassionate confrontation with her viewers. Through the use of scale, she reinforces her subjects' presence, and through her remarkable mark-making technique, she draws us close to her surfaces. Many of the drawings are life-sized, and some are full-length. This adds an uncanny sense that we share a space with her subjects and furthers the imaginative leap her viewers take into her world.

In many ways, Ojih Odutola's visions connect her work to a wide range of writers, from novelists to comic book authors. Hers is an approach that uses fiction as a vehicle to address the malleability of history and power, as well as identity and politics. In her work, the past, history

Toyin Ojih Odutola: The Firmament



News Release | Contact: Alison Palizzolo, Public Relations Coordinator | (603) 646-2426 | alison.m.palizzolo@dartmouth.edu

itself, becomes a medium to be formed—or reformed. While more implied than delineated, the backstory she creates rewrites the story of Africans brutally enslaved. Ojih Odutola uses the present to measure the past and to demonstrate the depth of the tragedy that was—and is—in play. Underlying her work, we find a theme that is both direct and provocative: it did not need to be this way.

Toyin Ojih Odutola is a contemporary artist who focuses on the sociopolitical construct of skin color through her multimedia drawings. Her work explores her personal journey of having been born in Nigeria, then moving and assimilating into American culture in conservative Alabama. Among her exhibition highlights, the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City recently concluded her solo show, *Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined*, on February 25, 2018. A 2012 graduate of the California College of Arts MFA program, Ojih Odutola has work in major museum collections, including the Birmingham Museum of Art and the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

About Hood Downtown

During the interval of the Hood Museum of Art's construction and reinstallation, Hood Downtown, located at 53 Main Street, Hanover, NH, presents an ambitious series of exhibitions featuring contemporary artists from around the world. Many of these works by a diverse group of artists will be on view in Hanover for the first time. Like the museum, Hood Downtown is free and open to the public.

About the Hood Museum of Art

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, enables and cultivates transformative encounters with works of artistic and cultural significance to advance critical thinking and enrich people's lives. The reimagined Hood will make a bolder statement about the significance of the arts within the life of Dartmouth and provide the arts district with an arresting new front door to the Green. With its renewed focus on serving Dartmouth's faculty and academic mission, the renovated and expanded facility will broaden the museum's reach to students, faculty, and departments across campus, while deepening its engagement with its longtime stakeholders.

The new Hood will continue to innovate in object-based teaching and learning by setting the standard for experiential engagement with art and material culture. It will design, implement, communicate, and evaluate exceptional object-based pedagogy and develop resources and activities for diverse audience experiences and interactions in the center for object study, galleries, events space, studio, and elsewhere within and beyond the museum. The Hood will also continue to extend its impact as an important regional museum with a distinct role in K–12 education, continuing education, and community engagement.

About Dartmouth College

Dartmouth College educates the most promising students and prepares them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership, through a faculty dedicated to teaching and the creation

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of knowledge. The Dartmouth model is unique in higher education: the fusion of a renowned liberal arts college and robust research university where students and faculty partner to take on the world's great challenges. Since its founding in 1769, Dartmouth has provided an intimate and inspirational setting where talented faculty, students, and staff—diverse in background but united in purpose—contribute to the strength of an exciting academic community that cuts easily across disciplines.

Media Contacts:

Hood Museum of Art

Alison Palizzolo: (603) 646-2426 • alison.m.palizzolo@dartmouth.edu

Dartmouth College Office of Communications

(603) 646-3661 • communications@dartmouth.edu

Image caption: Toyin Ojih Odutola, *Pregnant*, 2017, charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper. © Toyin Ojih Odutola. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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