

BINTA

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE GAYEMAGAL CLAN UPON  
WHOSE ANCESTRAL LANDS THIS EXHIBITION IS  
HELD. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS  
PAST PRESENT AND EMERGING, ACKNOWLEDGING  
THEM AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF  
KNOWLEDGE FOR THESE LANDS.

# BINTA

Roberta Joy Rich, Richmond Kobla Dido, Omar Rafiou Diallo,

H.Mur, Gianna Christella Hayes

Curated by Kevin Diallo

April 20 - May 1

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**Binta** – Still from Henri Duparc's movie *Bal Poussière* (1988)

# Brian Obiri Asare

## *Binta*

At the 2021 Cannes Film Festival, *Bal Poussière* ('Dancing in the Dust'), an Ivorian satire sparkling with irreverence, was given its due. A good thirty plus years after its initial release, the powers that be saw it fit to give this gem of African cinema a belated revival. And for good reason. Blessed with a wickedly comedic pulse, the film draws its energy from the chaos that ensues after Demi-Dieu, a pineapple mogul on the prowl for a sixth wife, decides one day to don purple robes, lather himself with perfume, and leave his harem to woo the feisty and rebellious Binta. Cultures collide and wobble. Polygamy lends itself to laughter. The old clashes with the new. Certainties shatter. And Binta steals the show with her trickster ways. She's defiant and funny and so easy to vibe with as a disruptor of the status quo.

She's also the inspiration behind '*Binta*'. Holding tight to Okwui Enwezor's vision of stretching beyond grouping artists of African descent together under a simple umbrella of African ancestry, '*Binta*' offers a way forward. There's room here to think past the framing of art solely within notions of personal identity. A wider terrain opens. Binta's agency, self-determination, and ingenuity provide the fire for five artists of African descent to explore their entanglements with Australia's unfinished history of colonial relations. We get to venture into the relatively unknown.



The result is a meeting point of sorts. Or rather, a platform for an Afro-Diasporic community to hold itself together in something like cohesion, to exhibit some kind of legible character. Think of it as an invitation to a different horizon from which to take our bearings. Or even as an experiment in a different type of public address and congregation. Or better yet, an attempt at levelling hierarchies, challenging assumptions, countering erasure, and encouraging strategies of resistance.

Guided by Binta's spirit, the works on display do some heavy lifting. Roberta Joy Rich's "Waiting for Permission" locks horns with the politics and philosophy of representation. Gianna Hayes's plant dyed textiles wrap us inside what is ghostly inside of history. Richmond Koba Dido's photography tends openly and honestly with blackness. Omar Raf Diallo brings a fresh breath of the old with paintings that tap into the abstraction in African art. All works are in dialogue with ideas beyond the white cube. All speak from the juncture where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other.

Perhaps above all '*Binta*' is a place to reflect. Somewhere where we can engage with the world and feel Binta's approval. And maybe even learn a subversive thing or two from her.



# Gianna C Hayes

b.1996, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Gianna Christella Hayes is a multidimensional artist and storyteller working within the realms of textiles, botany, natural dye, video, sound, and photography. Her cross disciplinary practice is manifested as a form of regenerative healing as a means to unlock ancestral traditions as sites of resilience.

Giannas work interweaves remnants of the past while simultaneously birthing our futures to engage with themes within ethnobotany, natural pigments, African diasporic narratives, multicultural identities and the human relationship with the natural world.

@gianna.hayes  
www.giannachayes.com

*“ The spirit is held within the cloth ”*

(on the left)

**Gianna Christella Hayes**, *Fragmented Portals* , 2022

Found Objects, Plant Dyed Cotton  
Cotton cloth hand dyed with Indigo [Indigo Tinctoria] and Walnut [Juglans nigra]



## ***Fragmented Portals***

Fragmented Portals is an exploration of remembrance, time and space through the conversation of cloth. The longing of seeking ancestral connection has manifested through the ritualistic practice of dyeing fibres with botanicals. Hayes uses botanicals linked to the transatlantic slave trade alongside native plants that African Americans and Native Americans used for medicine, ritual and healing.

For many individuals of the African Diaspora, ancestry is often a mystery. For Hayes the use of Indigo, and Walnut has been the portal to awaken connections of ancient wisdom thought to be lost, damaged, or forgotten.

Hayes recontextualizes found objects with plant dyed textiles, bringing shape to the artist's destined quest of ancestral discovery.

These textile sculptures echo the portals, entry points and fragmented memories; continuously shifting, merging and breaking new forms. Imbued with intergenerational memories, intention, emotion, and care, these works attest to the importance of reviving these practices as sites of resilience. Lost will always be found.

*"2 yards of Indigo dyed cloth was exchanged for one human life."*

**Gianna Christella Hayes**, *Fragmented Portals* , 2022

Found Objects, Plant Dyed Cotton  
Cotton cloth hand dyed with Indigo [ Indigo Tinctoria ] and Walnut [Juglans nigra]



**Omar Rafiou Diallo**, *Mother Nature*, 2020

paint on stretched fabric, 80cm x 39cm

# Omar Raf Diallo

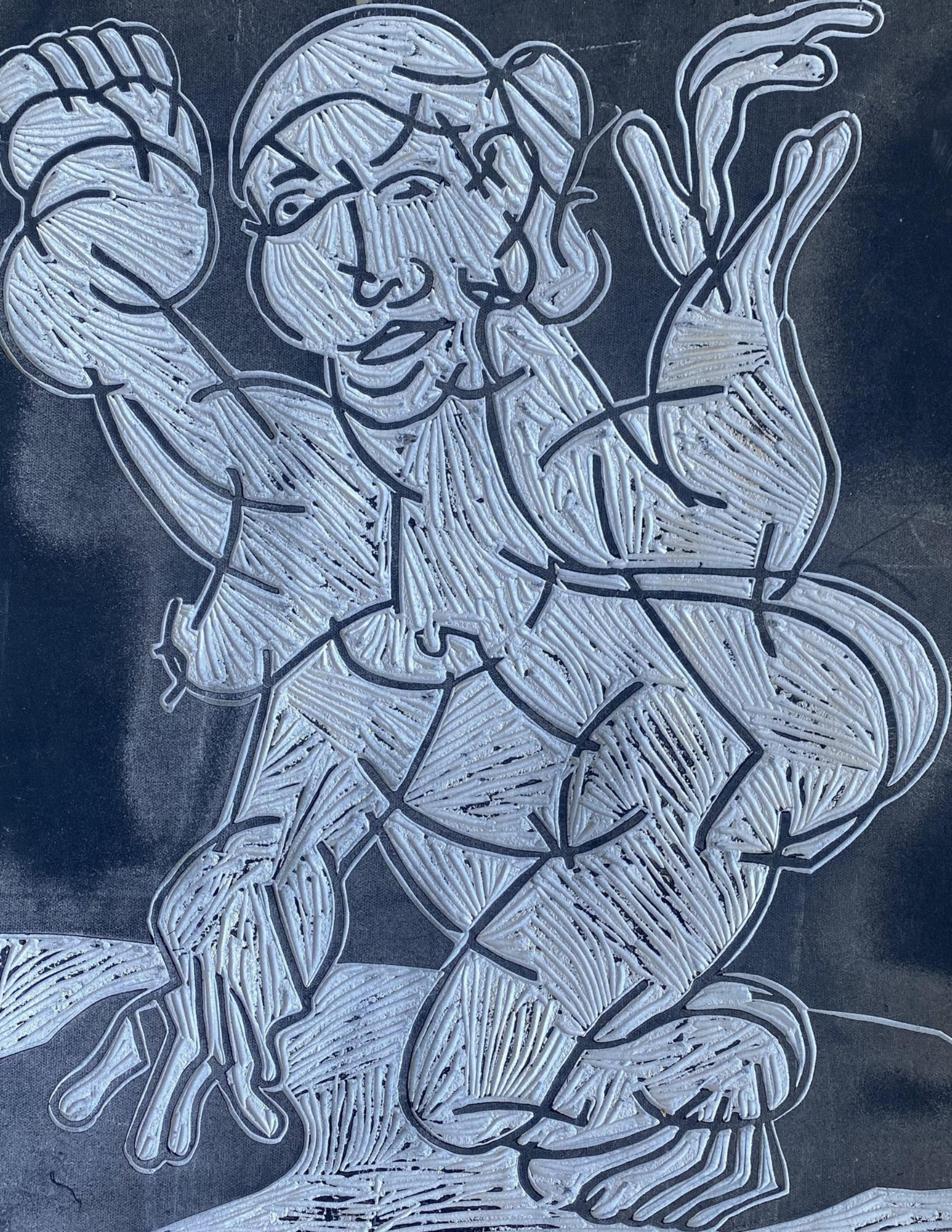
I am a 24 year old Australian artist based in Potts Point, Sydney Australia. I am a recent masters graduate of printmaking from the National Art School in Darlinghurst. My art explores the human form, everyday life and spirituality. The mediums I use are drawings, sculpture, paintings and prints. My art practice revolves around the 19th century concept 'flaneur' and how it is relevant in my modern lifestyle.

"The flaneur with their discerning gaze and high observational skills, they're able to see things that others fail to see. They go through life seeing the world as if for the first time, seeing things for what they are while remaining detached. Every person they encounter conceals a story."

@flanuersydcity

## ***Mother Nature***

The impact that spirituality has on form in this painting is the representation of the deep connection between spirituality and the human experience, largely through colour and gentle undulating lines surrounding her, which resemble a spiritual aura. In my studio directions, I will consider this omnipresent concept of spirituality and how it may be expressed and represented through my art making decisions. As I am aiming to observe the human experience in my day to day life, I will therefore also consider the spiritual realm in my representations.



## ***Human***

Human is an abstracted figure drawn from no stimuli but rather just an artistic exercise. Prior to drawing, I cut the lino sheet into a spear like shape to indicate the light attempting to cut through the figure, then holding it in place I started planning how a whole body would fit within the frame. This would involve the form from head to toe and the amplification of certain features such as breasts and feet to reaffirm that it is abstracted and human.

I believe the human figure is most beautifully designed living thing on the planet and the human form is fully influenced by ideas of spirituality. The human form has been used predominately throughout art ever since the stone ages and has been often subject to ideas about perfection and spirituality.

**(on the left)**

**Omar Raf Diallo**, *Human*, 2020

cut Lino block, 53cm x 47cm



*"This work depicts simplistic representations of animals and spirits in a stylised amalgamation."*

**Omar Raf Diallo**, *Amalgamation* 2019,

Lino block cutout, 80cm x 30cm



*“An abstracted female figure in a balanced free form posture”.*

**Omar Raf Diallo**, *Female figure*, 2017

Charcoal on canvas, 61cm x 31cm



# **Richmond Kobla Dido**

b. 1993 Accra, Ghana

Richmond Kobla Dido is a Sydney based photographer and creative director working across many genres that explores and documents black lived experiences.

Heavily inspired by photographers such as Malick Sadibe, Seydou Keita and more recently Zanele Muholi, Kobla aims through his work to be able to inspire his community and open some very important conversations be it in stills or moving images.

His practice as a photographer is all about creating safe spaces for people to tell their stories and to have a visual document that would be a reference for those who are to come, especially as an African in the diaspora.

He aspires for his photography to positively encourage a connection and understanding between the viewer and the subject.

@kobla.dido

(on the left)

**Richmond Kobla Dido**, *Free Spirit*, 2022,

Series of 5 Photographs, 45cm x 30cm





## ***Free spirit***

Masculinity can often get pigeon holed into one dimensional viewpoint, but in reality there is not universal standard. I believe especially as a black man, it's important we continue to reject the notion that our black expression is limited or limiting. Free spirit is my expression of this notion.

### **Team:**

Styling: Sarafina Nanyang - @nilotic\_archive  
Set Design: Zeinab Mahfoud - @Until.sunrise  
Assistant: Isadora Goncalves Das Neves - @isa\_dorable\_  
Models: Clinton Kojo & Adam Torres



for permissions

## **Roberta Joy Rich**

b. 1988 Geelong, Australia

Roberta Joy Rich is a multi-disciplinary artist who seeks to re-frame archives of African identity and histories, responding to constructs of "race" and gender identity. Often referencing her own diaspora southern African identity and experiences, she utilises language, archives and sometimes satire, in her video, performance, installation and mixed media projects. Rich draws from various socio-political, historical and popular culture epistemologies, to engage with notions of "authenticity", with the aim of deconstructing colonial modalities and proposals of self-determination within her arts practice.

@robertajoyrich

[www.robertajoyrich.com](http://www.robertajoyrich.com)

(on the left)

**Roberta Joy Rich**, *Waiting for permissions*, 2021

Digital collage print on beach towel, t-shirts with display rack.



## ***Waiting for permissions***

*Waiting for permissions*, 2021 was born from a fashion magazine shoot titled "Embellishment," of White women who adorned themselves in cultural garb from across the globe. Through cutting and re-mixing, the image became stripped back and left to one model. The original shoot ironically is by a Sydney photographer. I approached the photographer back in 2020 asking for permission to use this image but received no reply to my email. I wonder if the model and artistic team behind Embellishment asked for permission to wear significant cultural garb for fashion consumption.

Acknowledging these histories of art production, display and appropriation practices in the Western art canon, *Waiting for permissions* evolved into a satirical commercial display, attempting to speak back to such histories. In considering such histories and my questions, *Waiting for permissions* is a multi-dimensional gesture that attempts to challenge the expectations of African artists by Australian arts institutions and (hopefully) provide some laughter in this process.



Art intervention by an  
African artist working in  
Australia.

## ***H.Mur***

H.Mur is an anti-disciplinary artist and educator based in Melbourne. Across and against disciplines, mediums, and compositions, they are concerned with the poetics and tonalities of Black subjectivities. H.Mur works at the intersection of theory, liberatory practice, and aesthetics; they are interested in mapping and surveying otherwise possibilities.

[www.hilomur.com](http://www.hilomur.com)

**(on the left)**

**H.Mur**, *Free Interventions*, 2020,

White Index Cards (front), 9.1cm x 5.5cm



FLMur - 2021

## ***Free Interventions***

Free Interventions is a meditation on the systemic exploitation of artistic labor and art production. Riffing off Adrian Piper's *My Calling Cards* (1986), the form gestures at the capitalist modes of production, consumption, and circulation that structure art labor.

Is the African artist a worker? Is the African artist entitled, much less deserving of compensation? What institutional conditions and ideologies sustain a culture of non-compensation? What does it mean to demand capital compensation in the context of stolen lands, stolen wealth, and stolen labor?

Opting for a re-imagined alternative currency and economy, the artist presents the aesthetics and functionality of the QR code as an unmediated invitation to compensate the art labour and material costs directly; social and political action is presented as a viable remuneration for free art interventions performed.

**(on the left)**

**H.Mur**, *Free Interventions*, 2020,

Black Index Cards (back), 9,1cm x 5,5cm

## ***About the curator***

**Kevin Diallo** was born in Dakar, Senegal (1987) and raised in the Ivory Coast. He currently lives and works in Sydney, Australia

His practice suggests Blackness' relationship to the future. Rooted in post-colonial discourse and race politics, Diallo's work investigates how institutionalised ideas of Black and African authenticity can be deconstructed and challenged by mean of juxtaposition through a variety of mediums, more particularly with alternative photographic processes, installations, sculptures and new media."

Diallo has presented a number of national solo exhibitions including Wata, Woollahra (2022) Gallery, *Blue*, Artspace Ideas Platform, Sydney (2020); *Blackness Forgive Me For My Scenes*, Tributary Projects, Canberra (2020); *Keep It Real*, Firstdraft, Sydney (2018); *Ode to Their Words*, Alliance Française, Sydney (2017). Significant group exhibitions include *to listen, not to preserve*, Melbourne's Living Museum Of The West, Melbourne (2022); *I Will Tell You My Story*, UTS Gallery, Sydney (2022), *Jamming With Strangers*, Casula Powerhouse Centre, Casula (2021), *Pollen*, Pari, Parramatta (2021), *Inner Worlds*, Ileana Gallery, Brisbane (2022), *Unleash The Dragon*, Tributary Projects, Canberra (2020), Firstdraft, Sydney (2019), Seventh Gallery, Melbourne (2020); *Assembly*, Next Projects, Sydney (2019); *Speak Softly Thread Heavily*, Peacock Gallery, Auburn (2019) and *Neo-Bogolan*, Alaska Projects, Sydney (2016).

He currently holds a Bachelor of Design (Honours) in Photography and Situated Media. Diallo is represented by Aster+Asha Gallery in Brisbane. Most recently, he was awarded an Art and Creativity Grant by the Northern Beaches Council. Kevin has worked in the Australian media industry since 2011. Since January 2020 Kevin Diallo has been a resident artist at the North Curl Curl Creative Space managed by the Northern Beaches Council.

# ***Acknowledgements***

I would like to acknowledge the Gayemegal clan, the traditional custodians of the un-ceded land upon which I live and work. I would like to thank the Northern Beaches Council for their generosity and making me part of the Art and Creativity grant program. Thank you Alicia and Hector for your reactivity and support leading up to the exhibition. To the artists of the show, thank you for allowing me to realise a vision, trusting me with your work and sticking through several date changes and uncertainty due to Covid-19. Thank you Kate and Elias Diallo for their on-going support and without whom none of this would be possible.

Catalog designed: Kevin Diallo

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