

Thomas Erben Gallery Brings Together Historically Significant Works by Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé

Exhibition Reviews



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Nigerian-born artist [Oladele Ajiboye Bamgboye](#) is considered one of today's most interesting contemporary artists. In his work, which includes photography, video, and writing, he has explored identity, nationality, and the self while successfully avoiding objectification and commodification.

This October, Thomas Erben Gallery presents a solo exhibition by the artists entitled *Works from the '90s*. Visitors are able to view **three distinct yet interrelated bodies of work** from the 1990s. Each showcases Bamgboye's careful exploration of the self and his personal travels without entering into the sphere of cheap sentiment.



Still image from Oladele Ajiboye Bamgboye - *The Hair or the Man*, 1994.

Between Two Cultures

Together with Rotimi Fani-Kayode, [Yinka Shonibare](#), [Chris Ofili](#), and the theoretician Olu Oguibe, [Ajiboye Bamgboye](#) is part of a Nigerian/British artists group that left a significant impact on London's art scene in the 90s. Throughout his career, both Western and African aesthetics made a significant impact on the artist. While he was born in Nigeria, he moved to Glasgow to study Engineering at the age of twelve. Upon receiving the highest honor of its kind for photography in Scotland, **the Richard Hough Prize for Photography**, he moved to Berlin and later to London to pursue an art career. Another reason for leaving Scotland was his wish not to be seen as just the exotic, black artist next to the other Glasgow contemporaries. Likewise, upon visiting Nigeria, he experienced a distance from his home country, **a dichotomy of being neither here nor there**. This feeling had a great influence on his artistic practice.



Oladele Ajiboye Bamgboye - Celebrate #6, 1994. C-print; 16.5 × 16.5 in. Edition of 9 (+1 AP)

The Three Bodies of Work

Wishing to have complete control of his work, Bamgboye created [self-portraits](#). Thus, he stood firmly behind every statement made in his art. In the series *Defining Self Sufficiency* (1993), the artist took photographs of himself in his Glasgow kitchen. The seven large-scale, silver gelatin photographs feature Bamgboye in the nude. The overlaid exposures of the images create a sense of multiplicity of selves.

On the other hand, in *Celebrate* (1994), he embraces colors and creates a series full of sensuality, joy, and celebration. The pursuit to reach the state of Trisexuality is apparent in these early works as he carefully choreographs his body in a series of eight multiple exposed color photographs. Bamgboye said:

“ I am trying to move into a phase of trisexuality. Trisexuality, as the next logical stage that, acknowledges the strength, sexuality, and spirituality of individual images.

The video *The Hair or the Man* (1994), inspired by his first visit home after emigrating, features the artist's complete unease with his surroundings accompanied by the music by The Last Poets, the 70's Black Nationalist rap/poetry group. The accompanying texts, such as *Why Did I Shed the Sexy Locks* or *Self Recognition Can Equate Progression*, highlight Bamgboye's journey inward. At one point in the movie, he appears without his dreadlocks, which at the time were seen as a sign of sexual and physical prowess.



Left: Oladete Ajiboye Bamgboye - Defining Self Sufficiency, 1993. B/W silver gelatin print; 72.5 x 50 in. Edition of 6 (+1 AP) / Right: Oladete Ajiboye Bamgboye - Defining Self Sufficiency, 1993. B/W silver gelatin print. 72.5 x 50 in. Edition of 6 (+1 AP)

Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé at Thomas Erben Gallery

The exhibition *Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé - Works from the '90s* will be on view at [Thomas Erben Gallery](#) in New York **until December 16th, 2023**.

Featured image: Oladele Ajiboye Bamgboye - Defining Self Sufficiency, 1993. B/W silver gelatin print; 50 × 72.5 in. Edition of 6 (+1 AP)