

VEDA

DOMINIQUE WHITE  
PRESS PACK

YAC | Young Artists in Conversation

Artists

Writers

# Dominique White

Interview by Ellie Barrett

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Critical art theory has never really grappled with materials in any way which is satisfying or useful to artists. By contrast, artists themselves seem to be urgently taking up material-led approaches for numerous reasons. As a result, we are faced with a worrying rift between what artists are doing and how this is actually reported both historically and in contemporary practice. This needs to be addressed in art writing. As a practicing sculptor currently undertaking a PhD research project into materiality, I have been visiting artists in their studios, making efforts to bridge this rift by examining the multiplicity of material uses in sculptural practice. I visited Dominique White's studio as part of this research.

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Landlocked Prisoner (2018) [hanging right] commissioned for The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional at Sophie Tappeiner 14.09.18 - 03.11.19

Pictured with Patrick Staff & Candice Lin, Olu Ogunnaike and Kobby Adi. Courtesy the artist and Sophie Tappeiner.

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**To start by giving a context, can you talk about what you're doing with your work overall?**

I emulate shipwrecks: I'm very interested in nautical myths and old world politics. Everything looks like a dystopian relic of a civilization that has either existed or doesn't quite sit in linear time. My works appear partially destroyed, but that is also because of the very specific materials that I use, such as palm fronds which will eventually decay. Or even just certain sail rope: the way that I manipulate it means it's very delicate yet strong at the same time. I'm very interested in afro-pessimism and accelerationism from a black perspective. So, I think the easiest way of describing it is Blackness both being the destructor and inheritor of a new World. Instead of this new World being Mars or specifically in outer space, as in Sun Ra's notions of Black futurity, I've situated it in the sea as some sort of abstract future in a tangible space.

**And then how is this achieved specifically through the materials that you work with?**

I work with a lot of found objects and materials. I work with sails; I source very specific ones that are highly worn and patched up. I also use nautical buoys, and materials that are almost stereotypically other. So whether that's palm fronds or shells, or things that are associated with Black civilizations.



**So you're definitely choosing materials that have a loaded history?**

Oh yeah. Even down to the rope that I use. Sisal rope, for example, is actually tarred. When it gets slightly heated from being handled, it leaves this black residue over everything that it touches. It's a very odd material that I came across this year but now I love using it. Even down to its wispyness - that's from me manipulating it and unpicking it.

**So not only are you searching for materials that are historically and culturally loaded, but materials that allow you to perform a certain process?**

Also that aren't necessarily obvious processes for the materials. Because even the casting process and the clay I'm working with, casting this single buoy is literally going to take about a month. I have to fill the mould in layers and each layer takes so long, because it's such a volatile clay to use.



**So is this the same clay that you were using when you showed work with GRAFT in 2017?**

Yeah - kaolin - It's the same I use with everything. I want to push the boundaries of this clay. You've seen me use it as a paint, and it wasn't until earlier this year that I realised it can completely solidify, but it has to be under really certain conditions. I tried casting a full buoy in one go but it just would not set.

**Do you have a sustained engagement with one material, or are they selected as appropriate to projects?**

I usually play with a particular vocabulary of materials which develops over time. I also move onto other materials, for example I don't really use that kind of really manufactured rope anymore. The rope that I use now is more loaded with histories instead of using a perfectly manufactured material which is primed for its use. I do continue to use raffia because I know what it can do. It's weirdly strong, it can soak up water, so that's why I use it in casting as a filler. Because kaolin is such a liquid clay it won't set (within a day) unless you layer it with other materials. But then it does create this weird texture at the same time.

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**It seems like when you're selecting materials, they do have these two aspects that are so woven together in that everything you're choosing is coming as a product of your research, but also the things that they just really pragmatically allow you to do and the qualities that they have. So, is that a fair thing to say?**

Yeah, yeah that is fair. I do actually like pushing those materials to the limits.

**To what extent would you say that your work is materials led? And by that I mean would you say that you make the materials work for you, or is it more of a collaborative relationship, a negotiation or a feeling out of something where they push back against what you want them to do?**

I think a bit of both. With some materials, it's me in charge. But with stuff like kaolin, that's me experimenting and realising actually, I can't make a completely solid mass using this approach. There has to be a compromise. I feel like it's more me in charge of the materials as opposed to a collaboration a lot of the time. I don't know whether it's the way that I handle it or force it to work. It just does.

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**Can you speak about how you interact with them when you're making and the kind of processes you go through when you're figuring out what they can do? Maybe it's interesting to talk about the kaolin, because last time I saw you, you were painting with it and now you're casting these really big objects. There's some kind of finding out or experimenting process in there that's edging from one step to the next: how did you discover the qualities that it had that allowed you to do this?**

Most of the time I discover stuff almost by working other processes into the ground. It actually cast solid in the bottom of a bucket and I managed to get it out and it was this beautiful solid disc. But then it has those qualities and it kind of crumbles under weight. That's how I guess I treat most things materials: asking how much force can it take? How much can I load it with? So with kaolin, I ask much water or other materials can I mix with it before it just completely loses those qualities. Everything's time based.



**Are you very reactive to what they do?**

Yeah. That's how I also treat my work. I like to protect it when it's in my studio and in transit but when it's there it has its own narrative. The work that I had with you [GRAFT] sustained so much damage from being out in the rain and in the mud that I probably can't show it again but that's fine. I think that also ties in to people's attitudes towards preserving art works as this monetary object.

**There's an ethical question amongst object makers about producing more stuff to go in the world, and artists seem to be thinking if I'm using stuff that's already here then I'm not really making these giant things that have to be stored and looked after.**

Yeah I have a weird relationship with preserving works. It's also particularly in the history of institutions preserving black artist's work against their will, either after they've died or they've preserved it or repaired it in a way that shouldn't have happened. Or it's even shown in a way that people don't get to experience the whole thing. For example, I had no idea that Chris Ofili's work that's in Tate Britain - "No Woman No Cry" - glows in the dark. When you turn the lights off it turns bright green and it's says "Stephen Lawrence, 1974 to 1993". I never knew that. But that's the way Tate show it. It's a weird ownership of materials. I feel like I make work so the materials retain their autonomy. They can decay on their own terms. You can't really repair a lot of them without completely changing the work.

**Can you talk a bit more about the research that you've done to find your materials and the decision to pick them up and start making with them?**

Some of them are by accident. So, kaolin, that I came across about five or six years ago in one of those really gross anthropological books from the '50s. It's a naturally occurring clay that is often the (culturally loaded) white substance found on a lot of sculpture from central and western Africa. You can get it in skincare and other health related tools. I was actually painting my face at the time, but then over the years it's developed away from performance-based approach to a sculptural approach. In terms of rope, I always use stuff that you would find on boats or nautical related objects. Tarred sisal is just the newest edition. Rope is sometimes very sterile and clean, whereas this is literally tar covered. It's very specific to the nautical realm.

**So do you find you have a particular attachment to materials that get you mucky when you touch them, or leave a trace or transfer onto bodies? Even if it's a rope that you wouldn't expect that quality from?**

Yeah. I hate making sterile work. I also like the idea of removing that power dynamic from the viewer. Even looking at my studio floor now, it's been mopped about six times but it still has the remnants of clay. When you walk on it, you also carry it away with you. That's what I mean about this weird power play between art and the institution - art is elevated to this level for the viewer. So what happens when art is almost attacking the viewer through materials? That's why I'm so interested in works decaying at an unknown rate.



**And I suppose there's something about using materials that allow it to break out of that elevated level and by getting stuff mucky? Or the way that you allow it to dissolve into the audience a bit? There's always a feeling of transference going on?**

Even down to how I hang stuff in space. An example being this large mooring cleat that I used to attach a work to the ceiling as opposed to using something like a little gold hook or chicken wire. This would be bolted into the ceiling using specialised anchor bolts - it's a very solid object. But then again, that is very nautical - it's used for mooring. I'm interested in the whole piece being considered part of the piece, if that makes sense. It doesn't stop with the objects, it stops with how it's hung or if it's attached to the wall etc. It's this fine line between it being an alien nautical object or relic from this lost civilisation and an art object. I'm really interested in this object that I found it on ebay. So it's a kind of buoy that's made completely out of rope. And it's really bizarre because I've never seen them look like that. But it's massive. It's three or four foot tall. It also it looks like some kind of weird ritual object, like you're supposed to set it on fire or something. But it's just for boats. Apparently it's quite a normal thing - I don't know whether rope is just cheaper, or they last longer if they're made this way. I've no idea.

**Maybe it's something to do with material that was immediately around. Do you think there is a current need for material focused sculptural practice?**

Yes. I'm very bored of highly conceptual works that are super inaccessible to folks without a certain specialised knowledge. And that weird specialised language and education that you have to have even to have an entry point. So I guess that's why I like to have a heavily material based practice because if you're not from an art/philosophical background you can still take something from it. I have beef with inaccessible work. It's very unnecessary I think.

**One of the intrinsic things about material is that it can boil down to the simplest thing which is your physical interaction with the world around you. This can only happen with material engagement, so there needs to be an acknowledgement of that. They are a way of communicating things instantaneously. How do you feel, then, about how materials are discussed in art criticism? And how is your work discussed, do you think?**

In reviews, it's always discussed in a surface surface level way. I read lots of reviews that talk about my work as if the material is a symbol for something else entirely. Which is ok, but I feel like some critics are literally missing the nautical references.

**Because there is not any discussion about the nautical things or the histories of the material that are so obviously there? Do you think there's something to do with materials being perceived as being dumb? And if you're sat around talking about the actual material qualities instead of getting up towards the metaphysical things that they're doing then there's a fear of looking stupid?**

I think that, and also I think critics do forget that some artists do give a shit about the literal connotations of materials. I think sometimes art is so focused on stuff that appears to be something else, that the actual material is completely disregarded. For example, if an artist is using black paint, a critic might suggest that it appears to be oil. They're actually not considering why the artist would be using black paint and not actually oil.

**We're so used to seeing symbols in art that people try too hard to see symbols through material.**

Instead of looking at the literal decision making. Definitely. That's why I've talked quite a lot about the futurity of my most recent work. When I showed Landlocked Prisoner, people were asking why I chose that title. And I said well, because it's dry, it's on land and if I submerged it in water it would completely dissolve and the piece would be...free. And people often do not think of how specific a particular material is and how specific decisions could have a different future in the work. If I put that work in a very moist environment it would very slowly just fall apart. The moment you introduce even a tiny bit of moisture, it'll get soft. It'll just break up.

**I want to pick up on the way art seems to have a deadening effect on material, or the material sometimes is just disappears into the work and that's the way that it's also talked about or received. And it really feels like in your work you're absolutely not letting that happen.**

It's really about there being a fine line between an art object and like some sort of other object that we can't really understand. So this could be actually just plucked out the sea and you've just put it in a gallery, or has it just been made by an artist? And we don't really know which one it is.

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Dominique White (Essex UK, 1993) is a London based artist who merges incompatible worlds into a universe using a visual vocabulary which draws from blaccelerationism, afro-pessimism and beliefs surrounding the Kalunga; a watery boundary between the living and the dead. Her work takes form as sculptures, performances and installations which act as beacons of a fictional and experimental universe that only emerges into this realm bit by bit.

Recent exhibitions and talks include: Flood-tide at Love Unlited (Glasgow, GB. 2018), The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional at Sophie Tappeiner (Vienna, AUT. 2018), The Conch (April) at South London Gallery (London, UK. 2018) and Signs | Beacons (Manchester, GB. 2018), Dominique was also artist-in-residence as part of the Formerly Called network at Wysing Arts Centre throughout 2018.

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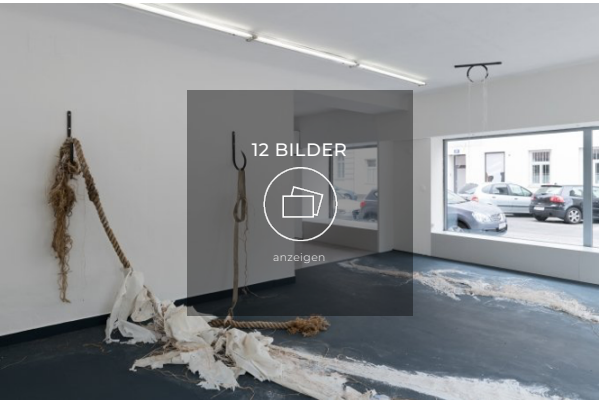
Volkertstraße 17/4, 1020 Wien  
Österreich

**Künstlerin:** Dominique White

**Titel:** Abandon(ed) Vessel

**Datum:** 14. September – 26. Oktober 2019

**Fotografie:** Courtesy the artist and Kevin Space, Wien | Foto: Maximilian Anelli-Monti



Dominique White, Abandon(ed) Vessel, installation view, Kevin Space 2019, Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti



Dominique White, Abandon(ed) Vessel, installation view, Kevin Space 2019, Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti



Dominique White, Ruttier for the Absent, Detail, Kevin Space 2019, Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti



Dominique White, Ruttier for the Absent, Detail, Kevin Space 2019, Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti

## AUSSTELLUNGSTEXT:

**» But even if those Africans who were in the holds, who left something of their prior selves in those rooms as a trace to be discovered, and who passed through the doors of no return did not survive the holding and the sea, they, like us, are alive in hydrogen, in oxygen; in carbon, in phosphorous, and iron; in sodium and chlorine. This is what we know about those Africans thrown, jumped, dumped overboard in Middle Passage; they are with us still, in the time of the wake, known as residence time.**

«

*(Christina Sharpe, In the Wake. On Blackness and Being, 2016)*

For her first solo exhibition in Austria, Abandon(ed) Vessel, Dominique White presents a new body of work that explores the histories and nautical myths of Black Diaspora interwoven with subaquatic afrofuturist and afropessimist narratives constructed by Detroit techno and Black Radical Thought.

White's sculptural installations draw from beliefs surrounding the Kalunga line—a watery boundary between the world of the living and the dead in the Atlantic Ocean—, and investigate the Shipwrecked, redefined both as a reflexive verb as well as a state of being. Her works act as beacons pointing first to the Drexciyan (from the Detroit techno duo Drexciya) theory of an existence of an underwater civilization that is populated by drowned slaves thrown overboard during the Middle Passage, but also towards reimaginings of a Black Future on a dystopian Earth.

Conceived in July 2019 on the Italian island of Favignana, Ruttier for the Absent hung precariously as a beacon on the cusp of the Mediterranean Sea at Punta Marsala in the shadow of an abandoned lighthouse where the found materials—a sail, rope and dried palm fronds—had first been heavily mutilated by the artist, then destroyed by the force of the Mediterranean Sea. Translated into the white gallery space, the sculpture has now been manipulated by the artist with kaolin clay, a naturally occurring white clay often found on sculptures from Central and Western Africa as an act of cleansing and protecting the work from the exhibition space. Delicately balancing the states of preservation, decay and renewal, the sculpture is held by two massive iron hooks reminiscent of mutilated anchors or meat hooks. Whilst seemingly permanent and violent in their nature, these metal components lack any kind of patina and are thus left exposed to an unknown rate of decay.

The floorpiece Sargasso: An Ode to those who are yet to find their way Home borrows its title from the Sargasso Sea, often described as an oceanic desert largely devoid of tangible life forms due to the free-floating sargassum (a common seaweed found in the Sargasso Sea) forming a black void beneath its tightly bound surface. Geographically situated in the heart of the Bermuda triangle in the North Atlantic, the Sargasso Sea remains the only sea without a land boundary in the world and is often associated with the historical myth of being a dangerous area where "dead ships, dead sailors and dead slaves" (Brand 2001) were wrecked and mired in its throes for eternity, unable to escape. Echoing the long stretches of seaweed in this area, the sculpture consists of two iron hooks and an increasing number of clay buoys (or lost souls) consumed by a mass of meticulously hand woven nets—the mind-numbing and repetitive movements of their making evoking the consumption of mourning. The sculpture is conceived as an ongoing work in progress intended to grow larger over an undisclosed amount of time. Understanding the sea as a powerful body to reveal elements of humanity's existence—a shipwreck from slavery or relics of a settlement consumed by a natural disaster—, the artist's sculptural installations recall dystopian remnants of an ignored or forgotten civilization existing outside of linear time. Rather than situating Black futurity in outer space (as suggested by Afrofuturist thinkers such as Sun Ra), the visual vocabulary of White's work imagines the sea as a new world in which abstract futures may find a tangible space: a space in which Blackness functions as both the destructor and inheritor of this world, and self-destruction, decay and wilful absence become a powerful means of escaping the social or inherited death of the perceived Black body.

Dominique White (b. 1993, UK) lives and works in London. Solo exhibitions and presentations include Fugitive of State(less), VEDA (Florence, 2019) and Art-O-Rama (Marseille, 2019). Her works have been presented in group exhibitions such as Flood-tide at Love Unlimited (Glasgow, 2018); The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional at Sophie Tappeiner (Vienna, 2018); °c at Clearview.ltd (London, 2018); The Conch (April) at South London Gallery (London, 2018); and Signs | Beacons at Caustic Coastal (Manchester, 2018). White was artist-in-residence at Curva Blu in June and July 2019 and also in residence with the network Formerly Called at Wysing Arts Centre (UK) from March to September of 2018.



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Fugitive of the State(less) - Dominique White (<https://www.rivistasegno.eu/fugitive-of-the-stateless-dominique-white/>)

**F***ugitive of the State(less)* è la mostra di Dominique White (Regno Unito, 1993) che si è appena conclusa presso lo spazio di Veda a Firenze. L'artista inglese utilizza il concetto di *Stateless*, indicando uno stato alterato che oltrepassa lo Stato in quanto entità giuridica e in cui la *Blackness* è libera di esistere. Quest'utopia è abitata da naufraghi e fuggiaschi, lasciati sopravvivere o perseguitati senza tuttavia poter essere riconosciuti, abbandonati alla decisione di autodistruggersi attraversando il mare.

Il mare è una dimensione onnipresente, sentito come un abbraccio, corpo potente in grado di scegliere il momento in cui agguantare e rivelare i relitti dell'esistenza umana sommersa, siano essi membra rigurgitate dalla tratta degli schiavi o frammenti di un insediamento umano devastato dalla furia della natura.

L'emergere di storie e tempi plurimi si collega all'utilizzo di materiali degradabili, legni, fronde di palme, rafie, fibre naturali di sisal e conchiglie già lavorati dal mare e aventi l'ambivalenza di possedere una precisa cronologia di deperimento laddove paradossalmente rimandano invece a vicende e corpi irrecuperabili nella loro linearità storica poiché mancanti di un passato certo, ma che tuttavia sussistono in quanto narrazioni di presenze/assenze che infestano l'opera. L'assenza è indagata attraverso lo scarto, attraverso ciò che è rimasto, ripescato e riassembleto. È un mare che consuma,

erode, dunque sottrae, ma allo stesso tempo sparpaglia i frammenti che formano e alimentano i suoi sedimenti e che infestano le sue acque, recuperati infine da pescatori della memoria attraverso reti dalle quali vengono riesumati per vivere nuovi significati.

Il mare viene letto dall'artista anche attraverso il mito di *Drexciya*, un mondo sottomarino abitato dai corpi dei figli mai nati delle donne africane gettate a mare dalle navi che agevolavano la tratta degli schiavi, durante l'attraversata dell'Oceano Atlantico. I drexciyani sono gli esclusi, i derelitti, guerrieri che lottano nei fondali marini per la giustizia e per riportare il popolo afroamericano nella terra natia: l'Africa. In questi abissi, la vita nelle metropoli scorre spensierata, mentre i guerrieri si agitano e danno vita a una risalita effervescente di bolle che scombussola dal basso, dall'underground, gli oceani.

Il mito di *Drexciya* è stato impiegato dalla scena musicale di Detroit negli anni '90. Nel decennio precedente, su ispirazione dei ribelli tecnologici e del libro di Alvin Toffler *The Third Wave*, Derrick May, [Juan Atkins](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Atkins) ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan\\_Atkins](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Atkins)) e [Kevin Saunderson](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Saunderson) ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin\\_Saunderson](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Saunderson)) diedero vita alla produzione conosciuta come *Detroit techno*. Tuttavia negli anni Novanta la techno divenne popolare, aumentarono le case di produzione discografica, i party e l'industria culturale iniziò a commercializzare i suoi prodotti. Nell'ambiente underground si decise di far fronte allo sfruttamento bianco dei ricchi con una resistenza nera di giovani che legavano insieme attivismo e musica. *Drexciya* fece parte di questa resistenza subacquea, un'invasione acquatica pronta a riemergere e avente un'attitudine militante nei confronti della techno. Nel mondo di *Drexciya* venivano oltrepassate le strutture sociali e politiche dello Stato-nazione e si privilegiava il meticcio degli abitanti che abitavano il *Black Atlantic*.

Tra i riferimenti teorici di Dominique White, la citazione: "The undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding" proviene dal libro di Stefano Harney e Fred Moten *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Study* nel quale i due studiosi sviluppano un approccio politico e antagonista che si alimenta di quelle forme di fuga criminale e comportamenti antagonisti agli schemi e alle relazioni dettate dall'istruzione coercitiva. Gli *Undercommons* sono territori incolti, anfratti della società, bolle sommerse della società abitate da queer, zingari, criminali, poveri e neri.

Ne fanno parte storicamente anche i "maroons", termine inglese con il quale si indicano le etnie che discendono dai primi "cimarroni", ovvero gli schiavi delle colonie americane dell'impero spagnolo che si davano alla fuga nella "macchia" (*cimarra* significa "boscaglia"). Questi schiavi praticavano il banditismo e si organizzavano in comunità clandestine. Attorno al 1540, il termine passò ad indicare la "carne umana", di proprietà dei *conquistadores*, che era fuggita per rivendicare la propria libertà.

In *Fugitive of the State(less)* non si capisce se i brandelli di storie e i relitti dell'esistenza siano pronti a tornare alla luce, afferrati da un'ancora o meglio da una draga tuttora sommersa, oppure se quel ferro uncinato sia un gancio da carne che gravita nell'aria e dunque se quello di fronte sia un post-moderno abisso profondo di *Drexciya* nel quale immergersi, oppure un antico trasporto di carne umana macellata dal quale scappare.



Fugitive of the State(less) - Dominique White - Rivista Segno

28/10/2020, 10:51

Nella sua immanenza, l'installazione rifugge il terreno, sollevata in uno stato di sospensione a mezz'aria, apolide del cielo e senza stato della terra, vicina al passato degli schiavi ma prossima al futuro nero, avanza l'intenzione di incombere nell'oggi tra gli *Undercommons* sempre in guerra, sempre nascosti, sommersi tra gli abissi o in fuga tra la boscaglia.



<https://www.rivistasegno.eu/fugitive-of-the-stateless-dominique-white/>

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# Loaded



# Objects

The inspirational installations of Dominique White  
Text Kate Neave



Artist Dominique White is a rare talent. Her powerful, ambitious work leaves her audience reeling. Choosing materials charged with a loaded history, she subjects them to force, testing their limits, sometimes ripping them to shreds. Her artworks hang limply, like bodies exhausted from the fight. Vulnerable but not broken, they retain echoes of the violence perpetrated against them. White's is disruptive work that challenges its audience, the galleries that exhibit it and the collectors that attempt to preserve it. As Covid-19 cut short a respected fellowship with Gasworks in Chile, White took time out to reflect on her ground-breaking practice and the moment we find ourselves in.



**Can you tell me about the process of creating these gutsy, potent artworks?**

Hurricanes work with the same kind of chaotic energy. I work for maybe twenty hours straight and I'll be covered head to toe in dust from the sails and from clay and maybe I've purposely smashed the work a couple of times. I've overloaded the form too much or I've dropped it from the ceiling to the ground, because I wasn't happy with something and then I repair it a little bit and do it all over again. It's super consuming, super messy. If you saw the state of my studio, you'd understand what I mean. It's not immediately obvious from photos just how demanding the materials are.

**The materials seem to retain all the energy exerted on them as you push them to their extremes.**

It's a forceful collaboration that happens. Sometimes it feels like a battle. I use materials which are loaded with a certain kind of history but which are also unstable. I'm collaborating with the materials as opposed to just forcing them into shapes. The works are almost autonomous, so there is only so much you can do to stop them from transforming or disappearing. I've learnt the hard way a couple of times. There is a limit to the materials before they will explode or rip or even fall apart. It's amazing to learn how much force each component can take before it destroys itself.

**How do you feel about the longevity of works when you make them so precarious?**

Because of the nature of the materials, there is so much autonomy that the pieces hold. So things may crumble with time as if they are escaping this realm. The iron hooks lack patina so they also start decaying over an unknown period. Especially with the larger and heavier works, this weight could accelerate the decaying process and potentially could cause it to come crashing down and disrupt a space even further. I haven't quite got that far, but that's what I have in mind.

**If a work did fall would you repair it?**

I have a particular relationship to repairing or editing the work. I think it's important that they change with time or, if they do get damaged, they hold on to that history. In the same way the materials hold onto their own history. The sails I source are usually completely unusable. They're mostly intact but they've been so heavily used at sea that they are deemed impossible to sail with. So they carry their own stories that can be built upon.

**You ask a lot of the audience viewing your work.**

For me, it's about reclaiming the power dynamic in

that moment. I want the audience to stop treating my work like an art object. I hate plinths. Using a plinth, the art object is elevated to your eye level for easy consumption so I like what happens when my work disrupts the white cube space and limits how you can engage with it. I want the work to instigate a new way of thinking and a new way of absorbing or consuming the environment around it.

**What are your sources of inspiration?**

I always listen to music when I'm making. Techno tends to be the genre of choice when I'm researching. Detroit Techno holds a special energy. It's so badass. It's all about resistance or creating new worlds or imagining new futures but without lyrics so it's more abstract. Or, if there are lyrics, there are only a couple throughout the song, so you're really focused on the titles or the emotive qualities that are produced through the music.

**There are definite parallels with your own work.**

I'm thinking about the ideologies that these musical acts are thinking about when they write this music. With regards to the music duo Drexciya they create new worlds using the sleeves of their album covers and that's how the Drexciyan mythology started to bleed into the world.

**Your artwork also seeks to create a new space for Blackness?**

Yes, it's borne from Afropessimism, Afrofuturism and ideas around Black Subjectivity. This idea of Blackness being fungible – the idea that Blackness is exchangeable (especially in a commercial/capitalist sense) for anything except the Human. It's also about rejecting both Land (the Human/assimilation) and the Coastline (marginalisation/periphery). So it's imagining a world beyond Land in a space that also lacks any time (something I call the Stateless). It's reclaiming and owning the instability of Blackness and creating a new space outside of this notion of the future. Outside this notion that one day everybody will be equal or even outside of Sun Ra's notions of a future where Black people will found a colony in outer space.

**Can you tell me about your concept of the Shipwreck(ed)?**

The Shipwreck(ed) is the title of my research which emerged last year. I'm very interested in placing Blackness back into the sea, which I know has been explored extensively, but reclaiming that space and its history for ourselves. Especially because Blackness (as we know it) was born on the slave ship. That was when Blackness was constructed. And the

Shipwreck(ed) is both the destruction of the Ship, and the creation of something new from its ruined remains as well. The Shipwreck(ed) is informed by the Undercommons, the maroons, the Drexciyans, and the Stateless; this idea of refusing or even destroying the main narrative (social and physical death) in favour of something that is wholly ours in both authority and autonomy. It's escaping in the most destructive way possible.

**How do you feel about the current Black Lives Matter protests?**

I keep seeing this statement whirring around, 'The Civil Rights Act only came about after six days of mass protest and rioting after Martin Luther King was assassinated.' But then I wonder what the act really did if it we're supposed to be living in a post-segregation, anti-racist era. It feels like we're stuck in a continuous cycle of minor progress/violent counteraction which makes me very apprehensive as to what will happen during and after this period of protest. I feel that in order for shit to really change we literally have to tear it all down and I don't know how we can do that without severe repercussions.

**How will this moment feed into your practice?**

So many of my works are made in response to the things that happen at the time of production. An example being the piece of work, 'Ruttier for the Absent' (2019) which was made off the coast of Sicily in response to newspaper articles of time decrying Italy's decision to essentially sentence migrants to death at sea (Il Decreto 53/2019 of June 14th 2019) and arguably erase the humanity of these people. The ruttier acts as a non-verbal mode of map-making, as a means of finding your way home wherever that may be. I found it impossible to detach myself, a Black woman, from that harrowing realisation, especially seeing as I was working in that very stretch of waters that the decree referred to. I guess so much of my practice is about destruction, rejection and mourning, but there is also this idea of a shred of hope. That perhaps I'm wrong and there will be some sort of peace or some sort of unity regardless of where the world goes. That is the glimmer of hope that is happening right now during these riots and protests in response to the dark and incredibly traumatising experience of watching police murder and brutalise Black people over and over again. People are fighting for this shred of hope that things may change for the better.

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Previous left: a Flag of Victory, a Trophy of Defeat (2019). Raffia, kaolin clay, tarred sisal, iron gambrel. Photo credit: Paris International. Courtesy VEDA Firenze and the artist. Previous Right Top: a haunting, a wake of sorts (2019). Hull sail, kaolin clay, cowrie shells, galvanised steel, steel shackles, raffia, and sisal. Photo credit: Wilf Speller. Courtesy VEDA Firenze, Wyssing Arts Centre and the artist. Previous Right Bottom: Ruttier for the Absent (2019). Hull sail, sisal, kaolin clay, worn rope, destroyed palm, iron, raffia, residue from the Mediterranean. Photo credit: Ilaria Orsini. Courtesy VEDA Firenze, INCURVA and the artist. This Page Top: The Beaconsing Soul / Bankrupt Utopia (for Pateh Sabally) (2017). Kaolin clay, wood, calico, preserved palm, cowrie shells (Nonstaria Noneta), tortoise shell beads, wooden beads, wire. Courtesy VEDA Firenze and the artist. This Page Bottom: Flag of Nowhere (2017). Kaolin, calico, rotting dried palm leaves, raffia, buoys, cowrie shells. Courtesy the artist.



**“Because of the nature of the materials, there is so much autonomy that the pieces hold. So things may crumble with time as if they are escaping this realm.”**

VEDA