

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

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TAU LEWIS

59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia

April 23 - November 27, 2022

The three sculptures Tau Lewis will exhibit in the Biennale Arte 2022 each bear a unique Latin title linked to the broader themes she investigates through the work. The *vena cava* are large veins that return blood from the body into the heart, gesturing toward the intergenerational and cross-geographical connections within the Black diaspora. *Angelus Mortem*, or “angel of death,” suggests ancestral lineage and spiritual communion between past and present. *Sol niger* translates to “black sun,” which invokes Lewis’ textile works existing as conceptual information systems or borderless maps that include celestial realms. Below text by Tau Lewis.



Tau Lewis, *Vena Cava*, 2022

"For the Biennale Arte 2022, my presentation will be comprised of three ten-foot, wall-hung masks. These are inspired by a smaller scale mask I made in 2017, inspired by those of the Yoruba tribes of West Africa, which are worn in ceremonies to conjure and communicate with ancestors and spiritual realms. As well as being anthropomorphic, masks in the culture often represent animals and it is believed that such masks can help wearers communicate with spirits who live in forests or open savannahs.

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Tau Lewis, *Angelus Mortem*, 2022

The masks will be brown and black and made of scraps of leather, fur and fabric remnants which I have collected in the studio over the years. I source the remnants primarily from personal environments in New York, Toronto and my family home in Negril, Jamaica. I am interested in the potential for emotive transference in found materials, the imagining of new geographies for Black existence and the production of something generative through discarded material. Through only using found fabric, I also strive to continue a long history of upcycling which exists in Black cultural history.

The works are also inspired by Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka's play *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), in which lives, voices, histories and ethical and spiritual stances are overlaid. The play brings ancestors to life to comment shrewdly on both the past and the present in terms of both human nature and politics in Nigeria. Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986 and was described as a playwright "who, in a wide cultural perspective and with poetic overtones, fashions the drama of existence."

On a broader level, I am interested in the duality of masks as objects, since they can be ceremonial or theatrical; act as protection or disguise and enable a wearer to be anonymous to serve both good or evil deeds."

Tau Lewis (b. 1993, Toronto, ON) has exhibited in several museums and institutions, including the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, presented as part of the fifth iteration of Prospect New Orleans, LA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; MoMA PS1, New York; New Museum, New York; Hepworth Wakefield, UK; College Art Galleries, Saskatoon; Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston; Art Gallery of Mississauga, ON; and the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto. Lewis has also shown work in galleries including Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Cooper Cole, Toronto; Sadie Coles HQ, London; Chapter NY, New York; Jeffrey Stark, New York; Oakville Galleries, ON; Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles; and Shoot the Lobster, New York, among others. Her work has been acquired to the permanent collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Library Collection, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; and Grinnell College Museum of Art, IA. In 2022, she will present a solo show at 52 Walker, New York. Lewis lives and works in Brooklyn.