

# IMAGE ON THE TONGUE

**EBUN SODIPO**

**16.05.24 - 07.06.24**

**CURATED BY FAFAYA MOGENSEN**

There are many ways to periodize one's life: the time of geography, mental states, images, technological advancements, emotions, and time spent with others. These create a hierarchy and narrative that shape who we are in the world. However, some subject positions defy this structure, resulting in a sense of being adrift, unmoored from a particular place and history.

Author Clarice Lispector writes, "Does my life have no plot? I'm unexpectedly fragmentary. I'm little by little. My story is to live." Eburn Sodipo's work exists somewhere between place and emotional state. The exhibition should be understood as entry points to a life; the works are not arranged in any chronological order and consequently, they jump through time. It is an encyclopedia of the privilege of periodizing a life.

Since 2021, Eburn Sodipo has archived almost everything in images, films, text quotes, fashion commercials, and historical black figures. The two wall-hung sculptures are an illustrious visual biography of this. Beneath the resin surface, you will see images she sourced from the internet to explore how images adopt different meanings and currencies, and how some subject positions still struggle to achieve solidification and recognition. The collages contain potent historical artifacts and reflect Eburn's visual interests. One might feel a certain sense of protection in being so exposed, yet there is so little history about the lives of queer individuals, especially young black queers, that these works carry an explosive significance.

The sculpture 'Prosthesis for Freedom' tells the true story of an enslaved black woman in the 1800s who liberated herself from colonial subjugation by dressing as a man. Philosopher and gender studies scholar Judith Butler has been pivotal in understanding "gender as a construct" and in popularizing this idea. In 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination,' she notes, "gender is imitation without an original." This means that gender expectations change over time—historical time and personal time. The pair of high-heeled boots mentioned in the text on display in the vitrine, which tell the story, are not what we today would consider as standard. Instead, they are an ironic placeholder and a reminder of Sodipo's and Butler's point.

Some of the most recent and rapid social changes concern LGBT rights, particularly trans rights and trans visibility. Broadly, transgender individuals encounter systemic and institutional discrimination and barriers to economic security. Sodipo, as her works make clear, is intimately acquainted with these barriers. Her figures and language struggle against ideological notions about black trans femmes' roles, their political entanglements, and the politics of archiving.

Her work asks the question: under what conditions do we become who we are?

Text by Fafaya Mogensen

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