

MAUREEN PALEY.



CHIOMA EBINAMA

Real love is a love that sets you free

25 April – 31 May 2025

Maureen Paley is pleased to present *Real love is a love that sets you free* at Studio M. This is Chioma Ebinama's third exhibition with the gallery. The show explores contemporary femininity and how it has been shaped through narratives spanning myth and manga. These works also champion the potential for love to be a space for liberation.

Real love is a love that sets you free is a collection of works on paper that meditate on nighttime. As Ebinama observed, "Night was once a sacred time, but now, for most people in the post-industrial world, it feels spiritually empty. Historically, it's been associated with feminine power, but today it's seen as dangerous – especially for femme people in urban centres".

Across her recent work, Ebinama has drawn from manga, celebrating the media which has found popularity through its exploration of modern loneliness and vulnerability. Of particular importance is the work of Moto Hagio, who began producing works in the 1970s and is considered a pioneer of shōjo manga (manga aimed at young women). Ebinama is interested in how Hagio and other female manga artists introduced psychodrama, sensitivity, and romance into a genre that until the 1970s was predominantly confined to male action and ego.

The works shown in the exhibition will be accompanied by a "nighttime tale", an experimental comic book which takes its inception from her 2024 artwork, *Al-buraq come save us*. This piece depicts Buraq – an equine creature with wings and a human face associated with rescue and liberation – flying over a burning landscape with a centaur beneath. The new book follows a post-apocalyptic romance between a centaur and a nymph, embodying the divine forces of masculine and feminine which have recurred throughout Ebinama's work in recent years. The narrative "is about love being a potent site of transcendence after destruction and loss" – Ebinama, 2025.

The exhibition title is drawn from the lyrics to a 2017 song by American R&B singer Roman GianArthur, *Real Love, No Shade*. The lyrics follow "We sang a glorious song / Real song / But I guess it wasn't true love / I can't lie, the greatest love of all / Is a love to set you free".

Chioma Ebinama (b. 1988, New Jersey, USA) is an artist living and working in Athens, Greece. In 2024, the Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen presented *This Mud-Formed Life*, a solo exhibition of works by Ebinama. Previous solo exhibitions include *The Eyes of the Beloved are Everywhere*, Maureen Paley: Morena di Luna, Hove, UK (2023); *The Eleventh House*, The Breeder, Athens, Greece (2023); *tipota*, Fortnight Institute, New York, USA (2022); *A Spiral Shell*, Maureen Paley, London (2021); *mud & butterflies*, Galeria Catinca Tabacaru, Bucharest, Romania (2021); *Lay All Your Love On Me*, Salon 94, New York, USA (2021); *Leave the thorns and take the rose*, The Breeder Gallery, Athens, Greece (2020) and *Now I only believe in...Love*, Fortnight Institute, New York, USA (2020).

Works by Chioma Ebinama are currently on view in the group exhibitions *Imagining Black Diasporas: 21st Century Art and Poetics*, LACMA, Los Angeles, USA; *Shifting Landscapes*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; and in *Undersea*, Hastings Contemporary, Hastings, UK (2025). Further group exhibitions include *Sea Inside*, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, UK (2025); *The Infinite Woman*, Foundation Carmignac, Porquerolles Island, France (2024); *Hollow Earth: Art, Caves & The Subterranean Imaginary*, Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition: Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham and RAMM, Exeter, UK; The Glucksman, Cork, Ireland (2022); *The Serpent's Eye*, Musée d'art contemporain de la Haute-Vienne, Rochechouart, France (2021).

Her work can be found in the Whitney Museum Collection, New York; Perez Museum Collection, Miami and LACMA Collection, Los Angeles.

Chioma Ebinama, *Al-buraq come save us*, 2024, watercolor, sumi ink, and gouache on handmade paper, 56 x 76 cm - 22 x 29 7/8 in

STUDIO M Rochelle School, 7 Playground Gardens, London E2 7FA +44 (0)20 7729 4112 info@maureenpaley.com www.maureenpaley.com