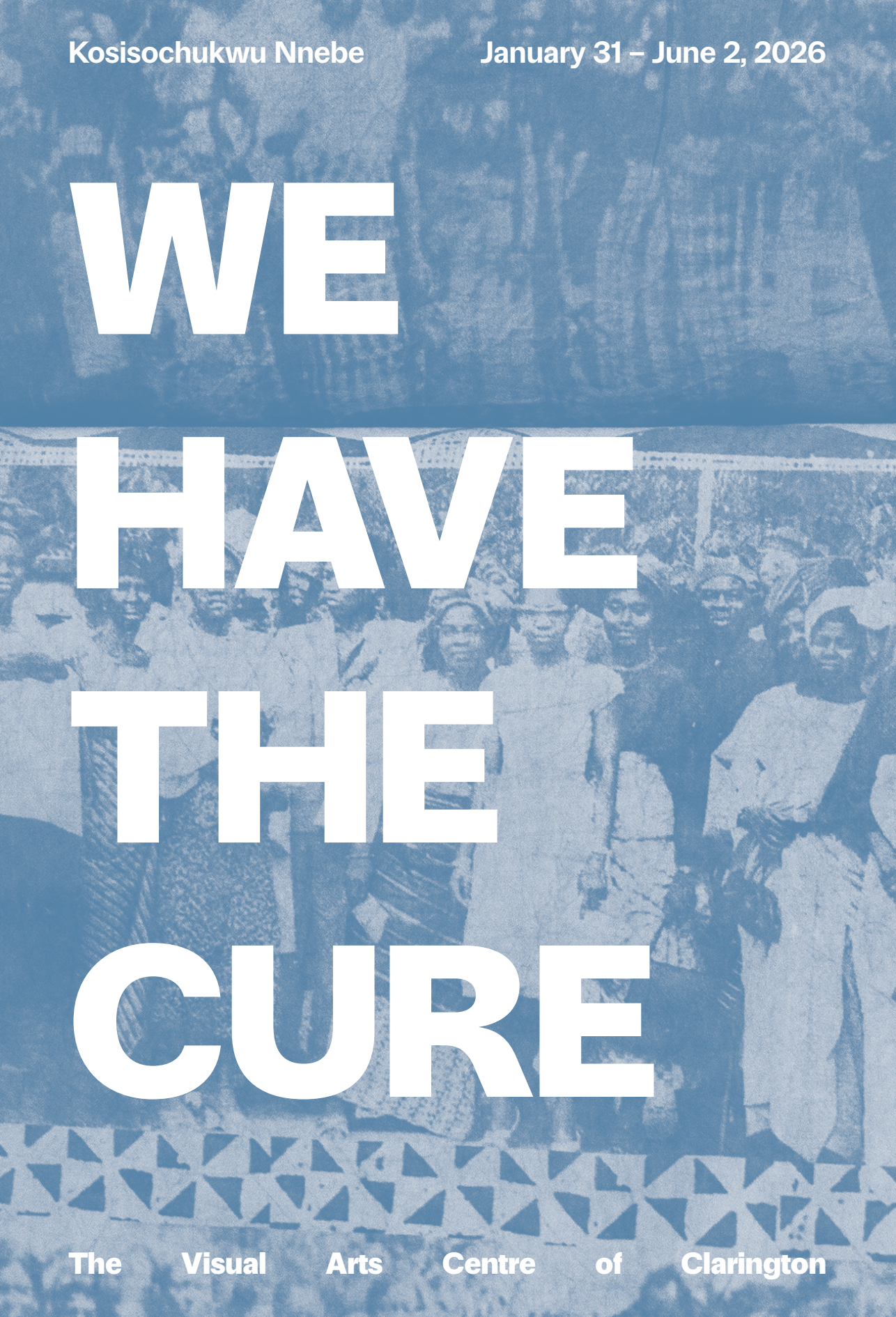
Kosisochukwu Nnebe

January 31 – June 2, 2026



WE HAVE THE CURE

The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington

Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *an inheritance / a threat / a haunting*, 2022, video installation, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.







Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *ihe anyị hapụrụ (a woman's weapon)*, 2024, bronze, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.



IN THE BE-

In the beginning

GINNING

there was a root.

THERE WAS

Cassava originated in South America and the Caribbean before becoming central to West African foodways. Now, it is a staple in Nigerian cuisine. However, this starchy vegetable must be carefully prepared to remove cyanide toxins from its flesh. The root has been pulled from the earth for generations by women who knew its dual nature—food and poison, sustenance and sabotage. Records tell us that enslaved women in the Caribbean hid traces of the root beneath their fingernails, carrying into the homes of slave owners a quiet insurgency in the smallest crease of the body. With each chore of service, each gesture of labour, these women courted the possibility of revolt. Their rage was righteous, and their hands became sites of strategy: nail beds as thresholds between survival and refusal, protection and empowerment.

Kosisochukwu Nnebe's *We Have The Cure* is a multimedia exhibition that extends from the wake of this sisterhood. It asks what becomes of this ancestral tactic—this "poison feminism"—as it travels across oceans, centuries, plantations, marketplaces, and digital economies. What remains at the fingertips of women today, and how do their hands continue to engineer liberation in a world structured against their flourishing?

Visitors encounter a large-scale textile installation when entering the exhibition, *Guaranteed Nigerian Adire - Available by the Yard!* (2025). Adire is a meticulous and multi-step resist-dyeing practice popular in Nigeria. It emerges from a process that is both technical and communal: the cloth is folded, tied, stitched, or coated with cassava. Once the resist technique is applied, the cloth is repeatedly submerged in deep vats of indigo. It dries and oxidizes to create various intricate motifs and vibrant patterns. Adire is tended by generations of women craftmakers. What results is a textile whose relief patterns are as layered as the histories that shape them.

Adire is not only a textile, but a pedagogy. Its techniques are passed from aunties to daughters, masters to apprentices, pattern by pattern. Every tie and resist marking carries the imprint of the hands that taught it, forming a lineage of embodied knowledge. Through this dyeing process, stories are traded, instructions are shared, and feminized creation is circulated as the completed fabrics become marketable and monetized. Through reference to and experimentation within this craft, Nnebe reminds us that the past is not dormant, but continually reactivated in practices of knowledge exchange, making, and trading.

Revolts led by women are threaded throughout Nigeria's history, and these textiles have often been at their centre. The 1929 Women's War and the Abeokuta Women's Revolt of the late 1940s were mass mobilizations against colonial taxation, market restrictions, and assaults on women's socioeconomic autonomy. Adire wrappers functioned like uniforms of defiance in both movements—garments that signaled sisterhood and collective refusal. By adapting the process of Adire to produce what she calls tie-dye or Adire photographs, Nnebe reproduces archival photographs of these protests on segments of fabric long enough to make a wrapper—a way of keeping these histories alive through wear and continued protest. These activists and union groups established a lineage of women leveraging the tools that they had at hand—trade networks, textile economies, cooperative labour—to challenge systems that were designed to curtail their freedom. This ethos reverberates through Nnebe's practice: an understanding that infrastructures of resistance are often improvised, local, and feminized, born from the same everyday practices that sustain life.

These craft histories become a bridge to contemporary economies, where women now forge similar community empowerment systems through new technologies. Access to traditional banks or ATMs is sometimes a challenge in Nigeria. Instead, you will likely approach a local agent and encounter a handheld point-of-sale (POS) system—like the device in Nnebe's *POS Available Here* (2025). Through POS, you can quickly and easily withdraw cash, pay utility bills, and make person-to-person money transfers without access to physical branches or technologies that are operated by conventional bank corporations or big tech. These big banks were not designed with the realities of residents in mind. Today, local agents, who are often women with POS systems, become self-governing access points into a robust network of e-commerce—digital



Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *The Seeds We Carry*, 2024, glass, custom nail extensions, sequins, beads, putrefying cassava juice, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.

banking, prepaid vouchers, mobile phone networks, and local economies that power everyday life. It's a high-functioning, grassroot, plug-and-play operation that developed in the face of obstructive state systems. No nearby bank? No bank card? No ATM? No problem. The infrastructure of POS, powered by local women and agents, offers real and inspired financial freedom.

To come face-to-face with a functioning POS terminal in the gallery is to have the expectation of spectatorship disrupted by the immediacy of financial exchange. Standing before *POS Available Here*, visitors are invited to shift from passive observers to active participants in a transnational economy. They can activate the POS terminal and tap their bank card to send money directly to the women vendors that Nnebe has worked with and learned from in Lagos. This action refuses the distance that normally shields North American audiences from global economic inequities. Visitors' transactions become a sort of trick offering, micro-reparation, or act of alignment with the women that anchor this exhibition. It is an insistence on direct action, community building across distance and difference.

In Nnebe's video installation, *an inheritance / a threat / a haunting* (2022), she replicates the steps taken by enslaved Africans to create cyanide powder derived from cassava. Grinded to a fine powder to slip beneath a fingernail, this substance was held there like recipe passed down through generations, like an ancestral transmission depicting how to assert one's subjectivity in the face of persistent un-liveability. In some ways, this action invokes The Trickster: a character known for bending the rules, refusing imposed narratives, building survival through improvisation and cunning. The Trickster can be found throughout Nnebe's practice. It also functions in the contemporary POS structures that are found in the project's earlier installations. Colonial systems may have shifted shape, but the disempowerment they impose on Black individuals remains relentless. Turning to overlooked histories of resistance and refusal, *an inheritance* becomes a meditation on feminine rage, not as something to be choked down and repressed, but as a generative and liberatory force.

We Have The Cure (2024), exhibited in the upper Loft Gallery, turns to the nail salon as a parallel feminized economy in North America. Black women cultivate rest, glamour, gossip, and refusal on their own terms in these community businesses. The manicure becomes more than a cosmetic ritual, it allows women to carve out space for themselves beyond hostile environments or social systems. In Nnebe's installation, the salon acts as an apothecary and an armoury. Hands are tended, decorated, sharpened, and fortified. Ornamented nails recall both the stylized armour of contemporary Black beauty and the protective tactics of ancestors who weaponized their fingernails to protect their bodies using cassava.

A collection of glass hands are seen throughout the installation, adorned with these nail extensions. *The Seeds We Carry* (2024) is a sculptural series that returns to historical traditions of Black healing and revolt. The hands hold translucent vessels and jars that echo convert containers that once carried the roots and poisons prepared by enslaved healers. The surface of these libation bottles shimmer with contemporary sequins and beadwork, cradled by translucent hands tipped with decorated acrylics. These vessels collapse the past and present: cassava powder tucked under fingernails becomes inseparable from new aesthetics of the nail salon. Beauty is ornamental, and operative—an engine of



Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *We Have The Cure*, 2024, acrylic, steel, neon lights, ready-made furniture, nail polish, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.

power, knowledge, and empowerment passed from one generation of women to the next. Through collaboration with local Black nail technicians, Nnebe honours the salon as a place where care rituals double as acts of community, sisterhood, and protection—where the gesture of tending to one's hands becomes a quiet rehearsal for shared vitality and survival.

In Lagos, women build their own micro-economies from scratch—crafting adire cloth or providing access to cash—while navigating conditions that consistently deny them financial stability. In North America, nail technicians create similar sites of freedom, expression, and autonomy. Their labour in each case is creative, entrepreneurial, and political. How can we learn from these ongoing traditions to uplift new avenues for community-building and emancipation? Perhaps, the cure has always been in our hands. It is not a single remedy, but a practice. It is the work of transmuting harm into healing—not by waiting for structures to change, but by actively building support systems with whatever materials are at hand.

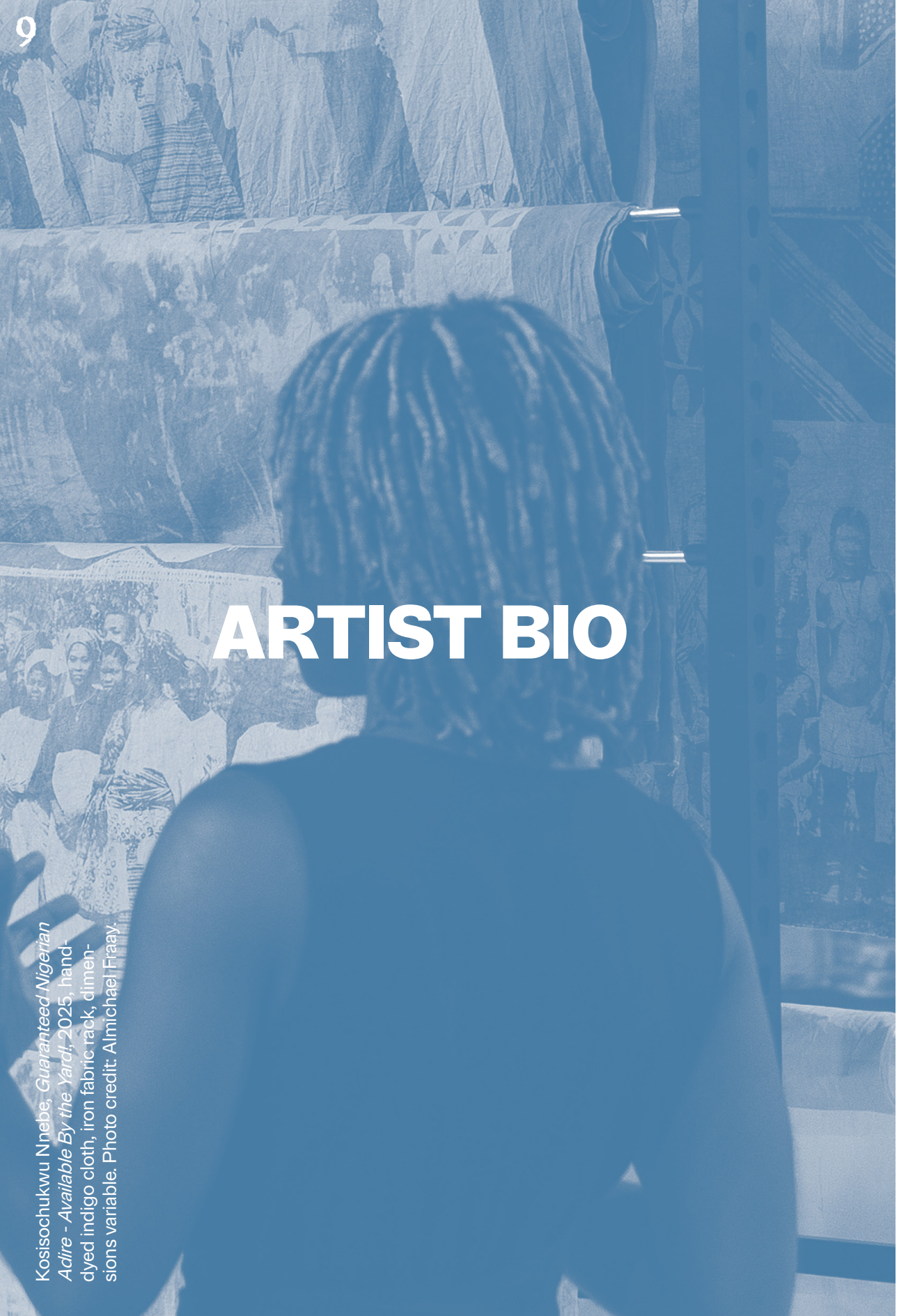
This exhibition makes a proposal: we don't have to get stuck in a cycle where we continually ruminate, theorize, and search for amorphous solutions to ongoing systems of oppression. The cure is already here. It courses through digital networks and marketplaces, in local rhythms of craftwork. It is held in the bodies, materials, traditions, and technologies that Black women have carried with them across generations. It's female rage, relentless hustle, a bit of trickery, something hopeful and caring. The cure can be found with dye-stained palms, lacquered nails, fingers that continually make, resist, and reimagine. Liberation doesn't need to be a distant horizon. It's a community practice already pulsing, ready for action, at our fingertips.

Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *POS Available Here*
2025, hand-dyed indigo cotton cloth, nylon fabric, PVC banner. Dimensions variable.



Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *Guaranteed Nigerian Adire - Available By the Yard!*, 2025, hand-dyed indigo cloth, iron fabric rack, dimensions variable; Photo credit Kosisochukwu Nnebe.

ARTIST BIO



Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *Guaranteed Nigerian Adire - Available By the Yard*, 2025, hand-dyed indigo cloth, iron fabric rack, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Almichael Fraay.

Kosisochukwu Nnebe (b. 1993, Nigeria) is a neurodivergent Nigerian-Canadian conceptual artist and researcher working across installation, lens- and time-based media, and sculpture. Her work challenges dominant narratives by transforming the vernacular and commonplace—from native languages and foodstuffs such as cassava to physical spaces such as nail salons—into counter-archives of colonial histories. Through her practice, she excavates and reclaims gendered histories of resistance, offering transgressive representations and understandings of Blackness rooted in anti-imperial relationality. At its core, Nnebe's practice is invested in anti-imperial worldbuilding through the troubling of colonial logics and speculative reimaginings of otherwise pasts, presents, and futures.

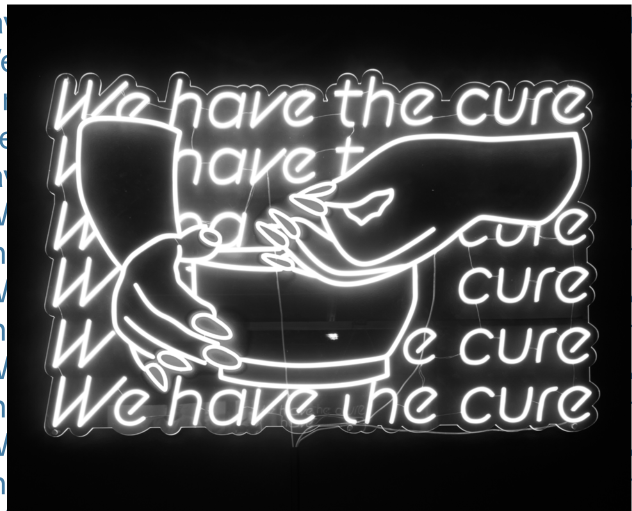
A self-taught artist, Nnebe uses her practice to critically engage with her educational background in economics, development, and sociology from McGill University and the London School of Economics, as well as her professional experience in social, economic and environmental policy with the Canadian government.

CURATORIAL BIOS

Samantha Lance is the Curator of the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington whose work fosters meaningful connections between artists and communities. She holds a Master of Visual Studies in Curatorial Studies degree from the University of Toronto and a BFA with Distinction in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University. Lance has worked with institutions including the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, C Magazine, the Art Gallery of Algoma, Onsite Gallery, and Latitude Gallery New York. Her graduating exhibition, *The Love that Remains* (Art Museum at the University of Toronto, 2024), brought together Toronto-based artists whose textile practices recover matrilineal histories of displacement and belonging. She continues to research and collaborate with artists and curators advocating for women's labour, textile practices, and ancestral techniques, with a particular interest in experimental, multisensory exhibition strategies that expand accessibility and dialogue.

Megan Kammerer (She/her) is a curator, writer, and researcher based in Toronto, Canada. She has held various positions with the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Blackwood Gallery, Jackman Humanities Institute, and the Art Gallery of Guelph, where she worked to support critically engaged exhibition programmes across Southern Ontario. From 2022 - 2024, she was the Curator at the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington (VAC), where she spearheaded the gallery's artistic direction and facilitated site-specific installation projects. Her work has been shortlisted for two exhibition awards, winning an Exhibition of the Year prize from Galeries Ontario / Ontario Galleries in 2023. Kammerer's research is published by the University of Toronto, where she holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Art History. She currently works as a Programming Associate at The Bentway.

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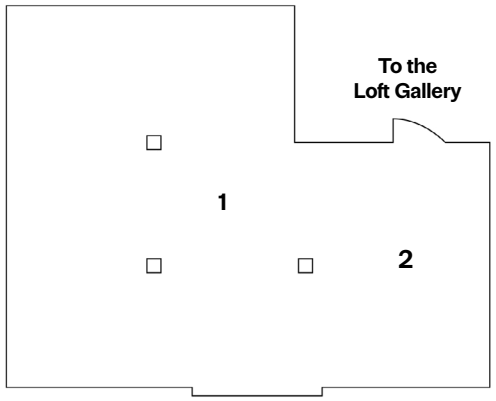
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Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *We Have The Cure*,
2024, acrylic, steel, neon lights, ready-made
furniture, nail polish, dimensions variable.
Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.



Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *We Have The Cure*,
2024, video, 00:09:01, dimensions variable.
Photo credit: Vladim Vilain.

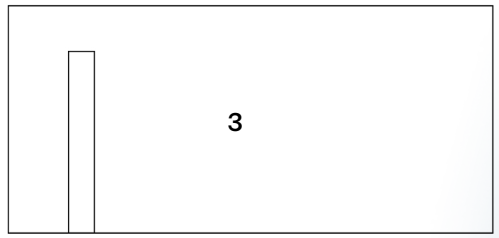
MAIN GALLERY



1. *Guaranteed Nigerian Adire - Available by the Yard*, 2025, hand-dyed (indigo) cotton, dimensions variable.

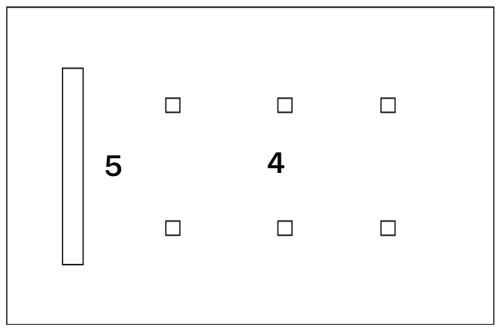
2. *POS Available Here*, 2025, multimedia installation, dimensions variable.

SMALL GALLERY



3. *an inheritance / a threat / a haunting*, 2022, video installation, dimensions variable.

LOFT GALLERY



4. *We Have The Cure*, 2024, multimedia installation, dimensions variable.

5. *The seeds we carry*, 2024, glass, custom nail extensions, sequins, beads, cassava juice, dimensions variable.

Kosisochukwu Nnebe, *The Seeds We Carry*, 2024, glass, custom nail extensions, sequins, beads, putrefying cassava juice, dimensions variable. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott.



WE HAVE THE CURE
Kosisochukwu Nnebe

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