

HAKEEM ADEWUMI
POSSESSION OF A RECALCITRANT DREAM, 2024
JUNE 4 – OCTOBER 1, 2024
ANNE H. FITZPATRIC FACADE

In this self-portrait, we behold a sensuous rendering of the artist's seated body in shadow. Adewumi was inspired by the hydra, a multi-headed creature from Greek mythology that regenerates in the wake of harm. Adewumi reclaims the monster's ferocious and protective nature to connect us with parts of himself that we can never fully know.

Adewumi believes in the right to allow authentic parts of ourselves to stay concealed. He joyfully resists limitations to Black queer diversity.

STATEMENT BY HAKEEM ADEWUMI

In this digital photo collage, the artist poses with a tenderness and obscurity that both invites and rebuffs. This self-portrait is both a refusal to be seen as a singular being, and an invitation to linger more deeply in the impenetrable capacity of the unknown.

1. I believe we (as people) have an ethical right to acknowledge and uplift the divergent humanities who invite us into deeper expansion in our being and everyday living. I believe my ethical right as a photographer (in this case), is to offer an irreducible version of myself, a photo-improvisation, a self-portrait of alterity, or a kind of otherness that challenges a photographic practice. I am more interested in challenging what viewers see and calling into question what brings you into a space of thought, feeling, and expectation.

2. Queer and Trans artists in the past have acknowledged that photography was simply one element in theorizing selfhood- many disrupted that practice with collaging, montaging, staging, etc. Here I am also taking those considerations to honor that lineage and push toward what it means to exist within an art world that celebrates our *otherness*.

3. I also want to share this passage from Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* that may help tie this together. This along with Edouard Glissant's writing is where I am drawing most of my inspiration:

The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the monstrum is etymologically "that which reveals," "that which warns," a glyph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again. These epistemological spaces between the monster's bones are Derrida's familiar chasm of differance: a genetic

uncertainty principle, the essence of the monster's vitality, the reason it always rises from the dissection table as its secrets are about to be revealed and vanishes into the night.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

After graduating with a degree in African & African Diaspora Studies from the University of Texas at Austin, Hakeem Adewumi (b.1990, US) was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship scholarship to Johannesburg, South Africa. His work has been exhibited at the Houston Museum of African American Culture, Houston, TX; the George Washington Carver Museum and Culture Center, Austin, TX; the Janette Kennedy Gallery, Dallas, TX; and is in the collection of the Phyllis and Ross Escalette Permanent Collection, Chapman University. Over the years Adewumi has curated several pop-up exhibitions including an experimental project, Juneteenth House (JH). This project is an immersive concept house and multidisciplinary studio merging design and art to explore placemaking, culture, and Black identity in Texas. Adewumi first came to the Gardner as an [Artist-in-Residence in July 2024](#). He is also the Co-Director of Marketing for The Theater Offensive, a Boston-based theater company that focuses on issues affecting queer and trans people of color.

RELATED EXHIBITIONS

[*On Christopher Street: Transgender Portraits by Mark Seliger*](#)
[*Portraits from Boston, With Love*](#)

The Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade on Evans Way has been dedicated to commissioning and rotating new site-specific works since 2012. The fabric scrim serves as an outdoor canvas that extends the gallery space beyond the Museum's interior walls and serves as public art in the city of Boston. The Artist-in-Residence program is directed by Pieranna Cavalchini, *Tom and Lisa Blumenthal Curator of Contemporary Art*, and is supported by the Barbara Lee Program Fund.