

NICOLA
VASSELL

FRIDA ORUPABO



CLOSED UP LIKE A FIST

MAR. 17 — APR. 30

Opening MAR. 17 5-8 pm

Gallery Hours

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm 138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

For press inquiries

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March 17 — April 30 2022

Nicola Vassell Gallery is pleased to present *Closed Up Like A Fist*, an exhibition of collages and digital prints by Frida Orupabo, on view March 17 - April 30, 2022.

Winged, pinned, and disembodied, Orupabo's most recent collaged images confront the history of generational, discriminatory trauma and simultaneously offer recuperative possibilities.

Orupabo's multidisciplinary practice excavates colonial archives and other digital sources to amass her materials of dispossessed imagery. By splicing and combining these depictions, she brings into question the mutability of identities, delicately bound by fragmented components. The temporal aspect of these photographs addresses how past depictions inform contemporary images, and how the two are intertwined.

The exhibition's title borrows from Gayle Jones' "Corregidora," a 1975 novel that explores the persistent psychological tyranny of generational trauma. The book deeply resonated with the artist as she developed this body of work. The ambivalent and contradictory qualities of Jones' characters reverberate through Orupabo's queries into the intricacies of human nature. Her fractured, splintered portraits embody sublime oppositions, coalescing beauty with horror, as a reminder of how closely the two coexist.

One of the key considerations in these works is the archival depictions of Black female bodies that is in conflict with their real lives and experiences. Rooted in historically racialized, colonialist images, Orupabo's figurative interventions calls these discrepancies into question.

Of these many depictions, her visual narrative of female suicide is a crucial reference point. It recalls the plantation memories of Grada Kilomba as well as *The Suicide of Lucretia* by Albrecht Dürer and *The Death of Cleopatra* by Edmonia Lewis. The splayed, prone, slain constitution of tragic portraiture is poetically evinced in her boldly collaged counter-narratives. They challenge traumatic, repetitive imagery often connected to portrayals of women of color.

"After one is de-idealized, one becomes idealized, and behind this idealization lies the danger of a second alienation. In both processes one remains a response to a colonial order." - Grada Kilomba

Frida Orupabo

Frida Orupabo lives and works in Oslo. Having begun her professional life as a sociologist, her practice examines notions of race, familial relations, sexuality, gender, identity, and violence. Solo exhibitions of her work include *I have seen a million pictures of my face and still I have no idea*, Fotomuseum Winterthur (2022); *A house is a house*, Galerie Nordenhake (2019); *How fast shall we sing*, Galerie Nordenhake (2022); *Medicine for a Nightmare*, Kunstnerens Hus (2019); *How did you feel when you come out of the wilderness*, Kunsthall Trondheim (2021); and *Hours After*, Stevenson (2020). Selected group exhibitions include *We Fight to Build a Free World*, the Jewish Museum, New York (2020); *What is the present?*, the Museum für Gegenwartkunst Siegen, Germany (2020); and Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2020). Orupabo was included in the 2019 Venice Biennale and her work is in the collections of Alexander Tutsek Foundation, Munich; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Dean Collection, New York; Huis Marseilles, Amsterdam; KADIST Foundation, Paris / San Francisco; LACMA, Los Angeles; Marieluise Hessel Foundation, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; National Museum, Oslo; NKIM / Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, Trondheim; Perez Art Museum, Miami; Preus Museum, Oslo; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Turku Art Museum, Turku.