



DOMINIQUE WHITE









Dominique White: Deadweight  
Max Mara Art Prize for Women at Whitechapel Gallery

A thought-provoking exploration of rebellion and transformation, Deadweight comprises four large-scale sculptural works which continue the artist’s interest in creating new worlds for ‘Blackness’ and fascination with the metaphoric potency and regenerative power of the sea.

The title Deadweight derives from a nautical term which collapses everything on a ship into a single unit which determines the ship’s ability to float and function as intended. White deliberately inverts this, offering disruption as opposed to stability – a reckoning with the tipping point of the ship to offer the possibility of emancipation through abolition.

The works combine force and fragility: undulating angular structures formed from metals manipulated into forms evocative of anchors, a ship’s hull, mammal carcasses or skeletons – lost or abandoned material forms that, through White’s treatment, become symbols of defiance.

As part of the process, the sculptures were immersed in the Mediterranean Sea: both a physical and poetic gesture to explore the transformative effect of water on material objects. The resulting forms display the rust and oxidation of the metals, the fragmentation of organic elements, such as sisal, raffia and driftwood, as well as carrying the lingering scent of seawater.

The new commission weaves together concepts of Afrofuturism, Afro-pessimism and Hydrarchy – philosophies central to White’s research and artistic practice. Her work envisions an Afro future, located outside of traditional utopian science fiction, in an oceanic realm with the potential to offer fluid, rebellious realities, liberated from capitalist and colonial influence. White’s sculptures, or ‘beacons’, recall sea-bound, imagined worlds which prophesise the emergence of the Stateless: “a [Black] future that hasn’t yet happened, but must.”

Deadweight was developed from White’s winning proposal for the ninth edition of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women and realised during a six-month residency organised by Collezione Maramotti.

Specifically tailored to support, inform and help realise the work, the residency saw White travel through Agnone, Palermo, Genoa, Milan and Todi, working with academics, researchers and specialists in naval and maritime history and the Mediterranean slave trade, as well as visiting historic foundries and artisan workshops, learning new skills from experts in historic, traditional and contemporary metalworking techniques.

The presentation at Whitechapel Gallery is curated by Katrina Schwarz, Curator: Special Projects, Whitechapel Gallery. An exhibition catalogue will be produced to coincide with the exhibition and features writing by Alexis Pauline Gumb, an essay by Olamiju Fajemisin, a conversation between the artist and Bina von Stauffenberg, and three poems by June Jordan.

Above:

Dead Reckoning  
2024  
forged iron  
195 (L) x 195 (W) x 320(H) cm

Following:

Installation views from Deadweight, at Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2024.

Ineligible For Death  
2024  
Driftwood, forged iron  
260 (L) x 260 (W) x 260 (D) x 180 (H) cm

The Swelling Enemy,  
2024  
Driftwood, forged iron, sisal, raffia, kaolin clay, destroyed sails  
320(L) x 180(W) x 160(H) cm

Split Obliteration  
2024  
Driftwood, high volatile charcoal, forged iron, metal wire, sisal, raffia, destroyed sails, exhausted ropes  
260(L) x 200(W) x 200(H) cm





























*following*

*the warning*  
2024

high volatile charcoal, forged iron, sisal, raffia, destroyed sail  
100 x 290 x 120 cm

*abandoned Hope*  
2024

high volatile charcoal, forged iron, sisal, raffia  
210 x 130 x 140 cm

*harnessing of the unknown storm*  
2024

high volatile charcoal, forged iron, sisal, raffia  
210 x 140 x 140 cm

*destination Unknown*  
2024

high volatile charcoal, forged iron, sisal, raffia  
90 x 140 x 100 cm

*undetected*  
2024

forged iron  
60 x 110 x 60 cm

Installation views from *Destruction of Order*, at Veda, Florence (IT), 2024.





















Taken from the title of the 2006 compilation album by Underground Resistance, *The Destruction of Order* is a continuation of White's exploration of the end of the Nation-state through a cannibalistic prophecy which was first explored during her German debut, *When Disaster Strikes* in late 2023. In the last throes of Western empires, White again asks, "Can the Master's tools dismantle the Master's house?"

White does not ask this question expecting an assimilative outcome to using the master's tools. No, instead she ponders this question looking at self-sabotage or annihilation as the likely outcome drawing on maritime disasters, corrupt algorithms and outsmarted systems as her starting points. Instead, she rehashes this question as "What happens when the predator is hunted using its own tools?"

*Destruction of Order* presents a graveyard of pathetic traps crushed under the weight of the Shipwrecked, the only survivors of the collapse.









following

Can We Be Known Without Being Hunted  
2022  
kaolin clay, burnt mahogany, sisal, null sail, raffia, cast iron, forged iron, rust, damaged rope  
230 (L) x 150 (W) x 580 (H) cm

To The Hunted, May You Continue To Be Their Worst Nightmare I  
2022  
forged iron, destroyed sails, kaolin clay, sisal nets, raffia and cowrie shells  
300 x 240 x 150 cm

Installation views from Dominique White and Alberta Whittle : Sargasso Sea, at ICA Philadelphia, New York (US), 2024.











## THE HAUNTED HYDROLOGY OF DOMINIQUE WHITE

written by Eric Otieno Sumba, on Frieze Magazine 241, “Outer Depths”

There is an impressive range to the frameworks Dominique White uses to engage with bodies of water. There is the nautical Afrofuturism of Detroit-based techno duo Drexciya (Gerald Donald and James Stinson). Another is Duke University Press, specifically the Black, feminist or nihilist thinkers on their roster such as Katherine McKittrick, Christina Sharpe and Calvin L. Warren. White’s YouTube algorithm recently recommended a video on how deserted lobster traps, crab cages and discarded fishing nets can combine to become naval mines. Likewise, social media has been generative as a source of information. When we meet in late 2023, she refers me to a series of TikTok videos titled ‘Haunted Hydrology’, produced by researcher and artist Geo Rutherford: ‘This person just tells incredible stories of natural phenomena or myths and legends about bodies of water.’ For White, these tales are inconclusive evidence of the untapped power that oceans and lakes have compared to land. Water is an interface between life as we know it and all the alternatives that once were or that could have been. It is also a medium that invites radical visions.

*Zero Is My Country* (2021), from White’s ‘Flagged Out’ series (2020–ongoing), resembles a pre-industrial, deep-sea trawler’s net. Three hooks attach to one end of a long, curved mahogany pole, which emerges from a platform that looks like the base of a mast. On each hook, filigree threads of what was once a robust fishing net delicately embody the tension of imminent rupture. This effect is emphasized by granules of white kaolin clay on the floor, where the rest of the net lies: a threadbare jumble of old sails, cowrie shells, raffia and sisal that looks like it would fall apart if picked up. Though some of its materials are incredibly durable – mahogany and iron are both commonly used in boat-building – the work elicits a sense of delicacy and instability. *Zero Is My Country* undermines its scale by its own fragility. Is this a thinly veiled commentary on national sovereignty, or the ceremonial mace and flag of an aquatic society?

‘Drexciya was one of the first concrete inspirations for my work – this idea of underwater nations as examples of resilience,’ White says. ‘Both literally and abstractly: this is why my work floats between fact and fiction. But also, a lot of Caribbean myths and legends permeated my childhood, so I carry both an obsession and a fear of the sea.’ Born in Essex, White’s first contact with a body of water that was not ‘dead’ – which is to say the grey ocean surrounding the UK – was in Saint Lucia, where she often visited her mother’s side of the family. ‘In some parts of Jamaica and Saint Lucia, the ocean is the link between the living and the dead. That’s where, ten or so years ago, my fascination really started. I was clinging on to the memory of dead family members who never went home to have a proper funerary practice.’ White’s work at the time gestured towards the ocean as a medium for mourning and transcendence. *The Beaconing Soul* (2016), for instance, features a vertical piece of wood, covered in gold leaf, kaolin, gold wire and calico; around the wood, contoured dried palm fronds give the work most of its volume. (Amongst the Ancient Egyptians and the Igbo, the palm symbolizes immortality.) The soul of the title was quite literal for White: ‘I talk about my artworks as bodies or souls because it feels like I’ve harnessed souls that breathe and occupy space.’

When we speak, White is preparing for an exhibition at Kunsthalle Münster, which opened in September 2023, and for another one upcoming at Whitechapel Gallery, London, in 2024. There is plenty in progress. ‘We are on course to sink a new work in Italy, which has been a headache

because all the water around Italy is protected. My practice sits in this volatile space: it’s very hard to control and I love that. You don’t know if something might snap but you kind of have to allow it.’ To the alarm of conservationists and collectors, White has consistently played with the notion of a fugitive materiality within her work over the course of her career: ‘I always had this romantic idea of the work actually escaping through the sea because it’s soluble. All the clay aspects of the work would disappear, leaving you with just the harpoons or the hooks. The work will actively be eating itself throughout the exhibition.’ For White, the retrieval of *Deadweight* (n.d.) from the water is perhaps even more interesting than its submersion because it would enforce true destabilization: ‘If you leave a shipwreck on the seabed, it stays intact, but as soon as you start bringing it out, that’s when things become unstable.’

In many ways, White’s practice is an exploration of how to push things to their limits. Take iron, which she works with a lot: ‘It’s such a volatile material. You can try and protect it but, whenever you see iron next to the sea, it’s actually expanded with the salt and has become unruly. I try to never look at material in a fixed way. Instead, I think: what can I do to push that to become its most unruly, uncontrollable form?’ The resulting entities can range from four to six metres in height. At Kunsthalle Münster, however, building restrictions have kept White’s ambitions on the lower side of that range, but they are still tall. She tells me of recent experiments: ‘The best way to imagine the creative process behind these works is to envisage everything being suspended ten metres in the air and then just dropped. There is a lot of crushed metal.’ She admits that her process has become one of discomfort but, ultimately, of growth: ‘It’s the most extreme experience I’ve ever tried to create in an exhibition: everything feels unstable and viewers may feel almost scared to enter the space.’

Disillusioned with cosmological Afrofuturism, White’s vision of the future has become darker – and more fluid: ‘There’s so little that we know about the deep sea. It seems to contain more possibilities than, say, outer space, the imaginative capacity of which seems to be dwindling.’ As the ‘province of all mankind’ – to quote the 1967 Outer Space Treaty – becomes the playground of moneyed men, the deep sea, while not immune to similar exploration attempts, remains as terrifying as it is exciting. When speculating about our nautical future, White makes no effort to hide her nihilist sympathies, acknowledging humanity’s inability to survive underwater long-term due to the pressure and the lack of light. Yet, visions of futurity, for White, are the domain of radical scepticism, where the illusion of certainty has forever been abandoned. With each new work, White returns to this realm eager to see how a piece of old wood, a retired net or a stretch of rope might cope.



following

*The dethroning of the Human*, 2023  
wrought iron, kaolin, destroyed sail, high volatile charcoal  
240 x 330 x 410 cm

*A refusal to be captured*, 2023  
wrought iron (rusted), destroyed rope, sisal  
270 x 220 x 190 cm

*A refusal to be dominated*, 2023  
wrought iron (rusted), destroyed rope, sisal  
220 x 220 x 220 cm

*The tortuous*, 2023  
mahogany (burnt), wrought iron (rusted)  
120 x 210 x 280 cm

*The antropophagus*, 2023  
mahogany (burnt), wrought iron (rusted)  
160 x 130 x 170 cm

*The domination of Nothing*, 2023  
wrought iron (rusted), sisal, destroyed sail, mahogany (burnt), high volatile charcoal  
410 x 270 x 270 cm

Installation views from *When Disaster Strikes*, at Kunsthalle Münster, Münster (DE), 2023.



































following

May you break free and outlive your enemy, 2021  
cast iron, null sail, sisal, kaolin clay, worn rope, raffia, cowrie shells  
485 x 320 x 420 cm

Installation views from La Casa Encendida, Madrid (ES), 2022.















“Land, Nation-State, Empire (2022) is a trio of charred mahogany flag poles and menacing iron hooks that are collapsing under the force of the insurrectionists that they desperately still cling to in an attempt to retain its former source of power. it follows a lineage of works or disruptions titled Flagged out (2020-ongoing); a series exploring the relationshio between nationalism and the performance within the etiquette of displaying the national flag.  
Land, Nation-State, Empire was influenced by a series of tired, torn and neglected flags observed in the city streets in italy, France, and the United Kingdom. Poised us a reflection of political descent and the possibility of the collapse of the strict borders that contain the nation state, Land, Nation-State, Empire is an embodiment of a future that engages with abolition and insurrection”

\_excerpt from Afterimage exhibition catalogue, Mousse publishing, 2022.

following

Land, Nation-State, Empire  
2022  
mahogany, forged iron, sisal rope, kaolin clay, raffia, null sails  
300 x 340 x 340 cm

Installation views from After Image, groupshow at MAXXI L'Aquila, Aquila (IT), 2022.







following

*Can We Be Known Without Being Hunted*, 2022  
kaolin clay, burnt mahogany, sisal, null sail, raffia,  
cast iron, forged iron, rust, damaged rope  
230 (L) x 150 (W) x 580 (H) cm

*The Long Emancipation*, 2022  
sisal, raffia, kaolin clay, null sail, burnt mahogany, forged iron, cast iron  
approx overall dimension 330 (L) x 90 (W) x 430 (H) cm

*Redemption*, 2022  
burnt mahogany, cast iron, rust, forged iron, found ropes  
240 (L) x 230 (W) x 400 (H) cm

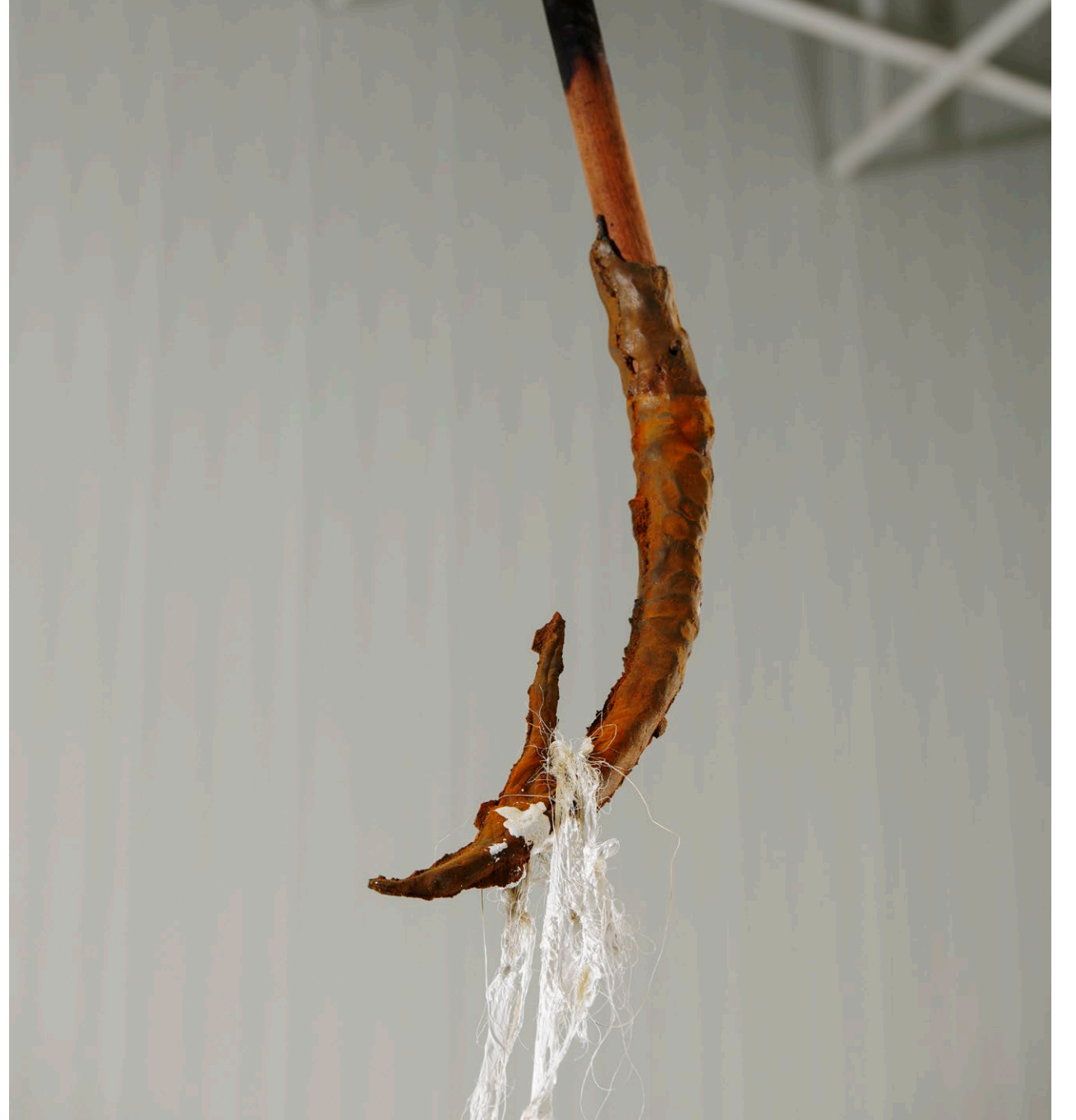
*The Collapsed, the Overthrown, yet ever Insatiable*, 2022  
cast iron, forged iron, rust, damaged rope  
240 (L) x 140 (W) x 310 (H) cm

Installation views from *Cinders of the Wreck*, at Triangle Astérides, Marseille (FR), 2022.





















FLIGHTS OF FANTASY: DOMINIQUE WHITE OLAMIJU FAJEMISIN

MOUSSE MAGAZINE #79

It is possible to derive a list of terms expounding the sculptural practice of Dominique White. Most recurrent are “nauticality,” “shipwreck(ed),” and “Kalunga”, the watery boundary between the living and the dead. “I see the sea as more impossible than space,”<sup>1</sup> White tells me over Zoom. The artist is speaking to me from her studio in Marseille, where she is preparing a new series of sculptural interventions that form *Cinders of the Wreck*, her first solo exhibition in France, currently on view at Triangle, Marseille. This aphorism—the notion that the histories of the largely unexplored, albeit finite, waters of the world are more unthinkable than the infinite vastness of space—explicates White’s concerns with the nautical myths of the Black diaspora and introduces the idea of her work as an exploration of various semantic and literal tensions: that between Afrofuturism and Afropessimism; the distinctions of material representation and illegibility; and the reciprocal desires to evade the antagonism of commodification, all the while establishing an image of the self that exceeds the acrimony of history.

White’s sculptures transcend the violence of representation—that is, the destabilization of the image as a form of truthful depiction as a result of its exhaustion by contemporary media within the current racist economy—through their unique, somewhat unintentional construction as the shadows or ghosts of (Black) bodies by proxy. Though there are no anthropomorphically identifiable features to works such as *The Vindictive Fugitive* (formerly *The Landlocked Prisoner*) (2021)—a tangled knot of woven raffia, sisal, and cowrie shells smothered with kaolin clay, dangling precariously from a bough of untreated iron ligaments—or *The Falling Executioner* (2021)—a similar mass of clay-covered raffia, sisal, shells, and disused sails (termed “dead sails” by the artist, as they can no longer be used), hung from the ceiling by an iron fishhook, tendrils tumbling to the floor like spilled intestines—White admits to the spectral bodiliness of these objects as a by-product of their means of construction. “People see the process as delicate when really, it’s extremely destructive,” she explains. “Smashing, cutting, ripping.” The works measure just above average human size and weight as that is the limit of what the artist can fathom with her own hands as tools. Like bodies, the works seem to breathe, swaying as a result of their unbalanced construction. Like bodies, they will decay if submerged in water: the kaolin dissolving instantly, the iron eventually succumbing to rust.

The significance of water and oceans in White’s practice can be understood within her definition of being “shipwrecked,” a reflexive, emancipatory term derived by the artist to express her desire for the destruction of the metaphorical slave ship’s hull in which modern Blackness was conceived and remains kept, an idea departing from the speculative writings of scholars including Christina Sharpe, Fred Moten, and Frank B. Wilderson, the last of whom writes of “[staying] in the hold of the ship, despite my fantasies of flight.”<sup>2</sup> To which Moten returns: “There are flights of fantasy in the hold of the ship.”<sup>3</sup> Errant, White explodes the ship, explodes banality, explodes Blackness. Is White an Afrofuturist? An Afropessimist? A Blaccelerationist?<sup>4</sup> Is she slipping, even, toward Black Nihilism? The artist has reconciled her desire for a better future with the necessity of the destruction of the now. White’s challenging of the tension between abundance and oblivion begets a sculptural language predicated on the ruination of her mediums in order to explore discomfiting new forms, and as such, she negotiates her materials to the point of their demise: tightly knotted fibers, unraveled rope, charred mahogany, oxidizing metal. White’s previous presentation, *Hydra Decapita* at VEDA, Florence (2021–22), titled for the nautical Herculean myth of the Lernaean Hydra—a multiheaded serpentine water monster that, for every head chopped off, would regrow two in its place, thus requiring Hercules to decapitate it completely and cauterize its remains—extended this reference to include an inversion of Peter Linebaugh’s depiction of the beast’s heads as those of runaway slaves and pirates, those whose dissent threatened the prosperity of seventeenth-century colonial capitalism, in *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000).



For White, the Hydra is the state, Blackness its executioner. The sculptural groups *A fugitive you cannot find a record for is the most successful fugitive of all* (2021) and *Fungibility evades capture* (2021) are the tools of execution. These elegant, bowed pikes of splintering mahogany topped with dark-patinated cast iron spearheads strike the ground as if to injure, yet remain poised in the moment of their attack. As the titles suggest, their success is predicated on their simultaneous martyrdom. (The fact of their specific “martyrdom” further explicates these objects as humanesque.)

Though there is an intrinsically personal element to White’s work (in conversation, she told me of her own family’s part in the Windrush generation and spoke at length of the music and sounds that inspire her), the ironies and references demonstrated by her work allow for its relatability across diasporas. The timelessness of White’s practice, too—residing in “a performance of a [Black] future that hasn’t yet happened, but must”<sup>5</sup> —permits its ongoing accessibility, an act of shipwrecking that has long since begun and sees no end.

1. All artist quotes are from a conversation with the author, February 10, 2022.
2. Frank B. Wilderson, acknowledgments, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
3. Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness,” in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 743.
4. Aria Dean, “Notes on Blacceleration,” *e-ux Journal* 87 (December 2017), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/87/169402/noteson-blacceleration/>.
5. Tina M. Campt, “Quiet Soundings: The Grammar of Black Futurity,” *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 17; quoted in Kathryn Yussof, “Insurgent Geology: A Billion Black Anthropocenes Now,” *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 100.









following

*May you break free and outlive your enemy, 2021*  
cast iron, null sail, sisal, kaolin clay, worn rope, raffia, cowrie shells  
485 x 320 x 420 cm

*A fugitive you cannot find a record for is the most  
successful fugitive of all, 2021*  
cast iron, mahogany  
250 x 130 x 80 cm

*Fungibility evades capture, 2021*  
cast iron, mahogany  
204 x 220 x 10 cm

*The Hunted, the Betrayed, the Traded, 2021*  
cast iron, null sail, sisal, kaolin clay, worn rope, raffia, cowrie shells  
200 x 150 x 165 cm

Installation views from *Hydra Decapita*, at VEDA, Florence (IT), 2021.





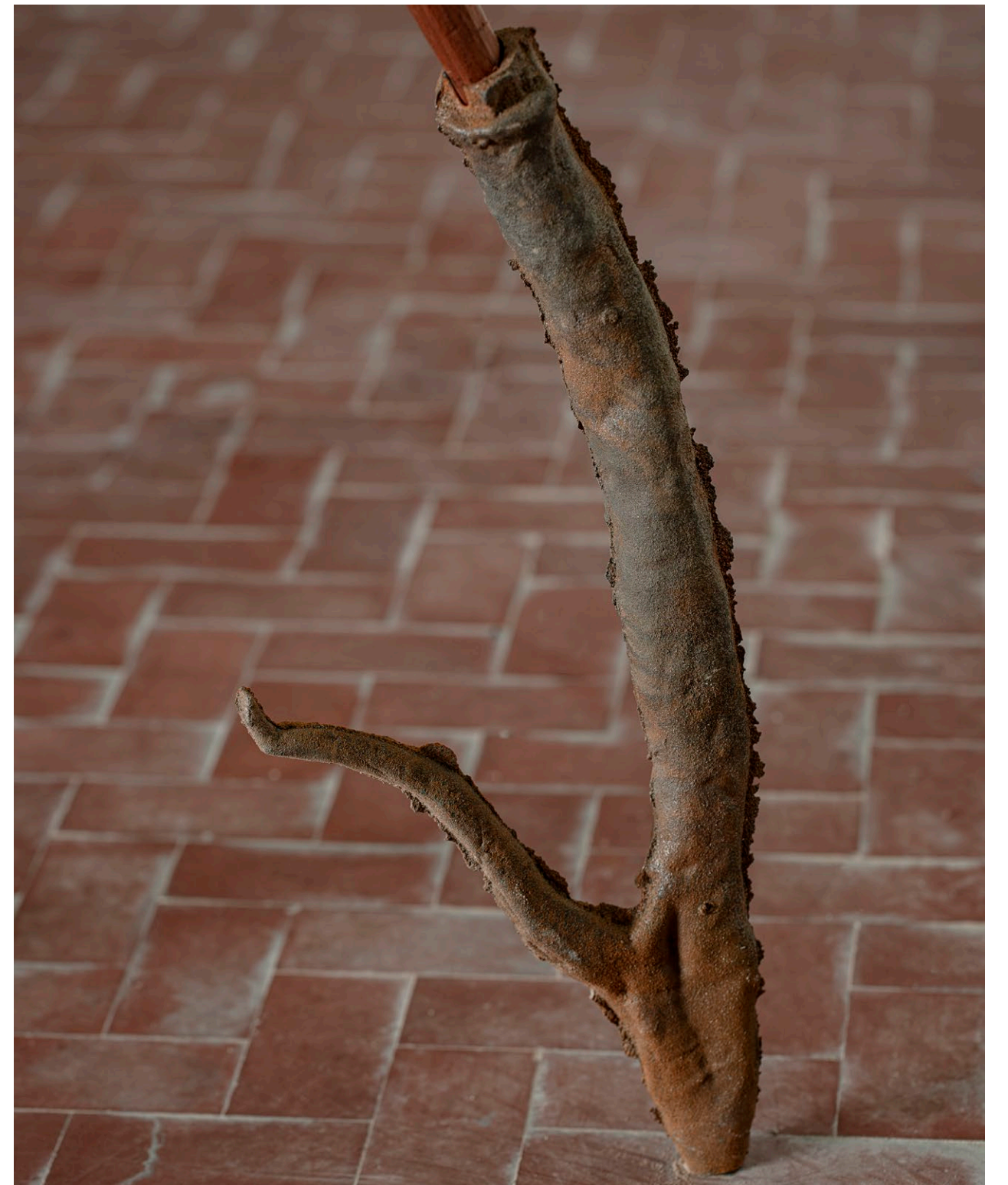




























Left

*The Vindictive Fugitive (formerly The Landlocked Prisoner)*

2021

kaolin clay, raffia, cowrie shells, 3 forged iron (untreated) poles, sisal

280 x 90 x 40 cm

Following

*Zero Is My Country*

2021

kaolin clay, raffia, cowrie shells, forged iron (untreated), mahogany, sisal

410 x 100 x 290 cm

*The Failing Executioner*

2021

null sails, kaolin clay, cowrie shells, iron, raffia, sisal

335 x 120 x 120 cm approx.

Installation views of Blackness in Democracy's Graveyard, at UKS, Oslo (NO), 2021











*I must begin.  
Begin what?  
The only thing in the world that's worth beginning;  
The End of the World, no less.*

—Aimé Césaire<sup>1</sup>

Three large-scale sculptural interventions fill the spaces of UKS. In the first, a mahogany flagpole towers over the viewer, seemingly crippled by the cluster of destroyed sisal, shreds of over-used sails, and raffia engulfed by kaolin clay, appearing to be simultaneously dripping and frozen mid-air.

A second sculpture, a distorted iron flagpole, looms three meters high, again dwarfing the viewer. A third piece hangs from the ceiling: an oversized replica of an antique gambrel, perniciously balancing a body of clay and raffia on its remaining functional metal hook. With their fragments of torn textiles and cast buoys, a ghostly shroud covered in dust, the pieces spill onto the gallery floor leaving traces of dust across the exhibition space. If they are not already relics of a destroyed world, the sculptures all balance precariously on the precipice of destruction.

In her UKS exhibition, Dominique White (b. 1993, UK) weaves together the theories of hydrarchy (from below – the dismantling of power through the sea) and Afrofuturism with the nautical myths of the Black diaspora into a term she defines as “the shipwrecked”: a reflexive verb and state of being. White works primarily with sculptures that act as materializations of Black life extended beyond its subjective limits; beacons or vessels of an ignored civilization defined as the Stateless; a realm in which the past, present, and future have converged into a Black Future. Blackness in Democracy’s Graveyard is the first large solo presentation of White’s work in Scandinavia, a culmination of thoughts and research surrounding abolition of the state, Blackness as the many-headed Hydra (a regenerative serpentine water monster in Greek and Roman mythology),<sup>2</sup> and its position as both the instigator and inheritor of a collapsed future.

White’s new body of work draws inspiration from a roster of sites and events: the global protests and riots relating to George Floyd’s death; the toppling of Confederate and Colonial statues in the UK and US in 2020; the destruction and mythicism that hurricanes in the Caribbean leave in their eternally transformative wake in the sea; driftwood washed ashore; and the act of sailing under a “flag of convenience.” The latter term is appropriated from nautical law. Here, “flagging in” designates the process of adding a maritime vessel to the national registry while the act of “flagging out” switches the vessel’s registration to another country, for example to operate under low-cost safety and labor standards. Apart from resulting in higher accident rates, flagging out also brings difficulties in identifying the legal authority in moments of crisis. Repeated use of flags of convenience can cause vessels to lose national status altogether, remaining indefinitely at sea and effectively rendering the vessel stateless and invisible to governing authorities. Appropriating this metaphor, White imagines Blackness as a concept and state of being that fluctuates between bodies and spaces, never able to settle; fungible like the goods traded within capitalism. These goods appear as echoes in the works themselves where iron, mahogany, kaolin clay, and rope symbolize the shifting forms of commodification of Blackness.

If whiteness is, as W. E. B. Du Bois has argued, the “ownership over the Earth forever and ever,”<sup>3</sup> then Blackness, seen through a lens of afro-pessimism, is the eternal shifting of positions between states of antagonism and commodification. Blackness is the denial of human subjectivity; an ontological death. Where does one venture then, if life is not afforded in this world? Many Black futures are imagined in outer space or under water and White’s research reaches back to the aquatic afro-futurist narratives and sounds imagined primarily in the Detroit electronic scene, with the root of her musical references leading to the Detroit techno group Drexciya.

The duo created music to tell the story and plight of the fictitious Drexciyan people, an underwater nation populated by the unborn children of pregnant African women thrown off slave ships. Following this, White’s work imagines another world and manifests as weather-beaten relics washed ashore: the ruinous architecture of a subaquatic anti-state.

The vestigial character of the sculptures in the exhibition is achieved by a conscious undoing of material that continues as the works age and gradually self-destruct. White undoes her materials, carefully unravelling the found sails and raffia threads that make up the sculptural bodies. Although conjured by the artist, she sees herself as the temporary guardian of this cohort of material beings with autonomy that rejects commodification and preservation. As vulnerable and fragile entities, these sculptural bodies delicately balance the states of conservation, decay, and destruction whilst emanating the sense that an event has/will/will never take place.


Blackness in Democracy’s Graveyard is an active rejection of authority and erasure, and a protest against continued existence in a system that relies on the dehumanization and instability of Blackness. It is a material scream in metal, rope, clay, and cowrie that slowly undoes and re/members oceanic narratives: an attempt at world-building after an apocalypse that will never come, that has already arrived.

<sup>1</sup>Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land* (New York: Archipelago Books, [1939] 1969).

<sup>2</sup>The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic (Boston/London: Beacon Press/Verso, 2000) by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker.

<sup>3</sup>W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Verso Books, [1920] 2016).





*A refusal to be contained, a refusal to die*  
2021  
null sails, kaolin clay, cowrie shells, cast iron, raffia, and sisal, damaged rope  
280 x 150 x 100 cm approx.

Installation view for Techno Worlds, at Art Quarter Budapest (HU), 2021.



In the nowhere space inhabited by the ghostly ruins of black lives, more precisely in the abyss of the Atlantic, exists a vibrant vocabulary, one that continues to give birth to fantastic creatures, myths and operative fictions that issue forth from the unthinkable union of the unborn child of the enslaved and the shipwrecked. Some of those utterances, full of meaning albeit dispossessed, sometimes hit our shores and find new ways to manifest themselves to us. Dominique White's sculptures are such manifestations. They may give the impression of looking for anchors, attempting to grapple with the terrestrial, but their vulnerability is uncompromised and does not require fixture. As such, they embody the refusal of a future built on the violence of colonialism, which goes hand in hand with a rejection of the horizon. That coastline, a promise for some, a sentence for others.

To equate White's sculptures with words is not so odd. Many of my encounters with her sculptures, although silent at first, happened to be filled with intelligible whispers. And if I was unable to decipher the language they were speaking to me, I could feel their textures and essence. One has to visit White's studio to understand that her sculptures aren't only the product of material hoarding and collecting, but quotes and annotations as well. Those times I have been able to wander in her former London studio were always punctuated with moments of pause, my eyes gliding over a passage from Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* or words from Frank B. Wilderson III. I was always leaving the place with clay dust under my shoes, and sentences from beautiful black thinkers in my mind.

White's sculptures do not whisper to everyone. They refuse to. They also reject an all-too-easy commodification. Ghosts among the ghosts, every time they are shipped, they fall apart. The act of sculpting is always, at once, with White, a gesture of self-destruction. In order for the voices of the dark, oceanic creatures channelled through the sculptures to avoid being capitalised upon, she made the vow to never fix them, paradoxically, as an act of care.

Coming from the sea, they are bound to return to it, to dissolve themselves and embrace the abyss. Call them anti-monuments, if you will. They would also refuse to be labelled as such if you were given the chance to ask them what they are.

Even the hooks that often seem to be holding White's sculptures are, in fact, perishable. Made of untreated iron, they are bound to oxidise with time and, depending on the condition in which the works are shown, wear away and release the other parts of the sculpture. In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018), Kathryn Yusoff writes that iron is "the only human thing" to be recovered from places holding the memory of the slave trade: "The ring formed by a human hand from the inhuman earth, beaten into shape in the forge, maintained in violence by free human hands, hooked so many into inhuman bondage – a bondage that ricochets across the Middle Passage, through so many inhumanities, in infinite arrears". If nothing held in the hold, then nothing holds with White either.







Conceived in July 2019 on the Italian island of Favignana, *Ruttier for the Absent* hung precariously as a beacon on the cusp of the Mediterranean Sea at Punta Marsala in the shadow of an abandoned lighthouse where the found materials—a sail, rope and dried palm fronds—had first been heavily mutilated by the artist, then destroyed by the force of the Mediterranean Sea.

Translated into the museum space, the sculpture has now been manipulated by the artist with kaolin clay, a naturally occurring white clay often found on sculptures from Central and Western Africa as an act of cleansing and protecting the work from the exhibition space.

Delicately balancing the states of preservation, decay and renewal, the sculpture is held by two massive iron hooks reminiscent of mutilated anchors or meat hooks. Whilst seemingly permanent and violent in their nature, these metal components lack any kind of patina and are thus left exposed to an unknown rate of decay.

*Ruttier for the Absent*  
2019

null sail, sisal, kaolin clay, worn rope, destroyed palm, iron, raffia, residue from the Mediterranean  
variable dimensions

Installation view for *Possédé·e·s*, at MO.CO, Montpellier (FR)



Dominique White's temporary installation at Punta Marsala (Favignana) was conceived during Curva Blu 2019 using ropes, sails and other materials processed by the sea, the wind and herself during residency on the island. Dominique White's sculptures demonstrate how Black life could extend beyond its own subjective limits and act as beacons or vessels of an ignored civilization defined as the Stateless; a realm in which the past, present, and future have converged into a Black Future.

Curva Blu is INCURVA's artist residency programme. Curva Blu unfolds in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, on the Island of Favignana, a diverse natural environment, a territory of possible exploration and discovery. The project aims to offer a place for artists who search a totally unique condition, where geographical, historical, and social characteristics can become sources of inspiration, base for experimentation, new dialogues and exchange.





“pausing again, that time in Hayley Wood, ‘An ancient coppiced woodland with a fantastic display of oxlips in the spring’. A net masqueraded as an object that have been attributed to artist Dominique White. Because of this net in Hayley Wood, I started to imagine building a display, too.

Boundary + Gesture is an exhibition-as-research, which means: I try not to find things (objects) to put in the exhibition, but rather I try to put objects in an exhibition that enable me, and others, to find things (information).

Invited to commission a new, site specific body of work, artist Dominique White has constructed a haunting, a wake of sorts (2019) in the main gallery. This large-scale intervention comprised of null sails, kaolin clay, cowrie shells, galvanised steel, steel shackles, raffia, and sisal, was sculpted through White’s use of casting via desiccation, or, air drying to remove a liquid. She manipulates materials by employing tension, hanging weight and ripping fabric.”

“The final pamphlet presents an excerpt of writer, curator and artist Imani Robinson’s essay, Objects who Testify (2019) alongside two risograph reproductions of sketches by Dominique White. Both White and Robinson’s investigations, in congregation though not in unison, draw upon the writings of well-known theories of Subjectivity and Objecthood that are referred to in Robinson’s bibliography within the pamphlet. Most prominent in this essay is A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None by Kathryn Yusoff.”

excerpts of exhibition text by curator and writer Taylor Le Melle

a haunting, a wake of sorts  
2019  
null sails, kaolin clay, cowrie shells, galvanised steel, steel shackles, raffia, and sisal  
variable dimensions

Installation view for Boundary+Gesture at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, 2019











*Fugitive of the State(less)*  
2019  
destroyed sail, palm fronds, tarred sisal, natural sisal,  
kaolin clay, raffia, cowrie shells, dual-prong meat hook/cleat/anchor  
680 x 160 x 110 cm

Installation view of *Fugitive of the State(less)* at VEDA, Florence, 2019.



*The undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding<sup>1</sup>*

Beyond the State is the Stateless, a non-space with neither time nor restrictions. The Stateless is not the non-state, but an altered state in which Blackness exists unbothered. It is a utopia inhabited by the shipwrecked, the escaped and the free. The fugitive yearns for the Stateless. According to the Occupiers of the State, the Stateless and the fugitive do not exist and are not acknowledged; the fugitive must either be killed or choos self-destruciton and pass into the Stateless by sea. Until then, the fugitive remains in limbo.

Dominique White's sculptural installations consist of natural materials manipulated by wind, sea, and the artist herself. Often exhibited in states of suspension, the artist's assemblages summon a range of presences and potentials (actual, virtual, historical, speculative) entangled with Black embodiment.

<sup>1</sup>Harney, S. and Moten, F. (2013). *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Wivenhoe: Minor Composition.









*Landlocked Prisoner* (2018) acts as an abstract commemorative sculpture that would have been dragged out of the Atlantic Ocean, a space which holds the memory of an underwater nation formed by the drowned enslaved people, an idea theorised and promoted by numerous afrofuturists --notably Drexciya--. The sculpture, primarily made out of tarred rope, which White manipulates and weaves to create large fishnet-like drapery, holds the cast of a buoy which, if returned to the ocean, would dissolve. The commemorative sculpture is thus, here, rendered impermanent, such as the memory it is holding.

words by Cédric Fauq  
for a text accompanying  
*The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional*

right

*Landlocked Prisoner*  
2018

Clay, tarred rope, rope, dried palm, destroyed sail, cowrie shells, raffia palm,  
hand carved wooden beads, used mooring cleat

following

*J.O.Y. (the last signal)*  
2018

calico, raffia, clay, rope, dried palm, cowrie shells, sail, life jacket triple hook safety line

*The Flag of Nowhere*  
2017

kaolin, calico, rotting dried palm leaves, raffia, buoys, cowrie shells

Naatal editorial/performance ‘A Study in Devotion’ at Market Peckham (14th and 15th of September 2017)  
Courtesy of the artist and Adama Jalloh









The last cries from the depths of the unknown.

The last distress signals from a body left for dead.

The last battle cries from a vessel at battle with the ever-consuming waves.

It was assumed that those who received their signal determined the fate of what was presumed to be a vessel isolated at sea. Those who would deem themselves as heroic allies would decide the fate of this doomed vessel - would they allow the vessel to continue living in the world as they knew it or would they desert the vessel? A most certain death by being consumed bit by bit by the sea.

Extended caption for J.O.Y (The Last Signal)

Dominique White (2018)

J I am leaking dangerous cargo

O Man overboard

Y I am dragging my anchor

J I am leaking dangerous goods

O Man overboard

Y I am dragging my anchor

The last cries from the depths of the known.

The last distress signals from a body embracing the beyond.

The last battle signals from a vessel at peace with the ever-consuming waves.

A self destruction at sea isolated from the prying eyes of the overseers of the sea, yearning for an existence beyond being captured and subdued. Weary from the lifetime of battles on land and worn to the bone by hope, the vessel took to sea to search for the relics of the Unknown. They are yearning for a future of their own, a narrative crafted from their histories, an existence devoid of burdens.

Extended caption for J.O.Y (The Last Signal)

Dominique White (2018)

Right:

J.O.Y. (the last signal)  
2018  
calico, raffia, clay, rope, dried palm, cowrie shells, sail,life jacket

Following pages:

The Flag of Nowhere  
2017  
kaolin, calico, rotting dried palm leaves, raffia, buoys, cowrie shells

Naatal editorial/performance ‘A Study in Devotion’ at Market Pec

Courtesy of the artist and Adama Jalloh











DOMINIQUE WHITE

b.1993, London, UK. Live and work in Marseille, FR

EDUCATION

BA Fine Art, Goldsmiths, 2012 - 2015  
Foundation in Art and Design, Central Saint Martins, 2012

SHOWS

2024 AMONG THE INVISIBLE JOINS: Works from the Enea Righi Collection (IT) (upcoming)  
2024 Deadweight [solo] Collezione Maramotti (IT)  
2024 Deadweight [solo] Whitechapel Gallery (GB)  
2024/5 TBA (FR) (travelling)  
2024 Destruction of Order, Veda (IT)  
2024 Dominique White and Alberta Whittle: Sargasso Sea [duo] ICA Philadelphia (US)  
2023/4 When Disaster Strikes... [solo] Kunsthalle Münster (DE)  
2023/4 Phantom Sculpture Warwick Arts Centre (GB)  
2023 Fugitive of the State(less) [solo] at ART CITY Bologna (IT)  
2023 May you break free and outlive your enemy [solo] La Casa Encendida (ES) curated by Pakui Hardware  
2022/3 Afterimage at Maxxi L'Aquila (IT) (current) curated by Alessandro Rabottini and Bartolomeo Pietromarchi  
2022 Statements [solo], Art Basel 2022, Basel (CH)  
2022 Love, Bold Tendencies, London (GB)  
2022 cinders of the Wreck/les cendres du naufrage [solo], Triangle - Astérides, Marseille (FR)  
2022 Hand to your ear Part 1 (presence/surplus) Emalin, London (GB) curated by Gabriella Nugent  
2021 Hydra Decapita [solo] Veda, Florence (IT)  
2021 solo presentation with Veda [solo] Artissima (IT)  
2021 Becoming Fugitive State [solo] Bloc Projects (GB)  
2021/6 Techno Worlds Art Quarter Budapest (HU)  
2021 Blackness in Democracy's Graveyard [solo] UKS (NO)  
2020/1 Possédé·e's, MO.CO (FR) curated by Vincent Honoré  
2020 Mere Skyn CAPC Bordeaux (FR) curated by Cory John Scozzari  
2019 Presentation with Aviva Silverman [duo], Paris Internationale (FR)  
2019 Boundary + Gesture [duo] Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge (GB) curated by Taylor Le Melle  
2019 Abandon(ed) Vessel [solo] Kevin Space, Vienna (AUT)  
2019 solo presentation [solo] Art-O-Rama, Marseille (FR) winner of the Roger Pailhas prize  
2019 Fugitive of the State(less) [solo], Veda, Florence (IT)  
2018 Flood-tide. Love Unlimited, Glasgow (GB)  
2018 The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional. Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna (AUT)  
2018 °c. Clearview.ltd, London (GB)  
2018 Signs | Beacons. Caustic Coastal, Manchester (GB)

2017 Allen Road Sculpture Park. Artlicks, London (GB)  
2017 A Study in Devotion. MARKET Peckham, London (GB)  
2017 The Other'd Artist/s. Transmission, Glasgow (GB)  
2017 thirty/thirty. 12o Collective, online  
2017 In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Copeland Park & Bussey Building, London (GB)  
2016 Our Sweet Souls [solo]. Limbo, London (GB)  
2016 Standing in the Shade. Mile End Pavilion, London (GB)  
2015 Utopian Ja. Reception Gallery, online  
2015 Goldsmiths BA Fine Art Degree Show. Goldsmiths, London (GB)  
2014 Reception. DIG, London (GB)

RESIDENCIES

2023 Max Mara Prize for women 2022-24 (IT)  
2021 La Becque, La Tour-de-Peilz (CH)  
2020/1 Triangle France - Astérides, Marseille (FR)  
2020 Triangle Network Fellowship: Sagrada Mercancía, Santiago de Chile (CHL)  
2019 Curva Blu, Favignana (IT)  
2018 Formerly Called @ Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge (GB)  
2016 Limbo, London (GB)

PUBLICATIONS

2024 In Deep: Dominique White. Frieze March 2024 (Eric Otieno Sumba)  
2023 States of Play. HOMEGROWN. Dazed summer issue 2023  
2023 Of Seas and Shoals. Fuck the Bauhaus (New Sculpture). Flash Art International 342 Spring 2023 (Gioia Dal Molin)  
2022 Techno Worlds Hatje Cantz  
2022 Dominique White by Nicoletta Lambertucci. The Generational Issue. CURA 38  
2022 Flights of Fantasy: Dominique White by Olamiju Fajemisin Mousse Magazine #79  
2021 GLOSSARY: Shipwreck (n.) (v.) (reflexive v.) Art Papers  
2020 no. 13 Time Nomas Magazine  
2020 Loaded Objects. Interview with Kate Neave. Twin Issue XXIII  
2019 GU002 - Various Artists - Bubble Chamber Compilation. The Book of Drexciya  
2019 Curating for the Age of Blackness, Mousse #66 (IT)  
2018 Nataal Magazine, debut edition (GB/IT/ZA/US/SE/KE)  
2018 Skin Deep The Food Issue (GB)  
2017 We Apologise For The Delay To Your Journey Thick/er Black Lines at Tate Modern (GB)  
2016 Apogee Journal #8 (USA)  
2016 WHERE IS ANA MENDIETA Deep Sea (2016) (GB)

MEDIA

2024 The Haunted Hydrology of Dominique White. Frieze (Eric Otieno Sumba)



2024 Art shows to leave the house for in February 2024 Dazed (Ashleigh Kane)  
2023 TEN MINUTES WITH DOMINIQUE WHITE, THE MAX MARA ART PRIZE FOR WOMEN 22-24 WINNER, 10 magazine (Emily Phillips)  
2023 Dominique White wins Max Mara Art Prize for Women 2022 – 2024 Wallpaper\* (Harriet Lloyd-Smith)  
2023 Meet Dominique White, winner of the 2023 Max Mara Art Prize for Women Harpar’s Bazaar (Clara Strunck)  
2023 MAXMARA WOMEN’S ART PRIZE WINNER DOMINIQUE WHITE ON AFRO-FUTURISM AND SHIPWRECKS, SHOWstudio (Christina Donoghue)  
2023 Dominique White wins 2022-2024 Max Mara Prize for Women Art Review  
2023 Dominique White wins Max Mara art prize for women Guardian (Tim Jonze)  
2023 Dominique White Awarded 2022 Foundwork Artist Prize Berlin Art Link (Annalisa Giacinti)  
2023 2022 Foundwork Artist Prize awarded to Dominique White E-flux agenda  
2023 Dismantling the hydrarchy Metal Magazine (Bernadette Large)  
2022 Max Mara Art Prize for Women: le finaliste Vanity Fair IT  
2022 Dominique White on Staging Shipwrecks [interview] Frieze (Jade Barget)  
2022 Dominique White par Sophie Lapalu zerodeux.fr  
“Hydra Decapita” by Dominique White: materiality, an instrument of transformation and rebirth (IT/EN) [review] Juliet (Caterina Fondelli)  
2022 Reifying Abysses [review] Cactus Magazine (Simone Rossi)  
2022 Dominique White tra Stato e Blackness [review] il giornale dell’arte (Matteo Mottin)  
2021 Dominique White at Veda art viewer  
2021 Artaround  
2021 Freshness The Scandale Project  
2021 OPENLAB RECOMMENDS: DOMINIQUE WHITE AT UKS Openlab (Kate Neave)  
2021 Rektualiserer avkolonisering [review] subjekt (Tomine Barstad Solvang)  
2021 Bølgenes historie [review] Kunstkritikk (Nicholas Norton)  
2020 Possessed: Deviance, Performance, Resistance Curated by Vincent Honoré Cura Magazine  
2020 “Possédé·e·s” : vingt-deux artistes redéfinissent l’occulte à Montpellier les Inrockuptibles (Ingrid Luquet-Gad)  
2020 “Possédé.e.s” : plongée dans la nouvelle exposition envoûtante du MO.CO. Numéro (Matthieu Jacquet)  
2020 Artists struggling to work amid coronavirus, says Rachel Whiteread the Guardian (Mark Brown)  
2019 DEMYSTIFYING THE WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY ART. Buro247 (Tamar Clarke-Brown)  
2019 ‘Abandon(ed) Vessel’ by Dominique White at Kevin Space, Vienna tzvetnik.online  
2019 Dominique White: Abandon(ed) Vessel Hugo Zorn  
2019 DOMINIQUE WHITE BEI KEVIN SPACE, WIEN Parnass Kunstmagazin: Kunst und Galerien  
2019 Marseille, ville-laboratoire Le Quotidien de l’Art (Pedro Morais)  
2019 Mountincutters et Dominique White, lauréats d’Art-O-Rama Le Quotidien de l’Art (Pedro Morais)

2019 Curva Blu IV Cura Magazine  
2019 A Favignana residenze per artisti della no-profit INCURVA. Intervista ai promotori Artribune (Claudia Giraud)  
2019 Fugitive of the State(less) - Dominique White [review] segnonline (Matteo Binci)  
2019 ‘Fugitive of the State(less)’ by Dominique White at Veda, Florence Tzvetnik.online  
2019 Times Eye Film: Dominique White  
2019 Curating for the Age of Blackness Mousse 66 Winter 2019 (Cédric Fauq)  
2018 Interview with Ellie Barrett. Young Artists in Conversation. December 2018  
2018 The Share of Opulence. aqnb  
2018 ‘The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional’,a Group Show Curated by Cédric Fauq at Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna tzvetnik.online  
2018 In Wien feiert das Festival CURATED BY die Stadt. 2018 [review] Monopol-Magazin (November 2018 print)  
2018 THE SHARE OF OPULENCE; DOUBLED; FRACTIONAL @ SOPHIE TAPPEINER, PAUL MAHEKE, LETTER TO A BARN OWL @ KEVINSPACE [review] (White Pube)  
2018 CURATED BY\_VIENNA 2018 review [review] Spike Magazine (Max L. Feldman)  
2018 Beacons | Signs [review] Corridor8 (Claire Walker)  
2018 The Art of Performance Notion Magazine  
2017 A Study In Devotion Nataal Media  
2016 “Should You Buy Art Online” Harper’s Bazaar online (Legacy Russell, Haniya Rae)  
2016 “LAST CHANCE: Standing In The Shade – Mile End Art Pavilion” Fad Magazine (Mark Westall)

TALKS ETC

2023 I HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WORK With Madison Bycroft and Ife Day. La Becque (CH) (23.02.23)  
2021 Artist talk and workshop. University of Edinburgh  
2021 ‘Where do we go from here?’ Art/Work Association & Auto Italia London [online]  
2021 Hydrarchy (from below) Cassandra Classrooms: Lecture Performa [online]  
2021 Bite size: Portraying power | Legacies and Futures 2020, The Arts Institute. University of Plymouth/The Box Plymouth [online]  
2020 Elijah Maja & Ibrahim Cissé with Dominique White & Adam Farah – ‘Sanguine August’. International Curators Forum [online]  
2020 Backend London. 12ø collective. (25/01/2020)  
2019 Affordance w/ Francesco Tenaglia, Alessio Baldissera Guest Dominique White. Radio Raheem Milano.  
2019 If Words Could Float - part 1. Sissi Club, Marseille (FR) (31/08/2019)  
2019 The Artists Journey #2. Bloc Projects/Sheffield Hallam University (14/02/2019)  
2018 The Conch, South London Gallery, London (GB) (27/04/18)  
2017 Artist talk and Q&A, Allen Road Sculpture Park, London (GB)



GRANTS/PRIZES

2022/4 Max Mara Prize for Women 2022- 2024 winner [prize] (GB/IT)  
2021 Windrush Monument Commission longlisted  
2020 Henry Moore Foundation’s Artist’s Award [grant] (GB)  
2020 Art Angel: Thinking Time [grant] Artangel (GB)  
2019 Develop Your Creative Practice [grant]. Arts Council England (GB)  
2019 Roger Pailhas [prize] at Art-O-Rama (FR)

Dominique White’s works can be found in public and private collections in France, Italy, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

DOMINIQUE WHITE weaves together the theories of Black Subjectivity, Afro-pessimism and Hydrarchy (from below) with the nautical myths of Black Diaspora into a term she defines as the Shipwreck(ed); a reflexive verb and state of being. White’s sculptures, or beacons, prophesy the emergence of the Stateless; “a [Black] future that hasn’t yet happened, but must.” (Campt 2017 in Yussuf 2018)

White’s research is inspired by the sounds of Detroit Techno and Electronic, where she continues to reference Afrofuturist narratives (situated in space and underwater) depicted by DJ Stingray (Sherard Ingram), Drexciya (Gerald Donald and James Stinson) and Tygapaw (Dion McKenzie). Her research also extends beyond the tangible, with a curiosity for both the destruction and mythicism that hurricanes in the Caribbean leave in their eternally transformative wake in the sea. Her visual vocabulary combines an emulation of an abandoned vessel at sea using destroyed sails, tired hand-woven nets, mutilated anchors and deflated nautical buoys with raffia and cowrie shells which are all cast and coated in a ghostly shroud of kaolin clay. She utilises this forceful unification as a means of dissociating the motifs from their original function and redefining them as bodies charged with retaliation, protest and resilience. These works, or bodies, delicately balance the states of preservation, decay and destruction whilst emanating a warning or a threat of what is to come.





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