

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
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MEDIA ALERT



Toyin Ojih Odutola. *Wall of Ambassadors*, 2017. Charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper, 40 x 30 inches. ©Toyin Ojih Odutola. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined Opens at the Whitney on October 20

NEW YORK, August 18, 2017—The Whitney Museum of American Art debuts Toyin Ojih Odutola's first solo museum exhibition in New York on October 20, 2017. The exhibition presents an interconnected series of portraits that chronicle the private lives and surroundings of two fictional aristocratic Nigerian families: the UmuEze Amara clan and the house of Obafemi. Rendered life-size in charcoal, pastel, and pencil, Ojih Odutola's figures appear enigmatic and mysterious, set against luxurious backdrops of domesticity and leisure. In tandem with the artist's larger conceived narrative, they highlight the malleability of identity and upend assumptions about race, wealth, and class. The exhibition features a significant new body of work alongside a small selection of works made in 2016.

Ojih Odutola creates intimate drawings that explore the complexity of identification and belonging. Depicted in her distinctive style of intricate mark-making, her sumptuous compositions reimagine the genre and traditions of portraiture. They are informed by the artist's own array of inspirations, which range from art history to popular culture to experiences of migration and dislocation. Highly attentive to detail and the nuances of space and color—whether of palette or skin—Ojih Odutola continues her examinations of narrative, authenticity, and representation.

Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined will be on view in the first-floor John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation Gallery, which is accessible to the public free-of-charge.

This exhibition is organized by Rujeko Hockley, assistant curator, and Melinda Lang, curatorial assistant.

About the Artist

Toyin Ojih Odutola (b. 1985) makes multimedia drawings that explore the sociopolitical construct of skin color and her personal journey of having been born in Ife, Nigeria and then moving and assimilating into American culture in conservative Alabama. In October 2016, Ojih Odutola debuted *A Matter of Fact*, a series of drawings featuring members of the fictionalized aristocratic UmuEze Amara Clan, at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco. She has participated in several group shows including *Disguise: Masks and Global African Art*, Brooklyn Museum (2015); *Ballpoint Pen Drawing Since 1950*, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2013); *Fore*, Studio Museum in Harlem (2012); *The Moment for Ink*, Chinese Cultural Center, San Francisco (2013); and *The Progress of Love*, Menil Collection, Houston (2012). A 2012 graduate of the California College of Arts MFA program, Ojih Odutola's work is in major museum collections including the Birmingham Museum of Art, AL and The National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Exhibition Support

Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined is sponsored by Audi of America.

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About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

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