

Woody De Othello

Woody De Othello's sculptures, paintings and installations imagine a world in which the things that populate our domestic lives metamorphise into syncretic, humanoid objects.

Working primarily in ceramic, wood and bronze, he creates assemblages of everyday artefacts — phones, television remotes, clocks, lamps, calendars, pipes, shoes, and light switches — that he stacks on glazed ceramic stools, chairs, radiators, and step ladders. “The objects mimic actions that humans perform,” says Othello. “They’re extensions of our own actions. We use phones to speak and to listen, clocks to tell time, vessels to hold things, and our bodies are indicators of all of those.”

A playful sense of humour infuses Othello's work and manifests in visual puns and cartoonish figuration. His vessels sometimes sprout ears and lips. They perch precariously on spindly legs. Elongated arms wrap protectively around their bodies, lending them an absurdist pathos that nudges them towards the uncanny. Standing alone or staged on theatrical plinths, his sculptures become actors in a drama of his own making. “I started to think about what would happen if the objects in the space of the figure were affected with the same type of spirit and energy as a figure. It's become another way for me to have a conversation around psychological and emotional states.”

Othello looks to myriad sources, from jazz music and French Surrealism to California Funk Art of the late 50's – 70's and the radical, experimental practices of Ron Nagle and Mike Henderson. Informed by his own Haitian ancestry, he draws on the nkisi figures of Central Africa, the supernatural objects of Vodou folklore and the animistic face jugs made by enslaved Black potters from Edgefield, South Carolina in the 1860s.

Woody De Othello was born in 1991 in Miami, Florida. He received a BFA from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, and a MFA from the California College of Arts in San Francisco in 2017. In 2021–2022, he presented a solo exhibition, ‘Hope Omens’ at the John Michael Kohler Center, and was included in ‘Quiet as It's Kept’ the 2022 Whitney Biennial. In 2019, San José Museum of Art, San José, California hosted ‘Woody De Othello: Breathing Room.’ He has been featured in group shows including ‘Strange Clay’ at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2022, and ‘Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina’ at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2022.

His work is represented in numerous collections including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California; MAXXI – National Museum of 21st Century Art, Rome, Italy; San José Museum of Art, San José, California; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland; Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California; the Rennie Collection, Vancouver, British Columbia; Museum of Fine Art, Boston, Massachusetts; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, Florida; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; Aishti Foundation, Lebanon; and de Young Museum, San Francisco,

California. He is represented by Jessica Silverman, San Francisco; Karma, New York; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Woody De Othello lives and works in Oakland, California.