

Precious Okoyomon, Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Vibration Frequencies To God, Performance Space New York

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Number 103, Fall 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/96966ac>

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Publisher(s)

Les éditions Esse

ISSN

0831-859X (print)

1929-3577 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Castro, A. (2021). Review of [Precious Okoyomon, Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Vibration Frequencies To God, Performance Space New York]. *Esse arts + opinions*, (103), 109–109.



Precious Okoyomon

Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Vibration Frequencies To God

As New York slowly crawled out of the pandemic this spring, the Brooklyn-based poet, artist, and culinary chef Precious Okoyomon devised a space of recollection and reverence at Performance Space New York in an attempt to tackle the immeasurable grief that resulted from the devastation of the past year. Upon entering the Keith Haring Theater, one stepped into a Zen garden of sorts in which stacks of rocks guarded over a sinuous fountain that housed a handful of fish. One could walk on the clearly marked soil path or decide on their own itinerary across the room, temporarily sitting on the rocks or stepping over the moss and small plants delicately sprouting here and there. The subtle murmur of the stream was accompanied by an audio track that combined drone-like sounds interspersed with human voices, while a snowblower on the ceiling blew out kudzu ashes that nonchalantly fluttered down like snowflakes and gradually piled up on the humid floor.

The use of kudzu ashes in *Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Frequencies To God* (2021) is particularly noteworthy. Okoyomon made the ashes by cremating kudzu vines planted for her exhibition *Earthseed* (2020) at the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt. Inside the walls of the MMK, the vine proliferated silently across the soiled-filled gallery while the institution remained unattended for months during the pandemic. Kudzu, a plant native to Japan, was introduced in the United States in the late nineteenth century as a means to curb the widespread soil erosion that resulted from the cotton industry, most notably in Mississippi. But in this foreign and hostile environment, the vine thrived and grew uncontrollably, strangling and swallowing everything in its path, to a point where its cultivation was eventually banned. Okoyomon's interest in kudzu stemmed from its paralleled fate with the displaced black bodies of the transatlantic slave trade and how both grew roots in inhospitable

ground to become “indispensable to and irreconcilable with” the culture it was forced to serve.

But whereas the exhibition in Frankfurt directly served this explicit analogy, the multisensory installation at Performance Space New York departs from it in order to offer an elegy in the form of a delicate ecology. As the ashes settled across the room, the fish continued to swim, unbothered by the transformation relentlessly taking place around them. This was a year that has profoundly changed all of us. *Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Frequencies To God* offers an arena in which to examine the incessant changes that take place in ourselves as we exist amidst the perpetual cycle of death and rebirth. While there is nothing particularly overwhelming about the installation per se, the task at hand is best observed in numerous forays. To be within Okoyomon's fabricated ecosystem a handful of times has almost felt like a therapy session. And ultimately, this became a hopeful place to be.

Anaïs Castro

Performance Space New York
March 20—May 9, 2021

Precious Okoyomon
Fragmented Body Perception As Higher Vibration Frequencies To God, exhibition views, 2021.
Photos : Da Ping Luo