

Kunsthaus Bregenz

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Austria



KUB 2025.01 | Press Release

Precious Okoyomon

ONE EITHER LOVES ONESELF OR KNOWS ONESELF

01 | 02 – 25 | 05 | 2025

Press Conference

Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 11 am

Opening

Friday, January 31, 2025, at 7 pm

Artist's Talk with Precious Okoyomon, Hans Ulrich Obrist & Claude Adjil

Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 11 am

Radical Dreamery

A weekend with Precious Okoyomon

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, May 23–25, 2025

Press photos available for download at

www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at/en/press/precious-okoyomon



Precious Okoyomon's works traverse art, poetry, and performance. They investigate identity, colonial history, spirituality, and people's relationship to things and the living environment. Intimate personal questions are linked with political and social issues.

Even before the pandemic, Okoyomon was invited to exhibit at Kunsthau Bregenz – the youngest artist in the institution's history, then just twenty-seven years old. Okoyomon gained the attention of a broad public with installations that incorporate materials such as soil, plants, and animals. At the Venice Biennale in 2022, the artist transformed the hall of the Arsenale into a lush, rampant ecosystem. Expansive sculptures, densely growing climbing plants, and small watercourses set in a tropical atmosphere created an experiential space that linked the processes of nature with afro-futuristic visions – and at the same time addressed the migration history of plants as well as their displacement.

For Kunsthau Bregenz, several new works have been developed that investigate diverse themes. Located on the **ground floor** are two offices that recall the consulting rooms of the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. Furniture from around 1900 creates an atmosphere that is at once familiar as well as impersonal. Existential detectives in adorned lab coats engage visitors in dialogue and pose questions about dreams, memories, and hidden feelings. Questionnaires and watercolors invite visitors to silently contribute their confessions to the artwork. A bookshelf holds books on subjects such as love, cooking, philosophy, and Arabic poetry but also volumes by Édouard Glissant, whose work points to creative interactions between cultures. The pattern on the wallpaper is composed of drawings by Okoyomon. The hybrid figures with large heads, dolllike bodies, and fiery eyes appear to be both lost in dream and demonic, inviting us to delve into the depths of our own psyche.

The Kunsthau Bregenz **stairwells** have been darkened for Okoyomon's exhibition. An additional, lowered ceiling constricts the stairway upward, creating a new spatial feeling of suffocation.

On the **first floor**, stuffed animals hang on nooses from the ceiling. Handcrafted from used toys and outfitted with real feathers, they seem like angels, childlike, playful beings subjected to a destructive fate. As is often the case in Okoyomon's work, that presented here deals with dreams and hybridity, fragility and affection, care and hurt. Cuddly stuffed animals protect children; they are companions and friends, provide comfort, and serve as a projection surface for children's fantasies.



A huge teddy bear on the **second floor**, strewn, forgotten, at the edge of a plush pink carpet. Its teardrop-shaped eyes, the hearts on its paws, and its anxious gaze prompt us to experience moments of self-forgetfulness and daydream. The installation is supplemented by music by the sound artist Takiaya Reed, whose ethereal pieces evoke trance-like states and accompany the transition into the world of waking dreams.

On the **third floor** of Kunsthaus Bregenz visitors find themselves in an enclosed garden. Along with pupated caterpillars in the process of metamorphosis, butterflies that have already hatched flutter through the air. Flickering outside of the warm humid habitat is a movie showing a flight over the suburbs of Okoyomon's home state, Ohio. The film was produced for the exhibition at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Okoyomon himself pilots the plane, reading their poetry out loud to the sky. The images convey a feeling of boundlessness and freedom, characterized by a sense of an ego that views both things and life in the material world as a source of spiritual inspiration. But the viewer is forced to remain behind the mesh, with the butterflies.

In addition to expansive installations, Okoyomon has earned a reputation with their poems, which are often integrated into performances. In their second volume of poetry, *But Did You Die?*, published in 2024, Okoyomon attempts to resist the forces of structural violence that surround us, with vitality and mischief. Their poems are tender, unembellished, and naïve, as intimate as they are uncomfortable.

Biography
Precious Okoyomon



Precious Okoyomon (b. 1993, London) is a Nigerian-American poet and artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. They have had solo exhibitions at the Fundación Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Madrid in 2024, at the Aspen Art Museum and at Performance Space New York in 2021, at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main in 2020, and at Luma Westbau in Zurich in 2018.

In 2024 Okoyomon participated in the Nigerian Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale; in 2023 at the 11th Sequences Biennial, Reykjavík; and the Thailand Biennial, Chiang Rai; in 2022 at the 59th Venice Biennale and the Okayama Art Summit; in 2021 at the 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale; and in 2018 at the Baltic Triennial 13, Tallinn. They took part in group exhibitions at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel in 2024; Luma Arles in 2022; and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2021. In 2019 they realized performances at the Serpentine Galleries and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, both in London. Okoyomon was the 2021 recipient of the Frieze Artist Award as well as the Chanel Next Prize. In 2024, *But Did You Die?*, their second book of poetry, was published.

KUB Billboards

Precious Okoyomon

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The KUB Billboards on Seestrasse, the most frequented street in Bregenz, are an integral part of Kunsthaus Bregenz's program, extending the current exhibition into public space. Precious Okoyomon is now displaying a selection of drawings and photos on the six panels. The photos derive from their own childhood and also include stuffed animals.

“This show is joy, trauma, and repression. As a child I was often co-dependent on my stuffed animals. I took them everywhere as my protectors, to shield me from the reality of my childhood. I've been thinking through the way memories are stored, held, recalled, created; stuffed animals represent tangible portals of collective and personal memory.”

Precious Okoyomon

Publication
Precious Okoyomon



On the occasion of the exhibition, Kunsthaus Bregenz is issuing the first institutional publication on the oeuvre of Precious Okoyomon. Large-scale images document the fascinating works that have been created for the four floors of Kunsthaus Bregenz. Texts by Christina Sharpe and Bhanu Kapil as well as an interview between Okoyomon and the curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Claude Adjil illuminate Okoyomon's artistic work, which fluidly operates at the intersection of contemporary art, theory, and poetry. Poems that Okoyomon wrote while preparing the KUB exhibition will be published for the first time in the volume. Like the visit to the show itself, the book is intended to appeal to both the mind and the senses using a variety of freely assembled material.

Edited by Thomas D. Trummer, Kunsthaus Bregenz
With texts by Bhanu Kapil and Christina Sharpe as well as
a conversation between Precious Okoyomon, Claude Adjil
and Hans Ulrich Obrist
Design: Tiffany Malakooti
English / German
€ 42

Available on site and online in May:
www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at/en/publications

Highlight

Radical Dreamery

A Weekend with Precious Okoyomon

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, May 23–25, 2025



Following the artist's vision, Kunsthau Bregenz is presenting an extraordinary series of events – a weekend of dreams and imagination, curated by Precious Okoyomon. Supplementing the exhibition is a diverse program featuring music, performances, and talks as well as contributions by renowned guest speakers from the fields of science, art, and literature.

The opening on Friday evening promises a musical highlight that will set the tone for a multidisciplinary and collaborative weekend. On Saturday, Okoyomon will read from their poetry collection *But Did You Die?*, published in 2024, and invites the audience to immerse themselves in the artist's poetic world. The boundaries between reality and dream will then be explored in lectures and discussions. Among the guest speakers is the award-winning British-Indian poet Bhanu Kapil, the Israeli artist Bracha Ettinger and the psychoanalyst and author Jamieson Webster. On Sunday, a reading marathon invites visitors to become active themselves and read passages from their favorite books – a collective experience and celebration of literature.

Further information will follow

In English

Single-day events included in KUB's admission ticket

A 3-day pass will be available online

shop.kunsthau-bregenz.at

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