

Press Release

5 July 2021

Seven artists in receipt of LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire Award announced: Ayo Akingbade, Ufuoma Essi, Adam Farah, Nnena Kalu, Djofray Makumbu, Josiah Moktar and Curtly Thomas

Studio Voltaire and LOEWE FOUNDATION have today announced the seven artists receiving the LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire Award – a new major award to increase opportunities for under-represented artists that will benefit them with two years of support through rent-free studio space, professional development opportunities and a bursary.

Launched earlier this year, the LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire Award was established to celebrate talent, individuality and original thinking within contemporary art practice. The programme aims to increase and strengthen equitable representation and access, and amplify artistic voices across class, race, gender, sexuality and disability. The second phase of the award, a new year-long residency for an international artist to be based at Studio Voltaire, will be announced later this year.

The 2021–2023 awardees are: Ayo Akingbade, Ufuoma Essi, Adam Farah, Nnena Kalu, Djofray Makumbu, Josiah Moktar and Curtly Thomas. The selected artists work across a range of disciplines and mediums, encompassing a diverse set of interests, experiences and modes of working.

Each awardee receives a rent-free workspace within Studio Voltaire's newly developed buildings for two years, a bursary of £2,000, an individualised programme of mentoring and professional development, dedicated curatorial and pastoral support and access to local and international audiences via public events programming.

Developed in direct response to the urgent need for affordable and secure workspace for artists, as well as the detrimental impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on artist's lives, the LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire award aims to cultivate spaces where artists can connect in a supportive studio environment that facilitates creative possibilities, risk-taking, experimentation and exchange.

Studio Voltaire received over 500 high-quality applications for the award, both via open call and through a group of selected nominators, emphasising the importance and level of need for long-term opportunities for artists to support and sustain their practices.

Panelist Sepake Angiama, Artistic Director of Iniva, said:

"I have been humbled by the experience of being part of the selection process. We are at an incredibly difficult crossroads in the arts whereby artists, who are the creative lifeblood of the artistic landscape, are struggling to make work because they don't

have the space to do so. This initiative has been met with an overwhelming response. The calibre of creativity in London is incredible – we need to continue to invest in the development of artists in order to sustain vital and necessary space for art, artists and their communities.”

Awarded artists were selected by a panel of leading curators and artists: Sepake Angiama, Artistic Director of Iniva; Andrew Bonacina, Chief Curator of The Hepworth Wakefield; artists Anthea Hamilton and Elizabeth Price; and Studio Voltaire’s Curator (Studios & Residencies), Maggie Matic and Director, Joe Scotland.

The seven recipients of the LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire Award will move into their studios from July 2021, joining Studio Voltaire’s community of artists including Ain Bailey, Lubna Chowdhary, Kaye Donachie, Anthea Hamilton, and Languid Hands (Rabz Lansiquot and Imani Robinson).

Maggie Matic, Curator (Studios & Residencies) at Studio Voltaire said:

“We were incredibly moved by the volume of high-quality applications we received. The process of receiving and reviewing the applications really surfaced how many artists are struggling to support their practice in the wake of the pandemic and due to structural inequalities within the sector and our wider communities. The level of need for opportunities like this, providing sustained and longitudinal support to artists is really pronounced. We are so pleased that through the award, we can go some way in catering to that need. The seven awardees are all at exciting and pivotal stages in their journeys, and we are honoured to welcome them into the artist community at Studio Voltaire, and support them as they take their vital next steps.”

For further information on the selected artists, please visit studiovoltaire.org.

In partnership with

**LOEWE
FOUNDATION**

Notes to editors

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LOEWE FOUNDATION / Studio Voltaire Award

Each awardee receives a rent-free workspace at Studio Voltaire, London for a period of two years, starting in August 2021. They will each receive a bursary of £1,000 per year (£2,000 in total) towards materials, production costs, equipment or living expenses. Each awardee will receive an individualised programme of mentoring and professional development opportunities co-devised with Studio Voltaire, taking advantage of the organisation’s network of peers, collaborators and supporters.

The second phase of the award, a new year-long residency for an international artist to be based at Studio Voltaire, will also be announced later this year.

Awardee biographies

Ayo Akingbade

Ayo Akingbade is a London-based artist whose current practice comprises film, installation and printmaking. Her work is rooted in notions of urbanism, power and stance, as well as personal occurrences informed by Akingbade's interests. She previously studied at London College of Communication and Royal Academy Schools.

Ufuoma Essi

Ufuoma Essi is a video artist and filmmaker from Lewisham, South East London. She works predominantly with film and moving image as well as photography and sound. Her work revolves around Black feminist epistemology and the configuration of displaced histories. The archive forms an essential medium for her and it's through explorations with the archive that she aims to interrogate and disrupt the silences and gaps of political and historical narratives. Previous exhibitions and screenings include Barbican Centre, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Black Star Film Festival, Philadelphia; Maysles Documentary Center, New York, South London Gallery; Lisson Gallery, London; and Chisenhale Studios, London.

Adam Farah

Adam Farah is an artist, composer and sauce-maker who was born 'n' raised in London. They are a Capricorn Sun, Leo Moon and Cancer Rising. They also practice under/within the name free.yard – a project set up to engage with and merge curatorial, research, artistic and equitable communal practices; with a focus on the ever expansive and nuanced creative endeavours/potentials that emerge from endz*. free.yard casts a side-eye onto the oppressive and supremacist structures upheld within the complacent and performative liberal bubbles of the artworld/s, and in the long term desires to create collaborative moments for artists to connect, manifest and exhale under such weight. *endz is a slang term originating in London meaning neighbourhood, but carries its own contextual nuances, mainly referring to working class communities with larger ethnic-minority populations.

Nnena Kalu

Nnena Kalu is a sculptor and visual artist who has worked with ActionSpace since 1999. Nnena is not only an integral member of ActionSpace and Studio Voltaire, but also a creative role model for London's neurodivergent artistic community through her work as a creative workshop leader. Working with ActionSpace for over 20 years, Nnena has developed a unique practice that shares her process with the viewer by creating performative, large-scale installations insitu. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, including three major solo exhibitions: Nnena Kalu at Glasgow International in 2018 with Project Ability, Wrapping at Humber Street Gallery, Hull in 2019 and Nnena's first major London based solo commission for Studio Voltaire elsewhere, Studio Voltaire's offsite programme in 2020.

Djofray Makumbu

Djofray Makumbu is a British Congolese artist born and based in East London. He often works with friends and family when making his work which draws on his personal experiences and that of the people close to him. Recent works have focused on the shame and stigma of mental health difficulties, the pressures and violence of

inner city life from the perspective of young people and the joy of music and dancing. Djofray loves to mix up different techniques combining stop motion animation, video footage, hand drawn and painted elements in moving image which are sometimes presented alongside live performances such as dance or scripted scenes. Each element in the work is carefully self-made from hand built sets and hand stitched garments for Claymation characters to soundtracks that are developed closely with Djofray's brother.

In 2020, Djofray won a London Community Film and Video Commission to make Hello Mr Officer a moving image work that sees young Black men from across London share their experiences of being harassed by the Police. The work uses stop motion, watercolour and rotoscope alongside archive material from The People's Account (1987) by Ceddo Film Collective held in the LCVA archive. The work is due to be exhibited in Summer 2021 at the Exhibitions Hub, Goldsmiths, London. Recent solo shows include Brixton Library, London in 2019. Djofray graduated from BA Fine Art programme at Goldsmiths in 2018 and was awarded the Alumno/SPACE Studio Bursary as a result of his degree show exhibition.

Josiah Moktar

Josiah Moktar makes photographs to track desire's movements through the everyday. Meditations after queer encounters, their images record contemporary British life with an observational style that is at once playful and elegiac. Through their camera's devotional lens, objects glow with a person's presence in their absence. Nude studies hinge on ephemeral moments, like screenshots of a scene.

Moktar started taking photography seriously after working front of house in a cinema, a gallery and sitting for a friend's paintings, exploring these forms as both viewer and subject. This interest in the symbiotic relationship between photography, cinematography and painting is a throughline in Moktar's work, seeking to question and complicate the sprawling, contradictory taxonomies of desire within a Western literary and artistic canon.

In March, Moktar was accepted onto the professional development programme at Photofusion, as part of the London Creative Network consortium, funded by the ERDF. They live and work in London.

Curtly Thomas

Curtly Thomas is a visual artist living in London. His creative practice focuses on photography, sound and performance. Creating narratives around myths and the transformational body, Curtly has performed solo and in different collaborative settings at Auto Italia (London), Kampnagel (Hamburg), Café OTO (London) and The South London Gallery (London).

About Studio Voltaire

Studio Voltaire is one of the UK's leading not-for-profit arts organisations. Its pioneering public programmes of exhibitions, participation projects, live events and offsite commissions have gained an international reputation. The organisation has an outstanding track record of supporting artists at a pivotal stage in their careers, championing emerging and underrepresented practices and placing emphasis on risk-taking and experimentation. Many commissions are an artist's first solo exhibition in London or the UK.

Exhibiting artists have included Aaron Angell, Nairy Baghramian, Phyllida Barlow, Monster Chetwynd, Anne Collier, Thea Djordjadze, Nicole Eisenman, Sharon Hayes, Nnena Kalu, Sanya Kantarovsky, Ella Kruglyanskaya, Shahryar Nashat, The Neo Naturists, Henrik Olesen, Paulina Olowska, Elizabeth Price, Charlotte Prodger, Jo Spence, Cathy Wilkes and Rehana Zaman.

Studio Voltaire commissions a wide range of participatory and offsite projects working in collaboration with artists, local organisations, schools and community groups and provides a much-needed resource of affordable and accessible onsite artists' studios, supporting the development of diverse individual and collective practices, from recent graduates to internationally recognised practitioners.

Studio Voltaire is a registered charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

More information:

web: studiovoltaire.org

Instagram/Facebook: @studiovoltairelondon

Twitter: @studiovoltaire

The LOEWE FOUNDATION

The LOEWE FOUNDATION was established as a private cultural foundation in 1988 by Enrique Loewe, a fourth-generation member of LOEWE's founding family. Today, under the direction of his daughter Sheila Loewe, the Foundation continues to promote creativity, organise educational programmes and protect cultural heritage in the fields of craft, art, design, photography, poetry and dance. The Foundation was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit in the Fine Arts by the Spanish government in 2002.

More information:

web | loewe.com

blog | blogfundacionloewe.es

Instagram | @loewefoundation

LOEWE & Culture

With the LOEWE FOUNDATION Craft Prize, founded in 2016, the house reasserts its longstanding commitment to creativity in all forms and disciplines. Culture is a pillar of the brand. Reflecting fashion's vital link to contemporary life, a strong emphasis on art, design and craftsmanship has been a cornerstone of Jonathan Anderson's rebuilding of the house. In the past four years, LOEWE has initiated an important series of collaborations with artists and artisans who reinterpret and expand the brand's values. Apart from showcasing the many facets of LOEWE, these cultural projects reflect the transfer of knowledge and the cooperative spirit that have been characteristic of LOEWE since the day it was founded.