



Africanus Okokon

Touch Products

22 June - 04 August 2024

Washington, DC: von ammon co is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Africanus Okokon. This is the artist's first show with the gallery, and will include sculpture, video, prints, and large scale billboard collage. The exhibition will extend through Summer 2024.

Okokon's practice, which darts between most known artmaking techniques, examines the ghostly connections that form between disparate societies under the auspices of consumer culture. In this exhibition, the artist conjures a limbo-like space between the United States and Africa (mostly the Gold Coast, his family's place of origin), employing disposable goods that have the tendency to linger in one's home, or in one's memory, despite their proneness to obsolescence. These key objects—plastic sports trophies, cheap tourist souvenirs, reclaimed colonial-era sea chests, billboard fragments, and television commercial clips—crackle with murmurs of an erstwhile era of material culture, long supplanted by newer, faster technologies. These relics usually take residence in the spandrels and crypts of contemporary culture: in the donation bin, or on VHS tapes stored in the attic.

Using the tactics of The Pictures Generation—of quotation, excerption, framing, and staging—Okokon's assemblage and bricolage works seek to imbricate shared experiences of longing and loss from the two places where the artist claims birthright. While many of these objects will strike resonant emotional chords in either American or West African viewers, the end result of each finished object involves the clashing of elements from antipodal sources: the sports trophy segmented and rebuilt using African souvenir figurines; the clean-cut models of a barbershop advertisement scarified with collotype printmaking; or the hyper-familiar Ghanaian billboard advertisement reconstructed using a blend of keepsake photography and folktale allusions. The emotional common-denominator is a disjointedness, somewhere lost in the transatlantic abyss, or in the wraithlike, invisible ether of wireless communication. Girded by the (albeit mass-produced) keepsake, Okokon's art draws the critique of late-stage capitalism towards one's private life, one's home, one's marrow.

Touch Products is a brand name for some of Ghana's most popular household cleaning products—somewhat akin to titling a show *Lysol* in Africa. Out of its native context—and for consumer ears unfamiliar to its daily use—this brand name is a synecdoche for the wide array of elements in Okokon's multimedia practice: it is an artwork that traces the contours of longing in a material culture that struggles to persist: the feel of carved wood, the weight of a hollow trophy, or the downy sting of television static on one's cheek.

von ammon co was founded in 2019 in its current Georgetown location. Gallery hours are Saturdays and Sundays, 12-6pm, and by appointment. For more information and image requests, please visit www.vonammon.co or email info@vonammon.co.

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