



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

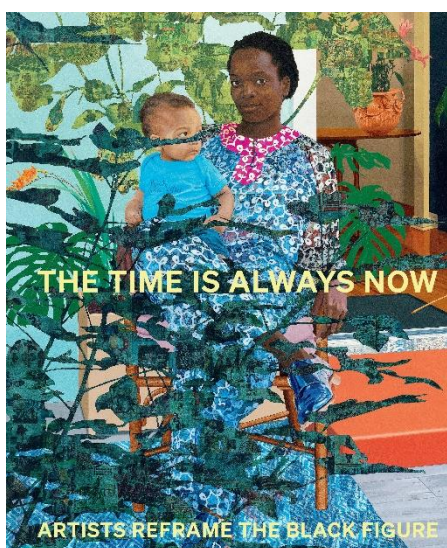
News release

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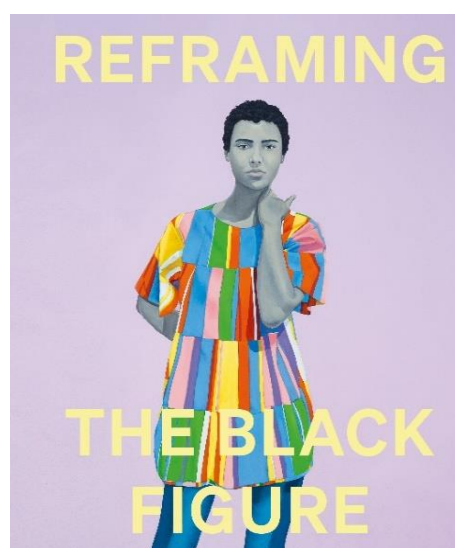
Original essays from curator Ekow Eshun, Booker Prize winning author Bernardine Evaristo, Scotiabank Giller Prize winning novelist Esi Edugyan, and art historian Dorothy Price, in National Portrait Gallery's new publication.

The National Portrait Gallery's publication, *The Time is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure*, will support its exhibition of the same name and will feature contemporary works of sculpture, painting and drawing by 22 African diasporic artists working in the UK and America alongside original essays by exciting writers.

The publication will sit alongside a smaller highlights book from the National Portrait Gallery, *Reframing the Black Figure: An Introduction to Contemporary Black Figuration*. Both publications will explore the exhibition and featured works in detail.



The Time is Always Now: Artist Reframe the Black Figure
9781855145580
15/02/2024
Hardback
£35



Reframing the Black Figure: An Introduction to Contemporary Black Figuration
9781855145481
15/02/2024
Hardback
£14.95



The Time is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure showcases work by 22 leading African diasporic artists, working in the UK and USA. Exploring the depiction of the Black form within portraiture, the exhibition will feature contemporary works – made between the year 2000 and today – that consider and celebrate figuration as a means of illuminating the richness and complexity of Black life.

The exhibition catalogue, *The Time is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure* by Ekow Eshun, includes an original essay by curator and writer **Ekow Eshun**, as well as contributions and essays from Booker Prize winning author, **Bernardine Evaristo**; Scotiabank Giller Prize winning novelist, **Esi Edugyan**; and art historian, **Professor Dorothy Price**.

“When I think of the concept of our aliveness, I am drawn to how Black artists transmit it through their creative endeavours, typically placing us in the centre of their oeuvre. While this might include the more familiar tropes of trauma, oppression and suffering, it also soars above it, wide wings. Destination? The universe.”

Bernardine Evaristo

The book explores the accomplished work of individual artists and celebrates a collective assertion of Black presence, and features the work of leading artists Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Hurvin Anderson, Michael Armitage, Jordan Casteel, Noah Davis, Godfried Donkor, Kimathi Donkor, Denzil Forrester, Lubaina Himid, Claudette Johnson, Titus Kaphar, Kerry James Marshall, Wangechi Mutu, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Chris Ofili, Jennifer Packer, Nathaniel Mary Quinn, Thomas J Price, Amy Sherald, Lorna Simpson, Henry Taylor and Barbara Walker.



L-R: *Standing Figure with African Masks* by Claudette Johnson (2018) © Claudette Johnson. Courtesy the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London. Photo: Andy Keate. *The Marchioness* by Toyin Ojih Odutola (2016) © Toyin Ojih Odutola. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo courtesy of North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh.

The Time is Always Now includes a three-part structure containing detailed artist profiles, essays and stunningly reproduced artworks. It also features a collection of texts and excerpts from authors, poets and scholars reflecting on Black bodies and Black lives. The publication examines Black figuration as a means to address the absence and distortion of Black presence within Western art history. It tells the story of representation through these works, as well as the social, psychological and cultural contexts in which they were produced.

“What happens when Black artists depict Black figures? What art does this produce, and what worlds of possibility does this reveal?”

Ekow Eshun



Reframing the Black Figure is a visual gift book that introduces readers to the field of Black figuration by highlighting a selection of key artworks from the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition, *The Time is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure*. Readers will encounter contemporary Black artists producing beautiful, urgent artworks.

Richly illustrated with artworks and visual details, alongside short biographies for all featured artists and quotations featuring their voices, this accessible publication offers an opportunity for readers to experience some of the most exciting and important artists working in figuration today.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

The Time is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure and *Reframing the Black Figure: An Introduction to Contemporary Black Figuration* are both published on the 15 February 2024, ahead of the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition, and are available to pre-order from the Gallery's online shop:

<https://npgshop.org.uk/collections/books/products/the-time-is-always-now-reframe-black-figure-catalogue>

<https://npgshop.org.uk/collections/books/products/reframing-black-figure-introduction-contemporary-black-figuration>

National Portrait Gallery

Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery tells the story of Britain through portraits, using art to bring history to life and explore living today. From global icons, to unsung heroes, our Collection is filled with the stories that have shaped, and continue to shape a nation. We celebrate the power of portraiture and offer encounters with some of the world's greatest and most exciting new artists, promoting engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world's largest collection of portraits. www.npg.org.uk