

# Deborah Segun: HOW TO FALL IN LOVE

PREVIEW: SATURDAY 4 DECEMBER (1-4PM)  
EXHIBITION: 5 DECEMBER – 15 JANUARY 2022

“I didn't give myself a chance to fall in love with myself because I didn't think she was deserving of it.”

Deborah Segun

It is often said that our personal reference to self-love is both met and restrained by those things we love the least about ourselves. Nigerian artist Deborah Segun questions this in *How to Fall in Love*, her debut solo exhibition with the gallery; and her first outing in the UK. Here, the Lagos-based young painter questions how we begin to accept that which we have never fully loved?

Love is meant to be an innate feeling – it comes easily when we look at others, the natural world, those things extrinsic to us. But these external factors and influences also shape us, mold, and meld us into the multifaceted and complex persons we are today. None of us are one-dimensional, we struggle to fully explicate our relationships to others, to ourselves.

In this regard, Segun's newest 'body' of work deals with that exactly: *The Body*. Just as art imitates life, she is at the crossroads of establishing a recognizable artistic style, (including representation by both Beers London and Athens renowned The Breeder gallery,) at the same time she is “redefining [her] own beauty.”

Life, art, self, each is a process, a journey, and just as her art evolves, so too does she find herself in transformative states as an individual – both outwardly but also, less evidenced, inwardly. In that respect, the works seem to house a subtle series of languid forms, peeking from behind shapes, gestures delicately or boldly revealing their truths. There is secrecy here, too; the suggestions of a young woman growing into herself at the same time a nascent (and international) artistic career reveals itself.

She speaks of herself in the third person: “*she slowly separates from her past self but knows that little bits of her will always be present, but there is an understanding that I will be kinder to her when she visits.*”

One requires knowledge to be able to fully love something; and as viewers, the beauty of these works is the subtle, unfurling moments of joy and revelation the artist has allowed to share with us.

“*I don't just want to exist, I want to be present and in tune with myself. She has been kind enough to give me life and I must reciprocate this kindness.*”

Dear viewers, such allowance is something we can all remind ourselves, and remember, once in a while, how to fall in love.

**Love Language** (2021)  
Acrylic on canvas, 170 x 120 cm



**That Feeling Within** (2021)  
Acrylic on canvas, 170 x 120 cm



Nigerian artist Deborah Segun adopts a deconstructed, reductive, and almost Cubist approach to her paintings, incorporating fragmented and exaggerated shapes, faces, and forms that delineate the female figure in contemplation or repose. Segun's work exaggerates the feminine silhouette and is perhaps as much a commentary on the representation of women in an art historical context, (and the omission of black women therein,) from the exaggerated proportions of The Venus of Willendorf or the multi-perspectival views of Picasso, who is an obvious inspiration to the young Lagos based artist. More contemporary depictions of the African female form similarly adopt a deconstructed and vibrant view where the black female form is a site for complex socio-political meaning. Segun's work, however, is – at least for the time-being – slightly more internalized. There is an element of truth that many artists need to self-reflect before turning the lens outward. And while inspired by her personal experience, and her awareness of her mental and physical sense of self, Segun's choice to focus on the individual becomes a reference point for a much larger schematic: transitions and phases in her life, including self-hate to self-acceptance, are undoubtedly issues that many women – African and otherwise – have experienced. There is a sense of a young artist and woman coming of age in these works – they are simultaneously vibrant but also codified, obscured, and protected. These works serve almost as a visual diary of how the young painter continues to define and redefine herself in a larger context. Segun describes her practice as a way of challenging reality and pushing herself to create alternative ways to position herself in contemporary art and society.



DEBORAH SEGUN (b. 1994, Nigeria) lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria. She obtained a degree in Fashion Design at the Polimoda Institute of Fashion Design and Marketing in Florence, Italy in 2017. Solo exhibitions include: 'Being Free', SMO Contemporary Art Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria (2020); 'Play as Collective', AWCA, ArtxLagos Art Fair, Lagos, Nigeria (2019); 'Still Life' Art Oja, Lagos, Nigeria (2019); 'I Feel Like I Am', Relate Africa, Lagos, Nigeria, (2019). Group exhibitions include: 'Eparapo, The Working Girls Forum', A Whitespace Creative Agency, Lagos, Nigeria (2019); 'Affordable Art Fair', Arthouse Contemporary, Lagos, Nigeria (2019); 'Art Oja Portfolio II', Miliki, Lagos, Nigeria (2018); 'Family & Friends', Wafflesncream, Lagos, Nigeria

(2018); 'Polimoda Performance Art & Fashion Show', Florence Italy (2017). Art Fairs include: Frieze New York, NY (2021); Armory New York, New York (2021); Frieze Los Angeles, LA (2021); 1-54 Contemporary African Fair, London, (2021); and FIAC Paris (2021). Deborah's debut London solo exhibition with BEERS, entitled, 'How to Fall in Love' opens on 4 December 2021.