

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

QUALEASHA WOOD

Malware

28 March – 26 April 2025

Private View | Thursday 27 March 2025 | 6-8 pm



Qualeasha Wood, *(but i live in a hologram with you)*, 2025, woven jacquard, glass seed beads and embroidery, 137.2 x 180.3 cm, 54 x 71 in

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present *Malware*, Philadelphia-based artist Qualeasha Wood's second solo exhibition with the gallery. In new tapestries, tuftings, and videos, Wood examines overconsumption with a visual language that refers to glitch art, body horror, and consumerism, considering how identity can persist and transform in the face of systemic failure.

In jacquard tapestries, where each digital pixel is woven as an analogue stitch, Wood develops her interest in the glitch as both aesthetic and metaphor, a strategy of communicating in a world where selfhood is perpetually mediated and warped. Now set against the harsh luminescence of a bathroom at night or the white-blue glow of bedroom lit up by a screen in the dark, the tapestries feature striking, uranium green code which narrates the artist's fatigue and disenchantment towards contemporary digital culture. In a visual play on computer programming, with dashes and brackets borrowed from Python or Java script, she references the invasive promotion of beauty products on social media, the collapse of body positivity via mass-marketed weight-loss products, and continuous threats to bodily autonomy following the overturn of abortion rights in the US. In doing so she critiques the coercive nature of prevalent trends, and the escalating commodification of the body.

For Wood, the glitch is a force of duality. Like a computer virus, it infiltrates and corrupts systems, but it also creates new pathways, rewriting frameworks and forging new possibilities. The works in *Malware* engage this dual nature, drawing from the language of glitches and viruses to examine how the Black femme body and experience are misinterpreted as threats within structures of racialised control. Alongside the tapestries, Wood presents new video work that harnesses AI technology and datamoshing to abstract her body, which appears pixellated almost out of recognition across multiple channels. Relying on code featured in the tapestries, the videos see Wood manually compressing text file data to manufacture glitches, a technique popularised in music video production. She posits that just as a virus is feared for its capacity to destroy—stealing, breaking, and corrupting—similarly, Black femme identities are often pathologised as errors or disruptions, subject to systems that attempt to consume, exploit, or erase them. Yet within this instability lies the potential for self-definition. Through the

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immediacy and intimacy of her webcam self-portraits, Wood positions her body as both a site of exploitation and a locus of resistance.

Although Wood's internet is generative and liberatory, she also acknowledges the loneliness epidemic exacerbated by technology, and the desensitising effect that mass-media creates, turning warfare into virtue-signalling, and politics into entertainment. A new series of tuftings interrogates this perspective, creating a dialogue between cyberspace and life away from the keyboard, returning to themes of Black girlhood and the innocence of childhood previously explored in this medium. While the tapestries take place in Wood's own home, the tuftings are set in rooms from her grandmother's house, drawing on memory distortion and loss, and the ensuing alienation of self. In one work, floodlights pour through a window, illuminating a sleeping figure, oblivious to the abundance of eyes upon it, not least the viewer's. Across Wood's practice paranoia and anxiety multiply as she continually asks what it means to exist within systems that see you as both product and problem, main character and menace.

Qualeasha Wood (b. 1996, Long Branch, NJ) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. She received her BA in 2019 from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI and her MA in 2021 from Cranbrook Academy of Fine Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI. Later this year she will be included in *Design and Disability*, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London; *Virtual Beauty*, Somerset House, London; *I Still Dream of Lost Vocabularies*, Autograph, London; and *Giants: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys*, Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN, travelled from the Brooklyn Museum, NY (2024-5) and The High Museum, Atlanta, GA (2024-5). In 2024 she presented her first solo institutional exhibition, *code_anima*, at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Art + Culture, Charlotte, NC. Other recent exhibitions include The Peeler Art Center at DePauw University, IN (2024); Salon 94, New York, NY (2024); Art Institute of Chicago, IL (2024); Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA (2024); Kendra Jayne Patrick, New York, NY (2023); Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2021, 2023); Hauser & Wirth, Somerset, New York, NY and Los Angeles, CA (2022-3); MoMA PS1, New York, NY (2022); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY (2022). In 2021-2022 Wood was artist in residence at the The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY. Her collections include Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Rennie Collection, Vancouver, Canada; The Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA; and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX.