

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Qualeasha Wood: tl;dr

5 May – 4 June 2023

Private View | Thursday 4 May 2023 | 6-8 pm



Qualeasha Wood, *Clout Chasin'*, 2023

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present the first European solo exhibition of US based artist Qualeasha Wood. Wood's textile practice brings together traditional craft techniques and contemporary technology, combining digital and analogue processes in the creation of her jacquard tapestries and tuftings.

In a new body of work, Wood continues to probe racial, sexual and gender identity, particularly as they relate to the Black femme body, turning her attention to themes of surveillance and vulnerability. While the artist's self-portrait remains a compelling presence in her tapestries, the imagery has pivoted to account for the daily experience of practising safety as a Black woman, both on- and off-line. Her continued fetishisation in digital and increasingly too in art spaces, has led Wood to explore a new visual language, executed in a distinct palette in which the colour white acts as a loaded signifier for purity and innocence. Error message pop-ups serve at once as boundary and barrier, impeding the viewer's access to the subject and demanding a mediated approach. The bridge between craft and digital art finds a compelling conduit in Wood's use of jacquard weave, where a pixel equates to a stitch. The jacquard system is often considered a predecessor to modern computing, whose inventor took inspiration from the loom's interchangeable punch cards to programme the first analytical engine.

Religious symbolism has played a central role in Wood's work to date and while its iconography is less pronounced in her new tapestries, its influence remains a key theme. The notion of a devotional relationship and its association with idolatry is observed in a set of found prayer kneelers, their cushions upholstered in a bespoke jacquard weave designed by the artist. Meanwhile, Wood's tuftings mark both a technical and visual shift from the tapestries. In these works, Wood adopts a naïve aesthetic that calls on the nostalgia of cartoon animations and their association with racial stereotyping to unpack notions of Black girlhood. Despite their formal simplicity, the tuftings reveal a tension drawn from her own experiences of consuming media rife with anti-Black prejudice from an early age. While previously the tuftings have been Wood's primary channel for comment on inherited trauma, her tapestries now also explore such acts of violence from a more contemporary standpoint. With both tapestries and tuftings, Wood necessarily implicates accountability in the viewer.

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Qualeasha Wood (b.1996, Long Branch, NJ) lives in Philadelphia, PA and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received her BA in 2019 from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence and her MA in 2021 from Cranbrook Academy of Fine Art, Bloomfield Hills. Wood was recently included in *It's Time For Me To Go* at MoMA PS1, an exhibition of works made during her residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2022. In May 2021, her work was featured on the front cover of *Art in America*. Recent exhibitions include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2022); Hauser & Wirth, New York and travelling to Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles and Hauser & Wirth, Bruton (2022-2023); Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2021); CANADA, New York (2021); Gaa Gallery, Provincetown (2021); Trout Museum of Art, Appleton (2021); and Kendra Jayne Patrick for Metro Pictures, New York (2020). Her work is included in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Rennie Collection, Vancouver, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Notes to Editors

For further press information please contact:

Madeline Adeane, Rees & Co: madeline@reesandco.com | +44 (0)20 3137 8776