

Sarah Cascone, "Frieze Has Awarded Artist, Poet, and Chef Precious Okoyomon With Its Closely Watched \$30,000 Commission in New York," *Artnet*, February 25, 2021

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Frieze Has Awarded Artist, Poet, and Chef Precious Okoyomon With Its Closely Watched \$30,000 Commission in New York

The artist will also have a solo show at Performance Space New York during the fair.



Precious Okoyomon. Photo by Sam Penn.

Frieze is giving its annual Artist Award to [Precious Okoyomon](https://www.instagram.com/devilintraining_/?hl=en) (https://www.instagram.com/devilintraining_/?hl=en), a New York-based artist, poet, and chef, who will use the \$30,000 budget for a new commission at this year's fair in New York, which is being held in [scaled-back fashion](https://news.artnet.com/market/frieze-new-york-moves-to-the-shed-1918991) (<https://news.artnet.com/market/frieze-new-york-moves-to-the-shed-1918991>) at [the Shed](https://theshed.org/) (<https://theshed.org/>).

"Simultaneously playful and critically inquisitive, this singular artist-poet's work highlights the inevitability of change, decay, death, and rebirth," said jury chair Jenny Schlenzka, executive artistic director at [Performance Space New York](https://performancespacenewyork.org/) (<https://performancespacenewyork.org/>), in a [statement](https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2021/02/FRIEZE_NY_ARTIST-AWARD_2021_FINAL_V51.pdf) (https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2021/02/FRIEZE_NY_ARTIST-AWARD_2021_FINAL_V51.pdf). "By extending poetry into the organic world, Okoyomon reminds us that apocalypse and utopia coexist and always have."

The prize for emerging artists, supported by the Luma Foundation and launched in New York in 2018, has previously recognized rising stars [Lauren Halsey](http://www.laurenhalsey.com) (<http://www.laurenhalsey.com>) and [Kapwani Kiwanga](http://www.artnet.com/artists/kapwani-kiwanga/) (<http://www.artnet.com/artists/kapwani-kiwanga/>).



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Shady* installation view at Frieze New York (2018). Photo by Mark Blower courtesy of Frieze New York.

Okoyomon is planning a site-specific "performance-activated installation" that ties together poetry, sculpture, light, and sound. "This piece takes its structure from the story of the tower of Babel, the mythological birthplace of difference, and differentiation," the artist told Artnet News in an email. Footage of the performance will be available online as well.

Okoyomon wrote the proposal for the award in the spring of 2020, just before the onset of the pandemic. "The piece, which centered around the collective cooking and eating of a day long meal, was mostly concerned with togetherness," Okoyomon said. "After returning to that project this year at a time when, for obvious reasons, realizing it has become impossible, I shifted focus to looking at failures of communication, places where language collapses, breaks down, arrives at impasse, etc."



Precious Okoyomon, installation view of "Earthseed" at the Museum Für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2020). Photo by Axel Schneider, courtesy of the artist and Museum Für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; and Quinn Harrelson/Current Projects.

This year's award jury members were Ralph Lemon (artistic director of Cross Performance, New York), Vassilis Oikonomopoulos (senior curator at Luma Arles), and Stuart Comer (chief curator of media and performance art at the Museum of Modern Art, New York).

During the run of the fair, Okoyomon will also present a solo show, titled "FRAGMENTED BODY PERCEPTIONS AS HIGHER VIBRATION FREQUENCIES TO GOD," at Performance Space New York (March 20–May 9, 2021). They will transform the space into a site for grief and mourning, with an installation featuring Kudzu ash, water, algae, moss, and stone.



Precious Okoyomon and Hannah Black, installation view of "I NEED HELP" at Real Fine Arts, New York (2018). Photo courtesy of the artist.

The artist has previously had exhibitions at the Luma Westbau in Zurich (2018) and the MMK in Frankfurt (2020), and performances at the Serpentine Galleries, London, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (both 2019). Their first show, "I NEED HELP" (2018), was a two-person presentation with Hannah Black at Real Fine Arts, New York.

Okoyomon will present a new commission at the Aspen Art Museum in June, and will release a book, *But Did U Die?*, with the Serpentine Galleries/Wonder Press later this year.

Frieze New York (<https://www.frieze.com/fairs/frieze-new-york>) will be on view at the Shed in Manhattan, 545 West 30th Street, New York, May 5–9.