

# GLADSTONE

Martha Schwendener, "6 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now," *The New York Times*, April 28, 2021

**The New York Times**

## 6 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Gerald Jackson's collages; Precious Okoyomon's reimagined ecosystem; Damien Davis's sculptures; Beverly Buchanan's "shacks"; and more.

April 28, 2021



Installation view of Precious Okoyomon's "Fragmented Body Perceptions as Higher Vibration Frequencies to God" at Performance Space New York. Da Ping Luo

# Precious Okoyomon

Through May 9. Performance Space New York, 150 First Avenue, Manhattan, 212-477-5829, [performancespacenewyork.org](http://performancespacenewyork.org).

The Nigerian-American artist and poet Precious Okoyomon, who uses the pronouns “they/them,” creates large environments that evoke fantastic landscapes. Last year, they staged “Earthseed” in a museum in Frankfurt, Germany, that featured live kudzu, a plant introduced to the American South to prevent erosion in soil ravaged by the overcultivation of cotton that was tended by enslaved people. For “Fragmented Body Perceptions as Higher Vibration Frequencies to God” at Performance Space New York, Okoyomon has taken that same kudzu, incinerated it, and installed machines to blow the ashes over a sculptural environment that includes fake boulders and real moss, gravel, soil and a few ladybugs and crickets.

The overall effect is impressive. Red lighting, a brooding soundtrack and the mossy faux-landscape conjure gothic tales, film sets and haunted houses. Beyond initial impressions, however, the work is a boilerplate mash-up of land art, earthworks, installation and sound art with weak links to history and Black trauma.

According to the exhibition’s news release, the project is as “an ecosystem that seeks to hold grief” after last year’s “brutal mood of apocalypse and rapture.” For me, though, so many other situations — ad hoc altars at protests and vigils, news conferences, and the removal of racist statues and monuments — provided far more powerful spaces for communal grief, mourning and rapture, while acknowledging how much work is yet to be done.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER