

UrbanGlass

day/dreams

Jasmine Anokye

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The COVID-19 pandemic has altered every aspect of our lives and pushed societal norms out the proverbial window.

The act of “social distancing” became a normal part of survival and necessary to protect public health. Though this act of social solidarity has strangely brought us closer, I wonder what really happens to the human psyche when our social connections are suddenly severed. We’ve been forced to live moment to moment, waiting for the next bit of bad news.

It is true that we didn’t have a choice but also true that because of our limitations, we’re reaching deeper into ourselves to find and celebrate the simple pleasures of everyday life. Times of crisis bring clarity. It is clear this is the start of a massive cultural change toward how we connect.

While sheltering-in-place, I found myself often gazing dreamily out the window. Initially out of hopelessness, which turned to curiosity and then to pleasure. I found myself looking forward to getting lost in my head. Dreaming up a better tomorrow, questioning the small role I play in all this and finding ways to keep hope alive.

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day/dreams, a selection of new works by Jasmine Anokye, explores social solidarity, dreams and new beginnings through African proverbs and storytelling.

Anokye transforms the UrbanGlass Window Gallery into a fantastical space lined wall-to-wall with beaded curtains – where you are allowed to daydream, lose yourself in stories of yesterday and imagine new possibilities for tomorrow.

“My latest work incorporates various glass techniques, specifically beaded curtain sculptures made using lampwork beads and neon, as well as collage and portraiture. I believe our lives are intertwined through verbal and written stories. Narratives from the past that highlight conditions in the present. Each piece acts as a fragment from our ancestors who were here long before us. Everything has a purpose and meaning. My vibrant works help amplify a story of who we once were, who we are now and who we are becoming.”

The selection of collages, portraits and sculptures illustrate the practical experience of humanity that proverbs hold and deliver messages of inspiration, celebration and advice. A site specific, beaded curtain sculpture covers the windows, inviting viewers on the street to physically engage and permeate the curtains to navigate the space fully. This portal exists as less of a sense of separation but serves to evoke humanness. Made with the most everyday materials, objects we come into contact with on a daily basis, granting humanizing touch.

Drawn to the poetry and universality of proverbs, this installation will serve as a space for reflection, realization and rebirth. A proverb is a simple saying that

expresses a truth based on common sense or universal truths. Though they are uniquely African, proverbs can help all discover new ideas and learn life lessons.

We all daydream – allowing our minds to wander off to our inner worlds and explore our fantasies. Living in an environment where the goal is often “go, go, go” 24/7, we can easily forget to take a step back and breathe. Daydreaming offers us a way to listen out for quieter suggestions and perspective of our deeper selves and the world around us. In dreams, a curtain symbolizes isolation from one’s reality or problems. An indication that you need to have a good rest and emerge refreshed.

There is a shift happening.

The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with sheltering-in-place has unapologetically removed the “curtain” or veils of our society. Not only has PAUSE awakened us to America’s health crisis, it has reaffirmed this country’s anti-Blackness and systemic racism. Through this collective trauma, we are forced to face ourselves and reconcile with the hatred and lies America was founded upon.

Sometimes, the most productive thing to do is to look out the window – observe the world around you or possibly catch a glimpse of your own reflection. Do you recognize the person staring back at you or find compassion within yourself for others? Research suggests the best way to combat feelings of isolation is to grow and strengthen concern for others.

In the midst of civil unrest, how can we tap into our individual power and imaginative and fresh ideas to realize our purpose in life? day/dreams offers space for revolutionary transformation, healing and joy cultivation. So much was uncovered, personally, socially and systemically in 2020. In the midst of COVID-19 we are seeing more of what happens when we actively hold one another, our communities and ourselves accountable.

For society to do its most nourishing work in helping us through the difficult times to come, we need to shake the idea that we are alone and keep the greater good at the forefront of our minds.

One day this too will be just another story.

Artist biography

Jasmine Yaa-Tiwaah Anokye aka BZARBLACKSTAR is an interdisciplinary Ghanaian-American artist, who practices glass art, collaging and painting. A professional daydreamer and child at heart, her work is powered by imagination and whimsy – often a compilation of mixed media elements she collects or creates. For Anokye, imagination is the ability to see the invisible, hear the inaudible, and feel the unbearable, allowing her to breathe life into her work. She sees art as a dialogue between thoughts, texture, color and experience. As a storyteller she uses her work as a visual language to depict strength, inner beauty and soft power.

Her work pays homage to her African heritage while highlighting nature and spirituality. She is motivated by the study of culture, evolution and identity. Her subjects, primarily Black women, represent resilience and triumph – each carrying intangible strength and divinity while counteracting societal stereotypes and patriarchal barriers. The constant thread that runs through each of her pieces is the concept of radical self care. Anokye attempts to

evoke emotion to tell a story through her work, while leaving room for the viewer to create their own backstory. Whether it be a shared narrative, her work is full of attitude, fearlessness and color, representing a voice to those who go voiceless in our society.

As a native New Yorker, Anokye identifies with the gritty, aggressive style and swag her city, which plays a significant role in her artistic sensibility. As a collector and sentimental soul, objects with personal context are included in many of her works. Elements such as magazine clippings or excerpts from her diary, as well as beads, dried flowers and other upcycled material. Her work celebrates the diversity of femininity by exploring how society and culture have shaped gender expression and intimacy.

Anokye graduated from CUNY Hunter College with a dual degree in Fine Art and Political Science. She is also founder of WAYSTED STUDIO, a wellness and lifestyle brand passionately committed to self care and body autonomy, through the form of waistbeads, wearable art and all-natural apothecary goods. Her works have been exhibited in various galleries throughout New York City including Chashama, The Untitled Space and Mark West Center for The Arts.

Objects on display

Bannu so a emmia (When two carry, it does not hurt)

neon, black tea, acrylic paint, ash, netting, glass beads, sequins on canvas
in found gilded frame

27 x 34 inches

2018 – 2020

It Takes A Village

paper, acrylic in plastic frame

13 x 22 inches

2017

Sorrow May Sadden Your Face

paper, seed beads, tea, ash, and sherpa fabric on canvas

30 x 32 inches

2020

*Auntie Series (1-5)**

paper in wooden frame

5 x 7 inches

2017-2018

Quarantine Collage Series (Village 1, Village 3)

paper, acrylic

4 x 6 inches

2020

Proverbial Collage Series (Eggs at the Market, The Word, Unless There is Wind A Tree Does Not Move)

paper, acrylic, black tea, ink, fabric

3 x 4 inches

2020

Hwimhwim Adee Ko Srosro (What comes easily, goes easily)

neon, black tea, acrylic paint, ash, netting, glass beads, sequins on canvas
in gilded frame

25 x 30 inches

2018 – 2020

Sculptural Bead Curtain (untitled)

glass beads, netting, clay, fabric, paper, dried flowers, kanekalon braiding
hair, twine, acrylic nails, collage

dimensions vary with installation (site specific)

2021

*Prints from the *Auntie Series* are available for purchase through the UrbanGlass Store.
Any print purchases will be available for pick up or delivery starting June 25th.

About UrbanGlass: Established in New York City in 1977, UrbanGlass fosters experimentation and advances the use and critical understanding of glass as a creative medium. UrbanGlass is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Exhibitions at UrbanGlass are supported by Agnes Gund, Capital Group Companies Global, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Robert Lehman Foundation, Corning Incorporated Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts and many generous individual donors.