

YSP

Press Release

 **KEDISHA
COAKLEY**

31 JULY – 31 OCTOBER 2021
UPPER SPACE

**An exhibition exploring timely issues
concerning Black women's identity opens
this July at Yorkshire Sculpture Park**



Kedisha Coakley, *The Right to Opacity*, 2020.

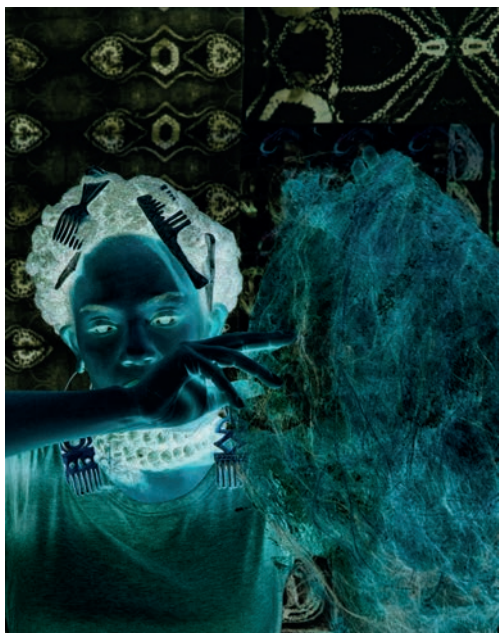
Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is delighted to present the first solo exhibition of work by Kedisha Coakley, who reconsiders objects and cultural symbols in relation to history, race and culture.

Born in London in 1982, Coakley completed her BA in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University in 2020. Her work inspires important and timely dialogues and encourages viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives bound up with objects of different cultures.

Since YSP was founded in 1977, it has invested in artists at crucial moments in their careers and supported them at every stage of their professional journeys. In 2020, Coakley was the recipient of YSP's Yorkshire Award, a residency which provides vital support to artists at the critical stage following graduation and offers guidance for them to reflect and move forward with their practice.

This new display is Coakley's first public gallery exhibition and is a space for her to increase the ambition of her ideas and reconsider conventions of curatorial practice. By exploring ideas of home, memory, class, status and cultural affiliations, Coakley attempts to create inclusive and recognisable spaces within the gallery setting, which she describes as a familiar place of ownership and truth, transparency, opacity, hypervisibility and belonging for all.

Her practice draws from personal experiences, challenges stereotypes and examines the ritualistic-like routine to maintain and condition African Caribbean hair, including its place in the lives of Black women. Motifs and patterns of braided hair feature in her bronze sculptures and her bold mural wallpaper designs, and attempt to interrupt Western representation and connections with colonial histories.



Kedisha Coakley, *The Right to Opacity*, Blue Ether Series, 2020.



Kedisha Coakley, *Ritual Series*, 2019 – 2020.

YSP Deputy Curator, Damon Jackson-Waldock first began working with Coakley in 2019, as part of his role as Career Mentor at Sheffield Hallam University. He says: "I am overwhelmed by the wealth of talent coming out of our northern universities. Opportunities such as the Yorkshire Award, and our wider responsibility to support emerging artists and those leaving university is incredibly important to all of the YSP curatorial team. Kedisha is exploring interesting and pertinent themes of identity and representation, and we knew she would embrace this venture to create timely dialogues with visitors to the park".

In what has been a challenging year, and with the ongoing support from YSP, Coakley has secured a number of exciting projects. Coinciding with this exhibition, she will create her first large-scale sculptural commission which will be unveiled in the Midlands later this year. At approximately 2.5m tall, this steel sculpture is inspired by traditional African tribal art and takes the form of a Mbulu Ngulu guardian, carved wooden figures of the Kota tribe of Gabon, Africa. Aligning with the Government's commitment to review diversity within public-realm artworks, this new commission is a step towards improving representation in sculpture across the UK.

Coakley is also selected for New Contemporaries 2021 touring exhibition that highlights some of the most exciting practices emerging from the UK's art schools and alternative learning programmes, to be seen at Firstsite, Colchester and South London Gallery later this year. Throughout August and September, Coakley's work will be on display at Quench, a project space and gallery in Margate, Kent run by artists Lindsey Mendick and Guy Oliver.

Kedisha says: "This year has been a fantastic opportunity to explore timely issues concerning Black women's identity and how our stories are represented in society. Taking my own experiences, events and societal disturbances over the past 18 months has challenged and changed the shape and intentions of my work as well as what I want to do with my practice. Now more than ever, interrupting spaces with true representation is paramount."

"I'm delighted my first solo show is at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, as for me the park exemplifies aiding freedom of thought with the non-prejudicial curation of the artworks in natural surroundings. I hope people who visit my exhibition consider the work in juxtaposition to the beautiful surroundings, as well as each other and have a unique experience."

[@kedishacoakley](https://www.kedishacoakley.co.uk) | www.kedishacoakley.co.uk

PRESS ENQUIRIES

Svetlana Leu
svetlana@suttoncomms.com

Mana Merikhy
mana@suttoncomms.com

Download images at yvsp.org.uk/media

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG
Near Wakefield and Barnsley – M1 Junction 38
+44 (0)1924 832631 | yvsp.org.uk
Open seven days a week, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
Pre-booking essential via www.yvsp.org.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter: @YSPsculpture
Instagram: @YSPsculpture

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is one of the finest places in Europe to experience modern and contemporary sculpture in the open air. We host work by some of the world's most well-known artists from Yorkshire-born Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Damien Hirst to Phyllida Barlow, Kalliopi Lemos, Gavin Turk, Ai Weiwei and many other major international and emerging artists across 500 acres of 18th century-designed landscape and six indoor galleries. YSP welcomes around 500,000 visitors every year to enjoy and experience art, heritage and the landscape and each year 40,000 people have contact with our learning programmes. Founded in 1977, YSP is an independent charitable trust and registered museum.

CREATIVE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Yorkshire Sculpture Park was founded in 1977 to enable fairer cultural access and opportunity and we are committed to being part of change towards a fairer world. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and are proactive in our programme, policies and behaviours to address inequalities locally, nationally and internationally. We recognise that economic, social and cultural disadvantage is complex and intersectional and shape our activity accordingly. Diversity and equality are crucial to the arts because they release the true potential of our nation's artistic talent – from every background. At YSP, we support Arts Council England's mission – great art and culture for everyone. We share ACE's commitment to promote and embed diversity in our workforce and cultural programme. This is called the 'Creative Case for Diversity'.

NEW CONTEMPORARIES

New Contemporaries is the UK's leading organisation supporting emerging and early career artists from established and alternative art programmes. Since 1949, we have provided development opportunities for artists, helping them to successfully transition from education into more established pathways.

Receptive to diverse practices from a diverse demographic, participants for our annual, open exhibition are selected by a panel comprising influential artists and art world figures, often including artists who have previously been a part of New Contemporaries. Selection is a rigorous two-part process with each applicant remaining anonymous throughout the process.

Remaining responsive to the radical movements of contemporary art, New Contemporaries also offers artists mentoring, residencies, bursaries, fellowships, commissioning and programming opportunities with our extensive network of partners. In addition to receiving NPO funding from Arts Council England over the period 2018-2022, Bloomberg Philanthropies has supported the New Contemporaries touring exhibition since 2000.

newcontemporaries.org.uk | [@NewContemps](https://www.instagram.com/NewContemps)

QUENCH

Quench is a project space and gallery in Margate, Kent run by artists Lindsey Mendick and Guy Oliver. Quench was created in the pandemic with the aim of giving artists and curators an opportunity to develop new work and put on exhibitions. Quench is a not-for-profit venture and all possible art sales and proceeds go directly to the artists.

www.quenchgallery.co.uk | [@quenchgallery](https://www.instagram.com/quenchgallery) | [@lindseymendick](https://www.instagram.com/lindseymendick) | [@guyjoliver](https://www.instagram.com/guyjoliver)