

ABI JOY SAMUEL



ABI JOY SAMUEL *PORTFOLIO*
2025 -

ABOUT THIS PIECE

The artwork here is just as much in the shadow as it is in the sculpture itself since this piece is about accepting my shadow self.

In this final piece for my graduate diploma course at the Royal College of Art, my love of found objects became a celebration rather than a point of suffering, so I created a bust of my alter ego. I deconstructed and reassembled found objects as a process of transformation, exploring my British Jewish female identity and subverting imposed narratives like the Jewish seductress or the scavenger stereotype. The sculpture, made from scavenged materials, reimagines contemporary expressions of eroticism. Hand-sewn, dried banana skins and fiery copper hint at sensuality, while the fragile, transparent nature of the bust conveys sensitivity. The dismantled baby rocker suggests a body in restraint or recovery—an ongoing theme in my work. The Nike trainers reference my Britishness and the childhood longing for a pair I couldn't afford.

I aimed to create a piece that speaks to women everywhere who have felt broken—showing that we are imperfectly powerful, unique, flawed, and ultimately sublime.

▼ 'MY SHADOW SELF' [2024]

Installation

Medium:

Head: Chicken wire, plaster of Paris, dissected trainer and part of a found baby rocker.

Hair composed of found floral fabric and remnants of my sister's hair weave.

Body: Chicken wire, copper sheeting, hand-stitched banana skins, metal studs, and dissected black Nike trainers.

Plinth: Laser-cut plywood, reassembled from a dissected found chair, a salvaged wooden shelf from Stamford Hill, and parts of a found baby rocker.

Dimensions: 165 x 56 x 67cm





◀ **'HUNTER, GATHERER' [2024]**

Medium: Acrylic, pastel and charcoal on canvas

Dimensions stretched: 130 x 190cm

ABOUT THIS PIECE

I keep coming back to the idea of women as both hunters and gatherers in my work, imagining a utopian future where women rule the world. This was heavily inspired by one of my favorite fashion collections, Alexander McQueen's Plato's Atlantis, which envisioned a world where women rise from the water and take over the land.

The figures I paint shift between human and animal—blurring the line between the two. The canvas is where I let my raw, animalistic instincts take over, unfiltered and unashamed, even when they feel at odds with the structures we live in.



ABOUT THIS PIECE

While walking along the canal in London Fields, I was stopped by an abandoned textile draped over a gate. Matted and tangled with fishing hooks, plastic debris, and fragments of a scarf, it seemed salvaged from the canal, shaped by the pressure of the lock.

In the studio, I unfolded its vast, two-meter length. Hideous yet sublime, it overwhelmed me, sparking a spiritual reflection on suffering, endurance, and the beauty that emerges through resilience. This textile became central to my project: I wore it in performance, transformed it into ready-made installations, and sculpted with it.



▼ **'IF GOD MANIFESTED IN HUMAN FORM, WOULD THEY APPEAR AS SOMETHING HORRIFYING OR SUBLIME?'** [2024]

Installation
[myself walking behind the installation for context]

Found textile from the canal (Ready-made)
Medium: Matted dust blanket, polypropylene fabric, fishing hooks, plastic bags, scarfs. Held up by fishing wire and fishing hooks

Dimensions: 187 x 26 x 10cm





▲ **'THE LAND I CALLED MY HOME' [2024]** | Medium: Charcoal, pastel and acrylic on canvas | Dimensions stretched: 120 x 95cm





▲ **NO.9 CORK STREET, FRIEZE GALLERY** | Presented as part of the Quinn Emanuel Artist Residency | August 2024

▼ **'THE ESSENTIALS OF MY LIVING'** [2024]

Hanging wall sculpture

Medium: Liquid latex, black latex ink, imbedded with cling film

Dimensions: 43 x 20 x 4cm



ABOUT THIS PIECE

I think of the body as a second skin—intimate, fragile, and sometimes confining. Working with black liquid latex allows me to approach the human form as something to be freed, much like a butterfly breaking free from its cocoon. The deep black of the latex speaks to the erotic, while its heavy, textured surface captures the raw imperfections of skin. This bodice is a shedding, a transformation—a moment of becoming, like a snake casting off its skin to reveal something new.



Close up



▲ **'BODY IN LAYERS 2' [2024]** | Medium: Charcoal, pastel and acrylic on canvas | Dimensions stretched: 195 x 135cm



▲ SOLO SHOW AT RYAN GRAFF CONTEMPORARY, SAN FRANCISCO | *'Body In Layers 2'* on display | March 2024

▼ **'DIRTY WHITE COLLAR 2' [2024]** | Medium: Wall installation made from a found shirt cut open | Dimensions: 47 x 27 x 5cm





▲ **'GOODNIGHT' [2024]** | Medium: Charcoal, pastel and acrylic on canvas | Dimensions stretched: 195 x 110cm



▼ **'ALTER EGO PHOTOSHOOT AND WRITING' [2024]** | Medium: Display of reflective writing and self-portrait photoshoot covered in white spray paint behind found acetate | Dimensions: 45 x 30cm



ABOUT THIS PIECE

Photography and writing are integral to my practice, which takes an autoethnographic approach. On the right, I have displayed an A4 sheet of free-flowing writing that reflects on different aspects of my life and what shapes my identity. This text is layered over a photograph I took of a smashed car headlight—its fractured form resembling a piercing, almost animalistic eye. To the left, my self-portrait mirrors this gaze, creating a visual dialogue between human and machine.

I was drawn to the connection between the robotic, eye-like nature of the headlight and the primal, instinctive quality of the self-portrait. This interplay speaks to my fascination with the relationship between women, animals, and the evolving presence of technology in our lives. Both pieces have been displayed behind pieces of acetate that I found continuing my interest in found objects.



▲ **'SPHINX OF HATSHEPSUT' [2024]** | Medium: Charcoal, pastel and acrylic on canvas | Dimensions stretched: 190 x 130cm

▼ **"GUN/CROSS' [2024]** | Medium: Deconstructed found wood installed on a wall | Dimensions: 42 x 19 x 2cm



ABOUT THIS PIECE

The composition of this wall sculpture was designed to combine both a gun and cross. By doing so I am drawing a direct visual connection between violence and religion, not as a statement of truth, but as a way of posing a question to the viewer. By flaking away areas of found wood and gradually building up the form, the process itself reflects my conceptual interest in deconstructionism-breaking down and rebuilding through found objects and material in order to understand the world.

EDUCATION

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Sept. 2025 - Masters in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art

May 2024 - Dec.2024 Graduate Diploma in Fine Art from The Royal College of Art
- Distinction

Jan. 2023 - Apr.2023 10 Week Intensive Drawing Program at the Royal Drawing School

2012-2017 - BA (Hons) in Fashion Design from the University of Westminster

2011-2012 - Art & Design Foundation Diploma from Central Saint Martins

GRANTS & AWARDS

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2025 - Leverhulme Arts Scholarship

2024 - The Quinn Emanuel Artist-In-Residence program in London

2024 - Scholarship Award from the Royal College of Art

2023 - Shortlisted The Gallery at Green & Stone Summer Show

2022 - 1st prize Inch Arts Gallery, Manchester

2020 - Shortlisted for Delphian Open Call

2019 - Lexus Prize for 'Best work in Show', Hampstead Art Fair

EXHIBITIONS

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Aug. 2025 - Ryan Graff Contemporary | Duo show | San Francisco, USA

Aug. 2024 - Frieze Gallery | Duo show | Mayfair, London

Oct. 2024 - Donya Gallery | Group show | Mayfair, London

May. 2024 - Ryan Graff Contemporary | Solo show | San Francisco, USA

Oct. 2023 - Cicek Gallery | Group show | Soho, London

Aug. 2023 - Green & Stone Gallery | Summer group show | Fulham, London

May. 2023 | J/M Gallery | Solo show | Notting Hill, UK

Oct. 2022 | Cicek Gallery | Group show | Mayfair, London

Apr. 2022 | Sale de Arte | Solo show | Aruba

Mar. 2022 | Inch Arts Gallery | Group show | Manchester

Aug. 2021 | Keats House | Group show | Hampstead, London

Dec. 2020 | Crate Brewery | Solo show | Hackney Wick, London

June. 2019 | Hampstead Art Fair | Hampstead, London

Nov. 2019 | Self curated solo show in ex-brothel | Hackney Wick, London

Dec. 2018 | Self curated solo show | Belsize Park, London

June. 2018 | Hampstead Art Fair | Hampstead, London

Oct. 2017 | KYTA artist residency group show | Himalayas, India

July. 2017 | Kings Road Gallery | Group show | Chelsea, London

May 2017 | Draw Fashion Exhibition | Group show | London

June 2017 | Hampstead Art Fair | Hampstead, London

CONTACT

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