



Bikubenfonden's portrait series, Artistic Practice presents Marie-Lydie Nokouda – artistic director of "Black To Normal"

Marie-Lydie Nokouda creates neo-Afro-Danish drama. With 'Black To Normal', Nokouda, clearly taking her mark in the artistic movement, 'Afrofuturism', is offering her bid on how diversity can be rendered mainstream in Danish stage arts.

Marie-Lydie Nokouda is the initiator and the leader of the new artist-platform, 'Black To Normal'

"There needs to be variety and diversity in all phases of our artistic practice, and this is a project that has to be carried on continuously. I've been missing a community with other artists who look like me in the stage arts, and this has always caused me to think: why aren't there more like me in our branch? With Black to Normal, I am managing to have this need met. Our new performative readings constitute sites of rendezvous for an incipient community of Afro-Danish artists. There's a clear sense that this is an enhancing element, and that this is a necessity in the branch."

Afrofuturism as an artistic practice

Through Afrofuturism, Nokouda is looking for an aesthetic and a working tool that has the potential to budge people's perceptions. In March 2022, Nokouda met with Ytasha L.

Womack at Teater Grob, and the two engaged in a conversation about Nokouda's artistic practice and about the cultural aesthetic movement known as 'Afrofuturism'.

See Artistic Practice, with Marie-Lydie Nokouda, here, including clips from her conversation with Ytasha L. Womack: <https://vimeo.com/712040147/9c9f56e865>

Womack is an author and one of the leading experts in the United States on Afrofuturism. The meeting between Nokouda and Womack relates – and addresses itself to – the spaces there are for telling other kinds of stories and was buttressed with the objective of making a contribution – with inspiration, sparring and international networking – around the topic of Nokouda's work with *Black To Normal*.

Ytasha L. Womack on Afrofuturism:

"Our imagination has been hijacked by norms, by Western and white norms, and creators of colour are not being exposed to their culture and possibilities because there is no platform for it – so Afrofuturism is a way to find a place for stories that are untold. Afrofuturism is always in the future, as we are always creating a future in time and space right now."

Promising artistic practice

Marie-Lydie Nokouda has been singled out for Bikubenfonden's Artistic Practice program for particularly promising artistic practices. As one aspect of the program, an interview salon is arranged, which examines the selected artist's particular approach to art and the potential lying within her/his practice. It is the artist herself who chooses her interview partner, in connection with setting up the salon.

*"Marie-Lydie Nokouda is opening new spaces in Danish stage art. With *Black To Normal*'s artistic investigations, she is aiming – through intense rounds of writing – to bring forth a new stage art expression in Denmark: scene-based Afrofuturism. This is the first artistic platform in the nation that is working purposefully, with new drama, to cultivate and render visible hidden talents among Afro-Danish artists,"* says Mette Marcus, director of Bikubenfonden.

Photograph: *Bikubenfonden's Portrait Series* presents actress Marie-Lydie Nokouda – artistic director of *'Black To Normal'*.

About Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism is a philosophical movement embracing science and history that examines and explores the cross-field situated between African diaspora and technology, science fiction and utopias. As a working method, it provides "a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens", as curator Ingrid LaFleur puts it. Marie-Lydie Nokouda makes use of Afrofuturism as a working tool, and she is using this in her working process, which quests after an aesthetics that can encompass the diversity in art.

ABOUT MARIE-LYDIE NOKOUDA

Actress Marie-Lydie Nokouda (born in 1981) completed her program of studies at Aarhus Theatre School in 2013. It was in the performance, 'SNE', presented at Husets Teater in 2014, that Nokouda made her debut. Since then, she has taken on roles in a number of theatre performances, among these being 'Katalog Over Kommende Katastrofer', 'QUEENS' and 'I Nat Kommer Krigen Hjem'. In the Netflix series, 'Kastanjemanden', Nokouda plays a role. In the autumn of 2021, she could be seen again at Husets Teater in the performance, 'Mit Arbejde'.

In 2021, Nokouda introduced the artist platform, Black To Normal. In conjunction with 'Afro To The Future', presented at Teater Grob, this platform gave rise to performative readings and new Afro-Danish drama, staged with a point of departure in Afrofuturism. On November 25 and November 26, 2022, in connection with Dansk Teater's Tricentennial, Black To Normal will be returning to Teater Grob, under the title, "Holberg Goes Black".

ABOUT YTASHA WOMACK

Ytasha L. Womack is an award-winning American author, filmmaker, independent researcher and dance therapist. Womack is regarded as the leading expert on Afrofuturism in the United States. All over the world, she holds lectures on Afrofuturism and its applications. Her book, 'Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture' has become a benchmark and is being used actively everywhere in the world in teaching that's going on at secondary schools and universities. Womack's book is among the finalists for a 'Nonfiction Locus Award', which the readers of Locus, the science fiction- and fantasy-magazine, vote on every year.

Ytasha Womack is the director of the Afrofuturist dance film, 'A Love Letter to the Ancestors From Chicago'. She is an inaugural resident with 'Black Rock Senegal' under the direction of the renowned artist, Kehinde Wiley. In 2019, Womack was one of the Creators-in-Residence at Kickstarter and was also a writer-in-residence at Emerson College in Boston.

As a writer, Womack stands behind several publications that have been turned out by various publishing houses, including the time-travel series, 'Rayla Universe', and the Afrofuturist short story series, 'A Spaceship in Bronzeville'. Womack is also the author of non-fiction literature, with books like 'Post Black' and 'Beats Rhymes & Life: What We Love and Hate About Hip-Hop'. Moreover, she is an inaugural author at the Megascop publishing firm, where she creates prints dedicated to speculative fiction in comics, and her graphic novel-epic, 'BLAK KUBE', illustrated by Tanna Tucker, is slated to make its debut some time in 2022.

FACTS about Artistic Practice

Artistic Practice is a close-to-the-person and up-close-to-the-work film portrait of a Danish artist, or artist duo, with a particularly promising practice and potential. Bikubenfonden is making Artistic Practice available to the artists as a link in an envisioned internationalization of Danish arts. The objective is to contribute toward edifying and amplifying the artists' visibility in their on-going careers.

Artistic Practice, with Marie-Lydie Nokouda, is produced by Meeto Film for Bikubenfonden.

Upcoming Artists in the Artistic Practice Series:

Visual artist Jens Settergren

Visual artist Marie Munk

Visual artist Linda Lamingnan

Artist duo How to Kill a Dog

Set designer Nathalie Mellbye

Theatre Director Anja Behrens

Set designer and artist Sif Freya Hestnes

Previous releases in the Artistic Practice series:

Visual artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen: <https://vimeo.com/347042970>

The artist duo Astrup and Bordorff: <https://vimeo.com/392665773>

Choreographer and creator Gunilla Lind: <https://vimeo.com/402526925>

Theatre director Sargun Oshana: <https://vimeo.com/429552902>

Visual artist Alexander Tillegreen: <https://vimeo.com/623381857>

Visual artist Hannibal Andersen: <https://vimeo.com/593250249>

Artist and choreographer Jules Fischer: <https://vimeo.com/593256188>

Choreographer Hilde I. Sandvold: <https://vimeo.com/669816595>

Set designer and costume designer: Ida Grarup: <https://vimeo.com/669819239>