

annet gelink gallery

PRESS RELEASE

AFRO CUSHION RINELLA ALFONSO

2 September – 22 October 2022

Annet Gelink Gallery is proud to present *Afro Cushion*, Rinella Alfonso's first exhibition at the gallery.

In her latest work, Alfonso focusses on the representation of black and female bodies and the way in which predominantly black communities are being robbed from their resources.



Afro Cushion, 2022

Afro Cushion is a direct reference to her painting with the same title, which features a couch covered in hair from an afro shop in a dark and gloomy atmosphere. The main inspiration for this work was Alfonso's research into the use of afro hair for filling cushions in the US, and the way in which parts of black women's bodies are extracted like resources.

Alfonso creates mystical worlds by placing everyday objects in stark fantasy environments. The featured objects in her work are often cheaply produced and disposable, yet bear meaning in Alfonso's memories of people and places. She often takes inspiration from memories of her home in Curaçao and topics such as nostalgia and connection. Her latest works feature traces of a bra, piercings, a golden tooth or a hairy couch, elements that are deeply rooted in her culture. The golden tooth in her work *Blinged till the death* (2022) springs from Alfonso's memories of her grandmother, whose golden tooth is a little hidden indication of wealth. The hair as returning elements is woven through her memory in the shape of afro shops, extensions, weaves, and wigs.

Using the formal language of painting, she produces poetic works that offer the viewer a new reality in which bodies, everyday objects, memories, and fiction coexist. These featured shapes interact with their fantastical surroundings in an absurdist yet natural way. For this exhibition, Alfonso experimented with different materials, such as hair, silicone and egg tempera and exchanged canvas for wood. By experimenting and re-using elements from older paintings into newer ones, she creates a storyline for her quintessential practice. And as things collide with beings, Alfonso proposes a new reality in which both can exist on similar grounds.

Rinella Alfonso (1995, Willemstad, Curaçao) studied at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (NL), before completing her residency at De Ateliers in Amsterdam (NL). Recent solo exhibitions include shows *La Maison de Rendez-Vous*, Brussels, BE (2021) and *June Art Fair*, Basel, CH (2019). Alfonso was the winner of the Koninklijke Prijs voor Vrije Schilderkunst in 2021.