

BORCH
EDITIONS

FRIDA ORUPABO

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FRIDA ORUPABO

Frida Orupabo, born 1986 in Sarpsborg, Norway, lives and works in Oslo. A trained sociologist, she first gained international attention with her instagram account @nemiepeba, a curated collection of imagery from digitized colonial archives and other internet sources, which led to artist and filmmaker Arthur Jaffa inviting her to present her work in a 2017 group exhibition at Serpentine North Gallery in London.

Orupabo's practice centres around reclaiming Black historical and cultural narratives, investigating the suppressive power of the gaze, as well as its potential to challenge and reshape social and political power dynamics. Working with photographic as well as moving imagery, her practice incorporates in a wide range of formats spanning from sculpture to video. Orupabo has been collaborating with BORCH Editions since 2024. Her first project, three large-scale photogravures based on digital collages, explored the tactile qualities of intaglio printmaking. In her photogravures *Cover I & II*, she deploys blind embossing to further investigate the sculptural potential of this classic printing technique.

Orupabo's work is rich in recurring pictorial elements, among them references to playing cards. *Picnic* contains the image of a colonial card game portraying a Black person, a reference to lynchings in the United States during which white spectators would consume food and drinks on picnic blankets as a recreational pastime. *Clover I & II* are based on stills from the blaxploitation film *Abby*, framed by a three-leave clover reminiscent of the shape of the card-suit Clubs. In Orupabo's hands, seemingly innocuous shapes turn into visual indicators of the way in which playful pastime activities were intertwined with anti-Black racism.

Solo exhibitions of Frida Orupabo's work include Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo and Sprengel Museum, Hanover (both 2025); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm 2024; Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (2022); Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo (2021), and Huis Marseille, Amsterdam (2020), among others.

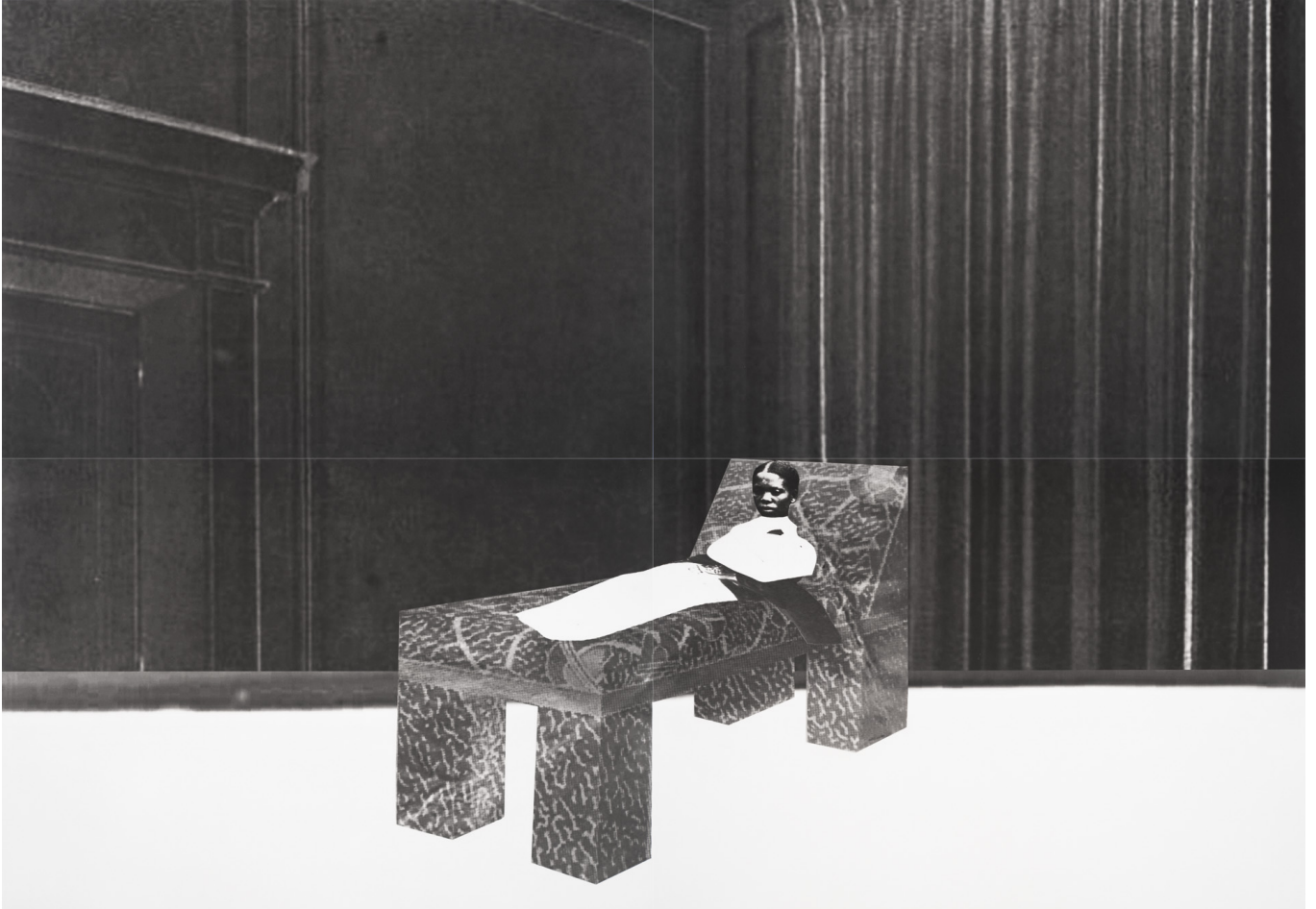
Her work is included in numerous public collections, among them Guggenheim Museum, New York City; LACMA, Los Angeles; Jumex Museum, Mexico City; Tate, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; MUMOK, Vienna; Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo; Moderna Museet, Sweden; and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark.

SICKBED I & II, 2024

Two versions of the same image form the basis of Sickbed I and II: the composition is dominated by a massive bed that almost swallows up a female figure lying in it. The resting figure, a reoccurring motif in Orupabo's work, references Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah's concept of rest as a survival strategy in response to traumatic events.

All elements in Orupabo's digital collage are riddled with unresolved contradictions. The figure in bed could be resting, but on closer inspection she appears to be fixed to the bedframe. The visual elements that make Orupabo's composition are charged with tension highlighting a crucial element of Armah's idea: that after rest, awakening must follow. With that in mind, the bed itself could be interpreted as a place of comfort and rest; but its oversized proportions seem almost threatening as something one cannot escape from.

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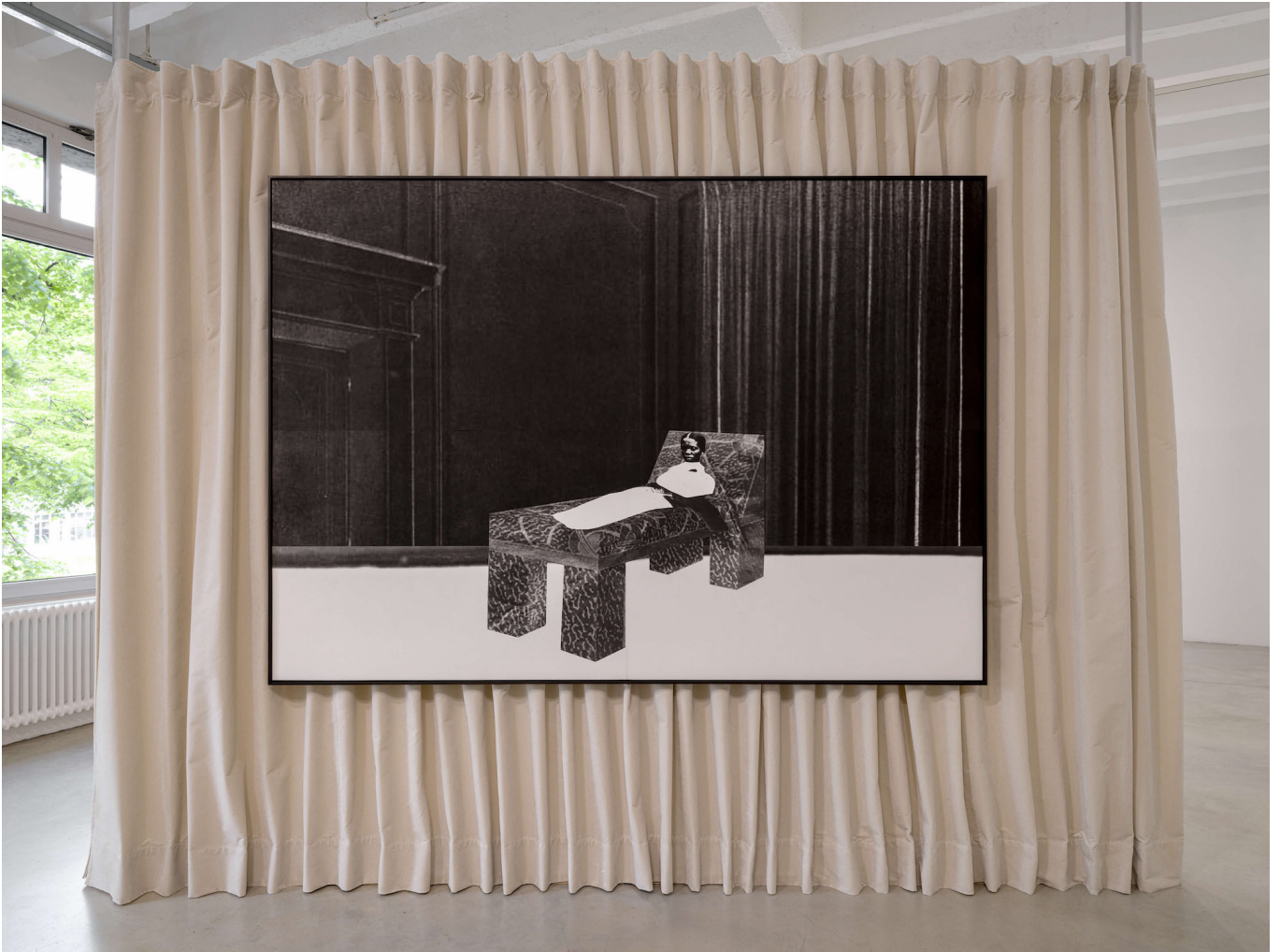
Frida Orupabo
Sickbed I, 2024
Photogravure
Printed on four sheets of
Somerset 410 g
162 x 230 cm (paper)
63,78 x 90,55 in (paper);
Edition of 8 + 3 AP
21.000 EUR
FrO 24 001-1.1

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Frida Orupabo
Sickbed II, 2024
Photogravure
Printed on four sheets of
Somerset 300 g
140,5 x 199,5 cm (paper)
55,31 x 78,54 in (paper);
Edition of 8 + 3 AP
20.000 EUR
FrO 24 002-1.1

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Frida Orupabo

Sickbed I, 2024

Photogravure

Printed on four sheets of

Somerset 410 g

Installation view 'All is broken in the night' Galerie Nordenhake Berlin 2024, photos by Gerhard Kassner

162 x 230 cm (paper); 168 x 236 cm (framed)
63,78 x 90,55 in (paper); 66,14 x 92,91 in (framed)

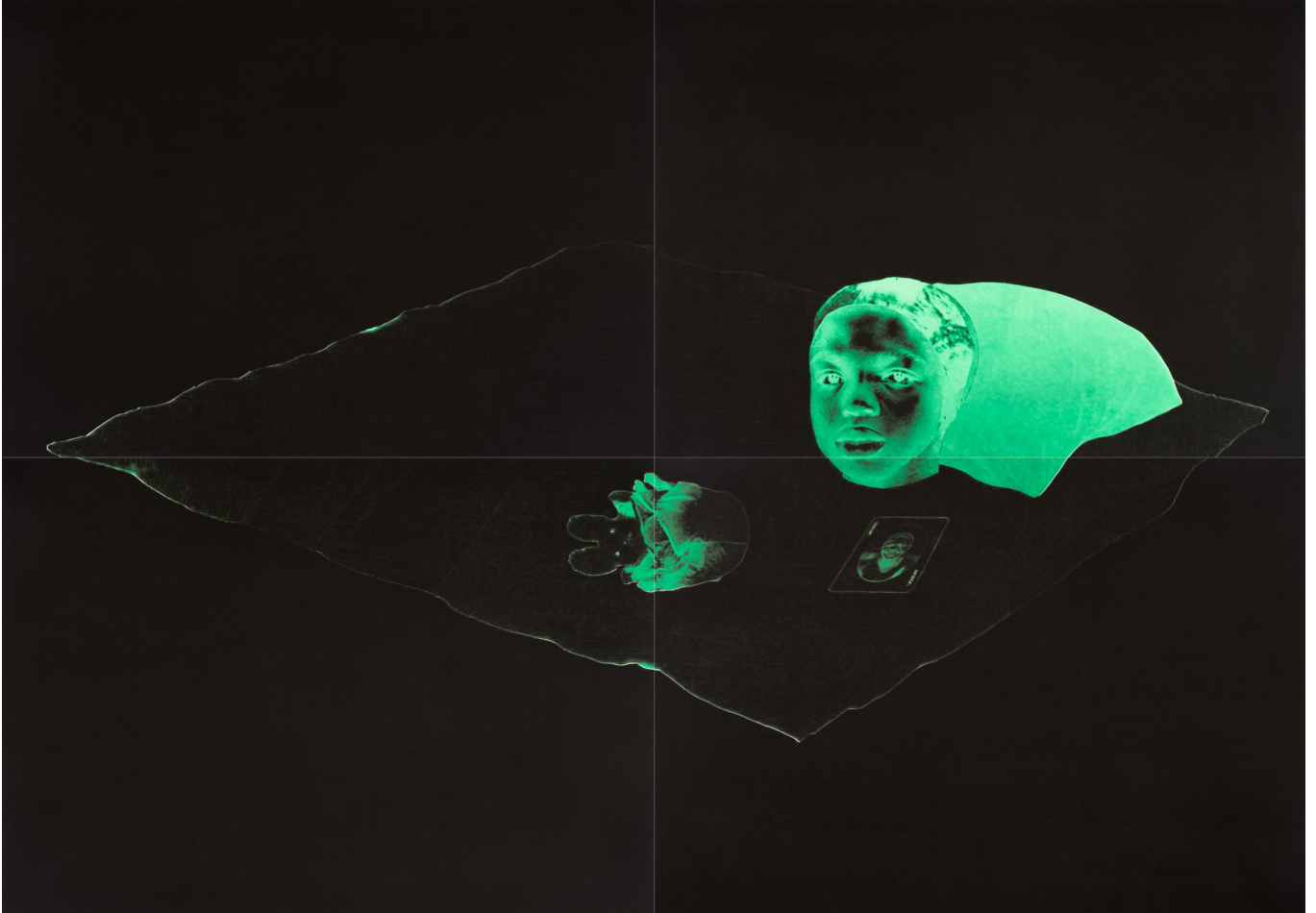
PICNIC, 2024

Frida Orupabo's photogravure *Picnic* combines pictorial elements that appear to float freely in bright, acidic green against a deep black background. Orupabo frames a woman's head, a twisted rabbit and a joker card from a historical racist card game in the barely visible outlines of a picnic blanket.

The word picnic, used in multiple languages and seemingly unsuspecting, describes the social act of eating together outdoors. Against the backdrop of the colonial history of the United States, however, it contains different, darker connotation: in the 19th and into the 20th century, it was customary in the southern states of the USA to attend public lynchings of Black Americans and combine them with a picnic.

With this knowledge, the surreal composition's disparate elements become phantom-like witnesses to a cruel chapter of colonial history. By pointing at the atrocious acts of recent history, Orupabo's work is a reminder of how questions of social positions and race are embedded in language.

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Frida Orupabo
Picnic, 2024
Photogravure
Printed on four sheets of
Somerset 300 g
140,5 x 199,5 cm (paper)
55,31 x 78,54 in (paper);
Edition of 8 + 3 AP
20.000 EUR
FrO 24 003-1.1

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Frida Orupabo
Picnic and Sickbed II, 2024
Photogravure
Printed on four sheets of
Somerset 300 g

Installation view 'All is broken in the night' Galerie Nordenhake Berlin 2024, photos by Gerhard Kassner.

140,5 x 199,5 cm (paper); 146 x 205 cm (framed)
55,31 x 78,54 in (paper); 57,48 x 80,71 in (framed)

CLOVER I – II, 2024

A woman's face is seen through a cloverleaf-shaped opening. The white foreground emphasises the act of looking as it creates an opening from which the woman comes into view. With a strained expression on her face, the intimate act of observing another person is disrupted by the woman's gaze, shifting the power relationship. Individual details are accentuated using the blind embossing technique, which highlights sections of the work by printing without ink.

Orupabo has consistently reminded us of the power of the gaze and the impact of images by letting figures re-emerge as active subjects that refuse to be objectified. *Clover I* and *II* depict the actress Carol Speed portraying the title character in the 1974 blaxploitation horror movie *Abby*. The plot of the film is so closely based on that of *The Exorcist* that it was withdrawn from theatres shortly after its release due to accusations of plagiarism; its main unique feature being its heavy reliance on racist and sexualized stereotypes in the portrayal of its protagonist.

Horror films, especially those with a Black cast or director, have been an important source of inspiration for Orupabo. The genre is profoundly contradictory; while the majority of films focus on the exploitation and objectification of Black characters, the genre has also been used to explore social issues and counter racial stereotypes, contributing to the humanisation of Black people on screen.

Likewise, Orupabo utilises the contradictory potential of her imagery by detaching it from its original context: formerly the object of the viewer's voyeuristic gaze, the portrayed figure now stares back out of the image. Isolated from the film plot, it becomes possible to re-interpret her frothing facial expression perhaps as anger, despair or disgust in the face of the exploitative gaze to which she is subjected.

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Frida Orupabo
Clover I, 2024
Photogravure, blind embossing
Somerset 400 g
81,5 x 77,5 cm (paper)
32,09 x 30,51 in (paper);
Edition of 12 + 3 AP
4.500 EUR
FrO 24 004-1.

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Frida Orupabo
Clover I - detail, 2024
Photogravure, blind embossing
Somerset 400 g
81,5 x 77,5 cm (paper)
32,09 x 30,51 in (paper)
Edition of 12 + 3 AP
FrO 24 004-1.

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32,09 x 30,51 in (paper)
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Frida Orupabo

Clover I - II, 2024

Photogravure, blind embossing

Somerset 400 g

Installation view 'On Lies, Secrets and Silence' Bonniers Konsthall Stockholm, 2024, photo by Jean-Baptiste Béranger

81,5 x 77,5 cm (paper); 86,5 x 82,5 cm (framed)

32,09 x 30,51 in (paper); 34,06 x 32,48 in (framed)

Edition of 12 + 3 AP