

**PRIX
JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRAT**



Paris, October 2nd, 2020

**PRESS RELEASE
JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRAT PRIZE 2020 – 9th EDITION**

**TOYIN OJIH ODUTOLA
PRIZEWINNER OF THE JEAN-FRANCOIS PRAT PRIZE 2020**



Toyin Ojih Odutola © by Brian Lowry - Courtesy of W Magazine

The 9th Jean-François Prat Prize was awarded to the artist Toyin Ojih ODUTOLA, Thursday October 1, 2020 at the Bredin Prat Foundation for Contemporary Art - 53 quai d'Orsay, Paris 7^e, after its presentation to the jury by Zoé WHITLEY, director of the London Chisenhale Gallery in London. The Jury was chaired by Marie-Claude BEAUD, director of the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (NMNM).

The two others short listed artists are: Kei Imazu (born 1980, lives and works in Bandung – Indonesia) and Torey Thornton (born 1990, live and work in New York).

Decided before recent racial events in the United States, the selection offers another look at African-American art, with the benefit of a decade of emergence and a universalist approach, but is not limited to this cultural contribution: for the first time, the Japanese contemporary art scene has been investigated.

The works of IMAZU, ODUTOLA and THORNTON are exhibited in a group show at the Bredin Prat Foundation in Paris until November 14th through on line reservation at :

<http://www.bredinpratfoundation.org/en/visit-the-exhibitions/>)

TOYIN OJIH ODUTOLA - Mini Bio & Profile

Born in 1985 in Nigeria, she left Africa with her family at the age of 5. Then, her father taught at the University of Berkeley, then in Alabama in Huntsville (at the A&M Black University). She starts drawing constantly from 9 years old. A high school teacher spots her talent and introduces

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her to the work of artists like Kara Walker and Kerry James Marshall. She joined the California College of Arts in San Francisco from which she graduated with an MFA in painting and drawing in 2012. She now lives in New York and has been represented since 2011 by the Jack Shainman gallery in New York.

Her work has been widely shown in solo exhibitions, this year at the Barbican Center in London and at the National Gallery (Washington DC) in 2019-2020 or at the Whitney Museum (New York) in 2017.

Ojih Odutola has participated in several group exhibitions including "Disguise: Masks and Global African Art", Brooklyn Museum (2015), "Ballpoint Pen Drawing Since 1950", Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2013), "Fore", Studio Museum in Harlem (2012), "The Moment for Ink", Chinese Cultural Center, San Francisco (2013) and "The Progress of Love", Menil Collection, Houston (2012).

Her works are part of important museum collections, including the Birmingham Museum of Art, AL and the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Known primarily for her portraits, which explore the limits of representation and deal with the complexity of identity, Toyin Ojih Odutola focuses on the socio-political construction of skin color. She seeks to represent race and the concept of blackness as a social marker, including in a traditionally invisible elite.

Her works are mainly combinations of pastels, charcoal, pencil on paper and ballpoint pen.

The three original works exhibited and specially created or chosen for the 2020 Jean-François Prat Prize are a Parisian echo of Toyin Ojih Odutola's current solo exhibition at the Barbican Center in London.

The artist immerses the viewer in an imaginary prehistoric civilization, ruled by warrior women and served by naked humanoids. Her portrayal of a queer, black, female-dominated society completely overturns historical hierarchies and power structures (here women hunt), even to the point of reversing the traditional practice of drawing of inscribing dark marks on canvas. White. Indeed, the three very large format drawings are made in white chalk, pastel and charcoal on a black canvas.

Depicting a world in which conventions related to gender, race and sexuality are inverted, this rich and provocative innovative show is an imaginary substitution for the historic white male patriarchy.

The works presented at the Bredin Prat Foundation until November 14, 2020 are a continuation of the exhibition dedicated to Toyin Ojih Odutola, currently on view in London at the Barbican Center (until January 24, 2021).

Images: see next page

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First Touch, 2019 © The artist. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.



New Found Land : The Vow, 2020 © The artist. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.



An Unlearning, 2020 © The artist. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.



The other part of the art of Toyin Ojih ODUTOLA

In her first self-portraits from the *All These Garlands Prove Nothing* series made in 2013, she studies the issue of black skin as geographic terrain. It evokes a broader story of how one can accept oneself over time. Odotola focuses on the face and creates complex lines. Inspired by former sculptors from Ifé (Yoruba region of southwestern Nigeria where her parents come from), she recognizes: *"I always thought that the portrait was an opportunity to make marks. I never considered the portrait to be that of the model"*.

She continues this exploration of the self-portrait in *Paris Apartment* from 2016-2017, depicting a woman with dark brown skin, seated in an elegant interior, and looking at the viewer in a patterned top and precious jewelry: *"All the marks on the face, the blouse or the decor are somehow equal. The eye moves smoothly from the material to the fabric and the face."* The artist views the marking as earth through which the eyes pass, not as a flat, dull surface. The self-portrait, according to the artist, is *"the reinforcement of what we think is the real self, or what we want to portray. I wanted to capture myself. I desperately wanted to create images of subjects with which I could identify myself. I wanted the darkest of black to be full of light, not in contrast or in comparison, but a lightness which is in itself, which is an inextricable part of it."*

In the 2015 *Treatment Series*, she portrays well-known white men such as Tom Cruise, Prince Charles, Leonardo Di Caprio and Picasso, removing their whiteness. About this series, she explains: *"I wanted to approach blackness as a subject - not men, but blackness itself - and how it negates or devalues a subject, at least in our Western construction. Then the idea came to me to represent famous white men."*

In his recent works, the artist often starts from an imaginary story. She develops a colorful epic family in which questions of race and class are shown in scenes including lush interiors and landscapes, as in *The Firm* drawn in 2017. She imagines two Nigerian aristocratic families united by marriage of their male heirs. It is both a story about a very affluent social class but also a transgressive tale, since homosexuality is illegal in Nigeria. She dedicates several drawings to the collection of works of art of the gay couple who lives surrounded by objects and paintings and who exhibits his collection in famous art places in the USA.

Through this iconic series of his work, Odotola changes the representation of black people, hitherto assigned to the working and middle classes by contemporary African American painting, and makes visible a black upper class.

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EDITION 2020

SUPPORTING CURATOR PRESENTING THE ARTISTS TO THE JURY OF THE PRIZE

- Florian Gaïté, philosopher and art critic, based in Paris (for Kei Imazu)
- Zoé Whitley, director of London based Chisenhale Gallery, (for Toyin Ojih Odutola)
- Taylor Le Melle, independent curator and author, based in London (for Torey Thornton)

ARTISTIC SELECTION COMMITTEE 2020

- Marie-Aline Prat, art historian and art collector
- Anaël Pigeat, art critic and editor at large of *The Art Newspaper France*
- Odile Burluraux, curator at the Musée d'art Moderne de Paris
- Frédéric Brière, executive director of the Bredin Prat Foundation
- Frédéric Bonnet, art critic and independent curator

THE JEAN-FRANCOIS PRAT PRIZE

To celebrate the memory of Jean-François Prat, who died on 26 March 2011, and who was a contemporary art enthusiast, the partners of the law firm Bredin Prat, which he co-founded, and his family, decided to pay tribute to his name by creating in 2012 a new contemporary art prize.

Each year, an expert committee, made up of key figures from the world of art, pre-selects eight artists and shortlists three finalists, from among whom the winning artist is selected. Then, following the vote by the jury (80% of art connoisseurs' partners of Bredin Prat, and 20% of artworld figures) the person chairing the Prize presents the award to the winning artist at an evening event bringing together guests from the art world, business and the press.

The Prize consists of an award of €20,000 for the winner and €2,000 for each of the other two shortlisted artists, as well as the publication of a catalogue presenting the work of the three selected artists and a two-month exhibition of a selection of their paintings at the premises of the Bredin Prat Foundation for Contemporary Art, which organizes the Prize.

The winning artists of the previous editions of the Jean-François Prat Prize are Miryam Haddad in 2019, Nicolas Roggy in 2018, Avery Singer in 2017, Janis Avotins in 2016, Raphaëlle Ricol in 2015, Zander Blom in 2014, Matt Saunders in 2013 and Farah Atassi in 2012.

In the past, the Prize has been chaired by Centre Pompidou – MNAM museum director Bernard Blistène (2019), collector and serial digital entrepreneur Marc Simoncini (2018), former Centre Pompidou curator-at-large Florence Derieux (2017), artist Bertrand Lavier (2016), curator of the Pinault Collection Caroline Bourgeois (2015), President of the Society of Friends of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris Christian Langlois-Meurine (2014), director of the FIAC contemporary art fair Jennifer Flay (2013) and former Culture Minister Jean-Jacques Aillagon (2012).

THE BREDIN PRAT FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Created in 2017, the purpose of the Bredin Prat Foundation for Contemporary Art is to support and promote contemporary artistic creation by establishing a new contemporary art collection focusing on what makes a "tableau": paintings and photographic works, and through the annual

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Jean-François Prat Prize. Awarded each year to a French or foreign artist, the Jean-François Prat Prize is the international radar searching new emerging artists in painting worldwide. The Foundation hosts free access public tours to this collection and to annual exhibitions of the Jean-François Prat Prize shortlisted artists at its premises on the Quai d'Orsay in Paris (originally the premises of the formerly French State-owned tobacco company Seita), as well as permanent access through its websites.

The Bredin Prat Foundation, a French non-profit entity serving a general public interest, is fully in line with the culture and the values of the law firm Bredin Prat characterized by innovation and creativity.

THE BREDIN PRAT LAW FIRM

Founded in 1966, Bredin Prat's practice areas include Corporate Law (Mergers and Acquisitions, Private Equity, Capital Markets), Litigation and White-Collar Crime issues, Competition and EU Law, Arbitration, Tax, Employment, Financing, Restructuring and Insolvency, Tech and Public Law.

With offices in Paris and Brussels, the firm now has some 180 lawyers, including 45 partners, committed to the highest standards of excellence, to advise the firm's French and international clients in complex or sensitive transactions or contentious matters. Cross-border matters today represent more than two-thirds of the firm's work.

Press contact : Aurélie SIMON (+33 1 44 35 35 35 / aureliesimon@bredinprat.com)

To get the best-detailed information about the Jean-Francois Prat Prize, please check on line:

www.prixjeanfrancoisprat.com/en/ or <http://www.bredinpratfoundation.org/en/>



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