

06 March 2021

## Imbedding secrets into the skin of paper

Exhibitions & Events



The visual artist ruby onyinyechi amanze \* (b. 1982), whose practice focus on mixed-media drawings and works on paper, has multiple identities and very new “brains”, as a dancer and

choreographer. Originally from Port-Harcourtin Nigeria, she has moved across many lands: UK and then U.S., back to Nigeria. Today she resides between Philadelphia and Brooklyn. Feeling more rooted to water - “a place you can call home without borders or limitations” - than to her “home” land, ruby onyinyechi amanze has a very hybrid, non-narrative, open, somehow obscure sense of being, of manipulating a bizarre world of aliens, creatures, and brilliant words (she has a thing for language and writing).

Related articles: [Anthony Cudahy - An Island Zombie](#). [Roni Horn's latest book](#)

In 2019, amanze took encouragement from Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia (Italy) to take a risk of building, for the first time, a monumental and multidimensional fresco on paper, which adds a descriptive yet lyrical chapter to her artistry continuum.

A site-specific performance by ruby onyinyechi amanze will be presented, pandemic permitting, at Collezione Maramotti in June 2021. Inaugurated at the end of February 2021, [HOW TO BE ENOUGH](#) is amanze’s first project and solo exhibition in Italy. Installed in the Collezione Maramotti’s Pattern room, the work spans the entire central wall (3 meters high by 18 meters wide).



ruby onyinyechi amanze, [HOW TO BE ENOUGH](#). Exhibition view, Collezione Maramotti, 2021, Ph. Roberto Marossi.

ruby onyinyechi amanze objectively constructed this drawing. There is a huge whole and there are overlapping units that function intendedly; there is a single drawing, but also 15 individual drawings on different sheets of paper, very light, each of them at a different distance from the wall. Therefore, the surface of the cycle is something moving, not flat, with internal rhythm and stratified layers with heterogeneous densities. amanze plays with a puzzle on a large-scale: rearranging arcane mosaicked pieces, engaging the space in an awkward way, to eventually find a rest on the ridge between visual

balance and tension. *“I have a role here. To move parts across paper, to play with relationships, to negotiate the space, decide when to acknowledge an edge, when to cut off the bottom, when to move something from the left to the right”*, as the artist reveals.



ruby onyinyechi amanze, HOW TO BE ENOUGH, 2021, mixed media on paper, 311 x 1780 cm / detail. Ph.

Roberto Marossi.

All of these decisions are part of the process of telling a story in a very systematic way. The narrative dimension in **HOW TO BE ENOUGH** is intentionally rarefied, deconstructed, misaligned time-wise, like an intricate movie you will never stop analyzing. The characters fluctuating in this work are recurring elements, amanze's personal alphabet. They move in a specific way, without signify anything in particular. Ada, who appears as a diver, a swimmer, a dancer; the flying leopard Audre; the swimming pools, the isolated windows and the bikes - that amanze personally photographed in Nigeria in 2012 - are interwoven with the white three-dimensional "void" and the paper. They both act as essential personae, physical and graceful forms of a choreography.





ruby onyinyechi amanze, HOW TO BE ENOUGH, 2021, mixed media on paper, 311 x 1780 cm / detail. Ph. Roberto Marossi.

If we desire to catch the essence of it, **HOW TO BE ENOUGH** is a dance drawing with architecture

elements, movements and space. Informed by Gaga's dance vocabulary, it includes the traces and marks of amanze's own body (hands, feet) and the concept of wateriness, which deeply resonates with her. The water of the pools becomes a connective point, while her body becomes part of the process, a memory absorbed by the compositional space. Beyond the graphite, the ink, and the acrylic, there is the paper fiber. As a graduate student of textile design at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, amanze loves the surface of a natural material, living and breathing. ***"Paper becomes in some ways a skin, and drawing for me is a great way to imbed secrets into this skin"***.



ruby onyinyechi amanze. Ph. Sahar Coston-Hardy

\*ruby onyinyechi amanze is intentionally written in all lowercase font by the artist herself.

Cover image: ruby onyinyechi amanze. Ph. Sahar Coston-Hardy.

Written by Petra Chiodi

Stay Tuned on [Kooness magazine](#) for more exciting news from the artworld.