

In conversation with Larry Achiampong

Larry Achiampong:

I always wanted to be an artist. Going as far back as like the age of 5 or 6, my brother who was 4 years older than me, I would follow him and you know do whatever he was kind of my into, at that point in time where he would have been 10, I would have been 6.

He got into drawing and I would copy him you know kinds of things he would do, particularly draw like sports logos or you know, comic characters, cartoon characters, things like that and sometimes still lifes, you know. And we would show the images to my mom sometimes kind of even in competition and I just really fell in love with the idea of being able to create and formalized objects and ideas, things from a blank sheet.

For me, to have a preferred medium would be kind of like accepting a certain kind of dogma, an agnostic. All the varied approaches whether it's using the physical body in a performance, or you know writing a script and world-building within that to spending hours composing sounds or you know directly working with people to make a film, building objects.

They all scratch various you know itches that I have on my body that kind of just keeps me going. So it's a bit of a weird analogy but I just can't do one thing. I have to be working on multiple things that's what stimulates me. But I'm just working on one thing I get quite bored actually and what can happen is I can become, just being honest I can be quite destructive toward the work or the idea.

In order to keep myself at ease or feel less anxious I'll have other things to work on. When I feel a little bit tired or weary of something, move that to the side, and work on something else. First off, I was honestly thinking about opening up the space in a manner that video games as an art form are on the same level as that of the work that I've made, you know, within a contemporary art space.

Its respect within the art scene has somewhat, you know, grown but I don't think in a way that really is as wholesome as it could be. I think there's a focus on technology, whilst on the one hand, it's an exciting thing, it's not, you know, contradictingly speaking, what gaming is entirely about.

It's actually about communal space. It's about conversation. It's about sharing ideas, sharing of experiences. Almost in the same way that someone could listen to a piece of music or literature to recite a moment of feeling that has grabbed you.

With regards to this show and the themes of, you know, religion, faith, racism wrapped up in the history of eugenics and some things. I was thinking particularly about video games that have been released that have a relationship with these themes and seating themselves within problematic aspects of religion in this case, Christianity.

Now the posters in question, they're actually from a place called *Kumasi* where my family are from in Ghana, West Africa. I came across these posters decades ago, for the first time in I think it's 1992, I travelled over there with my family.

I'd seen imagery that was somewhat similar in the UK, but it was never that big, it was always like, you know, A4 at the largest, perhaps A3, an image of, you know, white Christ kind of praying this kind of thing.

But I'd never come across imagery that had kind of plastered across a kind of clip art style image, words that were taken from, you know, the King James Bible or various passages from Psalms and things like that. Some of which even, are you know, include typos.

In a weird sense, they're kind of almost like their own memes. The thing that I kind of like reflected upon the most when creating this work actually is the fact that in all of these images, you have a white or Aryan Christ, and all of the other people within these stories, whether true or not are mythologised as white folk. You're thinking about one aspect of racism, on one hand, you know, the idea that whiteness essentially relates to you know, greatness.

And then with regards to the use of the Ogo Goliwag motif, in this case, I've utilised this motif within images over the years, I refer to it as the cloud face. I'm combining both of these references that really exist within the same realm already.

They just haven't been placed together before. The ridiculousness of a person who was born in a certain part of the other planet, in this case, Palestine, and is as white as chalk. It just kind of doesn't really make sense, does it?