

Malle, Jeanne. "Kayode Ojo: EDEN." *Air Mail* (October 27, 2023) [ill.] [online]



ART

# Kayode Ojo: EDEN

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Until Jan 6, 2024

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“The idea is that there are no secrets in the artwork,” said the Tennessee-born artist Kayode Ojo in an interview with *Pin-Up* magazine, “some people are tickled by the thought that they could very easily find every object I used and reproduce the piece.” For 52 Walker’s ninth exhibition, Ojo combines everyday and luxury items that reflect contemporary society. Moving between simplicity and opulence, the artist transforms the space into what the gallery describes as an “open-ended sanctuary that exists somewhere between a home, a fête, and a fleeting respite from the rest of the world.” Referring to the Book of Genesis in its title, “Eden” connects this fundamental book of the Bible to systemic racism and expresses Ojo’s view of “the Black middle class as a utopia related to Eden, a kind of paradise lost.” —*Jeanne Malle*

[Art](#) / [52 Walker](#) / [New York](#) / [Contemporary art](#) / [Gallery exhibition](#)

Photo courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York

Brady, Keegan. "STYLE GLOSSARY." *PIN-UP Magazine* (October 27, 2023) [ill.] [online]

# PIN-UP

# STYLE GLOSSARY

## Kayode Ojo's Spiritual Readymades

by Keegan Brady



A self-portrait of Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Over 100 years have passed since **Marcel Duchamp** debuted his thinking-man's urinal. *Fountain* (1917) was an embryonic play on meaning and commodity fetishism, an irreverent stunt that forever altered how art — and its artist — were culturally understood. Like Duchamp in his heyday, artist **Kayode Ojo** paints a complex portrait of modern existence through his selective inventory of the commodity objects available at our fingertips. When we speak, the 33-year-old is preparing for his solo exhibition, *EDEN*, a sculpture show at David Zwirner's sprawling **52 Walker**, led by director **Ebony L. Haynes**, in New York's Tribeca. Our conversation veers from mumblecore filmmaking to Ariana Grande lyrics, a form of hyper-specific versatility that also characterizes Ojo's creative output. Contending with the impossibility of true authenticity, his opulent sculptures take the form of online-sourced assemblages of clothing, jewelry, and furniture, and are often exhibited alongside his intimate portraits à la **Nan Goldin** (he studied photography at the School of Visual Arts). "My work often looks backwards, but usually toward anachronistic forms. It's not a heavily digital practice — my photographs are all on film," he says. Even the contemporary mass-produced objects he uses for his sculptures, like a ball gown or a tuxedo — what he calls "empty objects" — are nostalgic signifiers of "antiquated forms," rife with cultural resonance.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Over the past few years, Ojo has developed a signature penchant for high/low material combinations, or “fractals.” The high — **Marcel Breuer**-style chairs, luxury vintage and designer pieces — and the low — cheaply-produced Ikea furniture, Amazon-sourced chandeliers, and fast-fashion dupes from Zara and Shein — coalesce in cinematic *mises en scène* that reverberate with the potential for life, or of life already lived. Take **Untitled** (2017): a brown-velvet sofa sourced from ABC Carpet & Home stands upright on its end, a sequined silver ASOS prom dress draped over it, the train dramatically suspended in mid-air. Ojo creates all his work without adhesives, assembling everything onsite: “Nothing’s really produced. It’s all held together by gravity,” he says. Beneath the sofa, the caption reads: “Dark chocolate ABC Home sofa/couch, women’s silver sequined long-sleeved formal evening prom maxi cocktail party dress.” With this terse little list, Ojo destabilizes, and perhaps even democratizes, the absurdity of art-world valuations and the economic operations of present-day life. “The titles are what the works are. They include objects that no one archives,” he explains. “There are things I’ve put in museums that would never have been in a museum, things that would never even have been named, because no one else has assigned value to them. The idea is that there are no secrets in the artwork — some people are tickled by the thought that they could very easily find every object I used and reproduce the piece.”



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



*EDEN*, for Ojo, is an investigation into the visceral power and spirituality of everyday objects, particularly how they signify social aspiration with respect to race and class (Ojo was raised Evangelical Christian in Cookeville, Tennessee, where he read the Bible twice a day with his parents). “The show is visually very brown,” he says. “I’ve been thinking about the Black middle class as a utopia related to Eden, a kind of paradise lost.” For Ojo, the Book of Genesis, the origin story of the universe, is only a few pages — a detail that struck Ojo as representing a “period of time when humanity had this perfect moment that was so short. And that’s how I see the Black middle class, which has, historically, always been wiped out.” He pauses for a moment. “It’s this moment of peace that American society just does not want to happen.”

Perhaps then, the sculptural tableaux that Ojo assembles are — if only provisionally — a thrust of Utopian rumination, where Things become Us and We become Things in one blessed-out, celebratory union. What Ojo presents, using the variegated material conditions of our present moment, is a look into a postlapsarian world of authentic being. That is, if any of us know what “real” even is, anymore.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP. © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.



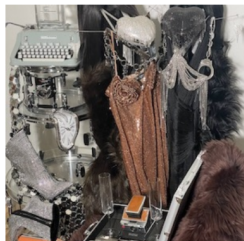
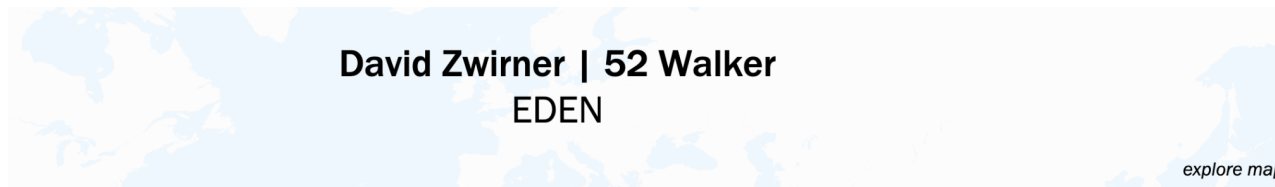
Kayode Ojo's solo exhibition *EDEN* is at 52 Walker from October 27, 2023 until January 6, 2024.

Text by *Keegan Brady*

Photography by Kayode Ojo for PIN-UP

“David Zwirner | 52 Walker EDEN.” *Artforum* (November 2023) [ill.] [online]

## ARTFORUM



### DAVID ZWIRNER | 52 WALKER

[52 Walker](#), [52walker.com](#)

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#### MUST SEE

#### Kayode Ojo

EDEN

October 27 - January 6, 2024

Reception: Friday, October 27th, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

52 Walker is pleased to announce its ninth exhibition, which will feature the work of New York-based artist Kayode Ojo (b. 1990).

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Herriman, Kat. "Material Reality." *W Magazine* (November 2023): 96-103 [ill.] [online]

W

# Material Reality

*The artist Kayode Ojo's captivating sculptures—assemblages composed of ready-made parts—question our relationship to the things we consume. What happens when you throw fall's best accessories into the equation?*

*Photographs and Artwork by Kayode Ojo*



Fendi bag.








Kayode Ojo has developed a shorthand for glamour. The artist deploys it to create sculptural portals into our desires using ready-made—and sometimes ready-to-wear—items. His fashion-flecked assemblages, which have included mirrored shelves studded with glass bottles, and a transparent chair draped with a white blazer and a belt of bullets, evoke cinematic grandeur despite their material economy. Somehow, in his work, grandiosity meets minimalism.

Raised in a small town in Tennessee, the 33-year-old New Yorker is a larger-than-life fixture on the art party circuit, often seen snapping candid moments that would otherwise go unremembered. Ojo started his career as a photographer, and his sculptures remain camera-conscious, drawing attention to the way photography has become a ubiquitous tool in the art-viewing experience.

Ojo approaches his exhibitions much like a stylist might prepare for a cover shoot, except he sources most of his materials through online shopping binges. "The selection process is kind of crazy," he says. "I'll look at a thousand dresses, and then they'll arrive, and it's sort of an audition process." He'll consider different components to see which ones play nice and which ones create new wholes. These decisions are often made in the gallery, during the final scramble before opening night. "It's a combination of being confident, terrified, bold, and delusional," he says, laughing.

Ojo agreed to tweak this selection process a bit for his first ever fashion editorial, seen here. A cache of this season's most coveted pieces made its way over to the installation of "Eden," Ojo's solo show at the gallery 52 Walker, in lower Manhattan. Once inside the viewing room that served as his staging area, Balenciaga and Gucci accessories easily transitioned into their new roles as complications in the artist's abstractions. Balancing on and hanging precariously from his work, these objects momentarily broke up a steely palette of highly polished metals and Plexiglas. Details such as an eye-catching clasp on a Saint Laurent purse and a dangling brass bell on a Burberry satchel made for interesting discoveries. "I felt kind of like a kid again," says Ojo.

What is ultimately captured in his images is the manic three-to-five-day stretch before the curtain goes up. This mad dash of late nights and intuitive associations is usually invisible—concealed within the flawless surfaces of his final compositions—but here the traces of this frenetic surge linger. There is a sense of urgency in these fleeting collisions between fashion and art. It's the kind of tenuous exchange between culture and commerce that he does best. KAT HERRIMAN



Balenciaga shoes.





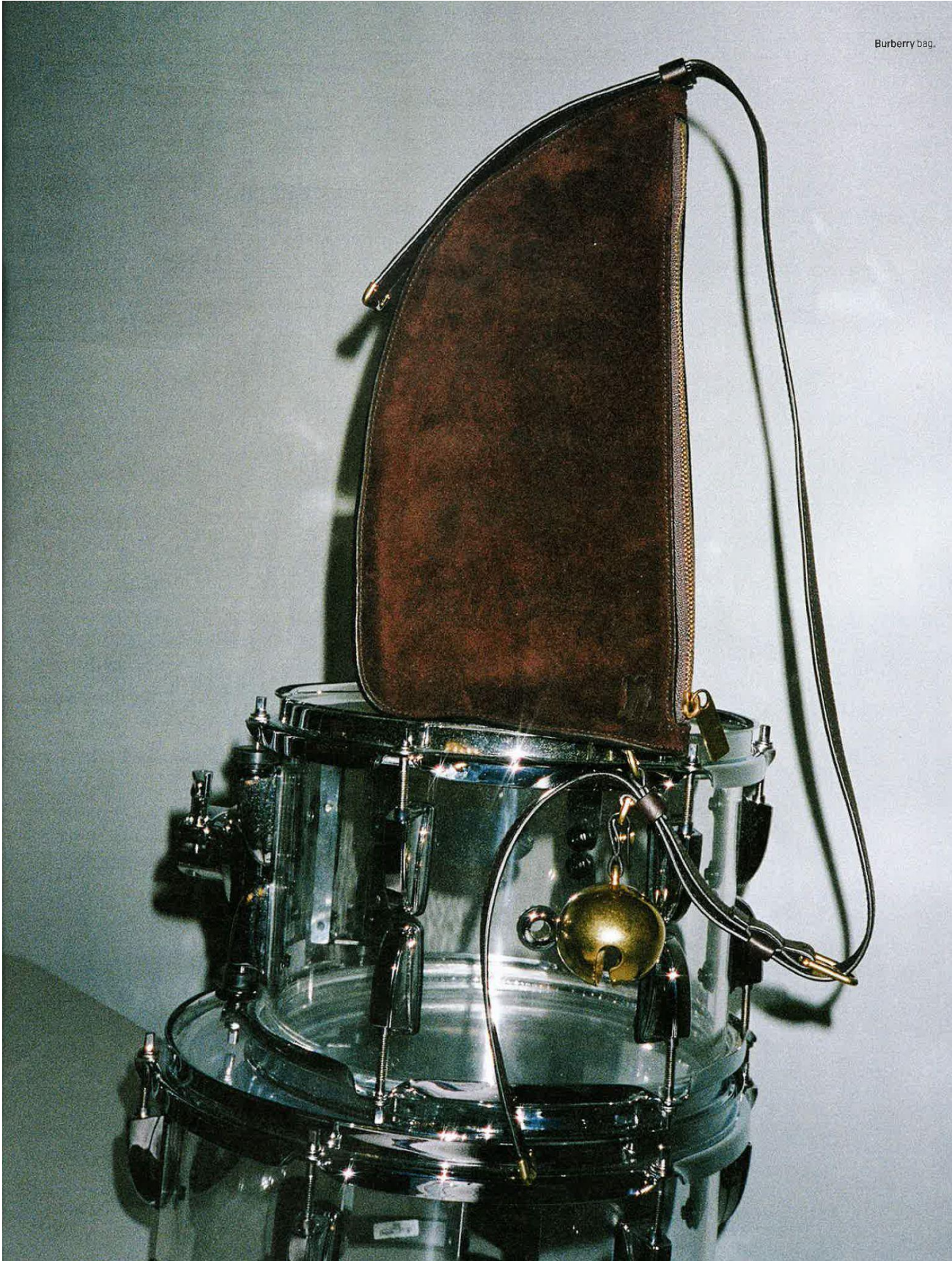
Gucci bag.



Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello bag.















Bottega Veneta shoes.  
Photographs and artwork courtesy  
of the artist and 52 Walker.

Last, Natan. "Hyperallergic Art Crossword: November 2023." *Hyperallergic* (November 6, 2023) [ill.] [online]

**HYPERALLERGIC**

Crosswords

# Hyperallergic Art Crossword: November 2023

In this month's puzzle, a missing Rodin, the inspiration for "American Gothic," oil painter's essential, and which store was once home to a guerrilla arts residency?



Natan Last November 6, 2023

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Reveal ▾ Check ▾ Print Settings

43 ACROSS • Kayode \_\_\_\_, artist with an exhibition currently up at David Zwirner's Tribeca space

**ACROSS**

37 \_\_\_\_\_, artist working to reclaim the water of the LA River

40 Puffs up

42 Mark Harmon CBS series

43 Kayode \_\_\_\_, artist with an exhibition currently up at David Zwirner's Tribeca space

46 Like oysters on the half shell

47 Degree for Rosalind Krauss

49 What a pad might protect

51 Key, e.g.

53 Exam given face-to-face

55 It might be buried by a reporter

56 "A Visit From the

**DOWN**

\_\_\_\_\_ crowd?

37 Smile ear-to-ear

38 Museum that recently revealed a Rodin sculpture has been missing from its collection since 1949

40 Brusque

41 Post-workout activity

43 Spotted wildcat

44 Dior fragrance

45 Starts the betting

48 Reality show staple

50 Peruvian visual artist Damiani

52 Extremities

54 Elementary particle

58 "\_\_\_\_ are not endorsements" (Twitter disclaimer)

59 Opera presenter, with "the"

The Hyperallergic Crossword - November 2023 by Natan Last  
Powered by [PuzzleMe™](#)

Ever wondered what superstore was once the unwitting home to an anticapitalist guerrilla arts residency? Or which museum lost a Rodin last century, without anyone noticing until this year? If you've been following our coverage, you already have a leg-up on this month's edition of the Hyperallergic Art Crossword.

Uncover the answer to these and a handful of other surprising, delightful, artsy hints — and, as always, let us know what clues you're hoping to see in our next puzzle!





**Natan Last**

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Natan Last's essays, poetry, and crossword puzzles appear in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Narrative*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and elsewhere. He is currently writing a nonfiction book about crosswords. [More by Natan Last](#)



Dafoe, Taylor. "Kayode Ojo's Glittery Readymades May Be About Capitalism or Fetishism—But He Won't Tell You Which." *Artnet News* (November 22, 2023) [ill.] [online]

**artnet**

**Artists**

## Kayode Ojo's Glittery Readymades May Be About Capitalism or Fetishism—But He Won't Tell You Which

In "Eden" at David Zwirner's gallery space 52 Walker, chintziness and luxury hang in a delicate balance.

**Taylor Dafoe**, November 22, 2023



Kayode Ojo, *self-portrait for PIN-UP* (2023). © Kayode Ojo. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker, New York.

You can learn a lot about Kayode Ojo's work by watching people interact with it. That's especially true inside "EDEN," his new exhibition at 52 Walker, New York, where visitors navigate intricate assemblages of stemware, jewels, and other expensive-looking wares with the trepidation of a tourist at Tiffany's.

It's funny at first. After all, most of the shiny objects that make up the artist's sculptures are not genuine items of luxury, but budget imitations—rhinestones, not deoboiamonds; acrylic, not crystal. Then again, that's the rub: even if these things are cheaply made, they have, through the context of the gallery, been turned into art. And in this case, that art costs between \$20,000 and \$75,000.

This, of course, is the syllogistic logic that's always defined the readymade, and Ojo knows it. The New York-based artist directs attention to it with the captions for his sculptures, which reproduce the exact descriptions of his various materials as he finds them at Amazon, Ikea, or elsewhere. Most are larded with generic, search engine-optimized terms that Ojo, who once worked as a keyword cataloguer for an image licensing agency, sees as a form of poetry. "Heavy Duty Toy Metal Handcuffs with Keys – 6 PACK Stainless Steel Bulk Fake Hand Cuffs Accessories Supplies for Kids Police Pretend Role Play, Adult Party Favors reads" the medium line in one.

"The context of the gallery is so important," Ojo said, looking around the space at 52 Walker. "It's the whole thing, when you really think about it."





Installation view, “Kayode Ojo: EDEN,” 52 Walker, New York, October 27, 2023 – January 6, 2024. Courtesy of 52 Walker.

Following a string of exhibitions in Berlin, Venice, and Washington, D.C., “EDEN” is the 33-year-old’s first New York solo show in several years. His work makes extra sense in the city, and especially in the uber-gentrified neighborhood of Tribeca, where luxury retailers share blocks with street vendors hawking knockoffs of their products.

When we spoke, he was sitting in a back office at the gallery that he’s turned into a temporary studio, though it looks more like a staging area for a showroom. Next to him are various pieces of chrome furniture, instrument cases, and racks of glittering cocktail dresses. Ojo explained that he spent more than a year and a half prepping for “EDEN,” but all the actual artworks were created on-site days before the opening, as he piled a smattering of previously acquired materials in the front of the gallery, then meticulously tested them, one-by-one, in different combinations throughout the room.

The vast majority of items didn’t make the cut. Others were added at the 11th hour. “Free two-day shipping!” Ojo said, underscoring one of the central aspects of his practice: he is an eager participant in the same consumer economies that his artwork calls out.



Installation view, “Kayode Ojo: EDEN,” 52 Walker, New York, October 27, 2023 – January 6, 2024. Courtesy of 52 Walker.

For Ojo, installation requires some trial and error. He stacks, wraps, and drapes his materials, but never adheres or fastens them together—not even when he incorporates tools of bondage. This time around, the process was particularly “arduous and heavy,” said Ebony L. Haynes, 52 Walker’s director and a longtime friend of the artist’s. “We have lots of conversations about what we want to say or what he’s thinking through, then it becomes a subtractive process. But nothing comes easy. Nothing was pre-planned.”

What was Ojo looking for when, for example, he swapped out sets of champagne glasses for the umpteenth time during an install stretching into the night? Haynes, who has curated the artist’s work on several occasions in the past, couldn’t say. “In the moment, it seemed clear. But to put it into words...” She paused. “I don’t know how to summarize what he was going for.”







Whether Ojo is truly unsure of his intentions or just being elusive isn't clear. It's not the only thing he says that seems at odds with his art. On some level, he's undoubtedly trying to preserve an open-ended interpretability of his works, which remain ambiguous despite being laced with coded innuendos and class signifiers. In *The Brick* (2023) for instance, a harmonica, a camera, a cocktail shaker, and a clock sit atop a mirrored, Haim Steinbach-looking shelf. Individually, these items are innocuous enough, but lined up, they tease different evocations in each other: the camera starts to feel a little prurient; the shaker looks violent. Is this collection of commodities supposed to tease our desire to spend or other, darker compulsions? Ojo, for his part, doesn't tip his hand.



Installation view, "Kayode Ojo: EDEN," 52 Walker, New York, October 27, 2023  
– January 6, 2024. Courtesy of 52 Walker.

Even when the artist includes authentic pieces of high-end merchandise alongside their bargain-bin counterparts, it's done without distinctions made. Ojo isn't interested in debasing his expensive objects any more than he is in reclaiming the cheaper ones as kitsch. "That's not necessarily my focus," he said when asked about the worth of some of the products in "EDEN." "It's something I'd prefer to leave as it appears."



And yet, regardless of his items' original value, there is an austerity to the way he stages them that is synonymous with wealth. The coupe glasses that form a pyramid in *We thought it might go the other way* (2023) are laboriously spaced out and aligned; so are the chains that hold up the chandelier lights of *Comfort* (2023). There's not a smudge or fingerprint on anything, a minor miracle given the shine of it all. This fastidiousness starts to feel like fetishism: readymades that are clean to the point of seeming dirty.

On this point, he might disagree, but it is not the first time he's heard it. "One thing I do think is funny is when people call the work 'sexy,'" he said. "I still don't know what this means, the idea of an object being sexy..."



Installation view, "Kayode Ojo: EDEN," 52 Walker, New York, October 27, 2023  
– January 6, 2024. Courtesy of 52 Walker.

Growing up in an evangelical Christian home in rural Tennessee, Ojo didn't have access to fine clothes and precious stones, and he didn't aspire to, either. The interest in commercial objects has always been about their formal properties first, their symbolic value second, he explained.

When this topic came up, Haynes recalled a story she'd heard about the time Ojo went out for middle school marching band and he was brought into a room to pick out one of the many instruments laid out. Ojo settled on the flute because it was a "shiny thing in a case that's lined with velvet," Haynes said. "It looked so pretty and rich."

Unfortunately, Ojo realized that, in spite of its beauty, "he realized very soon that he should have picked something else because no one can hear a flute in a marching band," she explained, giggling at the image she had conjured. "I think that says a lot about Kayode."



Installation view, "Kayode Ojo: EDEN," 52 Walker, New York, October 27, 2023  
– January 6, 2024. Courtesy of 52 Walker.

Maybe more telling is Ojo's integration of the instrument in his sculpture *Embouchure* (2023). In that piece, roughly three dozen flutes are connected with a pair of parallel chains suspended from the ceiling. At first glance, the sculpture looks like a playground apparatus—as sweet and innocent as the marching band story. But linger a minute longer, and other connotations may come to mind. Just read the materials caption: "Glory Closed Hole C Flute With Case, Tuning Rod and Cloth, Joint Grease and Gloves Nickel Silver, WXJ13 Swivel Clasps Lanyard Snap Hook Lobster Claw Clasp and Keychain Rings, 55 Pieces." In Ojo's practice, as in the garden after which his current show is named, beauty is inextricable from sin.



“Maybe [the work] does give people what they want,” Ojo eventually conceded. “It gives you what you want but doesn’t quite tell you why you want it.”

*“Kayode Ojo: EDEN” is on view now through January 6, 2024, at 52 Walker in New York.*

Yablonsky, Linda. "At 52 Walker, Kayode Ojo raids Amazon.com to create a Modernist Eden." *The Art Newspaper* (November 29, 2023) [ill.] [online]



THE ART NEWSPAPER

## At 52 Walker, Kayode Ojo raids Amazon.com to create a Modernist Eden

The rising star has created a luxe product paradise for the New York gallery



Installation view of *Kayode Ojo: Eden* at 52 Walker, New York

Imagine Amazon.com as Modernist Eden. Kayode Ojo does, and out of the studio of the mind where the 33-year-old conceptualist works, he has created a luxe product paradise for 52 Walker that is tantamount to vintage design porn. Though replete with references to the reflective interiors of architect Paul Rudolph, the readymade sculptures of Haim Steinbach, the polished stainless steel of Jeff Koons, and the misbehaviours embedded in a Cady Noland, Ojo's exhibition reminded me less of 1980s consumer critique than a pawnshop in downtown Las Vegas I once visited.



The store was chock-a-block with sparkling jewels, sequined gowns, and various weaponry that desperate gamblers had sacrificed for another roll of the dice. Ojo's through-the-looking-glass calculus of desire is spartan by comparison, but no less dazzling and far more transparent. It also has the gowns, the jewelry, and the guns as well as such "adult toys" as prop handcuffs along with Lucite furniture, a giant bird cage housing a giant Magnum 45 and, not to put too fine a point on it, a Bible—all bearing the the stamp of a previous owner.

Each sculpture has a story to tell, some quite personal to the artist. (One chandelier, Esther, is named for the family friend who gave him his first camera.) The exhibition itself is more involved in a mechanics of luxe display that is as destabilising as it is theatrical. It's also quite sexy, in a remote, careful-what-you-wish-for, mummifying sort of way.

Talk about holding a mirror to the soul. For all its icy but hypnotic brio, Ojo's exhibition *Eden* isn't about the spanking new but the fondly remembered and the fetishised associations that spin out from it. The white leather, Le Corbusier-style armchair from which Sharon Stone teased her interrogators in *Basic Instinct* sits like a throne on a bathroom mirror, a Speed Graphic camera once favoured by paparazzi propped on the seat in her place, its lens trained on the viewer.



Installation view of Kayode Ojo: *Eden* at 52 Walker, New York

After coming across a photo of an appearance by the Supremes in their heyday, Ojo searched for spangled, beaded, sequined, feathered and rhinestone-studded showgirl costumes and bought four slinky, glittering dresses, though one is barely more than a breast plate. He has them draped over music stands lined up like streetwalkers before a dark brown curtain that runs the length of a wall and gives the whole gallery the feeling of a ghostly cabaret. A silver revolver is tucked into one dress stand; handcuffs dangle from another like mittens secured to a child's snowsuit. Glamour can be dangerous when it bites.

"I have an obsession with Paul Rudolph," Ojo confesses, "and also the Tom Ford of Gucci." (Ford bought the multi-level Manhattan townhouse that Rudolph designed for Halston.) "He is provocative as a person but what people flock to is the vision, which they can't articulate for themselves."

No matter. They can look to Ojo. One of four siblings born to Nigerian immigrants who are both religious academics attached to a college in Cookeville, Tennessee, he grew up in an integrated community about an hour from Nashville. "I never had any trouble there," he says. "It was great." It was also too small, and he left for New York to study photography at the School of Visual Arts before finding himself in sculpture as an assembler of appropriated parts.

Nostalgic yearning creates its own distortions of reality; what lives in the mind's eye is not what arrives from Amazon or any fast-fashion site. Sometimes a purchased item will turn out to be larger than imagined or too small to fit. "One dress came with a hair caught in it," Ojo told me. He left it in, with a whole lot more.

The white leather, Le Corbusier-style armchair from which Sharon Stone teased her interrogators in *Basic Instinct* sits like a throne on a brightly lit bathroom mirror; a vintage Speed Graphic camera once favoured by paparazzi sits in her place, its lens trained on the viewer.



An over-scaled pocket watch that should be a wall clock hangs by a long steel chain from the ceiling to the floor as a becalmed pendulum that serves no purpose other than teasing the eye. Likewise, two outsize chrome and crystal chandeliers worthy of a New Orleans bordello are suspended by chains on either side of the gallery like drop earrings too heavy to lift above ankle height; each is composed of about a dozen individual chandeliers that together make a nearly blinding declaration of fractals. Smoky martini glasses are stacked, not glued, into a pyramid that barely holds its shape; lifting one glass would send them all flying—along with the several rotted human teeth sitting in them like olives.

One may think that consumer critique had long overplayed its hand, but that was before online shopping became a big thing. As it is, Ojo's sculptures have less to say about art as a commodity than it does about the psychology of marketing and the language of seduction employed by online retailers to snag customers willing to one-click for items they've never touched, smelled, or tested. (Hello, art market.) If you can't afford the astronomically priced vintage object of your dreams, you can get a cheaper reproduction that looks just as good. Just keep scrolling and you shall receive.



Installation view of *Kayode Ojo: Eden* at 52 Walker, New York



The list of materials that follows the title of each installation tell the tale.

*Embouchure* is an enormous rope ladder that Ojo suspended from the gallery's 16-ft ceiling in a U shape that touches the floor. It suggests the leather slings of a BDSM sex club, only the climbing bars are shining, nickel silver flutes, an impression that its online product description— "Glory Closed Hole C Flute....Joint Grease and Gloves"—does nothing to impair.

Ojo improvised the works in *Eden* and their size and placement is specific to the space of the gallery, an outlier as commercial entities go. Though connected to the Zwirner Gallery empire, 52 Walker operates as an autonomous curatorial project for its director, Ebony L. Haynes, who develops exhibitions over the course of a year with each of the "researched-based" artists of colour who dominate the programme. Notably, most are not represented by Zwirner.

"We modeled it on a kunsthalle," says Haynes. It works remarkably well as both an exhibition space and a study centre. Shows remain on view longer than is usual in galleries and each show gets its own Clarion Books publication. In addition, the gallery has a free lending library of books selected by the artists, for whom they have been source material.

"Good ideas are persuasive," says Haynes, who has a ten-year history with Ojo. The two worked together for his first solo shows at Martos Gallarey. In Europe, he's on the rosters of Sweetwater in Berlin and Balice-Hertling in Paris. *Eden* is his thirteenth solo show to date and his most assured. "It's intense having a solo show in New York," he says. "The jewelry is all about sexual display. When I wore gold jewelry around my neck, people did reach out to touch me. But if you touched anything in this show, it would fall apart. I'm not so obsessed with leaving a mark, like a painter. It's more like trying to disappear."

Not a simple task amid all those mirrors and transparent Plexiglass but as Jasper Johns once said: "The eye sees what the mind already knows."

• Kayode Ojo: *Eden*, 52 Walker, New York, until 6 January 2024

Mallett, Whitney. "Kayode Ojo "EDEN" 52 Walker, New York." *Flash Art* (December 2023): 36-37 [ill.] [print]

# Flash Art





Kayode Ojo  
 “EDEN”  
 52 Walker, New York  
 by Whitney Mallett

Kayode Ojo's signature glitter finds its largest stage yet at 52 Walker, where one wall of the sprawling 3,385-square-foot space is dressed in a floor-to-ceiling black velvet curtain, injecting added theatricality into a series of works already dripping with *mise en scène*. An oversized pocket watch hangs in between two of the I-beam columns that order the gallery's interior. It's suspended from a silver chain, as are crystal chandeliers and gleaming flutes arranged like a hanging ladder that smiles. These dangling sculptures activate the pronounced verticality of the room, while some of the more low-to-the-ground assemblages reward a meticulous attention to detail. There's a tooth in the bowl of an otherwise empty coupe glass, one of dozens stacked to form a pyramid. It's easy to overlook but it's there, served up in the stemware, a human molar, discolored, maybe from a dead nerve. This is something Ojo hasn't done before and reads as part comment on authenticity, part serial killer trophy.

For the most part, though, the show, titled “EDEN,” builds on a formal vocabulary for which the American artist has become known, and marks the latest collaboration between Ojo and 52 Walker director Ebony L. Haynes, who curated the artist's first New York solo exhibition at Martos Gallery in 2018. Each of the seventeen works in this new show is composed of consumer objects in some precarious arrangement. This is Ojo's unique style of hyphenated ready-mades, prefab manufactured goods assembled on-site without adhesives. A stainless-steel bird cage houses a pistol (one of two guns in the show). From a knockoff Arco lamp a Victorinox Swiss army multi-tool hangs, knives out, suspended ominously over a Pearl drum, the taut clear acrylic of which it'd likely pierce, depending on how it fell. The tensions of these arrangements mirror the anxieties of class, taste, and aspiration traced by the objects themselves, many of them cheap commodities suggesting ersatz glam. We're signaled to consider the theater of value with material lists that faithfully reproduce brand and product names. The Wassily-esque chair is by Baxton Studio. The guns are prop pistols and the handcuffs are intended for role play, another two types of fakes. Throughout, there are surfaces that tease transparency and others that deflect. Items include fetishized cameras, whiskey decanters, rhinestone chokers, sequined mini dresses, clear boxes, music stands, as well as a bible, typewriter, chessboard, Surrealist melting clock, and an acrylic cube displaying the element bromine (atomic number 35).

Walking through the Tribeca gallery (which David Zwirner opened in 2021 to offer more experimental programming than their Mid- and Uptown fare) the title of a poem from Megan Fox's new book (yes, the *Transformers* actress wrote a book, *Pretty Boys Are Poisonous: Poems*, 2023) repeats in my mind like a refrain: “it's giving Patrick Bateman.” How this status-obsessed fictional serial killer circulates as meme, and this specific instance in which an A-list hot girl is reaching for literary significance while confessing tabloid-worthy break-up stories, all seems relevant to Ojo's high-low collisions and

his postmodern understanding of subjectivity. It's “I shop therefore I am” in the age of search-engine optimization, any interiority a performance engineered for the algorithm, the self recontextualized as a scam.

I google “Kayode Ojo” + “Patrick Bateman” and find I'm not the first one to make the comparison. Chloe Stead writing for *Frieze* says all the glass and stainless steel of an earlier Ojo show reminded her of the character's apartment in the film adaptation of *American Psycho* (the infamous 1991 novel by Bret Easton Ellis, which she misattributes to J. G. Ballard). I'm not trying to be shady to include her error; I feel like it accidentally captures something else about Ojo's work, its sense of unreliability and misuse born from the surprising ways information and image circulate online. The title of the show, “EDEN,” suggests a yearning for safe haven, a contentment before shame. To look at or use something wrong even when we know better holds a special kind of pleasure. While we can't go back to a state before knowledge, maybe misuse is a perversion that's the closest analog to the bliss of return.



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*“The tensions of these arrangements mirror the anxieties of class, taste, and aspiration traced by the objects themselves, many of them cheap commodities suggesting ersatz glam. We're signaled to consider the theater of value with material lists that faithfully reproduce brand and product names.”*

Heinrich, Will. "What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in December" *The New York Times* (December 22, 2023) [ill.] [online]

**The New York Times**

## What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in December

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By **Holland Cotter**, **Blake Gopnik**, **Will Heinrich**, **Walker Mimms**, **Travis Diehl** and **Max Lakin**  
Published Dec. 1, 2023 Updated Dec. 22, 2023, 1:39 p.m. ET

*Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Check out a trove of South African art on the Upper East Side and Ed Atkins's avatars in Chelsea. And don't miss Kayode Ojo's sleek sculptures in TriBeCa.*

### Newly Reviewed

TRIBECA

#### Kayode Ojo

Through Jan. 6. 52 Walker, 52 Walker Street, Manhattan. 212-727-1961;  
[52Walker.com](https://www.52Walker.com).



Kayode Ojo's "Basic Instinct," 2023, on view at 52 Walker. Kayode Ojo; via 52 Walker, New York



“Basic Instinct” is one of 17 separate arrangements of ready-made objects in Kayode Ojo’s “Eden,” the latest brilliant show programmed at 52 Walker by the senior gallery director, Ebony L. Haynes. It comprises a Baxton Studio Jericho Leather Accent Chair in white and chrome; a three-foot-square beveled mirror; four clear plastic boxes, each about six inches high; and a medium-format Graflex camera from the 1970s.

Sitting on the chair at exactly crotch height, its lens pointing out, the camera evokes Sharon Stone’s most famous moment in the movie of the same title. In so doing, the camera also highlights the ambiguous line between exhibitionism and voyeurism, and how wrapped up they both are in status, culture and consumerism. It evokes the strange nostalgia, with its aftertaste of mortality, inherent in any technology that “captures a moment,” especially photography; and it offers an incisive metaphor, if a cold one, for what it means to be human. What are we, after all, but empty boxes looking for ourselves in the mirror?

Elsewhere in the show, Ojo reflects on religion, sexuality and performance. He uses chandeliers, cocktail dresses, an enormous bird cage, dozens of flutes and a family Bible embossed with his name; a pocket watch the size of a wall clock sways gently above the floor. But I kept coming back to the four plastic boxes that hold the Baxton chair above its mirrored base. Offering a slight remove, but a transparent one, at once showy and discreet, they seemed like the key to Ojo’s method. *WILL HEINRICH*

Ojo, Kayode. "Material Reality." *W Magazine Korea* (February 2024) [ill.] [print]











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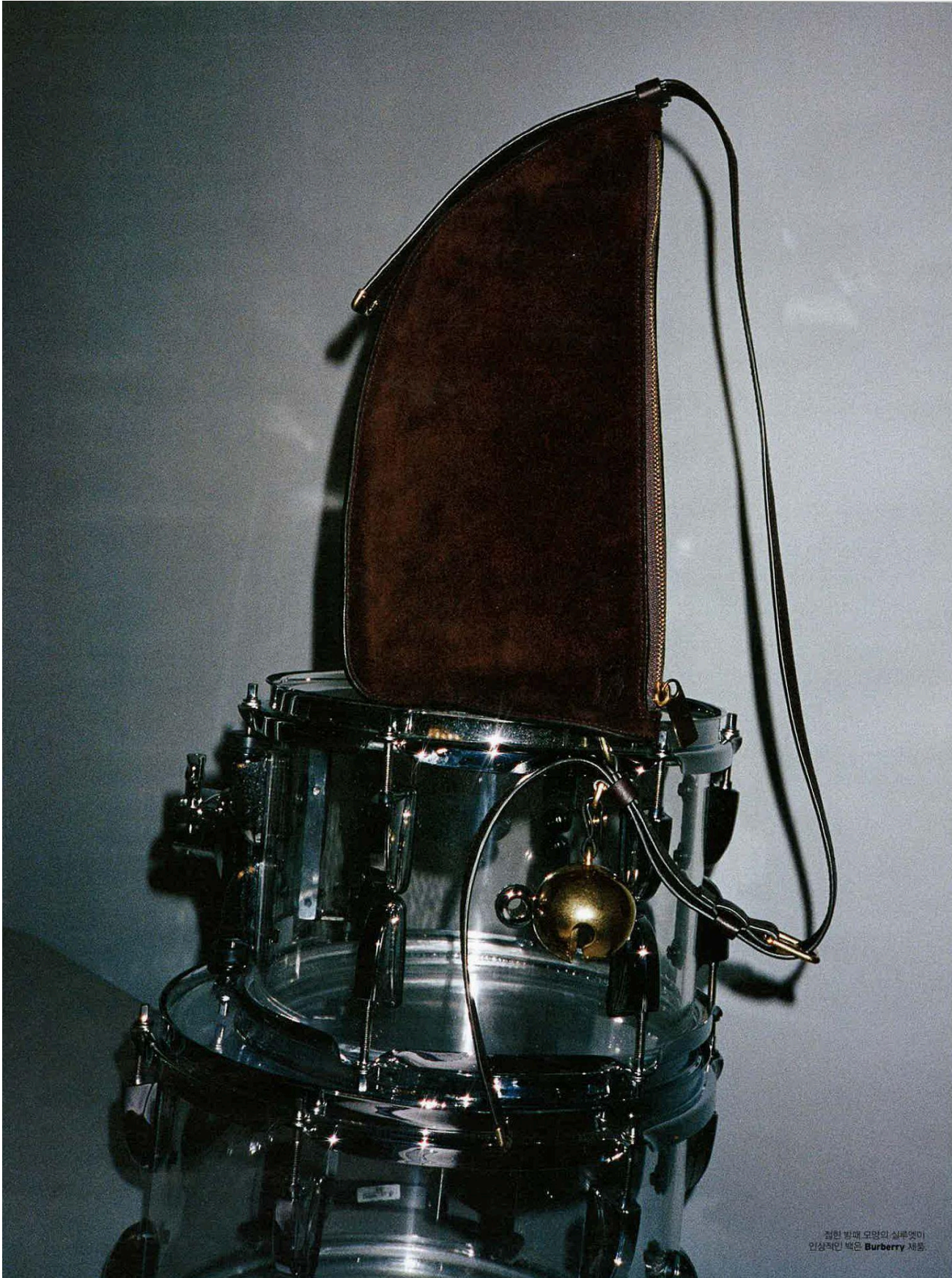
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