

Bansinath, Bindu. "The Art Gallery Where Orgasms Are Happening." *The Cut* (July 18, 2024) [ill.] [online]

THE CUT

CULTURE | 8:00 A.M.

The Art Gallery Where Orgasms Are Happening

 By Bindu Bansinath, a writer for the Cut who covers news, culture, and relationships. 

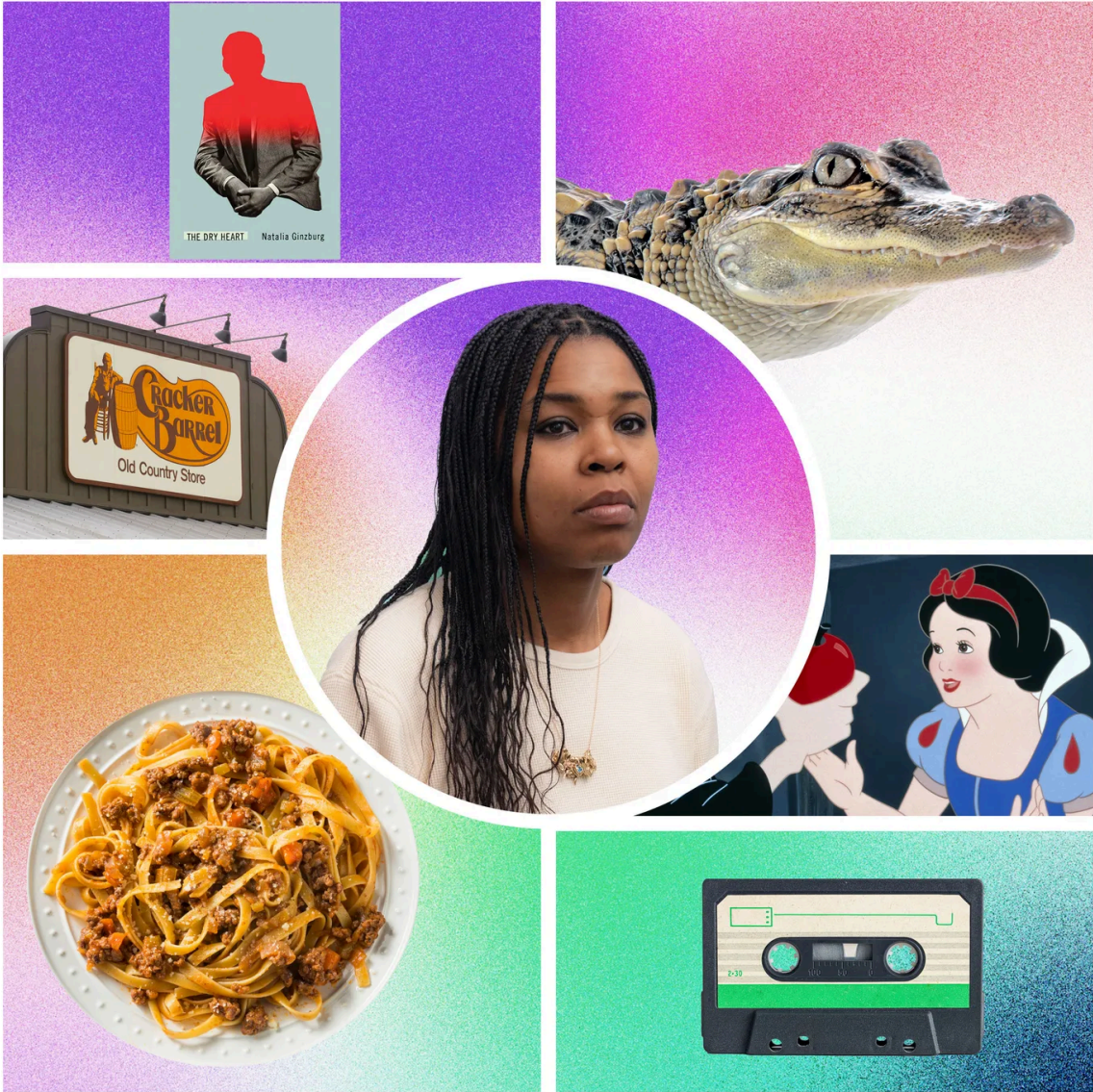


Photo-Illustration: by The Cut; Photos: Farah Al Qasimi, Getty Images, Everett Collection, Retailer

In the summer of 2003, a 13-year-old Diamond Stingily moved with her family to a house in Romeoville, Illinois, a suburb a few miles southwest of Chicago. Her mother and grandmother had already chosen their bedrooms in the new house and instructed Stingily and her older brother to do the same. Looking through the empty rooms, Stingily discovered a Post-it note stuck to a bedroom closet. *Orgasms happened here*, it read. In a house scrubbed clean of its previous tenant, only those words were left behind. Stingily and her brother laughed at the note. Maybe her mother threw it away, maybe she did, but in any case the phrase stuck with Stingily, who grew up to be a multimedia artist and writer who has exhibited everywhere from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami to the New Museum in New York and Art Basel in Switzerland. “I maybe understood their sense of humor,” Stingily says of that mystery tenant. “It had something to do with desire.”

The phrase is now the title of the poet and multimedia artist’s solo exhibition at 52 Walker in Tribeca. The exhibition, which opened earlier this summer and is on view through September 14, has transformed the gallery into a hallway of inset closets that feel lifted from domestic spaces and evoke the secret yearnings and mundanities of adolescence and beyond: neatly folded and sloppily discarded towels, newspaper clippings of girls in car magazines, baseball bats, and rows of white shirts reserved for middle-school graduations of the aughts.



Some of the closets, like one piled high with bricks, are tinged with the surreal. Others sit half-open, as if actively repressing the memories inside of them. “I was thinking about desire, everyday desire,” says Stingily, who admires bell hooks and relates to creating work that draws from the past to explore the present and the future. “Repressed memories — that’s a nice word for, *Oh, that person’s got a lot of secrets.*” The closet pieces, Stingily says, bring up good and bad memories for the people who peer through them. But they can also bring up plain old silly ones. “A lot of people brought up masturbation with me,” she says. “I was talking to one of my gallerists about a closet piece. I said, ‘It’s sexy.’ He was like, ‘I think it’s sexual, but not sexy.’” I ask her if she can show me the sexy ones, but like the other memories the closets tend to resurface, the “sexy” closet is more of a vibe. “It’s just a feeling,” Stingily says through laughter.

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**First of all, congratulations on your opening. How does it feel?**

I still have a lot of excitement, as if it hasn’t opened yet. I’m really honored to have been asked to participate in the vision Ebony L. Haynes has for 52 Walker. I believe it to be historical in a lot of ways for my career. I feel good. The Saturday after the opening, I celebrated by getting breakfast with my friend Martine Syms. We went for a walk in the park. It was a quiet weekend spent with friends.

**I love the origin story of “Orgasms Happened Here.” It’s rare for tenants to leave reminders of themselves like that. Why did the phrase stick with you all these years later?**

Because I’m a bizarre person. I used to write stories all the time, and a lot of my stories from when I was younger, there was never really any yearning in them. Yearning is a bit of desperation and maybe some limerence. I’ve always had desire. Looking back on those stories I wrote as a kid, they were always love stories. Shakespeare and Terry McMillan, those two combos. I think that’s why it stuck with me. I maybe understood their sense of humor.

**Speaking of childhood memories, let’s talk about that 2004 photo of you in the press materials. Is that from your middle-school graduation?**

That’s me graduating eighth grade. Because “Orgasms Happened Here” is based around that time period. And what a time period! I’m wearing a white button-up, and in one of the closets there’s a bunch of white button-ups, which is another reason we chose it. Maybe it’s a Black- and brown-girl thing, but parents really care how you present yourselves. There’s something about Black and brown girls in white button-ups that I’m really like, *Girl, go!* I’m not nostalgic, but I thought it was a way of honoring that time and myself. A lot of women I know fix things, accommodate others to make sure they’re comfortable. They take care of family and you’re told to do these things, you’re not really taught. Everyone’s very much in survival mode, and I was really hard on my past self. And that’s like me at the age I am now being upset with a 14-year-old girl, for things that wasn’t even my fault, ‘cause I was a child. So that’s me being like, *She’s present too.*



**What did the younger version of you desire?**

As a kid? A lot of stuff. This idea of what freedom would look like to me as an adult being in the household I was in, having so much personal quiet embarrassment and shame and shaking that off. Maybe that's what I desired. Maybe, like most teenage girls, you desire to be romantically involved with somebody. Just silly desires too.

**Do you have silly desires now?**

Of course I do. But they're more realistic. Not that they wasn't back then. When I was a kid, I thought I'd be in the club all the time or that clubs looked like music videos. Then you become an adult and you're like, oh, okay. As a child I thought I'd stay out and about all the time. Now some nights I'm in bed with my bonnet on before ten, you know? I desire different things. It's not a child wishing to be an adult. I'm an adult now, so I desire peace of mind. But I really thought I was about to be shimmying in a club with my tube top on.

**Would '04 you be happy now?**

Oh, yeah! She'd be happy. She'd be like, "Girl, you got tattoos?" Everything I wanted to do as a child, I've done it. It may not be how I thought it would happen, but it happened. So I'm very blessed.

**In addition to making physical artwork, you're also a writer and performance artist. Did you always want to be an artist, or did you consider other paths?**

I wanted to do a lot of things as a child. At one point, I wanted to be a pediatrician or an OB/GYN or a midwife. At one point, I wanted to be a veterinarian, but a crocodile-hunter type. My mom was like, "Girl, you don't even like snakes, what are you talking about?" I really liked alligators. I wanted to be someone who studies gators, or, I don't know, that girl at the zoo, holding a little gator like, "You guys could pet him!" They're one of my favorite animals. They're ancient and stoic and should be respected. And they have great faces with amazing cheekbones; I've never seen an alligator with a bad face. I also wanted to be an actress. I wanted to be a Romy Schneider/Liz Taylor fab actress, a lot of crying and falling on things. Or a makeup artist. My auntie is a businesswoman who owned a salon. It all came back to being a woman who people came to if they wanted their hair and makeup done. In college, I was that girl for my friends. If I really want to do something, I can make it happen.

**How did you start pursuing art, and what made you stick with it? It's hard to stick with the pursuit.**

It is! I was living in Chicago with my grandma to save money. Martine Syms was making some videos, and my voice was in them. At the time, I worked at an American Apparel. I recorded myself in what I called my cage, which was the stockroom. Chicago basements can sometimes look like the set of *Saw*. Me and Martine used to talk on the phone a lot; I be at work just on the phone, headset, just chitchatting. Martine was like, "Record yourself." So I was just talking about being at work. At one point, I opened the door and I was like, "This is the stockroom, it's a cage," honoring the reality I was in, which was steaming clothes in a cage.



A few months went by and Martine shot a video that was going to Bard. She was like, “Do you want to come up so I can shoot it?” It was “Notes on Gesture.” I took that opportunity to just move to New York. It was very 1970ish of me to move with a one-way ticket. I didn’t have an apartment and I moved with \$300. I was pinching when I moved here; I’m dollar-sliced and bodega-sandwiched out. I got a job at a dog boutique delivering dog food for the clients, sometimes celebrity clients. After “Notes on Gestures” came out, I got mistaken for Martine. People are just lazy, right? But they told me how excited they were for what I was doing. Some people still come to my show thinking I’m Martine. Then my friend and I did a show together, “Queer Thoughts,” my first official show in New York, and it snowballed from there. I didn’t have anything outside of art and being a creative person. I was just taking the opportunities that people presented me. They were like, “Want to do a reading? A show?” I started out saying yes to stuff that excited me.

**In a recent conversation with Arthur Jafa, you mentioned you taught yourself art history, and that amid the art-world jargon, you experienced feeling like you didn’t know what you were talking about when you did. What’s it like to be your own teacher and student?**

I’m still teaching myself. I’m constantly learning. I hope that didn’t make me sound like Boygenius or something. I have to teach myself not to be so intimidated talking about these things. It’s fun. I can take my time, I’m a whole teacher! I really like going to the Met. I can just chill out and sit. There’s an older Black man who’s always there and constantly sketching; I admire him. He’s constantly learning and teaching himself new techniques. I’ve learned to put myself out there. That’s how a lot of people learn. Accept that you’re going to make mistakes and say something silly and be wrong.

**What's your process like?**

I sketch a lot. I don't draw very well, so I write it out in kind of a paragraph. I can see it better that way. That sounds so like, *She's an artist*. But for real, I can't draw. Most if not all of my work is ready-made, so I just have to see how I can make it mine once it's in front of me. The fun part is installing, and the challenging part is how are we going to install it? Are the contractors okay with that?

**Onto the taste test. Do you have a creative ritual?**

Not really. Sometimes I make a private playlist, and it's a lot of classical and ambient music. Crystal Castles and house music. But mainly chill music. I call it anemic dancing; you can sit in a chair and kind of wiggle, but you're not doing too much. During this installation, I was listening to silly R&B. "In Your Wildest Dreams," by Tina Turner and Barry White, because I always thought that song was really funny. I think it's about orgasming. Quincy Jones's "The Secret Garden." Eddie Kendricks's "Intimate Friends." Smooth-jazz-sexytime music. Sex ain't even that sexy. Do a little two-step, dance like Lenny Kravitz, go-about-your-business-type music.



**What's a book you couldn't put down?**

Martine recommended this author to me, Natalia Ginzburg. I enjoy her a lot. I like weird girls, weird writers, weird women. She's strange and I was rocking with her. (And she's also Italian — mother Roma! I'm always joking with people because one of my great-grandparents or something was Italian.) The book, *The Dry Heart*, is a how-we-get-there story about how a woman kills her husband. I loved it. *All Our Yesterdays* was really good. I put Ginzburg in the same category as Leonora Carrington, who is also a painter. *Gayl Jones* is also really good and bizarre. Then *Anna Kavan*, an English writer who wrote about fast cars and was a functioning addict. When she died, they found enough heroin in her house to OD everyone on her block; she heard it was going to become illegal and started hoarding it. I like women who have a clear vision of themselves, who have their style and are unabashed about it.

**Where do you get your best culture recommendations?**

From cassettes. I like buying tapes that look weird. I'm a noise girl at heart. So I'm always looking for new music, and a lot of my friends are in the music scene and I respect their taste. I'm always in conversation with people who love to read.

**What's your favorite piece of art that you own?**

It's not art, but something I cherish is, I have a godbaby in L.A. And my baby mama — I call her that, but she's the mother of my godbaby — is very thoughtful. She knows I've been through a lot. 2021 was a heartbreaking year for me. She got me an antique photo album; it's red and small, and in my opinion, very chic. Inside I have photos of me and my mother, of my family and my chosen family, and at the end it's a photo of me and my goddaughter. I love it so much. I wanted to put it in my purse and carry it around, but I'd be devastated if I lost it.

**What's the best advice you've ever received?**

When I was a child, girl groups were very popular. I wanted to be in the talent show with a group of girls. They said no. I went home and was bummed out. My dad said, "Girl, fuck them, go solo." I didn't end up doing the talent show, but that stuck with me. Go solo. Do it yourself if don't nobody want to do it with you. Go where the love is. I went to the talent show and it was fine. The group sang Mýa's "Case of the Ex," but they lost because a dance group danced to "Bootylicious" and they tore it up. The past is the past, isn't it?

**How about the worst advice?**

This is gonna sound very boastful, but I don't listen to bad advice. I hope it don't stick.

**You're in an Uber XL to anywhere. What five people, dead or alive, are coming with you?**

Where are we going?

**That's up to you.**

You gotta set it up.



**Okay, it's daytime on a long weekend, you're heading to a wine trail upstate.**

I would like to take Joan, the mother of my godbaby, and my friend Kat, 'cause we going wine tasting. Joan doesn't drink, though ... if Martine is in town, she's coming. Zoë Lund died, but maybe she'd like to go on a trip? I'm trying to make it fun, not that my girls aren't. I don't even want to say a fifth one, I don't want nobody to get mad. This is giving Myspace. Maybe Betty Catroux? She's a YSL muse and seems like an older French woman to drink wine with, have heart-to-hearts when we're all drunk, forehead to forehead. I'd also like to take an Uber XL to a Cracker Barrel in a non-ironic way.

**What's your go-to Cracker Barrel meal?**

Shit. Chicken tenders with some greens, macaroni, and cornbread. Yup. I'd get some blueberry candy canes from the candy section at the end. That's the stuff you suck on on the drive home, when you know you had a good Sunday.

**What's the last thing you cooked?**

Beef ragù. It was delicious. Cooking for me is a treat we don't all get to have. I cook like a mother. I watch you eat like, you're getting your nourishment.

**What's your comfort rewatch?**

I don't watch a lot of TV. But I watch *Snow White*, the Disney movie from the '50s. If someone's like, "*Snow White* is on," I'll be like, "Cool, keep it on that." She was neurodivergent for sure, very misunderstood and sweet. Her sweetness othered people, but she didn't let it change who she was as a person. She always looked forward to the future like, *Oh, this is just temporary*, and she sounds like Mýa when she sings. I also like Disney villains. I think the witch was scary but campy. My favorite villain is Scar. I have a little niece. That's my little Simba, and I'm her Scar. Every time I see her, I'm like, "Hello. Care to know some secrets?" And she's like, "Girl, I'm just trying to color." I'm not a Disney adult, though. Never been there, don't want to get married there.

**What should you never do at a dinner party?**

Not bring anything. That's not okay. Bring something to the table. Sometimes people show up and their presence is enough, but bringing something is nice. Other than that, putting your feet on the table, that's nasty. Not flushing the toilet, that's not okay. Offer to help, be available in other people's homes even if they say no. Move like you got some sense and people will invite you back.

**What are you excited for next in your career?**

Having a career. It's not just having an attitude of *Oh, I'm happy to be here*, but having an art career is a blessing. People being interested in what I'm making and doing what I love for a living is really cool. I have this constant worry that it could go away any day. Time is limiting. I try to take advantage of the time I think I have.

**Is there a childhood memory in this installation you most like revisiting?**

I don't have a favorite childhood memory. I don't think about my childhood that much, actually. It's funny because I do a lot of work based on what I know. But I don't think of it in a romantic way. I'm grateful I had the childhood I had because it gave me a story. I wouldn't be who I am now if I didn't go through what I went through. That includes the joy and hardship. I can't think of one where I'm like, *Oh, that was great*, though I definitely have them. It's too precious; I can't think of it as something I want to share. I was a romantic little girl who could daydream. I still daydream. I've always been who I was.



Mousse Magazine. “Diamond Stingily “Orgasms Happened Here” at 52 Walker, New York.” *Mousse Magazine* (July 17, 2024) [ill.] [online]

# MOUSSE

## Diamond Stingily “Orgasms Happened Here” at 52 Walker, New York

17.07.2024

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Diamond Stingily “Orgasms Happened Here” at 52 Walker, New York, 2024. Courtesy of Mousse and 52 Walker

“Orgasms Happened Here” features new work by the New York–based artist Diamond Stingily (b. 1990). Stingily’s multidisciplinary practice traverses varied fictive, biographical, and autobiographical narratives to recast the symbolic order that governs everyday objects. Throughout 52 Walker, she has installed a series of site-specific architectural interventions that evoke the colors, scale, and ambience of suburban American households and places of worship. These interstitial spaces, as well as the gallery itself, serve as portals into the whimsical and dark memories that are often suppressed in the name of adult decorum, revealing glimpses of the libidinal longing secretly stored in the artist’s and our own collective imaginations.

The exhibition title is taken from the artist's childhood memories: when Stingily's family first moved into the home where she spent her adolescence, her brother discovered a sticky note affixed above the door of a closet in his bedroom that read "orgasms happened here." In her presentation at 52 Walker, Stingily zeros in on the closet and other thresholds—locked doors, stained-glass windows, and ready-made gate sculptures— that symbolize privacy, transition, curiosity, and transgression. The artist further relates the exhibition to the French folktale of Bluebeard, in which the titular nobleman's wife unlocks a forbidden door of his castle and discovers all of his previous wives inside the mysterious chambers.

The new works in "Orgasms Happened Here" build on existing forms from Stingily's oeuvre. At 52 Walker, a number of closets are inset into the built environment of the gallery, with each interior designed to allude to a particular theme and represent a conduit that may transport the viewer to other worlds. One features a crumbling brick wall that pays homage to the iconic paintings of queer American artist Martin Wong (1946–99); another, a series of propped baseball bats. The visual references Stingily includes are both vague and specific, humorous and dark—the individual closets are composites of varied memories and emotions that reflect the space's capacity to reveal and conceal, as well as its ability to capture tensions created by different characters and settings from all points in time.

Also on view are stained-glass windows that are set into walls or presented as stand-alone sculptures. The windows are each partially covered by soft yellow organza curtains, further filtering the already glowing light that fills the space. The architectural forms take on the art deco style of Stingily's great-great-aunt's Baptist church in Chicago. Operating at a remove from the religious worship practiced by her elder family members, Stingily connects the sanctuary of the church's urban community space to that of the suburban adolescent bedroom. Here, she reflects on the generational differences between grandparents, parents, and children: what changes or what might stay the same within households, how structures they inhabit might shift according to the locales in which they reside, and how these contrasts shape discrete notions of shame and desire.

To complement the windows and closets, Stingily has dispersed a number of her door and iron fence sculptures throughout the gallery. Although these objects maintain their tough exteriors, these portals recalibrate their normal limitations and boundaries when removed from their usual contexts—a theme with which Stingily has engaged throughout her practice. Although they are not used within this space for their primary function of defense, the gates maintain their purpose of guardianship. Their swirling metal constructions appear more decorative and ornamental, their loops and whorls rendered elegant and feminine. The doors beckon unfamiliar experiences, and yet their locks promise safety and security. Human-scale and made from everyday objects, these works serve as subtle reminders of the restrictions between the domestic and the public as well as a record of the evolving ways in which we try to keep ourselves safe.

at 52 Walker, New York  
until September 14, 2024

Falb, Sam. "Shows To See in New York This Summer." *Elephant* (July 15, 2024) [ill.] [online]

**ELEPHANT**



## Shows To See in New York This Summer

*'Reframe' is a monthly column in which contributor Sam Falb discusses timely openings to view in New York. Each edition offers commentary on the latest exhibitions, performances, and installations. Dynamic and ever-evolving, the content reflects the fluidity of the market it travels through.*



## Culture

15 Jul 2024



Stanley Stellar, Mr. NY Leather Kiss (I and II), 1987. Photo courtesy of the artist and Kapp Kapp.

What a timely moment to start an art column, when a large grouping of galleries and institutions in New York put up their early or mid-summer shows and indulge—just like the rest of us—in the promise of a summer breeze, a plane ticket, or a general period of leisure. Not to be perturbed, the first article of this series includes a variety of strong shows to view during this lighter period. See below for the selection, and join us at the end of the season for regular monthly coverage on New York's latest show openings.

1. Magenta Plains: Summer Group Show (July 11-August 17)

For the gallery's next show, expect a two-level experience with a wealth of work to take in. On the first level of the gallery, viewers will find a multi-media show under the moniker of *Swim Hole*, featuring works by Alex Kwartler, Alexis Rockman, Barbara Ess, Bill Saylor, Don Dudley, Jane Swavely, Jennifer Bolande, Martha Diamond, Matthew Weinstein, and Peter Nagy. On the second level, a sculpture-focused presentation featuring works by Rachel Faeth, Chadwick Rantanen, Hana Mileteć, and Eli Coplan will be shown. Barbara Ess's uniquely entrancing photography will certainly be a highlight, as will Jane Swavely's ever-captivating abstractions in rich color. Perhaps they'll even throw open the balcony and extend the festivities beyond the opening hours, and into the night.



Kate Pincus-Whitney, *Grandma's Rituals*, 2024. Photo courtesy of the artist and Anat Egbi.

## 2. Anat Egbi: Mama's In The Kitchen (June 28-August 16)

Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (lunch box)* complete with silver dishes of rice, mixed vegetables, and a convenient newspaper as lunchtime reading material, is just one of the delectable works of food-meets-art that can be found in this show. The presentation is an exploration of the tension that rituals of the home meet against the capitalistic bent of today's culture. In Kate Pincus Whitney's *Grandma's Rituals*, there is a buffet of gastronomic complexities so grand and packed with vibrance, it seems to capture (almost too deliciously) the theme of increasing complexity in today's fast-paced, consumption-led culture. The lineup also includes works (vegetal, painterly, and otherwise) by Jay Lynn Gomez, Caleb Hahne Quintana, Stephanie Temma Hier, Ryan Johnson, Alison Knowles, Tidawhitney Lek, Jaime Muñoz, Alvin Ong, Kemar Keanu Wynter, and FOOD: Tina Girouard, Carole Goodden, and Gordon Matta-Clark.

## 3. Whaam!: Roller Coaster (June 27 – August 3)

In his first solo show for the gallery, Justin Hager presents a series of paintings that invite viewers to see the world through his eyes: the extraordinary in the ordinary. It's whimsical, it's rich, it uses techniques like impasto applications of Rococo-like spackle work, and it's highly original. With several contributions to Collina Strada's recent collections, as well as the cover design of Richie Shazam's photo book published under IDEA, it's also worth noting that Hager's synergy within the worlds of fashion and art provides a compelling lens through which to view his work. Perhaps the figures seem dressed a little more smartly—between delicate, bright flowers and books)—and the worldbuilding of the pieces grows a little more complex with each passing glance.





Robert Nava, Weekend Crunch, 2020. Photo courtesy of the artist and Amanita.

#### 4. Amanita: Social Practice (June 26-August 10)

At Amanita, a group exhibition of eight painters arrives under the banner of Social Practice. What's unique about the show, as Shanti Escalante-De Mattei describes in exhibition notes, is that the artists "have committed to showing up for themselves and each other, sharing resources, trade secrets, honest critiques, insider gossip, [and] another body at the opening." All living and working in Brooklyn as well, a masterful showcase of synergy and connection is now on view, by Cristina BanBan, Paul Cooley, Marco Paul, Robert Nava, Cristina de Miguel, Marco Pariani, Federico de Francesco, and Dan Flanagan.





Michael Simpson, Drawing for the Love Locked series, 1983. Photo courtesy of the artist and Tara Downs.

### 5. Tara Downs: The Principal Cause of Serial Monogamy (June 21-July 26)

Curated by Cooper Brovenick, bright points of the cinematically-titled presentation include a wide exploration of texture (see Justin Chance's works in wool and Lynda Benglis' aluminum sculpture) among a range exploring the spectrum of abstraction. A subtly connected follow-up to his last exhibition, *A Modern Disease — like jetlag*, this show brings together artists across generations to speak on their relationships with the highs and lows of interconnectedness, as well as individuality and its sanctity. André Breton's *L'Amour Fou* is cited as an influence, just as the preceding show's title was guided by the poetry of *Purple's* Glenn O'Brien, the late former Editor-at-Large. It's these thoughtful easter eggs that make Brovenick's work that much more delicious, with a lineup that includes Yuji Agematsu, Carly Burnell, Violet Dennison, David Flaughner, Lauren Anaïs Hussey, Nika Kutateladze, Liza Lacroix, Sabine Moritz, and Michael Simpson.

### 6. 52 Walker: Orgasms Happened Here (June 21-September 14)

An architectural scavenger hunt unfolds in the high-ceilinged, grand room of 52 Walker – one of this author's preferred Tribeca gallery spaces among neighbors including Bortolami, James Cohan, and P·P·O·W. However, this highlight is about 52 Walker, and it's quite well-deserved. Diamond Stingily offers an array of thoughtful, home-centric works ranging from locked doors, to stained glass windows, to gate sculptures. Bright, singular hues in icy blue and neon green mark the stained glass, a welcome departure from the conventional storytelling design of this medium. A series of doorways communicate separate micro-narratives, referential to themes including privacy, curiosity, and transgression. A cluster of bats lean against a threshold, pressed shirts hang just behind a folding closet door, and stacks of bricks can be found neatly packed in front of a wall of pasted newspapers.



## 7. James Fuentes: Fire Island Pines 1981 (June 21-July 19)

This exhibition showcases Ed Baynard through a collection of intimate works on paper from the summer of 1981, in Fire Island Pines. Baynard's career spanned an enormous breadth of work based in simple, classic touch-points including ceramics, flowers, and natural scenes. This particular series, rendered in colored pencil, captures his reflections in the queer sanctuary of the Pines, just as the HIV/AIDS epidemic emerged. His background as a graphic designer for the Beatles and a clothing designer for Jimi Hendrix complexifies the work, with these pieces moreso focusing on the intimately personal, rather than the splashier projects that helped raise his profile during his lifetime. Influences include a masterclass of flora and fauna-centric works and calming strength—Zen minimalism, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, and Japanese Ukiyo-e prints.



Jean-Pierre Villafañe, *Clocking-In*, 2024. Photo courtesy of the artist and Charles Moffett.

#### 8. Charles Moffett: Playtime (June 21-August 2)

For Jean-Pierre Villafañe's first solo show with the gallery, the Puerto Rico-born, New York-based artist presents a cinematic selection of works with elements of his trademark style: highly-constructed facial features and an alluring story that unfolds on the canvas. Across the works, figures confront each other as they arrive for work (*Clocking In*), engaging in salacious activities at tension with the office environment (*Offsite* and *Playtime*), and generally explore themes that cross lines between sensuality, tight-lipped and tightly-cinched office culture, and the release that comes from transgressing the boundaries. For Villafañe fans who may not make it to his murals watching over diners at West Village establishment Cecchi's, a gathering of his work in a thoughtful environment of this nature is even more of a treat, and not to be missed.

#### 9. All Street Gallery: Nature of Being (June 20-July 21)

A quad of talent across photography, sculpture, textiles, weaving, and paper collage are represented in the gallery's latest show, curated by Hayley Ferber. Identity is the key mainstay, with diasporic dialogue, experimentation with the senses, relationships, and perseverance across history on display. Koyoltzintli, Ruth Jeyaveeran, Nia Imani Winslow, and Lin Qiqing are showing at the culmination of Residency Unlimited's 2024 NYC-Based Artist Residency Program, an annual program supporting BIPOC artists. Qiqing's practice stands out for its labor-intensive commitment to the theme, with naturally dyed, hand-spun yarn communicating the turbulent world of interpersonal relationships.





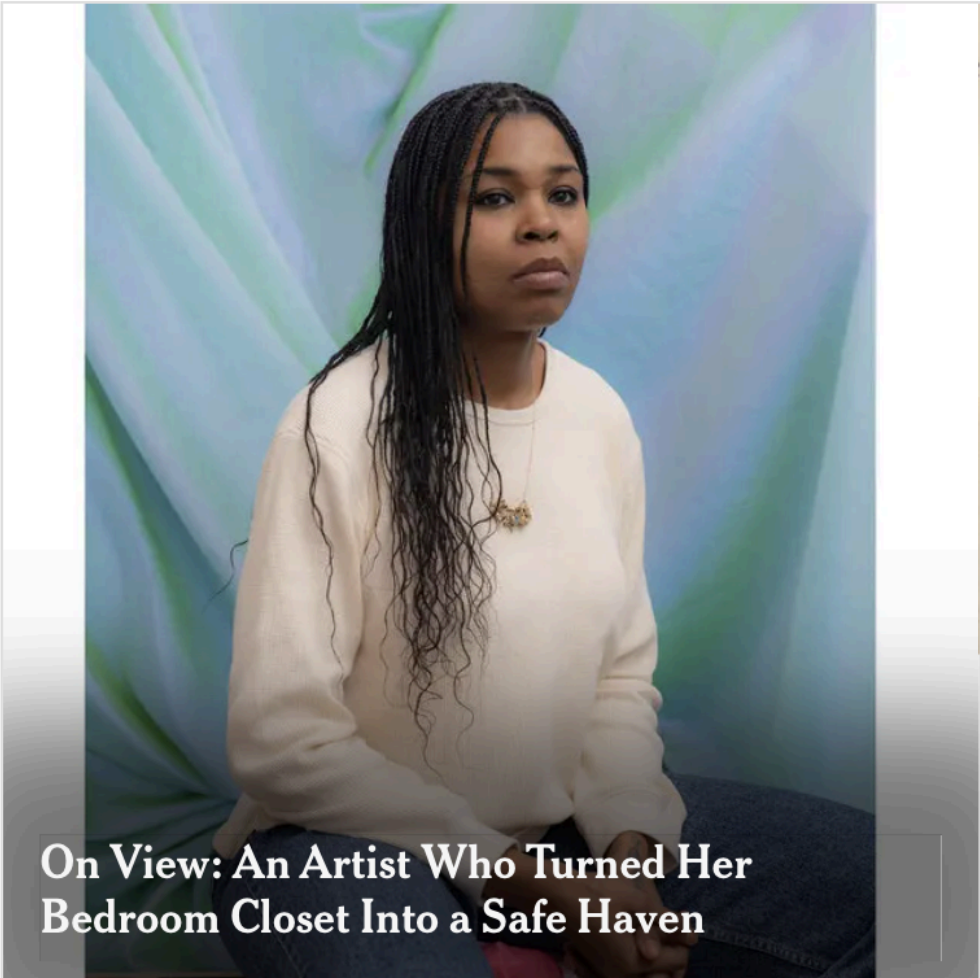
Lin Qiqing, *The Walls*, 2024. Photo courtesy of the artist and All Street.

#### 10. Kapp Kapp: Tulips (June 1-July 26)

This exhibition is an homage to Sylvia Plath's nine stanza poem *Tulips*, which she wrote after a surgical operation at St. Pancras Hospital in Central London. A multi-media encapsulation of the poem's themes, it features a variety of compellingly playful works: the delightfully sinister gaze of Martha Stewart visualized by Sam McKinniss in *Martha Stewart Arranging Tulips at Home*, a stolen kiss captured by Stanley Stellar *Mr. NY Leather Kiss I and II*, and the almost-titular *Tulipa*, a stone rendition of a tulip's silhouette by Alicia Adamerovich. The show's lineup includes the aforementioned artists, alongside Luke O'Halloran, Julian Ceccaldi, Louis Osmosis, Thomas Blair, Cynthia Hawkins, Justin Liam O'Brien, and Anthony Cudahy.

Words by Sam Falb

Oladipo, Gloria. “On View: An Artist Who Turned Her Bedroom Closet Into a Safe Haven.” *The New York Times Style Magazine* (July 3, 2024) [ill.] [online]



On View: An Artist Who Turned Her Bedroom Closet Into a Safe Haven



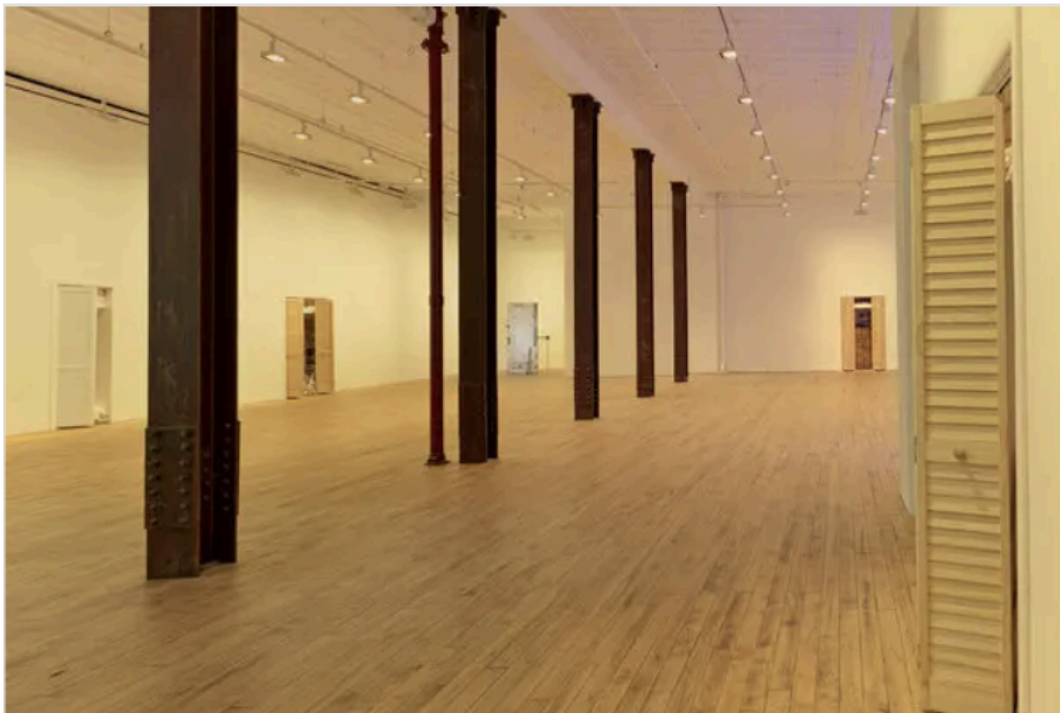
**Gloria Oladipo**  
Reporting for T Magazine

In her show at the New York gallery 52 Walker, Diamond Stingily reflects upon her upbringing in Illinois and the places she’s lived since.

I spoke to Stingily about one of the works →

Courtesy of Diamond Stingily, Greene Naftali, New York; Cabinet London; and Isabelle Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin. Photo: Farah Al Qasimi





The show's title, "Orgasms Happened Here," is pulled from a note that Stingily and her older brother found in his bedroom closet when their family moved to the suburb of Romeoville, Ill., from Chicago's West Side.

At 52 Walker, Stingily has built a set of closets into the gallery's walls, filling each one with found materials, such as newspaper cutouts and baseball bats, that explore **"shame, sexiness, desire [and] yearning,"** she says.

An installation view of Diamond Stingily's "Orgasms Happened Here." Courtesy of 52 Walker, New York





One installation, “Orgasms Happened Here (Hot Girl),” was inspired by the closet in Stingily’s own teenage bedroom. Back then, the artist was frustrated by her mother’s and grandmother’s strictness, she says, and her closet was a sanctuary where she could read or retreat, **“a space within a space to get away.”**

Stingily, “Orgasms Happened Here (Hot Girl)” (2024). © Diamond Stingily, courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker







The prim white shirts in “Hot Girl” partially obstruct magazine images of bikini-clad women posing on cars and motorcycles. “It’s interesting to me how cars and women go hand in hand, how cars are given female names and [that’s] very objectifying,” the artist says.

While building this work, she was thinking about how such pictures shaped her sense of self as a girl and how **“a lot of Black women don’t have agency over their bodies.”**

Detail of “Orgasms Happened Here (Hot Girl)” (2024). © Diamond Stingily, courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker



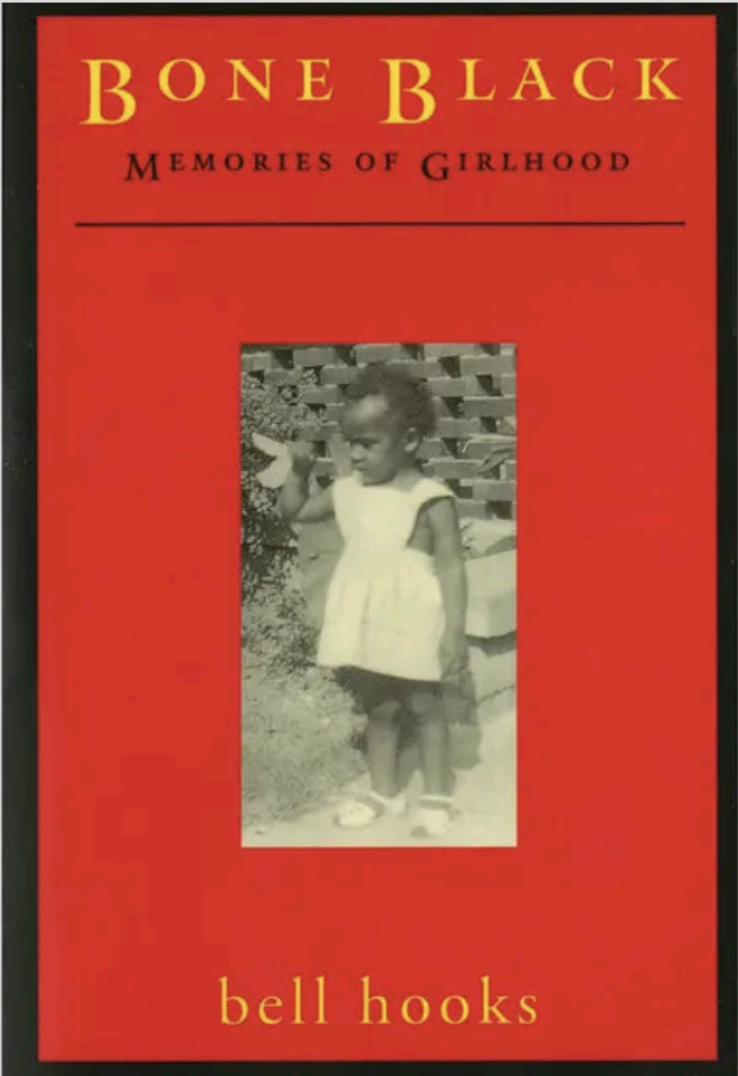


Throughout the gallery, Stingily has installed stained glass windows and segments of iron fences that nod to the architectural details of Chicago and New York, her current home.

“I wanted to make a show about a lot of things, but mainly a **show with duality**,” Stingily says.

An installation view of Stingily's "Orgasms Happened Here." Courtesy of 52 Walker, New York

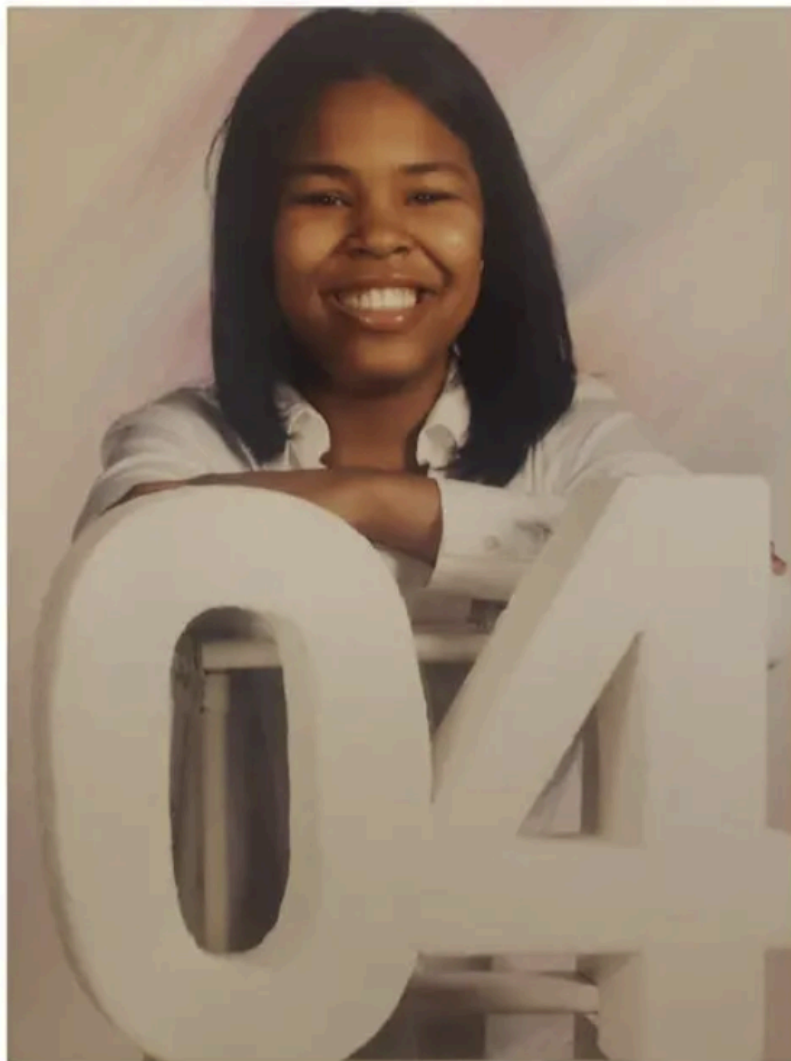




Stingily is inspired by the writer bell hooks. “I’ve been reading [her memoir] ‘Bone Black’ (1996), and she talks about her childhood [without] romanticizing it,” the artist says. “**She goes within herself to reach the masses ...** and explores not only [her] personal life but the collective.”

Henry Holt & Co.





Stingily aims to similarly translate her own memories in her work. Looking back now at her life in Romeoville, she says, “**I probably wouldn’t be an artist if it wasn’t for that house.** Because I just wanted to do a 180 [from] what I had to do at home.”

A 2004 photograph from the artist’s personal collection. Courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker





Kane, Ashleigh. “Art shows to leave the house for in July 2024.” *Dazed* (July 2, 2024) [ill.] [online]

**DAZED**



Photography Megan Winstone

**Art shows to leave the house for in July 2024**

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - LISTS

2nd July 2024

Text Ashleigh Kane

There’s a sense of the in-between in this month’s list. The summer sun has disappeared in the UK as the looming dark cloud of the [General Election rolls in](#), [France heads towards the far right](#), and the US seems destined to repeat recent history. But resistance continues, unfaltering as always amongst the art community and in the art it makes.

While you might feel confronted by shows like Rheim Alkadhi’s *Templates for Liberation* at London’s ICA, there too is respite in *Meditations on Love* at The Photographer’s Gallery. Elsewhere, artists are feeling insular, offering personal, intimate explorations that draw on the autobiographical, such as Koby Martin’s *Drunk Minds Speak of Sober Times* at The Sarabande Foundation and Diamond Stingily’s *Orgasms Happened Here* across the pond at New York City’s 52 Walker. You’ll find whatever you’re searching for in these shows.

52

52walkerstreet

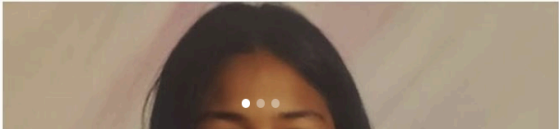
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52 Walker

Announcing

Diamond Stingily:  
ORGASMS  
HAPPENED HERE



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ORGASMS HAPPENED HERE, DIAMOND STINGILY, 52 WALKER STREET, N

Artist [Diamond Stingily](#)’s multidisciplinary practice explores fictive, biographical, and autobiographical narratives to reframe everyday objects. You might even remember her as the star of fellow artist Martine Sym’s feature-length film, [The African Desperate](#). Stingily’s new solo show, [Orgasms Happened Here](#), features site-specific architectural interventions that evoke suburban American households and places of worship. These spaces reveal whimsical and dark memories that reflect libidinal longing. The exhibition’s title refers to a note in her brother’s childhood closet reading, ‘Orgasms happened here’. Across the show, Stingily explores thresholds – closets, doors, stained-glass windows – symbolising privacy, transition, and transgression while examining generational differences, blending themes of shame and desire within domestic and public spaces.

*From June 21 – September 14 2024 at 52 Walker, New York City*



Yin Zhang, Lisa. "15 Art Shows to See in New York City This Summer." *Hyperallergic* (July 1, 2024) [ill.] [online]

# HYPERALLERGIC

## 15 Art Shows to See in New York City This Summer

From the Bronx-forward work at Wave Hill down to Robert Podavano's liminal paintings in Staten Island, shows that'll make you want to stick around a sweltering city.



Lisa Yin Zhang 16 hours ago



Installation view of Suchitra Mattai, *We are nomads, we are dreamers* (2024) at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, New York (photo by Scott Lynch, courtesy Socrates Sculpture Park)

Not everyone can flee the hot mess of summer in New York City — it ain't all “what pleasure, what joy” down here, as it seems to be Upstate. I kid — I'm probably just salty from the heat ricocheting off the concrete, sending sweat down my face. But hey, we've got gardens down here, too. The manicured greenery of Wave Hill cocoons the Bronx-forward work within, while Suchitra Mattai's sculptures erupt from rough earth in Socrates Sculpture Park, contrasting with the quiet sculptures in the Noguchi Museum's shady courtyard mere steps away. The exhibitions below will transport you — whether to parts of the city most of us ought to visit more, like the Staten Island waterfront or the northern tip of Manhattan, or to the city's past, as in the Met's Harlem Renaissance show, or to pockets of the psyche both nostalgic and repressed, as in Diamond Stingily's architectural interventions at 52 Walker. Stand before Amalia Mesa-Bain's moving altars in Spanish Harlem, elbow your way through the careerists in midtown to find yourself before Rose B. Simpson's bronze-and-steel sentinels. Living here has always been about finding the way through the labyrinth. We've unspooled some string to guide you through.





Detail of Diamond Stingily, “Window 1” (2024) (© Diamond Stingily; courtesy the artist and 52 Walker)

***Diamond Stingily: Orgasms Happened Here***

If you want to (psychologically) escape the grind of the city, why not do so to a place temporarily entitled “Orgasms Happened Here”? Diamond Stingily has transformed 52 Walker gallery with site-specific architectural elements that suggest the moments of privacy, curiosity, whimsy, and longing stolen in various spaces of American suburbia: The soldered intersection of a stained glass windowpane, for instance, suggests to me a detail fixated upon during a daydream at a church sermon. The name of the exhibition is drawn from a post-it note Stingily’s brother found above a closet door when they moved into their childhood home: a declaration of presence, of pleasure. We should all take note.

52 Walker ([52walker.com](http://52walker.com))

52 Walker St, TriBeCa, Manhattan

Through September 14



**Lisa Yin Zhang**

Lisa Yin Zhang is Associate Editor at Hyperallergic, based in Queens, New York.

**More by Lisa Yin Zhang**

Martin-Gachot, Ella. "Closets See It All. In Her Latest Exhibition, Diamond Stingily Turns the Spotlight on Them."  
*Cultured Magazine* (June 28, 2024) [ill.] [online]

# CULTURED

## Closets See It All. In Her Latest Exhibition, Diamond Stingily Turns the Spotlight on Them

In her new show at 52 Walker, "Orgasms Happened Here," the Chicago-born artist excavates what lies behind closed doors with a series of architectural interventions.

### WORDS

**Ella Martin-Gachot**

June 28, 2024



Diamond Stingily, "Orgasms Happened Here" (Installation View), 2024. All images courtesy of the artist and 52 Walker.

Closets as we know them today—built into a wall, most often accompanied by a door or two—made their debut in the latter half of the 19th century. Armoires, which had served as storage for weapons, garments, books, and other objects, were seen as clunky; built-in closets in contrast were marketed as a luxurious asset in a home. When it opened in the 1880s, New York’s iconic Dakota building even used the invention as a selling point to lure in affluent clients.

Over a century later, closets loom large in our cultural imagination—from Harry Potter’s dreary living conditions at the Dursley’s to Carrie’s *Sex and the City* walk-in—as vehicles for escape, fantasy, and extrafamilial intimacy. They’re where you put your armor to confront modern life on, and where you shed it at the end of the day. They’re great places to store things you’d rather forget. And they’re the perfect place to access another dimension—whether that’s Narnia or your 30s.

Diamond Stingily found the title for her latest show in a closet. Her family had just moved into a house outside of Chicago where she’d spend her teenage years. When her brother walked into his new room, he found a sticky note fixed to the closet door. *Orgasms happened here*, it read. Three words that distill the intimacy, transcendence, and libidinal potential a closet can afford.

At 52 Walker, Stingily embeds five closets—alternately filled with baseball bats, magazine pages, bricks, towels, and newspapers—into the gallery’s walls, alongside other works that point to a certain liminality, from stained glass windows to wrought iron gate fragments. The New York-based artist’s practice has often restaged spaces and objects that have defined her personal and cultural memory; here, she interrogates the things closets, church windows, and other thresholds witness—and what remains as a trace.

To mark the show, which runs through September 14, Stingily sat down with *CULTURED* to talk about giving herself permission to revisit work, her fascination with portals, and the literary diet she’s been following.





Portrait of Diamond Stingily. Photography by and courtesy of Farah Al Qasimi.

**CULTURED: Tell me about the ecosystem “Orgasms Happened Here” springs from.**

**Diamond Stingily:** I've spent a lot of time by myself. This show started from an older piece I wanted to expand on, and from me wanting to not be so linear with my work. I don't want to just make a piece and move on—sometimes I want to elaborate as to why I made the piece or to look at it differently. I think I should be allowed to revisit and not constantly keep producing different things all the time.

**CULTURED: This whole idea of novelty can be kind of a trap in the art world. Is this idea of looping back into work that's existed in the past a way to protect yourself from that?**

**Stingily:** Why not go back to it? Poets revise poetry all the time. That's just how I'm looking at my art to a certain extent, like you can go back and revise that if you want to.

**CULTURED: Do you remember what headspace you were in when the original *Orgasms Happen Here* was made in 2021?**

**Stingily:** We were all still semi in lockdown. There were still a lot of restrictions as to what people could and could not do. I do think it was collectively a traumatic experience. It was a strange time for everybody.





Diamond Stingily, "Orgasms Happened Here" (Installation View), 2024.

**CULTURED: When did you decide to revisit the work?**

**Stingily:** I've been wanting to do it for a while ... I talk a lot about giving myself permission or some type of allowance. Sometimes someone will approach me and be like, "Would you like to do a show?" And I say yes. But then based on the space, I'll be like, "Okay, I have this idea in mind, and I would like to execute it here." I want more people to see my work, and if I have opportunities for that, then I'm going to take it.

Sometimes I do shows in countries where the majority of the people don't look like me. That's fine because art should be for the masses—all types of people should be able to see my work—but I would love for more people in my image to see my work. So I also felt like this was a great opportunity because I'm showing in New York. I've been living in New York for almost 10 years, so I just want more New Yorkers to see my work too, not just people who regularly go to institutions or galleries or museums.

**CULTURED: The suburban American household is very present in the show. How are you translating that for a New York audience?**

**Stingily:** I grew up in the suburbs, but I wasn't just always in the suburbs. My parents are both from the West Side of Chicago, both of my grandmothers were still over that way and my family was still over there. I spent a lot of time in the city ... I'm not nostalgic the way that a lot of people think that I am. I don't yearn for the past. I am just really fascinated with my culture.

A lot of people, especially a lot of Americans that did grow up in the suburbs, can relate to being a part of two worlds in a certain way. Having grandparents from the country, having parents from the city, and then me growing up in the suburbs, and how all these historical, economic, and personal histories have affected me and my friends and people who grew up like me.





Diamond Stingily, "Orgasms Happened Here" (Installation View), 2024.

**CULTURED:** What was so fascinating about the closet, a leitmotif in the show, for you?

**Stingily:** I kind of feel like it's a portal. I've always been fascinated with portals, how to get from one place to another. As a child, I was really superstitious, and I believed in magic. It's like the book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, I truly believed for a second, if you went into a closet at a certain hour, you could be someplace else or spirits or beings could come out of the closet. Doors and windows in general really fascinate me for that reason.

**CULTURED:** Have you had any recent experiences with closets that have been revelatory for you?

**Stingily:** No, but I notice that at night I always make sure my closet door isn't even cracked open. I think you should have your doors closed. That's maybe a superstition. I also think a closet space is filled with secrets. It's storage; sometimes [it holds] things you don't want to be bothered with, things you don't have the heart to donate or throw away.

My mother kept my prom dress and my American Girl dolls in the closet for years. And a lot of my friends have funny stories like, "Oh yeah, I used to masturbate in the closet," so shame could be related to the closet space, too—things you don't want to talk about.

**CULTURED:** The show also includes stained glass windows inspired by your great-great-aunt's Baptist church in Chicago. What about that space was potent for you?

**Stingily:** I liked her church when I was a kid because the artistry is really beautiful in that church. Also, going to church was cool because you could see how community works. Within the church space, there are some people you don't like, but you got to work with them still. I wasn't necessarily a religious little girl. I wasn't going to church every Sunday, but what made me think of it more was when my mother and grandmother died, I remember my Auntie Pearl, who's in her 80s, was like, "You should go to church because you need community."

I was like, "No, Auntie Pearl, I have friends." And she was like, "I know you have friends, but you need community." And I got what she was saying: She meant you need a group of people that actually show up. Whether or not they like you or not, you are a part of the community and they're going to help you. She was aware of something that most people my age actually lack. She was not saying I need God; she was like, "You need real community."



Diamond Stingily, "Orgasms Happened Here" (Installation View), 2024.

**CULTURED: It's a community that's not going to ghost.**

**Stingily:** There's no sunsetting on your friend because you don't know how to talk to them about this thing. Within some communities that discomfort is actually necessary to bring people closer. That's one of the reasons why I made these stained glass pieces. But I also think the Black church has changed a lot. As a kid, I thought a lot about that ... Some of the work that I make is very "if you know, you know." The work that I'm making is almost archival, because if you grew up with a Southern grandma, maybe you get it.

**CULTURED: What's your relationship to making work right now?**

**Stingily:** I'm very blessed to be a working artist. My grandmother has said this, and I believe it to be true: You can't complain to people that do not know. But I think I could be a little bit more disciplined. I wish I was an early bird, but that's not my schedule right now when it comes to sleep. I work really good at night because right now I can't really go to sleep at night.



I don't want to beat myself up because I'm not somebody that wakes up at 5 and goes on a jog and does all these things before noon. I go in and out through phases of feeling like I'm a disciplined person and then sometimes feeling like an unorganized child. I have a love-hate relationship to the idea of work.

**CULTURED:** An almost adolescent yearning is central in “Orgasms Happened Here.”  
**What do you yearn for?**

**Stingily:** A nice, big check. Peace of mind ... I don't yearn for anything I could tell a magazine about. I want something for my future self for sure, but there's no desperation.



Diamond Stingily, "Orgasms Happened Here" (Installation View), 2024.



**CULTURED: Writing has been a big part of your practice in the past. Are you working on any text-based work these days?**

**Stingily:** I'm still trying to write a novel, but those things take time. When I was in Paris, I was very confident in myself to the point of being almost a little too bold. I was like, "Oh yeah, I'm gonna write a novel this summer." I was thinking, *So-and-so did it in a summer, this person did it in a month, that could be you*, but that's not me. As I'm gaining more experience, I'm really coming to accept my position in the world. As much as I wanna write, I also know to be a great writer, you have to be a reader, and I've been reading a lot more.

**CULTURED: What are you reading right now?**

**Stingily:** This past week, I've read three books: *The Dry Heart* and *The Road to the City* by Natalia Ginzburg and Roland Barthes's *Mourning Diary*, which is a book that I wish I would have had the capacity to read when my mother died. Barthes kept a journal for two years after his mother died, and how he describes mourning and grieving is very articulate, graceful, and beautiful.

Reading it felt like I was listening to someone who has gone through what I've gone through, who knows the loneliness of grief. And now I'm reading *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* by bell hooks. I think bell hooks is similar to me to the extent where I don't think she's nostalgic. She writes a lot about her childhood, and she talks about her experience as a Black woman, but she was very present and future-focused.

Another book I'm reading is by Anne Carson: *Glass, Irony and God*. Carson makes up her own rules, and that's really cool. I noticed I like these female, almost rebel writers. I really like female writers that are weirdos. They want to be a part of the world, but they just know they're weird. They're different.

Bell hooks was so radical. She really shook the room. She made people uncomfortable sometimes. She had tea. You're not gonna be well-liked all the time if you're telling truth. Reading has been very meditative for me. I don't even want to be on social media at the moment, because I got too much going on in my personal life. I want to focus on me, my friends, and my family. I get caught up in being like, *Am I doing enough for the world?* I just want to be present, right now.

BlackBook Presents. "Looking Back with Diamond Stingily." *BlackBook Presents* (June 26, 2024) [ill.] [online]



## LOOKING BACK WITH DIAMOND STINGILY

The artist's new exhibition, 'Orgasms Happened Here,' serves as a portal into her childhood home.

JUNE 26, 2024



Photograph from the artist's personal collection, 2004. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker.

Last week, artist Diamond Stingily opened her new show, *Orgasms Happened Here*, at 52 Walker. The gallery is installed to look like scenes from Stingily's childhood, as the exhibition explores the inner workings of her adolescent memories. Youthful throwbacks of sports gear and newspapers live inside foldaway closets, pieces of iron metal gates signify guardianship, and stained glass windows live in the gallery walls, symbolizing the sanctuary these settings hold.

The inspiration behind the exhibit is derived from Stingily's childhood, specifically the home where she spent her adolescence. When she and her family moved into the home, her brother discovered a sticky note in the closet of his bedroom that read "Orgasms Happened Here," thus inspiring the title of this exhibition. Stingily also noted the French folktale of *Bluebeard* as being one her inspirations for the exhibition. In the tale, the wife of Bluebeard opens a locked door in his castle out of curiosity, and finds previous wives in the curious hall.



Inside the exhibition, each architectural space is a window to a specific memory from Stingily's upbringing. The exhibition portrays an average American household, through multiple life size bedroom closets with mini scenes inside, as well as stand alone doors and stained glass windows. The identical windows are built into the gallery walls, with sheer curtains draped over the awnings and a light blue hue shining through. Stylistically similar to the architecture in Stingily's great-great aunt's Baptist church in Chicago, they act as a commentary on how her family church within an urban community enacts the same comfortability that she felt within her adolescent bedroom.

The closets are also built into the walls of 52 Walker, protruding out and allowing the viewer to glance inside, similar to being at home and looking into one's own closet. The different closets displayed in the exhibit are a cheeky look into the actual closets that stood within Stingily's home. Newspapers fill the walls, folded towels line the shelves; one is filled with wooden and metal baseball bats, while another has white button downs that hang freely as the wall behind it is decorated with ads of cars for sale with beautiful women in push up bras and mini jean shorts.





Installation view, Diamond Stingily: Orgasms Happened Here, 52 Walker, New York, June 21–September 14, 2024. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker.

Pieces of an iron fence are sprinkled throughout the gallery, making it feel as though you are walking down the street and looking into a suburban home. The gates outside of a home guard those that live within the space, so although the iron pieces have sharp ends and jagged exteriors, there is a softness there – protection, and a sense of security.

As we get older, childhood memories and spaces become increasingly more foreign. Although these memories still live inside us, and make up who we are today, at times they can be hard to visualize. These standalone spaces that Stingily has created act as portals – a literal look inside to a more youthful time in life.

***Orgasms Happened Here* is the twelfth exhibition for 52 Walker, since its opening in October of 2021. Stingily's exhibition will be up for public viewing now through September 14.**

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Jafa, Arthur. "Diamond Stingily and Arthur Jafa on Ego, Grief, and Dopamine." *Interview Magazine* (June 12, 2024) [ill.] [online]

# Interview

## Diamond Stingily and Arthur Jafa on Ego, Grief, and Dopamine

By [Arthur Jafa](#)

Photographed by [Sam Penn](#)

Styled by [Julio Cesar Delgado](#)

June 12, 2024



*Diamond Stingily wears Dress, Top, Pants, and Shoes Balenciaga. Earrings Agmes.*

*Orgasms Happened Here.* That's the title of [Diamond Stingily's solo summer show](#) at New York's 52 Walker gallery. The title stems from an uncanny childhood incident embedded in the 34-year-old artist's memory. When her family moved to a subdivision in Romeoville, Illinois, a teenage Stingily and her brother were investigating the house. In one of the rooms, they came upon a sticky note that read, "Orgasms happened here." Even then, struck with the perverse residue of the previous tenant, Stingily knew she'd stumbled upon a great title. So much of the artist's work stems from the power of language and the potency of childhood memories. Stingily moves fluidly between writing, visual art, and performance. But as fellow artist [Arthur Jafa](#) makes clear, creatives don't always like to be summarized in a few pat sentences.

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SUNDAY 10 AM APRIL 28, 2024 NYC

ARTHUR Jafa: Hey, Diamond. Where are you?

DIAMOND STINGILY: I'm in my home in Bed-Stuy.

Jafa: I know, like me, you travel a lot. I think I've only seen you in Europe.

STINGILY: We saw each other in New York a few weeks ago.

Jafa: Did we? My god, my brain. I've been running on fumes. I don't remember anything from my opening. It's a blur.

STINGILY: That's what happens to me too. I won't be remembering my opening.

Jafa: Yeah. I was going on two weeks of three hours a night of sleep. I was sleeping in the gallery. Anyway, it's good to see you. Something I wanted to ask you about is the Europe thing. Do you feel any difference between the kinds of things you show in the States versus Europe, particularly as a Black artist?

STINGILY: Honestly, A.J., I don't think about what I'm going to show in Europe versus at an American institution or a gallery. But the audience is different, so it definitely gets talked about differently.

Jafa: A lot of times I go see shows and feel like I don't know what the artist feels. It's very masked. One of the things I've liked about your work is the way it confronts villains. Do you have a particular philosophy or aesthetic ethos about that?

STINGILY: I only express what I know. I'm a sensitive person. Seriously, very sensitive. So, if people can feel something coming off of my work, that's great, but that's not necessarily a conscious thing when I make art. I'm not, like, "I want people to feel this." But I think I'm a very honest person. It's hard for me to not be myself, and that's a line of vulnerability. I think people pick that up, so that's great.

Jafa: I know a lot of people are curious about this dual identity you have as artist and writer, as if there's a split between the two.



STINGILY: But you have that, too.

Jafa: Well, not as a writer, because I'm definitely not a writer.

STINGILY: But as an artist you have so many different practices. You're also a cinematographer. And on top of that you're a father. It's not about split personalities, but don't you find different personas of yourself or how you carry yourself in different rooms?

Jafa: In an art context, people really want to box you. They've got to be able to frame you in a certain way. And if you have any sort of impulse towards the multidisciplinary, they get tripped up. I'm very sensitive to the idea that I'm a video artist. I love video. But whenever a person says something definitive about how they understand me, it tends to generate a countermove in me. I just don't want to be boxed in.



Installation view, "dead Daughter," 2021. Cabinet, London. © Diamond Stingily. Courtesy of the artist, Cabinet, and Greene Naftali, New York.

STINGILY: Sometimes I get irritated when someone tries to talk for me, but at the same time, I know someone is reading this and they're just trying to get a sense of who you are. If I'm interested in something, I'll go out of my way to figure it out. So, I try not to get too caught up in what an article or a paragraph about me says, because there's more to me than that.

JAF: You just used the word “irritating.” I get irritated about a lot in the art world. But one of the things I get wound up about is the way people will come up and speak to you with a certain kind of familiarity, you know what I mean? I know some is just my warped internal personality, because obviously it’s great, particularly when younger Black people are excited to meet you. But you can be having a conversation with somebody and they’ll just break in, start calling me Arthur, things like that. As soon as somebody’s like, “Yo, Arthur,” with this level of familiarity, I know they really don’t know me, because nobody calls me that name. A handful of people call me Arthur. I wonder how much of this is generational, because I do find younger Black artists are just so much freer.

STINGILY: It could be generational, but I also think I come from a matriarch that has really drilled in me that I truly have to believe in myself in order to survive. I can’t worry about what other people think. I’m really out here. So it’s like, you’ve got to be strong, you’ve got to stand tall. I am tall, I am Black, okay? I’m like, “Alright, you see me then. Respect it.”

JAF: I feel like I have freedom, but compared to this younger generation, it feels much more combative or insurgent. I feel like I’m making gestures that are against, as opposed to just being. But you seem like a Vulcan or something. Just above it, completely floating, which I guess I’m envious of.

STINGILY: I guess if you’re envious you’ve got to understand you’re part of the generation that allowed people to feel freedom. I also didn’t necessarily come from an institutional background. I didn’t go to art school, so maybe that could be a lot of my attitude as well.

JAF: I didn’t go to art school either. Sometimes in the art world I’m thinking, “I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.”

STINGILY: Yeah, the jargon that they talk. I had to teach myself art history and things like that. When I lived in Chicago, because I was intimidated to talk about art, I felt like I didn’t know what I was talking about, even though I probably did because I’m smart. But I volunteered at the Art Institute. It was me and elderly women. That was my group, so maybe I just approach it differently because I don’t think about the same things that my peers do. It’s not a right or wrong way, it’s just my way, and I’m constantly evolving. I’m also aware that as an artist, I have a lot more agency than a lot of people I know. I make my own schedule, and people are interested in my art and my thoughts. Sometimes I think the point of being an artist is to be able to do those types of things that we’re talking about.

JAF: There’s a certain degree in which, as artists, particularly as Black artists, it’s like you’re modeling what freedom looks like. I don’t mean modeling in the sense of, like, “Oh, you should imitate me.” I mean it more in the sense of, this is what running wild looks like, this is what being free looks like. And with that running wild part, my younger friends are much less self-conscious about it than I am.



STINGILY: I recently met [Brontez Purnell](#)—he’s older than me—and I was telling him, “I saw you doing your thing, and I was 11 years old listening to Gravy Train!!!! and I saw you. You got me curious about you. I kept up with your career.” I was talking to him, like, “I just wanna give you your roses right now.” I feel like he’s a part of an older generation that helped someone like me be who I am. Him, and other artists and writers like him. Whether you’re a fan or not, you can see the blueprint of what they did.

Jafa: I was reading an interview you gave where you were talking about your mom passing, and that’s something I’ve been struggling with. My best friend passed a couple of years ago. You used this word, “ascension.” I was struck by that word, and how you take the experience of losing somebody and make something out of that.

STINGILY: Honestly, I felt like I had to do it. That was my way of expressing grief. I can’t afford to build my mother a Taj Mahal, but I can do other things to express that I love and miss her. The same with my grandmother. I lost her two months after my mother, so I was dealing with a lot of the feelings that come with losing two pillars in your life. The word “ascension” for me was just something bigger than myself, above and beyond me.

Jafa: You seem appropriately named. Diamond.

STINGILY: Thank you. I love my name. When I was a kid, not so much. I wanted to be “Jasmine” really bad, but we got over that. I could tell my mother really thought about my name and put her heart in it.

Jafa: You started off as a writer, right?

STINGILY: No, I started off as a performance artist. I went to school for writing, but then I started doing a lot more performance art in Chicago. And I did [Martine Syms](#)’ [2015 video work] “Notes on Gesture.” That’s how I was introduced to New York in a lot of ways.

Jafa: Is being a performer in someone else’s work a different experience than when you are doing your own thing?

STINGILY: Martine’s the director, I’m the actress. I’m not in the room being, like, “It’s both of our things.” I’m aware of my position in the projects that I participate in, so there’s no butting heads or ego.



Installation view, "Holding Space" in Collection 1970s–Present, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Diamond Stingily. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photo by Robert Gerhardt.

JAFa: I was talking to somebody a few days ago about Madonna's acting career.

STINGILY: What about it?

JAFa: Exactly. What about it? It's nonexistent. They said because her persona, it was too big, she could never be in character. She always had to be Madonna, and that's why it didn't work.

STINGILY: She tore crazily in *Girl 6*. She was the madam.

JAFa: Maybe you're right. But in a way, it was playing a variation of herself.

STINGILY: Yeah, but she tore in *Evita*.

JAFa: That's definitely a variation of herself.

STINGILY: Okay, but she's Madonna, why's she got to be something else? Can we watch a movie and be like, "Wow, that's Madonna," and leave it alone?

JAFa: We can. But my friend was just saying that Madonna couldn't subsume her own persona in the character. In other words, this is going to sound weird, but she couldn't humble herself to the process.

STINGILY: But also, don't you think that's up to the viewer to allow the person to be that persona, too? We didn't allow her to be the characters because we were so caught up in the fact that it was Madonna. You talked about, earlier, being pigeon-held, and maybe that's what the audience did to her.

JAFa: I think I'm trying to say something that I get the sense you fundamentally don't agree with, which is this whole idea that artists' egos function in a certain kind of way.

STINGILY: At this point in the game, I'm not romantic about the idea of an artist, and every artist is so different as to how we move and survive. And yeah, I don't agree. But that's good. It would be boring if we agreed.

JAFa: Okay, what about the distinction I increasingly make, which is between making something and the presentation of showing them. Is that seamless to you?

STINGILY: To me, it's one thing. I make work because I want to show it. I like set design a lot, actually. So, I think about that in a way where it's, like, "How can I set this up?" I look forward to installing, actually. The install days are really fun for me.

JAFa: Really?

STINGILY: It makes me feel like I'm in a fashion show. I feel like a working bee.

JAFa: Me too. I just find that it's a very different feeling than in my studio making a thing.

STINGILY: Oh, yeah, in the studio it's a lot calmer. But I'm a pretty chill person, so the studio is very calm and quiet. But I get very anxious and emotional before an opening. It's like a teenager that wants to go to prom but doesn't want to take the picture. It's very, "She's in a mood."



JAFa: Do you have a sense of when you made an internal transition from being a writer to being an artist, or being a performer to being an artist?

STINGILY: No, but at one point I just quit my part-time job. And then something came up. [Terence \[Nance\]](#) was making *Random Acts of Flyness*, I acted in it, and it was like, “You’ve got to be fully all the way in it and just let go of the rope and free fall right now.” Because I had a job. The paycheck wasn’t huge or nothing, but it was like, “Okay, I have this job and I do some shows every once in a while.” Or I’ll act in this thing, and then I’ll go back to making coffee or whatever. And then, at one point I was like, “Okay, you’ve just gotta fully do it now.” That’s just what happened naturally.

JAFa: What’s your relationship to social media? I’m addicted to Instagram. Literally, when I wake up—

STINGILY: Really?

JAFa: First thing in the morning, I look at my phone, Instagram. If I wake up in the middle of the night, I look at Instagram on my phone. But I have to say, I never post. I posted a lot in the very beginning—literally, the first two or three months. I looked for a job, and I never went back to posting. So I post maybe once every two or three years, but I am locked in on Instagram like nothing else.

STINGILY: Damn! I ain’t know that.

JAFa: Oh, yeah, for real. Even my metric of my work clicking or connecting or getting trashed is not the art world, it’s not the art magazines, it’s definitely what shit gets reposted from my shows on Instagram.

STINGILY: But ain’t that just you getting off on dopamine? Are you addicted to the dopamine?

JAFa: No. If I see my own thing, I get a little dopamine hit from it, but it’s not like I’m checking my likes. I don’t even know how.

STINGILY: No. A.J., do not explain. You do not have to explain your interactions on Instagram. Yeah, we’re good.

JAFa: So how do you operate on Instagram?

STINGILY: I just post what I post and then delete it. I post and delete a lot. And I think I’m funny. So then, I’ll post something, get my little hee-hee-ha-ha out. My friends see it, they get my humor, they giggle, and then I’m like, “Okay, it’s been up for four hours. Delete.” And I don’t take selfies.

JAFa: But I’m a real connoisseur of people’s Instagram feeds. Some are beautiful, some are funny. Some of my good friends and artists I love have these genius threads.

STINGILY: I don’t have a thread.



Jafa: Well, clearly you don't if you delete shit after four hours. Okay, last question. What kinds of things are you envisioning in the future?

STINGILY: I don't want to say it because I want it to happen. I'm superstitious like that, for real. I enjoy being superstitious. Gives me something to get excited about.

Jafa: You said you're superstitious. I would say quantum.

STINGILY: Yeah, I like that word. Let's end it with, "She's quantum."



*Top, Skirt, and Underwear Miu Miu. Earrings and Necklace Agmes.*

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*Makeup:* Kuma *using* MAC Cosmetics *at* Streeters.

*Production Assistant:* Kiernan Francis.