

Harmattan Haze

Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Njideka Akunyili Crosby was born in Enugu, Nigeria, and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. She has exhibited at venues around the world, including the Fifty-Eighth Venice Biennale. She received a MacArthur Fellowship and is the recipient of honorary doctorates from University of the Arts and Swarthmore College.

I was born in Nigeria, where I lived until the age of sixteen, and in 1999 I moved to the United States, where I have remained since that time. My cultural identity combines strong attachments to the country of my birth and to my adopted home, a hybrid identity that is reflected in my work.

Many of my works feature figures in scenarios derived from familiar domestic experiences: eating, drinking, watching TV. These gestures are underscored by a second layer of imagery, only truly discernible close-up. Photo-collage areas are created from images derived from Nigerian pop culture and politics. Some of these images are from my archive of personal snapshots, magazines, and advertisements, while others are sourced from the internet.

Western art historical references are also included in the work as a means to counter generalizations about African or diasporic experience. In much the same way that inhabitants of formerly colonized countries select and invent from cultural features transmitted to them by the dominant or metropolitan colonizers, I extrapolate from my training in Western painting to invent a new visual language that represents my experience—which at times feels paradoxically fractured and whole—as a cosmopolitan Nigerian.



Njideka Akunyili Crosby, *Harmattan Haze*, 2014. Acrylic, color pencil, charcoal, and transfers on paper, 84 × 84 in. Photo: Mario Todeschini. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner © Njideka Akunyili Crosby.