

Bio

Afiwa Afandalo, a student artist from The Bronx and Togo, is currently a 4th year undergraduate with double majors in Africana Studies and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies with Studio Art and English double minors at Lehigh University. Her project is titled “‘I Refuse To Be Invisible...’ Narratives of Love, Communities, and Resistance in Africa and its Diaspora”. After graduating from Lehigh, she plans to take a well-deserved break to reconnect with herself and her siblings.

“I Refuse To Be Invisible...” Narratives of Love, Communities, and Resistance in Africa and its Diaspora

Artist Statement

“For Black women and femmes to exist in the future, they have to live and flourish in the present.”

- Cheyenne M. Davis

I think of my artistry as an archive of Black girls' and Black women's stories, and at the core of this archive is my love for every single Black girl and Black woman; each artwork tells a love story. Through painting and drawing, I celebrate their everyday stories and emphasize the importance of these stories in liberation movements. Inspired by the concept of Afroturism—which (re)imagines a world that centers Black people's past, present, and future—my work (re)imagines a world that centers the heritage, ancestors, culture, creativity, knowledge, labor, community, and future of Black girls and Black women. I use my experience and interactions with others to inform these imaginations. I ask myself questions such as: “What does it look like for me to live in a world where I am not rendered invisible?”

Every aspect of my pieces is intentional—some happy accidents do occur. My use of *avɔ* [African textile prints] in several pieces draws from my Ewe and Fon cultures of wearing *avɔ* during moments of joy and celebration. My choice of purple glitter is to portray the beauty and sacredness of Black girls and Black women. The color purple is often associated with royalty, creativity, and wisdom.

My artistry is also informed by Black feminist writers such as Anna Julia Cooper, Gloria Naylor, Audre Lorde, Yaa Gyasi, bell hooks, etc. The writings of these women confront controlling images that portray a one-dimensional experience for Black girls and Black women. I am also inspired by contemporary artists such as Tunji Adeniyi-Jones, Qualesha Woods, Bisa Butler, and Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Their portrayal of Black personhood has evoked in me a desire to be seen, be in community, and to create works that replicate these emotions for others.