

Artist Resources – Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (British, b. 1977)

Yiadom-Boakye at [Jack Shainman Gallery, New York](#)

The Studio Museum in Harlem hosted Yiadom-Boakye's [first solo exhibition in 2010](#), showcasing the artist's work beginning in 2003, when she received her MFA. In a 2017 interview with [Vogue](#), she comments on finding her creative path: "Instead of trying to put complicated narratives into my work, I decided to simplify, and focus on just the figure and how it was painted. That in itself would carry the narrative."

"I like this idea of ordering to something, this sequence, as something that essentially works to a certain logic," Yiadom-Boakye explains in a [video interview](#) at the [2013 Venice Biennale](#). "There being this link, making a certain sense, having a certain narrative across [the group]."

In her 2015 exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, [Natures, Natural and Unnatural](#), Yiadom-Boakye created new work inspired by selections from the [V-A-C collection](#). Landscapes and representations of nature comprised the majority of the show, an unusual foray for the artist, known for her figurative work. As she explained in an [interview with the curator](#), "The thing that I found really useful about nature is that in situating figures outdoors there is something timeless about it. There are no buildings there. You can give a sense of place, like a particular landscape...you can give that kind of suggestion and introduce the natural world as a context."



Yiadom-Boakeye in her student studio, 2003

[The Guardian](#) spoke with Yiadom-Boakye in 2015 as she prepared for a show at the [Serpentine Gallery](#) in London. Discussing her titles, she reflects how "they never relate to a specific narrative that would make sense to anyone else. The logic is entirely mine. I wouldn't discount them. I would think of them as an extension of the work, another mark, but not as an explanation."

[Glenn Ligon sat down with Yiadom-Boakye in 2015](#) at Munich's Haus der Kunst museum on the occasion of her exhibition, [Capsule 03](#). "It's something I'm always trying to explain to my students, trying to get them to believe in the mark itself and allow the mark to do fifty percent of the work. Because as soon as you think in outlines, you start to obsess over the picture rather than the painting....and it's the marks the actually give painting the meaning."

In the 2017 exhibition, [Under Song for a Cipher.](#), Yiadom-Boakye transformed the fourth-floor gallery of the New Museum in New York with seventeen new works and an immersive painted environment. [Vogue visited the artist in her London studio](#) to chat her career and inspirations.

"In the beginning, it's this building up of tone and color, and laying the foundations of something, and gradually sharpening and sharpening and sharpening," Yiadom-Boakye explains in [a conversation at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 2018](#).

[The Tate Modern](#) will host the most comprehensive museum survey Yiadom-Boakye's work in 2020, bringing together over 80 works and charting her career from 2003 to the present.



Yiadom-Boakeye, 2014, Photograph: Marcus Leith

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (British, b. 1977)

A Midweek Midnight, 2024

Oil on linen

Private Collection; L2024:109.1

“People are tempted to politicize the fact that I paint Black figures, and the complexity of this is an essential part of the work. But my starting point is always the language of painting itself and how that relates to the subject matter” - Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

Born in London to Ghanaian immigrants, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye rose to fame in the 2010s, when she had a solo exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem and was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize. Her intimate portraits of Black figures are imaginary and often depicted in nondescript settings; they could be any person of African descent across space and time. **A Midweek Midnight** is a recent example with Yiadom-Boakye's classic neutral color palette, painterly brushstrokes, and soft light that endow her figures with a deep sense of emotion and human experience.

On view May 28 – September 28, 2025





Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (British, b. 1977)

Afterword, 2019

Oil on linen

The Komai Shah & Gaurav Garg Collection; L2020:58.1

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye is a rising star in contemporary art, honored as a finalist for the Turner-Prize in 2013, winner of the Carnegie International Prize in 2018, and featured in the Ghana pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale. Reflecting her own story – born in London to Ghanaian immigrants – her elegant, intimate portraits explore nuanced complexities of race and identity through anonymous Black figures of African descent. Each portrait is intentionally fictional, without specific reference to time or place. As she explains, she paints “suggestions of people. ...They don’t share our concerns or anxieties. They are somewhere else altogether.” Yiadom-Boakye works in what she refers to as a stream-of-consciousness style, often completing a painting within a single day. The figure in **Afterword displays an aura of meditative repose**, showcasing the artist’s ability to create emotional impact through the handling of light, color, and painterly brushwork. The result is timeless yet immediate, conveying the palpable humanity of her figures.

On view June 17 – September 20, 2020