

Bunmi Augusto is an artist, writer, curator and art historian focusing on fantasy storytelling within West African contexts. Augusto is concerned with lives that exist in tandem with our primary reality — past, spiritual, interior and digital. Her practices are informed by her upbringing in Lagos, Nigeria. She is of Yoruba, Edo and Afro-Brazilian descent.

> AS AN ARTIST & WRITER

Bunmi Augusto holds a paracosm in her mind that she has named ‘Within’. This world exists as a macro-reflection of her own interiority and is subsequently a site for her explorations of psychology, cultural theory and the evolution of selfhood through the lens of fantasy. As featured in her paintings, the indigenous inhabitants of this world are eight hybrids born in the image of the artist with mutations based on formative emblems of her childhood and cultural development. Non-Hybrid humans are present in Within through family members, friends and passersby in the artist’s waking life who have been subsumed into the world through encounters and begin to occupy the role of cross-reality migrants in her mind. As a result, Within functions as a repository for all people, objects and theories the artist encounters in her waking life as she creates fantastical retellings of her lived experiences as well as the unseen mechanics of the metaphysical forces around us. Her works on paper depict fantastic, allegorical life on the sentient, braided landscape of Within. She combines drawing, painting and printmaking to create bold, intricate images with underlying geometric compositions that draw from West African aesthetic histories embedded in her cultural consciousness.

> AS A CURATOR & ART HISTORIAN

In Augusto’s work as a curator and art historian, she explores the legacies of West African cosmologies, metaphysics and magic in Nigerian art history. Her postgraduate dissertation at SOAS University focused on the remediation of the Yoruba Egúngún masquerade in contemporary Nigerian art. In this thesis, she analysed the ongoing influence of Ìsè in fantasy storytelling whilst situating this discourse in close proximity to Nnedi Okorafor’s Africanjujuism and Kameelah Martin’s Black Feminist VooDoo Aesthetics. Afterwards, she embarked on her fourth curatorial project ‘Masking The Unseen’ in Lagos —featuring the works of Yadichinma Ukoha-Kalu and Wale Matuluko— which exhibited contemporary remediations of mask traditions as a modes of capturing intangible essences.

Augusto’s concerns with fantasy and world-building are highly influenced by the life-simulation and open-world video games she plays —such as *The Sims* and *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Her engagement with world-building in these contexts has extended her interests into the realm of architecture. She even has an Instagram account ([@surrealistsimmer](https://www.instagram.com/surrealistsimmer)) dedicated to her architectural explorations within *The Sims*. In 2021, she collaborated with the founders of the Young Aspiring Nigerian Architects online community to create a website that acts as a digital resource for Nigerian and West African architectural history. Augusto advocates for the power of the built environment to transform and expand the quotidian human experience.

Prior to her career in art, Augusto competed in the Microsoft Office Specialist World Competition at the age of 2015. She came first in the Microsoft Word 2007 category and third in the Microsoft PowerPoint 2007 category nationally before being selected to represent Nigeria on the international level. Augusto came second in the Microsoft Word 2007 category worldwide and subsequently

became the first African to earn a medal in the competition's fifteen-year history. She often says that she would likely be work in tech if she was not in a creative field. However, her tendency to seek systems in seemingly abstract forms and notions is highly present in her art-making and research in the supernatural.

> CAREER

She earned her BA in Fine Art in 2020 from Central Saint Martins where she graduated with first class honours and was awarded the Cass Art Prize twice. She earned her MA in History of Art and Archaeology from SOAS University in 2022 and her MFA from the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford in 2023, both with Distinction. At Oxford, she was awarded the Clarendon Scholarship for outstanding academic merit and was selected for the Mansfield-Ruddock prize at her Degree Show. She was also selected for the Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2023.

She has been the subject of several solo and group exhibitions including: *Outside*, kó artspace, Lagos (2022); *Redefining the Trend - Histories in the Making*, Christie's, London (2022); 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, DADA Gallery, London (2022); *Psychoscape*, TAFETA, London (2022); *Escape To Within*, DADA Gallery, London (2021); *London Grads Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2021); *Wheels To Water*, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London (2020). She also notably exhibited her work alongside the presentation of Kenneth Ize's Spring/Summer 2022 collection at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Her work has been featured in print in DADA Magazine (*Issue No. 1*), Boy.Brother.Friend (*Issue No. 3*) and Town & Countryhouse (*Mar/Apr 2023*). Her work has also been featured digitally on The Financial Times, Women's Wear Daily and Another Magazine Online.