

Spencer Museum commissions new painting for KU Common Work of Art

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LAWRENCE — The Spencer Museum of Art commissioned artist Fahamu Pecou to create “Parable of the Sower: Oya’s Dream” as the KU Common Work of Art for the 2023-2024 academic year. The painting is Pecou’s response to the KU Common Book, “Parable of the Sower,” by Octavia Butler.



The Common Work of Art depicts a pregnant Black woman reclining with a copy of Butler’s novel held over her face and a portrayal of the “orisha,” god or goddess, Oya balancing on her hip. The protagonist in the KU Common Book is named Lauren Oya Olamina.

Pecou further explains the painting’s symbolism: “Oya, the orisha of change and transformation, serves as a powerful symbol in Ifá cosmology. Through the character of Lauren, we witness the importance of mentally, spiritually and physically preparing for the storms of life. Oya teaches us that change is not something to be feared, but rather a catalyst for growth and evolution.”

This painting is part of Pecou’s “Trapademia: Lit” series, which juxtaposes Black bodies with famous literary works by Black authors. “Oya’s Dream” will be featured in the Spencer Museum’s fall exhibition “Black Writing,” which explores the power, politics and complexity of language in contemporary Black culture. The show is in partnership with the History of Black Writing (HBW), a research center at KU that specializes in the recovery and preservation of texts by Black writers.

“Black Writing” and the KU Common Work of Art will be on view at the Spencer Museum from Aug. 19 through Jan. 7, 2024. Pecou will give a talk at the Spencer Museum at 4 p.m. Nov. 30.

Resources for expanding conversation about the KU Common Work of Art are [available online](#).

Image: Fahamu Pecou, "Parable of the Sower: Oya's Dream," 2023, courtesy of the artist.

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