

## 2023 Common Work of Art

### *Parable of the Sower: Oya's Dream*, Fahamu Pecou



**Fahamu Pecou**

born 1975, Brooklyn, New York, United states

**[Parable of the Sower: Oya's Dream](#)**, 2023

acrylic, canvas

Dr. Fahamu Pecou, EL2023.026

Each year the Spencer Museum selects a Common Work of Art to provide a visual pairing with the [KU Common Book](#). This year's selection is a commissioned painting by Fahamu Pecou to accompany *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler.

Written in 1993 but set in 2024, Butler's post-apocalyptic novel is about a young hyper-empathic woman named Lauren Oya Olamina who intends to establish a new religion. As Lauren encounters climate change, structural inequality, and social collapse, we as readers can learn to embrace change, seek expertise, and support and trust one another.

*Parable of the Sower: Oya's Dream* depicts a pregnant Black woman who reclines 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. Oya is an *orisha* in Ifá cosmology, a belief system practiced by Yoruba peoples of West Africa and believers in many parts of the African diaspora.

Pecou elaborates:

*"Oya, the orisha of change and transformation, serves as a powerful symbol in Ifá cosmology. Through the character of Lauren in Octavia Butler's Parable novels, we witness the importance of mentally, spiritually, and physically preparing for the storms of life. By embracing the inevitability of change and cultivating the seeds of possibility within us, we can navigate the tumultuous waters of transformation and emerge stronger, wiser, and more aligned with our true selves. 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. The series title refers to trap music, a sub-genre of hip-hop, and the euphemism "lit," which means aroused or excited and is also an abbreviation for literature. The Common Work of Art is featured in the Spencer's fall exhibition [Black Writing](#), which explores the power, politics, and complexities of language in contemporary Black culture. The exhibition is a collaboration celebrating the 40th anniversary of KU's [History of Black Writing](#) program.

The Common Work of Art and Black Writing will be on view at the Spencer Museum August 19, 2023 - January 7, 2024.



**Learn more:**

[Read Fahamu Pecou's statement about the Common Work of Art](#)

[Watch Fahamu Pecou discuss his Trapademia: Lit series \(2:02–4:39\)](#)

[Explore Fahamu Pecou's website](#)

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