



Installation view, Ranti Bam, *Anima*,
James Cohan, 291 Grand St, New York,
NY, May 17 - July 26, 2024.

Ranti Bam

Anima

291 GRAND ST | MAY 17 – JUL 26, 2024

James Cohan is pleased to present *Anima*, an exhibition of ceramic sculptures by British-Nigerian artist Ranti Bam, on view from May 17 through July 26, 2024, at 291 Grand Street. This marks the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery and her New York debut. The gallery will host an opening reception on Friday, May 17 from 5-7 PM and an exhibition walkthrough with Bam on Saturday, May 18 at 2 PM.

Ranti Bam engages with the feminine; confronting notions of fragility, vulnerability, and care. Her recent practice explores multivalent concepts of anima—which in Latin represents the soul and in Jungian philosophy is defined as the feminine spirit tied to emotion, empathy, and sensitivity rooted in the unconscious. Bam creates clay forms that embody this life force in two related bodies of work: *abstract vessels* and *Ifas*.

In *Anima*, the artist draws inspiration from the symbolic amalgamation of Eden and Hieronymus Bosch's painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, building a sculptural world that reimagines Eve as prima materia—the primal feminine. The *abstract vessels* are constructed with thin slabs of overlapping earthenware and are often supported by legs, while others are grounded flat. Using the language of gestural painting, the artist works with slip—a pigmented liquid clay—to rub and transfer painted sheets of paper onto the surfaces of her vessels, as well as painting directly onto the slabs. Her intuitive use of color is influenced by the exuberance of her West African

Yoruba heritage, as well as the palette of Bosch's Garden. Bam occasionally punctures her intricately patterned surfaces to reveal their glossy interiors, inviting the audience closer.

Interspersed throughout the gallery and perched on stools, the artist's meditative *Ifas* reference the body and ritual practice. The torso-length vessels are shaped by the artist's physical embrace. These forms subsequently pucker, crack, and sometimes collapse in on themselves during the firing process; a compelling metaphor for fragility. The *Ifas* are rendered in raw earth-toned stoneware and terracotta, some a copper color, rich with red iron oxide and others stone, ashy gray, and deep charcoal black. "Ifa" in Yoruba means both (ifá): divination and (I-fáá): to pull close, reflecting on the transformation from pure material to states of expression. The stools that the vessels rest upon, known as 'akpoti', are integral to indigenous life and are used to facilitate spiritual and material sustenance; rest and communal gathering. Bam symbiotically fuses these supports with the vessels, presenting her *Ifas* as votive offerings or "portals" to another sphere.

Through her work in clay, Bam searches for a new state of consciousness, one that is unbound. Her colorful *abstract vessels* and corporeal *Ifas* emit an interior spirit that encourages public contemplation and invites us to embrace vulnerability.

Ranti Bam (b. 1982, Lagos, Nigeria) pursued her formal studies in London where she received an MA from The Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design and a diploma in ceramics from City Lit. Bam was the subject of a solo exhibition titled *Common Ground* (2022) at Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, Bucharest, Romania. Recent notable group exhibitions include *Insistent Presence: Contemporary African Art* (2023) from the Chazen Collection, Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin, and *Hard/Soft: Textiles and Ceramics in Contemporary Art* (2023), Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria. Bam's work is represented in the public collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Contemporary Art Society, London; Chazen Museum of Arts, Wisconsin; High Museum, Atlanta; Victoria & Albert Museum, London. In 2023, Bam was commissioned to produce a series of *Ifas* for the Liverpool Biennial in the United Kingdom.

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