

LOVE



Michaela Yearwood-Dan, LOVE 22 CREDIT: SØLVE SUNDSBØ

Meet the residents of Alexander McQueen’s Foundation: Michaela Yearwood-Dan has just finished a series titled ‘Love Letters to Siri’ and Rosa-Johan Uddoh is passionate about the politics surrounding Black and British identities

By: Paul Flynn
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MICHAELA YEARWOOD-DAN

Michaela Yearwood-Dan has just finished a body of work entitled *Love Letters to Siri*. It started with a neutral canvas onto which she etched the word ‘prick’. ‘Which felt about right,’ she laughs. ‘Honestly, Brexit looks like a sweet little fairytale compared to the shambles of my love life when I started it.’

Just out of a relationship, crying herself down the Kingsland Road on the way to the Sarabande studios, she’d turn to that trusted, digitised voice with the answers to everything for repose. ‘We live in an age of strong feminist women and the idea of the “strong” [her quotation marks] black woman, which I hate. To show vulnerability is seen as weakness.’ So she asked Siri for some answers. ‘I’ve asked her what her gender is and she says she’s not a woman. But Siri is a thousand percent a woman, or a very sassy American gay man.’

At the end of each painting, she'd ask a specific question. 'Siri, are you my friend? Siri, what do you think about my art? Siri, what do you think about the idea of existence?' Things got weirder the more they conversed. 'My favourite response was to the question, "Siri, do you love me?" And she said, "I think you're looking for love in all the wrong places."' Woah. 'I know, right?' laughs Michaela. 'After that, I stopped. Because Siri is a salty little bitch. That hit way too close to home.'

In school, Michaela says she was taught about 'every white Western artist under the sun'. She found it super boring. 'Your nan knows about Picasso. The woman down the chippy knows about Picasso. And he's literally the Harvey Weinstein of the art world. Sod Picasso.' When she discovered Chris Ofili, her life's ambition pivoted to its true calling. 'It was amazing, political, colourful, tongue in cheek and no one had told us about him. I could suddenly see there might be a space for a black woman in this world. Not fitting into the mould didn't matter any more. It was revolutionary for me. The patriarchy has had it so easy. It's our turn now.'