

# “Réveillée”

CR Rousseau  
Oil on Canvas  
48 x 48 inches  
\$4400



## Rationale from **Cathy Meyong, Fashion Designer**

This collection is a visual analysis of the western concept of blackness. The research journey started with looking at how dehumanisation of Black people and the demonisation of west African spirituality were used as tools of oppression. These were tools crucial to the colonisation of the African continent and are prevalent to this day in western society and across the globe. I looked at colonial uniforms and used them as a basis of my visual research. I used upcycled leather remnants from upholstery, thrifted fur coats and dead stock fur. I bought horns from antique collectors and real wings from ethical taxidermists I found in Facebook groups. The animal parts I am using are meant to question the demonisation of black religions such as Haitian Voodoo and Beninese vodun — to name a few — by referencing animal offerings that take part during certain ceremonies. It is meant to question why religious animal offerings are denounced while mass farming under extremely cruel conditions is widely accepted in The West. This whole collection is aiming to make you feel uncomfortable. I want people to look at it and ask themselves, why do I feel discomfort when looking at horns and wings but still go home and enjoy my chicken burger.

I researched into its most widely misunderstood and falsely portrayed aspects - such as animal offerings and spirit mounting (also falsely called possession). I also researched the true meanings and purposes behind the practices and compared them to their false portrayals by “Hollywood” and western media. It is an ongoing personal journey to educate myself, understand and unlearn false stereotypes that even I, too, had been led to believe.

## About the Visual Interpretation **CR Rousseau, Abstract Artist**

I appreciate Cathy’s work as she looks at demystifying misunderstood spiritualities in various African cultures as well as understanding the diaspora of her own family. Raised in Germany, she took her graduate collection in a direction that aims to make viewers uncomfortable with the misportrayed stories of numerous cultures and the impacts of their trauma.

My concept puts the feeling of tragedy into visual blocks through a semi-cubist style. I place the woman in whole, trying to represent her as complete and not in parts. Her gaze is her own and although she looks at you, you cannot see her eyes watching you. Her ensemble and her scene are broken into components and parts, then reassembled in a way that feels like a fragment from the past and yet it is visually futuristic.

Representing the fragmented and chaotic nature of trauma, the painted shapes are mostly square, used like building blocks that lend the painting an air of fortification and strength. These stable shapes are a symbol of Cathy’s intention, to build strong foundations for community and the support of future generations. The parts have a separateness yet they are interconnected.

With the intent of representing the emotional and psychological impacts of oppression, I hope to symbolize the act of bringing light to fallacies and misrepresentations, while delivering an awareness that is informed and conscious of social injustice and inequalities.