

## **Diana Blain Fine**

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Diana Blain Fine is a visual artist from The Gambia whose works across photography, collage, painting and installation represent her engagement with societal norms around beauty and power in Africa and the West. Diana spent her formative years across continents and has lived in The Gambia, the U.K., Pakistan, Liberia, Indonesia and the U.S. Her personal experiences living under state-sanctioned military dictatorship in Southeast Asia as a child, as a young teen witnessing the dawn of a bloody military coup in Liberia, and as an immigrant transplanted to the suburbs New York, all continue to inform and inspire her work. Diana fuses her background in sociology with the intimate and introspective practice of self-portraiture to challenge aesthetic ideals and gaze upon their effects on our interiority. Her art practice incorporates self portraiture, use of natural and artificial light, color, prosthetics, fabric and found objects in service of creating constructed images that tell stories. Diana is a graduate of Columbia University with a B.A. degree in Sociology. An artist and a farmer, she currently lives on her farm in upstate NY.

### **Current Work**

***The Future's So Bright series:*** My current portraiture project interrogates the ways in which Western ideas of purity of body and beauty have left an indelible imprint on local and diasporic communities some six or more decades after independence. Specifically, the work explores identity modification through skin bleaching; a beauty practice that has consumed much of Africa and the “Global South”. The works depict dark beauty as well as an uneasiness with the self, fractured interiority and the disembodiment effects of adherence to prescribed beauty standards. I place myself in much of my work as both the objectified and objectifier, the ill-favored and the aspiration. In doing so, I create a visual portal to bear witness to and engage with the practices and messaging around beauty, skin and power. The works are an offering, an invitation to take an unflinching look at what our communities across the African diaspora take in and what we make of ourselves in our human need for worth, power, and upward mobility.

***Aunty Vicky:*** Producing and co-directing a documentary about my Aunt Vicky Blain. After an unfortunate event found her at the center of a family scandal at the age of 13, Vicky was sent away from Gambia to a boarding school in western Ireland. While on a school language in Paris, she was discovered by Loulou Gaste, the renowned French composer, and landed a recording contract with RCA. Vicky sang in her native Wolof, French and English, and became an international star performing on the Johnny Carson Show in 1971. Beautiful and confident, Vicky found herself in the center of the Pan African arts movement rubbing shoulders with Miriam Makeba, Nina Simone, Kwame Toure, Harry Belafonte and African heads of state and revolutionaries who were emerging on the global scene. A 1979 interview in South Sudan started rumors of her being a spy, and terrified she retreated into privacy, leaving her fans wondering, “What ever happened to Vicky Blain?”

## **Exhibitions**

- 2025      *Black Dimensions in Art: For Liberation and For Life*  
The Albany Institute of History & Art  
Sixty works by contemporary New York State artists that also includes historic works by Elizabeth Catlett, Kerry James Marshall, Roy DeCarava, Alison Saar, Romare Bearden, Zanele Muholi, Lola Flash and Henry Ossawa Tanner
- 2024      *POP: Art with Mass Appeal Exhibition*  
Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center in Maryland in association with The Smithsonian. Winner of one of three Juror awards. Juried by Keri Towler, Director of Collections, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.
- 2024      *Critical Forum Arts Exhibition*  
The Arts Center of the Capital Region, Troy, New York
- 2023      *Fence Select Exhibition*  
The Arts Center of the Capital Region, Troy, New York.  
Juried by Corinna Ripps Schaming and Yael Erel
- 2023      *Life Thru the Lens*  
The Arts Center of the Capital Region, Troy, New York.
- 2022      *Adorned: Inspired by Fabric and Fashion*  
Annamarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center in association with The Smithsonian
- 2019      *Future Now Group Show*  
Pierro Gallery, South Orange, New Jersey
- 2018      *Blue Scarf Collective: Art in the Time of Resistance*  
Pierro Gallery, South Orange, New Jersey

## **Awards**

- 2024      Vermont Studio Center Residency / Pollock-Krasner Fellowship Award
- 2025      Yaddo Residency (December 2025)
- 2025      Ucross Residency (September 2025)

## **Additional Work**

Farmer and Founder of Holy Forest Farms, Hudson Valley, New York, [www.holyforestfarm.com](http://www.holyforestfarm.com)

## **Education**

Columbia University, New York, NY, B.A. Sociology 2000