

EBONY G. PATTERSON

Seph Rodney, What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now, The New York Times, 1 June 2022



Installation view of Ebony G. Patterson's *... to kiss a flower goodbye ...* at Hales New York, Photo by JSP Art Photography

Ebony G. Patterson's work in her show *... to kiss a flower goodbye ...* pulls me in varying directions at the same time. For example, the installation piece *... in the lament ... there is a nest ... a bursting a ... nourishing* (2021-2022) contains rivulets of white beads cascading down to the ground, giving into what the poet Jorie Graham describes as "the slack and heaving argument of gravity." Simultaneously, riotously colored flower stalks sprout upward, a host of plastic Monarch butterflies pervade the air and a python insinuates itself into the underbrush. There is so much happening in Patterson's night garden that I learn to really see it only by first giving into the abundance, letting the flora and fauna represented by appliqué, fabric, trim, feathers, resin and glitter overwhelm me. It's a monsoon of colorful embellishment, and I know I'm going to be drenched.

But it's that relation of opposites that has kept me coming back to Patterson's work for several years now. In this work, her use of collage is obvious, but there is also *décollage*, the tearing and cutting and subtracting of visual evidence from the digitally printed photographs and tapestries that form the foundation of these installations. Her gardens are always a confluence of contradiction: restoration and rebirth, but also burial and violence. With the human figures she nestles inside the foliage and ornaments, a hand here and a torso there, Patterson suggests not only that we can still live in this place of incongruous opulence but that we might belong there.