

DOMINIQUA ELDRIDGE

From scarification and neck stretching, to lip plating and sculptural hairstyles, Dominiqua Eldridge celebrates in her digital and embroidered works the many beauty traditions found throughout the African diaspora.

The Maryland-based artist uses soft, saturated color with crisp detail in her *Ethno Beauty Collection* series, which honors various body modification practices and beauty standards that have long existed outside of the Western gaze. “I created this collection to show the untouched power and beauty of black women,” Eldridge said. “My goal is to control and change the narrative of what is seen as being black and how we define beauty.”

It’s this series that caught the eye of Mickalene Thomas, who selected Eldridge as one of eight artists to have their artwork displayed in the terrace gallery portion of *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment’s Pleasure*, on view through 2021. This immersive installation reimagines the Museum’s two-story East Lobby as a living room plucked right out of a photo album from the 1970s and 1980s. As visitors enter the building through what appears as three classic Baltimore rowhouses, they’re invited into Thomas’ interpretation of a black family’s home of that era, outfitted with a massive vinyl photocollage, what appears as wood paneling and linoleum floors, and staged furniture. This arresting attention to detail and color is what Eldridge says she feels most connected to. “I am overwhelmed with how beautiful and amazing Thomas’ work is and the way she uses color and texture to create visual excitement and tell a story.”



Thomas explained to *The New York Times* that while intuition guided her overall selection process, her work and that of the selected artists have a thread of creative commonality. “There are definitely some intersections with materiality and domesticity, and color and pattern,” Thomas said. “And we use the black body as an image.”

Eldridge’s regal depictions of the black female body are presented among several framed works including Devin N. Morris’ textured paintings of interiors, Clifford Owens’ serene images of naked bodies blanketed solely by the surrounding natural environment, and a painting by Theresa Chromati in her signature style of glittering, Surrealist figures twisted from the imagination.

Each work in the terrace gallery is illuminated by the glow of 11 short films by Baltimore-area artists played on rotation. The affirmation that *A Moment’s Pleasure* provided Eldridge and other artists whose works are on view has inspired the artist to continue pursuing her passion.

“To have my work included in this installation at the BMA is amazing,” she said. “I remember last year feeling very defeated within my art career, so to have been given this opportunity, it has reassured me that I am an artist.”

Left: Installation view, *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment’s Pleasure*. Photo by Mitro Hood