

# A.I.R.

## *dreamgurl* Asia Stewart

April 22–May 21, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, April 22, from 6–8pm

Gallery performances: Saturday, April 29 and Sunday, April 30, from 2–6pm

GALLERY III



Asia Stewart, *is my mascara running?*, 2023, Archival pigment print, 22 x 28 inches.

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *dreamgurl*, an exhibition by 2022–23 Fellow Asia Stewart. *dreamgurl* features a series of self-portraits that explore the production and reproduction of sexually explicit images. This is Stewart’s first solo exhibition in New York City.

Stewart was inspired to begin this series after a video of her 2020 performance “La Nègresse blanche,” which includes nudity, was downloaded by an anonymous Vimeo user named “J” and shared on various pornographic sites without her consent in February 2021.

Although Stewart had originally intended “La Nègresse blanche” to be a commentary on double consciousness, internalized racism, and the epidermalization of whiteness, J had classified the work as masturbatory material and ironically distributed it as PAWG (phat ass white girl) porn. Notably, J exoticizes Stewart’s naked Black body by repeatedly drawing attention to her “dark and meaty cunt,” nipples, and “kitty.” Despite Stewart’s numerous attempts to regain control of the video, it continues to pop up on different sites every few months to this day.

After processing this violation, Stewart felt that she needed to reckon with the fact that her art can be classified as pornographic because it centers her naked body. Rather than disavow this designation, Stewart uses her latest series as an opportunity to explore the possibility of being a producer of pornographic images.

Stewart started collecting dozens of vintage 1980s *Playboy* magazines to study the physical language and gestures displayed in archetypal pornographic materials. Cutting out the bodies of white (and often highly bronzed and airbrushed) centerfold models, Stewart embarked on a mission to entirely cover her body in an assemblage of thousands of magazine clippings. *dreamgurl* documents Stewart’s construction of garish Frankenstein-esque molds of her body, an act that took place over twenty hours in the privacy of a studio. The messy performance incorporated honey, Q-tips, saliva, sweat, hair, and dirt.

Stewart used the photographs and videos from her durational performance to produce self-portraits of her face, chest, stomach, pubic area, thighs, and ass, which now hang in the gallery. The exhibition also includes a single remnant of the performance: one of the masks that was adhered to Stewart’s face. It sits in the gallery on a mirrored vanity table in front of a magnified scan of the object, becoming a metonym for the slippery, sinuous relationship between image and performance.

In *dreamgurl*, Stewart offers up abstracted flesh for consumption. She invites audiences to be unashamed about their voyeurism as they move through the gallery and delight in eyeing (and occasionally fingering or trying on) the collaged pieces. Yet, in this project of exposure, Stewart reveals herself on her own terms. Subverting general assumptions of the “nude selfie” by cloaking herself in images of others, Stewart largely keeps her own body hidden.

**Asia Stewart** is a Brooklyn-based performance artist whose conceptual work centers the body as a living archive. After receiving degrees in the social sciences from Cambridge and Harvard University, she has sought ways to transform the language specific to studies of race, gender, sexuality, and diaspora into materials that can be felt and worn on the body. As a National YoungArts Winner in Musical Theatre and a former National Arts Policy Roundtable Fellow with Americans for the Arts, Stewart uses her past experiences on stage to inject her work with a heightened sense of theatricality. Stewart has received various honors and support for her works in performance from organizations that include The Shed, Franklin Furnace, A.I.R. Gallery, Marble House Project, GALLIM, and the Brooklyn Arts Council.

Stewart routinely questions how she can best document her performances and represent movement and physicality across mediums. Her works in video and installation have been exhibited at venues across the United States, including the Mercury Store, Untitled Space, NARS Foundation, Goodyear Arts, A.I.R. Gallery, Kellen Gallery, and Anthology Film Archives. Her first series of prints is also now held in the permanent collection of the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC.

A.I.R. Gallery is wheelchair accessible via ramp. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating with backs. Free tap water is available. The venue is nearest to the F train at York St (0.2 miles) and the A train at High St (0.5 miles). The nearest wheelchair accessible trains is the B, Q, R at Dekalb Av (1.1 miles) and the 2, 3 at Borough Hall (0.8 miles). The roads immediately surrounding the gallery are cobblestone. The nearest accessible parking garage (for an hourly fee) is two blocks away at 100 Jay St. No ID necessary for entry. Please contact [info@airgallery.org](mailto:info@airgallery.org) for more information.



[Asia receives unsolicited email from an unknown man]

██████████@hotmail.com

Mon, Feb 15, 2021, 5:33 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

to me ▾

Hi Asia,

I recently came across a video of you online, I think it was from a performance. I thought it was interesting because your breasts are very large with a nice shape and your nipples were quite dark and erect.

Is it ok if I add it to my xhamster profile? I know many people would like to see them.

Sincerely,

J ██████████

[Asia responds to J and tells him that his actions are unacceptable violations of her consent.]

██████████@hotmail.com

Mon, Feb 15, 2021, 6:14 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

to me ▾

Dear Asia,

I honestly thought you wouldn't mind it. Being on a porno site will make the video increase in popularity quite a bit. I really find your body sexy.

Anyways I'll let you know as soon as it's offline.

Cheers,

[Asia repeatedly asks J not to share *La Négresse blanche* on any sites, including pornographic sites.]

██████████@hotmail.com

📧 Tue, Feb 16, 2021, 6:09 AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

to me ▾

Dear Asia,

Your nipples are really nice. I love it when you show them like this.

Also in one of the scenes I can make out your vagina lips, it's so sexy.

[Asia does not respond to J's email.]

██████████@hotmail.com

Sat, Feb 20, 2021, 12:35 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

to me ▾

Asia I think you don't mind having your breasts and your vagina exposed. I added it to a new profile.

J ██████████



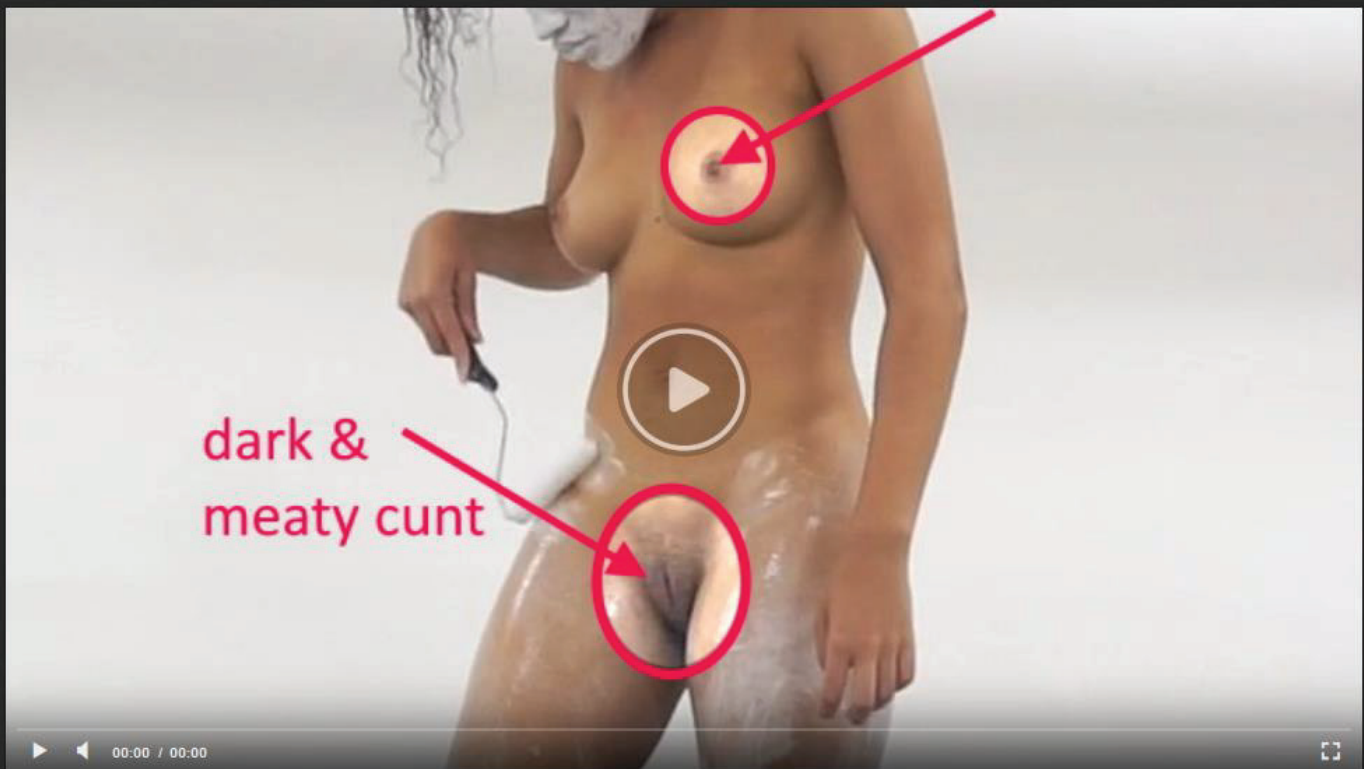
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Asia Stewart wants to be a white girl with a dark kitty



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Duration: 34:10 | Views: 909 | Submitted: 7 months ago

Submitted by: Artful Exposures

Categories: Ebony WTF Public Masturbation

Tags: white girl Asia Stewart wants to be a white girl WITH dark kitty

