

Tschabalala Self expands painting into new dimensions, creating works that blur the boundaries between representation, materiality, and lived experience. The hardwood floors that appear in many of her domestic interiors recall the work of pioneering African American painter Horace Pippin, among the first to acknowledge the quotidian beauty of Black domestic life. Self is also connected to the lineage of Black women artists like Faith Ringgold and Dindga McCannon working with textiles and fabrics within expanded painting practices. By drawing on this lineage, Self situates her explorations of vulnerability and desire within a broader history of Black representation in art.

At the centre of this room, Self extends these ideas into three-dimensions in Soft Kiss 2023. The larger-than-life sculptural figures command presence while retaining an intimate connection to her painterly universe. Self explains, ‘I really wanted to see if I could push the formal aspects of the painted works and make them fully three-dimensional’. As in her paintings, attention to surface is paramount: ‘There’s quite a lot of attention given to the stitching,’ she notes, ‘the stitching is both functional and decorative.’

For Self, this process is more than a technical experiment. By creating sculptural figures that share the same physical space as the viewer, she collapses the distance between art and audience. ‘The purpose of having these sculptures in the exhibition is so they can exist in the same realm as the viewer,’ she says, ‘to shift relationship from viewer and painting, observer and object but to name the exhibition space as the figure’s universe.’

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

The Soft Kiss 2023

steel frame, wire, upholstery foam, wadding and textiles

193.0 × 150.0 × 252.0 cm approx.

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

The works in this room explore the charged dynamics of desire, observation, and domestic intimacy, probing the dimensions of both physical and psychological interiors. In Candy 2021, a female figure reclines prostrate in a darkened interior, she is nude as a mysterious presence appears in the doorway. Light spills through the entrance, creating a moment suspended between anticipation and uncertainty. The title alludes to consumption, availability, and perceived desirability—suggesting either reward or indulgence. Is this figure coming or going? Is this encounter warm, cold, or neutral? Tschabalala Self deliberately leaves these narratives open-ended, allowing viewers to project their own experiences and interpretations onto the scene.

Blue Woman 2025 portrays a dignified older woman — proud, matriarchal, and deeply present in her physicality. Suspended within a spiraling domestic setting, her posture suggests longing, vulnerability, and unspoken desire. Self observes, ‘She’s quite languid in her movement... her hand extended out, beckoning for affection or assistance.’ The spiraling floral stamps take on psychological dimensions, suggesting unrest and tumult.

At her throat, is a cyanotype of activist Angela Davis, lending the figure a ‘voice’, perhaps suggesting her resilience, power, or resistance. The title, Blue Woman, also evokes both colour and mood. As Self explains, ‘to be blue can be to be sad, to be melancholy.’ Yet the work resists pathologising depression and melancholia, instead it is about recognising turbulence as part of shared human life —and rest and acceptance as forms of resistance.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Blue Woman 2025

acrylic paint, grease pencil, fabric, thread, and painted
canvas on linen

259.1 × 243.8 × 3.8 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Candy 2021

fabric, felt, acrylic paint, Flashe paint, pigment and dyed
and painted canvas on canvas

243.8 × 243.8 cm

Courtesy the artist and Longlati Foundation

‘When people are having one feeling, what they’re actually having is many, many thoughts, an infinite number of thoughts, associations, and memories, all collapsing on themselves in one instance.’

— Tschabalala Self, 2025

The three large-scale paintings presented along this wall are investigations into physical and psychological interiors, portraying moments of self-reflection and contemplation staged within domestic spaces.

Chest 2020 turns to the quiet poetry of the everyday. A man leans back, removing his shoe, absorbed in a moment of solitude. Self explains, ‘The figure is vulnerable in this scene as he takes off his shoe and leans against his dresser.’

Ordinary moments can offer glimpses into something more profound, ‘These are the moments when you realise a lover’s beauty or uniqueness.’ In its tenderness, Chest reveals how mundane gestures can hold profound emotional truth, capturing vulnerability, exhaustion, and the intimacy of shared life.

Lady in Mirror 2024 offers a playful meditation on self-perception. A figure studiously observes her own reflection, comically contorting herself in the elusive pursuit of self-knowledge. The work complicates the traditional association of mirrors with vanity, proposing instead that reflection can be both absurd and revealing, a site where identity slips between the serious and the humorous.

The Exhibitionist 2023 depicts a kneeling figure in a domestic setting before a blooming yellow flower. Meeting the viewer’s gaze while exposing one breast, she holds power in her conspicuous display. The flower becomes a mirror to her gesture — a symbol of beauty, sexuality, and desire.

Tschabalala Self imagines this character as confidently presenting herself for an observer, her ease and self-assurance turning vulnerability into strength.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

The Exhibitionist 2023

acrylic paint, oil paint, oil pastel, soft pastel, fabric, thread,
paper, dyed canvas, painted canvas on canvas

213.4 × 182.9 × 5.1 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and
Petzel Gallery, New York

Lady in Mirror 2024

fabric, painted canvas, thread, acrylic and oil on canvas

213.4 × 182.9 × 5.1 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and
Petzel Gallery, New York

Chest 2020

fabric, acrylic, and painted canvas on canvas

213.4 × 182.9 cm

Courtesy the artist and Longlati Foundation

A reimagining of the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve 2025 explores the delicate balance between opposing forces. Hung against a bold black-and-white striped wall, the diptych amplifies Tschabalala Self's interest in duality — opposites held in tension. 'Similar to a checker board, the stripes have a yin and yang relationship. They are opposing yet conjoined, working in cycles with one another, like the sun and moon, when combined these forces create the totality of our universe.'

The diptych captures the suspended moment of choice, evoking the complex interplay between curiosity, harmony, and change. On the right panel, Eve holds an untouched apple — a symbol of potential knowledge, transformation, and destruction. As Self explains it, 'Eve has a curiosity about the message from the snake, the apple simultaneously holds the power for expansion and destruction. The collision of the two will create the chaos that we are familiar with in our current state of being. Will Eve lose God's favor? Will this loss result in her ultimate salvation through choice?'

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Snake 2025

black theatre paint on white wall

dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist, painted with assistance of staff and students from the Victorian College of the Arts,

The Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne:

Harry McEvoy, Darren Munce, Madeleine Palmer,

Poppy Skipper, Mary Shaw and Zamara Zamara

Adam and Eve 2025

acrylic paint, grease pencil, fabric, thread, and painted canvas on linen

259.1 × 243.8 cm each

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

In dialogue with Tschabalala Self's reimagining of Eden, the newly commissioned works Snake 2025 and Bold Reclining Nude 2025 face one another, forming a meditation on fear, transformation, and embodiment.

Snake traces the artist's journey of confronting and releasing a long-held emotional state. Part biblical allegory, part personal mythology, the snake first appeared to Self as a vision: urgent and insistent. Painting it became a way of releasing it from her mind — an act of spiritual and personal liberation. 'I saw something in my mind's eye... it appeared as a visual manifestation of a feeling I had been having for a long time,' she recalls. For Self, the snake was 'a physical manifestation of fear... something I was ready to let go.' Later, she found clarity on the encounter, 'Despite the challenge of the confrontation, I realised it was actually quite a positive experience. Maybe it was just something that needed to be reckoned with in order for something else to come about.' The snake has since become a potent symbol of transformation, echoing mythologies of renewal across cultures, including those of several First Peoples Communities in Australia.

Paired with Snake, Bold Reclining Nude celebrates the feminine form and Tschabalala Self's lived experience. Using lino cuts and silicone stamps, the work fuses figuration and abstraction to reflect growth, complexity, and the layered nature of embodiment. 'I see this figure as existing in a liminal space,' Self explains, 'but her space is the most physical of any of my works.' Rich with symbolic language — eyes, mouths, and floral motifs — the figure embodies blooming, abundance, and the shifting line between body and metaphor.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Bold Reclining Nude 2025

acrylic paint, grease pencil, fabric, thread, and painted
canvas on linen

224.8 × 254 × 3.8 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Snake 2025

acrylic paint, grease pencil, fabric, thread, and painted
canvas on linen

213.4 × 243.8 × 3.8 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Man in Frame 2025 presents a contemplative figure gazing beyond immediate reality, embodying moments of solitude, spiritual seeking, and personal transformation. The work conveys hope, yearning, and the desire to transcend personal limitations in search of connection with something greater. Tschabalala Self notes:

‘He is peering out of his home, he is under the sky, making a wish, saying a prayer. Self explains.

‘In this sense, the figure becomes a universal symbol of reflection and resolution’.

– Tschabalala Self, 2025

Tschabalala Self

Born 1990, Harlem, New York

Lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Man in Frame 2025

acrylic paint, grease pencil, fabric, thread, and painted canvas on linen

243.8 × 121.9 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

‘Submission is not only about control, submission can be an act of love, or acceptance.’
— Tschabalala Self, 2025

Challenging conventional assumptions, Submission 2025 and Humility 2025 reframe ideas of surrender as an act of personal empowerment. The works explore the radical potential of acceptance and rest, suggesting that true strength lies in understanding one’s emotional landscape.

In a world where marginalised bodies have long been compelled to resist, Tschabalala Self offers an alternative narrative of liberation. ‘The Black body, especially the Black woman’s body in the American context, has been burdened with constant expectation of activation,’ she explains. These paintings challenge the expectation of constant struggle, proposing instead a form of radical self-care.

Submission here is not capitulation but a complex emotional strategy. ‘You can spend your whole life trying to convince people of your humanity, or you could just live,’ Self observes. Crucially, these works are about choice — what she calls ‘submission by personal choice’ — a deliberate act of letting go, of finding peace in acceptance. They propose surrender not as weakness, but as a profound act of self-knowledge, healing, and faith.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Submission 2025

243.8 × 213.4 × 3.8 cm

**Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and
Petzel Gallery, New York**

Humility 2025

243.8 × 121.9 × 4.4 cm

**Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and
Petzel Gallery, New York**

‘Taking a seat is an act of power. It can be about reclaiming a seat at the table, but it can also about just taking a break.’

— Tschabalala Self, 2025

In a historical context where Black bodies have been valued for labour, Seated 2019 represents an act of self-determination. The earliest work presented in Skin Tight, Seated explores rest not just as a physical state, but as a form of personal and collective liberation. By taking a seat, Self reclaims agency, challenging narratives of constant productivity and resistance, and asserting the fundamental right to pause, reflect, and restore.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Seated 2019

fabric, painted canvas, painted paper, lace, Flashe and acrylic on canvas

172.7 × 127.0 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York Private Collection, Shanghai

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Study 10 on Wood with Elevating Figure 2025 acrylic

paint, ink, dye, fabric, canvas, thread and Arches

paper on wood panel

30.5 × 40.6 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Study 11 on Wood with Black Beauty 2025

acrylic paint, ink, dye, fabric, canvas, thread and

Arches paper on wood panel

40.6 × 30.5 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Study 12 on Wood with Green Man 2025

acrylic paint, ink, dye, fabric, canvas, thread and

Arches paper on wood panel

40.6 × 30.5 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Study 9 on Wood with Mounted Figure 2025 acrylic

paint, oil paint, ink, fabric, canvas, thread and

Arches paper on wood panel

30.5 × 40.6 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

‘I intentionally make most of the works open-ended. I think there’s room for people to to interject their own narrative, and to allow their own feelings and memories to emerge.’

— Tschabalala Self

The Voyeur 2021 presents a male figure seated in a domestic space marked by tiled floors and wallpaper. He appears excitable and uneasy. A woman lingers at his side, but her presence is indistinct—phantom, memory, or fantasy—the viewer is left without answers.

The palette of purple, a mix of blue and red, marks out a space of liminality. The colour is used to evokes the ‘in-between’ states of emotion, of identity, and of the experiences that shape our humanity. Rather than offering singular feelings or fixed interpretations, Tschabalala Self embraces complexity, layering references and resisting the need for resolution.

Ambiguity of presence is a recurring motif in Self’s practice, generating psychological tension and opening her portraits to a non-corporeal world. Through overlapping metaphors and layered references, she creates a space suspended between reality and fantasy, where projection shaped by desire and observation reveals more about ourselves than about the figures depicted.

Hung opposite is Self’s diptych, Dreamers 2021, a meditation on intimate connection beyond physical reality. Dreamers depicts two figures separated by the boundaries of their respective picture planes, yet connecting in a different realm. The artist describes it as, ‘two lovers meeting in a dream state... both eyes are closed.’ This work suggests that profound emotional bonds can exist in non-physical spaces beyond immediate perception, representing the intimacy of shared unconscious experiences.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

The Voyeur 2024

acrylic paint, oil pastel, fabric, thread, painted canvas
on canvas

213.4 × 182.9 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

Dreamers (diptych) 2021

fabric, painted canvas, oil, acrylic, gouache and Flashe
on canvas

2 parts: 244 × 213 cm and 213 × 244 cm

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

‘Sounding Board 2021, was created for the Performa 2021 commission. Roselee Goldberg encouraged me to participate in the Biennial despite my disinterest in performance art at that time. She believed in the narrative potential of my painting works transcending the wall in a time-based medium. Sounding Board is an exploration into humanity relationship, exploration in human relationships, performativity, and the multiplicity of self.’

—Tschabalala Self, 2025

The Bigger Picture is a 3-panel installation based on the live performance called Sounding Board. This luminous and energetic play was originally commissioned for Performa 2021 Biennial. It is an immersive installation that explores the complex dynamics of artistic performance, gender roles, and power dynamics within intimate relationships.

The Bigger Picture blurs line between reality, fantasy, and performance. A male and female actor perform scenes of dialogue using humour and exaggerated sincerity in a conversation that moves variously from honesty to absurdity, earnest introspection to joyous melodrama. These two protagonists —an artist and their partner—are each portrayed by two performers, creating a doubled representation of both roles. A Boney M cover band performs some of the iconic disco group’s greatest hits to accentuate the emotional register of the drama, akin to a Greek chorus.

Staged in the amphitheatre bandshell of Jackie Robinson Park in Hamilton Heights in Harlem, every element of the meticulously constructed world – costumes, stylings, and backdrop – has been designed by Self. Infused with her distinctive use of patterning and colourful geometry, this exuberant realm expands out from the world of her paintings.

Beyond linear narrative, the film takes on the role of philosophical meditation, on life, on performance and on artistic practice. In translating her work into a moving, time-based medium, Self questions how storytelling can move across forms and expand beyond traditional boundaries. It is an exploration of human relationships, performance, and the multiple selves we inhabit both in our public, and our personal lives.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

The Bigger Picture, 2024

3-channel video projection with individual run-time

Ed. 1/3 + 2 AP

video loop / dimensions variable

left video 20:17 min

middle video 3:01 min

right video 47:49 min

Courtesy the artist, Pilar Corrias, London,

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / Vienna and

Petzel Gallery, New York

‘The trope of the reoccurring male and female figure are symbolic of opposing yet conjoined forces. Similar to the diamond pattern and the stripes, together they create a whole like the yin and yang.’

— Tschabalala Self, 2025

In this site-specific mural, Tschabalala Self reimagines the biblical characters Adam and Eve not as figures of sin, but as metaphors for opposing yet complementary forces. She explains, ‘The apple reveals a totality of all things good and bad, the duality will create chaos, giving a full understanding of the scope of all existing things.’

Painted directly onto the wall with support from students at the Victorian Collage of the Arts, these ephemeral murals are a meditation on curiosity, knowledge, and the generative power of difference.

Tschabalala Self

born 1990, Harlem, New York

lives and works Hudson Valley, New York

Adam and Eve 2025

black paint on white wall

dimensions variable

**Courtesy the artist, painted with assistance of staff and
students from the Victorian College of the Arts,**

The Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne:

Harry McEvoy, Darren Munce, Madeleine Palmer, Poppy

Skipper, Mary Shaw and Zamara Zamara