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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries

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Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba

Through Oct. 22. Someday, 120 Walker Street, Manhattan, somedaygallery.com.



Still from Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba's 2021 "Nosferasta: First Bite." via the artists and Someday, New York

Did you know Christopher Columbus was a vampire? It's true — at least according to the allegorically muddy "Nosferasta: First Bite," a mockumentary video by Adam Khalil, Bayley Sweitzer and Oba, a Trinidadian artist and musician. Oba also plays himself as the main character: a Rastafarian nightwalker, made by the bloodthirsty Italian back in 1492 as an entree into Indigenous society, navigating green card issues in present-day Brooklyn. The video flips between historical re-enactment and modern folly, mixing post-colonial satire with wacky tableaux like a pair of undead "moonbathing" on a beach in the 15th century or Oba studying for the U.S. citizenship test in the 21st. An ominous fisheye shot of Columbus Circle and its triumphal pillar rams home the fact that, even though Columbus is dead (the dreadlocked protagonist claims he killed his master after trying weed for the first time), his name lives on.

In the gallery, Oba's glittering sculptures reify spiritual traditions in the form of Day-Glo shrines and statuettes encrusted in costume jewelry, cellphones and Pan-African symbols. The teachings of Ras Tafari — respect for human life and resistance to Babylon — serve as shorthand for post-colonial hope, borne through time by racism. Jokes aside, the vampiric metaphor of "Nosferasta" replaces the heroic image of Columbus with that of a lecherous leech feeding on the blood of others, infecting them with his greed. This is different from tearing down statues. Instead, it dissolves them in the bootleg acid of myth. Just in time for the Day Formerly Known as Columbus. *TRAVIS DIEHL*