GOWEN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

COUNTER-MEMORY

Roméo Mivekannin

Show Presentation |

September 16 – November 28, 2026 | GOWEN

This Autumn, GOWEN is excited to present a first solo exhibition at the gallery by Beninese artist **Roméo Mivekannin** (b. 1986, Bouaké, Ivory Coast). *Counter-Memory* unveils fifteen new works made between 2025 and 2026, as well as key paintings from his past series of reimagined portraits in acrylic on velvet.

Extending Mivekannin's investigation into the ways personal and collective memories endure through the body and the image, the exhibition examines the structures of visibility that have shaped art history, bringing attention to figures pushed to its margins or excluded from its narratives altogether. Drawing on archival sources and the traditions of the Western pictorial canon, he revisits images shaped by the colonial gaze, treating their omissions and silences as sites for critical re-examination and reclamation. For this presentation, the artist deepens his reflection to consider contributions to this redress by a contemporary generation of artists.

Mivekannin's encounter with the archive stems from two exhibitions in Paris, both proving formative to this inquiry. *L'invention du sauvage* at the Musée du Quai Branly in 2011 and *Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse* at the Musée d'Orsay in 2019 both prompted questions around the formation, objectification and essentialisation of African identity, and the mechanisms through which certain bodies have been made visible while others have been anonymised, displaced or erased.

Roméo Mivekannin, *Lynette, Resurrect the Oracle*, 2026
Acrylic on velvet, 164 x 139.5 cm.
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © Roméo Mivekannin.

The current show develops these concerns exclusively through the medium of painting. Often produced with found materials, such as old bedsheets, traditional batik fabrics, and burlap, soaked in mixtures of pigments, spices, and elixirs inspired by Beninese voodoo customs, the works are imbued with spiritual and ancestral resonance, transforming the surface into a site of both ritual and resistance. Using acrylic, and with humour and a critical eye, Mivekannin creates high-contrast compositions, responding with what he has described as a "visual irritation": an intervention into inherited visual codes that unsettles established hierarchies. Inserting his own likeness into the image, his black-and-white silhouettes surface against dark backgrounds, quietly, yet with intent: posed, watching, held in stillness, on their own terms. The fabric's darkness becomes an active representational space within which the recurring face, like a surrogate, stands for those whose identities have disappeared within dominant accounts of the past.

In an intimate gesture, the viewer is brought face-to-face with these figures, their presence emerging from rich surfaces with an immediacy that reverses the conditions under which Black bodies have so often been represented. The act of looking shifts from something endured to something claimed.
Mivekannin explains: "The idea is to step outside the frame, to reclaim space, to bring figures out of the shadows."

Understanding his work, which is both fictitious and real, as an ongoing dialogue between past and present, and the social construction of skin colour, Mivekannin's acts of quotation, substitution and reappearance open familiar compositions to different readings, a process at once an homage and an effraction. His engagement with the current generation of artists who have shifted the terms of representation extends this logic into the present. In referencing his contemporaries, Mivekannin acknowledges practices that have created space for imagined Black subjects beyond the restrictive roles historically assigned to them.

Within *Counter-Memory,* these artistic lineages sit alongside archival ones, proposing another way of inhabiting art history. His figures - now with new agency - retain an assertion of their continuing place within the contemporary image.

Roméo Mivekannin has been represented by GOWEN since 2025. In November 2026, his work will be exhibited at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris and at the Kanal–Centre Pompidou in Brussels.

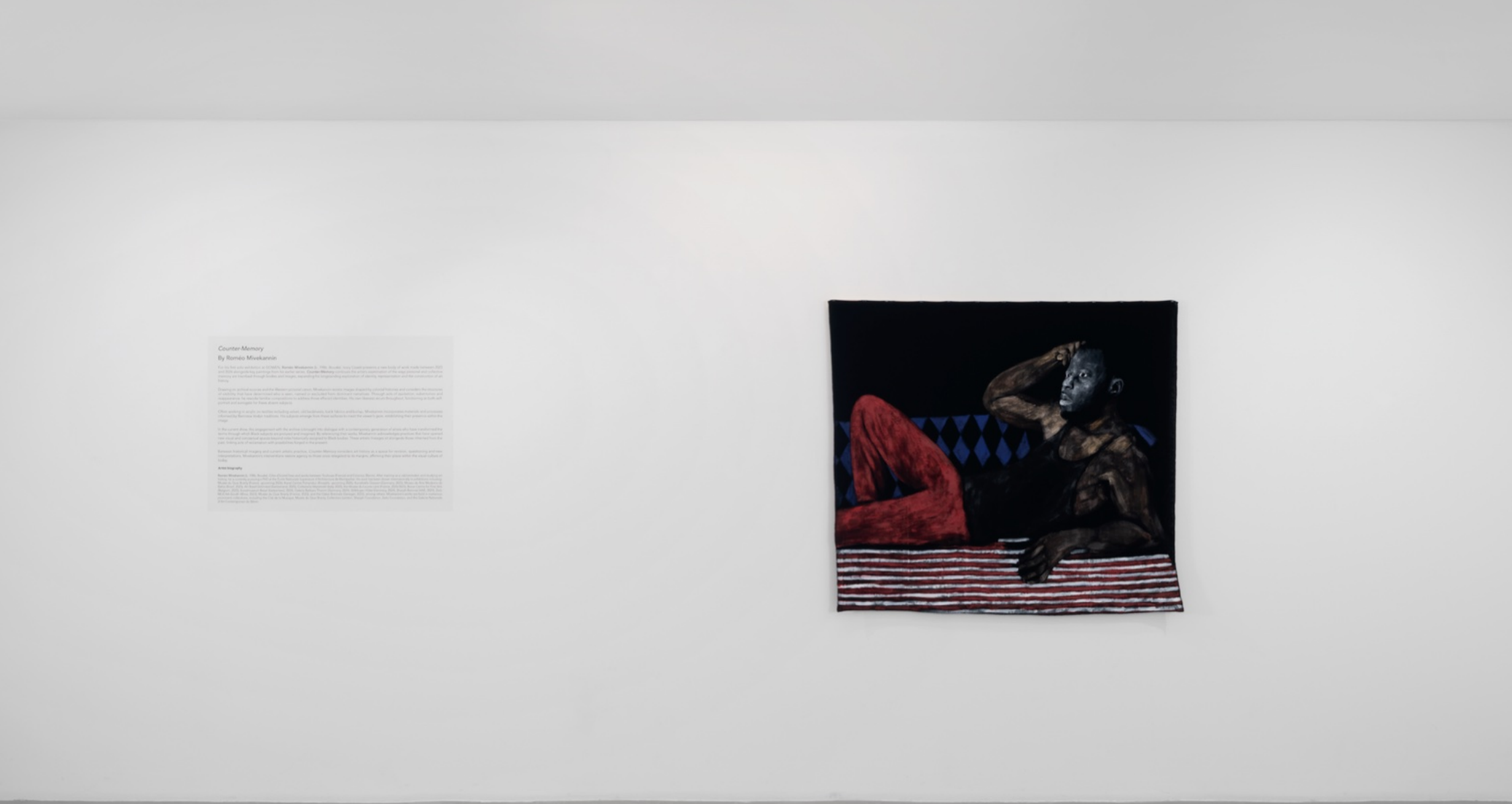
Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, Vigil for a horseman
Acrylic on velvet
132 x 137 cm
52 x 53.9 in
RM24

SOLD

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, Vigil for a horseman
Acrylic on velvet
120.5 x 137 cm
47.4 x 53.9 in
RM22

Inquire



Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, Resurrect the Oracle
Acrylic on velvet
164 x 139.5 cm
64.6 x 54.9 in
RM19

SOLD

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Tea Time after Lynette - Station 2, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
105 x 70 cm
41.3 x 27.6 in
RM16

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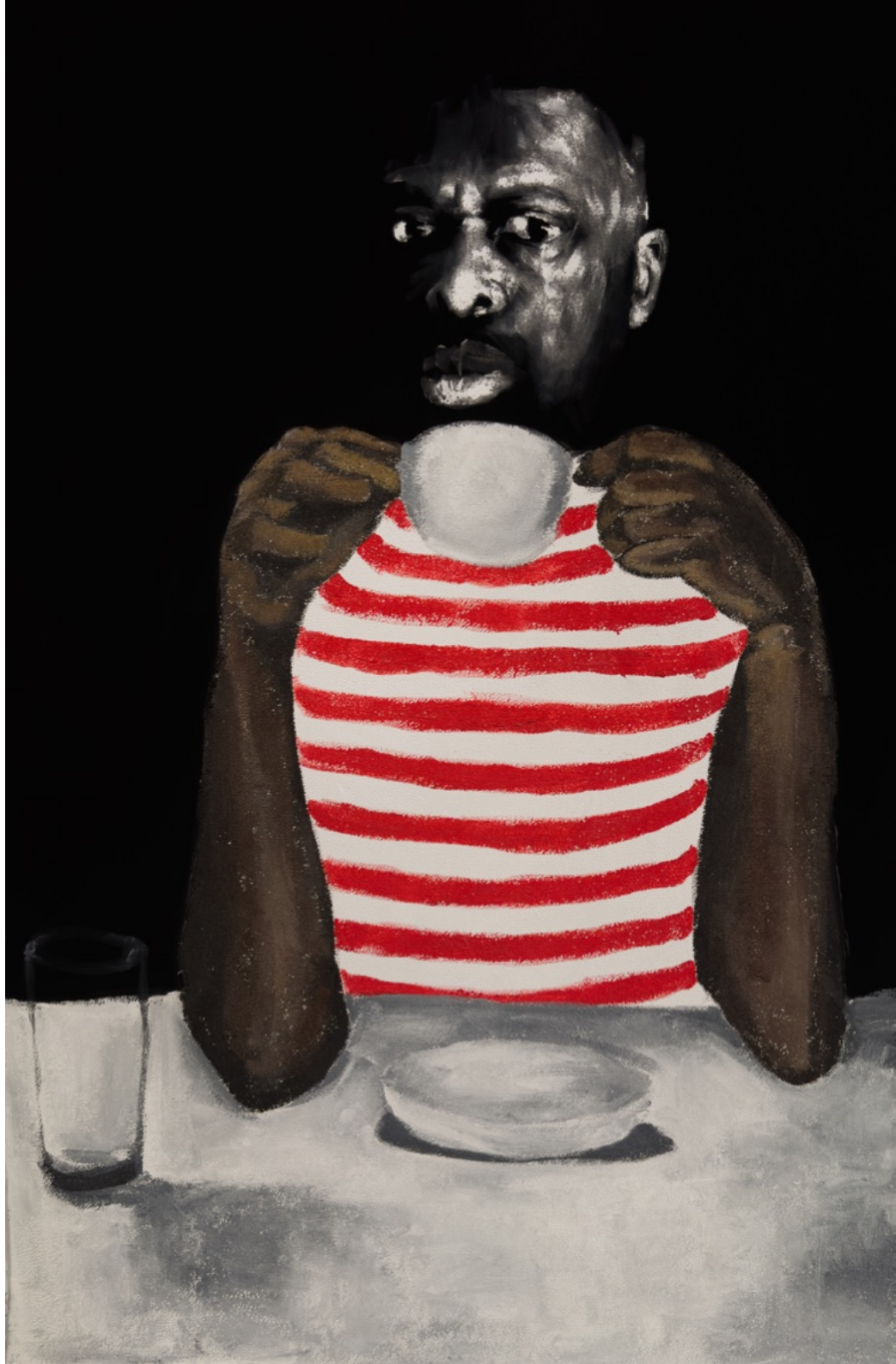
Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Tea Time after Lynette - Station 1, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
105 x 70 cm
41.3 x 27.6 in
RM15

Inquire



Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Tea Time after Lynette - Station 4, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
105 x 70 cm
41.3 x 27.6 in
RM18

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Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Tea Time after Lynette - Station 3, 2025
Acrylic on velvet
105 x 70 cm
41.3 x 27.6 in
RM17

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Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, Witching hour
Acrylic on velvet
260 x 135 cm
102.4 x 53.1 in
RM20

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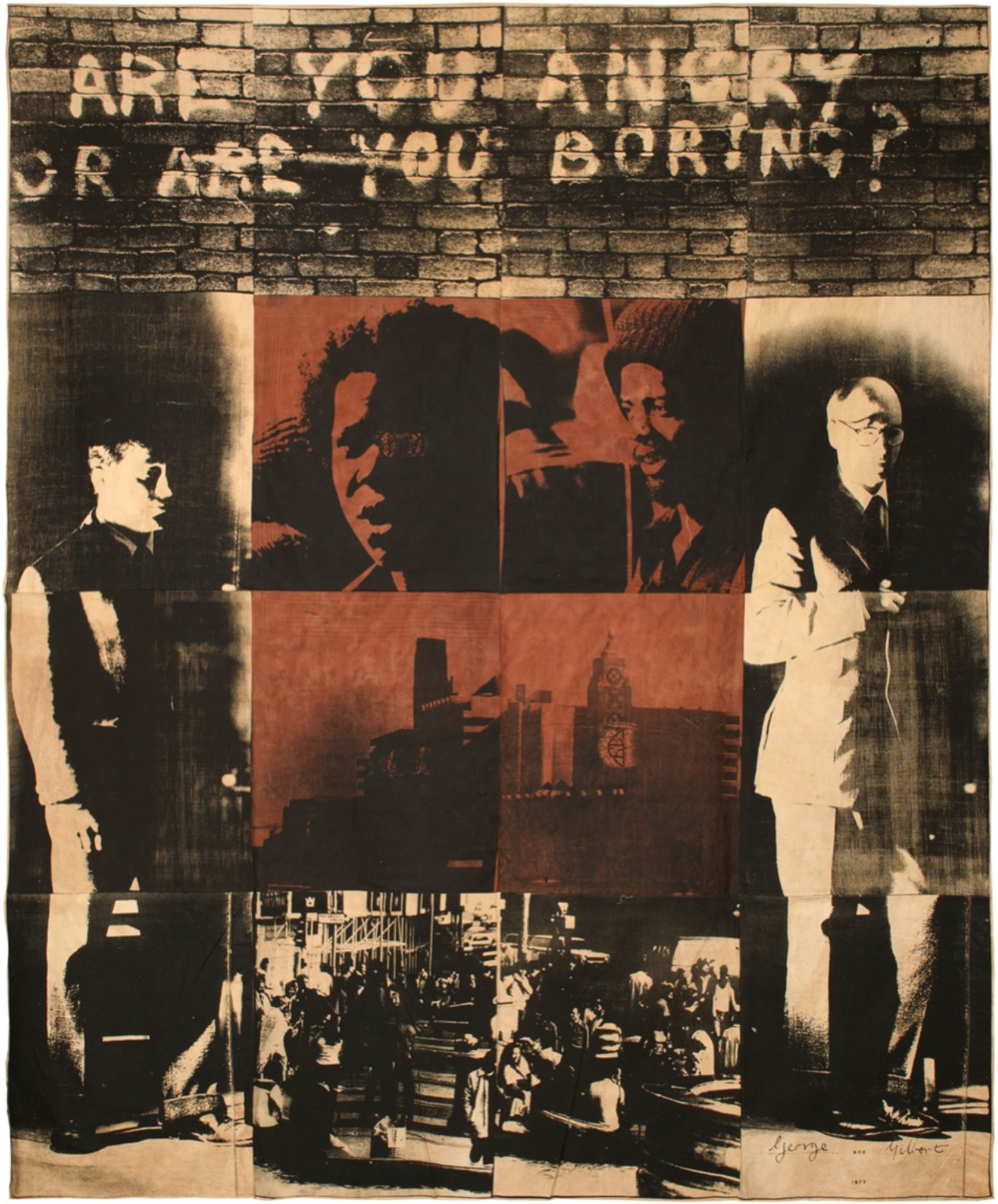
Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, 8pm December Sunday
Acrylic on velvet
208 x 136 cm
81.9 x 53.5 in
RM26

Inquire

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.



Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Dirty Words, 2025
Elixir on Sheets, mixed media
246 x 205 cm
96.9 x 80.7 in
RM33

Inquire

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Dirty Words, 2025
Elixir on Sheets, mixed media
247 x 561 cm
97.2 x 220.9 in
RM27

Inquire

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, 11pm Saturday
Colours on velvet
255 x 135 cm
100.4 x 53.1 in
RM25

Inquire

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, 10 pm Saturday
Acrylic on velvet
250 x 140 cm
98.4 x 55.1 in
RM21

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Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Installation View, *Counter-Memory*, Roméo Mivekannin, GOWEN, Geneva, CH, 2026. © Julien Gremaud.

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Lynette, Vigil for a horseman
Acrylic on velvet
122 x 136 cm
48 x 53.5 in
RM23

Inquire

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Anna in Red Kimono, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
148 x 147 cm
58.3 x 57.9 in
RM07

SOLD

Roméo Mivekannin (1986, Beninese)
Girl in Red Kimono in Front of a Mirror - After George Hendrik Breitner, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
190 x 137 cm
74.8 x 53.9 in
RM08

SOLD

GOWEN

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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