

# JANE LOMBARD



## Merryn Omotayo Alaka and Sam Frésquez *Your Birth is My Birth*

May 1st - June 13th, 2026

Reception: Friday, May 1st, 6 - 8 PM

Jane Lombard Gallery is pleased to present *Your Birth is My Birth*, the first exhibition at the gallery by the collaborative duo Merryn Omotayo Alaka and Sam Frésquez. Building upon their ongoing series, *Hairland*, this new body of immersive sculptural work collectively chronicles a speculative ecosystem in which evolution stems from Kanekalon Hair. Transforming the gallery into a conservatory, the works look to the natural world to explore physical sensations of intimacy, familiarity, and otherness. The exhibition marks the artists' New York debut, and will be on view at Jane Lombard Gallery from May 1st - June 13th, 2026, with an opening reception on Friday, May 1st from 6 - 8 PM.

Influenced by epiphytes: non-parasitic plants, such as many orchids, bromeliads, and mosses, the collective body of work stems from a botanical fiction. Developing within the framework of what Omotayo Alaka and Frésquez refer to as the Kanekalon forest, the artists' have centered this exhibition on five main species of works: *Listening Roots*, *Hearing Bells*, *Mother & Child*, *Stacking Pearls*, and *Umbra Pods*. Similar to an epiphyte and its host tree, these sculptural works have their own life cycles evoking systems of dependence and exchange, where one form sustains from another.

Anchoring the exhibition is *Listening Roots*, a colossal, tentacular structure which extends from the floor to ceiling. Rooted to the ground by lily pad inspired cylindrical bases, the elongated limbs stretch upwards as sheaths of hair stream down. The limbs join at the top, gently intertwining to suggest a growth cycle of kinship, a form of one developing from many. The play between individuality and community is also exhibited in *Hearing Bells*, a chain-like formation of delicate sculptures that bud in clusters across the exhibition. Hanging upon spools of long locks the works drape down, tiering into three convex nodules. These works hang together but alone, gradually drifting closer and closer to the ground in an attempt to tether towards a point of connection.

Passed through maternal lineages, hair binds individuals to histories of care and tradition. *Mother and Child*, a body of work conceived in pairs, encompasses both a large and small undulating organic form. These works both mirror and diverge from one another

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in ascending layers with the smaller, bulbous shapes reaching upwards while the larger forms float above. One body envelops another, eliciting a symbiotic relationship where nurture breeds nature. The *Stacking Pearl (Adolescent)*, is the next stage of maturation for the invented offspring of *The Mother & Child (Silky Belly)*. Dispersed across the gallery floor, hair extends both outward and downward from each structure, free flowing and expanding, connoting a movement toward autonomy.

Despite their immense scale, the works carry a feeling of intimacy. Suspended from high above *Umbra Pods* resemble an umbrella-esque canopy. Tufts of black hair drape around cylindrical patches of blonde strands. The distinction of color from blonde to black, alludes to the overall span of growth, from spore to roots. Here hair becomes a marker of genetic material, carried through generations simultaneously independent yet connected.

Your *Birth is My Birth* reflects the ongoing dialogue between two artists whose practices operate in symbiosis. Drawing on influences from science fiction literature, film, and conversations with botanists, the exhibition immerses viewers into an imagined environment that is at once playful and poetic. Lush, glossy, and meticulously combed, these sculptures emerge in stratified formations, allowing acts of maintenance and ritual to operate as both material and metaphor. Idyllic in its regenerative resilience, the works collectively function as a medium that carries memory, persists across generations, and continually evolves into new forms.

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## About Merryn Omotayo Alaka and Sam Frésquez

Merryn Omotayo Alaka (b. 1997, Indianapolis, IN) and Sam Frésquez (b. 1996, Mesa, AZ) met while pursuing their undergraduate degrees at Arizona State University. They began their collaborative project, *Hairland*, in 2017, with many shared interests, including science fiction, fables, lies, and patternmaking. Their work has been exhibited at institutions such as the Tucson Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington, Phoenix Art Museum, and Arizona State University Art Museum. In 2022, they were awarded the Lehman Emerging Artist Award at the Phoenix Art Museum. In 2025, both graduated with MFAs: Frésquez earned a degree in Sculpture from Yale School of Art, and Omotayo Alaka earned a degree in Fiber and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. They currently live and work in Chicago, IL.