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Multidisciplinary Brendan Fernandes Moves Beyond Motion

The artist's newest exhibition at Monique Meloche delves into dance, photography, paintings and fabric.

BY ELISA SHOENBERGER | SEPTEMBER 29, 2026



Installation view, "Brendan Fernandes: The Noise Will Sound" (2026)/Photo: Monique Meloche Gallery

While many people may be more familiar with Brendan Fernandes' work as a choreographer (with his recent [residency at the Driehaus Museum](#)), we get a rare look at visual work through photography and mixed media in "The Noise Will Sound" at Monique Meloche Gallery.

Dance and performance remain a central part of his visual works. In his "Noise See" series, his photographs feature one or two figures, draped in red and blue Shuka cloth, with only arms and legs exposed. The Shuka cloth is front and center in these works with its own complicated history. While the Shuka cloth is associated with the Maasai people from Kenya, scholars believe that Scottish missionaries introduced the textiles and the Maasai widely adopted them in the

1960s. The cloth is a marker of a colonial past but also a sign of adaptation and marker of Maasai culture.

His choice to cover the dancers' bodies also speaks to the meanings of clothing and textiles themselves. Typically, people wear clothing to be seen and signify status. But here, the figures are obscured by the cloth—only their limbs remain. The gallery guide for the show notes, "clothing can be a source of gender and cultural policing, but also a powerful tool to... create new, diversity-empowering spaces for belonging." These dancers exist beyond the binary, both blending and standing out as their limbs contrast with the checkered pattern. He makes us question the meaning of clothing, bodies and history. Fernandes' photographs manage to balance these multifaceted contradictions into photographic marvels.

Fernandes is also quite intentional about using photography for these works. We tend to think of photography as capturing a moment in time, yet dance is movement through time and space. These photographs depict dancers who have been moving, but they are not taken from a dance performance as it was performed. They are instead inspired by performance and then staged as photographs in and of itself.

In addition to that, Fernandes chose to use analog film photography that introduces imperfections into the photograph. The gallery statement explains that this choice "resists the idea of the perfect image." Photography may seem to capture real life, but it is not objective reality, like clothing. Choices are made about what is photographed, how it is photographed and why.

The show also includes multi-media paintings that are more abstract but also contain references to Shuka cloth and Belgian linen. These works feel unfinished, as if the artist wants us to consider the process of textile and artistic creation. The gallery statement comments that he creates these pieces like approaches to choreography, bringing and assembling materials together. But also his attention to textile history, the use of Belgian linen, may be pulling on threads of Belgium's brutal history of colonialism in Africa into the work.

Just as extraordinary as his choreographed work at the Driehaus, "The Noise Will Sound" demonstrates Fernandes' mastery over the mediums of photography and mixed media.