

# Soft Opening

Dozie Kanu  
“Humane Alternatives”  
27 September - 21 October 2018  
Unit 7, Piccadilly Circus Underground Station

Soft Opening is pleased to announce “Humane Alternatives,” the first solo exhibition in London from artist and designer Dozie Kanu (b. 1993, Houston, TX). “Humane Alternatives” introduces a penetratingly theatrical body of work that traverses two extremes of human existence: celebration and punishment. Behind the glass of Soft Opening’s window, Kanu presents a carved marble electric chair cut into three pieces sitting atop pristine plinths, accompanied by a tripartite series of miniature dance-floors fixed onto the back wall. Inextricably intertwined with his experience as a black male growing up in urban Texas, Kanu presents sculptural and wall-based work each embedded with powerful reference and complex resonance.

The electric chair alludes to death, pain and human anxieties. Developed in the 1880s as a “humane” alternative to executing perpetrators by hanging, the chair represents an object that still purports the sole function to harm people. In stark and deliberate contrast, Kanu’s dance-floors offer a gesture of joy and positivity. Titled after a celebratory line dance choreographed in 1976 by New York Broadway performer Richard L. “Ric” Silver to the song “Electric Boogie” by Marcia Griffiths and Bunny Wailer, the “Electric Slide” became so popular among African American communities that by the 1980s it was danced everywhere from weddings to graduation parties, fast becoming a symbol of family togetherness in black culture. Two editioned prints accompany the exhibition, each pairing with its respective work, with these functioning as “assembly instructions” reminiscent of IKEA furniture that detail either how to piece together Kanu’s marble chair or how to dance the “Electric Slide.” With “Humane Alternatives,” Kanu continues to make functional works that maintain an inherent purpose, reconfiguring design objects into loaded sculptural pieces.

Dozie Kanu (b. 1993, Houston, TX) is an American designer and artist living and working in Lisbon, Portugal. After studying production design for film at The School of Visual Arts in New York (BFA 2016), he began working with Paul Johnson and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn for Salon 94, New York. Exhibitions include “STRETCHED,” curated by KALEIDOSCOPE for RIMOWA, Spazio Maiocchi, Milan (2018, solo), “Early Works,” curated by Elise By Olsen for 89plus and Google Arts & Culture, New Galerie, Paris (2017), “Midtown,” curated by Salon 94 & Maccarone Gallery, Lever House, New York (2017), “Clear Eyes,” curated by Caio Twombly, 95 Avenue B, New York (2016) and “In Cylinder,” curated by Jamie Keesling, SVA Gallery 21st St, New York (2016). Earlier this month he was awarded the prestigious Hublot Design Prize. “Humane Alternatives” is Kanu’s first solo exhibition in London.

For more information please contact [info@softopening.london](mailto:info@softopening.london) or visit [www.softopening.london](http://www.softopening.london)