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ART

## Artist's palate: Mandy El-Sayegh's recipe for Acar

Mandy El-Sayegh's simple yet layered recipe for Malaysian Acar is the latest dish in our Artist's Palate series, an homage to our favourite contemporary art



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Mandy El-Sayegh's recipe for Acar

(Image credit: Neil Godwin at Future Studios for Wallpaper\*)

BY HARRIET LLOYD-SMITH PUBLISHED MAY 2, 2023 IN [FEATURES](#)

The work of Mandy El-Sayegh is multilayered. Through large-scale paintings – often featuring newsprint, advertisements, maps and other source material – immersive installations, performances and videos, the Malaysia-born, London-based artist dissects, and pieces together disparate socio-political constructs to raise new questions about the contemporary world.

Her artist's palate recipe, Acar (pronounced 'ah-char'), is a Malaysian vegetable side dish. 'There are many favourite recipes to choose from growing up – Palestinian,

Malaysian, Chinese, Indo-Chinese. My family always had many dishes on the table; interesting combinations that raised me with a very broad palate. So I chose a simple side dish with contrasting flavours, which reflects this breadth,' she says. 'It can accompany other recipes and is long-lasting in the fridge. It tastes best after flavours have infused for a few days.'

## **Mandy El-Sayegh's recipe for Acar**

### **Ingredients**

1 large onion, peeled and chopped

3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

Chilli powder, chilli flakes, curry powder and turmeric powder, blended with water to create an aromatic paste

Vegetable oil

1 large can of pineapple chunks

White sugar

200-300g salted roasted peanuts, crushed

White vinegar

1 medium carrot, peeled and cut into 4cm strips

1/4 medium cauliflower, cut into florets

1 cucumber, trimmed of inner pulp and cut into 4cm strips

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tsp sesame oil

1 tsp roasted sesame seeds

### **Method**

Fry the onion, garlic and aromatic paste with a little vegetable oil over a medium heat until fragrant. Add the pineapple with its juice and a little sugar and combine to form a thick, soft paste. Add the crushed peanuts and mix well, then add vinegar according to taste, and stir to a soft consistency. Reduce to a low heat, then add the vegetables and lemon juice, and mix well. Adjust sweetness, saltiness and sourness to taste, then stir in the sesame oil and seeds, and mix. Allow to cool, then transfer to

a bowl, cover with cling film and refrigerate it for a day or two. This will help to mature and infuse the taste.

*Mandy El-Sayegh will hold her largest solo exhibition to date at Thaddaeus Ropac, London in September 2023, concurrent with a joint show with Kader Attia at Lehmann Maupin, London. [ropac.net](http://ropac.net); [lehmannmaupin.com](http://lehmannmaupin.com)*

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### Topics

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Mandy El-Sayegh

Artist Palate





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## **Harriet Lloyd-Smith**

Harriet Lloyd-Smith was the Arts Editor of Wallpaper\*, responsible for the art pages across digital and print, including profiles, exhibition reviews, and contemporary art collaborations. She started at Wallpaper\* in 2017 and has written for leading contemporary art publications, auction houses and arts charities, and lectured on review writing and art journalism. When she's not writing about art, she's making her own.

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ART

# 'A gentleness in the hard truths': behind the scenes at Slave Play

Slave Play, London is on at the Noël Coward theatre – Amah-Rose Abrams reports on a 'hilarious, tender, confronting' performance and its masterful mirrored set



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The maquette for theatre designer Clint Ramos' Slave Play set design  
(Image credit: Courtesy of Clint Ramos)



The announcement of Jeremy O Harris' West End run of *Slave Play* was greeted with equal measures of glee and trepidation. What would London make of this controversial play that, while on Broadway, sparked debate to a level that a new play hasn't done for years?

Since *Slave Play's* debut in 2018, Harris has written art-world satirical melodrama *Daddy*, and co-produced smash hit, star-making series *Euphoria*. The sense of anarchy and the surreal level of realism common to all three projects is especially palpable in *Slave Play*, written while Harris was completing his master's at Yale.

## **Slave Play review: 'sex, relationships and power through the lens of race'**



(Image credit: Courtesy of Clint Ramos)

I enjoyed the play immensely, especially the way in which the writing radically seized permission to address power, sex, relationships and self-perception through the spectrum of race. The actors – a cast of eight, including Kit Harrington, Olivia

Washington (daughter of Denzel), Fisayo Akinade, Aaron Heffernan, Chalia La Tour and Annie McNamara – clearly admire the work they are performing, and as a result put themselves in positions that felt like a gift.

Without giving away spoilers, hearing certain things said out loud can eradicate their power and I found the play hilarious, tender and very confronting, but in a way that I welcomed. For some people, it may be the entertainment equivalent of jumping into an iced plunge pool, and there are moments of extreme darkness wrapped in the masterful satire at play here. Against a background of millennial pop and indie favourites, there is a gentleness in the hard truths delivered by the cast over the play's two-hour duration, with no interval.

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## For some people, it may be the entertainment equivalent of jumping into an iced plunge pool

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When the show's set designer, Tony-winning Clint Ramos, read the script, he missed his train stop so he could keep reading.

'When I first read the play, which was in 2017, I think I was drawn to it not only because it broke so many taboos, but because it was talking about something that, as a man of colour and in an inter-racial relationship, really spoke to me and not only on a personal level; at least in America, and I think globally, it spoke to the zeitgeist,' he says. 'I called Robert (O'Hara) the director and unpacked what I was feeling when I initially read it, which was admiration, titillation, discomfort but also ultimately, excitement and how to craft a theatrical piece around what Jeremy had written. For me, the first impulse we have for every design is an emotional response, so a lot of those emotions guided me into the design itself.'

The play shatters taboos: it is at once hilarious and eviscerating and is a pleasantly disruptive, fresh and contemporary piece of writing. Parsing issues of race through 'antebellum sex therapy' creates an unavoidable intimacy and as the play takes us through the funny, the troubling, the dark and the violent, there is nowhere to hide.

**The set design: mirrors open and tilt throughout**



(Image credit: Courtesy of Clint Ramos)

*Slave Play's* greatness lies in its relationship with the audience. The set is built of mirrors, around which creeps the vegetation of the plantation it is set on. Throughout the action, the mirrors open and tilt, revealing the audience to itself, using the reflections of the actors and tessellating to accommodate the performance.

The idea was born out of a workaround of staging the production in the round, with the audience facing itself: 'The root of Jeremy's mandate was really that he wanted the audience to be immersed in the plantation, [to feel] that ephemeral thing that happens when you're in a place that has a history of oppression, that is real but [is also an idea around which there is] a spiritual envelope. Robert wanted the audience to be conscious of the performance. Seeing the actors while you're seeing the audience across for you was important to him.'

Ramos' research led him to look at a lot of bedrooms, many of them with mirrored ceilings, and he began to think about intimacy and performance.

'I started playing around with mirrors, and then ultimately really landed on this idea... Why don't we just reflect ourselves onto it? And that also achieves what Jeremy was going for, which is because most of the audiences in the American theatre are white in a metaphorical way – we are already placing both the actors and the play itself in a plantation, in something that is charged, and which is basically a swathe of white people.'

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'The root of Jeremy's mandate was really that he wanted the audience to be immersed in the plantation... a place that has a history of oppression'

CLINT RAMOS

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From the pop-out beds, hidden drawers and lyrics from a Rihanna song hanging over the action, the set accentuates the play in a powerful way. This was due to a collaborative approach embraced by Ramos, O'Hara and Harris.

'Our collaboration started in 2018, with Robert and Jeremy and all the other designers and it hasn't really stopped. Once I had the envelope of these walls of mirrors, it was really about what do we need for each particular scene? And the pop-up ideas facilitated the ideas of the hidden doors and within that [the set] opens up into these little vignettes, as if we're presenting middle stages. Again, it ties into this idea of how sex is performed, both for our partners or for ourselves.'

Great theatre creates great conversation, and people have something to say about *Slave Play*. Many have found it very liberating, appreciating its voicing of things lurking for too long as elephants in rooms. Exposing these long-engrained tropes requires us to look at ourselves, helping us question fundamental elements of our lives and relationships.

*Slave Play, London is at the Noël Coward theatre until 21 September 2024*

[slaveplaylondon.com](http://slaveplaylondon.com)

## Topics

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London    Set Design

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### **Amah-Rose Abrams**

Amah-Rose Abrams is a British writer, editor and broadcaster covering arts and culture based in London. In her decade plus career she has covered and broken arts stories all over the world and has interviewed artists including Marina Abramovic, Nan Goldin, Ai Weiwei, Lubaina Himid and Herzog & de Meuron. She has also worked in content strategy and production.

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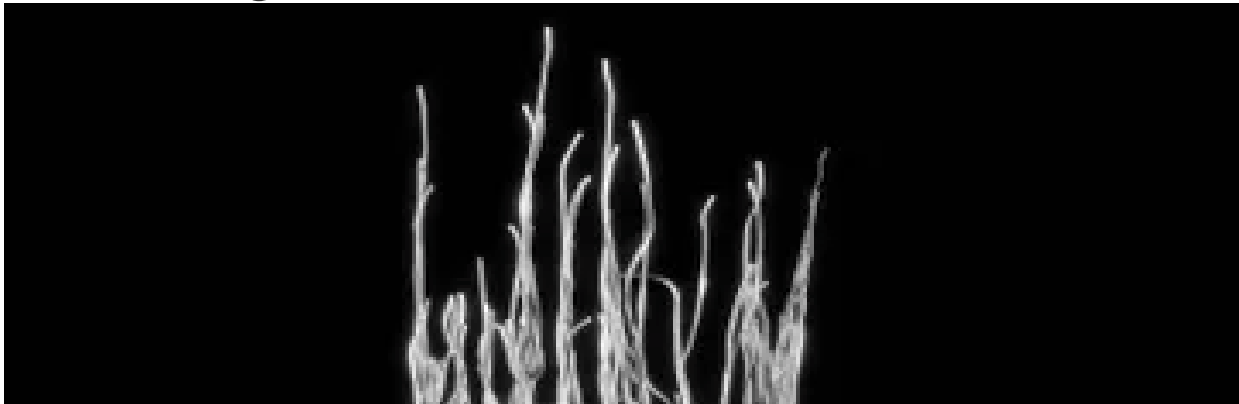


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