

THE WHOLE WORLD



SMILES WITH YOU

OPERA GALLERY

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

May 29 - June 26

OPERA GALLERY



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GILLES DYAN
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

GIULIA LECCHINI
Deputy Director
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“When you’re smiling, when you’re smiling
The whole world smiles with you
When you’re laughing, when you’re laughing
The sun comes shining through
But when you’re crying, you bring on the rain
So, stop your sighing be happy again
And keep on smiling, ‘cause when you’re smiling
The whole world smiles with you”

FOREWORD

The lyrics of Louis Armstrong’s 1929 song ‘When You’re Smiling (The Whole World Smiles With You)’ inspired the title of this exhibition, curated by Alayo Akinkugbe. Armstrong’s words were penned nearly a century ago in America but remain timeless in their encapsulation of humanity’s enduring and profound sense of unity and hope. Featuring a distinct group of artists portraying Black people at leisure, often in bright, vivid scenes from everyday life, ‘The Whole World Smiles with You’ demonstrates the impact of shared visual experience and power of representation during challenging times.

This theme of interconnectedness is distinctly portrayed in ‘Scenes from Everyday Life,’ one of the exhibition’s three sections. It showcases a distinct group of artists who depict Black people engaged in leisurely activities amidst vibrant quotidian settings, a popular theme among West African artists. It is easy to imagine the figures in these paintings, portrayed in casual poses, as if they are personally echoing the song’s sentiments, radiating a similar aura of serenity and warmth.

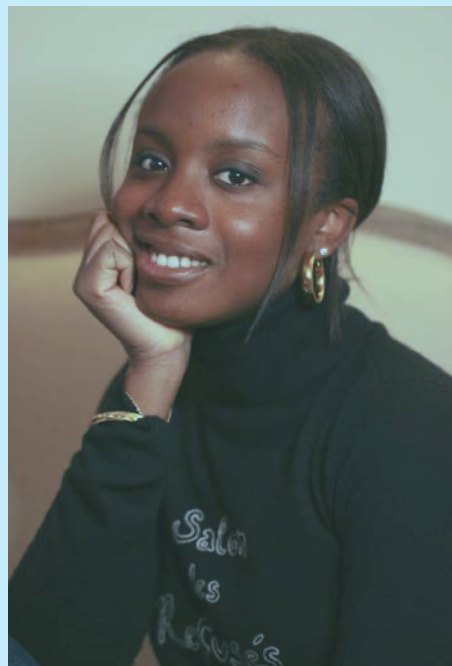
The remaining two sections complete the trilogy, exploring different modes of figuration by contemporary Black artists. ‘Redressing the Canon’ explores how artists challenge the traditional telling of European art history by reimagining well-known paintings with Black protagonists, or by depicting figures in poses reminiscent of pre-twentieth-century European portraiture. Meanwhile, ‘Distortion and Caricature’ delves into the ways that Black subjects have been distorted, simplified, or caricatured—highlighting how these artistic choices can either reinforce stereotypes or envision Black identity beyond conventional boundaries.

This exhibition aims to interrogate diverse modes of figuration by Black contemporary artists, featuring works by Aboudia, Derrick Adams, Noel W. Anderson, Amoako Boafo, Gerald Chukwuma, Bouvy Enkobo, Jazz Grant, John Madu, Kimathi Mafafo, Simphiwe Ndzube, Chris Ofili, Anya Paintsil, Deborah Roberts, Collin Sekajugo, Thelonious Stokes, Adjei Tawiah, Awodiya Toluwani, and Kehinde Wiley.

Thanks to Alayo Akinkugbe’s curatorial vision, this exhibition facilitates a dialogue that integrates mediums and voices from a diverse spectrum of Black artists, both established and emerging. It aims to redress historical power dynamics that have shaped their narratives and explore contemporary contributions to them.

Responding to the broader cultural discourse surrounding Black figuration, inclusion and underrepresentation, this exhibition places figurative works in conversation with one another, providing a space for reflection and imagination.

ALAYO AKINKUGBE



The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 led to a proliferation of Black cultural production being spotlighted in Western institutions, museums, and galleries. Figurative work which portrays Black people as perceived by Black artists, has been extremely popular, and has been frequently described as a “trend”. Figuration, however, is a constant throughout art history, regardless of shifts in popular taste towards and away from it. Such work remains relevant in its contribution to the understanding of racialised experiences and the diverse self-perceptions of Black people.

In a sense, the sudden popularity of art which presented positive representations of Black figures, was a direct counter to the gut-wrenching imagery of Black people suffering – particularly at the hands of the police – which were circulating on social media and in the press in 2020. They provided a visual respite: images of Black people at ease, in everyday domestic and public settings, often smiling, countered the overwhelming increase of negative images at that time. ‘When you’re smiling, the whole world smiles with you’, a phrase from Louis Armstrong’s 1929 song – from which this exhibition gets its title – speaks to this phenomenon.

This exhibition interrogates various modes of figuration by contemporary Black artists. It includes works by artists who challenge the European canon by overtly reconfiguring renowned paintings to include Black protagonists or, more covertly, portraying figures in poses reminiscent of pre-twentieth-century European portraiture.

Awodiya Toluwani – in keeping with a lineage established by artists such as **Kehinde Wiley**, whose oeuvre consistently manipulates the tropes of European portraiture – revisits European canonical painting in his work. His painting *Ewa/Beauty* (2022), for instance, reimagines Manet’s famed *Olympia* (1863), with the courtesan in the foreground as a Black woman, and the maid in the background as a white woman, reversing the races of the figures in *Olympia*. In doing this, Toluwani draws our attention to race relations in European canonical art, using this reversal to highlight the peripheral role of Black figures in such paintings, often in positions of servitude, and to imagine a European art history with Black protagonists.

Thelonious Stokes draws on techniques of academic oil painting, which he trained in at the Florence Academy of Art. His painting, *Tired of being a N*gger; Champion of A Fowl* (2023) denounces stereotypes of Black masculinity – which are so strongly associated with the slur in the title “N*gger”, by portraying his own image in the costume of a ballerina, repeatedly the subjects of canonised European painters, most famously Edgar Degas (1834-1917). Like Toluwani, he places a Black figure in the role of the protagonist assuming a position, as with the reclining nude of Manet’s *Olympia*, conventionally ascribed to white women in academic painting.

Other works in the exhibition demonstrate a tendency among Black artists to distort, simplify, or caricature the image of a Black person – either to draw attention to negative stereotypes or to imagine Black bodies extending beyond imposed limitations. **Noel Anderson’s** textiles distort the images of his subjects; the triptych *Shadow of a Gangsta* (2022) implies that a silhouette alone – in the form of a shadow – can be weaponised to categorise a Black figure. It brings to mind the brutal killing of Trayvon Martin, who had a soft drink and packet of skittles in his pocket, but was murdered for the fact that he was a Black boy in a hoodie, presumed by his white murderer to be holding a weapon. *Michael in a Sound Suit* (2019), refers to American artist Nick Cave’s widely celebrated Sound Suit series. Cave’s Sound Suits are spectacular wearable sculptures, adorned in found objects which dazzle, jingle, and cocoon the wearers: eliminating the possibility of judgement of the figure based on race, gender or any other physical attribute.

Stokes’ *The Cry* (2023) shows a nude Black figure in Blackface playing the violin. This draws upon the history of minstrel shows in the US, which developed in the early 19th century and foregrounded harmful stereotypes of Black people as unintelligent, lazy or happy-go-lucky. The scarlet mouth of Stokes’ figure in Blackface bears a formal similarity to the figure in **Deborah Roberts’** collage *Radical* (2017), in which a Black girl’s face is overlaid with red lips bearing clenched teeth, which confront the viewer and challenge a passive gaze. Where Roberts’ collage plays with juxtaposition – a menacing expression counterbalanced by the face of a child – **Jazz Grant’s** mode of collaging brings together fragments of images in synchrony, offering a glance into the inner lives of her figures. In *She Leaned Over the Earth* (2024), a woman’s silhouette is filled with fragments of clouds and landscapes, evoking memories of a location now distant, or imaginings of a future far away.

In **Anya Paintsil’s** textiles, the figures similarly bare their teeth in confrontational expressions, *I’m not a Tender Woman* (2024), presents two figures with facial expressions akin to Roberts’ figure. In Paintsil’s work, the expression is mirrored by a second figure with pigtailed hair. The baring of teeth in this way is also seen in **Aboudia’s** two-dimensional figures, and can be read as an evocation of anger, pain or frustration. These are not smiles – on the figures of Roberts, Paintsil and Aboudia – they’re grimaces.

A distinct group of artists within the exhibition represents a recent movement, particularly among West African artists, towards portraying Black people at leisure in bright, vivid scenes from everyday life. **John Madu’s** painting, *Doing Well, with These Fine Goods* (2022), shows a grinning lady holding hands with an unseen figure. The painting evokes a sense of abundance, joy, and luxury, exemplified by the presence of a Fendi shopping bag on the table, alongside a newspaper opened to a page which is titled ‘money and investment’, with a notable subheading which reads ‘art’, making a subtle comment on the art market, and the notion of art as financial investment.

Other works within this movement show figures starkly backdropped by acontextual, monochromatic backgrounds, who – despite being presented outside of a specific setting – demonstrate a sense of ease and leisure through their body language and facial expressions. **Amoako Boafo’s** works, *Laced Fingers* (2022) and *Little White Dress* (2022) both portray grinning women dressed in white, with the artist’s signature technique of finger painting adding a unique texture to their skin.

Adjei Tawiah, Accra-based like Boafo, portrays his figures similarly against vivid monochrome backdrops. *Still Got Your Back* (2023), is a particularly tender depiction of two Black men, one on the back of the other, engaged in an intimate moment of physical connection and support. Optimistic and vivid, these paintings are celebrations of Black existence and self-determination.

Altogether, the works which make up *The Whole World Smiles With You*, demonstrate a small cross-section of figuration by Black artists today. The works here examine themes which are continually addressed by Black artists through generations and across the globe, working both within and beyond figuration. Usurping the European canon, using distortion and appropriating racist caricatures and stereotypes, as well as presenting Black figures at leisure, are key facets of figuration by Black artists but by no means do they reflect the entirety of figuration by Black artists, which is sprawling, diverse and varied. Blackness in itself, as a subject, certainly defies monolithic categorisation. *The Whole World Smiles With You* is an iteration, a contribution to the ongoing dialogues surrounding figuration by Black contemporary artists in the years since 2020.

**SCENES FROM
EVERYDAY LIFE**

**COLLIN SEKAJUGO · BOUVY ENKOBO · ADJEI TAWIAH · JOHN MADU ·
KIMATHI MAFAFO · AMOAKO BOAFO · ANYA PAINTSIL**

COLLIN SEKAJUGO



Collin Sekajugo was born in Masaka, South-eastern district of Uganda, and now lives and works in Kampala. He explores the theme of identity throughout his work, often placing himself at the centre of his paintings. Through this lens, he looks at issues of social, cultural, economic and political identity within a larger global context. Often, the goal of the work is to encourage his viewer to foster a more inclusive sense of community.

In 2022, his work was exhibited in Uganda's National Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale. His work is on permanent display at a number of institutions including the Chazen Museum of Art, Madison and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington.



COLLIN SEKAJUGO (b. 1980)
Lord of Banana Republic
2023

Barkcloth, polypropylene
and acrylic on denim

150 x 102 cm | 59.1 x 40.2 in

PROVENANCE

Private collection,
acquired directly
from the artist

CERTIFICATE

The authenticity of this
work has been confirmed
by the artist.



BOUVY ENKOB



Congolese painter Bouvy Enkobo was born in the city of Kinshasa, where he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. He now lives and works between France and Democratic Republic of Congo. His mixed media paintings depict Black figures against abstract backdrops, combining impressions of urban life with references to art historical portraiture.

Ultimately, Enkobo is a painter of life; he prefers candid subjects to studio sitters. His practice is centred around walks around walks through his city, where he is inspired by the people and the scenes that he sees. In his own words, "I like the fact of distancing myself from my workshop and getting out of this space, to be directly confronted with the reality of the street. I seek to transmit this energy there, in my paintings."

The collaged backgrounds that he uses are both suggestive of ripped down and pasted over posters and of anonymous abstract space. This points towards a certain universality within Enkobo's work; there is a degree to which the scenes he portrays could take place in any city, chronicling the forgotten facets of metropolitan life.

Enkobo has exhibited globally, and won the European Union's special prize at the Yango Biennale in Kinshasa in 2014. His work is included in the collection of the delegation of the European Union in Democratic Republic of Congo and Fondation Hirondelle, Lausanne among others.



BOUVY ENKOBO (b. 1981)
Wazola Nzimbu 3
2019

Acrylic and collage on canvas
195 x 125 cm | 76.8 x 49.2 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio
Private collection





BOUVY ENKOBO (b. 1981)
Lisapo
2023

Acrylic, collage and charcoal
on freeform canvas

195 x 240 cm | 76.8 x 94.5 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio
Private collection



**ADJEI
TAWIAH**

Courtesy of the Artist

Adjai Tawiah is a Ghanaian artist known and revered for his unique technique of using a nylon sponge in his vibrant figurative paintings. This approach, which he has labelled “Sponge Martial”, was inspired by his witnessing the cleansing of his mother’s corpse in the mortuary. Tawiah channels this idea of cleansing through his work, the bright, vibrant colours a representation of the bright moments that follow the darker times in life. Tawiah hopes that his work will serve as a source of inspiration to its viewers during such dark times.

Tawiah was an alumnus of the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra, Ghana. He now lives and works in Accra, where he is inspired by his community and surroundings. He had his first solo exhibition with Gallery 1957 in London in January 2022, and shows his work frequently in Ghana and more recently in the USA, including in “Self-Addressed”, an exhibition curated by Kehinde Wiley at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. He has been featured in a number of publications including *Flash Art*, *New York Times* and *Fad Magazine*.



ADJEI TAWIAH (b. 1983)
I'm Still Here
2023

Oil on canvas with sponge

Signed on the lower left

80 x 80 cm | 31.5 x 31.5 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



ADJEI TAWIAH (b. 1983)
Still Got Your Back
2023

Oil on canvas with sponge

Signed on the shorts on
the lower center

219,7 x 210,1 cm | 86.5 x 82.7 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



JOHN MADU



Born in 1983 in Lagos, Nigeria, where he still lives and works today, John Madu took an unconventional path into painting. He studied Policy and Strategic Studies, and is self-taught as an artist. He is now known for his symbolic mixed-media figurative paintings.

Street art in Lagos, though its influence is not immediately visible in his work, shaped the way that the artist viewed culture from a young age. The bright colours that he uses are inspired by those of the fabrics that adorned his home as a child. Such specific personal details like these find a connection with deep histories in Madu's paintings. Here, the minutiae of everyday life are combined with resonances of the universal.

Madu is conscious of the constant shrinking of the world facilitated by globalisation and the internet; his studio is both receiver and transmitter of the chaotic range of images and ideas that constitute popular culture. The variety of objects and images present in his colour-saturated paintings pay tribute to this fact.

The artist has exhibited his work globally and collaborated with a number of brands including Diesel and Bombay Sapphire.



JOHN MADU (b. 1983)
Doing Well, with These Fine Goods
2022

Acrylic on canvas

Signed and dated 'John Madu 2022'
on the lower left

230 x 190,5 cm | 90.6 x 75 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

EXHIBITED
Milan, Fondazione MUDIMA,
'John Madu, Year of the Masque',
9 June–8 July 2022



KIMATHI MAFAFO

Born in the city of Kimberly in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, Kimathi Mafafo was the daughter of a respected watercolourist, who encouraged her to take art classes at William Humphreys Art Gallery, a local museum. Here, she encountered the 16th and 17th century Dutch paintings that would go on to inspire her own work. She went on to study at the College of Cape Town and Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Today, her mixed media works feature Black female protagonists surrounded by verdant imagery and rich fabrics. These images subvert gender roles, both by placing women at centre stage and by eschewing the traditional medium of oil painting in favour of textiles and embroidery. Creating these works, Mafafo's contribution to art history, and indeed history more general, questions the hierarchies and expectations that went before her, making legible the possibility of a future where things are otherwise.

Crystallising the potential of this legacy, her work is now part of the William Humphreys collection, as well as a number of others in South Africa and around the world. In 2022, Mafafo was a finalist for the Ares Art Prize and the recipient of the Norval Foundation Sovereign Art Prize.



KIMATHI MAFARO (b. 1984)
Untitled
2022

Hand and machine stitched
embroidery on fabric

133 x 134 cm | 52.4 x 52.8 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



AMOAKO BOAFO

Amoako Boafo reimagines the canon of portraiture, emerging as a key artist in defining the contemporary culture of Africa and the African diaspora. His elegant paintings elevate his subjects, capturing their confidence, style, and character. To depict the figures in his portraits, Boafo manipulates pigment with his fingers rather than with a brush, tracing gestures through direct touch.

Boafo was born in 1984 in Accra, Ghana, where he currently lives and works. After teaching himself to draw and paint as a child, he pursued various professions in his early career, most notably semiprofessional tennis.

He graduated from Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra in 2008, winning the college's award for best portrait painter that year. In 2013, Boafo relocated to Vienna, and with artist and curator Sunanda Mesquita founded WE DEY, a centre for exhibitions, workshops, and community programmes that advocated for artists of colour and LGBTQ+ voices.

Encountering the marginalisation of Black people in Austria, Boafo decided to focus on portraits of Black subjects, who remain underrepresented in global contemporary art. Inspired by the expressionistic portraiture of Vienna Secession artists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, he also counts Jordan Casteel, Maria Lassnig and Kerry James Marshall among his contemporary influences.



AMOAKO BOAFO (b. 1984)
Laced Fingers
2022

Oil on canvas

Signed and dated 'AMOAKO /
BOAFO 2022' below the
right hand

120 x 100 cm | 47.2 x 39.4 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



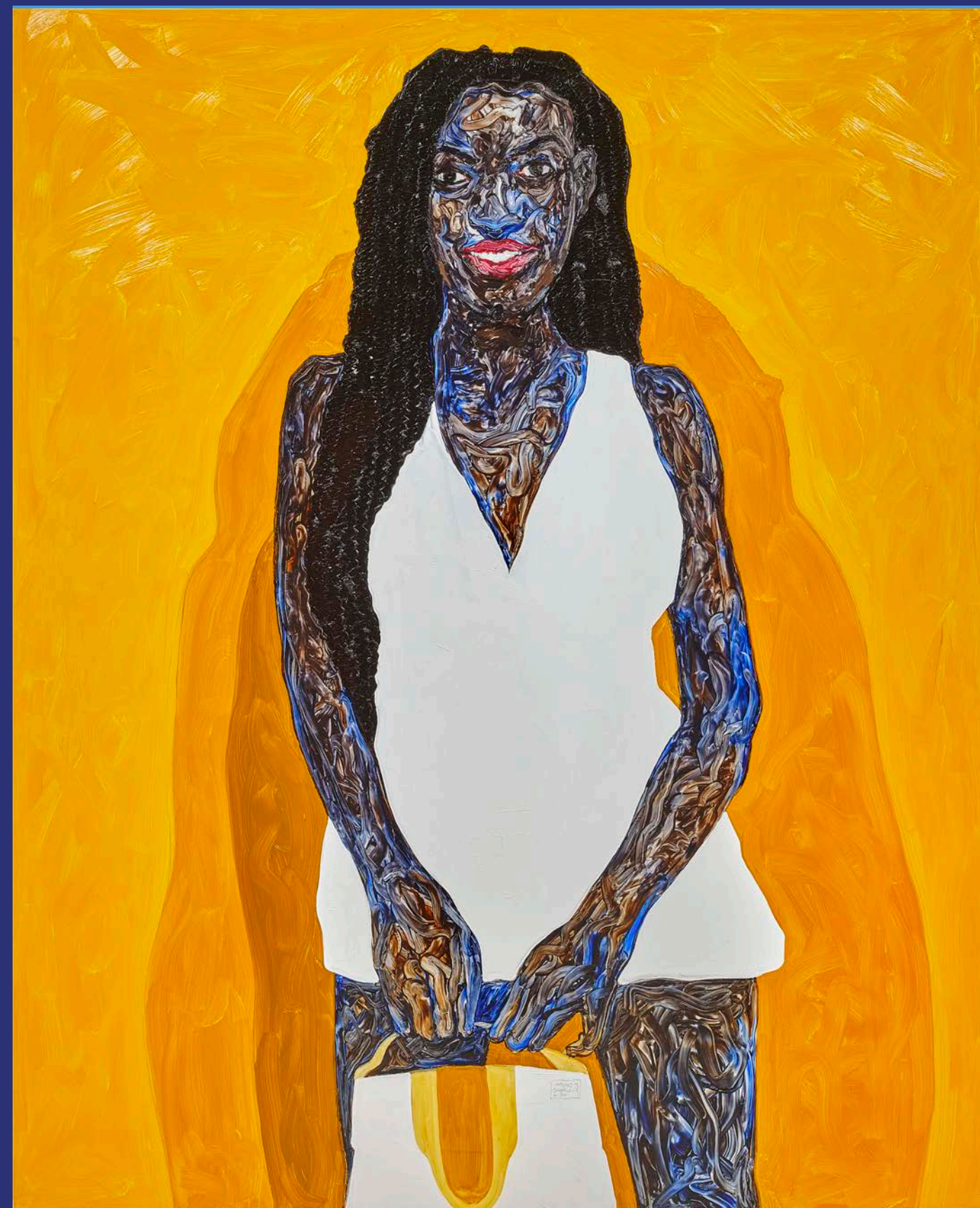
AMOAKO BOAFO (b. 1984)
Little White Dress
2022

Oil on canvas

Signed and dated 'AMOAKO /
BOAFO 2022' on the bag

190 x 150 cm | 74.8 x 59.1 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

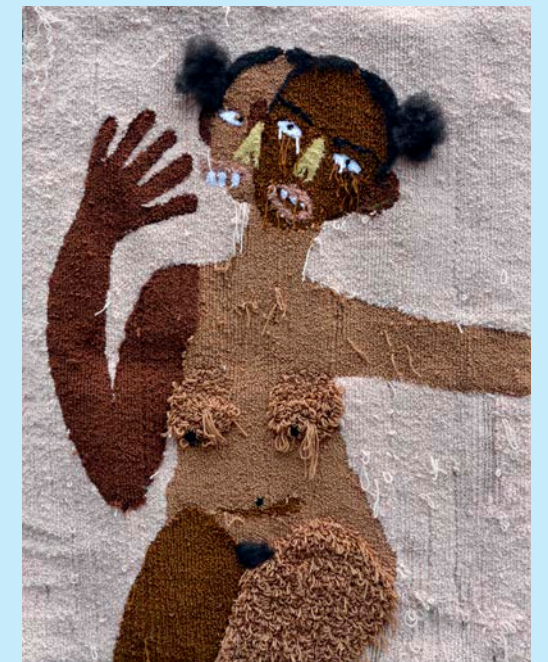




**ANYA
PAINTSIL**

Anya Paintsil is a Welsh and Ghanaian artist working primarily with textiles. From rug hooking to embroidery, her work sits somewhere between tactile tapestry and semi-sculptural interventions. Playful and profound, flippant and forceful, her practice engages the language of fibres of all kinds, interrogating materiality and political personhood. Paintsil's work is largely autobiographical, many of the subjects being the artist herself and her family. They serve as a personal record of her experiences growing up in North Wales, investigating trauma, mental health and the artist's own identity.

Paintsil made her London debut at 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair in 2020 with a booth that sold out within hours. The artist has also received sustained interest from public institutions. Recent acquisitions include the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea; The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, and Tullie House Museum, Carlisle. Paintsil was awarded the Wakelin Prize in 2020 and featured in Crafts Council Gallery's exhibition 'Maker's Eye', London, 2021.



ANYA PAINTSIL (b. 1993)
Sew My Face
2024

Acrylic, wool, human hair,
polyamide and synthetic hair
and cotton on hessian

135 x 97 cm | 53.1 x 38.2 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



ANYA PAINTSIL (b. 1993)
I'm not a Tender Woman
2024

Acrylic, wool, synthetic hair,
rhinestones, acrylic paint,
stainless steel on hessian

120 x 100 cm | 47.2 x 39.4 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

**DISTORTION AND
CARICATURE**

DEBORAH ROBERTS · CHRIS OFILI · DERRICK ADAMS ·
GERALD CHUKWUMA · NOEL W. ANDERSON · ABOUDIA ·
SIMPHIWE NDZUBE · JAZZ GRANT



DEBORAH ROBERTS

Deborah Roberts is an American mixed media artist whose work challenges the notion of ideal beauty, the body, race, and identity in contemporary society through the lens of Black children. Her works on paper and on canvas combine found images, with hand-painted details in striking figural compositions that invite viewers to look deeply and attentively, to the minute details. The gaze on Black children that is at the heart of her work is used to explore how societal pressures, projected images of beauty or masculinity, and the violence of American racism conditions their experiences growing up in this country as well as how others perceive them. The figures that are depicted in her artworks are complex and are based on both living or historical individuals.

Her work has been exhibited internationally across the USA and Europe. Roberts' work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles, California; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia; Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas, among several other institutions. She was selected to participate in the Robert Rauschenberg Residency (2019) and was a finalist for the 2019 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition, as well as the recipient of the Anonymous Was A Woman Grant (2018), and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2016). Texas Metal of Arts Award (2023) Roberts received her MFA from Syracuse University, New York. She lives and works in Austin, Texas. Roberts is represented by Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, CA.



DEBORAH ROBERTS (b. 1962)
Radical
2017

Mixed media and collage
on paper

88 x 67,5 cm | 34.6 x 26.6 in

PROVENANCE
Private collection



CHRIS OFILI



Chris Ofili is a British artist who rose to prominence in the 1990s for his complex and playful multi-layered paintings, which he bedecked with a signature blend of resin, glitter, collage, and, often, elephant dung. His works — vibrant, symbolic, and frequently mysterious — draw upon the lush landscapes and local traditions of the island of Trinidad, where he has lived since 2005. Ofili's work investigates the intersection of desire, identity, and representation. He creates intricate, kaleidoscopic paintings and works on paper that deftly merge abstraction and figuration.

The artist completed his Foundation course at Tameside College of Technology, received his BA in Fine Art from the Chelsea School of Art, London in 1991 and his MA in Fine Art from the Royal College of Art, London in 1993. The artist's works are represented in prominent collections internationally, including The British Museum, London, UK; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; Tate, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA.



CHRIS OFILI (b. 1968)
Untitled
2003

Gouache, charcoal
and gold leaf on paper

Signed twice and dated
'CHRIS OFILI Chris Ofili 2003'
on the reverse

31,5 x 24 cm | 12.4 x 9.4 in

PROVENANCE
Victoria Miro Gallery,
London, UK
Private collection
Christie's, London,
1 July 2010, lot 140
Private collection



DERRICK ADAMS

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Derrick Adams received his formal training at the Pratt Institute and Columbia University, New York, where he still lives and works today. He also holds a tenured assistant professor position at the School of Visual, Media and Performing Arts at CUNY Brooklyn College.

He is known for his paintings, sculptures and installations that depict Black figures during moments of quietude and leisure. The work is concerned with depicting Black people at rest, rendering his subjects as unremarkable characters rather than performers or the subjects of or political intrigue. His artistic style employs a Cubist geometry alongside the precision and sharpness associated with 21st century painting, resulting in a mode of representation that is both modern and timeless.

Alongside his own artistic practice, he has established a number of social enterprise projects to support underserved communities and artists in America, including Charm City Cultural Cultivation, The Last Resort Artist Retreat and The Black Baltimore Digital Database.

His work has been featured in exhibitions at a number of institutions including Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



DERRICK ADAMS (b. 1970)
We><Here
2013

Silver-painted wood
and metal structure

Unique piece

175 x 236 x 115 cm |
68.9 x 92.9 x 45.3 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio
Private collection



GERALD CHUKWUMA

Born in 1973 in Enugu State, Nigeria, Gerald Chukwuma studied at the University of Nigeria before settling in Lagos, where he lives and works today. He has become known for his mixed media relief sculptures that apply a variety of techniques to wooden panels.

The panels he works on are often found around his studio and he works them tirelessly, burning, chiselling and painting them until they look like artefacts from his own unique world. The use of traditional Uli and Nsibidi symbols links his work to the Nsukka art tradition, which is credited with expanding and modernising the Igbo cultural aesthetic. His images hum with colour, texture, symbolism and narrative. At the centre of each work is, along with a deep connection to Nigerian history, a story of the resilience of the human spirit.

Chukwuma's work has garnered widespread international acclaim, and has been featured at a number of institutional exhibitions, including at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C., the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Centre Pompidou, Paris.



GERALD CHUKWUMA (b. 1973)
Iwa Akwa: Men become Men
2019

Mixed media on wood

188 x 205,7 cm | 74 x 81 in

CERTIFICATE
The authenticity of this work
has been confirmed by Kristin
Hjellegjerde Gallery.



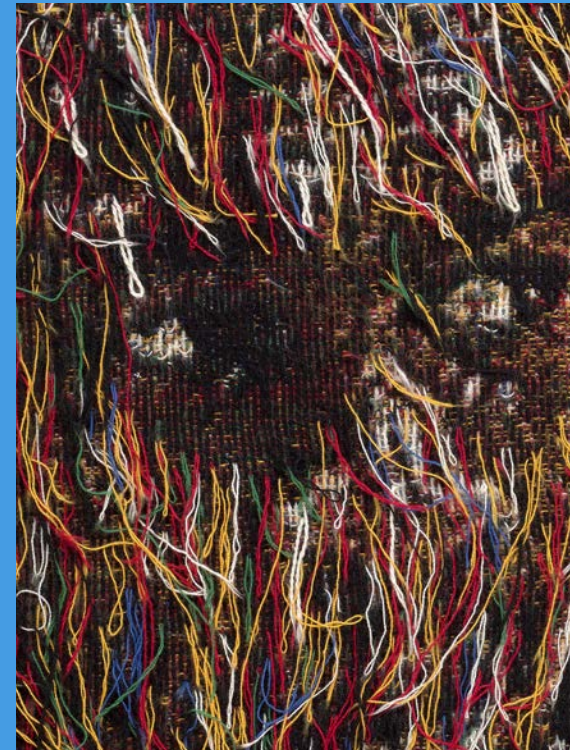
NOEL W. ANDERSON

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Noel W. Anderson is known for his explorations into the evolving makeup of Black male identity through the medium of textiles. Using found imagery from various media and archives, including television and magazine, Anderson adds, subtracts, manipulates and distorts the original pictures, which are then woven into tapestries. He then re-works each tapestry, distressing, dyeing and sometimes dissolving the image until it is only partially legible. This literal blurring of the object metaphorically highlights issues of race and gender, as the artist attempts to dissect the distortion of Black males in contemporary culture and media.

Anderson is an Assistant Professor at NYU's Art and Art Professions Department in Print Media. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Ohio Wesleyan University, a Master of Fine Arts from Indiana University in Printmaking, and a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University in Sculpture. He was recently included in the Studio Museum of Harlem's exhibition, 'Speaking of People: Ebony, Jet, and Contemporary Art', which included an internationally published book. He held an appointment as a Visiting Lecturer at Vanderbilt University, and was also a recent Visiting Artist and Lecturer at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, France.



THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU



NOEL W. ANDERSON (b. 1981)
Michael in Sound Suit
2019

Distressed, stressed jacquard
tapestry mounted on panel

Signed and dated '2019'
on the reverse

51,3 x 40,8 cm | 20.2 x 16.1 in

PROVENANCE
Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery,
Luxembourg City, Luxembourg
Private collection



NOEL W. ANDERSON (b. 1981)
Shadow of a Gangsta
2022

Picked, stretched cotton tapestries

99,1 x 467,4 cm | 39 x 184 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

ABOUDIA



Aboudia (real name Abdoulaye Diarrassouba) was born in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, where he studied at the Center Technique Des Arts Appliqués De Bingerville. He now lives and works between Abidjan and Brooklyn, New York. His gestural work, inspired by graffiti and the chaos of urban life, has been compared to Jean-Michel Basquiat's for its urgency and immediacy.

His work was first noted internationally during the 2010–2011 Ivorian crisis, a time of violence and unrest in the artist's city. In this moment, his paintings were a form of testimony, describing the scenes he experienced with a level of intensity that only painting can articulate. Determined to prove himself to be more than a war painter, he continued to paint the communities and people he experienced. His canvases are filled with frenetic energy, populated by a cacophony of figures that seem to pulsate with life, capturing the raw vitality and spirit of urban existence.

The artist's work has been exhibited in a number of international institutions, from the Benin Biennial 2012 to institutions, including the Saatchi Gallery, London, the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris and the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

ABOUDIA (b.1983)
Untitled (3 Amis)
 2019

Acrylic and oil pencils
 on canvas

Signed 'ABOUDIA' on the
 center right

150 x 150 cm | 59.1 x 59.1 in

PROVENANCE

Private collection,
 acquired directly
 from the artist

CERTIFICATE

The Aboudia Foundation has
 confirmed the authenticity of
 this work.



ABOUDIA (b.1983)
Untitled 1
2019

Acrylic and oil pencils
on canvas

Signed 'ABOUDIA'
on the lower right

150 x 150 cm | 59.1 x 59.1 in

PROVENANCE

Private collection,
acquired directly
from the artist

CERTIFICATE

The Aboudia Foundation has
confirmed the authenticity of
this work.





SIMPHIWE NDZUBE

Born in 1990 in Cape Town, Simphiwe Ndzube studied at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, where he earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2015. He now lives and works between his home city and Los Angeles.

His background in painting, printmaking, sculpture along with a number of other artistic media informs his mixed media practice characterised by a fundamental interplay between objects, media and two-dimensional surfaces. He is inspired by the Magical Realism of writers like Gabriel García Márquez and Italo Calvino. In his paintings, he finds ways to push the viewer's expectations of his subjects, suggesting the existence of new worlds outside of our own limited concepts. He often paints group portraits of imagined characters, their faces obscured or rendered in outlandish palettes. This experimentation with the unexpected forms a subjective account of the Black experience in past and present-day South Africa from a mythological perspective.

Ndzube's work has been shown at a number of institutions including Denver Art Museum, USA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA, Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, France and Iziko South African National Gallery, South Africa.





◀ **SIMPHIWE NDZUBE** (b. 1990)
The Coming of the Second People
 2018

Acrylic, spray paint and collage on canvas, diptych

Signed, titled and dated 'Simphiwe Ndzube 2018 The Coming of the Second People' 2018' on the reverse of each part

160,7 x 240 cm | 63.3 x 94.5 in

PROVENANCE

Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
 Private collection

SIMPHIWE NDZUBE (b. 1990)
Here, There, Nowhere
 2019

Mixed media, collage & acrylic on linen

180 x 150 cm | 70.9 x 59.1 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio
 Gazelli Art House, London, UK
 Private collection

EXHIBITED

Baku, Gazelli Art House, 'Simphiwe Ndzube, Navid Nuur & Sara Rahbar',
 24 November 2019-29 February 2020

Nicodim Gallery, Bucharest, 'Simphiwe Ndzube: In the Order of Elephants After the Rain', 28 September-9 November 2019

LITERATURE

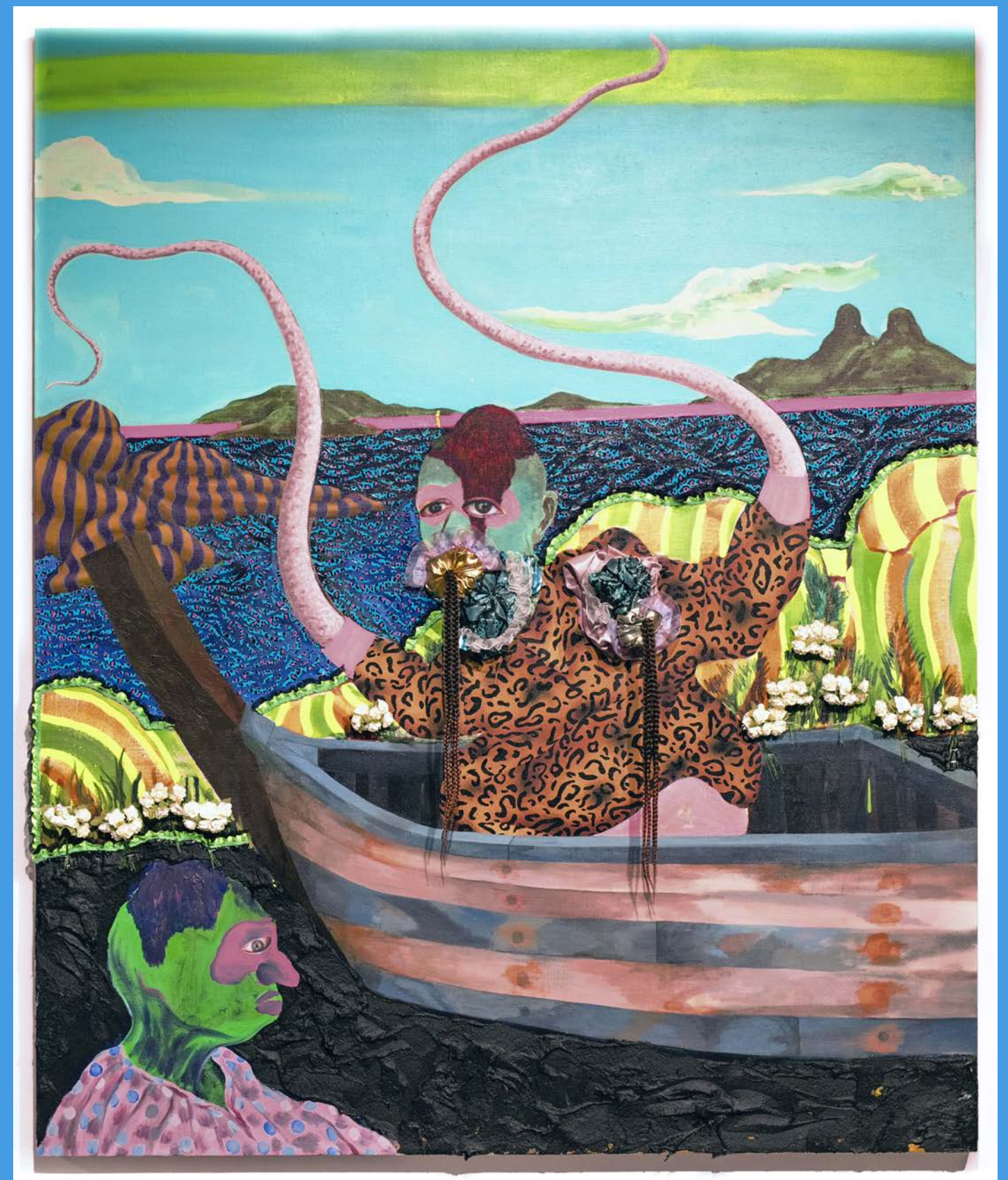
"Simphiwe Ndzube at Nicodim Gallery / Bucharest" in Daily Lazy, November 2019, online

"Simphiwe Ndzube at Nicodim" in Art Viewer, 8 November 2019, online

Lea Marianna Ficca, "Simphiwe Ndzube's Metaphorical Universe" in Mutual Art, 14 January 2020, online

CERTIFICATE

Gazelli Art House has confirmed the authenticity of this work.



JAZZ GRANT



Courtesy of END
Photo by Adam Thirtle

OPERA GALLERY

Born in London, Jazz Grant is a multimedia artist whose practice is mostly concerned with collage and animation. She is informed by her studies at London College of Fashion, where she began using collage in place of drawing to explore ideas. She currently lives and works in Margate, UK.

Through her cut-and-pasted, often anonymous characters, Grant explores the construction of memory, personal history, roots and identity. Her collages are composed of a combination of archival imagery and photographs taken by the artist. They come together organically, Grant following her intuition to put together an image that is both aesthetically balanced and meaningful. By placing figures and scenes from across multiple time periods and geographies within the same frame, she builds unique narratives that trace hidden lines of identity and emotion.

Her unique style and craft has led to her creating a mural for Jay Z's Book of HOV, NYC exhibition, artwork for the front cover of *Dazed Magazine* and collaborations with brands including Burberry, Gucci, Hermès and Adidas. She has also been featured in magazines including *The Face*, *Love Magazine* and *Creative Review*.

OPERA GALLERY



JAZZ GRANT (b. 1992)
Girl You Think You Got It Bad
2024

Paper collage and acrylic on
gessoed wood board

107 x 91 cm | 42.1x 35.8 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



JAZZ GRANT (b. 1992)
She Leaned Over the Earth
2024

Paper collage and acrylic on
gessoed wood board

120 x 90 cm | 42.1x 35.4 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

**REDRESSING
THE CANON**

**KEHINDE WILEY · AWODIYA TOLUWANI ·
THELONIOUS STOKES**



KEHINDE WILEY

Kehinde Wiley is an American portrait painter known for his naturalistic paintings of Black people that reference the work of Old Master paintings. He predominantly works in the mediums of painting, sculpture and video, Wiley's portraits challenge and reorient art historical narratives, awakening complex issues that many remain muted on. His work uses the visual rhetoric of the heroic, the powerful, the majestic and the sublime to celebrate Black and brown people he has met and known of around the world.

In 1999, Wiley earned a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and in 2001 earned a MFA from Yale University. His first solo exhibition, 'Passing/Posing', was shown in 2002 at the Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, IL. In 2005, his popularity increased when VH1 commissioned Wiley to paint portraits of all the 2005 VH1 Hip-Hop Honors honorees. He is currently based in New York City, USA.

KEHINDE WILEY (b. 1977)
Untitled (Easter Realness II)
2002

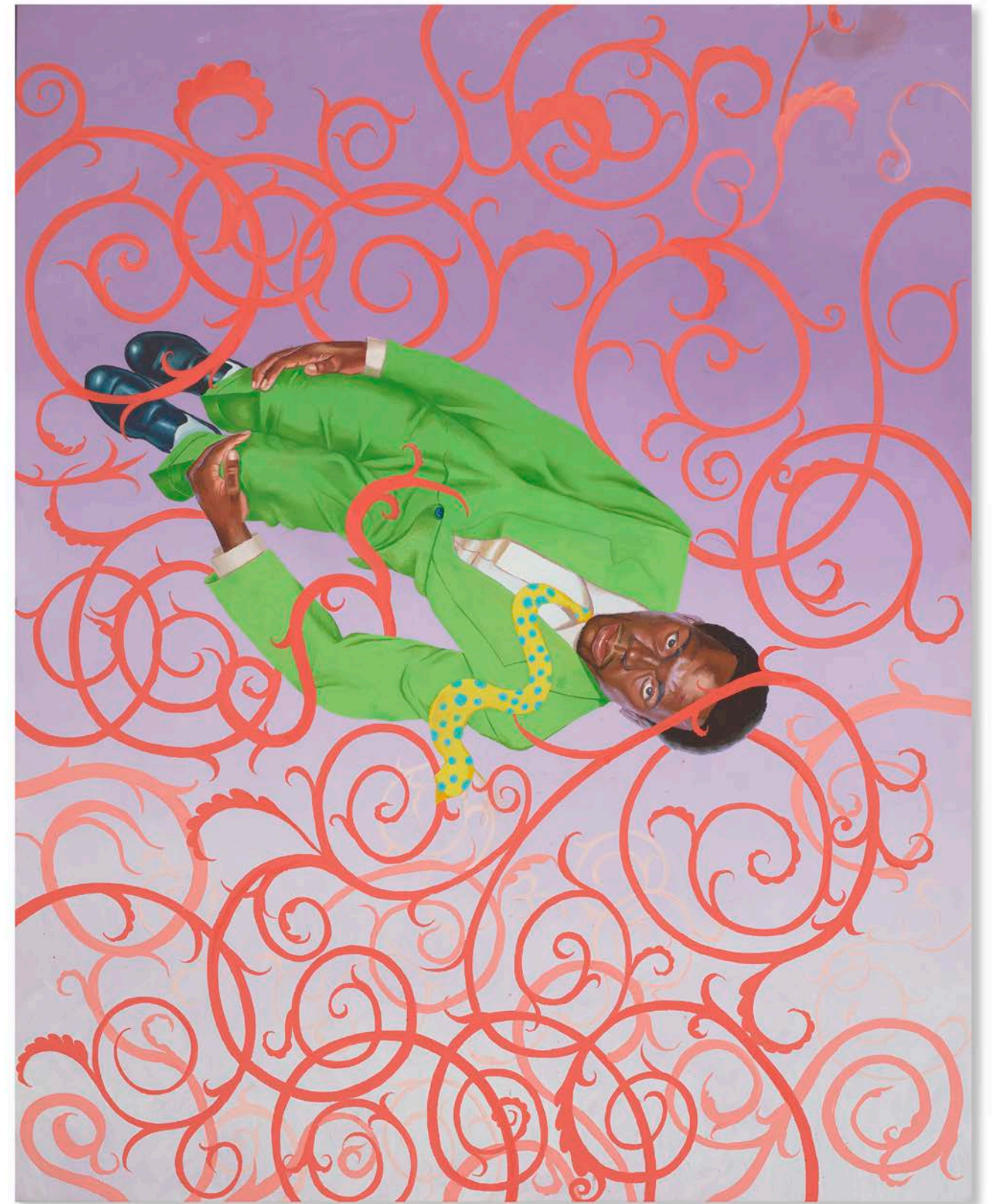
Oil on canvas

Signed and dated 'Kehinde Wiley '02'
on the reverse

154,3 x 123,7 cm | 160.7 x 48.7 in

PROVENANCE

Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, USA
Private collection, 2002





KEHINDE WILEY (b. 1977)
Big Daddy Kane
2005

Oil on canvas

269,2 x 208,6 cm | 106 x 82.1 in

PROVENANCE

Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles, USA
Private collection

EXHIBITED

Washington D.C., Smithsonian National
Portrait Gallery, 'RECOGNIZE 8 Hip
Hop Contemporary Portraiture',
8 February–26 October 2008,
exh. cat., ill. p.12
Boca Raton, Museum of Art,
7 January 2013–7 January 2018

LITERATURE

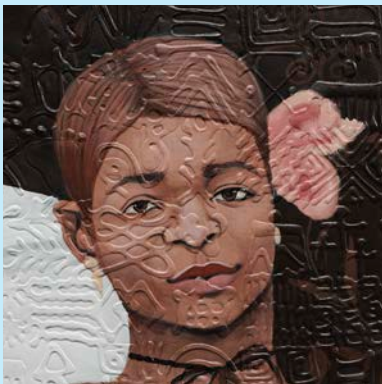
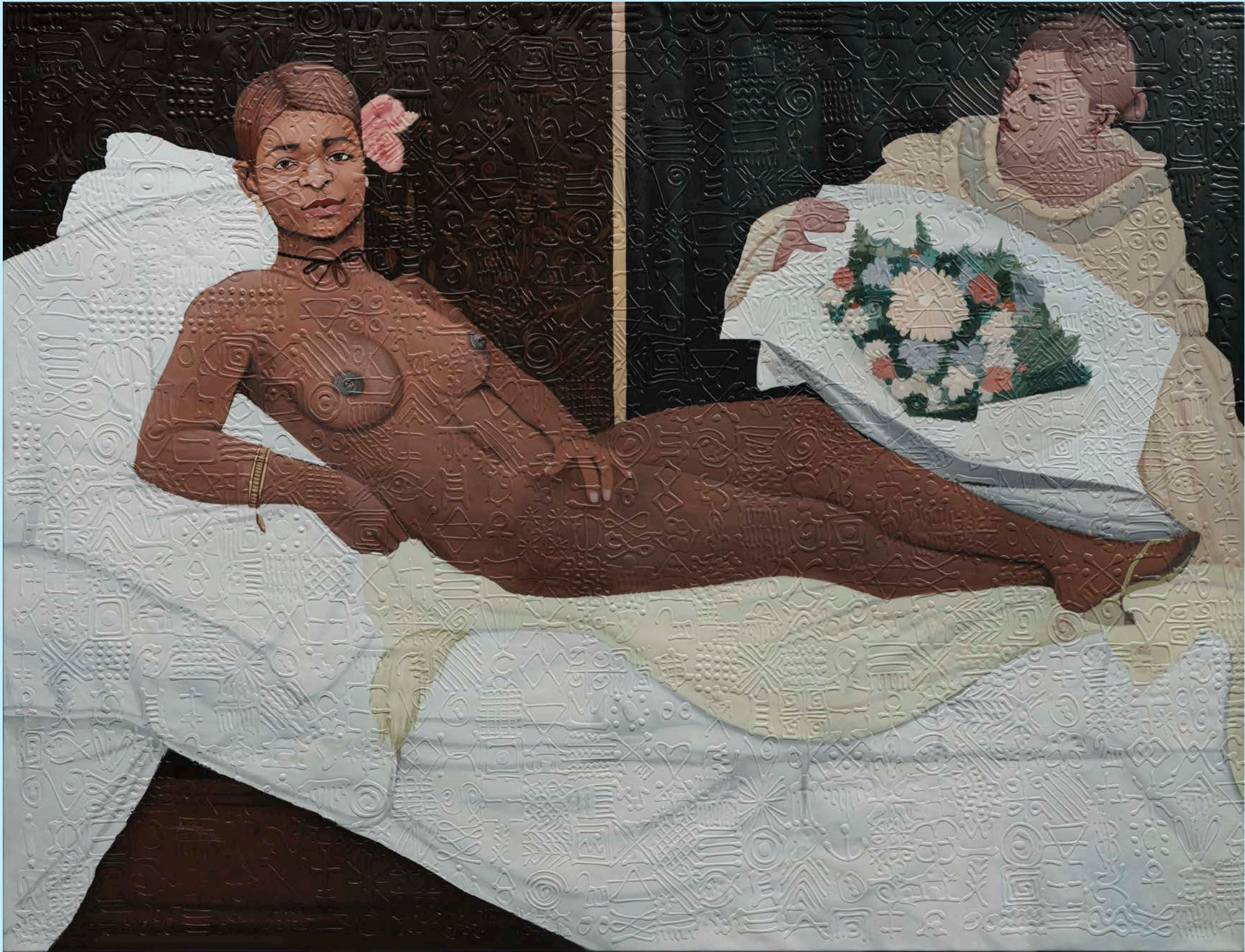
Sareet E. Yoseph, "Where Swagger
Meets Stoicism" in *The Root*,
16 May 2008, online



AWODIYA TOLUWANI

Awodiya Toluwani is a Nigerian artist. In his works, culture and history become visually tangible concepts that demonstrate the ideas, feelings, and experiences that his own cultural background have given him. His technique draws largely from the art of a number of African cultures, including Adire (from the Yorubas; Southwest Nigeria), Adinkra (from Ghana) and Nsibidi (from the Ejagham people from Southeast Nigeria). His use of thousands of African symbolic motifs creates striking patterns on his canvases.

The high relief textures in the works are imitation of scars. To Toluwani, the reason for such scars is twofold: they arise from the pain of racism, and are tribal markers of culture. He endeavours to demonstrate that these scars have not broken his community and instead made it stronger. He is currently based in Lagos, Nigeria. He grew up in Ogun State and graduated in Fine and Applied Arts from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State in 2017.



AWODIYA TOLUWANI (b. 1994)
Ewa/Beauty
2022

Acrylic on texturised canvas

Signed and dated ‘Awodiya /
Toluwani / 2022’ on the lower
left

138 x 180 cm | 54.3 x 70.9 in

PROVENANCE

Artist’s studio
Private collection

CERTIFICATE

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery has
confirmed the authenticity of
this work.





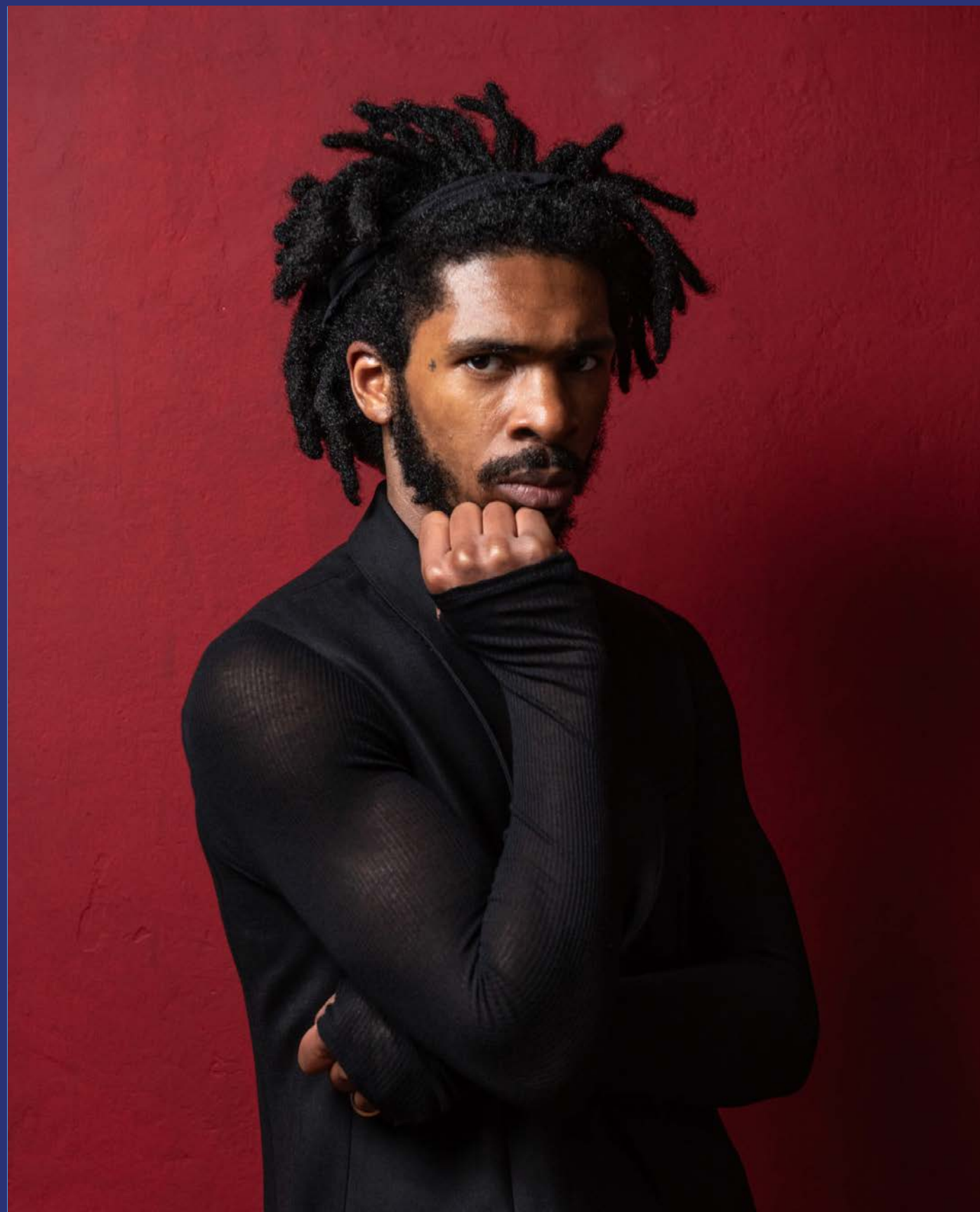
◀ **AWODIYA TOLUWANI** (b. 1994)
Spirit of Ecstasy
2023

Acrylic on texturised canvas

Signed and dated ‘Awodiya /
Toluwani / 2023’ on the lower
right

138 x 194,5 cm | 54.3 x 76.6 in

PROVENANCE
Artist’s studio
Private collection



THELONIOUS STOKES

Thelonious Stokes is an American figurative oil painter whose work examines Black identity and representation through various personal, social and historical lenses. It simultaneously interrogates Western art history and Judeo-Christian themes – challenging and recontextualizing the canon to include themes and depictions of Black figuration that have been historically omitted. He was the first African American to attend the prestigious Florence Academy of Art. His work anchors itself in the figurative movement as an attempt to compensate for the centuries of missing Black representations in the arts. Thelonious is currently based and works in Florence, Italy.



THELONIOUS STOKES (b. 1995)
The Cry
2023

Oil on linen

200 x 150 cm | 78.7x 59.1 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

THELONIOUS STOKES (b. 1995)
*Tired of being a N*gger; Champion of A Fowl;
Crossroads red ribbons and chalk lines*
2023

Oil on linen

200 x 150 cm | 78.7x 59 in

PROVENANCE
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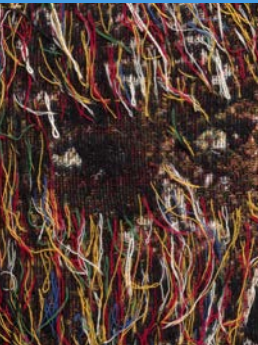
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THOUGHTS ON A BODY
TOO LONG CURATED

Otamere Guobadia

Otamere Guobadia is a multidisciplinary writer, poet, and columnist whose work focuses on desire, art, adornment, queerness, and agency, within culture high, low, and popular. This poem is taken from his first book, *Unutterable Visions, Perishable Breath* (2024).

We are a glittering, perma-medicated set. A revolving door of beauty and
decay—creatures, all love and no decorum.

Has glamour this latter day become dysfunctional, or has glamour always
been a kind of dysfunction?

I am a secret, beneath a false drawer, set upon an illusion.

But really a kiss is the most exciting thing in the world.

I have always wanted to be perfect — everything else I have ever done has
been peripheral, incidental.

Perfect posture rots the bone.

All perfect form was improvisation once.

The problem is degeneracy just looks so good on us.

All of our luxury, our excess, is paid for in someone else’s deprivation,
their lack, their blood.

CREDITS

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Adjei Tawiah, *I'm Still Here*, 2023

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