



John Madu's first solo show at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg

Madu discusses three of the works that form part of 'A Loop In Time'

'A Loop In Time' is an exhibition of paintings exploring figures of power through identity, emotion and time, reinterpreting narratives in history to fit into a contemporary discourse concerning social and political debates. Madu's latest body of work consists of subjects that have evolved through his practice over the years. He plays with recognisable iconography from history and popular culture to compose symbolic fun and appealing visual languages.





John Madu, *Judgment of Paris (we are the gifts)*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 173 x 182cm. Courtesy of the artist & Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.

This work is part of a series of paintings with the subject culled from Greek mythology, with a popular depiction by Peter Paul Rubens. *The Judgement of Paris* was a contest between the three most beautiful goddesses of Olympus for the prize of the golden apple addressed 'to the fairest'.

I was inspired by conversations on social media surrounding women not supporting other women, which led me to learn about 'Queen Bee Syndrome', a term coined in 1973, mainly in the corporate environment where midlevel women feel a lack of support from more senior women.

When creating this piece, I had my mind on a reversal to the stereotype that women don't support each other, I positioned the characters in the painting close to each other because I believe a woman alone has power, but as a collective can make an impact concerning important issues, by channelling the power of collaboration."



John Madu, *Maleek: Of skin and stereotypes II*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 144cm. Courtesy of the artist & Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.

Maleek: Of skin and stereotypes II is a second version of an initial work I created in 2020, inspired by a caricature of a black boy in an old poster printed from the year 1863. The young black boy (piccaninny) eating a very large watermelon, almost as big as he is, underneath this picture had a caption which defamed Africans and their American descendants.

This made me look for more similar posters and found out the cartoonists depicted the African eating watermelons that were exaggerated by its size, to depict black men having an unusual voracious appetite for the fruit. Through research I found that watermelons were originally a symbol of freedom and black sufficiency for the just then emancipated slaves after the civil war in the 1860's. Free black people grew, ate and sold watermelons and made this a symbol of their freedom.

Southern whites were threatened by this new found freedom and responded by making the fruit a symbol of black peoples

presence. The watermelon became a stereotype and has been viewed as a major symbol in the iconography of racism in the United States. It is evident that cultural symbols have the power to shape how we view our world and the people in it. I am of the CLA hook of thought that intolerance can be used to teach tolerance. From my trip through art history this painting is styled after a painting by Francisco Goya titled *Saturn Devouring His Son*.



John Madu, *Not this time invader VII*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 144cm. Courtesy of the artist & Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.

This painting is a part of a large body of work exploring subjects of time, history, identity, globalisation and neo-colonialism. Initially, the universal conversations about repatriating Africa's looted art inspired me. It made me think why the artist's or artisan's at that time weren't documented. My playful approach to this subject is a way I cushion such serious issues. The red

these paintings.



**Installation view of 'A Loop In Time' at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.
Courtesy of Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.**

John Madu is a Nigerian multi-disciplinary artist born in Lagos, best known for his figurative, symbolic paintings. His work can be described as eclectic because of how he derives ideas from various influences and sources based on popular culture, African history, art history, and personal experiences. Symbolism is usually evident in his work, with reoccurring iconographies such as books, paintings, and other recognisable items which convey a particular meaning in art and act as metaphors to a subject.



With a B.sc in policy and strategic studies, John Madu has taught himself, how to follow a natural flow of research and idea development, exploring all possible concepts, until it is innovative and ready for high-quality production, and above all to embrace his individual style, with a wide array of mediums such as acrylic paint, oil paint, spray paint, ink, burlap and collage. His multi-disciplinary approach has guided his creative interest in design objects, sculpture, functional art, and even artistic fashion pieces. Madu's art has been featured in contemporary art exhibitions locally and internationally. He has collaborated with international brands such as DIESEL and Bombay Sapphire and believes art should be perceived as a time continuum like the way we see nature and an instantaneous reflection of the creative part of ourselves being expressed, when a viewer comes in contact with his work.

'A Loop In Time' will be on view from the 13th of November until the 24th of December 2021 at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery. John Madu is exclusively represented by Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery. For more information, please visit [zidoun-bossuyt.com](http://www.zidoun-bossuyt.com) [<http://www.zidoun-bossuyt.com/>]. Click here to view the online viewing room. [https://vr.seemore.art/zidoun-bossuyt/a_loop_in_time]

FEATURED IMAGE: John Madu, Costume party at the flamingo club, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 174 x 174cm. Courtesy of the artist & Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.

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