

Wallpaper*

'I see portraiture as a means to impart a social commentary'

Self-taught Nigerian painter Eniwaye Oluwaseyi addresses #EndSARS in his debut show at ADA gallery in Accra



Like so many entrepreneurs and business owners this year, the contemporary art advisor and former journalist Adora Mba had to place plans to open her contemporary art gallery in Accra, Ghana on hold. Mba's ADA \ Contemporary originally intended to stage its first show, by Collins Obijiaku, in March, but it opened six months later. The delay allowed Mba to refine her strategy and strengthen relationships with the artists she represents.

Committed to nurturing Ghana's emerging art scene, ADA \ Contemporary's second show, the debut of the self-taught Nigerian painter

Eniwaye Oluwaseyi, titled 'The Politics of Shared Spaces', presents an exciting body of work that contemplates the identities, narratives and power struggles formed within the layered frameworks that accompany the shared space. Explored through a portfolio of 12 large-scale canvases, the exhibition investigates the contexts of shared living spaces, communities and mindsets, while offering a commentary on the politics of race and class.



'I see portraiture as a means to impart a social commentary,' explains the 26-year-old Oluwaseyi, who only began pursuing art a year and a half ago. 'Each work brings attention to an individual of a certain socioeconomic background and outlines underlying political issues by shedding a light on a marginalised person or community, all-the-while examining the identities and power struggles within our shared spaces. With my work, I hope to spark up comprehensive conversations with those that see them, no matter where on the globe they may find themselves.'

He continues, 'I focus primarily on the dynamics of power struggles: from sharing my viewpoint on the #EndSARS protests currently happening in Nigeria, to bringing people's attention to the Albino communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, who have been caught in the crossfire of ignorance and Black colourism [and killed as a result].'

Each of Oluwaseyi's portraits captures its subjects within a vacuum of ambiguity, inviting the viewer to reconsider what is being prioritised in the visual space. Using a vivid colour palette and intentional compositions, Oluwaseyi also asserts the idea of co-existence by presenting his subjects in a non-dominant manner. Working in oil on canvas, his intricate

brushstrokes convey both a refinement and vulnerability to the subjects being portrayed.



‘I purposefully choose vibrant colours to embody the term "person of colour" in an aspiration to emphasise that we, as Blacks and Africans, are likewise majestic people’



‘I try to combine unusual colour palettes to go beyond the borders of religion, race and tradition,’ he explains. ‘I use colour as a means to

communicate the subject matter since skin colour is rooted in my work, but [also] as a medium for creation and expression. Colours are reflections of my moods and feelings while I paint each piece. I purposefully choose vibrant colours to embody the term "person of colour," in an aspiration to emphasise that we, as Blacks and Africans, are likewise majestic people.'

Eniwaye concludes, 'I believe that if we are able to coexist in a communal space, no reason will arise to ostracise some or harm others whom we may not "understand". Within our personal spaces, we can seek to work together at peace without placing priority over anyone in the face of their identity, race or position. If this can be achieved, then we can project these same ideals onto our communities as a whole.'



INFORMATION

Eniwaye Oluwaseyi, 'The Politics of Shared Spaces', until 27
December, ADA \ contemporary art gallery, Accra. ada-accra.com

ADDRESS

ADA \ contemporary art gallery
Ground Floor, ALTO Tower
Villaggio Vista
North Airport Road
Accra, Ghana