

## Awodiya Toluwani

### ***INTERWOVEN EXISTENCES***

16 March – 6 May 2023



*Duke*, 2022, Acrylic on texturized canvas, 124 x 157 x 3 cm, 48 7/8 x 61 3/4 x 1 1/8 in

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is pleased to present, *Interwoven Existences*, the first solo exhibition of Nigerian artist Awodiya Toluwani in Europe from 16 March to 6 May at the gallery in Luxembourg.

“As an artist, my work centers around bringing to the forefront the often-overlooked yet inherent significance of the animal kingdom to human existence, juxtaposed against the fragility of our own nature. Through my art, I aim to draw attention to the delicate balance that exists between humans and animals, and the selective nature of our interactions with them. Drawing inspiration from old masters works such as the likes of Johannes Vermeer, Arthur Wardle, Édouard Manet, Charles and Christian Nahl. My focus is on highlighting the benefits of animals to humans, both in life and death, and the ways in which these benefits have been appreciated and utilized throughout history. In particular, I draw inspiration from the ancient era, which was marked by a keen interest in the natural world and its complexities, as well as a fascination with the ornamental and decorative.

With this in mind, I seek to create works that are both aesthetically pleasing and conceptually rich, exploring themes of beauty, death, and our relationship with the natural world. By engaging with these themes, I hope to inspire a deeper appreciation for the complex interplay between animals and humans, and to encourage reflection on our place within this intricate web of life. My technique draws largely from the use of Adire (from the Yorubas; Southwest Nigeria), Adinkra (from Ghana), the Nsibidi (from the Ejagham people from Southeast Nigeria) and many more African cultures. The use of thousands of African symbolic units of motifs creates striking patterns. However, it does so in such a way as to immerse the observer, almost

in a mystical way, in the collective cultural experience of the Africans. High relief traditional motifs/ symbols are incorporated within an array of units placed on the background. The high relief textures in the works are imitation of scars. We as Africans have two major sources of scars. One is from a place of pain, while the other is from a place of culture, beliefs and faith popularly called tribal marks. The physical and emotional scars are received from slavery. These scars were received from whips and lashes of canes. Some still bear these scars emotionally and physically. Tribal marks are scars that were intentionally given to Africans for a number of reasons. Some were for identification (during local wars), spiritual reasons, a form of aesthetic, rites of passage and so on. Legacy shares our story not with ignorance but with acknowledgement of our pains and the gains of our scars. Our scars didn't break us, they make us better."

## Biography

Born in Nigeria, Toluwani grew up in Ogun State. He studied Fine and Applied Arts at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State and graduated in 2017. Awodiya Toluwani is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA). Toluwani's works are privately collected in Nigeria and Abroad. He has been involved in various projects and exhibitions in Nigeria such as the So Far Exhibition (2014- 2017), The Tribe Art Festival (2018), Art Soirée (2019), Society of Nigerian Artists Art Exhibition 'October Rain' (2019), MyDrim Art Gallery Group Exhibition (2019) and Life in My City Art Foundation competition (LIMCAF) (2019) where he was one of the finalists. He is exclusively represented by Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery and he presented his first solo exhibition at the gallery in Dubai in May 2022. Awodiya Toluwani is currently doing a residency at the Institut für Alles Mögliche in Berlin.