

AWODIYA TOLUWANI

The Becoming

9 November 2024 – 11 January 2025

*Amarya (meaning bride in Hausa language), 2024*

Acrylic, gold dust, rhinestone and fabric (called aso-òkè in Yoruba culture) on canvas
77 x 103 cm

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is pleased to announce Awodiya Toluwani's fourth exhibition with the gallery and second solo exhibition in Dubai, opening on Saturday 9 November 2024 until 11 January 2025.

Awodiya Toluwani's technique draws from the South Nigerian Adire and Nsibidi traditions, as well as from the Adinkra (Ghana) and numerous other African traditions. Such high relief textures imitate scars of two major sources: one is from a place of physical pain, whereas the other is a cultural element that constitutes tribal marks. While the physical and emotional scars are a heritage of slavery – provoked by whips and lashes of canes – the tribal marks are scars that were intentionally given to Africans for several reasons, spanning from identification, faith, aesthetic and so on.

'The Becoming' examines values of marriage across several cultures in Nigeria. It analyses prospects of the institution and also provides insights into several marital practices observed across cultures. It also examines forms of marriage, marital expectations and myths. Furthermore, it discusses the patterns of marriage, its changing institution and what makes marriage work. These includes faithfulness, tolerance, faith, understanding, long suffering, nurturing fondness and admiration, turning towards each other instead of away, solving conflicts, overcoming gridlock and creating shared meaning.

Marriage in Nigerian culture is a profound institution steeped in rich traditions and communal values, reflecting the diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds of its

people. It serves not only as a union between two individuals but also as a bond between families and communities.

The traditional marriage ceremony is a vibrant affair, characterized by colorful attire, music, and dance. It involves various rituals that vary by ethnic group, such as the Igbo's "Igba Nkwu" (palm wine carrying) and the Yoruba's "mo mi'n mo e" (know me and let me know you). These events are often elaborate, showcasing cultural pride and community solidarity. Community members play an active role in the festivities, highlighting the communal nature of marriage in Nigeria.

Religious beliefs also significantly shape marital practices. Whether Christian, Muslim, or traditional, each faith brings its own rituals and moral guidelines, influencing how couples approach their unions. This intersection of tradition and modernity reflects broader societal changes, as many young Nigerians navigate their identities in a globalized world.

In summary, marriage in Nigerian culture is a multifaceted institution that embodies deep-rooted traditions, family values, and evolving gender roles. It remains a cornerstone of societal structure, symbolizing love, commitment, and the unity of families and communities.

Biography

Born in Nigeria in 1994, 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. His solo exhibition *The Becoming* is the fourth solo exhibition with the gallery and the second show in Dubai.