

ADA \ CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY, SPECIALIZED IN THE WORK OF EMERGING ARTISTS ACROSS AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORA, TO OPEN IN ACCRA, GHANA

Opening in October 2020, the inaugural exhibition *Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree* presents a new body of work by Nigerian portrait artist Collins Obijiaku, addressing notions of lived experience and identity.

October 15 – November 19, 2020



(Accra, Ghana) – Marking its opening in Accra, Ghana, **ADA \ contemporary art gallery** unveils its inaugural exhibition, *Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree*, the debut solo presentation of Nigerian painter Collins Obijiaku (b. 1995). From October 15 to November 19, 2020, the gallery will present the emerging artist's new body of work, a selection of 17 intimate portraits delving into notions of Blackness, lived experience, interiority and identity. Debuting ADA's program of curated exhibitions specializing in the work of emerging artists across Africa and its diaspora, *Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree* attests to the gallery's engagement in supporting fresh talent across a diverse set of mediums, offering early career artists an opportunity to present a comprehensive portfolio of work.

On view within the gallery's 850-square-meter space, the exhibition showcases a new body of work from Obijiaku's eponymous portrait series, marking a radical departure from his previous work based on social commentary. A celebration of his own lived experiences and struggles and those of his friends and acquaintances, the paintings transcend accepted conceptions of portraiture and come to embody the profoundly human inner character of each of the artist's subjects. Obijiaku creates vivid and poignant portraits, utilizing charcoal, textured brushstrokes and dactylograms to render each individual's intimate history and complex personality. The concurrent and collinear lines, seemingly cartographic and filling the surface of the

canvas with no obvious starting point nor known end, deliberately translate the unpredictable journey of each depicted life. Impressing notions of identity and of relationship to space through patterns and typography, the artist's styled portraits compel the viewer to delve into a close, focused observation, and exert on him a dizzying embrace.

Furthermore, Obijiaku's visual language plays with the now accepted theme of the profligacy, or shameless immorality, of image production in relation to Black figuration and representation. He disrupts the seemingly natural order of image production in portraiture by texturizing his portraits so as to suggest a form of expressionism that excludes all assumed or anticipated excess. His works do not speak to a representation of emotion. Moving beyond sociocultural constructs of gender, skin color and religion, the paintings are a homage to pure human existence, the expression of a shared desire to just be.

On view until November 19, 2020, the exhibition also extends digitally, complementing the gallery display with a multifaceted immersion into Obijiaku's practice. A virtual viewing room and visit, as well as personal sketches and videos of the artist, these supporting materials offer an intimate insight into both his inspiration and his artistic process.

Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree is the first iteration of ADA's program of dedicated solo and group exhibitions, off-site projects, talks, creative partnerships and more. In 2021, ADA will also launch a residency program bringing together a local Ghanaian artist and an international artist whose practice is rooted in Africa and its legacy. Cultivating a dialogue between local and international artists, the residency is a manifest to ADA's engagement in nurturing Ghana and Africa's emerging art community, while strengthening its ties and influence across global audiences.

MEDIA CONTACT:

A R T Communication + Brand Consultancy (Berlin)

Anna Rosa Thomae | CEO & Founder | art@annarosathomae.com

Roxane Latrèche | Account Manager | roxane@annarosathomae.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Collins Obijiaku:

Collins Obijiaku (b. 1995, Kaduna, Northern Nigeria) is an early career portrait artist living and working for in Suleja, a small town in the periphery of the country's capital Abuja.

While Obijiaku's creative journey began with sketches and illustrations in the margins of his class notes in school, his practice took a turn in 2016 when he moved south to Enugu to live with his relatives. Taking up part time work in a shopping mall to earn a living, he developed a keen and sharp sense of observation, spending extensive time sketching his surroundings. In particular, he grew aware and deeply receptive to individuals' gazes – decoding those of both the wealthy and the working classes, the carefree and the burdened, he studied the diversity within a superficially homogeneous group of people. A form of release from the physical exertions of his work, Obijiaku's early pencil sketches set the foundations for his particular style, one gradually established with no formal art background or training and which he increasingly applied to sketches and painting his acquaintances.

Returning to Suleja with this new sensibility, he witnessed a friend survive a near lynching – a turning point in his creative process. Turning to a more engaged practice, he began to chronicle the precarious existence of those on the margins of society as his paintings took on a darker dimension, depicting societal ills and injustices in the hope of catharsis and as a form of social commentary. Gaining critical attention but increasingly self-consuming, Obijiaku's work has since evolved to liberate his subjects from the dire conditions that surround them, instead representing them as empowered, unfazed individuals, witnesses to a deeper, essentially human existence.

Collins Obijiaku has been featured in several international group exhibitions including *The Medium is the Message*, UNIT London; *SAY IT LOUD*, Christie's, New York; *Black Voices / Black Microcosm*, CFHILL, Stockholm; and *Diaspora Unite!*, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco. *Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree* is the artist's first solo exhibition.

About ADA \ contemporary art gallery:

Based in Accra, Ghana, ADA \ contemporary art gallery specializes in the work of emerging artists across Africa and its diaspora. Established in 2020 by contemporary African art advisor Adora Mba, ADA is committed to nurturing Ghana and the continent's contemporary art community and to fostering its ties and influence amongst global audiences.

Highlighting individual early career artistic practices, the gallery's program includes dedicated solo exhibitions; off-site projects and exhibitions; site-specific commissions; talks; creative partnerships and philanthropic activities with local actors; and international art fairs. Each exhibition also extends online, complementing the physical experience with a multifaceted digital immersion into each artist's personal practice.

In parallel, ADA will develop a residency program starting in 2021, bringing together a local Ghanaian artist and an international artist whose practice is rooted in Africa and its legacy. Cultivating a dialogue between the local and the international artists, the residency is a manifest to ADA's engagement in strengthening these ties and to establishing Ghana's emerging artistic scene and market internationally.

ADA \ contemporary art gallery

Villaggio Vista

North Airport Road

Airport Residential Area

Accra, Ghana

info@ada-accra.com

www.ada-accra.com

Image credit:

Image 1. Collins Obijiaku, Molaya, 2020. Oil and charcoal on paper, 100 cm x 70 cm. Courtesy of the artist and ADA \ contemporary art gallery.

Image 2. Collins Obijiaku, Gindin Mangoro, 2020. Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas, 180 cm x 160 cm. Courtesy of the artist and ADA \ contemporary art gallery.