

ADA \ CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY PRESENTS *CROSS HATCHING AFFLUENCE* BY EMERGING GHANAIAN ARTIST HAMID NII NORTEY

On view from May 6 – June 16, 2021, Hamid Nii Nortey's new series of glamorous urban scenes bear witness to Africa's transforming urban landscape and to its burgeoning middle classes, thereby reclaiming ownership over prevailing narratives of poverty and war.

May 6 – June 16, 2021



Left. Hamid Nii Nortey, *Deep Summer is when laziness finds respectability*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 48x40 inches. Courtesy of the artist and of ADA \ contemporary art gallery. Right. Hamid Nii Nortey, *Build an empire, leave a legacy*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 42x60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and of ADA \ contemporary art gallery.

April 22, 2021 (Accra, Ghana) – Accra-based ADA \ contemporary art gallery, specialized in the work of emerging artists across Africa and its diaspora, unveils its fourth consecutive debut solo exhibition since opening in October 2020 – *Cross Hatching Affluence*, an exhibition by emerging Ghanaian artist Hamid Nii Nortey (b. 1987). On view from May 6 – June 16, 2021 in person and online, the selection of 20 new figurative paintings acts as a mirror onto the Ghanaian capital's fast-evolving urban and social landscape, thereby reappropriating a narrative long dominated by socioeconomic and political hardship.

An emerging artist based in Accra, Hamid Nii Nortey has stood witness to the city's considerable transformation in recent decades – one that has materialized in its expansion and architectural development and in the social dynamics that have emanated from it. Looking to the inhabitants of the city as reflections of these changes, *Cross Hatching Affluence* is a visual snapshot onto the growing middle- and upper-class elite that has come to represent an increasing share of Accra, as well as Ghana and the broader African continent's population. A testament to the



extensive socioeconomic and industrial development of post-Independence Ghana, the paintings move away from prevailing tropes of war, poverty and disease as they often relate to the continent. Shifting from the less fortunate to the flourishing middle class, Nortey reclaims ownership over this visual narrative, thereby leading the way for new voices and narratives from the continent to emerge.

At once mimicking and interpreting the rich fabric of Accra's cityscape, Nortey's paintings depict sweeping urban scenes of expansive buildings and interior scenes. Fascinated by the spatial structures, Nortey indulges viewers into experiencing physical space on a flat surface – rendering exterior and interior architecture as a pivotal structural element to his work. Adopting an architectural lens, he investigates the peculiar language of composition through lines. With a complex interplay of linear contrast and harmony, and with parallel lines converging in a vanishing point, Nortey builds on perspective as a crucial element in bringing the works to life and emulating the city's bustling urban life.

Mirroring the works' many compositional lines, Nortey's hatching technique – consisting of closely spaced parallel and crossed lines which he uses to add texture and dimension – echoes his desire to communicate the *beating heart* of the city: this time, by breathing life into his characters. Reflective of his pursuit for realism in detail, Nortey seeks inspiration from Dutch post-Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh. Creating a visual link with the latter's rough brushstroke treatment, best embodied in his notable *Starry Night* (1889), Nortey covers the skin of his figures with his characteristic drawing and painting crosshatching technique. Contrasting the artist's broad and smooth Impressionist color palette, from sienna brown to burnt sienna, the close-knit parallel lines, varying in spacing and width, create a rough, loose organic texture, conveying the at once visual and tactile qualities of natural skin. Meticulous and playful sketches, his portraits grow into lifelike, and lively, visual impressions.

Weaving his figures into his dazzling urban landscapes, Nortey invites his viewers to step into the lush narratives of the glamorous and successful – to, as quite literally depicted in *Build an Empire, Leave a Legacy* (2021), climb onto a Victorian staircase or go for a ride in a classic vintage car. In shedding a light onto the physical landscape and material markers of Ghana's evolving society, they become the basis for the artist's visual storytelling, at the border between the physical, the *real*, and the story and broader narrative, the *fictional*. Beyond their referential and decorative role, the complex cityscapes come to embody the artist's conscious approach to image-making. Offering a new display of the “*spectacle of Black wealth*” as Nortey states – a *cross-hatching* of Ghanaian and African *affluence* – his paintings restructure prevailing visual narratives of the continent, hereby reclaiming ownership over them and affirming a sense of both pride and hope.

Cross Hatching Affluence is the fourth iteration of ADA \ contemporary art gallery's ongoing program of dedicated solo and group exhibitions, off-site projects, talks, creative partnerships and more, launched in October 2020. Previous exhibitions include the sold-out solo shows of emerging Nigerian artists Collins Obijiaku (*Gindin Mangoro: Under the Mango Tree*, October 15 – November 19, 2020) and Eniwaye Oluwaseyi (*The Politics of Shared Spaces*, November 27, 2020 – January 10, 2021), and most recently of rising South African star Zandile Tshabalala (*Enter Paradise*, March 4 – April 30, 2021).

This Summer 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.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Hamid Nii Nortey:

Hamid Nii Nortey (b. 1987) is a Ghanaian artist whose compelling and colorful figurative portraits delve into Ghana and the African continent's fast-evolving social landscape – shedding a light onto its diverse generations and social classes. Inspired by Dutch post-Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh, Nortey's works are characterized by the signature cross-hatching technique which he applies onto the skins of his figures. In contrast with the smooth flesh tones rendered by his subtle and wide-ranging color palette, from sienna brown to burnt sienna, his parallel lines, varying in spacing and width and across multiple areas, allude to natural skin tones, all-the-while bringing life to his characters and urban sceneries.

Cross Hatching Affluence, presented at ADA \ contemporary art gallery, Accra, from May 6 – June 16, 2021, is the artist's debut 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.

In parallel, ADA will develop a residency program starting in the Summer 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.

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