



ADA \ CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY PRESENTS ITS INAUGURAL GROUP EXHIBITION *I NO BE GENTLEMAN (AT ALL O)* OF THREE EMERGING NIGERIAN ARTISTS

On view from June 30 – August 15, 2021, the exhibition introduces rising Nigerian artists Chukwudubem Busayo Ukaigwe, Matthew Eguavoen Imuetiyan and Emmanuel Amoo's intriguing new bodies of work in a collective act to ignore and challenge prevalent societal motifs around the African identity, all-the-while interrogating and exposing new conceptions and ideals.

June 30 – August 15, 2021



Left. Chukwudubem Busayo Ukaigwe, *Portrait of Sahar*, 2020. Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 92.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and of ADA \ contemporary art gallery. Right. Matthew Eguavoen Imuetiyan, *Cynthia*, 2021. Acrylic and oil on canvas, 130 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist and of ADA \ contemporary art gallery.

June 28, 2021 (Accra, Ghana) – Accra-based **ADA \ contemporary art gallery**, specialized in the work of emerging artists across Africa and its diaspora, presents its very first group exhibition, following on four consecutive debut solo exhibitions since opening in October 2020. *I No Be Gentleman (at all o)*, on view from June 30 – August 15, 2021, brings together the works of three emerging Nigerian artists Chukwudubem Busayo Ukaigwe, Matthew Eguavoen Imuetiyan and Emmanuel Amoo, introducing a new wave of interest in going against the prescribed *status quo* and forging a new, broader constellation of African identities and representations.

The title of the exhibition, *I No Be Gentleman (at all o)* finds its roots in the 1973 Afrobeat album *Gentleman*, and soundtrack of the same title, by Nigerian bandleader, controversial and disruptive activist, Fela Kuti. The lyrics cheerfully mock the pretensions of a “gentleman” who wears stifling Western clothing under the scorching African sun: “*He go sweat all over,*” Kuti predicts. *Gentleman* denounces the legacy of colonialism, European ideals and Westernized constructs and cultures. Kuti’s commentary calls for the African – man and woman – to take possession of his or her own identity and authenticity, and break away from predominantly Westernized indoctrinations.

In their eponymous group exhibition, Ukaigwe, Imuetiyan and Amoo perpetuate artistic practices that attempt to frame their own notion of African aesthetics. Exposing sociocultural identities and economic discrepancies, they point to the effects of neocolonialism and to the resulting politics of material and conceptual decolonization.

Ukaigwe consciously uses a variety of mediums to relay a plurality of ideas at any given time. He views his art practice as a conversation, or a portal into one, and in some instances, as an interpretation of an ongoing exchange in researching semiotic possibilities and diverse mechanisms of meaning. Ukaigwe’s work semantically interrogates contemporary themes and their association to the canon, premising and borrowing his concepts from experimental music, chiefly jazz music. The matrix of his practice is to provide a platform for individual analysis of work or of an idea and for revealing a transcendent relational meaning between multiple works or ideas positioned together in space.

Imuetiyan’s focal concern hangs in the impact of his work on his immediate environment, and on the world at large. Fascinated by individuals’ reactions to their surroundings and how it affects their response to life, his art centers around societal, political and economic imbalances. Imuetiyan’s large-scale portraits hold a strong, striking gaze, as each of his models embody bold, unwavering stares. Through these eyes, the artist projects identity formation, mental health, gender constructs, the societal and governmental impact on both the “*common man*” and the “*affluent.*”



Emmanuel Amoo, *Waiting to No Avail*, 2021. Charcoal, pastels and acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 121.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and of ADA \ contemporary art gallery.

Amoo is a contemporary surrealist who specializes in the use of pastels, graphite, charcoal and acrylics. His art is primarily inspired by human emotions and tenderness in an environment that is at once sociocultural and sociopolitical. In his work, Amoo strives to define a new space where self-expression at any given time is acceptable. This new body of work centers around major sociocultural current issues and the pervasive influence of digital, mainly social, media. Ultimately, Amoo’s creative process calls to an attempt to unveil, in his viewers and more broadly, authentic emotions concealed in a society governed by the art of hiding one’s true nature under pressured smiles and forced toxicity.



I No Be Gentleman (at all o) is the first group show in 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); of rising South African star Zandile Tshabalala (*Enter Paradise*, March 4 – April 30, 2021); and of Ghanaian contemporary artist Hamid Nii Nortey (*Cross Hatching Affluence*, May 6 – June 16, 2021)

This August, ADA will launch its one-month residency program, in partnership with the Noldor Artist Residency, 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:

***Biographies of the artists are available upon request.*

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 inaugurate a one-month residency program, in partnership with the Noldor Artist Residency, in August 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

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