

ADA \ CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY PRESENTS:

***COME HELL OR HIGH WATER***

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY ARABA OPOKU

**01 April – 22 May 2022**

Araba Opoku is a Ghanaian multidisciplinary artist whose lucid abstract paintings explore her distorted concepts of memory as well as reference socio-economic issues of her home country.



Araba Opoku, *Damba Lane*, Acrylic on canvas, 180 cm x 140 cm,

Image courtesy the Artist and ADA\ contemporary art gallery

*Come Hell or High Water* examines Araba Opoku's lived experience of the water scarcity and rationing crisis prevalent in Accra, Ghana. Only a privileged few in Ghana's society can afford water tanks and storage units with most people being forced to resort to waking up at midnight to fetch water daily due to lack of availability.

Opoku draws inspiration from her immediate environment by capturing streets, house backyards, objects, and the daily activities of her community. She utilizes illustrations and editing applications to bring her concepts to life from virtual arrangements to physical forms. Opoku applies multiple layers of mixed acrylic paint on the canvas, representing every documented memory, every experience of suffering and inconvenience due to water scarcity. Through subtle visual storytelling, her abstract paintings balance life and decay. In her paintings, there is a reference to the stages of water evolving, from when it is fetched and stored for a long period, to when it starts molding and becomes murky and green. *Come Hell or High Water*, draws attention to the relentless labor involved in fetching and storing water.

*“The subjects of my paintings generate a warped feeling that also signifies limitless flow. They directly channel the state in which my family finds ourselves: having to wake up in a dream-like state at midnight till dawn to store and preserve water, and the sleepiness that clouds your vision with dizzy spells. Ultimately, all the focus on water shortages in my community affected my life and made me and others nocturnal for the past two decades.” - Araba Opoku*

In contrast, visually, *Come Hell or High Water* is a display of joy and the abundance of water, characterized by the artist’s approach which involved washing the surface of her canvas with large brush strokes and watery acrylic paint. The paint drips resonate with the limitless and emancipatory nature of water. Opoku enjoys producing the regimented warped, curved grid lines of shapes that hold the pigment in place. The multiple layers of paint, distorted subjects, and text leave imprints of the consequences the water crisis has caused in the lives of so many.

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## **Araba Opoku**

Araba Opoku (b. 1998) is a Ghanaian multi-disciplinary artist. Opoku’s body of work ranges from lucid and layered abstract paintings to more specific projects, from her self-reflective works exploring distorted concepts of memory and experience to referencing socio-economic issues such as the challenges in Ghana, mental health issues within individuals and families. Opoku takes a textile-like approach to painting, merging various forms and colours from the world around her onto her canvases.

Opoku is a 2022 Junior Fellow of the Noldor Residency and a member of the Artemartis Art Collective.

## **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; offsite projects and exhibitions; site-specific commissions; talks; creative partnerships and philanthropic activities with local actors; and international art fairs.

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