

**ADA CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY PRESENTS**

***Celestial Contemplations: Unveiling the Divine***

**A SOLO EXHIBITION BY JOSEPH MOBOLAJI AINA**

**15 FEBRUARY – 31 MARCH 2024**

ADA contemporary art gallery is pleased to present *Celestial Contemplations: Unveiling the Divine*, a solo exhibition by UK-based Nigerian artist, Joseph Mobolaji Aina (b. 1996).



Joseph Mobolaji Aina, *Disciple 2*, Oil paint, Oil Stick, Chalk Pastel on Canvas, 2023.

*“My faith has been key in forming my character. It is so deep within me, it would make no sense not to let my viewers know about it. I can focus in on personal moments with the Divine when there is silence, when everything outside of the work is cut out. I eliminate all the noise outside of the canvas and become connected and still. That is when my paint brush moves.” – Joseph Mobolaji Aina*

At the core of Aina’s practice is the examination of his pursuit of belonging. His experiences living in a foreign country encouraged him to turn towards his internal psychological landscape for a foundation. This personal journey led him to a deeper knowledge of his faith, and turned his gaze upwards towards the ultimate Creator.

Aina is fascinated by the reverential culture surrounding religious art, in particular the Italian Renaissance period of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the works of Alberto Burri, Antonio da Correggio and Peter Paul Rubens for how they exemplified the contrast of light and shadow. The clear tonal contrasts in this chiaroscuro approach intrigued him enough to incorporate within his practice, in pursuit of such poignancy.

By creating a range of large rectangular paintings, he seeks to simulate the sensation of experiencing a painting as a portal to heaven, an Elysian snapshot of God. The artist creates a range of textural surfaces in his works through the use of oil stick and spray paint beneath oil paint. Moulding the atmosphere and the levels of tension beneath the canvas to reflect the emulsion of colours in the sky as the sun journeys west to set, using diptychs and triptychs to expand the horizon.

Each time Aina creates, he is engulfed in an awareness of being a conduit of a higher power that then spills abundantly into the works. The closer he gets to this exceptional feeling, the more cohesion there is between the pieces. Aina is content to focus on repeating one motif such as the cloud in the swirling shades of blue, pink, yellow, silver and beige to endlessly recreate this ethereal radiance.

By skillfully manipulating the way the paint develops on the surface of the canvas, he captures an array of movement, moisture, and cloud density within the stratosphere. Pulling from memories of his time in Umbria, Italy where he lived on a hill observing the lustre change throughout the day, he recreates moments of the sun gradually moving across blue skies as cirrus and cumulus clouds are blown across the soft surface by the breeze, leaving the observer feeling spiritually uplifted, floating weightlessly above the ground into the cosmos.

Through *Celestial Contemplations*, Aina came to the profound understanding that his yearning for belonging was not unique to him, but is deeply shared by all of humanity. He recognized that the panacea for isolation was not within any one person, but in fact up above, beyond the clouds and the ether. In this body of work, Aina invites the viewer to catch a glimpse of the realm of the Divine and find peace on earth.

*Celestial Contemplations: Unveiling the Divine* is on view until 31 March 2024.

## **CONTACT:**

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## **ABOUT JOSEPH MOBOLAJI AINA**

Joseph Mobolaji Aina is a London-based Nigerian artist. He received a Graduate Diploma at the Royal College of Art (RCA) upon the receipt of the Royal College of Art Studentship, where he graduated with an MA in Painting in 2022. Aina's work investigates personal connections with faith and religion and the emotional response of human nature. Aina has completed art residences in Berlin Germany, Umbria Italy and Lagos Nigeria while his work has been placed in international collections all over the globe. He recently showed at Miami Art Basel 2023 to critical acclaim.

## **ABOUT ADA CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY**

ADA contemporary art gallery, based in Accra, Ghana, specialises in the work of emerging artists across Africa and its diaspora. Established in 2020 by Adora Mba, ADA is committed to nurturing Ghana and the continent's contemporary art community and 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; philanthropic activities with local actors; and international art fairs.

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