

ADA CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY PRESENTS

The Allegory of a Seeker

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY ABDUR RAHMAN MUHAMMAD

25 APRIL – 02 JUNE 2024

ADA contemporary art gallery is pleased to present *The Allegory of a Seeker*, a solo exhibition by Ghanaian artist, Abdur Rahman Muhammad (b. 1992).



Abdur Rahman Muhammad, *Infinite Reveries*, Oil on canvas, 2024.

“I have always believed that living in and being from Ghana should not be a reason to remain stuck, or not to make an impact. I have never created art from a selfish, self-absorbed place, but from a place of keenness and urgency to contribute positively to my community now and in the future by reflecting their realities and giving them hope.”

- Abdur Rahman Muhammad

On view from 25 April 2024, Abdur Rahman Muhammad synthesises national history, observations of contemporary life and inspiration from the lyrical finesse of rap in order to create a visual dialogue, inviting viewers to engage with the layered chronicles of migration, disillusionment, and hope embedded within each stroke and texture.

Foregoing popular sentiment to *Japa* (a pidgin slang word borrowed from the Nigerian Yoruba language meaning “to escape or flee a situation, typically in a hasty manner”), Muhammad chooses to contend with the burdens of life in Ghana, transmuting these hardships and exasperation of Ghanaian youth into a stimulus for his practice. He confronts complex social issues in Ghana today including unemployment, limited skills development from an under-performing education system, poverty and debt, and disenchantment with government.

In *The Allegory of a Seeker*, the artist draws inspiration from the lived experiences of those around him, capturing their woes, and infusing them into the characters in his work. The seekers are real-life, hard-working individuals with an active sense of purpose despite the less-than-ideal circumstances in which they find themselves. While the dejection is depicted in their expressions, the inertia of their daily lives does not extinguish their dreams for pastures they imagine to be greener than their own. This is reflected in his bold use of colour and palette.

Primarily working within figurativism, Muhammad uses oil pigments and employs the impasto technique in his painting process to imbue his characters with texture and depth. This approach serves as a visual metaphor, symbolizing the complexities embedded within his narratives. In contrast, background elements in his paintings remain deliberately flat, creating a dynamic interplay of visual dimensions that mirror the nuanced layers of the stories he explores. Influenced also by the insightful storytelling abilities of musicians, poets and rappers who skilfully navigate critical matters using astute wordplay, his works seek to mirror this weaving of artistry and social commentary.

The ‘Ghana Must Go’ bag motif bridges the gap between past and present for Muhammad. In 1983, Nigerian President Shehu Shagari ordered the expulsion of a large number of undocumented migrants, many of them Ghanaian. These migrants used the cheap, readily available bags to pack their belongings during the forced exodus. The name “Ghana Must Go” emerged then, reflecting the xenophobic sentiment behind the expulsions. During this time the bag gained a negative undertone of illegal migration and unsavoury conditions, but has since transcended these origins to become a totem of resilience, and is highlighted as such in Muhammad’s work.

By manipulating the colours of the bags in his work from the readily available mundane red and blue to rich hues of burnt oranges, deep violets, maroon reds, and emerald greens, Muhammad speaks to the power of imagining a world beyond what is presently known.

As he navigates his ruminations of painting a better life for himself and his kin in this body of work, Muhammad aims to point the viewer back to themselves and the power they hold to not only survive but to thrive and to turn adversity into dreams fulfilled.

The Allegory of a Seeker is on view until 02 June 2024.

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ABOUT ABDUR RAHMAN MUHAMMAD

Abdur Rahman Muhammad (Ghanaian, b. 1992) is a contemporary artist who works and resides in Accra. He has been a practicing artist for over six years. His work explores the impact that the high unemployment rate has had on Ghanaian youth, particularly through the lens of the overconsumption of Western cultural media. Abdur captures in oil on canvas the stories of young men and women who brave perilous journeys for their dreams of a better life in the land of 'milk and honey.' He is a member of the Ghanaian art collective, Artemartis. His works have found their way to collectors and exhibitions all over the world.

ABOUT ADA CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

ADA contemporary art gallery, based in Accra, Ghana, specializes 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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