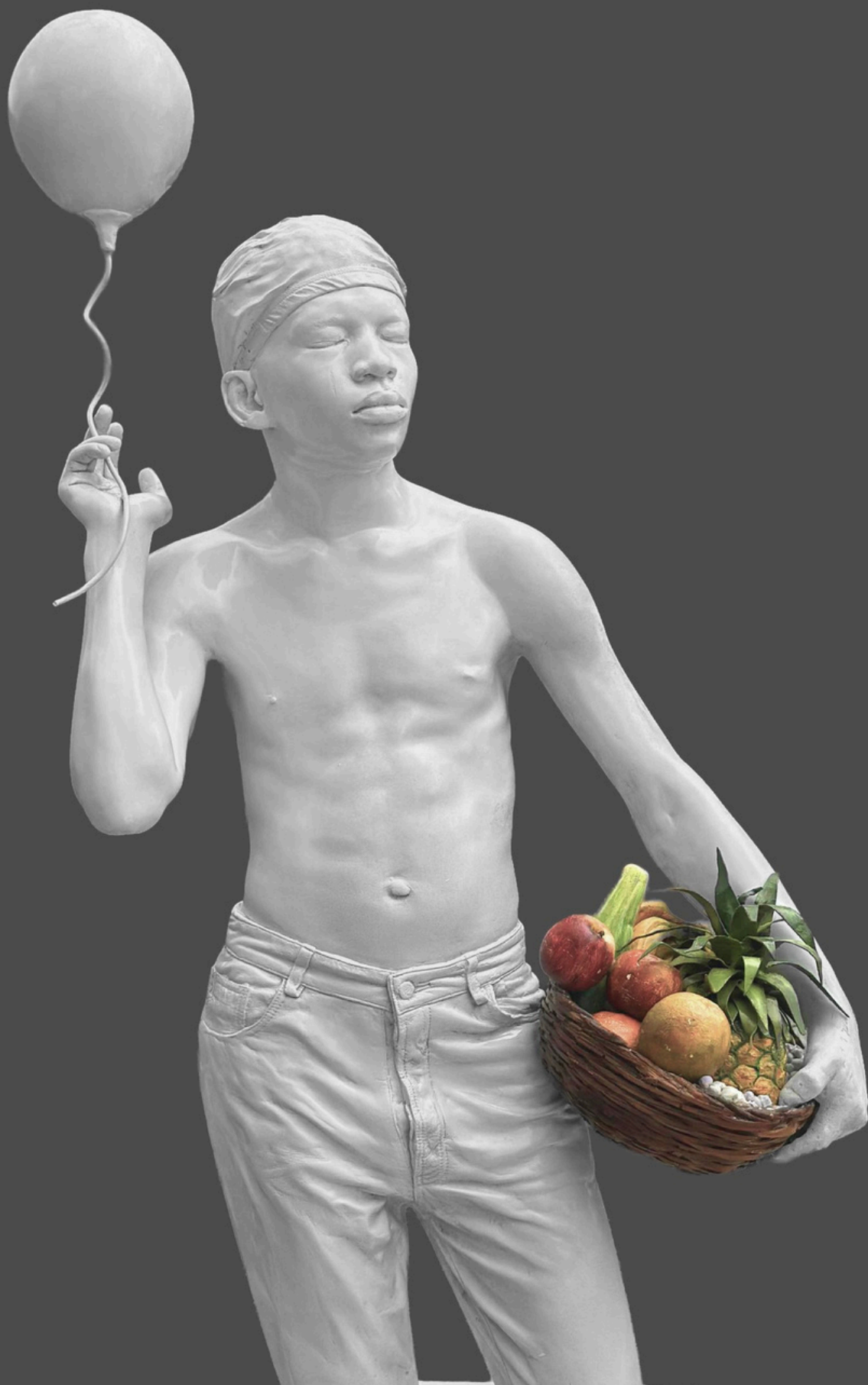






REFLECTIONS O N T I M E

ART X Lagos 2025

November 6 - 9, 2025

Victor Butler
Manyaku Mashilo
Somi Nwandu
Adewole Adeniyi
Ofunne Azinge



REFLECTIONS ON TIME

What does it mean to live with time? to stretch it, question it, or remake it? To hold space for renewal, redefinition, and stillness, even as life's tides move us forward?

Time, in its endless rhythm, becomes more than chronology; it becomes memory, imagination, and endurance. To reflect on time is to examine how we exist within it: how we remember, release, and rebuild ourselves through it.

SMO Contemporary Art's presentation for ART X Lagos 2025 brings together five artists: Victor Butler, Somi Nwandu, Manyaku Mashilo, Adeniyi Adewole, and Ofunne Azinge, whose practices expand the idea of time. Through painting, sculpture, photography, and mixed media, they create visual languages that negotiate time, identity, healing, and belonging. Each artist, in their own way, reimagines how time connects us: as history, as inheritance, as motion, and as renewal.



Victor Butler's Heart Sensing series is a meditation on time, not as something to be measured, but as an infinite pulse that binds the past, present, and future. His works, such as *Searching Scripture* and *The Last Minute*, question how something so boundless can become so confined by our perception. Butler's art listens before it speaks, translating the unseen rhythm of existence into colour and illumination.

For Butler, to reflect on time is to loosen our grip on it, to recognize its boundlessness, and to allow its unseen rhythm to guide our sense of being. His use of oil on canvas mirrors the delicate balance between control and surrender, reminding us that the act of creation, like life, thrives in the space between intention and chance.

South African artist Manyaku Mashilo reconfigures time as a spiritual continuum. Her layered portraits, drawn from family and community photographs, merge ancestral memory with the present. By painting the ordinary as sacred, she transforms archival fragments into portals of continuity. In Mashilo's world, reflection is a return, an act of walking between times, bridging what was and what will be.

Mashilo's process of painting transforms archival moments into portals of continuity. Her figures move between times, ancestral and contemporary, suggesting that spirituality is not about distance but access.



Somi Nwandu's practice explores identity as a living, evolving process. Drawing from Uli, the Igbo women's art of beautification and symbolism, she interprets it through abstraction and lenticular media to reflect the shifting nature of selfhood.

In Nwandu's work, each shift of light or angle reveals a different truth, reminding us that identity, like time, is never static. It moves, refracts, and rebuilds itself endlessly. Reflection, for Nwandu, is an act of authorship, writing the self into continuity not by restoring the past, but by reanimating it for the present.

Adeniyi Adewole's Let It Go series began from a fleeting, tender moment with his daughter; a balloon drifting into the sky, a lesson in release. What began as play became a lifelong metaphor for, resilience, and emotional healing. His fiberglass sculptures embody the duality of strength and fragility, translating personal reflection into universal resonance. Rooted in Yoruba philosophies of balance and renewal, his work translates personal pain into universal reflection. Through Let It Go, Adewole transforms vulnerability into power. He reminds us that freedom often begins where control ends, that letting go is not surrender but liberation.



Ofunne Azinge transforms time into memory made visible. Through painting, image transfer, and photography, she gathers fragments of her past, childhood, family, womanhood and reconstructs them as living archives. Her portraits become acts of preservation and continuity, gestures that assert: we were here, we still are. For Azinge, reflecting on time is a way of holding love across distance, of turning nostalgia into presence.

Her portraits of women, family, friends, and strangers are acts of preservation. Each photograph becomes an embrace, each canvas a reminder that to be seen is to exist. “If you love someone, photograph them,” she says and her work lives in that truth. Azinge’s art moves between nostalgia and joy, between grief and celebration. Her process is playful and intuitive she paints like she dances, with rhythm and release.

Together, these artists form a constellation of reflection and renewal: Butler teaches us to trust time, Nwandu teaches us to rewrite language. Mashilo teaches us to walk between worlds, Adewole teaches us to release and heal, Azinge teaches us to remember with love.

Their works remind us that to reflect on time is not to resist its flow but to move with it, to recognize the quiet power of becoming, remembering, and imagining anew.

“Reflections on Time” is a collective meditation on endurance and transformation; a celebration of the artists who continue to dream, to listen, and to build.

*"My works are in simple settings
that depict the human condition -
man's unflagging spirit of strength
and weakness, joy and pain..."*

Victor Butler



Victor Butler, born 1964, in Accra, Ghana, is a self-taught artist whose practice offers a profound interpretation of Ghanaian life and the human condition. Through his art, Butler explores the influences and social issues that shape his environment, portraying the unflagging spirit of humanity, its strengths, vulnerabilities, joys, and pains within everyday settings.

Over the decades, Butler has built a distinguished career marked by exhibitions across Africa, Europe, and North America. His early shows in Accra, including *Sample Expression* (1987), *Synopsis I* (1988), and *Concept I* (1989), established his reputation for depth and originality. This was followed by acclaimed presentations such as *Beyond the Surface* in London (1996), *An Old Highlife Tune* in Ottawa (2000), and the *Postures of the Soul* series in Johannesburg (2003–2004). More recent exhibitions include *Nuance I – Whisperings of the Soul* (Lagos, 2018) and *Nuance II – Heart Sensing* (Accra, 2024), both of which reflect his ongoing exploration of emotion, texture, and consciousness.

His participation in international group exhibitions—among them *Jeune Peinture* at the Grand Palais in Paris (1988–1990), *Jeune Expression* at Galerie du Nesle (1989), and *A Group of African Artists* at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. (1991)—cemented his position among leading contemporary African artists. Butler has also exhibited at Art X Lagos (2018, 2022), underscoring his continued relevance in the evolving African art scene.



Beyond his studio practice, Butler has contributed significantly to arts education as an Associate Senior Art Teacher at the Ghana International School between 1988 and 1999. His dedication to artistic excellence earned him the ECRAAG Award for Artist of the Year in 1991 and recognition as West Africa Magazine's Artist of the Year in 1996.

Butler's works are represented in national and institutional collections in Ghana—at the Official Residence of the President, Parliament House, and Accra City Hall—as well as in France and Great Britain, where they form part of cultural and governmental collections.

His most recent body of work, Nuance II, continues his long-standing dialogue with the subtleties of perception and the quiet resilience of the human spirit.



Searching Scripture
Oil on canvas
213 cm x 121.8cm
2025



Last Minute
Mixed Media
167 cm x 137cm
2025



"Time, to me, is infinite. It situates us simultaneously in the past, present, and future. It determines how we perceive change, how we hold on to memories, and how we imagine what comes next. Yet we often define time within our own limitations, in minutes, in deadlines, in endings. My works question that contradiction: how something so boundless becomes, in our hands, something measurable and fleeting."



"In Searching Scripture, I examine time through scriptural and philosophical references. The painting reflects the continuum of time as an evolving dialogue between revelation and remembrance. I employ the likeness of the human ear as a symbol of oral tradition, the foundation upon which our histories, proverbs, and truths have been passed down for generations. It represents our collective capacity to listen, absorb, and transmit knowledge. The light that emerges from the books in the painting signifies illumination, the idea that thought and information are the sources of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment."



"In The Last Minute, I extend this inquiry to the phenomenon of how we experience time as it unfolds. I am fascinated by what I describe as "extended moments" the ways in which we mentally stretch or compress time to fit our emotions, desires, or anxieties. In these moments, we create our own internal chronologies. The work contemplates that tension between time as an infinite continuum and time as a human construct, one that defines and confines us even as we attempt to transcend it."

Victor Butler

"I would like to create scenes which free my characters from a certain idea of Blackness that is imposed or projected on them by removing them from the context of the found photographs and placing them in a different and more spiritually inspired setting: a setting that allows them to exist freely in motion or stillness and inspires journeying to a place of healing and new beginnings."

Manyaku Mashilo



Manyaku Mashilo. (b.1991) is a Cape Town-based artist whose multidimensional practice encompasses mixed-media painting, drawing, and collage. Born in Limpopo in 1991, she addresses themes of spiritual identity, memory, ancestry, community and belonging. Mashilo draws on inspiration from photographic archives to build expansive scenes where imagined representatives of Blackness migrate through abstract liminal spaces. These scenes act as celestial cartographies, connecting the depicted Black figures through a felt mutuality of heritage, spirituality, shared ritual and intent. These migratory figures, forever moving between and through, are driven by an energetic pull toward a new vanguard where purpose and representation can be renegotiated.

Mashilo's figures are drawn from family photographs, historical imagery depicting various experiences of Black lives and portraits of people from her own community. In this way, Mashilo enmeshes the contemporary and historical as a form of interdimensional mapping. Lineage and memory, both collective and personalised, conflate in this unknown world. Her vast cosmological landscapes offer a multiverse of imagined futures, weaving together place and space, charting a rich and diverse tradition of African spirituality and identity.



Southern Guild has presented her work at The Armory Show in New York, Expo Chicago and the Investec Cape Town Art Fair. The Laying of Hands, Mashilo's second solo with the gallery and her first in the US, opened at Southern Guild Los Angeles in February 2025.

Her work was recently included in Spectrum: On Color and Contemporary Art at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, Africa Supernova at Kunsthal KAdE in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, and Rites of Passage at Gagosian, London. Mashilo has also participated in exhibitions at the African Artists Foundation in Lagos, the Javett Centre in Pretoria, Art X Lagos and 1-54 London with SMO Contemporary Art. Her work forms part of the Schulting Art Collection, Pizutti Collection, Hort Family Collection, Tiroche Deleon Collection, and The Suzie Wong Collection as well as private collections in the United Kingdom, Nigeria, Korea and United States.



Silhouettes inside a Dream II,
Acrylic and oil on canvas
140 x 130 x 2.5cm
2025



Silhouettes inside a Dream III
Acrylic and oil on canvas
98 x 147 x 2 cm
2025



"Through my work I find spirituality in the mundane. I use spiritual practices as the means to travel between times and to connect past, present, and future. My early works are paper-based drawings, and I have since moved to painting with mixed media on canvas which has given me more freedom, both in terms of physical space on the canvas and the durability of the new medium itself, which allows me to create works with a deeper layering and detail. My process is a blend of portraiture, collage making, mark making and mapping.

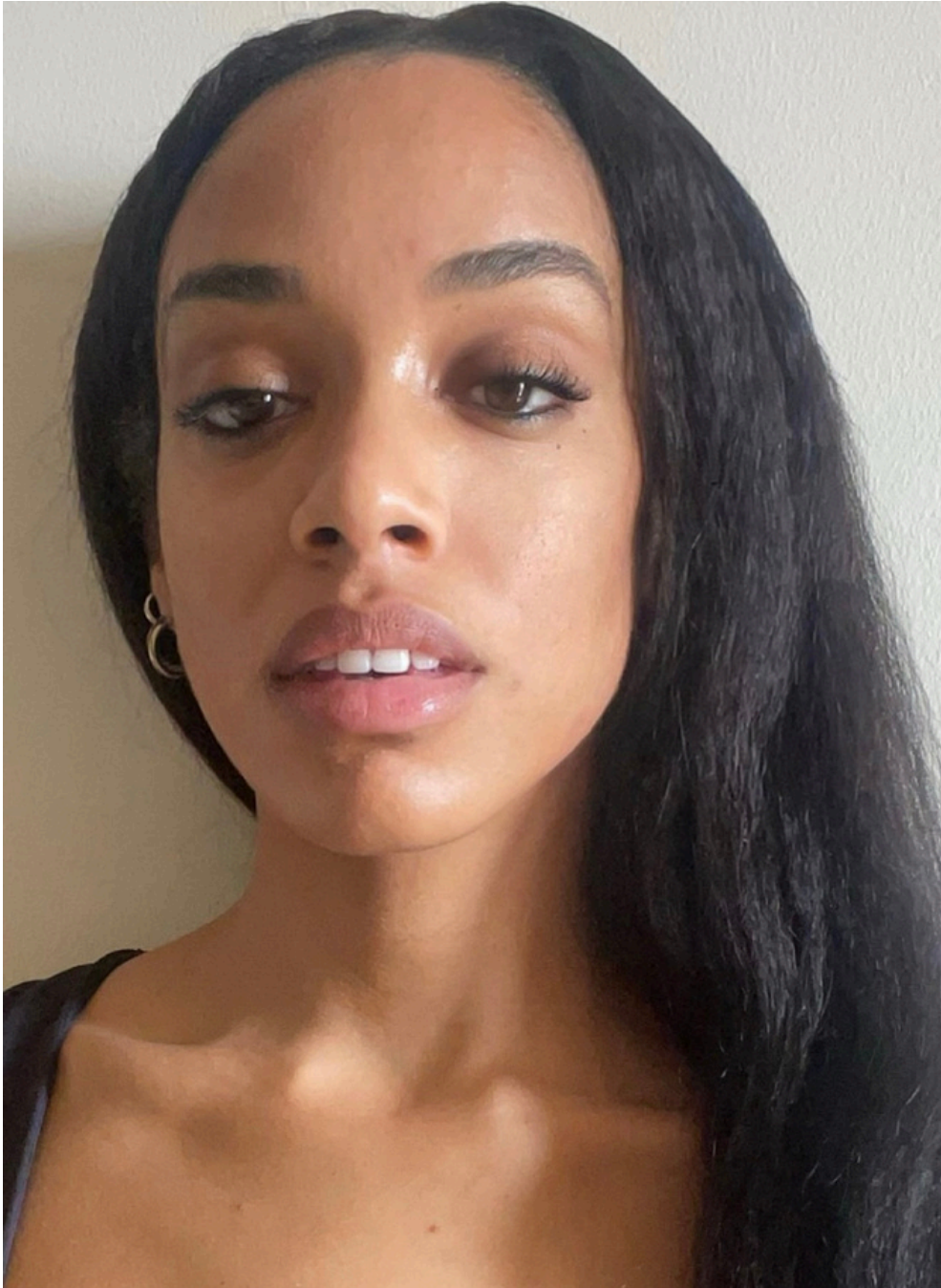
I draw inspiration from these images because they remind me of how and where I grew up and the feelings that we carried as a young black people in those contexts. It is the memories of the conviction in our parents' voices and body movements as they prayed, and also of what they were praying for: a sense of peace, belonging, love, and calm in their lives. These feelings are in me now as a parent myself, praying and moving for my family in a similar way.

I am part of a generation that often struggles to consolidate spirituality with our everyday selves but whose ancestors did everything in the name of spirit. I want to step out of this perspective, one that highlights the separations between us and our ancestors, and replace it with a thinking that focuses on our access and connection to them."

Manyaku Mashilo

"Some things are inherited with clarity. Others arrive fragmented, unnamed, incomplete carried in the body, etched into memory, passed quietly between generations like breath."

Somi Nwandu

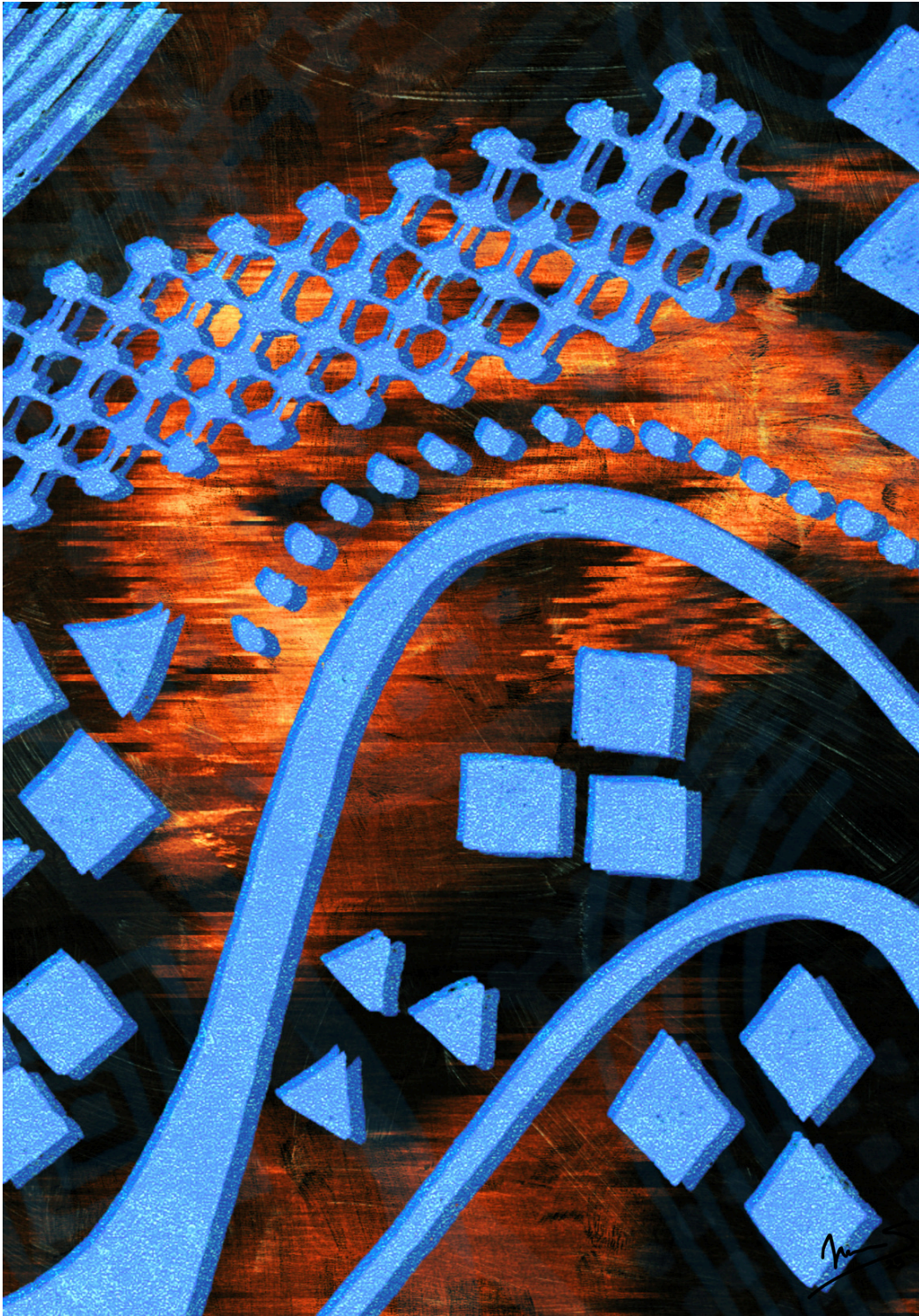


Somi Nwandu (b.1993) is a self-taught multidisciplinary artist, curator, art producer, and cultural strategist whose work bridges art, technology, and identity. Passionate about exploring culture, memory, and the human mind through digital and new media, she has established herself as a dynamic contributor to the global art ecosystem. Alongside this, she further explores style curation as a form of storytelling; blending fashion, identity, and culture.

Her work, as an artist, has been presented internationally at acclaimed platforms such as Art Dubai, Xposure Photography Festival in Sharjah, The Other Art Fair in Los Angeles, the Lagos Biennale, Lagos Photo Festival, the New York Art Show among others. She has also conceptualized, developed, and delivered major art and cultural initiatives with leading institutions, including the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.

Somi holds an MA in Global Creative and Cultural Industries from SOAS, University of London, completed while simultaneously advancing her artistic and professional practice. She is driven by a vision of cultural diplomacy and cross-cultural exchange, using the arts as a bridge between regions, histories, and futures.

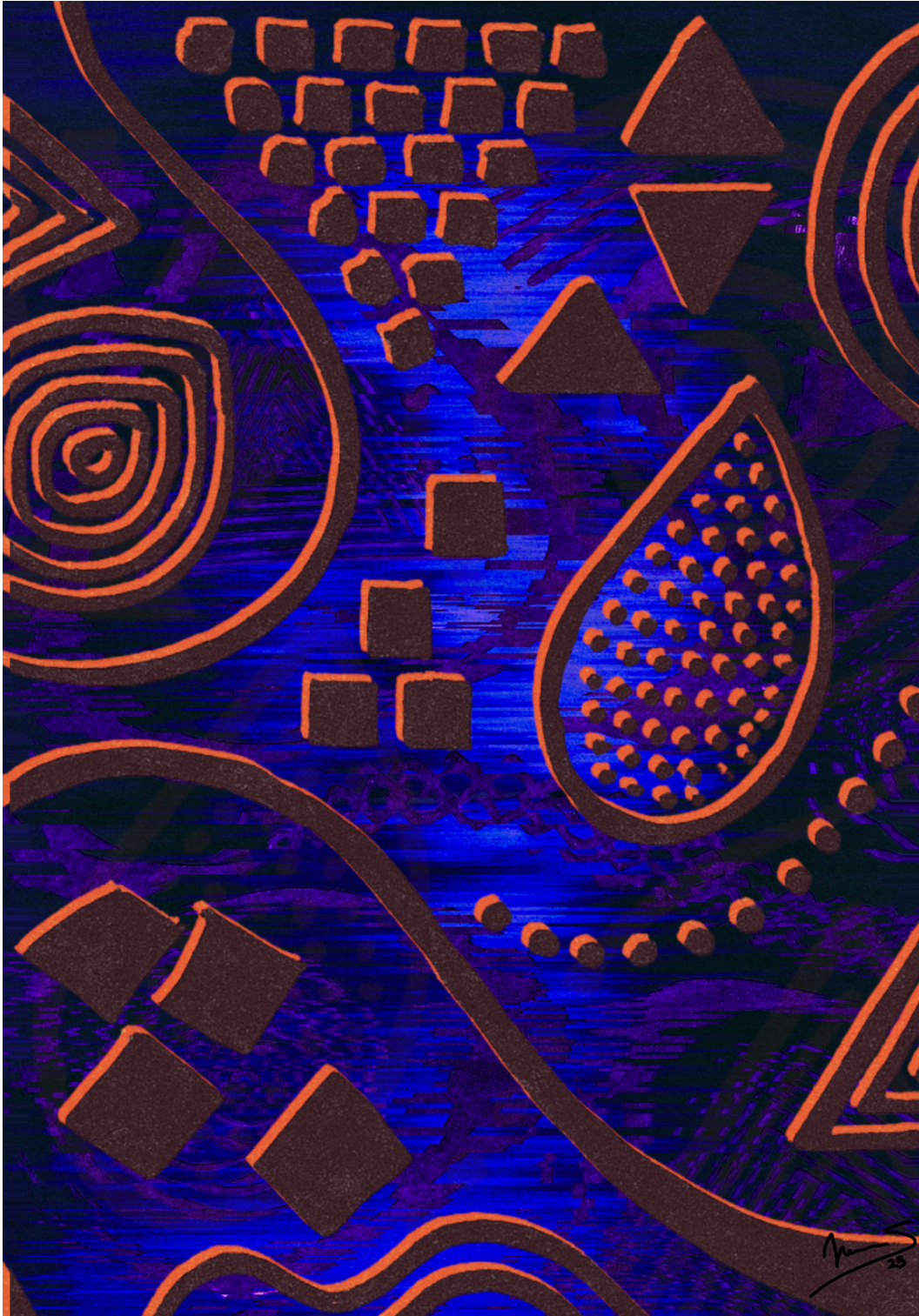
She currently serves as Art Producer in the Entertainment and Culture sector of NEOM, Saudi Arabia, where she is leading pioneering cultural initiatives aligned with one of the world's most ambitious creative and cultural transformations.



The Tender Gaze of Ife Nkili
Digital Mixed Media on Lenticular Lens
61 × 86.5 cm
2025



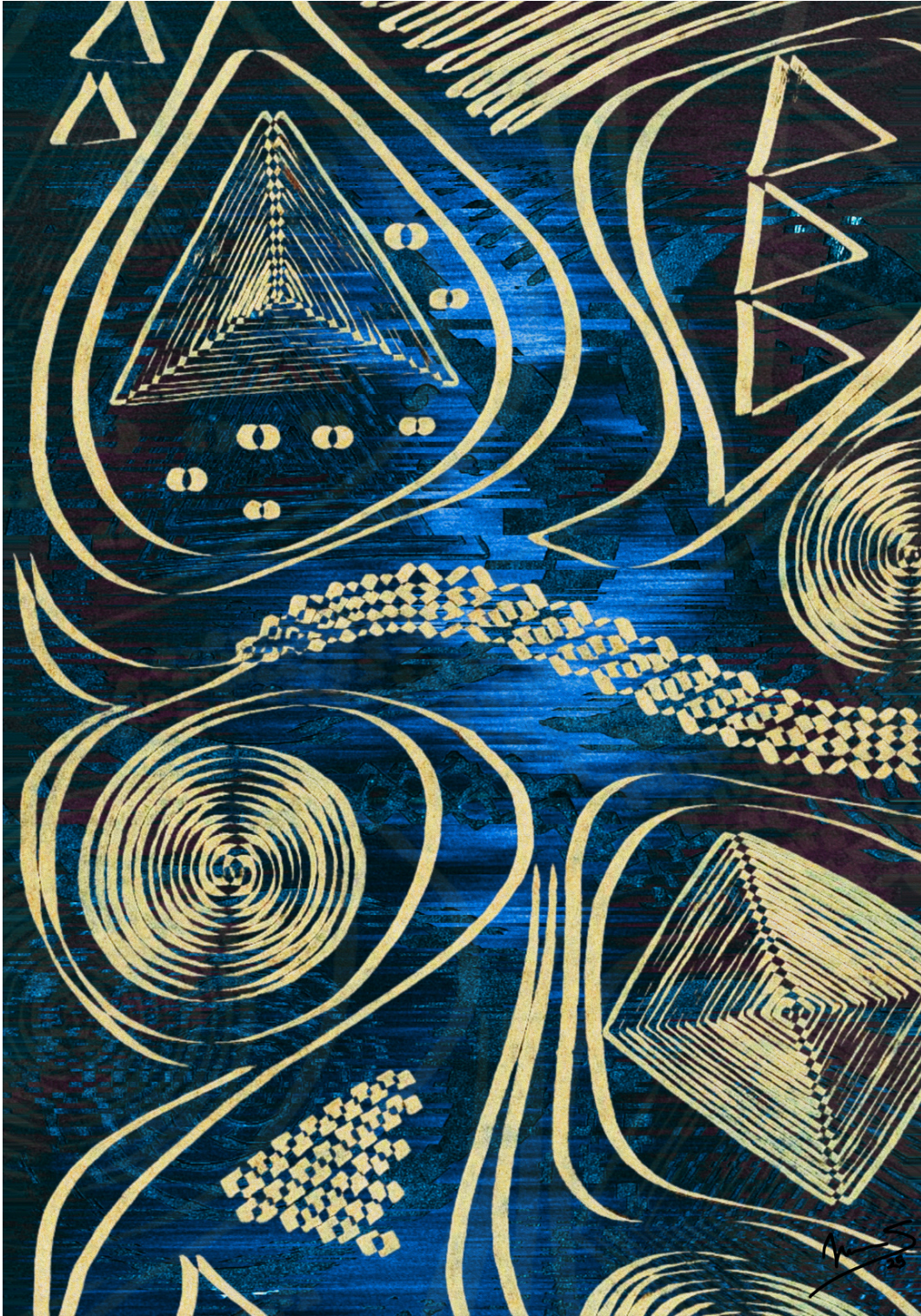
The Silent Bravery of Nchèta
Digital Mixed Media on Lenticular Lens
81.5 × 117 cm
2025



The Still Pulse of Ife N'etiti
Digital Mixed Media on Lenticular Lens
61 × 86.5 cm
81.5 × 117 cm
2025.



The Soft Architecture of Nsogbu
Digital Mixed Media on Lenticular Lens
61 × 86.5 cm
2025



The Quiet Audacity of Icho mma
Digital Mixed Media on Lenticular Lens
106.5 × 152.5 cm
2025



"This series was born in that in-between: where tradition is remembered more than spoken, where symbols endure even as their stories fade, where beauty is not discovered but constructed from what remains.

In my earlier collection, *ULI HOMAGE*, I traced the beautifying language of Igbo women - Uli - not simply as visual tradition, but as vessel of memory, rhythm, and root. Those works gave me foundation. They offered me a place to stand, a structure of identity strong enough to hold me. But *My Fifth Element: A Language Between* moves beyond grounding. It is about becoming: about what unfolds when you exist between places, between inheritances, between languages that do not align... and still choose to speak.

Here, Uli is no longer only a mark of memory; it becomes a first alphabet. A structure I adapt, interrupt, extend. Not a tradition I preserve untouched, but a system I live inside - one I can stretch, reconfigure, and recast. Uli becomes my compass, a method of orientation, yet the map is mine to draw. This is not erasure of what came before. It is continuation. It is letting Uli evolve, letting it carry me into territories unnamed, but undeniably mine.

I do not come from one place. My inheritance is braided; multiple backgrounds layered together. These coordinates do not resolve neatly. They scatter, overlap, contradict. Yet in their scattering, a different coherence emerges; one that belongs to me."



"In this work, Uli becomes more than beautification. It becomes a portal: a structure through which time, memory, and identity cross and transform. The lenticular lens amplifies this condition. It holds multiple truths at once, shifting with angle and light, refusing a single reading. It reveals identity not as surface, but as field - layered, unstable, alive.

What emerges is a language between: shaped from fragments and repetition, from things that do not align but insist on belonging. These works are acts of inheritance and invention. They draw from ancestral marks, gestures remembered, silences carried, and symbols created in the absence of what was lost. Some arrive with clarity; others come through the body before they reach the mind. Together, they compose a grammar of becoming.

This is not nostalgia. It is construction. A way of finding presence in absence, coherence in fracture. My work does not offer resolution. It offers rhythm. It offers form to complexity without flattening it. It says: *I was here. I am here. I am still becoming.*"



"My *Fifth Element* gestures beyond earth, air, fire, and water. Not toward spirit or essence in the abstract, but toward something personal and deliberate. Here, the fifth element is not inherited, but authored. It is built in the gaps where lineage falters, where tradition runs out of words, where memory no longer explains - and yet the self insists on making sense. It is the part of identity that resists translation: the rhythm assembled from fragments, the structure composed from uncertainty. This is the fifth element: the language between memory and reinvention, between what was given and what must be made."

Somi Nwandu

“Letting go is not a weakness;
it is an act of freedom. It is the
moment we stop holding on to
pain and begin to reclaim
ourselves.”

Adeniyi Adewole



Adeniyi Adewole Wasiu (b. 1994) is a contemporary figurative sculptor. He holds both a diploma in General Arts and in Sculpture from the Yaba College of Technology. He currently lives in Lagos State, Nigeria and works as a studio artist. He enjoys modeling with clay and fiberglass casting, and also accentuates his subjects with a lavish use of colour. His oeuvre explores concepts such as human and animal characterization, life's complexities and contradictions, and his own personal experiences. Adewole is also an art instructor and co-founder of the Ayowole Academy of Arts.



Gentle Whisper
Fiberglass, Bead, Metal
45.72 x 50.8 x 30.48 cm
2025



Boy with Balloon
Fiberglass
111.76 x 35.56 x 60.96 cm
2025



Seeds of Dreamer
Fiberglass
139.29 x 131.06 x 34.44 cm
2025



Float Embrace
Fiberglass
96.52 x 81.28 x 50.8 cm
2025



"The inspiration behind my recent body of work emerged from a simple yet profound moment shared with my child, a moment that transformed into a lasting metaphor. While playing with a balloon, my daughter began to cry as it floated away, and I told her to let it go. Those words, "let it go," echoed deeply within me. At the time, I was struggling mentally, burdened by invisible weight. That encounter revealed something fundamental about the human condition, that freedom often begins with release.

This realization became the conceptual foundation for my current series, where letting go functions as both personal healing and universal metaphor. The works reflect on mental health, resilience, and the quiet courage embedded in vulnerability. I am interested in how pain transforms into renewal and how release becomes a form of strength rather than surrender."



"My process begins with life casting and modeling, acts of preservation and transformation, before moving into fiberglass casting. I am particularly drawn to fiberglass for its duality: lightweight yet remarkably strong. This material dualism mirrors the complexity of the human mind, fragile and resilient, transparent yet enduring. Through it, I explore how material can embody psychological states and emotional thresholds.

My work is also informed by Yoruba cultural perspectives on balance, endurance, and the cyclical nature of life. By integrating these philosophies into contemporary sculptural practice, I create spaces where personal narrative and cultural heritage coexist. The forms I produce serve as meditations on the human capacity to endure, to heal, and to evolve.

My art seeks to invite reflection. I want viewers to engage not only with the aesthetic qualities of the work but also with the emotional resonance behind it, to see themselves mirrored in its fragility and strength. I hope they leave with the understanding that letting go is not a weakness; it is an act of freedom. It is the moment we stop holding on to pain and begin to reclaim ourselves."

Adewole Adeniyi

“Home for me is wherever my feet
land, anywhere where there is a Black
woman that’s where I want to be,
documenting cultures and subjects
that wouldn’t normally be in
paintings.”

Ofunne Azinge



Ofunne Azinge (b.1998) is a Nigerian–British artist whose practice weaves together painting, photography, and image transfer to explore cultural mergence, identity, and the politics of representation. Born in Nigeria and fostered into families of different cultural backgrounds between there and the UK, she moved between more than eleven homes before adulthood. Photography first became a way of processing this fragmented upbringing, helping her to piece together grief, memory, and belonging. Inspired early on by Malick Sidibé and Abdourahmane Sakaly, she began documenting those around her, capturing people and environments as a way to make sense of her own history.

Her return to painting during her final year of art school marked a decisive shift, as she began merging it with photography through a personalised image transfer technique. This hybrid process remains central to her practice, layering personal archives, community photographs, and images shared by her sitters into textured compositions that blend the personal and the collective.

At the core of Azinge's current work is her fascination with women. What began as a tribute to the women who raised her has expanded into a broader project of documenting Black women across the streets of London, a process that she would like to extend worldwide.

She often meets strangers in the city, photographs them, and engages in conversations about their lives, inviting them to pose in places or with objects of personal significance. Each sitter has agency in the process, choosing how they wish to be seen and often contributing their own personal photographs for the image transfers. In this way, the portraits become collaborative acts of empowerment, inscribing the strength, beauty, and complexity of Black womanhood into the canon of portraiture.



Emma Prempeh and Her mum (Carmen)
Photographed at home
Oil and Acrylic image transfer on cotton canvas
200cm x 180cm
2025



My sister Daniella
Oil and Acrylic image transfer on cotton canvas
120cm x 90cm
2025



Her large-scale paintings emphasise this sense of agency. Drawing on the visual language of photography, she places women in poses historically associated with masculine authority, thereby subverting conventional ideas of power. The sitters themselves decide how they move and position their bodies, taking up space with confidence, while Azinge's role is to witness and capture them.

Azinge ultimately conceives of her practice as documentation - an ongoing record of cultures and communities often overlooked in painting. For her, "home" is not tied to one fixed place but defined by connection: "home for me is wherever my feet land, anywhere where there is a Black woman that's where I want to be, documenting cultures and subjects that wouldn't normally be in paintings."

Colour, too, carries political weight in her practice. Azinge refuses to use white when painting bodies, instead creating tones through layers of black, blue, and purple. This deliberate absence of white rejects its symbolic associations in traditional painting, ensuring her Black subjects are rendered with full depth, dignity, and presence. Through this rethinking of portraiture - its symbols, its subjects and their poses - Azinge builds a visual community of women, personal and collective, rooted in admiration, strength, and empowerment.

"My work is deeply inspired by my upbringing. I grew up in different homes, with different families and cultures, and these experiences continue to shape my practice. My inspiration also comes from the women I've been documenting over the past several years; family members, friends, and strangers I've met across the streets of London, women with whom I've been fortunate to build relationships and share memories."



"The materials I'm most drawn to are paint and photography. Painting, to me, feels incredibly freeing—almost like dancing, a state of flow. Photography, on the other hand, came from a desire to preserve what was missing from my childhood. There are many photographs and memories I'll never know, so I began documenting the people and moments around me: the women who raised me, the families I've lived with, and those I've met along the way.

I'm the friend with the camera, capturing every second. For me, photography is love; it's preservation. When you love someone, you want to remember them, and photography is the easiest way to do that. If you love someone, photograph them. And photograph yourself.

At its core, my work explores relationship, family, memory, nostalgia, and at times, grief. Having lost my parents early, I see building relationships through my art as a continuation, a healing continuation; of my childhood. I believe everyone deserves to be remembered, seen, and preserved. The people in my work are real; the memories are shared, genuine, and human.

Lately, my collection has grown beyond friends and family to include strangers who have generously shared their stories with me. Through these connections, I hope viewers find echoes of their own relationships, memories, and sense of belonging."

Ofunne Azinge



SMO Contemporary Art (SMO) is an international art platform, showcasing a unique portfolio of modern and contemporary art from Africa and the Diaspora to a global audience. Based in Lagos, Nigeria, SMO curates exhibitions, as well as public and private art events of leading and emerging talents for a diverse audience. SMO is dedicated to artists of all generations who have been instrumental in shaping West Africa's contemporary art canon and who became crucial in establishing a unique narrative of the continent. The SMO program sheds light on forgotten talents who have paved the way for new identities in contemporary art while encouraging a vibrant and continuous discourse around their oeuvres. Specialized in art advisory services SMO Contemporary curates and manages important private and corporate art collections with a great commitment to documentation, preservation and communication.

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Graphic Design and Layout : Mustapha Taiwo
Photography: Yinka Akingbade & Artists
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