

# MOMENTS IN TIME







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Sanaa **GATEJA**  
Tyna **ADEBOWALE**  
Kelani **ABASS**

October 3 - 6, 2019  
1-54 Contemporary Art Fair  
Somerset House  
London







# Curatorial Introduction

SMO Contemporary Art is delighted to present Moments in Time at 1.54 London this year, with exceptional textile and paper tapestries by master Ugandan artist Sanaa Gateja, alongside powerful works on paper and canvas by Kelani Abass and Tyna Adebawale from Nigeria. Moments in Time explores contemporary themes, which coalesce around our diverse histories and identity as Africans. Sanaa's intricate works created out of bark cloth, paper, raffia, beads, wood, and banana fiber respond to the subject of nature and materiality which is central in his work, which can be categorized as installation, tapestry, and sculpture. Abass uses outdated technology like obsolete date-stamping machines and archival photos in the creation of multilayered works, exploring personal histories against the background of social and political events frozen in time and memory. Adebawale uses the body as a signifier to question feminism and gender, critique patriarchy, and celebrate the strength and resilience of women. Moments in Time presents a common thread between Sanaa's colorful weaving and stitching, Kelani's rhythmic stamping on paper, and Tyna's miniscule text-filled monochrome swirls, offering fresh perspectives and powerful new insight into contemporary art coming out of Africa.

Sandra Mbanefo Obiango,  
Curator

*"Life is a journey with a purpose.  
The message I bring is visually African. The themes  
I present are universally human..."*

Sanaa Gateja

# Sanaa Gateja



Sanaa Gateja (b. 1950) is a Ugandan, multi-disciplinary artist who studied as a goldsmith in London and whose works are a wonderful combination of installation, tapestry, and sculpture. Heavily influenced by the potters, blacksmiths, and basket weavers in his village where he grew up, Sanaa is a self-taught visual artist. Sanaa creates intricate works which reference indigenous art practices like weaving and stitching. A social commentator, Sanaa works with bark cloth, paper raffia, beads, wood, and banana fiber to construct large textured artworks that respond to the subject of nature and materiality. Sanaa has showcased at FNB Johannesburg Art Fair (2016, 2017, 2018), AKAA Art Fair, Paris (2016, 2017, 2018 and ART X Lagos (2018).



**Addressed**, Paperbeads on barkcloth, 140 diameter, 2018









**Visitors**, Paperbeads on barkcloth, 226 x 160 cm, 2019



A social commentator, Sanaa works with barkcloth, paper, raffia, beads, wood, and banana fiber to construct large artworks that respond to the subject of nature and materiality which is central in his work. His work straddles the categories of installation, tapestry, installation, and sculpture, and definitively is arresting in its monumentality, array of color and subject matter. The artist is particularly drawn to aesthetic and value in his work: creating a balance between what is visually attractive and original.

Sanaa's art fits appropriately within the global consciousness of contemporary times that highly regards the environment and its preservation. This is because of his work ethic that involves working with organic and synthetic material. The paper bead, which he's mostly known for, and introduced in Uganda in 1990, not only responds to the subject of recycling but offers sustainable incomes to thousands of local women across the country.



***Parallel Journeys***, Paperbeads on barkcloth, 130 x 150 cm, 2018









**White Mood**, Paperbeads on barkcloth, 192.5 x 156 cm, 2018











# Tyna Adebowale



Tyna Adebowale (b.1982) is a multimedia artist from Nigeria, who studied painting at Auchi Polytechnic in Edo state and has gone on to explore video, performance, and installations in her art practice. She is an award winning visual artist who has taken part in group exhibitions in Nigeria, the Netherlands, Brazil, Cameroon, South Africa & Ghana. She has attended workshops and artist residencies at the Foundation for Contemporary Art, Accra, the Nigeria Brazil Cultural Centre in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the Bakassi Peninsul'Art in Limbe, Cameroon, the University of Cape Town, South Africa, Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos, the African Artists Foundation, and Arthouse Foundation Artist Residency. She is currently an artist-in-residence at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam. Tyna uses the body as signifier and tool to trace history and advocate for visibility. Adebowale aims to counter the imposed influences, and rejuvenate knowledge, possibilities and appreciation of alternative ways of existence.



***I See You From A Distance #07***, Painting on canvas, 97 x 131 cm, 2019









**Untitled #001**, Painting on canvas, 135 x 109 cm, 2019



In I See You from a Distance, my paintings are based on images of friends and chosen family. The portraits are concealed within a background of intricate designs and discernible only from a distance. The series celebrates women/humans who have gone against the norms of society to pursue and assert their identity. Rather than clicking my appreciation on social media, I have created portraits that tell the stories of these strong, successful humans, giving them the recognition they deserve but rarely get. The dots, circles, and lines in the background reflect my surroundings; the cycles of life and nature, communication between people, and bonds that connect all humanity. Every painting features three red dots signifying birth, life, and death, which is the essence of human experience, regardless of one's gender. In I See You from a Distance, my paintings are based on images of friends and chosen family. The portraits are concealed within a background of intricate designs and discernible only from a distance. The series celebrates women/humans who have gone against the norms of society to pursue and assert their identity. Rather than clicking my appreciation on social media, I have created portraits that tell the stories of these strong, successful humans, giving them the recognition they deserve but rarely get. The dots, circles, and lines in the background reflect my surroundings; the cycles of life and nature, communication between people, and bonds that connect all humanity. Every painting features three red dots signifying birth, life, and death, which is the essence of human experience, regardless of one's gender.





***I See You From A Distance #08***, Painting on canvas, 104 x 134 cm, 2019









***I See You From A Distance #12***, Painting on canvas, 109 x 148 cm, 2019











# Kelani Abass



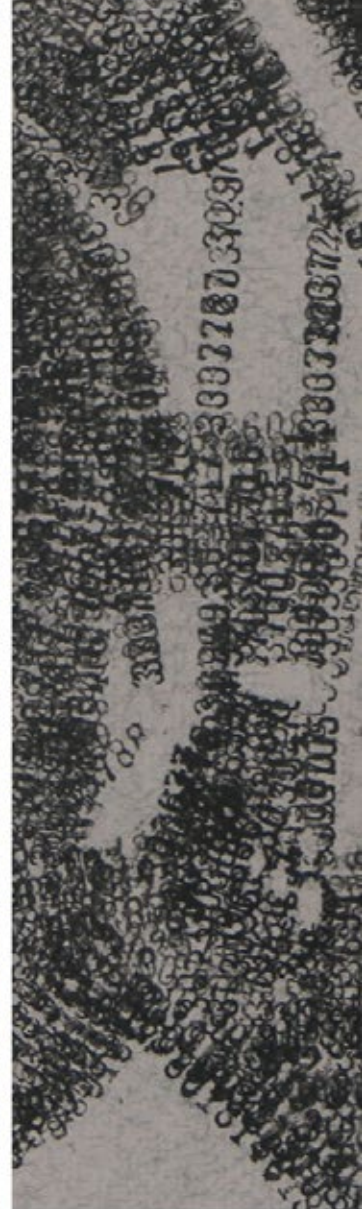
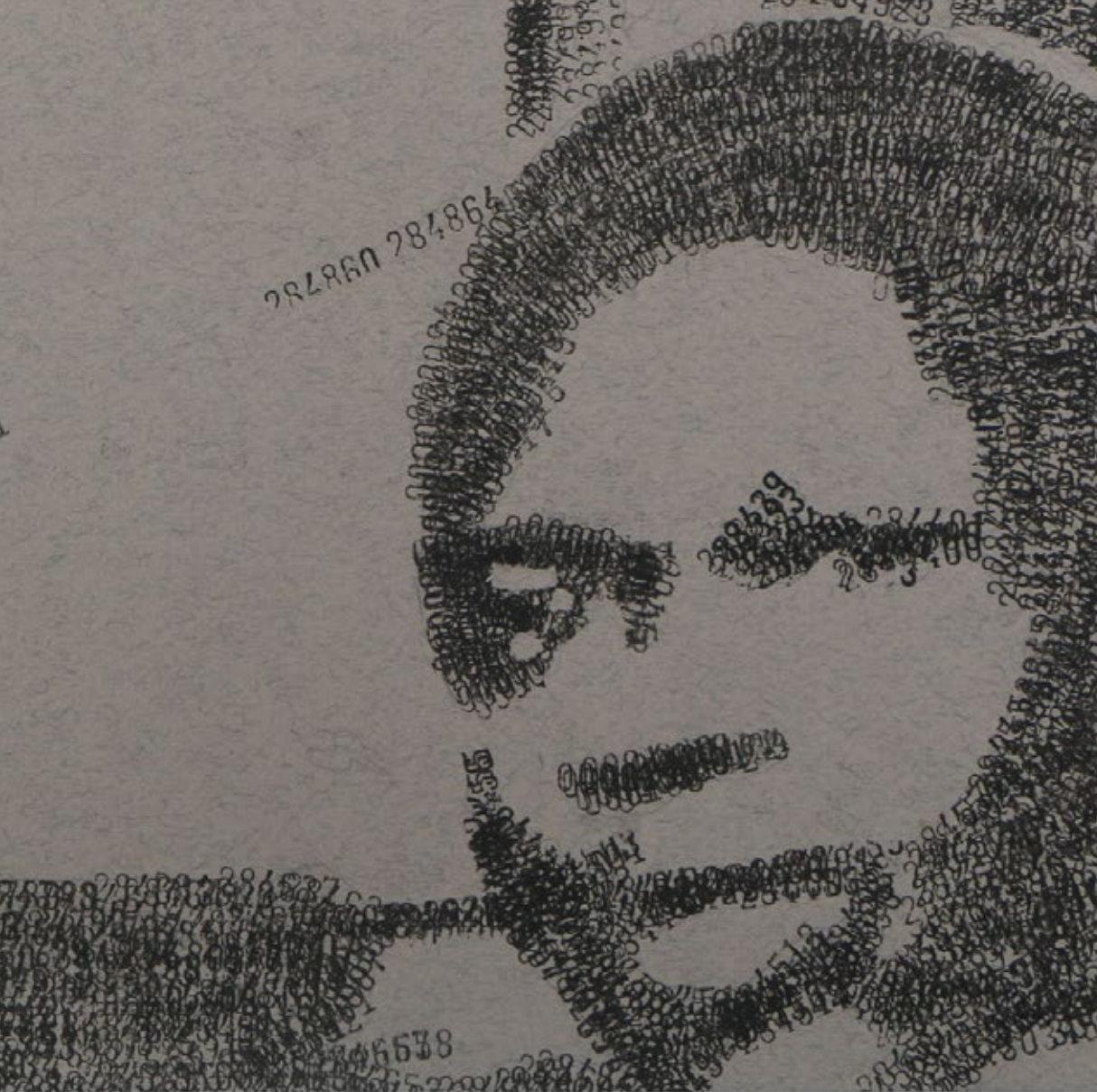
Kelani Abass (b 1979) is a multi-disciplinary artist from Nigeria, who studied at the Yaba College of Art and Technology in Lagos state, graduating in painting with distinction. Since then he has had four solo exhibitions, has taken part in several group exhibitions in Nigeria and South Africa. Kelani's works probe difficult relations of belonging and identity. In addition to acrylic, oil, pastel and charcoal, he also explores the possibilities inherent in painting, photography, and printing to engage time and memory. He has won several awards and prizes including 1st prize in painting of the Caterina de Medici/3rd Black Heritage Prize (2010), and the Yusuf Grillo Award for best painting student at Yaba Tech (2007). He has taken part in several residencies, most recent being at the Headlands Center for the Arts in San-Francisco in October-November 2018, and is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists.





***Stamping History (Making Time 3)***, Hand numbering on paper, 90 x 93 cm, 2019



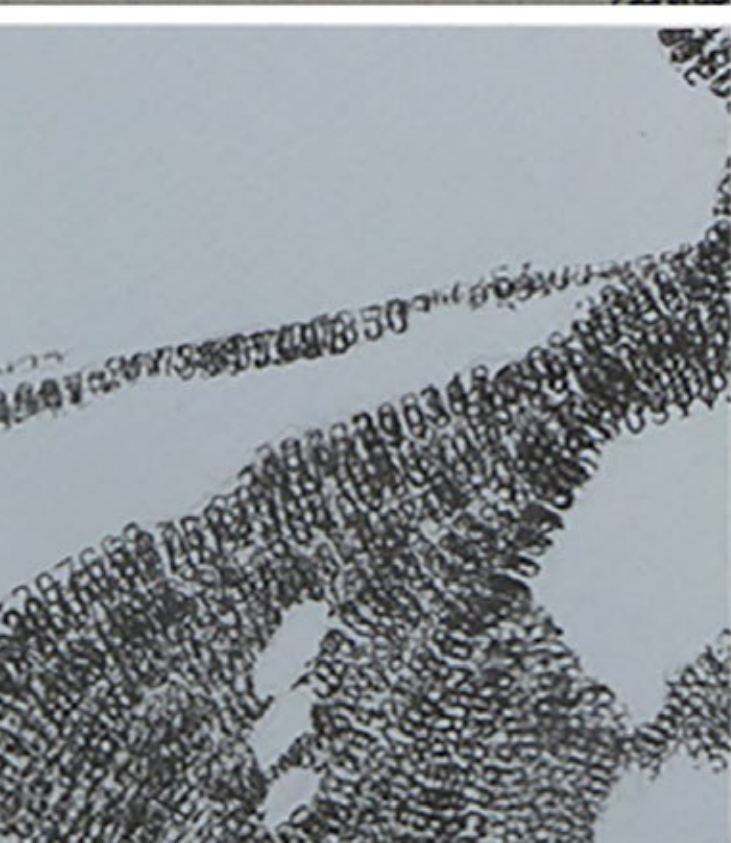
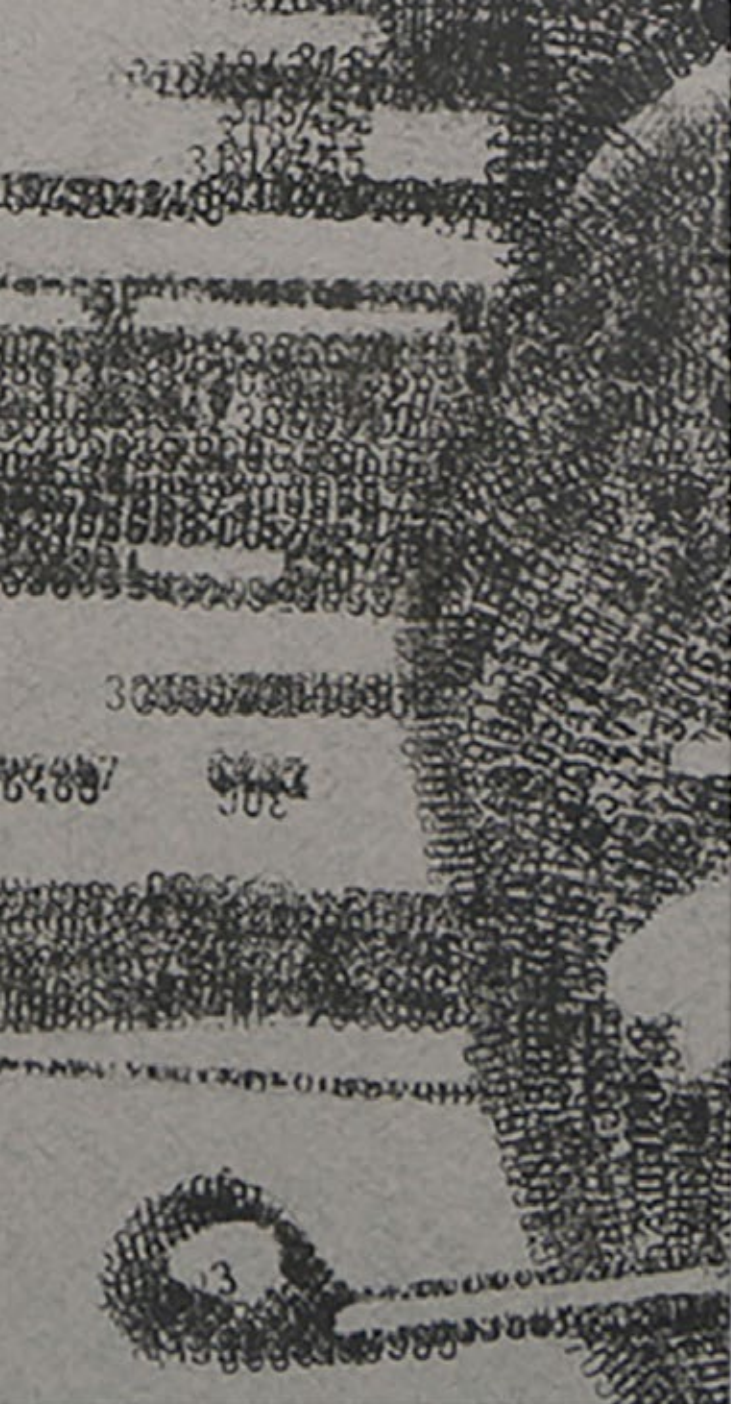






***Stamping History (Making Time 4)***, Hand numbering on paper, 90 x 93 cm, 2019













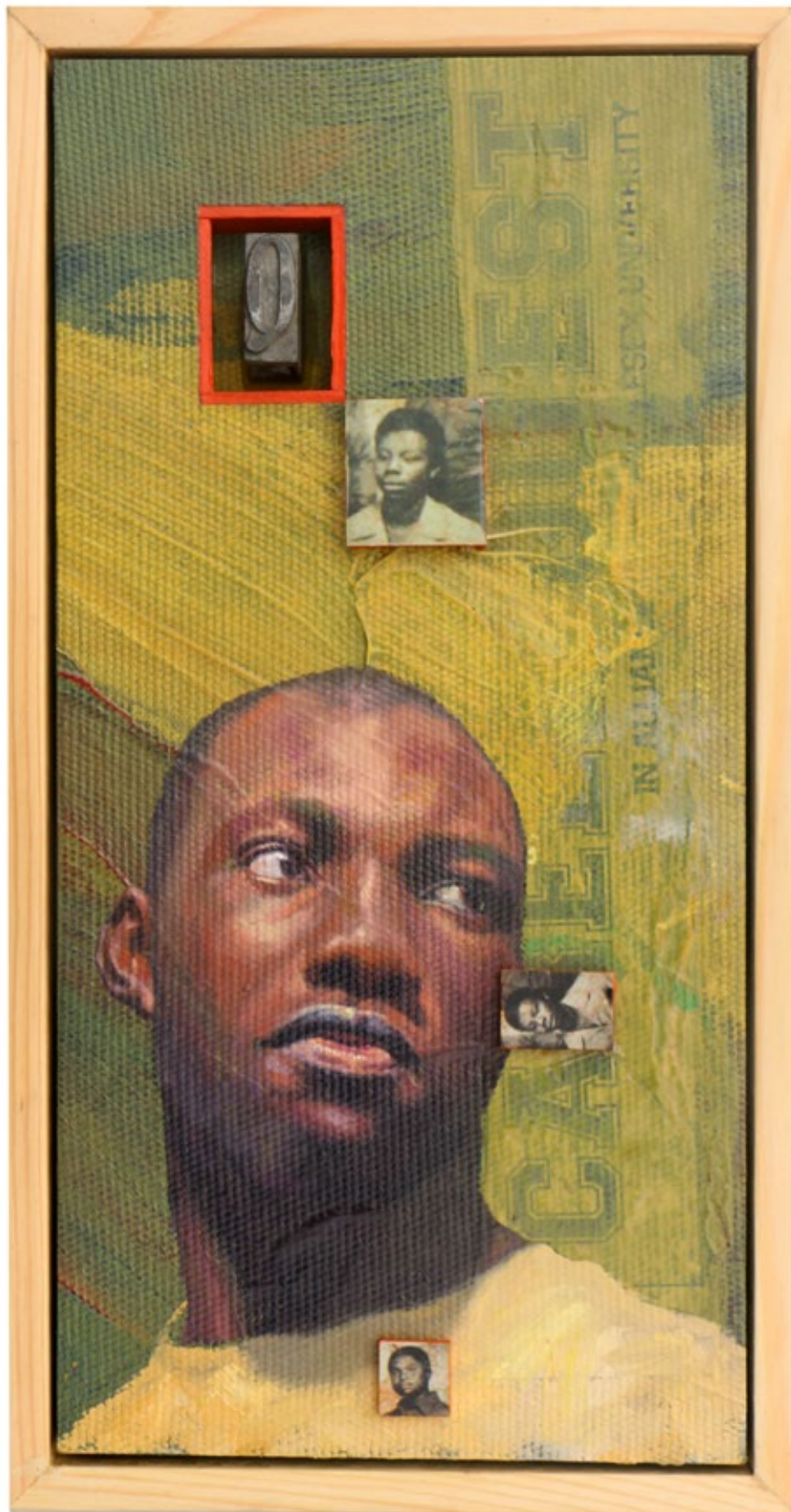
***Scrap of Evidence (Old Girls Association)***,  
Acrylic, oil, news print, aluminium, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Isile)**, Acrylic, digital print, rubber, aluminium, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Quest)***, Acrylic, oil, news print, digital print, letterpress type  
16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Aka-Arogundabi).***  
Acrylic, oil, letterpress type, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019



I am intrigued by how the past and present coalesce. I attempt to make a statement on the future that concedes the interdependence of different moments in time. I explore these themes through painting, photography and printing, using archival materials to highlight personal stories against the background of social and political events frozen in time and memory.

I engage the use of technology with the printingpress, which I use as a metaphor for obsolete materials, transporting them into modern relevance, usurping outmoded machinery and tools such as printing cases, letterpress types, metal plates, rubber blocks and the stamping tool to generate new contemporary narratives.





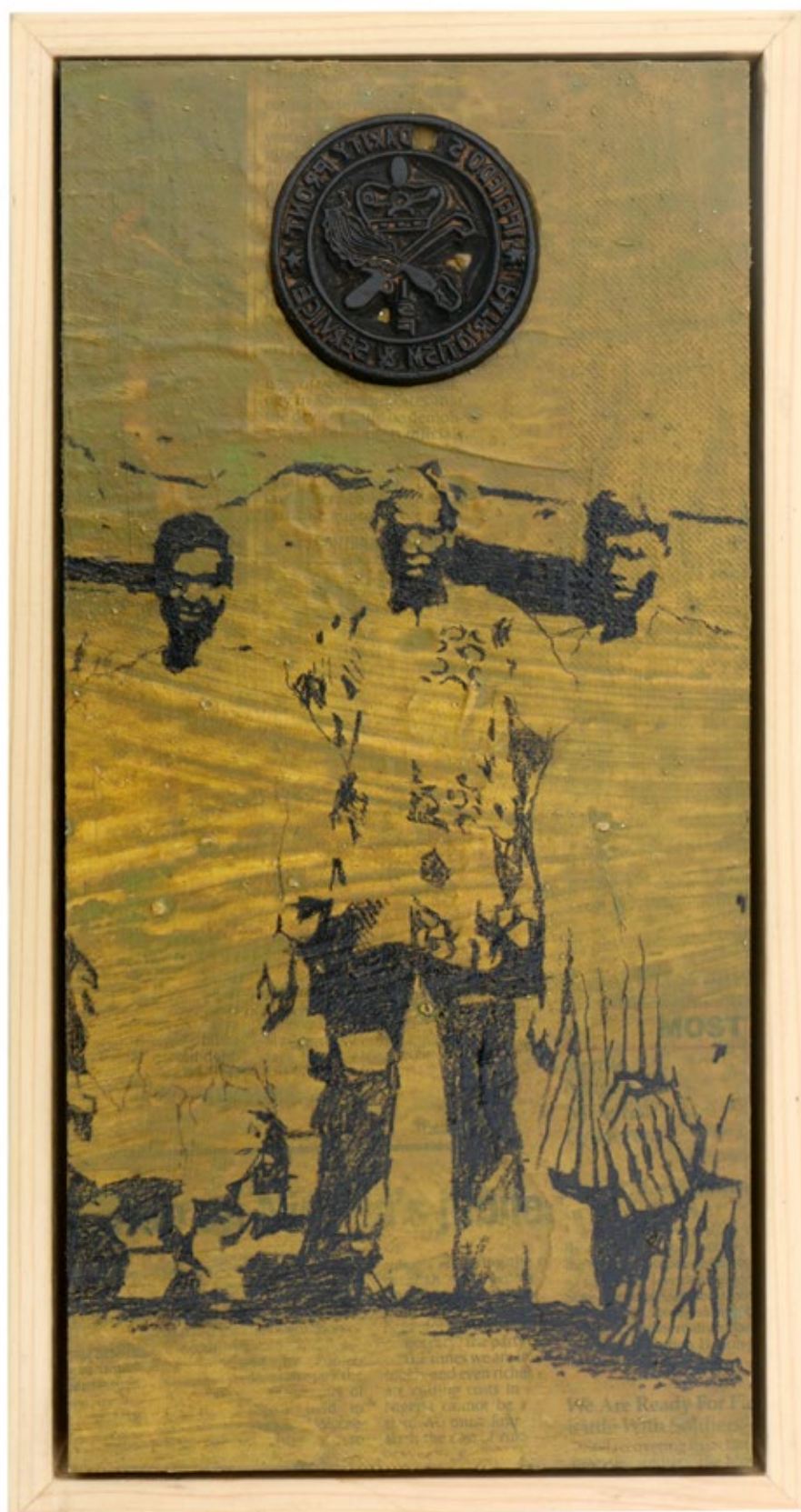
***Scrap of Evidence (Agogo Igbeyawo),***  
Acrylic, digital print, letterpress type, aluminium, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Old School Association I)***,  
Acrylic, digital print, corrugated sheet, aluminium, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Ifetedo Society)**, Acrylic, charcoal, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





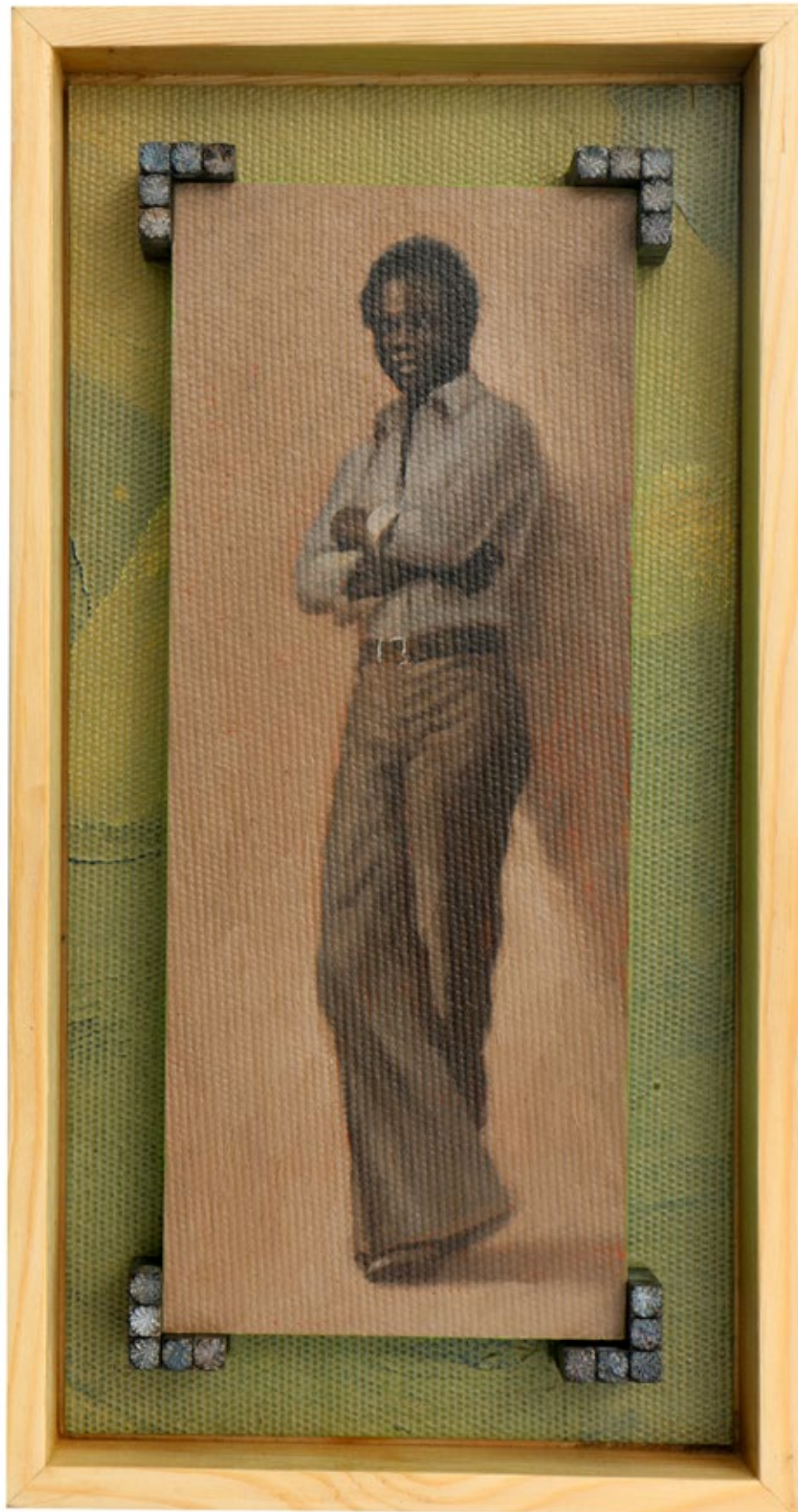
***Scrap of Evidence (Diakoni Obinrin II)***, Acrylic, oil, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Apon I)***, Acrylic, oil, letterpress type, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Apon)***, Acrylic, oil, letterpress type, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Diakoni Obinrin)**, Acrylic, digital print, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Boys Scout)**, Acrylic, digital print, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Awalah)**, Acrylic, oil, letterpress type, aluminium, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





**Scrap of Evidence (Abiye)**, Acrylic, digital print, rubber, 16 x 30 cm, 2019





***Scrap of Evidence (Egbe Akorin Obirin)***, Acrylic, digital print, rubber 16 x 30 cm, 2019









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SMO Contemporary Art specializes in showcasing contemporary art in non-traditional exhibition spaces, focusing on established and emerging artists based in Africa and the Diaspora.

SMO priority areas include art curating, research and documentation, valuation, events, film and photography, training and artist talks. SMO has expertise in organizing exhibitions & events which provide a platform for the creative industry to inspire and strengthen humanity's aspiration for the good society.

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