

CHIDI KWUBIRI



motion**E**motion



curates

CHIDI KWUBIRI

in

motion*Emotion*

in collaboration with

Gallery 1957

Kempinski Hotel
Accra, Ghana

June 27 - July 30, 2018



"Colour is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Colour is the keyboard. The soul is the piano with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposely sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key. Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul."

- Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)





Chidi Kwubiri, born in Umuahia, Nigeria, studied fine arts (painting) at the Art Academy Dusseldorf with Prof. Michael Buthe and Prof. A.R. Penck (Master of Fine Arts [Meisterschüler]).

He has had multiple solo exhibitions in Nigeria, USA, Germany, South Africa, France and the Netherlands. Over the years his works have been shown at the Casablanca Biennale, Morocco, the "Palm Beach Contemporary", Florida, USA, the UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Goethe-Institut, Dusseldorf, Germany, OPERA Gallery, Paris and at the 50th Anniversary of the Nigerian Independence at the Nigerian Embassy and Deutsche Bank, Berlin, to name a few. His works were shown at the Venice Biennale (Collateral) in 2015 and at the Dom Museum of Trier, Germany. He is the recipient of several art sponsorship awards.

In 2016 Chidi Kwubiri was selected by MISEREOR to design the important "MISEREOR-Hungertuch" with the title "Ich bin, weil Du bist" (I am because you are) for their global Lenten campaign for the years 2017 – 2018.

motionEmotion: **The Socio-Political Effect of Music on Chidi Kwubiri's Ouvre**

Music has always been a centrifugal force within African society. Whenever we gather, music reflects our communal heartbeat, our identity, and our sensory memory. Music highlights socio-political thinking, projects our longing for balance and equality, and touches our deepest emotional reservoirs of identity, longing and belonging.

No wonder Chidi Kwubiri's latest exhibition, motionEmotion, draws us into his world where brushstrokes, color, texture, and form are a continuum of emotions which have been awakened through the music he immerses himself in, influencing fresh experimentation in painting, sculpture and performance. motionEmotion takes us on a journey of sensory memory and perception as we see, discover, explore and respond to Kwubiri's artistic expression by feeling the rhythm of his colors, the staccato of his partly concealed faces, bathed within a universe of thousands of dots and light moving in unison.

The phenomenon of music influencing art has been researched in the West by artists such as Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky, whose philosophy of "Synesthesia" focused on the dynamics between music, art and spirituality.

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the piano with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposely sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key. Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul," he said.

In Africa, drummers, dancers, and masquerades have influenced and stirred the pulse of creativity on the communal level for centuries. The art, architecture and murals, such as in the uli and nsibidi tradition of Nigeria, are strongly rooted in the music, symbolism and spirituality of the community.

Kwubiri draws on powerful childhood memories growing up in Umuahia, eastern Nigeria, and then builds on these, after years of living in Europe. In his work we see clear African roots such as in Groove Marathon with the imagery of the talking drum, but beyond these visual references, his works have a universal essence, which makes them stateless and timeless.

motionEmotion represents the physical manifestation of music stirring Kwubiri's emotions leading to creative movement which is sometimes frenzied and pulsating, and at other times, melancholic and intimate. His color palette is influenced, quickened, and finally explodes onto his large canvases under the influence of his playlist which includes all genres of music ranging from soul, funk, hip hop, to Latin,



gospel, classic, jazz, blues, high life and afrobeats.

Kwubiri's drips and brushstrokes invite us to join him in the dance of our souls as we rise to levels of hypnotic abandonment in his monochrome series. His works reflect the full rainbow of emotion and motion, from rhythmic dance, melancholic dreaming, groovy gyration, to soulful supplication. We experience the patterns of his artistic oeuvre, which includes afro-beat and reggae crescendos. Kwubiri's exciting new works featuring globally celebrated musicians, have titles inspired by their most famous songs. Many of these tracks were youth anthems from the music of the 1970's through to the 1990's. His works reconnect us with the sensory memories of songs and movements such as Zombie by Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti, No Woman No Cry by the prophetic Bob Marley, Pata Pata by South African freedom fighter Miriam Makeba, One Love by Nigerian filmmaker turned preacher Onyeka Onwenu, and Hot Shot by reggae cowboy, Jimmy Cliff. These songs and Kwubiri's painterly response reflect the global struggle for emancipation and equality, the protection of basic human rights, and the fight for freedom from oppression.

"We see how Bob Marley or Miriam Makeba's music touched souls and opened people up during apartheid. Fela, for instance, used music to address the social injustice in Nigeria; the inequality of life between the haves and have-nots," explained

Kwubiri recently. "A lot of artists use music to talk about what is not working in the system. Music can communicate and also criticize what is not going well."

Kwubiri's stylized pointilism renders his musical icons in profile, with half the canvas exploding into an abstract universe of color and light reflected by thousands of dots and drips. There is even an homage to the "unknown" musician whose music woos us, but whose name has not made it to the limelight.

Besides the musician portraits his new works touch on his continual quest for unification. His Heartbeat painting, in which a younger and older human figure are depicted in tender embrace within a speckled universe of melancholic blue, grey, and white, was created on the heels of an almost two year sojourn, when Kwubiri received the prestigious Misereor "Lenten veil" artist prize in Germany in 2016.

Kwubiri's artwork "I Am Because You Are" reflecting the age-old African philosophy of UBUNTU was used during a yearlong Lenten campaign. It became the artistic bridge of reconciliation in a country torn apart by the huge burden of Europe's largest refugee community, and the increasingly divisive "migrant issue" in Germany.

"What inspired me were the rivers Niger and Benue.

They join and coexist peacefully alongside each other, even though they originate from different sources. When these two forces of nature are able to look at one another and say: "Look, I am, because you are", then this is precisely what I am trying to express," Kwubiri stated during the campaign.

For the last eighteen months, Chidi Kwubiri - misereor goodwill ambassador for 2017/2018 - travelled across Germany presenting his art and speaking at hundreds of events in schools, urban centers and in rural communities. His message was clear. We need to embrace the difference in others. We need reconciliation, acceptance, and empathy. Kwubiri's art is a clarion call for global unification and acceptance of a diversified and richer "multi-kulti" society.

We see an artist whose experience as an immigrant to Germany and assimilation into his new homeland, allows him to draw on his African roots in a positive and inclusive way. His response to the xenophobia which is being stirred across the world by the global migration crisis is to ask us to try to remember universal principles of love, communion and community, inter-dependence and joy which is most often evoked through artistic expression, whether it be musical or visual.

But motionEmotion is not only about paintings. The exhibition displays Kwubiri's deeper and broader

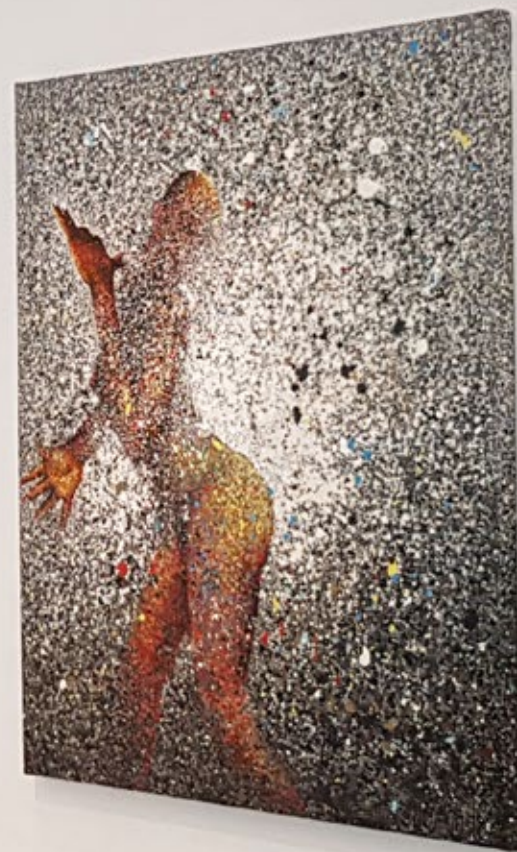
creative spirit when he paints on a model during a live performance at the exhibition opening. He paints on a human canvas in tandem with a musical performance of Ghanaian popular music enjoining his audience to feel, hear, and connect with their own emotional reservoirs of creative memory.

"Music influences our lifestyle and state of mind. Music opens us up, makes us to have different views instead of seeing things in just one direction," concludes the artist. " My heart is colorful when I listen to music. It sends sun straight to my soul when it's raining outside."

Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio
Curator
motionEmotion

Sources:

1. *Music and the Brain: The Fascinating Ways That Music Affects Your Mood and Mind*, by Barry Goldstein from www.consciouslifestylemag.com
2. *Hearing color, seeing sound: Synesthesia in art* by Bruce Adams, www.buffalospre.com
3. *Music and Painting, A Harmonious Relationship* by Meghan Norton, www.ArtistsNetwork.com
4. *MISEREOR Lenten Veil 'I am, because you are' , 2017/2018* by Chidi Kwubiri





Hypnotize
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 250 cm



Enter the Centre
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 250 cm





Reverberation
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 170 cm

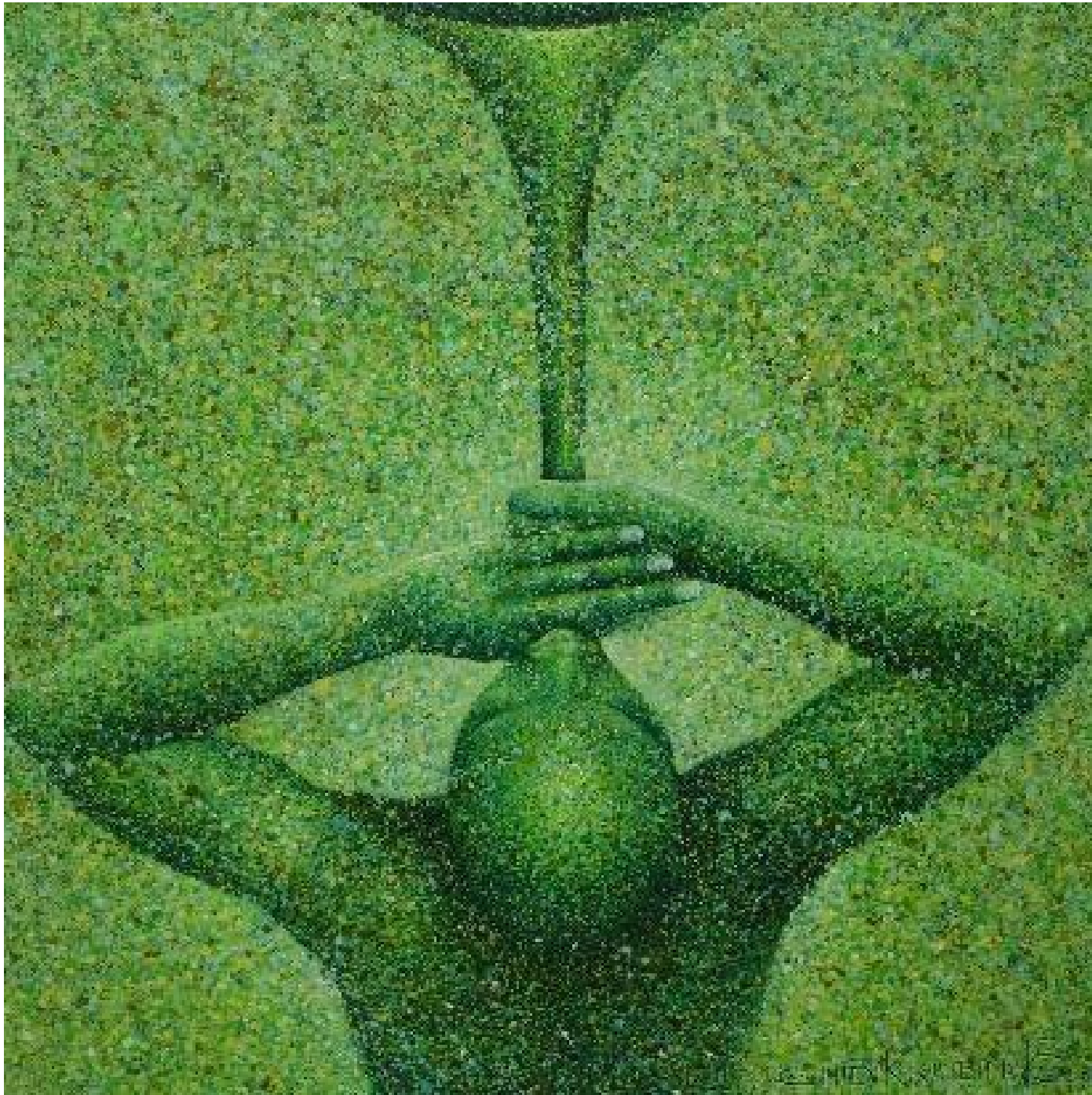


What on Earth
2011
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 150 cm



*"Music influences our lifestyle and state of mind.
Music opens us up, makes us to embrace different
world views, not just see things in one direction. To
be able to see things in multiple layers."*

- Chidi Kwubiri



Supplication
2015
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 200 cm



Groove Marathon
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 300 cm

*"My heart is colorful when I listen to music.
It sends the sun straight to my soul when its raining
outside."*



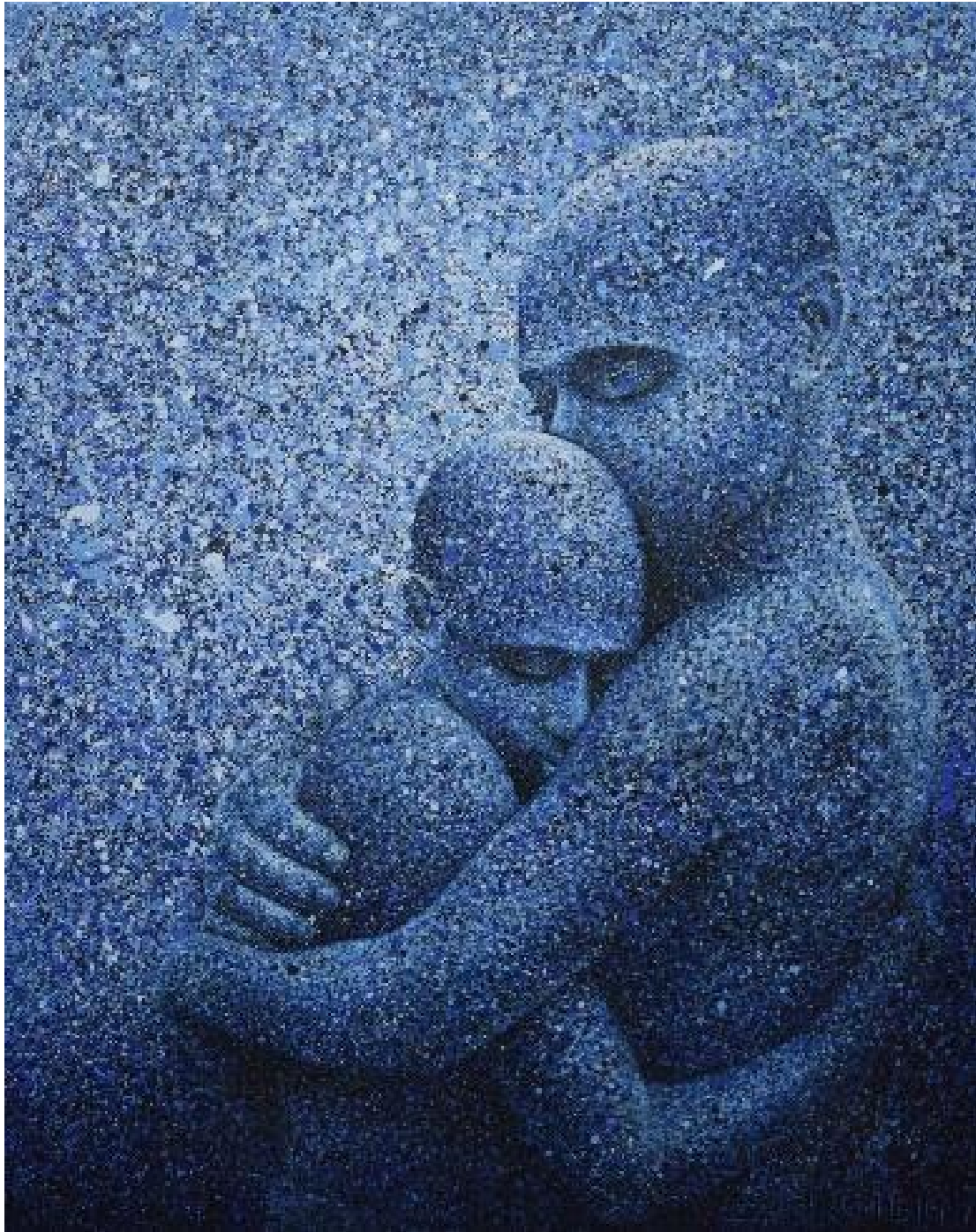
Drum Beats
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 200 cm







Queen I-III, 2014, Acrylic on Canvas, 110 x 60 cm each,



Heartbeat
2017
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 160 cm

"The message that I am bringing to people is inspiring them to see need to contribute to humanity, especially refugees. It really gives me hope. The world is not falling apart. The good will continue. Desiderata."



In Dialogue
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
140 x 180 cm

"What inspired me were the rivers Niger and Benue. They join and coexist peacefully alongside each other, even though they originate from different sources. When these two forces of nature are able to look at one another and say: "Look, I am, because you are", then this is precisely what I am trying to express."



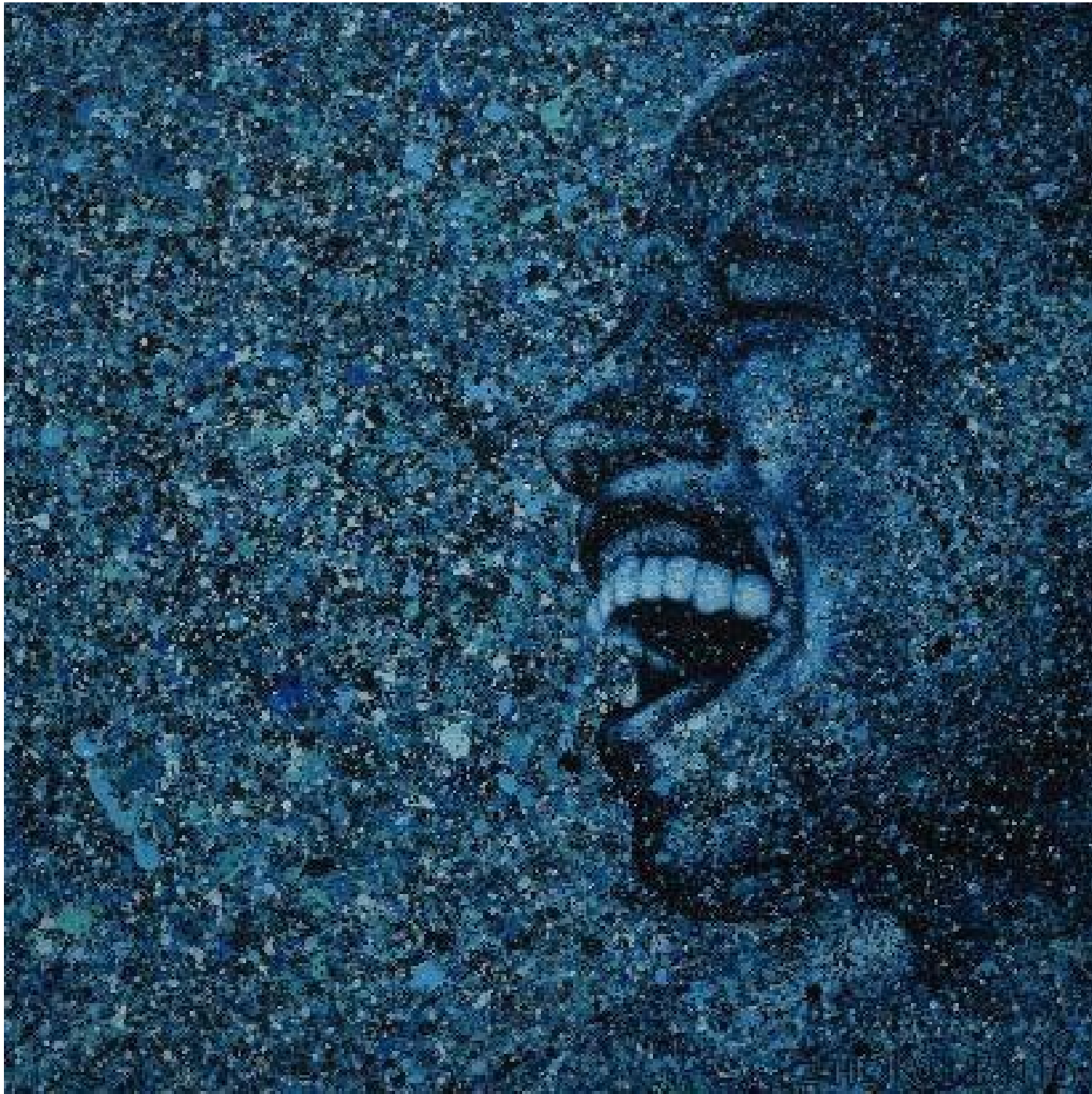


Baba
2009
Acrylic on Canvas
250 x 250 cm



No Cry
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm

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Pata Pata
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



One Love
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



Unknown
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



Zombie
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



Hot Shot
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm

*"I see music as an instrument to help us get to the level we want to be, whether crazy, meditative, melancholic...
It lifts our spirits. When we lose someone we can use music to pray to God and look for strength and consolation."*







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.

Founded by social activist, art collector, and filmmaker, Sandra Mbanefo Obiako, SMO holds cutting edge art exhibitions which showcase masters and exciting new talent expressing their creativity through art, performance, film & new media.

SMO is experienced in organizing symposia, conferences, training and events, which provide a platform for the creative industry to inspire and strengthen humanity's aspiration for the good society.

Priority Areas:

- Art Curating
- Research & Documentation
- Valuation
- Events
- Film & Photography
- Training & Artist Talks

For more information contact
smocontemporaryart@gmail.com
www.smocontemporary.com

Gallery 1957

Based in Accra and working internationally, Gallery 1957 is dedicated to contemporary art. With a curatorial focus on West Africa, the gallery presents a programme of exhibitions, installations and performances by the region's most significant artists. Gallery 1957 works with artists currently bridging the gap between local and international practices, including Serge Attukwei Clottey, Jeremiah Quarshie, Yaw Owusu, Gerald Chukwuma, crazinisT artisT and Godfried Donkor. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, the gallery has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting.

Named after the year Ghana gained independence, the gallery's initial space, located within the Kempinski Hotel in Gold Coast City, opened on Independence Day 2016, with an exhibition from Serge Attukwei Clottey. In 2017 they inaugurated their second exhibition and project space in Accra's new Galleria Mall with a solo exhibition by British-Ghanaian artist Godfried Donkor.

Gallery 1957 offers both local audiences and international visitors the opportunity to discover artists, and to gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of their practice. Their work expands outside of the gallery walls through a public programme that includes talks, off-site projects, residencies, performances, commissioning new site-specific installations, and supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana and beyond.

The presence of Gallery 1957 adds another layer to existing independent arts structures currently thriving in Ghana.

For more information contact
www.gallery1957.com

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