



TEGA AKPOKONA

Curated by Ugoma Adegoke

Saturday 7th March, 2020

Continues until 6th April, 2020



Notes from the curator

“It is simply a delight and honour for me to be a part of Tega's journey and story. For an artist so young, he is much beloved by the finest collectors and even more so by his fellow artists- upcoming and established. As his gallerist and friend, I can opine that this is due to a combination of the following factors - his curiosity, his philosophical maturity, his penchant for reading and his technical dexterity as evidenced in his mastery of chiaroscuro. It is my expectation that if he continues in this vein that the world will enjoy his expressions, which elevate black imagery and identity and in so doing, backlighting our lives for a long time to come.”

- Ugoma Adegoke. Lagos. March 2020

About Ugoma Adegoke

Ugoma Adegoke trained as an economist and corporate finance professional. Today she is a creative entrepreneur, gallerist, and foremost cultural curator. Some might call her a one-woman army. Ugoma is a tireless community builder, arts advocate, a passionate art collector and a dynamic taste-maker. She is the founding director and curator of BLOOM Art, Lagos

Ugoma completed a course in Curating Contemporary Art and Exhibition Design in Barcelona facilitated by acclaimed curator Tina Zeigler, co-founder of the Moniker Art Fair. In 2016 she embarked on a course in Art and Finance at the Sotheby's Institute in London and also attended an art writing seminar under the tutelage of Ossie Ward of the Lisson Gallery.

In December 2016, she was invited to Paris to speak at the Africa-focused conference of Comité Colbert, France's premier cultural & luxury association. In May 2017, Ugoma was invited to become an Ambassador of The African Art in Venice Forum, a 2-day symposium event which took place during the opening of the 57th Venice Biennale. In the same month, Ugoma was selected by the German Consulate General and the Goethe Institut as a representative from Nigeria to attend a special segment and one - week curated immersion of documenta no. 14 in Kassel, Germany, one of the world's most important modern and contemporary art festivals since 1955. In April 2019 she produced and hosted a historic launch event for the re-published "Art in Development: A Nigerian Perspective" the seminal book by the late Uche Okeke.

Also in July 2019 together with acclaimed artist Emeka Ogboh, Ugoma was appointed to curate the art exhibition "Face Me, I Face You" hosted by the Embassy of Nigeria, Germany to commemorate the first ever annual Nigerian Cultural Day in Berlin.

Ugoma avidly promotes and supports the work of artists and creatives as curator and director through BLOOM Art, her portfolio gallery and private art salon. She has curated and produced art exhibitions with the most exciting and accomplished modern and contemporary artists including Uche Okeke, Obiora Udechukwu, Muraina Oyelami, Tam Fiofori, Victor Ehikhamenor, Olu Ajayi, Angela Isiuwe and Marcia Kure to name a few.

Ugoma's personality inspires trend-setting directions in design, art, culture and lifestyle. She is pushing the envelope on the African cultural experience and its receivership.

Sukari
Oil on Canvas
47 x 46 inches
2019 - 2020



The Romantic Relationship Between Light and the Black Skin

Organised by Bloom Art, this exhibition features a selection of artworks by artist Tega Akpokona. In this new body of work, his most accomplished to date, Akpokona further examines the human experience as forged by cultural influences, and the complexities of identity. With the spotlight on black figures and created characters, the viewer is invited on a journey of self-reflection and interpretations, nuanced by their individual perceptions of reality. The selections of paintings evoke nostalgia, contextualised within contemporary settings.

This exhibition brings together a diverse array of fictional characters from Akpokona's universe; characters who have their basis in Akpokona's critical observations of real life people. Expanding on his previous series in which he exalts his characters, these works continue to explore what Akpokona describes as the *"romantic relationship between light and the black skin."*

Through his mastery and manipulation of chiaroscuro, Akpokona imbues into his characters an air of atemporal magnificence, attempting to provoke aspiration in the eye of the viewer, both present and future. Akpokona uses form and practice to extend this approach, as his choice of oil as a medium which incurs lengthy drying periods, affords him the luxury to develop, configure, and amend his characters whilst he paints. He projects his ideals onto these imagined characters, upgrading them from passive objects into active subjects, who are able to engage the viewer in non-verbal dialogue.

The epitome of this approach is evident in the paintings 'Ekaite' and 'Muse in Gold' (both 2019 - 2020). Here, Akpokona explores the interplay between light, costume, and the black figure, employing dramatic lighting to tastefully illuminate body and dress, seducing the viewer into developing a relationship with Ekaite, who is also the muse in gold.

Still at an early stage in his already impressive career, this selection of works is demonstrative of Akpokona's recent growth, which is clear in the way that he has developed a greater three-dimensional quality to his work. His backgrounds, which he has since developed and made more specific, are better balanced with his real-life foregrounds, thus creating a greater sense of depth in his portraiture. Similarly, Akpokona has ventured to depict deeper and bolder characters in this series, and in doing so, has explored the male muse in more of his works, diversifying and adding range to his oeuvres.

Contrary to claims that Akpokona's work parodies Dutch Baroque vernacular, or is strictly founded in this period, his work employs figuration and dramatic light in a way in which honours and pays homage to this era, but also transcends it. Stating that "history is a buffet of knowledge," Akpokona credits Van Dyk, Rembrandt, and Rubens amongst others as influences on his visual language. However, he takes inspiration from all over, including the Russian Masters, John Singer Sargent, and indeed Aina Onabolu.

Inspired by the regality of the characters in Dutch Golden Age portraiture, Akpokona quickly became conscious of his inability to relate with the people in these paintings. His works therefore aim to portray and revere everyday Nigerian people, in a way that we would not normally look at them.

Akpokona heralds figurative painting and portraiture as being essential for Africans, particularly at this moment in our history. With an upbringing surrounded by photography, through parents who were keen enthusiasts, nurture has shaped Akpokona's appreciation of documentation and representation. At a time where African cultures have come under the global spotlight, Akpokona believes in the importance of creating work that speaks to what it means to be Nigerian, and more broadly African, or black. His intention is for the work to engage the viewer, and for the viewer to engage the work in an endless continuum, eventually helping the viewer to learn something about themselves.

"As Africans we are now questioning our identity and beginning to find ourselves... crystallized out of past influences, this is now embodied in how we look, how we dress, and how we are," says Akpokona.

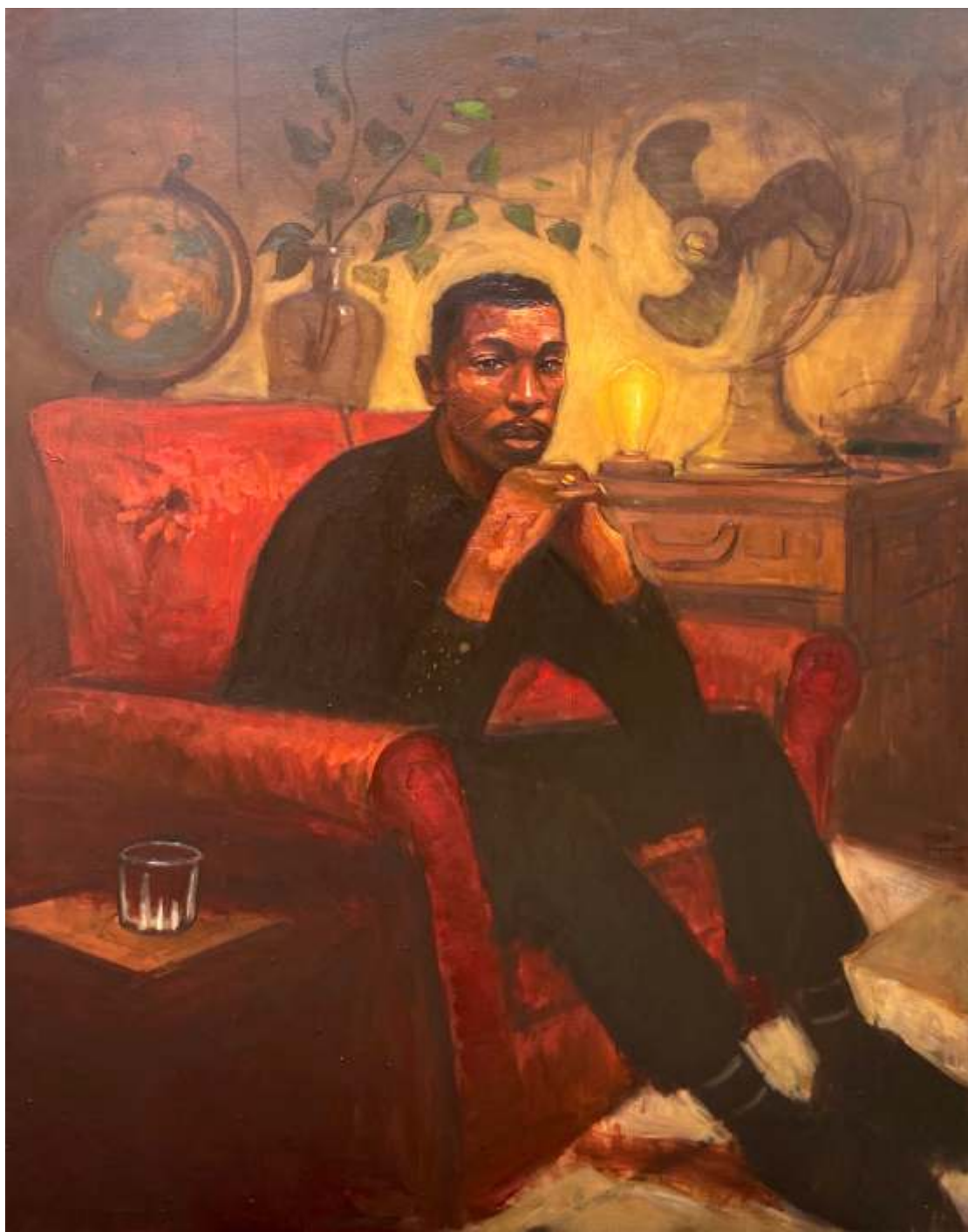
Akpokona's works directly confront this notion, elevating us to be sincere, at any point in history. The aim is for Nigerians to see the works and feel pride; for Africans and black people to also share in this pride; ultimately offering a new lens through which Nigerians and indeed all black people can be considered.

Tobi Onabolu,
March 2020

Tobi Onabolu is a dynamic creative based in Lagos, passionate about culture and identity in relation to Africa and the Diaspora, through the lenses of story-telling, research, and commentary. He holds an MA in Africa Studies from SOAS (University of London), and is the Communications Manager at ART X Collective. Tega Akpokona



Ufuoma
Oil on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
2019-2020



Light Bulb Moment
Oil on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
2019-2020

Muna
Oil on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
2019-2020





Ekaete
Oil on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
2019-2020

Esiri
Oil on Canvas
52 x 55 inches
2019-2020

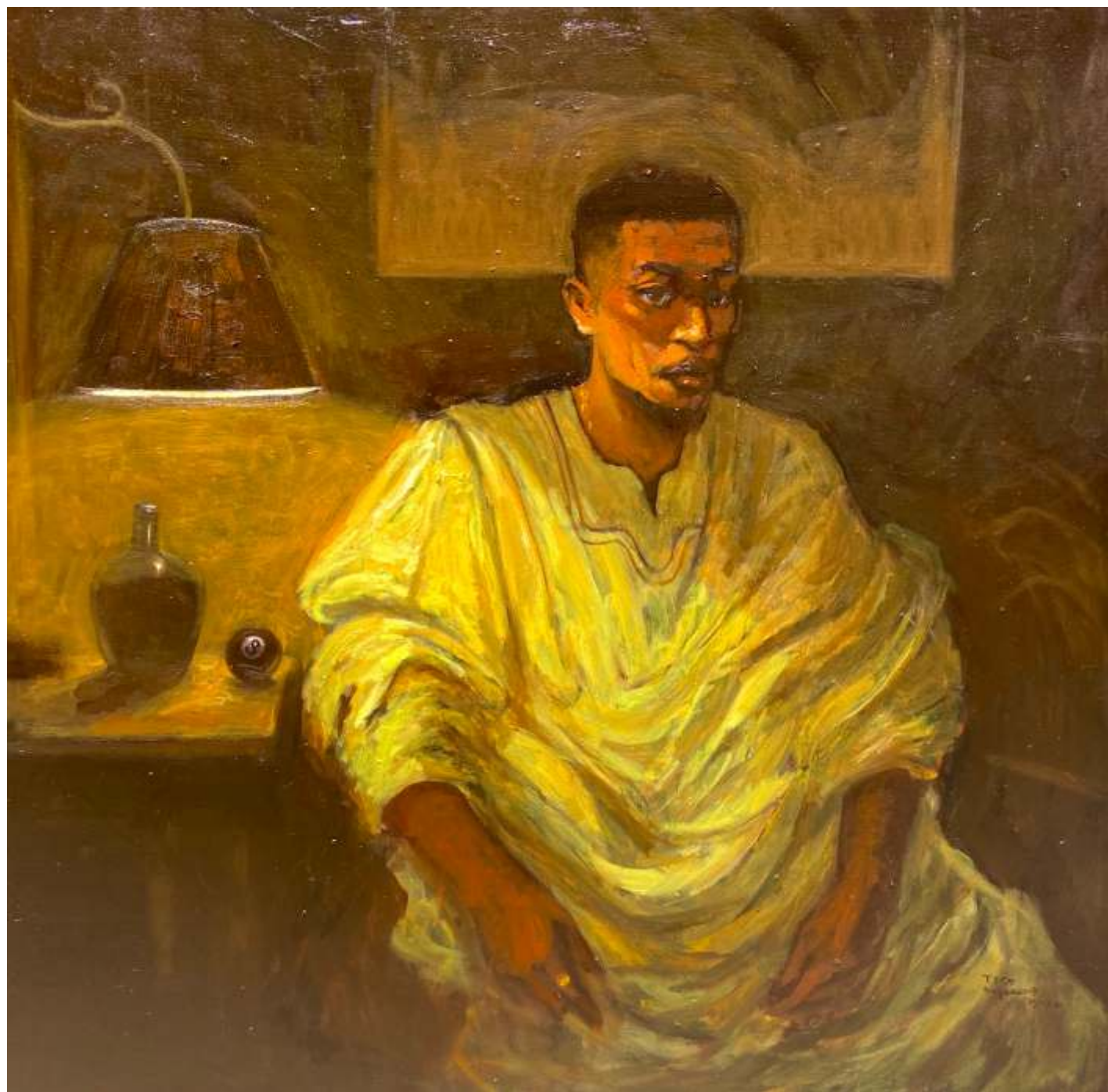




Muse in Gold
Oil on Canvas
60 x 48 inches
2019-2020

Titi
Oil on Canvas
55 x 40 inches
2019-2020





Babatunde
Oil on Canvas
54 x 55 inches
2019-2020

Laughing Man (Study)
Oil on Canvas
20 x 16 inches
2019-2020



TEGA AKPOKONA

Tega Akpokona (b.1991) is an outstanding and talented young Nigerian emerging artist. He graduated with a BA in Fine and Applied Art, from the University of Benin, Nigeria, in 2011. Akpokona's practice aims to allure the viewer to experience the creative use of light interplayed with rich subtle, colours, capturing the depth of human emotions. Using a colour language reminiscent of the Dutch Baroque period, his work seeks to address socio-economic issues, and interrogate everyday realities of living in Nigeria. Akpokona's works can be found in prestigious private collections in Nigeria and abroad. He held his first solo exhibition, Timeless, in 2016 at Terra Kulture in Lagos, Nigeria, and was among the artists selected for TAFETA London's summer 2018 exhibition. He lives and works in Lagos







For more information

Ugoma Adegoke

ugoma@bloomartlagos.com

+234 703 403 0683

 @bloomartlagos

www.bloomartlagos.com



