

**IT'S A
WORD
RELE ART PARTY**

5, Military Street, Onikan, Lagos
www.rele.co



It's a wRAP

Rele Gallery Lagos is pleased to present its last exhibition of the year It's a wRAP. Featuring works from our represented artists Marcellina Akpojotor, Tonia Nneji, Ameh Egwuh, Chidinma Nnoli, Sabrina Coleman-Pinheiro, Michael Igwe, Iyunola Sanyaolu and David Otaru, the exhibition explores topical subject matters and critical reflections rooted in personal and collective experiences.

Ranging from the abstract to works in figuration, It's A wRAP invites the audience to dialogue with a mixture of stylistic influences and thematic focus. We imagine this exhibition as a place of gathering — one of meticulously conveyed underpinnings and artistic spirits — a locus where visual references and social commentary commune from diverse origins.

Marcellina Akpojotor's 'Ode to Beautiful Memories' is an ongoing dialogue on familial history, the evolving nature of archives and an intimate celebration of memories and generational legacy. The works in this series function as both a re-engagement with a

personal history as well as an act of remembrance and commemoration, serving as a monument and testament to past lives and unfolding futures.

Tonia Nneji's presented series 'Transaction for Sanctification' references her experiences with religious institutions in her search for alternative treatment. It questions a culture of purity and arbitrary judgment that precludes access to religious spaces. Conflating the sacred with the sensual, the body of work considers the role of the church in enforcing a system of moral policing and exclusion against women — especially during moments of vulnerability — in contemporary Nigerian societies.

In 'Fantasies of the Other Side', Ameh Egwuh imagines new worlds rooted in varied beliefs of the afterlife across several cultures. Exploring ideas of reincarnation, ancestral veneration and nothingness, the works fictionalise the unknown, creating a hybrid space of memory and continuity.

Generally inspired by personal and lived experiences, Chidinma Nnoli's *Let's Hope the Sun Will Show Us the Path* documents the beginning stages of her newfound independence (escape) from a strict religious home and how she moves through unknown 'waters' and spaces while seeking a path and embracing this newfound freedom.

Sabrina Coleman-Pinheiro's series 'Fragmented Versions of Self' treats the voyeuristic role society plays in its engagement with mental illness. It focuses on the relationship between the observer and the observed, seeking to highlight its fragility and superficiality.

Michael Igwe's *Between Extremes* investigates the dynamic ways the body mediates across certain spaces and time as well as a subjective account of accumulated experiences. Drawing from lived

encounters, the works chronicle unconscious states in the feeling, acting and thinking of a transitioning body, suggesting both listening and negotiating with bodies in ways that elude the notion of mere covering. IyunOla Sanyaolu's 'How Do You Sleep?' recounts the intimate and varied movements and positions the body assumes while in a state of rest. Having been described as a restless sleeper, this body of work is focused on recording these dynamic, often sporadic movements while also exploring the relationship between the unconscious body and the lived space.

In his series 'The Muse and the Paintbrush', David Otaru looks into the intimate relationship between the artist and the muse. Drawing primarily from his practice, Otaru underlines the role of the muse as a catalyst for artistic expression, bringing into our consciousness the vitality of this relationship.

Ameh Egwuh

Ameh Egwuh (b. 1996, Nigeria) is a visual artist whose practice is characterized by his fascination with lines. Drawing inspiration from the scarification techniques of ancient Ife art, Adinkra, and Nsibidi art signs and symbols, Egwuh's paintings invite the viewer into an expansive, multi-layered world populated with dynamic figures in intimate and casual scenes of family and everyday life.

Exploring concepts of home and familial responsibilities, solitude, and identity, Egwuh utilizes multiple modes of representation from expressionistic painting techniques to his use of lines and geometric patterns — drawn from textile designs from his hometown, Idoma in Benue state — in representing skin and backgrounds. His eclectic visual vocabulary conveys varying textures of lives lived and spaces occupied.

Egwuh studied Fine and Applied Art at the Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State and has been part of different exhibitions, competitions, and trainings such as the ACOEDE International School competition, Afriuture Painting Competition by Ramati Art Africa in 2018 and Generation Y exhibition organized by Retro Africa. In 2019 he participated in the inaugural edition of Rele Arts Foundation's Young Contemporaries Bootcamp and was selected in 2020 as part of Rele Arts Foundation Young Contemporaries.

In 2020, Egwuh's work was shown at FNB Art Joburg and South South Veza. His debut solo show Life After Life opened at Rele Gallery, Los Angeles in April 2021. Egwuh lives and works in Lagos.



A Better Place (IV) | Acrylic on canvas | 54 x 60in | 2021

Chidinma Nnoli

Chidinma Nnoli (b. 1998, Nigeria) is a visual artist whose practice draws from personal, real-life experiences in challenging stereotypes, psychology and the cultural conditioning of women while exploring elements of identity, sexuality and mental health.

Working predominantly in oil, Nnoli's work confronts socially entrenched structures of patriarchal power and misogyny as enforced by the state, familial relationships and religious organisations. Fascinated with the notion of safe and enabling spaces, her work pushes back against reductive notions of femininity, gender roles and mental health in contemporary society.

Nnoli earned her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Benin and has participated in various exhibitions all over Nigeria. In 2019 she participated in the inaugural edition of Rele Arts Foundation's Young Contemporaries Bootcamp and the following year was selected as part of Rele Arts Foundation Young Contemporaries. Her debut solo exhibition *To Wander Untamed* opened at Rele Gallery, Lagos in March, 2021. Nnoli currently lives and works in Lagos.



Let's hope the sun will show us the path (II) | Oil on canvas | 60 x 48 in | 2021



Let's hope the sun will show us the path (I) | Oil on canvas | 60 x 48in | 2021

David Otaru

David Otaru (b.1991) is a self-taught artist from Edo state, Nigeria. He holds a degree in English and Literature Education from the University of Benin, Nigeria. Combining several mediums, Otaru's work depicts dynamic, yet recognisable scenes populated with figures caught in random moments of their daily lives. His work incorporates the use of metaphors and familiar imagery in telling multi-layered stories of everyday life, socio-economic conditions and societal structures. Exploring the use of the negative image in his work, the artist considers the growing relationship between art and technology in contemporary society.

David Otaru lives and works in Lagos.



His hoodie | Acrylic on canvas | 36 x 48in | 2021



If the world was black and white | Acrylic on canvas | 36 x 48in | 2021

IyunOla Sanyaolu

IyunOla Sanyaolu is (b.1998) a graduate of the University of Lagos where she had her B.A in painting from the Department of Creative Arts. Working primarily with the oil medium, her work centers around an enduring exploration of texture and a layered build-up of form through the use of the impasto technique. Presenting picturesque scenes that merge the abstract with the figurative, Sanyaolu eschews the realistic for the emotive, echoing her belief in the therapeutic qualities of art.

IyunOla Sanyaolu is a 2019/2020 Arts in Medicine (AIM) Fellow. She lives and works in Lagos.



How do you sleep (III) | Oil on canvas | 48 x 48in | 2021



How do you sleep (IV) | Oil on canvas | 48 x 48in | 2021

Marcellina Akpojotor

Born in 1989 in Lagos, Nigeria, Marcellina Akpojotor had her first apprenticeship under her father; assisting him with drawing, design, stencil, writing and calligraphy work before she eventually moved on to study Art and Industrial Design at the Lagos State Polytechnic.

Employing collaging and traditional painting techniques, Akpojotor produces richly textured and layered work with compelling visual imagery exploring femininity, personal and societal identity and issues surrounding women empowerment in contemporary society. Working primarily with discarded pieces of the Ankara fabric - sourced from local fashion houses - commonly known as the 'African print fabric' despite its Dutch origin, she investigates the politics of the fabric as a cultural signifier and a conduit for memory and shared energy.

In her work, Akpojotor presents powerful images that at once captures the unyielding strength, complexities and seemingly effortless style of her subjects while also referencing the long, arduous journey to female empowerment and gender equality, especially in contemporary African societies.

In 2015, Akpojotor participated in Make We Do, a performance workshop by Afiriperfoma at the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, and in 2016, the 19th Bone Performance Art Festival, in Bern, Switzerland as well as 'Onobrakpeya and the Harmattan workshop', at Lagos Court of Arbitration, Lagos. In 2017, she was selected to be part of the Rele Arts Foundation Young Contemporaries exhibition and was awarded the Ronke Ekwensi Salon fellowship following the publication of the book "The Art of Nigerian Women" by Ben Bosah in which she was profiled. Akpojotor has also taken part in several group exhibitions including; Sisters: The Art of Nigerian Women in 2018 at the Carnegie Gallery, Columbus, Ohio and the Young Contemporaries Alumni Exhibition in 2020 at the National Museum, Lagos. Her work, Tobi (2015) was used as the cover image for the novel Jagua Nana by Nigerian author Cyprian Ekwensi first published in 1961, and republished under Penguin Random Art "Modern Classic" which was released in May 2018. Her work has also been featured on Harper's Bazaar, BBC Nigeria, the Goethe Institut and Channels TV.

Marcellina Akpojotor had her first solo exhibition She Was Not Dreaming at Rele Gallery in 2018 and has participated in prominent art fairs across the world including the FNB Art Joburg Fair 2019 (South Africa), Art Dubai 2020 (Dubai) and the 2020 edition of the LA Art Show (USA).

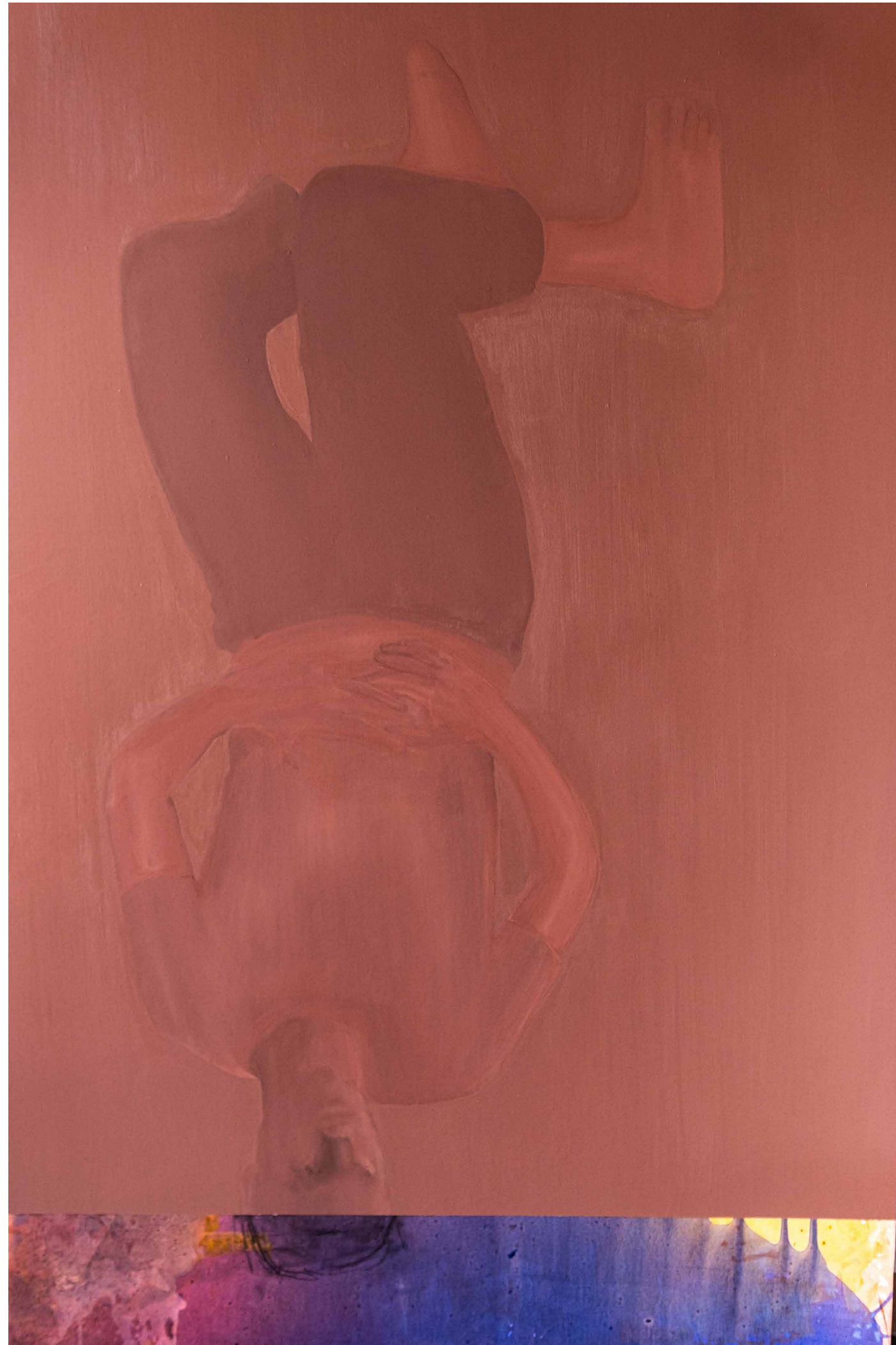


Quest for education | mixed media on canvas | 48 x 72in | 2020

Michael Igwe

Exploring the interaction between traditional painting medium and alternative material, Micheal Igwe's paintings employ the fluidity of form in engaging the grotesque, seamless and unsteady nature of human experience and memory. His paintings employ multi-layered narratives that reference and depict people he encounters, speaking to a broader collective experience, however, they are intimately rooted in personal experiences and identity politics that the artist refers to the paintings as 'self portraits'.

Born in 1994, Micheal Igwe holds a B.A degree from the University of Benin, Nigeria with a major in Painting. He lives and works between Port-Harcourt and Lagos, Nigeria.



I have become him | Acrylic on canvas | 69 x 40in | 2021



Sleeping anguished boy by the corner | Acrylic on canvas | 69 x 40in | 2021

Sabrina Coleman-Pinheiro

Sabrina Coleman-Pinheiro (b.1990) is a visual artist of Nigerian, British and Sudanese lineage based in Lagos. She holds a B.A in Business and Fine Art from Linfield University, Oregon. Working between the abstract and the figurative, Coleman-Pinheiro's works catalogue her constant battles with anxiety; with a goal to drive conversation on our understanding and view of mental health in contemporary society. Her work seeks to give material form to the intangible and offers shape to things that can only be felt. Her pieces take her viewers on a journey through a mind dealing with a mental disorder.

Coleman-Pinheiro's highly codified and conceptual imagery seeks to connect her viewers to the universality of her experiences. She lives and works in Lagos.



In Opposition with my selves | Acrylic on canvas | 48 x 48in | 2021



Lingering in chaos | Acrylic on canvas | 48 x 48in | 2021

Tonia Nneji

Born in Lagos State, Nigeria, contemporary Nigerian artist Tonia Nneji comes from a long line of traditional carvers and masquerade carriers. Following the family tradition of artistry, she graduated with a B.A (Hons) in Visual Arts from the University of Lagos, Nigeria in 2016. Known for her use of bold colours and intricate patterns, Nneji's work explores the relationship between trauma and the female body. Drawing from her experience in dealing with personal health issues, she confronts a culture of suppression and silence on issues around women's physical and mental health, body autonomy and sexual harassment in a bid to create safe spaces where conversations could be held freely. Her recent paintings show women's bodies in various stages of movement draped with colourful, intricately detailed swathes of print fabric. This preoccupation with body forms and textile material navigates cultural and social meanings of fabric in contemporary African societies while exploring the protective qualities of clothing. She notes, "I use drapery as a tool of hiding, to represent protection, a safe place". Nneji's works have been featured in prominent publications such as Nation Newspaper, Vanguard, and the Guardian and in 2017, she was celebrated on BBC Africa during the 'International Women's Day'. Her work was also profiled by prolific Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie in her essay 'The New Guard' published by Harper's Bazaar in 2020. In 2018, Nneji was awarded the Ronke Ekwensi Fellowship in New Jersey and her work was presented at the FNB Art Joburg in South Africa and Miami Art Basel in Florida, USA in 2019. During the same year, Nneji participated in Rele Arts Foundation's Young Contemporaries program. In 2020, she also exhibited in the first-ever Young Contemporaries Alumni Exhibition at the National Museum, Lagos. Nneji was recently a part of the artists selected for the Art Dubai Residency program in 2020 curated by Johannesburg-based Kabelo Malatsie and her works are widely collected both locally and internationally. She lives and works in Lagos.



Forced prestige, false prestige | Acrylic and oil on canvas | 60 x 60in | 2021



Tete-a-tete with the recruiter | Acrylic and oil on canvas | 36 x 47in | 2021

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