

ROUND 2023

Contemporaries



Opening date
January 8

32, Thompson Avenue, Ikoyi, Lagos

www.releartsfoundation.org

rele
ARTS FOUNDATION

Gallery Statement

The Rele Arts Foundation is pleased to present the 8th edition of the Young Contemporaries programme. Initiated in 2016, the programme identifies, mentors and promotes early-career artists from Africa, by equipping them with tools and resources for artistic development. Each year, the Foundation guides artists via its virtual boot camp and residency programme in Ado-Ekiti towards the creation of critical projects, encouraging innovative explorations of existing inquiries as well as the birth of fresh ideas.

This year's edition presents new projects done over the course of 6 months by seven artists — **Adeniyi Adewole, Adetutu Adediran, Hanson Okere, Yoma Emore, Seidougha Linus Eyimiegha, Elfreda Fakoya and Tosobuafo Matilda Bardi** — working across a diverse range of mediums from textile material to aluminum dust; engaging complex issues from diasporic and familial identity to migration and urban traffic culture. The Young Contemporaries 2023 project presents the audience with a collection of distinct and exciting perspectives on contemporary issues while also drawing attention to the exciting and critical work being done by a younger generation of contemporary African artists.

Adetutu Adediran

Adetutu Adediran is a visual artist and conceptual photographer. Born in Osun, Nigeria, she graduated with a B.Tech in Chemistry, from the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

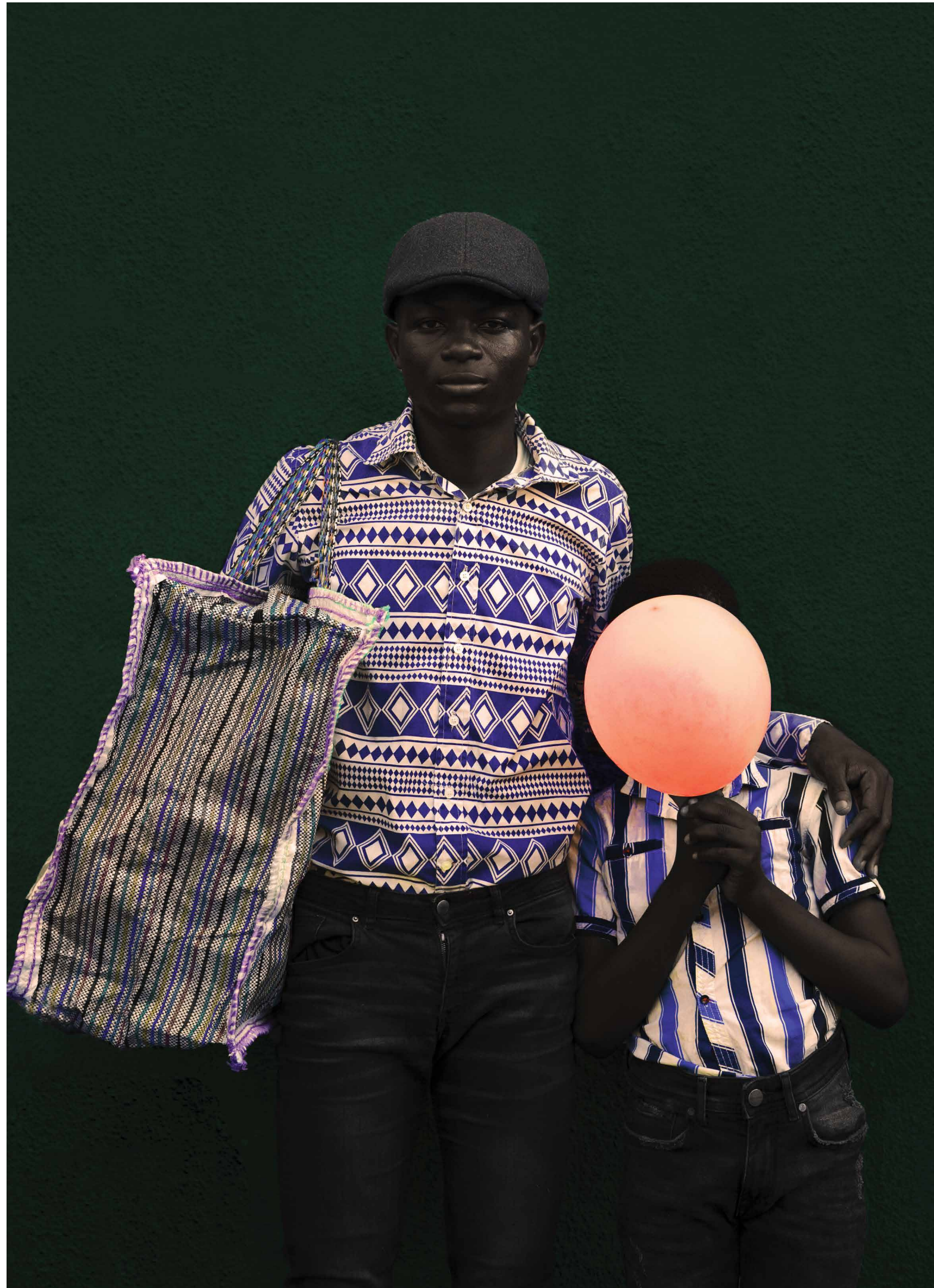
Working in a conceptual photographic style, Adediran presents meticulously posed and arranged images that employ symbolism in representing ideas on masculinity, identity and migration. Her work is influenced by her experience and stories from her environment.

Adediran's work has been exhibited at the *Abuja Photo* Festival, Abuja and Arnheim Gallery, Ibadan.

Artist Statement

The issue of mass migration from Nigeria dates back to the 1970s exemplified by the mid-80s propaganda TV commercial 'Andrew checking out'. The photography and audio project 'Now we are leaving' documents the present day exodus of Nigerians. It draws from current migration trends in the country as well as American painter Jacob Lawrence's depiction of black Americans migrating from the south to the North in his Migration series. Framed at the point of departure, the photographs act as ways of saying goodbye and as repositories of personal migration stories. My use of balloons as a recurring motif reference the desire for self-actualisation and the pursuit of dreams that often propel migration.

The photographs in this body of work also serve as a way of remembering close friends who have left or are in different stages of leaving. The figures in the photographs exist in a state of liminality, poised for an inevitable journey.



Finding home
Archival Print, 24x36 inches, 2022



Goodbye Nigeria
Archival Print, 33 x 36 inches, 2022



Leaders of tomorrow
Archival Print, 26x 36 inches, 2022



Nigerian Dream
Archival Print, 24 x 36 inches, 2022



No Work No Pay
Archival Print, 24 x 36 inches, 2022

Adeniyi Adewole Wasiu

Adeniyi Adewole Wasiu (b. 1994) is a contemporary sculptor born in Ibadan, Nigeria. He studied Arts and Culture at the Yaba College of Technology. Adewole is also an art instructor and co-founder of the Ayowole Academy of Arts. In 2022, his work was shown in the group exhibition *Crossroads* by SMO Contemporary.

He currently lives and works in Lagos.

Artist Statement

My work explores the past and the present, especially with regard to the Yoruba people. In my practice, I delve into parts of Yoruba history, culture, mythology, folklore and fables in uncovering and producing metaphors that speak to social issues in contemporary African societies. Working predominantly in figuration, I source my primary material from discarded aluminum shavings — as an alternative to waste — as well as incorporating found, manufactured objects.

In my work, I am also interested in exploring and presenting the surreal which informed my replacement of the human head with stainless steel balls. According to Yoruba philosophical thought, beyond the physical head seen outside, there is an inner ‘head’ regarded as a person’s spiritual essence, the home of one’s intuition. The use of these balls references the surreal landscape of the ‘inner head’ as well as providing a reflection of the outside world.



Agbefuye (Lighten)
Aluminum in resin, 49 x 52 inches, 2022



Ayeta (bulletproof)
Aluminum in resin, 19 x 43 x 12 inches, 2022



Egbe(Disappear)
Aluminum and resin, 48 x 60 inches, 2022

Tosobuafo Matilda Bardi (Tofo Bardi)

Tofo Bardi (b. 2001) is a visual artist who draws inspiration from the depths of the human mind and enjoys working with the subject of altered consciousness. She holds a B.A from the University of Benin specialising in Painting. In her works, Bardi presents an intense preoccupation with states of the mind, rites of passage and an expressive representation of the real and unreal.

In 2020, her work was featured in the virtual group exhibition *Conversations* by Nosa Creatives.

Artist Statement

It has never been about the before or the after but what happens in between.

My art is an illustration of introspection and manmade voids. Exploring concepts of psychology, self-doubt, negative patterns and existentialism, I imagine the movements of the human consciousness and the spaces it occupies in considering a state of being and the fear of the unknown.

My presented body of work draws from personal experiences with encountering fear, visually exploring dark parts of my mind while finding connections with individuals dealing with the same condition. Here, I set out to confront and connect to audiences by presenting visually, an envisioning of the upsetting and unavoidable world of the mind.



For What We Call Mundane Is In Distress
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches, 2022



I met Cordelia outside this dark world
Oil on Canvas 48 x 48, 2022



For Wisdom And Passion Have Become Absurd
Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches, 2022



I Set My Feet On Sacred Ground
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches, 2022



My Meaning And Goal Have Become Seperate
Oil on canvas 48 x 60 inches, 2022

Yoma Emore

Yoma Emore (b. 1997) is a visual artist working across digital and textile mediums. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, where she currently lives and works, she obtained a Bachelor's degree, in Art & Design, Media and Cultural Studies from the University of Worcester, in the UK. In 2018, she obtained a Master's degree in Textile Design from Chelsea College of Arts (University of the Arts London), specialising in digital textile printing. Emore has since created fabric works that combine her background as a painter and her interest in more conceptual forms of visual art, using motifs, repeat patterns and text.

In 2017, she was awarded the Worcestershire County Council Art Award and also nominated for the Boffy Art Award, for an installation of text paintings that told a deconstructive story of colonialism, and presented fabric as a reflection of national identity, through the use of African Wax prints.

Artist Statement

I tell stories through fabric manipulation and an exploration of text and imagery. As fabric is a marker of identity, my choices of fabric in every piece I create deeply relate to the specific story that I am telling. Additionally, the relationship between text and image in a single frame is one that I have always found interesting. They are two forms of communicative techniques which seem to confront each other and are always in a struggle for dominance. Nonetheless, there is little to no difference between text and image. Both forms of language are descriptive on an abstract level of storytelling and are of equal importance.

My presented body of work is a biographical exploration of my father's stories as a response to the way my immediate older brother defines himself: "son of an international landscaper". In creating this project, I began to think about the ways in which we define ourselves and in whom our identities are rooted. More often than not, our identities are primarily defined and shaped by whose children we are. Here, I embark on a journey of re-discovering who my father is, through his past experiences and journeys. I chose a particular moment in time (1977-1982), a period that constituted a monumental change in his life as well as representing an intersection of past, present and future.

This body of work is set up as a dialogue in five chapters between these stories and the responses of my siblings and me. All our individual experiences of seeing and defining ourselves are tied to our respective connections with our father and his stories of that particular moment in time. It is a conversation between how we see ourselves and who he is.



May We Always Find Solace in Each Other I
Screen-print and spray paint on paper and felt, 90 x 50 inches, 2022



My Fathers Daughter

Acrylic, tulle, paper stay and linen stitched on canvas, 71 x 63 inches, 2022

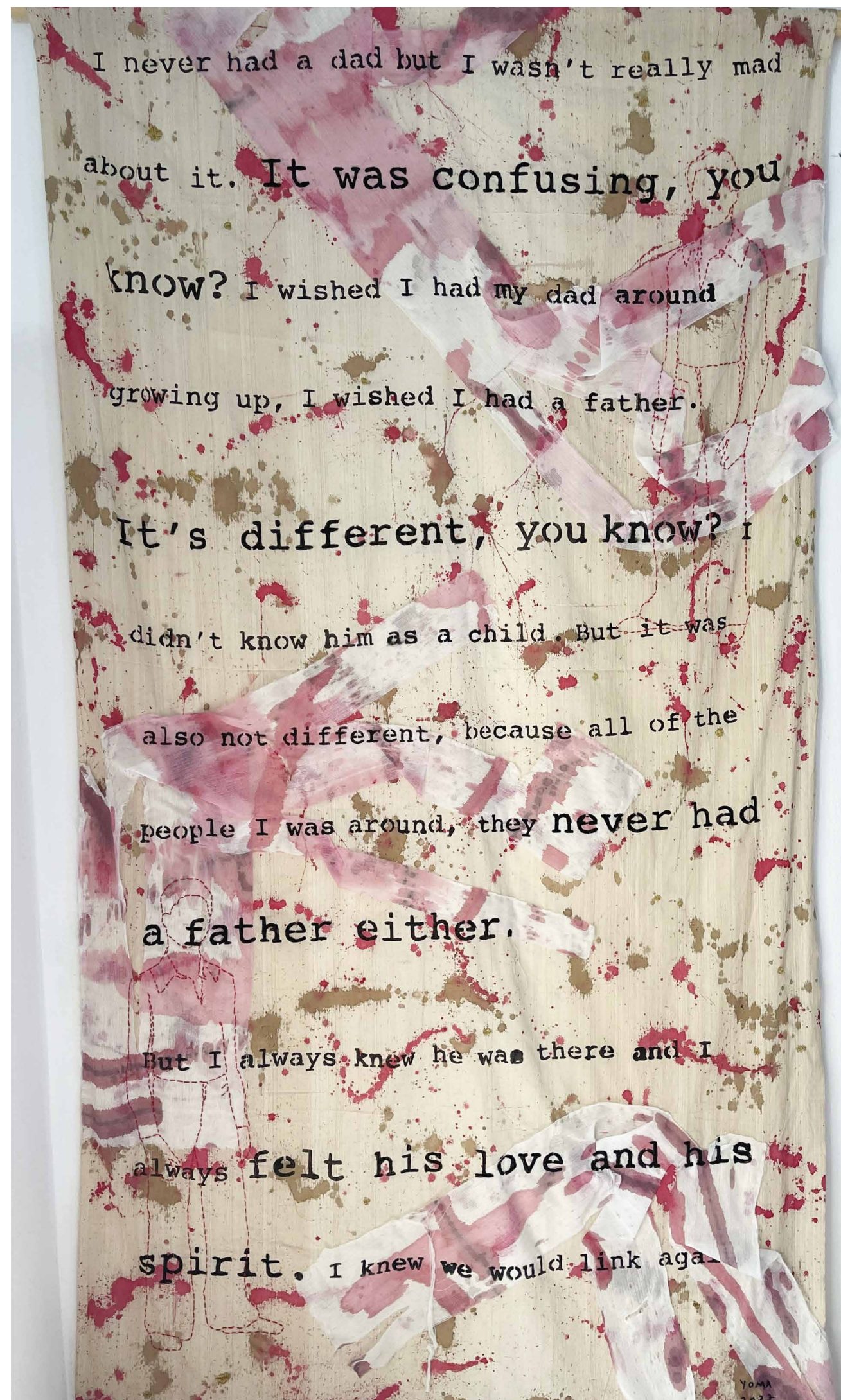


Son of a Landscaper

Acrylic, Dried flowers, paraffin wax and tulle on organza, 79 x 67 inches, 2022



Children of the Soil
Screen-print, lace and embroidery on chinos, 82 x 51 inches, 2022



May We Always Find Solace in Each Other II
Acrylic, fabric stay on Muslim, 93 x 51 inches, 2022

Seidougha Linus Eyimieggha

Seidougha Linus Eyimieggha (aka Mr. Danfo) (b. 1991) holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Delta State University, specializing in painting. His work is spurred by his everyday Lagos experiences and engages local art forms, contemporary designs, and popular culture. He re-enacts these stories in his paintings utilizing colour, geometric shapes, graphic design and installations; blurring the boundaries between painting and graphic design.

Mr. Danfo held his debut solo exhibition *Portraits of Public Figures* in Lagos at Alliance Française de Lagos in 2022 and was later shown at the Johannesburg Fair with Bubblegum Gallery later in the year. In 2021, his works were included in an international exhibition at Museo De Ciudad De Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Select group exhibitions include *Elixir*, National Museum, Lagos (2021), *Floor One 9 Exhibition*, Art Twenty One, Lagos, (2020), *Ofala Festival Art Exhibition*, Onitsha, (2019).

Mr. Danfo's pieces have been included in several publications and private collections.

Artist Statement

My artistic practice is a reflection on the influential role Lagos and its evolving urban culture has played in my thinking and process as an artist. Growing up, I used to mimic the conductors I see at Ajangbadi bus stop who usually yelled their destinations at the top of their voices *Okoko, Iyana-oba, Volks*, holding anything within arm's length since I could not hold onto a real danfo. 20 years later, I still find myself drawing influences from the motifs, rhythms and textures of the danfo buses.

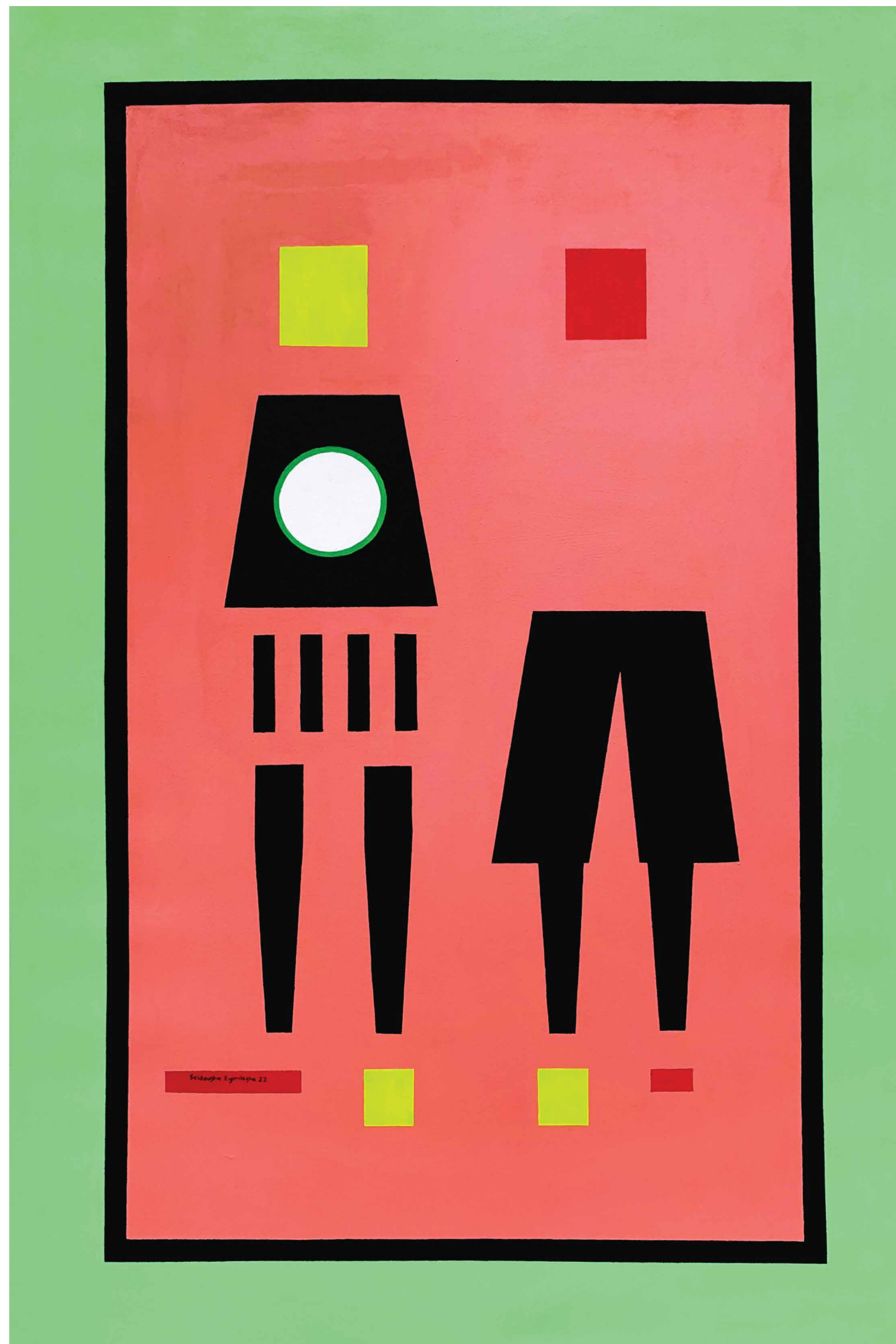
The body of work presented here addresses one of my major concerns as a frequent road user, which is the role of traffic signs in our day-to-day commute. Studying various traffic signs across countries and how they function to ensure safety, I select unifying elements from these signs and re-compose them to construct narratives on the safety of children, and the need to care about the lives of others. As a survivor of a road accident, I find urgency in addressing contemporary traffic culture as well as exploring a history of street signs, street culture and safety, as well as our global experience(s) of public spaces.



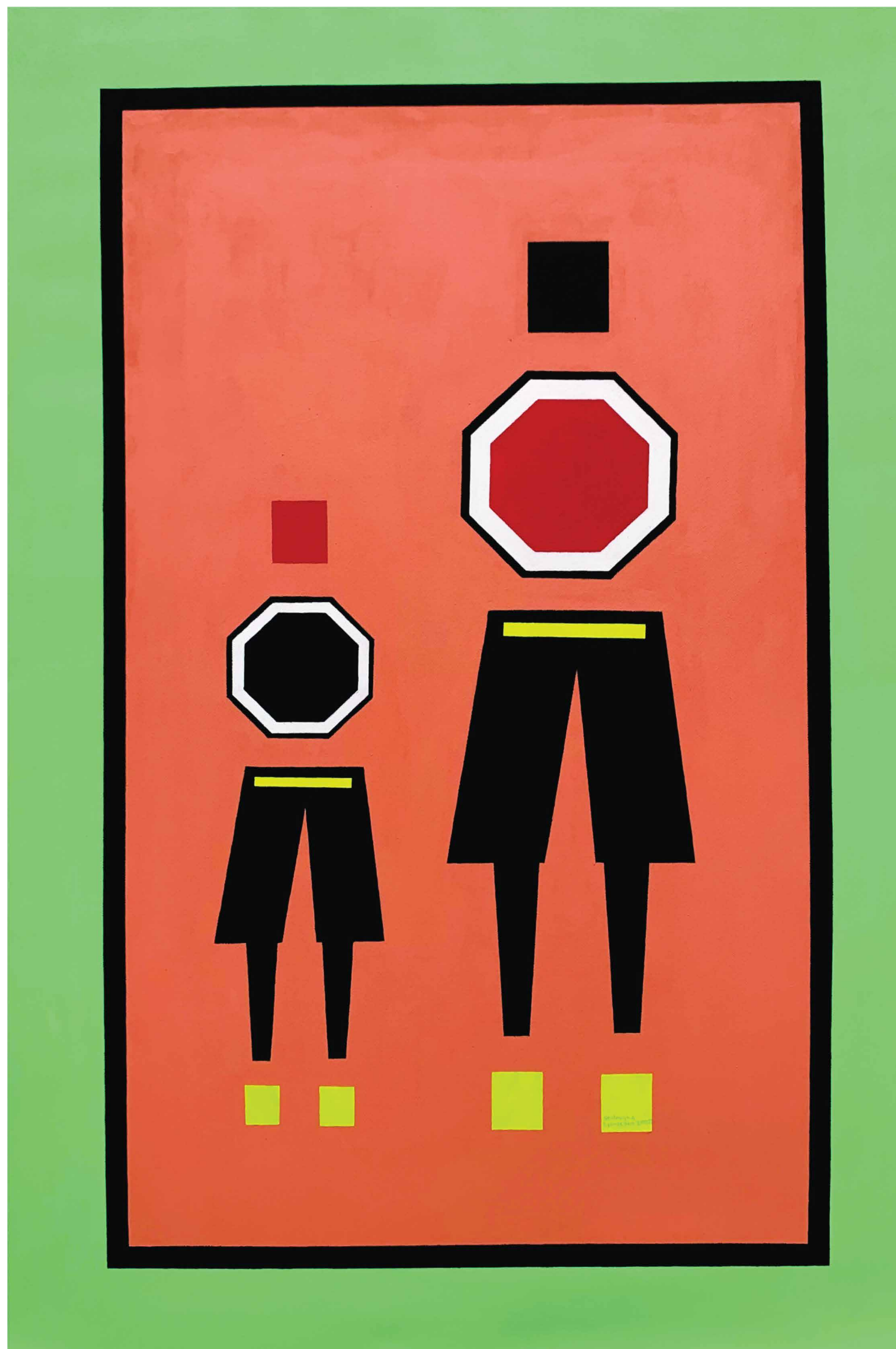
My Heart Beats For Your Safety
Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 50 inches, 2022



Aunty Suru
Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 50 inches, 2022



Na Only You Waka Come?
Acrylic on canvas, 49 x 69 inches 2022



Like Father, Like Son
Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 60 inches, 2022



Na We Be This
Acrylic on canvas, 50x60 inches, 2022



Don't Stop Here, Tomorrow has a lot to Offer
Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 60 inches, 2022

Elfreda Fakoya

Elfreda Fakoya (b. 1995) is a Nigerian multidisciplinary artist living and working between London and Lagos. Her design process is influenced by broad research into cultural theory and diasporic identities as seen through clothing and customaries. Fakoya studied Fashion Design at Ravensbourne University and has since incorporated garment production and print techniques in her work. In 2012, she was the youngest artist to showcase at Africa Fashion Week London, and in 2018, presented an award-winning collection at Graduate Fashion Week. Her work has also been featured at Alliance Francaise, The Royal Albert Hall, and The V&A museum. In 2020, she was selected as part of Arise's 30 under 30 for her work in fashion and was shown at Arise Fashion Week in Lagos and London. Fakoya has also been a guest lecturer at Ravensbourne and Northampton University.

Artist Statement

Working primarily with textiles, my practice explores the complexities of gender, cultural heritage, race and diasporic identities as seen through clothing and customaries. The tension that lies between holding opposing ideas within the same breath has always inspired me. I find this duality in many facets of life, especially within the context of cultural globalization and the way its conflicts and resolutions quietly affect and 'customize' us.

These systemic transformations combine several elements, most of which can be expressed through dress or attire. This same duality of nature is seen in fabrics; its adaptability of form and texture is used to explore the meaning of identities and the concept of shelter within my work. Altering the materials in my work becomes a way of commenting on the attitudes, fears and unwritten rules which have formed our environment and behaviors within it.



A moment of silence
65 x 46 inches, Leather, PVC, Cotton, acrylic , 2022



Echos of absence
60 x 48 inches, Leather, PVC, Cotton, Acrylic, 2022



Upon Reflection
Leather, PVC, acrylic, threads, 65 x 46 inches, 2022

Hanson Okere

Born 1993 in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Hanson Okere studied Fine Arts at the University of Port Harcourt. Working with pyrography techniques, he creates illustrative scenes that draw from personal experiences and reflections. Okere currently works from his home studio in Lagos, Nigeria.

Artist Statement

The presented body of work titled ‘the odd one out’ explores themes of identity, social anxiety, aloneness, and the search for oneself. Much of this exploration examines the idea of vulnerability and a coming into and acceptance of self. In addition to exploring social anxiety, the project focuses on self-actualisation and realisation, sharing my past and current experiences as an introvert from a juvenile stage to adulthood.

The works in “odd one out” feature imaginative scenes of myself with friends in different stages of play and socialisation, examining what it means to navigate social relationships from the outside. They wrestle with the struggles of my past and speak to the advances of the present.