



KÓKÓ
Awá
(The Essence of Beauty)

AN EXHIBITION OF MIXED MEDIA PAINTINGS BY
SAHEED ADELAKUN





KÓKÓ
Ewà
(The Essence of Beauty)

Mydrim Gallery

74, Norman Williams Street,
S.W. Ikoyi Lagos State, Nigeria.

4h April, 2026




Kini K

(When the essence is know



Kòkó?

(When, beauty reveals its truth)



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Kókó Ewà

The Essence of Beauty

@ Mydrim Gallery

74, Norman Williams Street,
S.W. Ikoyi, Lagos State, Nigeria.

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Cover Image: The Vessel, 2024,
Mixed media, 53 x 65 inches

Back Image: details from, The Vessel, 2024,
Mixed media, 53 x 65 inches

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Foreword

This exhibition is a result of many experiences in finding integral awareness between Africans of different generations. Particularly between the traditional identity and that of surrealist expectations. Each piece on show gives the viewer an opportunity to compare the various positive ways of presenting our indigenous identity for himself and to see and sense their relationship.

Beauty has long occupied a central place within African aesthetic narrative. Yet within Yoruba philosophical thought, beauty is never understood as a purely visual phenomenon. It is not merely the pleasing arrangement of forms, colors, or physical attributes. Rather, beauty emerges from the deeper alignment between appearance, character, and presence. As is foremost encountered in the Yoruba adage - *Ìwà l'ẹwà* – character is beauty.

This exhibition represents a continuation in the evolving artistic journey of the artist. In his earlier exhibition *Ojú Tó'n Sọ̀rò`* (The Eyes That Speak), Saheed explored the expressive capacity of the human gaze, revealing how the eyes of Nigerian women carry unspoken narratives of resilience, experience, and emotional depth. In *Kókó Ẹwà*, the artist extends this investigation beyond the eyes to encompass the broader landscape of African feminine identity in contemporary times.

Kókó Ẹwà (Essence of Beauty) invites us into this philosophical space. Through a compelling body of forty-five mixed media paintings. Saheed Adelokun examines the layered meanings of beauty within African cultural consciousness. The works unfold as a meditation on femininity, dignity, and presence, situating African women not merely as subjects of representation but as embodiments of cultural memory and aesthetic philosophy

Two interconnected visual explorations shape the exhibition. The series titled *Dúdúyẹmí* turns attention to the body, celebrating the richness of African skin, the sensual geometry of body forms, and the cultural symbolism of adornments such as colorful waist beads, natural simple patterned hairdos, body markings and floral-patterned draperies. While, the portrait series presents women whose calm and composed faces emerge from vibrant fields of painterly color.

Together, these works propose that beauty resides not in isolated features but

in the harmonious interplay of form, identity, and cultural consciousness. The faces speak of presence; the bodies affirm vitality; the colors evoke emotional atmospheres that situate the African woman's figure within dynamic worlds of energy and experience.

Through this exhibition, Adetakun contributes to a broader conversation within contemporary African art - one that seeks to reclaim cultural philosophies as living sources of artistic meaning. In doing so, Kókó Èwà becomes more than a collection of paintings; it becomes a visual meditation on the enduring essence of beauty.

Ismaila Adegboyega

Independent Curator and
Writer on Contemporary African Art

A Word From Mydrim

MYDRIM Gallery is delighted and honored to host Prince Saheed Adelokun's exhibition, " Kókó Ẹwà - THE ESSENCE OF BEAUTY", his 4th solo show and 3rd at MYDRIM.

Adelokun works primarily with rope, a medium inspired by the meaning of his surname (Yoruba): "We have arrived to untie the knots in the rope". The story goes that as a child, he was bullied due to a misinterpretation of his name as "The royal who slit people's stomachs", leaving him constantly embarrassed. It wasn't until his college days at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria, that he discovered the true meaning, shifting his perspective and building his confidence.

He believes this discovery was divinely orchestrated, as he immediately received the inspiration to use rope as his medium of expression. Encouraged by his supervisor, Dr. Odun Orimolade, he began creating intricate pieces using rope through the tedious but fulfilling process of drawing, gluing, scraping, painting, and sculpturing.

"Kókó Ẹwà - THE ESSENCE OF BEAUTY" focuses on portraits of women and paintings of the female form, celebrating their beauty and adornments.

He lives out the meaning of his name in the themes of his artworks and in his character – a solution provider, mentoring, caring, inspiring, and encouraging others.

We invite you to share in this wonderful experience and acquire pieces to enrich your collection.

Sinmidele Adesanya

Founder Mydrim Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria.



The Poetics of Okun

By and beyond definition I untangle the true meaning of my name.

There is an important personal story behind my exploration of “Okùn” which coincidentally bares correlation to my surname. Throughout my primary and secondary school years, I experienced a great deal of teasing and misunderstanding because of the way my surname Adelakun sounded to many people.

Some people interpreted the name as if it meant someone who had come to cut people's belly, which created an impression that the name carried something violent or negative. As a young person, this misunderstanding brought a lot of embarrassment and affected my confidence.

Later in life, when I began to research the deeper meaning of the name, I discovered that “Okùn” actually refers to rope or cord, which I found as a symbol of connection, strength, and continuity. Realizing this completely changed my relationship with the name and brought me a sense of relief and pride.

In a way, reclaiming this meaning felt like solving a generational misunderstanding. It was not only important for me personally, but also for my children and future generations of the Adelakun family, so that they would not carry the same burden of misinterpretation.

Today, the idea of Okùn resonates with my artistic practice as well. Just like a rope connects and binds things together, my work seeks to connect African identity, culture, and heritage within the visual language of painting.

Through my art, I aim to constructively contextualize our positive cultural morals, as well as a viable indigenous solution to resolving the modern conflicts of Africans reality and the socio-interactive adoptions heralded by global algorithms striving to demote our Africanism awareness.

Some visitors will doubtless not agree as to the validity of all contexts suggested in this exhibition and will discover others which have not been stressed or foreseen. Yet, it is believed that a walk through the gallery will show that African art is not an isolated phenomenon in history but is, like the art of any period, an integral part of the art of all ages.

-Prince Saheed Adelakun



PRINCE SAHEED A

KOKO
Qwa



Artist Biography

Saheed Adelakun (b. 1982) is a native of Ayetoro, Ogun state, A graduate of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, he received the Koko Foundation Scholarship for outstanding talent and graduated as the best Painting student in 2009. In the perfect instance of a well-rounded contemporary Nigerian draughtsman artist working on the theme of culture and identity. A Fellowship member of the Society of Nigerian Artists. His practice explores the interplay of Nigerian indigenous identity, culture, and modernism through a combination of two - and three-dimensional mixed media. His solo exhibitions - STRIDE (2022), DRAWPHORIA (2023), and OJU TO'N SORO (2024) - demonstrate his innovative approach to recontextualizing cultural ideologies, blending technical mastery with bold conceptual depth.

Several mentor-artists have shaped Saheed's artistic discipline and approach to painting over the years. Most notable is Dr. Mrs. Odun Orimolade, who foremostly instilled the idea of searching for a personal originality in art. Other important influences include, Mr. Sam Ovrati, Mr. Abiodun Olaku, Mr. Duke Asidere and Mr. Segun Adejumo, whom have all guided, and intellectually engage with Saheed's art whilst shaping his understanding of painting as both practice and cultural responsibility.

In a more contemporary context, Saheed also reflects on the works of Amy Sherald,

whose portraiture demonstrates how powerful color relationships can elevate the presence of Black subjects. While their techniques differ, aspects of her bold color atmospheres resonated with a phase of the palette exploration within Saheed's Dúdúyẹmí series.

Beyond visual artists, music and social commentary have also played a role in Saheed's thinking. The song Yellow Fever by Fela Anikulapo Kuti inspired an important phase of Saheed's research into culture. The song addresses the issue of skin bleaching among African women, and it prompted Saheed to begin observing everyday life more closely. He would spend time visiting several markets, particularly the Balogun Market, where he observed how beauty standards and social pressures influence the choices people make about their appearance.

Through these observations, he began to reflect on the inferiority complex that sometimes pushes people toward imitation of the "Yellow skin" rather than embracing their natural black beauty. This realization led him to conclude that African artists have a responsibility to remind its society of the beauty that already exists within African identity.

As the Yoruba proverb says, "òrí ò rí ara è" - the seer does not see himself. Sometimes it takes another voice to reveal what is already present. In Saheed's work, each painting is lending a voice, encouraging African women to appreciate the beauty of their natural skin and the relative adornments of cultural identity.

Based in Lagos, Saheed maintains an active studio practice and has contributed annually as a costumier for the Calabar Carnival since 2015. His evolving practice cements his place in Nigeria's art scene, inviting audiences to engage with his distinctive voice and stylistic experimentation

Curators Essay

(Èwà - Beauty)

Philosophers have long debated whether beauty exists objectively or whether it depends on the observer. A common phrase – “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” – suggests that beauty is subjective. However, further philosophical analysis shows that beauty may involve a dynamic relationship between object and observer, where perception, cultural context, and human sensibility interact. This leaves the difficulty of defining beauty in the fact that it functions both as a sensory experience, and a conceptual or cultural idea. Because of this, beauty often appears mysterious or difficult to define precisely.

The answer suggested by Saheed's paintings is both simple and profound. Beauty, in this context, is not confined to appearance alone. It emerges from presence, dignity, cultural memory, and the enduring power of identity.

In Yoruba worldview, for instance, beauty is associated with divine creativity. The supreme deity Olorun is sometimes described as the ultimate source of beauty, because all forms of existence originate from divine creation. This ever-present factor of the spiritual strengthens contemporary art in African thought process to constantly search for the feeling of a subject beyond its physical form.

Hence, in African contexts beauty cannot be reduced to physical appearance alone. Beauty operates on multiple levels of human existence, as argued by the Nigerian philosopher Lawrence O. Bamikole (2021) that - beauty exists in both outer and inner dimensions. The outer dimensions relate to visible physical attributes such as facial structure, skin tone, and bodily form – while the inner dimension relates to psychological, moral, and spiritual qualities that shape a person's identity and presence. When these two dimensions work together harmoniously, they produce a complete human being whose beauty is not merely aesthetics but existential. In other words, beauty becomes a reflection of how a person exists in the world, rather than simply how they appear. This philosophical position aligns closely with why portraiture representation in African art is often intended to reveal the deeper essence of the subject rather than a literal likeness of the person.

This poses the universal idea that human beings can actually actively shape their identities through different forms of beautification – both physical and internal. Physical alterations may include cosmetics, bodily modifications, or aesthetic styling, while inner transformation involves the development of character, values, and self-understanding. It is then relevant that an ongoing essence of beautification should not exclusively be focused on external transformation, in order not to create a “double-consciousness”, where individuals become disconnected from their authentic identity. On this framework, Yoruba thinkers also speak of beauty as an inner cultural truth, a societal value system embedded in heritage, dignity, and totems of collective memory.

In the Kókó Ewà series, Saheed Adhlakun, captures beauty not merely as visual pleasure, but he immerses it as a cultural code – one woven through the textures of Yoruba identity, Black consciousness, and African self-representation. His distinctive patterned rope canvas becomes more than a stylistic device but as functional motif to function as; connection - binding histories, identities, and communities. For continuity - linking ancestral memory with contemporary expression. And as Resilience - to back the tensile strength of African culture under westernized identity pressure.

The conceptual foundation of this exhibition can be traced to the artist's earlier body of work titled Ojú Tó ń Sọrọ (Eyes That Speak). In that series, Saheed explored the expressive capacity of the eyes within faces of indigenous Nigerian women. The project investigated how emotion, resilience, and lived experience can be communicated through an eye gaze.

In Yoruba cultural philosophy, the face - particularly the eyes - often functions as a site of emotional and spiritual revelation. The eyes are believed to communicate inner states that language cannot fully articulate. The earlier works therefore positioned the female face as a communicative surface on which identity unfolds through subtle visual cues.

Dúdúyẹmí: The Body as Beauty

In 2022, Saheed started the DUDUYEMI series in a response to Fela Anikulapo's Yellow Fever and the pressures to bleach African skin still present in the African society. Since his earlier portraits explore African beauty through facial presence, the series Dúdúyẹmí turns toward the body as a broader site of aesthetic exploration.

The title itself carries layered meaning. The Yoruba word dúdú refers to blackness, which often associated with depth, richness, and strength, while yẹmí can be

interpreted as something that suits or adorns the self. Within the context of the exhibition, *Dúdúyẹmí* evokes the idea that blackness itself becomes a form of adornment. Through *Dúdúyẹmí*, Saheed asserts that beauty cannot be confined to facial symmetry. Instead, beauty resides within the physical presence of the body itself - its curves, textures, and cultural adornments.

Kókó Ẹwà

Kókó Ẹwà is an exploration of essence of beauty. The Yoruba word *Kókó* refers to the fundamental core or substance of something - the part that gives meaning and identity to the whole. By pairing this concept with *ẹwà*, the exhibition asks a profound question: what truly constitutes beauty within African cultural experience?

In this way, *Kókó Ẹwà* represents both continuity and transformation: turning Saheed's earlier inquiry on emotional expression into a larger philosophical reflection on the nature of beauty for the African woman as a cultural archetype.

In these paintings, the figures of African women are depicted with full, rounded bodies, emphasizing body rolls and natural curves. These forms challenge dominant global beauty standards that frequently marginalize fuller African body types. Instead, the paintings celebrate bodily abundance as a visual language of vitality and presence. Within many West African cultures, waist beads function as symbols of femininity, sensuality, and personal identity. They can signify rites of passage, maturity, or intimate adornment known only to the wearer and those close to her.

The visual design adopted in this collection is guided on thematic grouping and stylistic exploration. In this way, individual paintings find an interconnectedness within the artists working span of five years. Thematically presenting *Dúdúyẹmí* within Section I - Elegance in Silence & Section II - The African Feminine Archetype, where the bareback of the figures are openly expressed, their radiantly etched brownish skin tone compliments the colorful waist beads that appear as recurring elements across the figures. Their elegant drapery, decorated with colorful floral motifs, creating a dialogue between the rich muted melanin body and colorful ornamentation. This working pattern echo's the vibrant hue brushwork present in the portrait series in section III & IV, visually linking the two series together.

Stylistically grouping, Section III – Portraits of Inner Radiance and Section IV - Faces of Quiet Strength, as the faces portrayed are neither ornamental figures nor symbolic archetypes. They are subjects of presence. Their faces do not perform exaggerated expressions or dramatic gestures. Instead, with their orb-like eye

balls, and facial features they inhabit a space of quiet introspection, inviting viewers to encounter them as unique individuals rather than generic projections.

We fully realize that this exhibition is based in part on personal interpretation and do not present it as a dogmatic statement but as an invitation to the visitor to undertake his own explorations.

On Color, Gesture, and Emotional Atmosphere

Color plays a crucial role in shaping the visual language in the works of Saheed Adelakun. As can be starkly seen in his approach to handling backgrounds - which are often composed of bold, energetic brushstrokes of a single hue. This introduces a sense of movement and emotional tension, suggesting a world in constant flux. While his flat color choices backdrop his contemporary Pop-culture awareness.

Against this vibrant atmospheres, Saheed's subjects appear grounded and deliberate when encountered from a distant. However, on closer introspection their carefully woven textures and tonal depth - rendered in layered browns and shadowed highlights - creates a sense of solidity and permanence. The masterful use of subtlety in lost edges adds a mysterious spiritual presence to the power of philosophy embedded in every piece.

This contrast between expressive abstraction and figurative calm forms the central visual rhythm of Saheed Adelakun's personal signature. From a philosophical perspective, this contrast between composure and chaos can be interpreted as a reflection of the human condition. Life unfolds within dynamic, sometimes unpredictable circumstances, yet the ideal of beauty calls for an inner steadiness that allows individuals to remain balanced within this flux.

Conclusively, at the core of this exhibition is the cementing of Saheed Adelakun's artistic integrity in Contemporary Nigerian Art discourse. His paintings therefore operate simultaneously on two levels. On one level, they present seemingly recognizable portraits of individuals. On another level, they function as meditations on the relationship between inner being and outer environment which is the most profound way to present the African human condition in this time and era of history.



Section I:
Elegance
in Silence

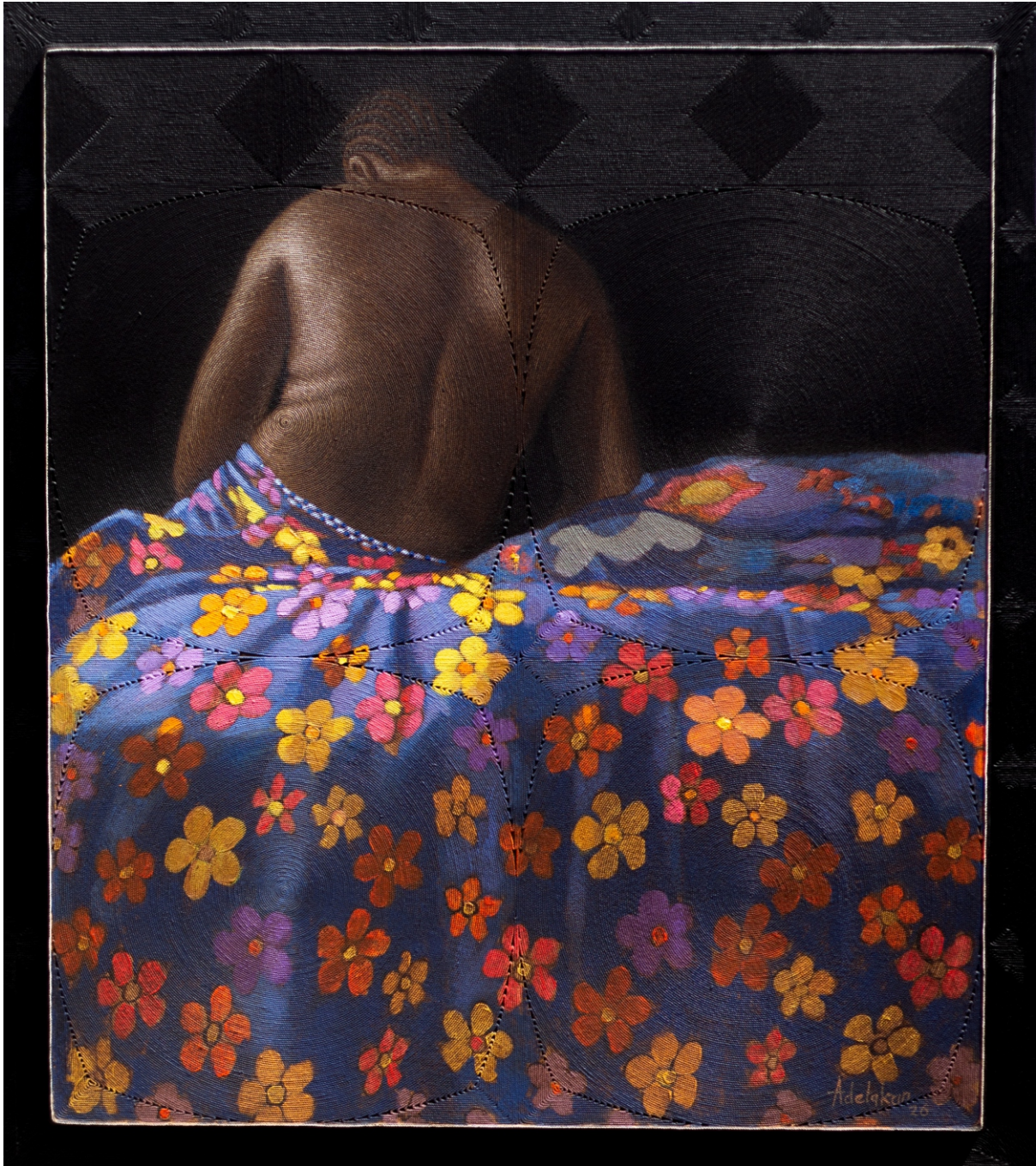




Corner Place Holder, 2026, Mixed media, 48 x 48 inches



The Nostalgic Shield, 2025, Mixed media, 36 x 48 inches



Mama's Nostalgic Shield, 2026, Mixed media, 52 x 46 inches



Dabira, 2026, Mixed media, 48 x 39 inches



Sidi's Solo Repose, 2025, Mixed media, 47 x 35 inches



The Line Sinker, 2025, Mixed media, 36 x 48 inches



Abike at Ease, 2026, Mixed media, 42 x 72 inches





As if your beauty is not enough on this canvas, you ask me why I commit my paintbrush and palettes to you. You're a muse; the relic that adorns the African heritage.

Ẹwàtómi, you're enough work of art for the eyes of dreamers and beholders. Your thick black hair strands label the African resilience to the tropical climate. Your melanated skin defies the sun's fiery touch, and glows instead like brown foliage. Adéşewà, with your dense eyebrows that crown your almond-shaped sockets, you complement the pale canvas for a perfect contrast. Your brown eyes are reminiscent of my cup of coffee, keeping me awake in the vigil of art.

Ọmọlẹwà, I stick my tongue out to take your beads of sweat in the heat of the moment that binds us. Your pheromone smells ensnare me in the hypnosis of your beauty. You're the spring to my thirst for Q̣sun's flowing endowment.

I traced the smell of coconut oil across the texture and shape of your thighs, kneecaps, calves, shins, ankles and feet, to find the beauty essence spread across your body. I might drown in the valley of your hips, if I dare travel this pristine route where milk and honey flows.

Not the colourful fabrics that hide your magnitude of feminine charm and mystery. Not the beads that rattle when you sashay in the motion of sea waves. Not your voice, when you're captured in the orbit of my attention. Not my ears, when I feel content with your voice.

I'm a dreamer, and my art interprets a portion of my dreams, while my muse interprets a portion of my art. That you're the muse for my foray into this surreal mixture of colours and memories, is the essence of your beauty.

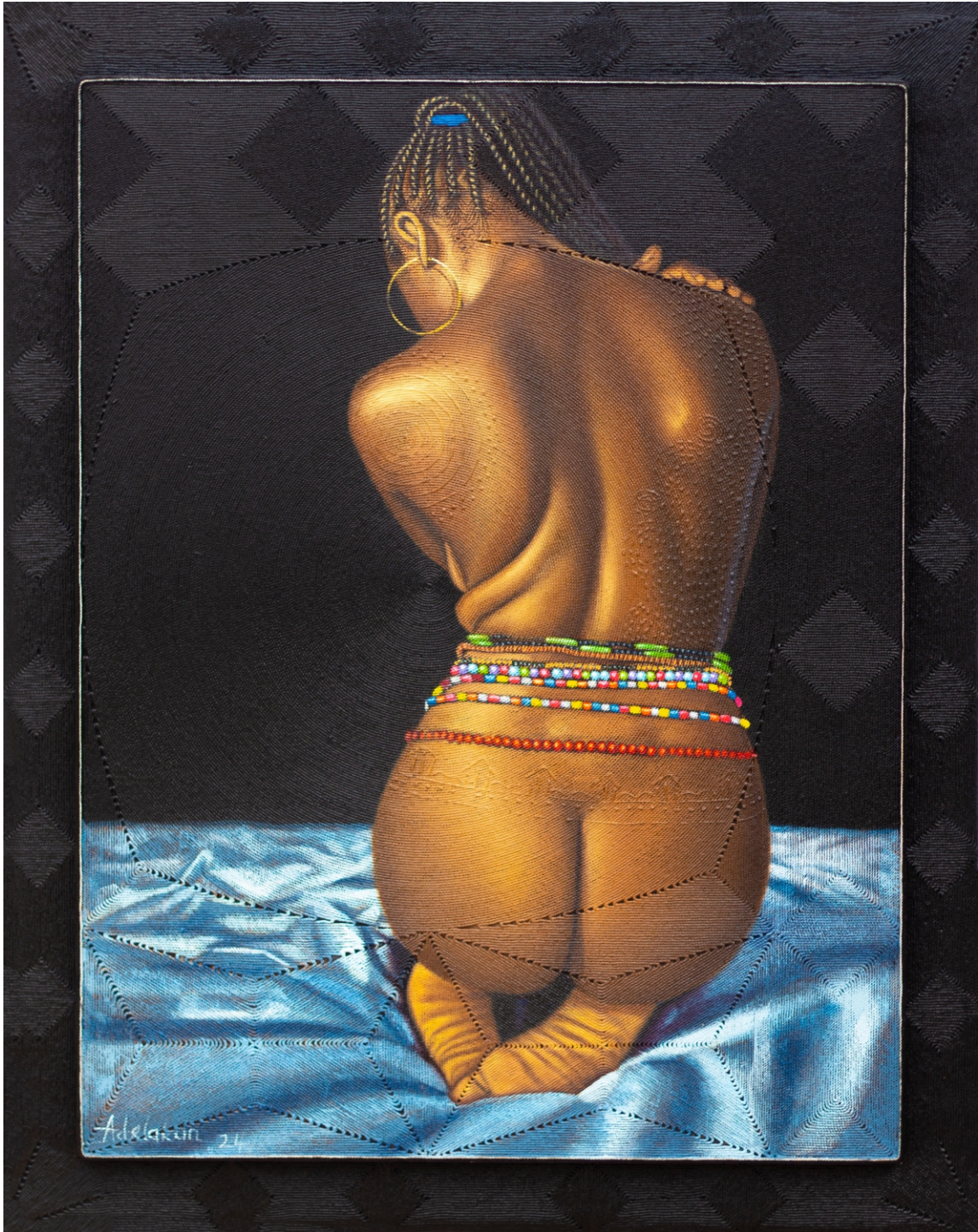
- Tukur Ridwan Loba

Poet



Section II:
*The African
Feminine
Archetype*





Strings of Beauty, 2024, Mixed media, 48 x 38 inches



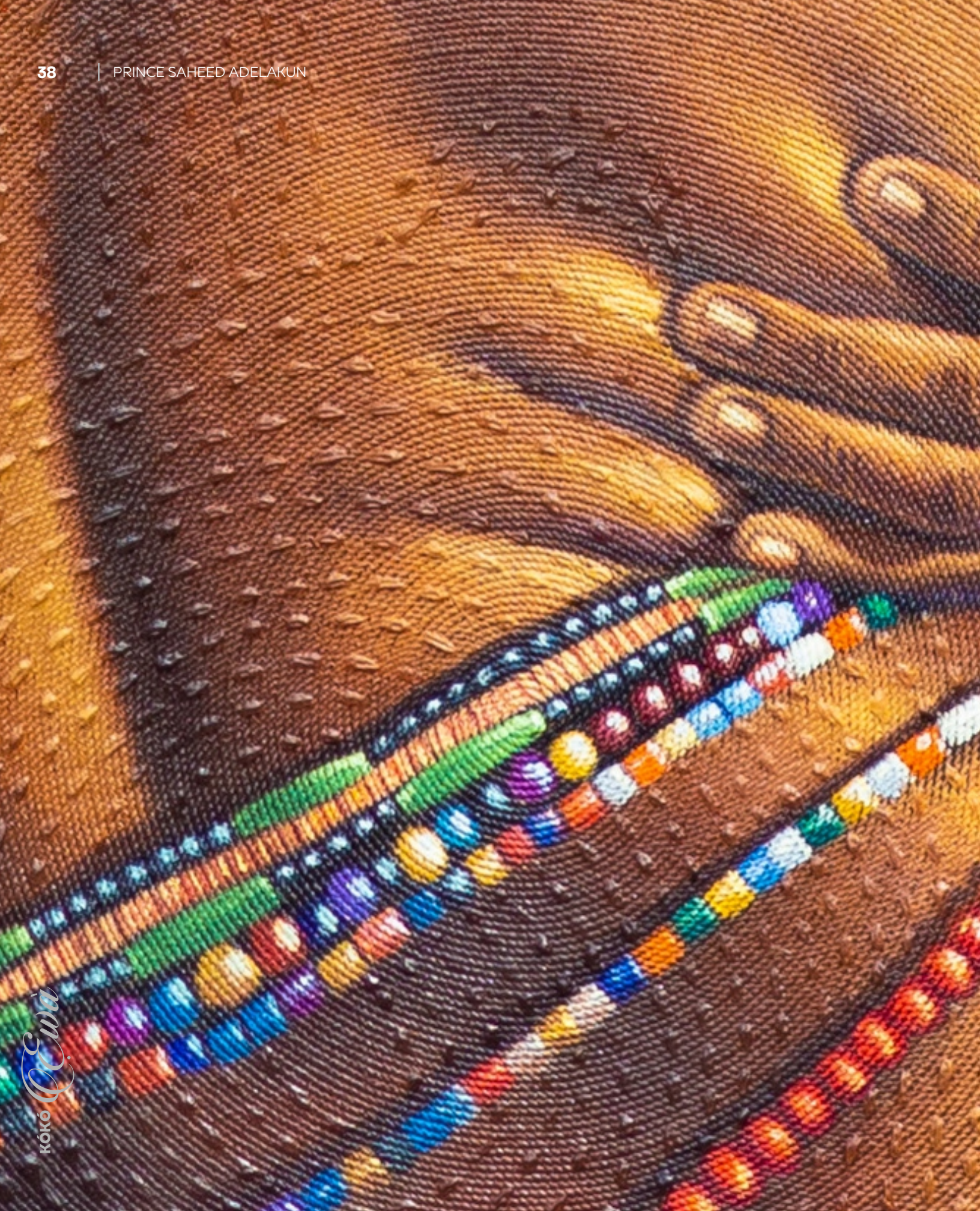
Lotus Bed, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 48 inches



Eyimofe, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



Asante, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches

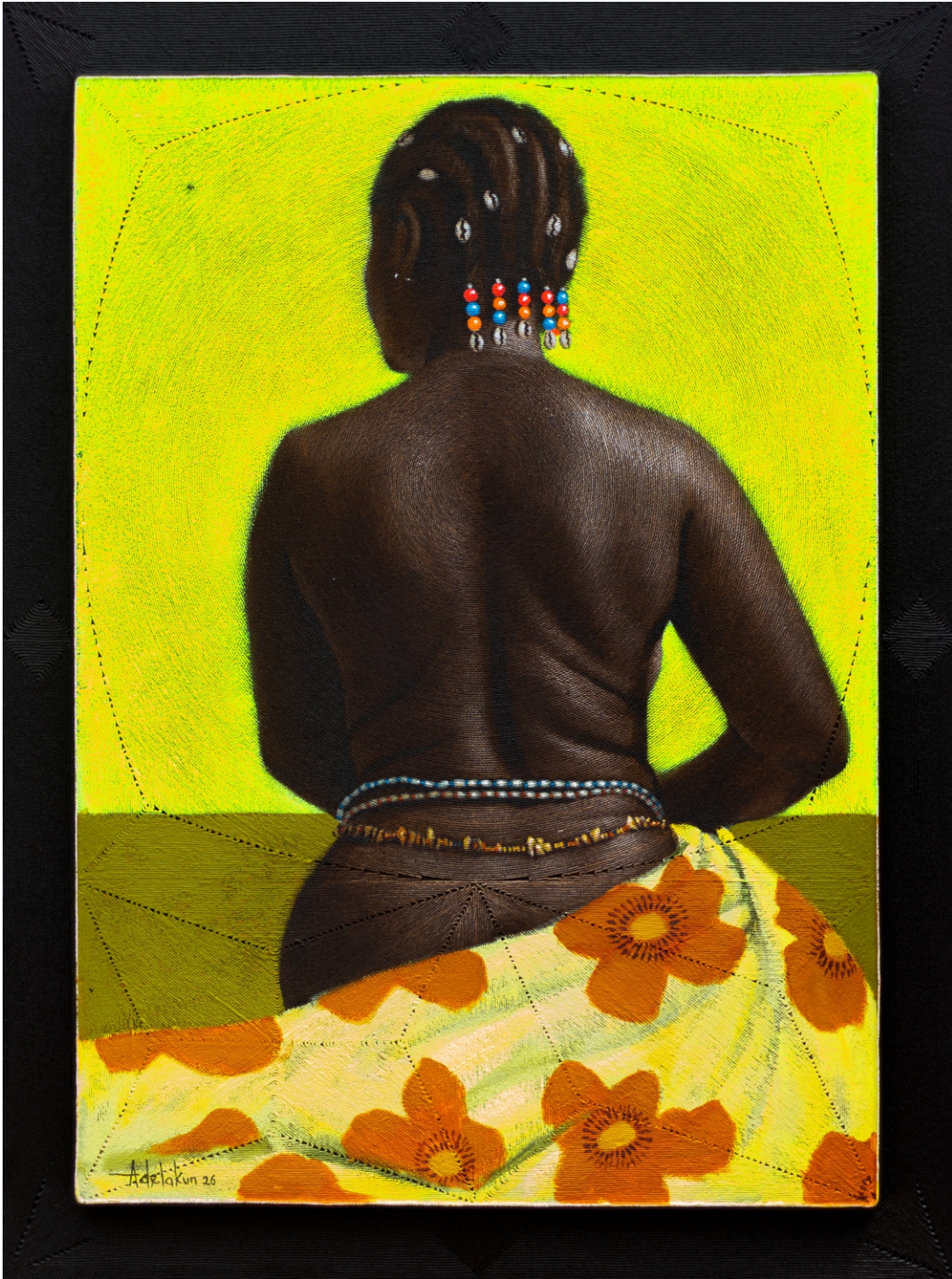




Nana, 2023, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



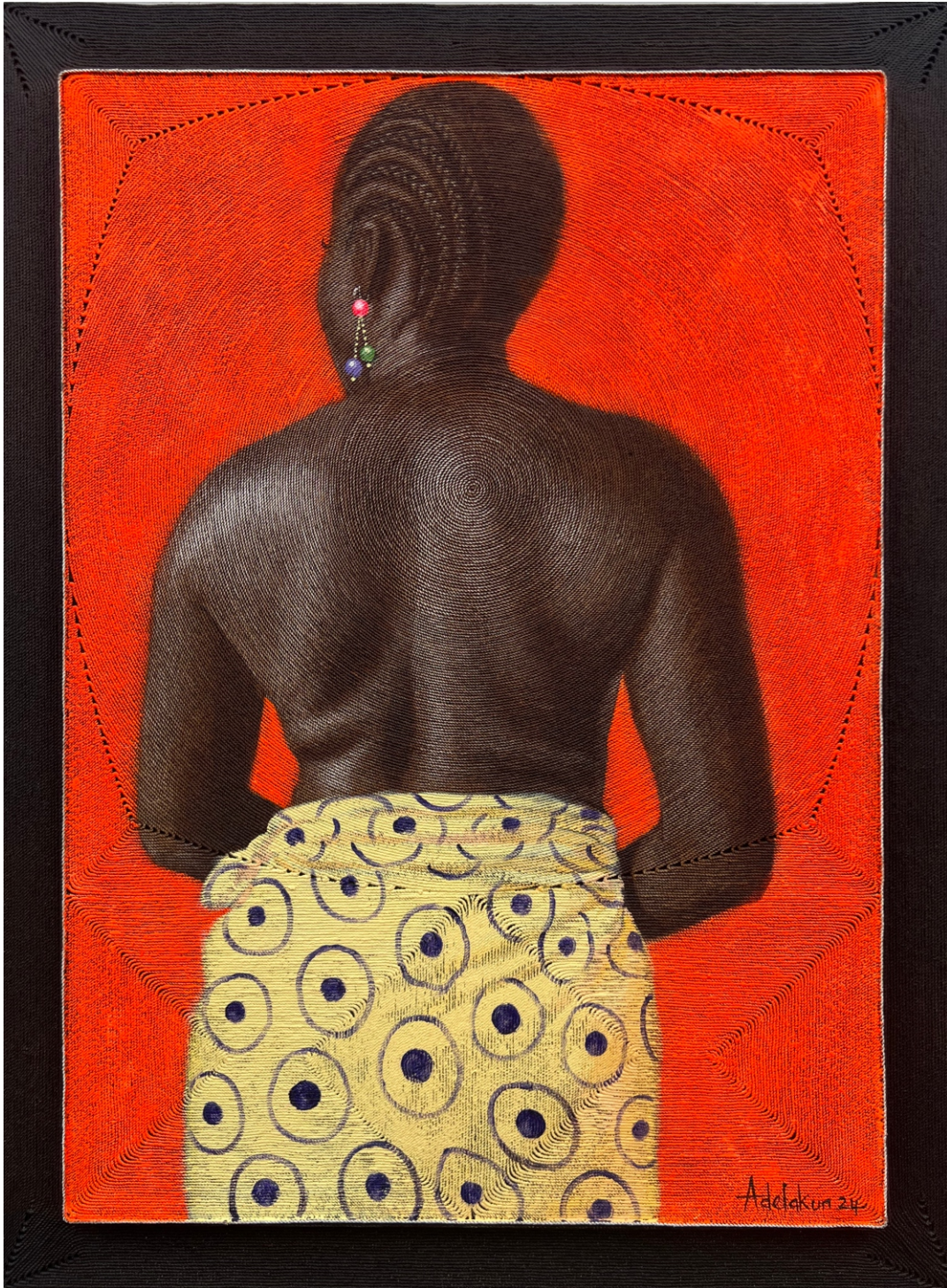
The Vessel, 2024, Mixed media, 54 x 65 inches



Orente, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



The Bounty, 2026, Mixed media, 72 x 42 inches



Faith's Pass, 2024, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches

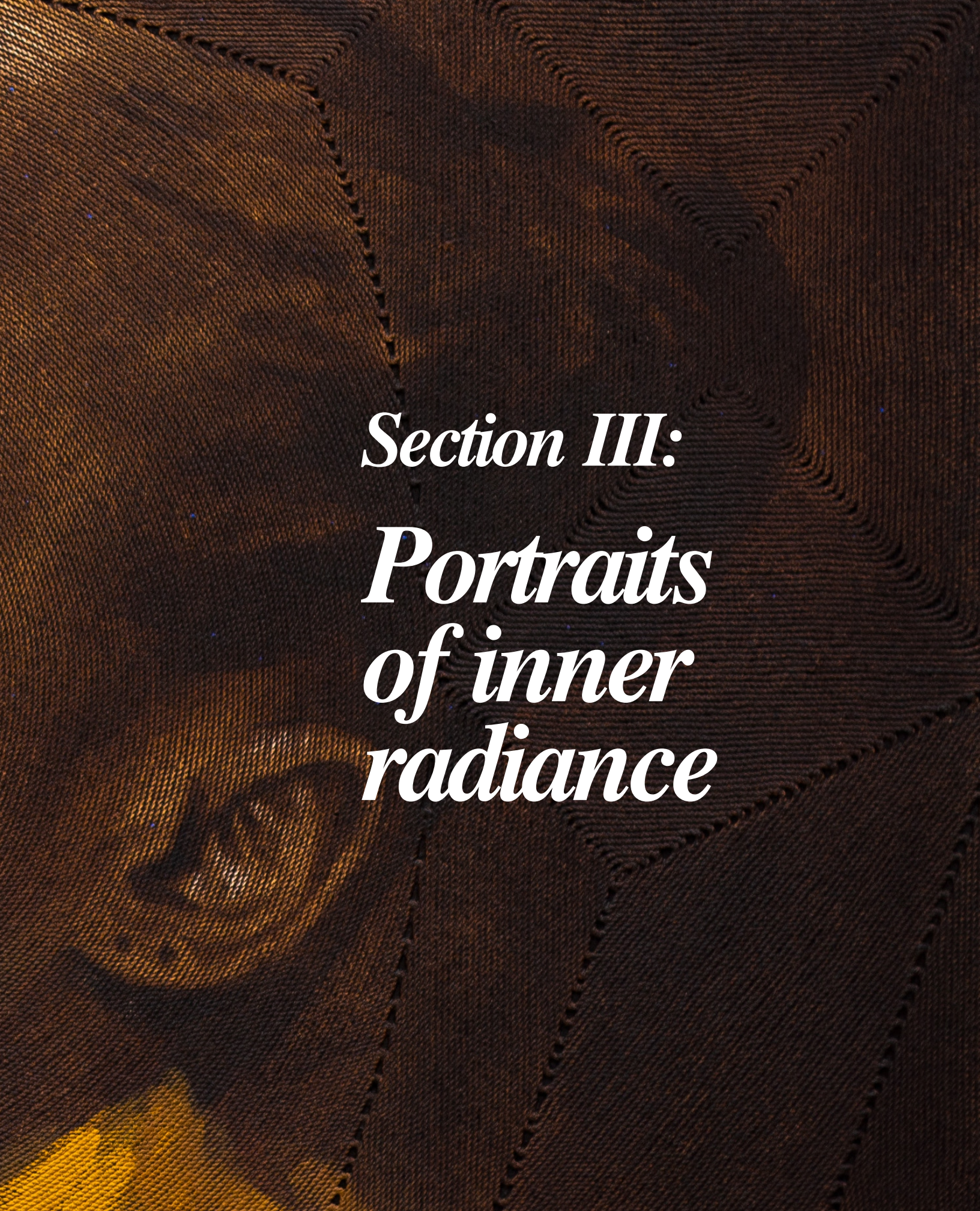


Scuffle Rom, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



No Bone Straight, 2026, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches





*Section III:
Portraits
of inner
radiance*



Aburo Mi, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



Egbon Mi, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



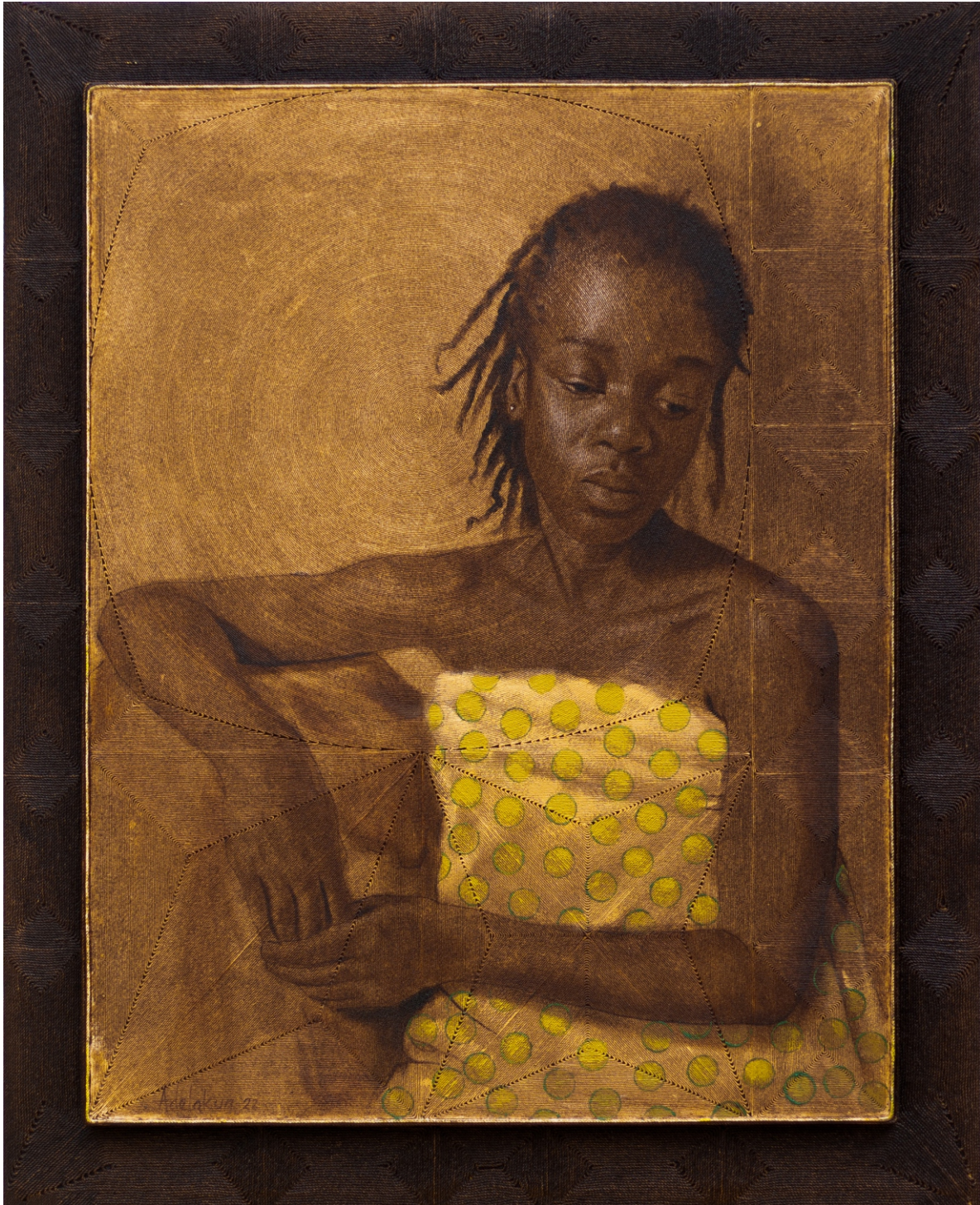
Ewàtòmi, 2026, Mixed media, 36 x 48 inches



Transient Mood, 2024, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



Elizabeth, 2022, Mixed media, 40 x 32 inches



Syrah's Perseverance, 2022, Mixed media, 42 x 34 inches



Asa Eze, 2025, Mixed media, 48 x 48 inches

Curator – Artist Conversation

Curator in conversation with the artist (On Beauty, memory and form)

IA (Ismaila Adegboyega):

Your new exhibition, Kókó Èwà, explores beauty through both portraiture and bodily representation. What was the starting point for this body of work?

SA (Saheed Adelokun):

The starting point was a reflection on how beauty is perceived within our current cultural environment. I became interested in the idea that beauty is not only what we see physically but also what we feel through presence, dignity, and identity. The paintings therefore became a way of exploring the deeper essence of African beauty.

IA:

The title of the exhibition draws from Yoruba language - kókó meaning essence and èwà meaning beauty. What significance does this title hold for you?

SA:

For me, Kókó Èwà represents the exploration on what the core of African beauty is beyond superficial appearance. To speak of the inner strength, cultural identity, and dignity that African women embody. I wanted the works to celebrate that deeper essence through an emotional visual meditation rather than focusing only on outward aesthetics.

IA:

Your previous exhibition, Ojú Tó'n Sọ̀rọ̀, focused on the expressive power of the eyes in portraits of Nigerian women. How did that earlier exploration evolve into the works presented here?

SA:

In Ojú Tó'n Sọ̀rọ̀, I was interested in how the eyes as an isolated organ communicate emotion and personal history. Over time, I began to think about the broader identity of the subjects beyond their gaze. Kókó Èwà expands that

exploration by considering the entire presence of the figure - both the face and the body - as carriers of beauty and cultural meaning.

IA:

In the portrait series, the faces appear calm and composed, yet they are surrounded by vibrant, energetic brushstrokes. What role does this contrast play in the work?

SA:

The contrast reflects the balance between inner calm and the dynamic nature of life. The figures represent stability and dignity, while the colors around them express movement, emotion, and the energy of the world they inhabit.

IA:

Alongside the portraits, the exhibition includes the body series titled *Dúdúyemí*. Why was it important for you to explore the body as well as the face?

SA:

The body carries its own narrative. Through the *Dúdúyemí* series, I wanted to celebrate the beauty of African skin, form, and adornment. The expansive bare skin on the back of their bodies becomes another way of expressing identity and cultural pride.

IA:

Elements such as waist beads, patterned wrappers, and the fullness of the body appear throughout the paintings. What meanings do these elements hold within your visual language?

SA:

These elements are connected to the whole African aesthetic identity. Waist beads, for instance, symbolize femininity, maturity, and add-on beauty in many West African traditions. By including them in the paintings, I wanted to re-introduce the cultural aesthetics that are deeply rooted in our heritage.

IA:

Your works are also recognizable for their almost 3D relief appearance on the patterned rope canvas, and your bold brushwork, which has become a signature within your practice. How did this visual language develop?

SA:

The rope canvas patterns developed gradually as part of my exploration of texture and rhythm in painting. Over time, they became a personal visual

signature that reflects continuity, connection, and the layered nature of our African identity.

IA:

Yoruba philosophy often suggests that beauty is inseparable from character through the idea that Ìwà l'èwà - character is beauty. Do you see a relationship between this philosophy and your paintings?

SA:

Yes, very much. The women in these paintings are not simply figures meant to be admired visually. You will see that their pose represents one from the point of view of dignity, strength, and presence. In that sense, the works align with the idea that beauty, even on the not so considered body is rooted in character and essence.

IA:

What do you hope viewers will experience when they encounter Kókó Èwà?

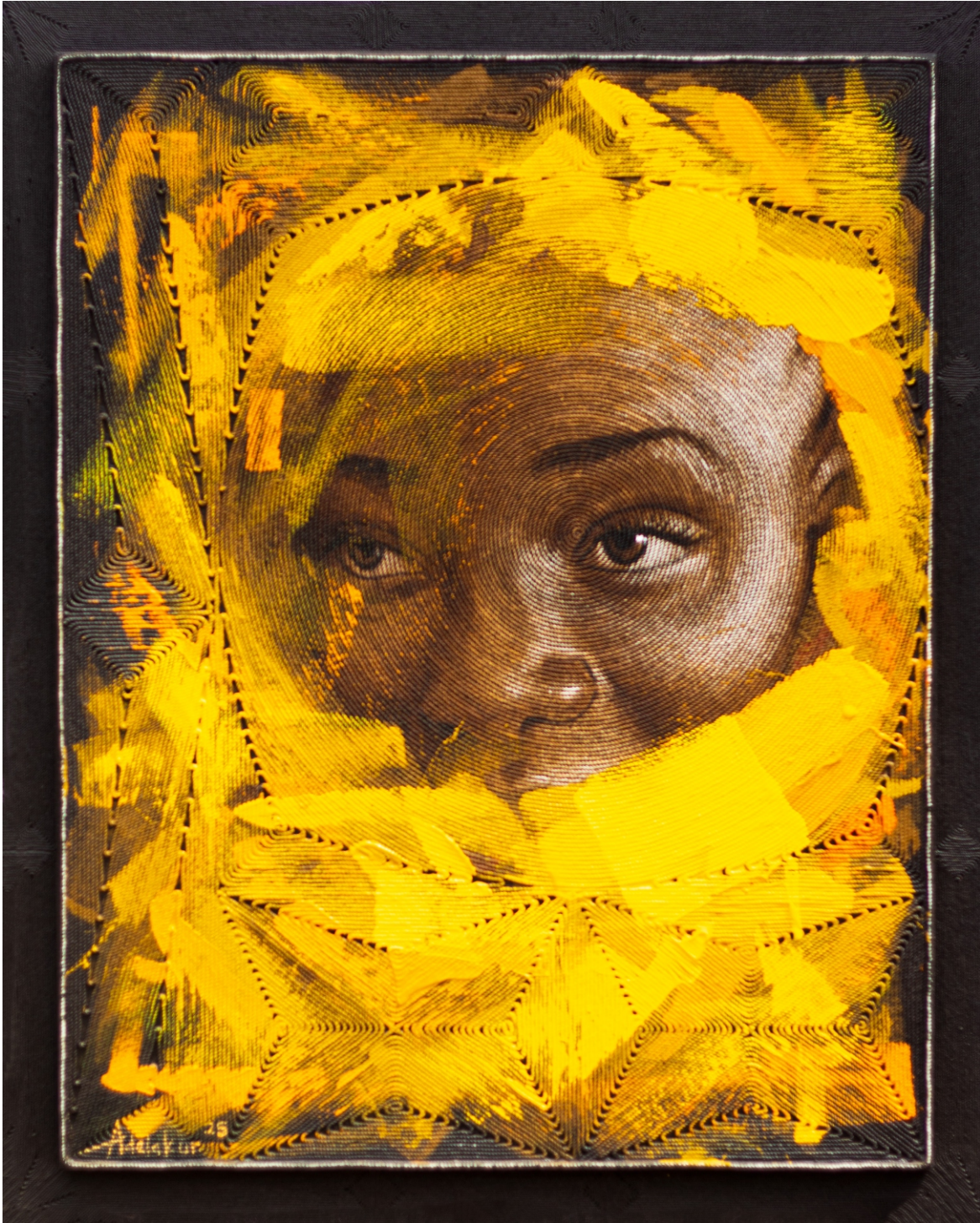
SA:

I hope viewers will see beyond the surface and reflect on the richness of African identity. The paintings are meant to celebrate beauty in its deeper form - one that is grounded in culture, dignity, and humanity.

Section IV:

*Faces
of Quiet
Strength*





Ayinke, 2025, Mixed media, 62 x 50 inches



Igi Leyin, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Iran (Revelation), 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Adebisi, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Romoke, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Abiola, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Ogobukwu, 2026, Mixed media, 48 x 36 inches



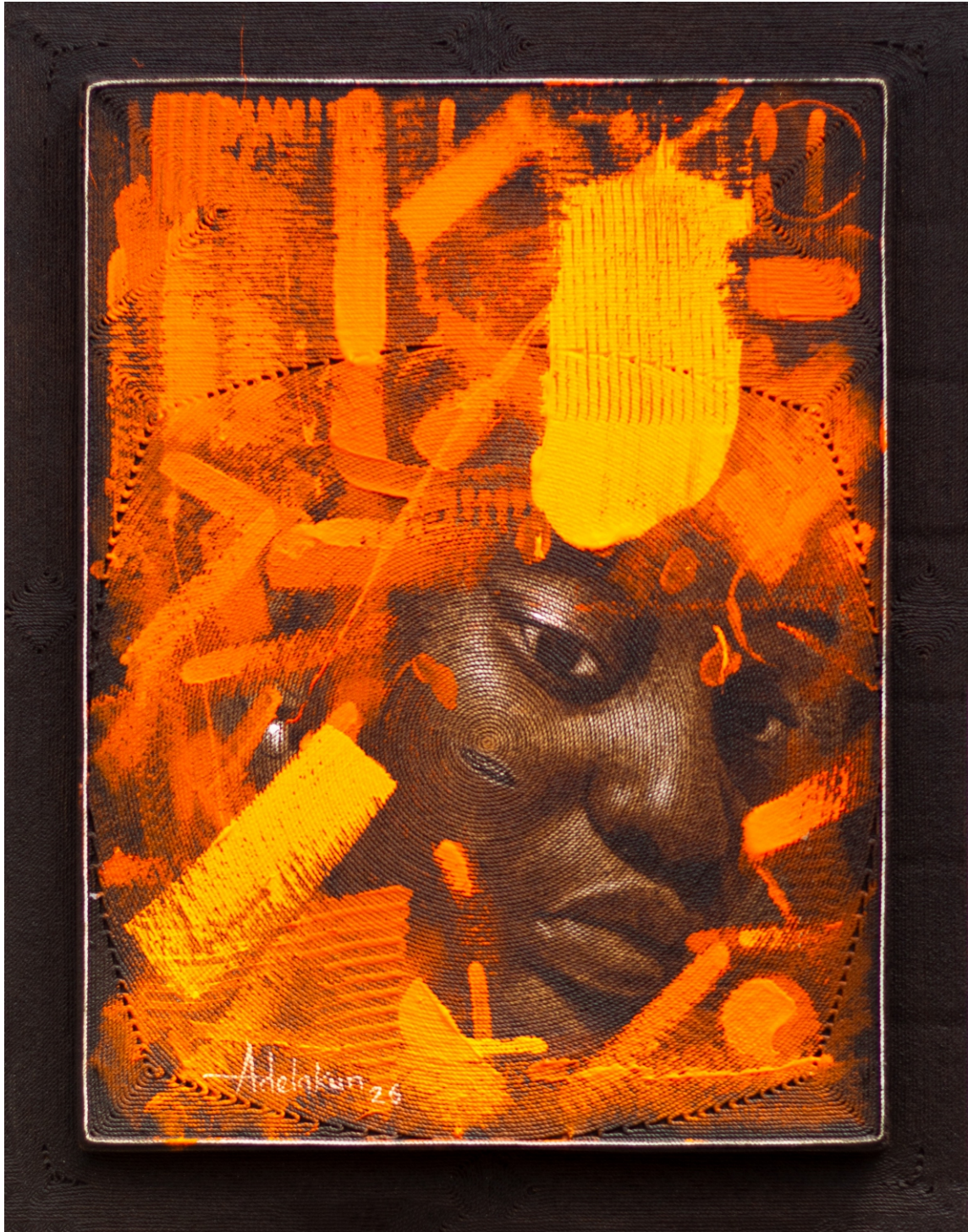
Ruby, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Chinasa, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Uju Nwa, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Jessica, 2026, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Umairah, 2024, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Rakiba, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



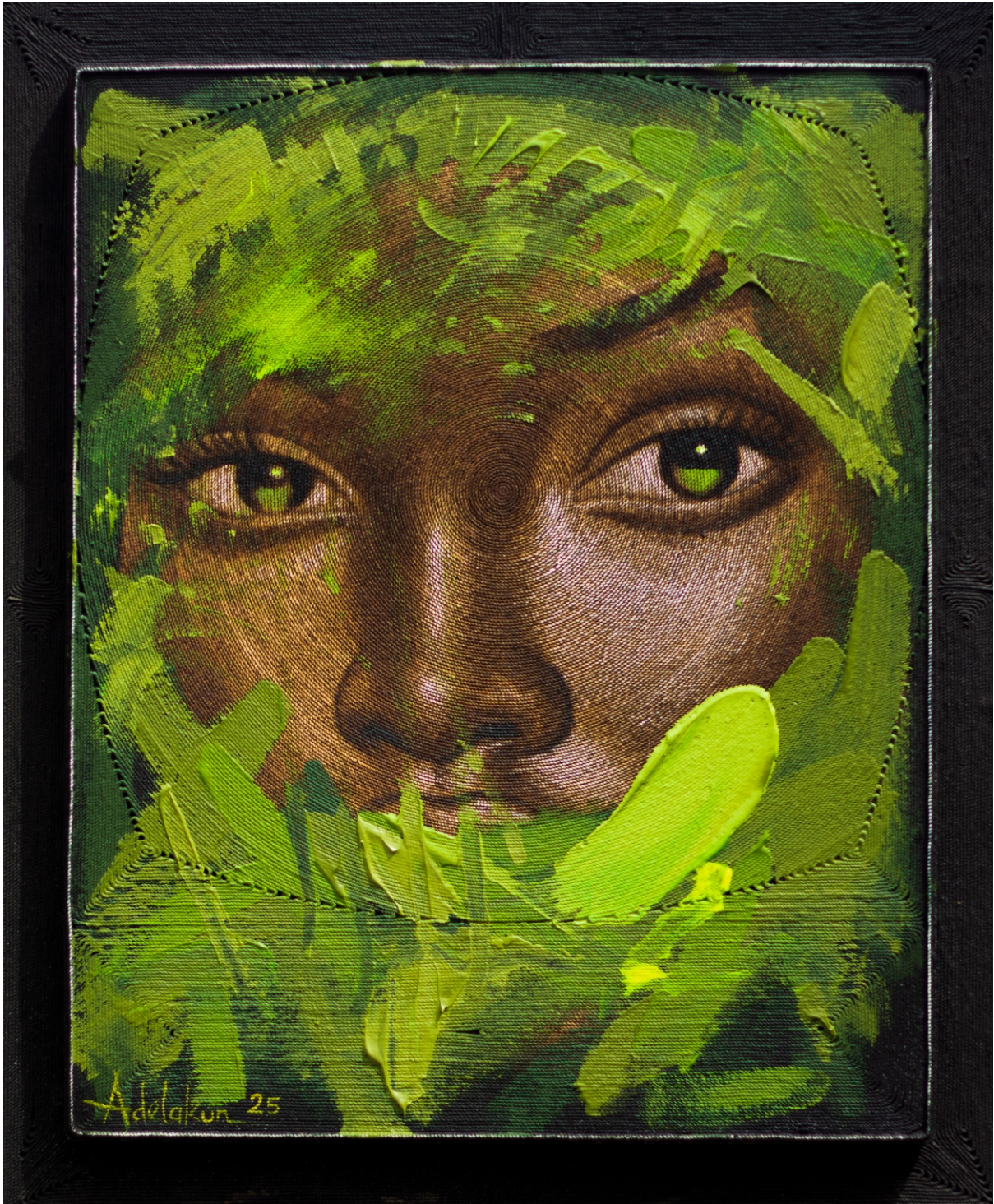
Phoebe, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Imole, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Peace, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



The Favorite Subject, 2025, Mixed media, 34 x 28 inches



Bound by Vision, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Sundial Gaze, 2025, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Lilly, 2025, Mixed media, 28.8 x 23 inches



Monica, 2026, Mixed media, 28 x 22 inches



Koko
Q&A



Studio Process

Behind the Canvas: The Artistic Process of Saheed Adelakun

Saheed Adelakun's unique artistic process is a meticulous and layered approach that merges texture, colour, and intricate detailing. Adelakun begins with one continuous strand, a foundation of meticulously laid ropes on prepared Masonite board. Relying on his studious experience with geometric patterns, while locating the concentric circles and squares in various sizes to a proposed focal point relative to his final subject. The rope pattern then forms an overall textured canvas, which adds depth and a tactile quality to the finished artworks.

To secure the rope pattern and prepare the surface for painting, Adelakun applies multiple coats of glue to size and secure the surface. This step ensures that the rope is firmly affixed to the board, creating a solid base that can withstand the subsequent layers of paint. After the base is prepared, Adelakun applies a dark underpaint wash. This wash serves as the groundwork for the artwork, providing a rich, dark backdrop that will enhance the contrast and depth of the final piece.

For him sound drawing and cultural narrative is an integral part of his artistic thinking. The extent of his mastery may be observed in the gradual purification of design apparent in successive studies of the same subject.

One of the distinctive techniques in Adelakun's process is the strategic scratching off of the dark underpaint to reveal highlights. Using this method, he creates the dynamic interplay of light and shadow, giving the artwork a sense of movement

and realism. The revealed highlights bring the textured rope patterns to life, emphasizing the intricate details and adding dimensionality to the piece.

The final step involves the application of paint using a knife or brush or sometimes an inventive use of his fingers in an impressionistic style. Adedokun further, employs impasto to apply vibrant colours, as seen in his bold application of hues that envelop the figure's faces. This thick, bold strokes contrast with the delicate details of the faces, creating a focal point that draws the viewer's attention.

The use of both brush and knife techniques allows for a range of textures and effects, from smooth blends to sharp, defined edges. The beauty of his paintings derives to some extent a strong decorative design faculty but to a far greater degree from the breadth and audacity of his original conception.

Artist Profile



Contemporary multimedia artist with 15+ years of experience creating socially engaged works that explore Yoruba heritage and African identity through innovative techniques. Specializes in textured, rope-based canvases and large-scale public art, including carnival costumes. Committed to producing visually compelling art that sparks dialogue and broad accessibility.

EDUCATION

- Higher National Diploma (HND) in Painting
- Yaba College of Technology, Lagos — 2009
- Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in Fine Arts
- Yaba College of Technology, Lagos — 2005

Solo Exhibitions

- Koko Ewa – Essence of Beauty
- Mydrim Gallery, Lagos – April, 2026
- Oju To'n Soro – Eyes that Speak
- Gemini Art Gallery, Lagos – June, 2024
- Drawphoria
- Mydrim Gallery, Lagos — June, 2023
- Stride
- Mydrim Gallery, Lagos — October, 2022

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Creative Director

- OLÓKÙN Art Studios, Lagos — 2012 – Present

Facilitator (Harmattan Workshop)

- Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation, Agbarha-Otor - 2021

Fine Arts Teacher (NYSC)

- Hampos International School, Kaduna — 2010 – 2011

Art Intern

- Odun Orimolade Studios, Lagos — 2011 – 2012

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Harlem Fine Arts Fair

- Paul Conliffe Gallery, New York — February 2026

Atlanta Art Fair

- Paul Conliffe Gallery, Pullman Yards — September 2025

Mindscapes

- S.N.A. Annual Show, IWALEWA Gallery, Lagos — October, 2025

Material Memory

- TR Gallery, Lagos — April 2025

Ethereal Essence: Portraits of the African Diaspora

- Curtiss Jacobs Gallery, New York — April 2024

Harlem Fine Arts Show

- Paul Conliffe Gallery, New York — February 2024

Beauty in Diversity

- AAA Gallery, National Museum, Lagos — November 2023

Cross Currents

- Gemini Art Gallery, Lagos — October 2023

Ascension

- Mydrim Gallery, Lagos — October, 2022

Art as a Glorious Passion

- Mydrim Gallery, Lagos — October, 2021

Resilience

- National Museum, Lagos — October, 2020

When Thoughts Become Reality

- Freedom Park, Lagos — October, 2019

Beyond All Odds

- Life in My City Arts Festival, Enugu — October, 2015

AWARDS & HONORS

Emerging Artist Award

- Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) Induction Exhibition — 2015
 Runner-Up, Centenary Exhibition & Competition
- Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) — 2014
 Best Student in Painting
- Yaba College of Technology — 2009
 Koko Foundation Art Talent Scholarship
- Awarded by D'Banj — 2008
- Public Projects
 - The Annual Calabar Carnival — December, 2015 - 2025
 - Lagos Island Public Mural Painting Project, Ikoyi, Obalende, Lagos —
 March, 2019
 - Lagos State Carnival — December, 2010 – 2015
- Techniques & Specialties
 - Mixed media (rope canvas, oil and acrylic, textile integration)
 - Large-scale public art and carnival costume design
 - Cultural narrative portraiture

Publications

- This Day Newspaper – “Adelakun Pays Homage to Culture, Ancestral Roots with Debut Solo”, 2022
<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/02/adelakun-pays-homage-to-culture-ancestral-roots-with-debut-solo/>

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Exhibition Checklist

Plate No.	Title	Medium	Size (inches)	Year
1.	<i>Corner Place Holder</i>	Mixed media	48 x 48	2025
2.	<i>The Nostalgic Shield</i>	Mixed media	36 x 48	2025
3.	<i>Mama's Nostalgic Shield</i>	Mixed media	46 x 52	2026
4.	<i>Dabira</i>	Mixed media	48 x 39	2025
5.	<i>Sidi's Solo Repose</i>	Mixed media	47 x 35	2025
6.	<i>The Line Sinker</i>	Mixed media	36 x 48	2025
7.	<i>Abike's at Ease</i>	Mixed media	42 x 72	2026
8.	<i>String of Beauty</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2024
9.	<i>Lotus Bed,</i>	Mixed media	48 x 48	2025
10.	<i>Eyimofe</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
11.	<i>Asante</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
12.	<i>The Vessel</i>	Mixed media	54 x 65	2024
13.	<i>Orente</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2026
14.	<i>The Bounty</i>	Mixed media	72 x 42	2026
15.	<i>Faith's Pass</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2024
16.	<i>Scuffle Row</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
17.	<i>No Bone Straight</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2026
18.	<i>Aburo Mi</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
19.	<i>Egbon Mi</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
20,	<i>Ẹwàtómì</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2026
21.	<i>Transient Mood</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2024
22.	<i>Elizabeth</i>	Mixed media	40 x 32	2022
23.	<i>Syrah's Perseverance</i>	Mixed media	42 x 34	2022

24.	<i>Asa Eze</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2025
25.	<i>Ayinke</i>	Mixed media	62 x 50	2025
26.	<i>Igi Leyin</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
27.	<i>Iriran (Revelation)</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
28.	<i>Adebisi</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
29.	<i>Romoke</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
30.	<i>Abiola</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
31.	<i>Ogochukwu</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2026
32.	<i>Ruby</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
33.	<i>Chinasa</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
34.	<i>Uju Nwa</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
35.	<i>Jessica</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2026
36.	<i>Umairah</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2024
37.	<i>Rakiha</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
38.	<i>Phoebe</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
39.	<i>Imole</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
40.	<i>The Favorite Subject</i>	Mixed media	34 x 28	2025
41.	<i>Bound by Vision</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
42.	<i>Peace</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
43.	<i>Sundial Gaze</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2025
44.	<i>Lilly</i>	Mixed media	28.8 x 22	2025
45.	<i>Monica</i>	Mixed media	28 x 22	2026
46.	<i>Nana</i>	Mixed media	48 x 36	2023

Acknowledgment

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported the Kókó Èwà exhibition at Mydrim Art Gallery. This event would not have been possible without the collective effort and dedication of many individuals and organizations.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Mydrim Art Gallery for providing such a beautiful and inspiring space to showcase my work. Your unwavering support and professionalism have been instrumental in bringing this exhibition to life.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my team of studio assistants Taiwo Adebayo, Abel Agwu, Titilayo Abdulrazaq among others, and to the exhibition's curator Ismaila Adegboyega for their shared vision in my works, your meticulous attention to detail and seamless coordination have ensured that every aspect of this exhibition has been executed to perfection.

A special thank you goes to - Tukur Loba Ridwan. To my family, friends and industry mentors for their endless encouragement and belief in my vision. Your love and support have been my constant source of inspiration and motivation throughout this journey.

Lastly, I am profoundly thankful to the viewers and art collectors who have visited the exhibition and owning a part of it. Your presence and engagement mean the world to me. I hope Kókó Èwà resonates with you and invites you to reflect on the powerful narratives embedded within each piece.

Thank you all for making this exhibition a memorable and meaningful experience.

Warm regards,

Prince Saheed Adelakun

Curator Biography

Ismaila Adegboyega is a Nigerian curator and visual artist whose practice is dedicated to redefining how contemporary African art is seen, studied, and experienced. Grounded in a background in Fine and Applied Arts from Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, where he graduated with distinction for his research on the sculptural practices of Moses Akintonde and Ijisakin Yemi, his work is shaped by a strong commitment to critical inquiry and cultural scholarship.

His curatorial approach has been further refined through hands-on experience within the Nigerian art ecosystem, including working mentorship under Segun Adejumo at One Draw Gallery, Lagos, contributing to exhibition processes at Alexis Galleries, and serving as studio manager for multidisciplinary artist Segun Aiyesan. These experiences have cultivated a practice that bridges intellectual rigor with a deep understanding of artistic production and presentation.

Working across diverse media including painting, sculptures, drawing, and mixed media - Ismaila curates' exhibitions that foreground Africans identity, condition, and philosophical thought within contemporary visual culture. His projects are driven by a commitment to constructing meaningful narratives that extend beyond display, positioning African art within broader global conversations.

He is the founder of Ri Mi Si Arts Collective Ltd., a platform through which he continues to develop curatorial projects that engage African discourse in contemporary practice.

For Ismaila, curation is not merely the arrangement of artworks, but an act of authorship - one that shapes how art is encountered, interpreted, and remembered.

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