

ADJEI TAWIAH



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GALLERY

SELECTED PRESS

«Face Value», une exposition du Ghanéen Adjei Tawiah qui révèle la profondeur de l'âme humaine

L'artiste ghanéen Adjei Tawiah expose ses œuvres à la So Art Gallery du 18 février au 30 mars 2025. «Face Value» est une invitation à la réflexion sur les apparences et les vérités cachées derrière les visages, à travers une technique picturale originale et une exploration profonde des émotions humaines.

The Refined Court, 2024
Huile et éponge sur toile
100 x 100 cm



NADIA OUIDAR

16 FÉVRIER 2025 À 15:56

Du 18 février au 30 mars, **So Art Gallery** à **Casablanca** accueille l'**exposition «Face Value»** de l'artiste ghanéen **Adjei Tawiah**, figure montante de la scène contemporaine africaine. Le **vernissage**, prévu le mardi 18 février à 18 h 30, se fera en présence de l'artiste, offrant ainsi une occasion privilégiée de découvrir son univers et d'échanger sur sa démarche artistique.

Adjei Tawiah a su se distinguer ces dernières années par une approche artistique à la fois audacieuse et profondément poétique. Son univers offre une réflexion sur les apparences et les vérités cachées derrière les visages que nous montrons au monde.

À travers des œuvres puissantes et expressives, Tawiah explore les émotions humaines, la vulnérabilité, et la quête d'identité. L'originalité de l'œuvre d'Adjei Tawiah réside notamment dans son usage singulier de l'éponge comme outil principal de peinture. Loin d'être un simple instrument, l'éponge devient un moyen d'expression artistique à part entière. Elle permet à l'artiste de créer des textures veloutées et dynamiques, donnant à ses personnages une profondeur tactile presque tangible. Ce geste créatif, tout en légèreté, contraste avec la puissance des émotions que dégagent ses œuvres.

Les visages représentés par Tawiah ne sont jamais figés : ils racontent des histoires faites de silences, de doutes et de désillusion. S'inspirant de son entourage et de sa communauté, Adjei Tawiah a développé une approche artistique singulière qu'il nomme «Sponge Martial». Cette technique, qui consiste à utiliser une éponge comme médium pictural, trouve son origine dans une expérience marquante : le rituel de purification du corps de sa mère à la morgue. À travers son art, il transpose cette notion de nettoyage, utilisant des teintes éclatantes et vibrantes pour symboliser la lumière qui succède aux épreuves de l'existence. En affirmant son expression artistique, Tawiah aspire à faire de son œuvre une source de réconfort et d'inspiration pour ceux qui traversent des périodes difficiles.

Loin de l'**esthétique numérique**, Tawiah nous invite à un engagement plus profond. Sa technique transforme un objet domestique ordinaire en un outil d'expression d'une précision remarquable. Par des gestes de pression, de tapotement et de superposition de la peinture, il compose des portraits qui semblent respirer à travers l'accumulation de matière, à l'image même de l'identité construite à travers les strates de l'histoire, de l'expérience et de l'adaptation. La matérialité travaillée par Tawiah confère à ses œuvres un aspect patiné, presque archivistique, comme si ces visages existaient simultanément dans le présent et dans la mémoire collective d'un peuple.

Au cœur de sa démarche, l'artiste ghanéen interroge la personne en tant qu'être intrinsèque et en perpétuelle évolution, en résonance avec le concept du philosophe ghanéen **Kwasi Wiredu**, qui définit l'identité comme une construction progressive à travers les relations et les interactions communautaires.

À travers «Face Value», Adjei Tawiah invite chaque visiteur à aller au-delà de ce qui est visible, à plonger dans des récits où fragilité et force coexistent harmonieusement.

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18 FÉV 2025, 8:36 KAWTAR FIRDAOUS



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Entre émotions et quête d'identité

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8 Artists Share How They Set the Perfect Vibe in the Studio

Cooking, podcasts and cozy spaces all play a part.



José Parlá in his studio, 2023. Photo credit Tyler Haft

Verity Babbs May 8, 2024

What makes an artist's studio the perfect place for creating? Nowadays, there is no one way for an creative space to look: some are part of huge studio complexes, others are a dedicated corner of a bedroom.

The concept of the "studio" as we know it today dates back to the Renaissance, when master artists worked in workshops with apprentices. These were often split into two rooms provided by the artist's patron: a bottega, a workshop in which the work was made, and a studiolo, a private place where the artist could study and contemplate their work.

For many contemporary artists, having two rooms dedicated to their practice is considered a rare luxury, so what do today's contemporary artists do to make their space an ideal place for them to work in?

Artnet News has been asking artists what atmosphere they prefer when creating their work, and how they achieve the perfect studio vibe. Here are eight inspiring ideas for anyone looking to optimize the energy in their studio.

Adjei Tawiah : Creating a Home from Home



Courtesy of Adjei Tawiah.

Music really inspires, especially Ga highlife, and most notably Wulomei, one of my late mother's favorite bands. The music really puts me in the right frame of mind for painting, and especially being here in Brooklyn, with that music and sunlight shining through the windows, I can forget that I am far from home.



Verity Babbs

SURFACE

ARTIST STATEMENT

Adjei Tawiah's Exquisite Ode to a Close Mentor's Legacy

A stand out among the lucid, melancholic canvases featured in the emerging Ghanaian painter's first stateside solo exhibition is a delicately textured portrait of close friend and mentor Amoako Boafo.

BY RYAN WADDOUPS

April 03, 2023



Here, we ask an artist to frame the essential details behind one of their latest works.

Bio: Adjei Tawiah, 35, Accra (@adjeitawiah)

Title of work: *The Helper I- How can I help?* (2023)

Where to see it: "I Miss Us" at Opera Gallery (791 Madison Ave, New York) until April 11.

What was on your mind at the time: I was contemplating my relationship with my close friend and mentor Amoako Boafo. I wanted to honor him and pay homage to his legacy because he has been a major driving force in my career and that of many other artists.

An interesting feature that's not immediately noticeable: The use of a nylon sponge netting material, which is called *kotsa* in Ghana, and is used for bathing and ceremonial cleansing processes. From afar it's not easily recognizable, but it's a very important feature of my work. It acts as a metaphor for healing, cleansing, and renewal.

How it reflects your practice as a whole: My work is about personhood—exploring and displaying the innate characteristics of humanity. And most importantly, creating images that resonate with all types of people causes them to interrogate their interior worlds and how they interact with wider society.

One song that captures its essence: "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers.

Artist Adjei Tawiah Shows Us How He Brought a Bit of Ghana to His Brooklyn Studio While Preparing for His Debut U.S. Solo Show

The artist's first New York exhibition, "I Miss Us," is now on view at Opera Gallery.



Adjei Tawiah in his studio, 2023. Courtesy of Opera Gallery.

Katie White March 28, 2023

How does an artist make a residency studio feel like home?

Emerging Ghanaian artist Adjei Tawiah spent six weeks working from a Brooklyn studio far from his base in Accra as he prepared for “I Miss Us” the artist’s first major solo exhibition in the U.S., now on view at New York’s Opera Gallery.

In the past few years, Tawiah has been noted as an important emerging artist to watch. In 2021, Amoako Boafo chose Adjei for T Magazine’s “Artists on Artists to Watch ” and he was recently selected by Kehinde Wiley for the group show “Self Addressed” at Jeffrey Deitch.



Adjei Tawiah in his Brooklyn studio, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

“I Miss Us” presents Tawiah’s latest portraits, a group of tender paintings that explore the emotions that linger long after a relationship ends. Lovers are shown softly holding one another. Figures in individual portraits cast faraway glances, in a mood of melancholy haunted by memory. Painted with Tawiah’s recognizable pulsating intensity, and marked by vivid hues, the paintings are plangent and longing in effect. Into these compositions, Tawiah incorporates kotsa, a nylon sponge material popular in Ghana. Typically used for bathing and in funerary traditions, kotsa embeds the idea of ablution into the works themselves.

In finalizing these works, the artist has used his Brooklyn studio as a place of meditation and focus, but also as a home away from home where he plays his favorite music and dines on Ghanaian dishes like

Recently, he invited us into this light-filled Brooklyn space, where we caught a glimpse of the artist’s creative process.



Adjei Tawiah in his Brooklyn studio, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

Tell us about your studio. Where is it, how did you find it, what kind of space is it?

My studio is in Brooklyn on Bergen Street. I spent about six weeks here in a residency leading up to my first New York solo exhibition at Opera Gallery on the Upper East Side. The studio is located on the fourth floor of the building, which means I get my daily workout in before painting. I've grown to love climbing up these stairs daily. The space is really large, much bigger than my studio space in Accra, Ghana, where I'm from.

Do you have studio assistants or other team members working with you? What do they do?

Back in Ghana, Grace Adjeley is my assistant and having her around adds a level of ease when I'm working. Here in New York during this residency I have no assistant, but the curator Chantel Akwonor Thompson has spent many hours with me at the studio helping me as we prepare for the show. We have developed a great working relationship, and I think that's reflected in the work. She has really pushed me to take a step back and critically analyze what I'm producing and why. Through our conversations, I've been able to reflect and grow. I do love my home studio in Accra because of the collaborative, community feel—there are nine other artists, including Amoako Boafo, David Aplerh-Doku Borlabi, and Crystal Yayra Anthony, there—but I have really grown as an artist in this space in Brooklyn and the experience has been invaluable.

How many hours do you typically spend in the studio, what time of day do you feel most productive, and what activities fill the majority of that time?

I normally arrive around 9 a.m. and leave at 4 p.m. I'll be honest, most

days I work straight through with few or no breaks. There is something about when I'm in the zone. The fear of losing that sensation and focus helps guide me as I paint.

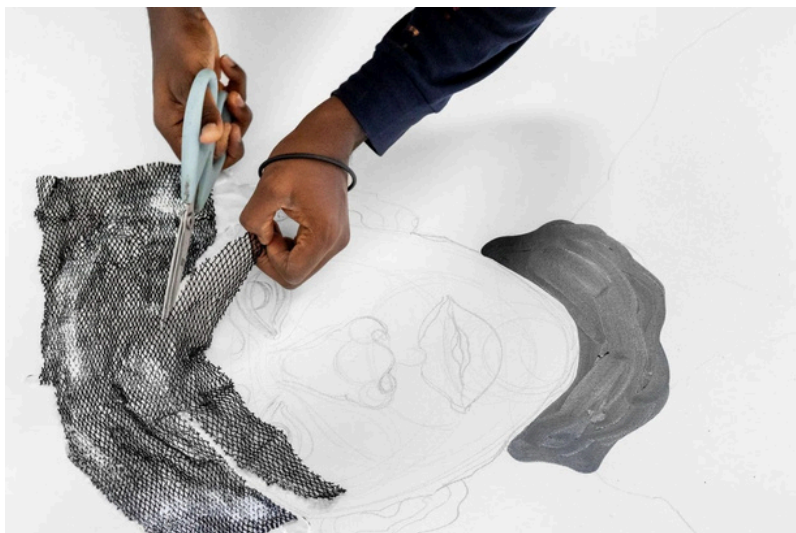


Adjei Tawiah's Brooklyn studio, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

What is the first thing you do when you walk into your studio (after turning on the lights)?

I meditate. This has become a really important ritual of my process, especially for this show. This particular space, and being so far from home and away from my usual art community has given me time to dedicate to developing this. The meditation helps put me in the zone and helps me to know what I should paint, what colors to use, and what kind of brush strokes to deploy.

What are you working on right now?



The artist working with kotsa, a nylon sponge material popular in Ghana. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

Right now I'm working on a series for my solo show "I Miss Us ". It's a really important series for a number of reasons. Firstly because it's my first major solo show in the U.S., and secondly because of the themes I'm exploring. "I Miss Us" is about love, loss, grief and healing. It's a real display of some of the feelings I've harbored deep inside and those that I believe all humans experience. Through this show, I want to allow people to enter into a conversation that I think is really vital for society.

What tool or art supply do you enjoy working with the most, and why?

Without a doubt, the local Ghanaian nylon sponge we call kotsa in our local dialect Ga-dangme. The use of kotsa has become my signature and is used as a metaphor for cleansing and renewal. I first got inspired to use it after my mother's passing. Part of the burial traditions in Ghana amongst Ga people includes a process we call kotsa gbamo, which is the bathing of the corpse. It is the final realization that the person can no longer bathe themselves and that others are called to do the duty for them. This is one of the rituals performed to ensure that the spirit of the departed member of the family can rest rather than wandering in the world forever suffering. The Ga word for soul is susuma, which also means spirit or shadow.



Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

What kind of atmosphere do you prefer when you work? Is there anything you like to listen to/watch/read/look at while in the studio for inspiration or ambience?

Music really inspires, especially Ga highlife, and most notably Wulomei, one of my late mother's favorite bands. The music really puts me in the right frame of mind for painting, and especially being here in Brooklyn, with that music and sunlight shining through the windows, I can forget that I am far from home.

How do you know when an artwork you are working on is clicking? How do you know when it's a dud?

It's all in the eyes. Once I've painted them, I take a step back and look at the portrait. If the gaze is right it gives me a sensation that I can't explain. It's like we're in communication, but of course, no words are exchanged. If the eyes are off, I know the work is not right.

What's the last museum exhibition or gallery show you saw that really affected you and why?

I would say "Side by Side" and "Homegrown," which were exhibited in Accra in December to launch Amoako Boafo's new residency space dot.ateliers, designed by David Adjaye. "Homegrown" was a solo exhibition of works from Boafo's personal collection, never exhibited before. "Side by Side" was a group show exhibiting collaborative works between Amoako and his contemporaries, including myself, Kwesi Botchway, Cornelious Anor, and more. It was curated by Chantel Akworkor Thompson, which is the first time we worked together. I'm thrilled she's curated "I Miss Us." The way she interprets my work is so exact and she's brilliant at bridging the gap between Ghana and the rest of the world.



Adjei Tawiah in his Brooklyn studio, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

What do you eat when you get hungry in the studio? Where do you get your food?

Waakye, Kenkey, Kontomire stew: these are all local Ghanaian dishes. Luckily, I discovered an Accra Restaurant in Harlem where I buy my Waakye, and Chantel bought me some Kenkey from her mother in London, who has made and sold the dish there for years. Family friends living in New York have also cooked and brought me food to the studio. It helps me feel connected to home.

Is there anything in your studio that a visitor might find surprising?

I guess the kotsa, nylon sponge. For non-Ghanians, it is not something they are familiar with, and most people here have referred to it as 'netting'. In Ghana, because it is used for bathing or cleansing the body, Ghanaian people are also surprised to see it in the studio.

Describe the space in three adjectives.

Meditative, inspirational, and rejuvenating.



Kotsa, a Ghanaian nylon sponge, in the his studio. Courtesy of the artist and Opera Gallery.

In the silence, I am able to reflect on past experiences. This environment put me in a really good space to create the works for the show. I felt very inspired. With this studio space I feel like I have been able to almost make a fresh start with my career.

What do you like to do right after leaving the studio?

When I leave the studio and get home, I love to unwind by watching comedy. Specifically *Mind Your Language*, a British sitcom that debuted in the 1970s always has me laughing out loud.



Katie White
Editor



WHITEHOT MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2026
"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

Whitehot Recommends: Adjei Tawiah: I Miss Us at Opera Gallery



Installation view, Adjei Tawiah: I Miss Us at Opera Gallery. Courtesy of Opera Gallery.

Focusing on memory's role in shaping the legacy of 'lost' Love, Tawiah's portraits capture melancholy moments. Moments induced by memories of a love once had that meander in the mind, shooting arrows of anguish towards the heart. Alone, hearts overwhelmed, time takes leave as the individuals stand frozen in time, whether alone in a silk-laden embrace, hearts beating in sync, surrendering to Love. With skin rendered in an exquisite lucid cobalt hue with a pearl-like sheen, swirled and laced with ivory black, Adjei's portraits exude opulence. Their vulnerability lures us into a state of reflection, offering us an opportunity to meditate on our own heartbreaks. This is Tawiah urging us to consider how

one heals if we allow pain to wipe out the memory of Love. Can Love remain when the relationship ceases to exist when Us is no more? Using his signature nylon sponge material, popularly used in his home country of Ghana for bathing, Tawiah creates a metaphor for healing, the element of the grieving process he wants us to contemplate. What is left when the pain subsides, and we let go of the attachment to the human who once was in our presence? **WM**



Installation view, Adjei Tawiah: I Miss Us at Opera Gallery. Courtesy of Opera Gallery.

ByWM, March 2023

CHRISTIE'S

Markets on the rise in 2022: Five game-changing names to know in figurative art

Christie's specialist Anna Touzin chooses five artists on the rise who are reshaping figurative painting — all with works in the Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale in London on 2 March

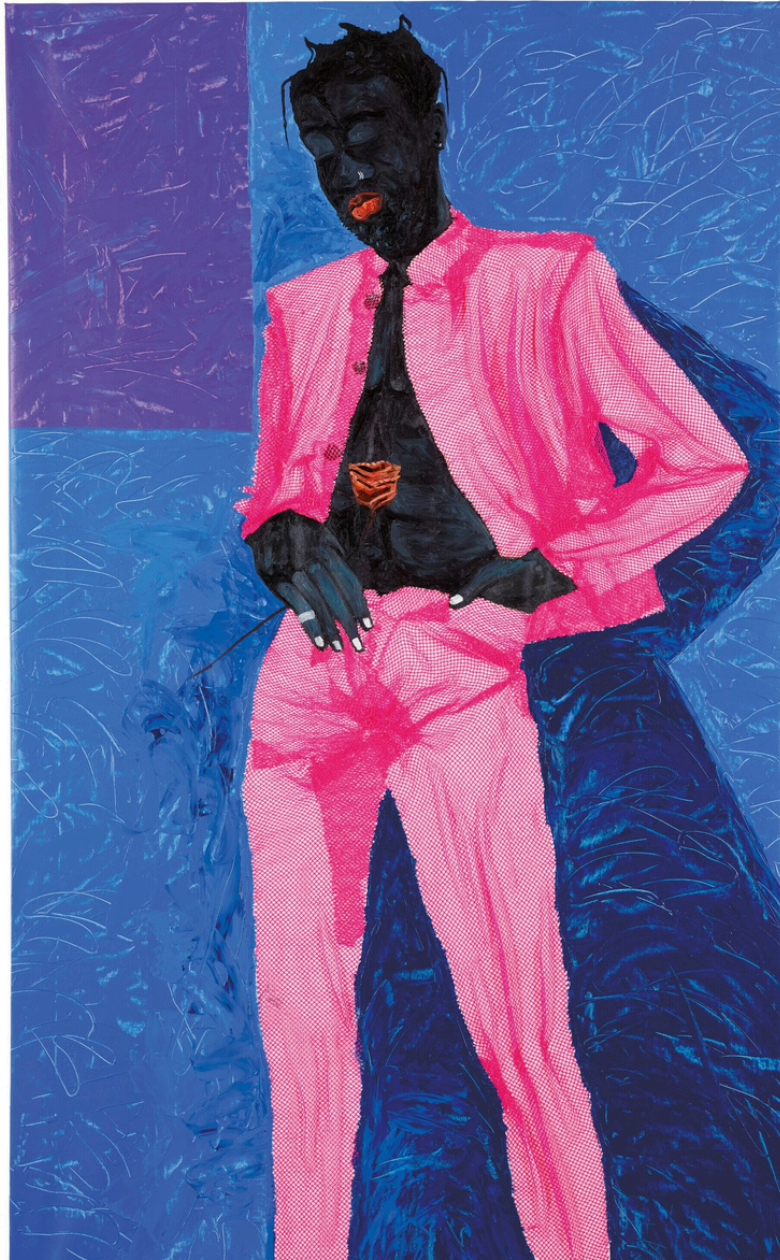
17 FEBRUARY 2022



In June 2021, *The New York Times* asked 16 established artists to select an artist they felt should be better known. The hugely successful Ghanaian painter Amoako Bofo, whose works sell for serious sums (and have even been blasted into space by Jeff Bezos), chose Adjei Tawiah (b. 1987).

Like Bofo, Tawiah trained at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra, Ghana. Bofo said he was drawn to Tawiah's works because of 'his use of authentic materials and his defined style, which sets him apart from many other figurative artists'.

Describing Tawiah's technique, which was inspired by the cleansing of his late mother's body in the mortuary, Bofo observed, 'He uses sponge to clothe his powerful subjects, creating colourful, delicately textured portraits.'



Adjei Tawiah (b. 1987) *Pink Suit*, 2020. Oil and sponge cloth on canvas. 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 47 in (203 x 119.5 cm). Sold for £50,400 on 2 March 2022 at Christie's in London

Tawiah has only been exhibiting since 2020, but already landed a spot in a group show of African painters curated by another celebrated portraitist, Kehinde Wiley, at Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles, and a solo exhibition at the London outpost of the Ghanaian Gallery 1957, which is on until 5 March. One critic called it 'unmissable'.

The artist's work was also recently photographed hanging in a house belonging to Nish McCree, a celebrated patron and collector of African art, and his painting *Irony* was offered in a last year's ARTNOIR charity auction, an annual event regarded as a launchpad for African artists. It was one of the most in-demand lots in the sale, realising \$13,000. The upward trend could well continue with *Pink Suit*, Tawiah's first appearance at Christie's.

Beyond Amoako Boafo: The Next Emerging Names You Need to Know in Accra, Ghana's Rapidly Accelerating Art Hub

The vibrant art scene that birthed breakout stars Amoako Boafo and Ibrahim Mahama has plenty more in store.



Artist Afia Prempeh. Photo: Nii Odzenma, courtesy Gallery 1957, Accra.

Rebecca Anne Proctor

September 19, 2021

All eyes are on Accra, the capital of the small West African nation of Ghana, where a vibrant art scene is on the rise. Quickly becoming one of the African continent's main hubs for contemporary art, the equatorial port city now hosts a growing generation of young artists, many inspired by the global success of the country's biggest stars, such as Amoako Boafo and Ibrahim Mahama. Most of these rising stars work in portraiture and large abstract figurative paintings, portraying the powerful faces and figures of West African men and women, some easily identifiable while others are anonymous persons taken from magazine clippings or Instagram. Here, we scout out seven of the most-sought after emerging artists working in Accra today.

Eric Adjei Tawiah (b. 1987)



Eric Adjei Tawiah, Red on Black (2021). Courtesy of Gallery 1957, Accra.

Eric Adjei Tawiah has garnered buzz for his emotive paintings that incorporate what he calls “sponge material,” or pieces from colorful mesh body sponges to his canvases. The approach was inspired by his experience of watching his mother’s body being cleansed in a mortuary—and in many ways, his vibrant, figurative portraits offer a metaphorical way to cleanse negative thoughts. Tawiah works from his space at a studio owned by Boafo, a place where several artists, with permission from Boafo, are given free workspace to create their art. There he enhances his evocative renderings of Ghanaian men and women with flat, vivid backdrops and incorporates his mesh sponge material. Sometimes his subjects are locked in an emotional embrace, other times they stare directly out to the viewer, as if in longing or silent determination. Tawiah trained at the acclaimed Ghanatta College of Art and Design. His work was recently featured in Gallery 1957’s dual show “Could You Be Loved,” with fellow artist and studiomate Aplerh-Doku Borlabi.

T'S 2021 ART ISSUE

Artists on Artists to Watch, and Maybe Even Collect

We asked 16 established names to suggest a fellow talent they feel should be better known.

By Noor Brara

Published June 14, 2021 Updated June 16, 2021

The best direction one could give to someone interested in expanding their knowledge of contemporary art is to pay attention to what artists are paying attention to; artists always know before everyone else does. With this in mind, we asked 16 established artists from all over the world about a young or underappreciated artist whose work resonates with them. They spoke about why these talents deserve more attention than they're getting, and why readers should take time to explore their oeuvres, which inspect, among other things, issues of identity, race, material culture, social justice, climate change and how we live.

Amoako Boafo: Adjei Tawiah, 34

Adjei formally trained at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra, Ghana. He is into portraiture and figurative painting, but what draws me closer to his work is his use of authentic materials and his defined style, which set him apart from many other figurative artists. He uses sponge to clothe his powerful subjects, creating colorful, delicately textured portraits across mixed media. He calls this his "sponge martial" technique. I believe attention should be paid to this work, and that people should make space for it.



Adjei Tawiah's "2 Chains" (2021). Courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957

Morocco

Essayouti Place des Iris, 29 Rue Jalal Eddine
Sayouti, Casablanca 20000, Maroc

Contact

g.guessouse@soart-gallery.com
+212 661453705