



OLUWOLE OMOFEMI

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Culture

Elle propose une série de portraits centrés sur l'intériorité: «Quiet Territories» de l'artiste Oluwole Omofemi à la So Art Gallery

ALM • 12 MAI 2026



Exposition

L'artiste africain Oluwole Omofemi présentera à partir du mardi 19 mai sa première exposition «Quiet Territories» à la So Art Gallery de Casablanca. Celle-ci rassemble un ensemble de peintures où les figures apparaissent dans des moments suspendus, en retrait du monde extérieur.

Oluwole Omofemi, l'un des artistes africains les plus visibles de sa génération et choisi par le magazine britannique Tatler pour réaliser le dernier portrait officiel de la reine Elizabeth II à l'occasion de son jubilé de platine, présentera toute sa première exposition personnelle au Maroc, à So Art Gallery. Le vernissage de l'exposition Quiet Territories de l'artiste nigérian aura lieu le mardi 19 mai à partir de 19h00. Né en 1988 à Ibadan, Oluwole Omofemi s'est rapidement affirmé sur la scène internationale. Ses œuvres, exposées en Europe et aux États-Unis, figurent aujourd'hui dans de nombreuses collections. Sa reconnaissance s'est également confirmée sur le marché de l'art, avec des résultats remarquables lors de ventes aux enchères chez Christie's à New York et Londres, ainsi que chez Phillips à Londres, atteignant des montants significatifs qui témoignent de la solidité de sa cote à l'international. La notoriété d'Oluwole Omofemi a connu un tournant lorsqu'il a été choisi par le magazine britannique Tatler pour réaliser le dernier portrait officiel de la reine Elizabeth II à l'occasion de son jubilé de platine. Cette commande, largement relayée à l'international, a mis en lumière une écriture picturale singulière, à la croisée de référence classique et d'une approche résolument contemporaine. Centrée sur la figure humaine, sa pratique explore les questions de mémoire, d'identité et de représentation.

Ses portraits, souvent féminins, se distinguent par une présence à la fois intime et affirmée, portée par un travail précis de la couleur et de la composition. Avec « Quiet Territories », Oluwole Omofemi poursuit cette exploration en se tournant vers des espaces plus intériorisés. L'exposition rassemble un ensemble de peintures où les figures apparaissent dans des moments suspendus, en retrait du monde extérieur. Sans narration explicite, ces œuvres donnent à voir des états de présence, des formes d'attention silencieuse où l'émotion affleure avec retenue. Les œuvres présentées, exclusivement consacrées à des figures féminines, montrent des femmes saisies dans des moments de calme et d'introspection. Le regard est souvent détourné, comme tourné vers un ailleurs intérieur, créant une certaine distance avec le spectateur.

Les compositions sont épurées, avec des fonds colorés très présents qui structurent l'image et mettent en valeur les figures. Ce jeu entre simplicité et intensité donne aux peintures une force à la fois douce et assurée. En se concentrant sur l'essentiel, l'artiste met en avant la présence, l'attitude et l'expression de ses sujets, sans artifice. À travers « Quiet Territories », Oluwole Omofemi propose une série de portraits centrés sur l'intériorité, où le silence, la retenue et une forme de force tranquille occupent une place centrale.

PEINTURE

Oluwole Omofemi expose "Quiet Territories" à la So Art Gallery

Le nigérian Oluwole Omofemi, l'un des artistes africains les plus visibles de sa génération et choisi par le magazine britannique Tatler pour réaliser le dernier portrait officiel de la reine Elizabeth II à l'occasion de son jubilé de platine, présentera sa première exposition personnelle au Maroc, à So Art Gallery. Vernissage le mardi 19 mai à partir de 19h00.

12 MAI 2026, 0:22 KAWTAR FIRDAOUS



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L'artiste nigérian derrière le portrait d'Elizabeth II expose à Casablanca

Oluwole Omofemi présentera pour la première fois son travail au Maroc avec l'exposition Quiet Territories, dont le vernissage se tiendra le 19 mai à partir de 19h à So Art Gallery à Casablanca.

14 MAI 2026, 9:27 LILIA HABBOUL



À travers cette nouvelle série de peintures, l'artiste nigérian poursuit son exploration de la figure humaine, en mettant cette fois l'accent sur l'intériorité, le silence et la contemplation. Les œuvres exposées, exclusivement consacrées à des figures féminines, dévoilent des femmes saisies dans des instants suspendus, entre calme, introspection et force discrète.

Reconnu pour ses portraits puissants aux compositions épurées et aux arrière-plans vibrants, Oluwole Omofemi développe une écriture picturale où la couleur dialogue avec l'émotion. Les regards détournés de ses sujets instaurent une distance subtile avec le spectateur, invitant à une lecture plus intime et silencieuse de l'image.

Avec Quiet Territories, l'artiste propose une réflexion sensible sur la présence et l'identité, loin de toute narration explicite. Chaque toile devient un espace de méditation visuelle où retenue et intensité cohabitent avec élégance.

Figure montante de l'art contemporain africain, Oluwole Omofemi s'est imposé sur la scène internationale grâce à des expositions en Europe et aux États-Unis, ainsi qu'à des ventes remarquées chez Christie's et Phillips à Londres et New York.

Sa renommée mondiale a pris une nouvelle dimension lorsqu'il a été choisi par le magazine britannique Tatler pour réaliser le dernier portrait officiel de Queen Elizabeth II à l'occasion de son jubilé de platine.



The Portrait, The Prince and The Painter

Nigerian artist Omofemi's portrait of Prince William draws global attention [PHOTOS]

The painting, commissioned by the British lifestyle magazine Tatler, will feature on its June 2026 cover.

By Emmanuel Muna — May 6, 2026 Reading Time: 2 mins read



A Nigerian visual artist, Oluwole Omofemi, has drawn international acclaim following the unveiling of a new portrait of Prince William.

The painting, commissioned by the British lifestyle magazine Tatler, will feature on its June 2026 cover, presenting the Prince of Wales as a “king-in-waiting” amid renewed global focus on the future of the British monarchy.

The painting was rendered in a bold palette; the prince is depicted in a navy suit against a vivid yellow background.

Speaking to Tatler, published by Condé Nast, Mr Omofemi said the work was conceived to challenge how public figures are perceived.



Oluwole Omofemi

The portrait

The new piece builds on Mr Omofemi's growing international profile, following his 2022 commissioned portrait of Queen Elizabeth II created to mark the Platinum Jubilee, an event celebrating the monarch's 70 years on the throne.

According to the artist, both portraits share thematic links but diverge in tone and intent.

A subtle but significant motif in the painting is the faint depiction of St Edward's Crown, traditionally used during British coronations. Its subdued presence symbolises inheritance and a future yet to be fully realised.

Executed in oil on canvas, the portrait reflects Mr Omofemi's signature layered technique, combining textured brushwork with symbolic elements.

The piece also incorporates patterns inspired by African textile traditions, bridging British royal imagery with African cultural identity.

The dominant yellow tone, which featured prominently in his earlier royal portrait, serves as a visual thread linking past and present, reinforcing continuity within transformation.

Mr Omofemi said the creative process involved extensive research, including studying multiple photographic references sourced online to capture the prince's likeness and psychological depth.



Oluwole Omofemi and the portrait

The prince

Prince William, formally the Prince of Wales, is the eldest son of King Charles III and the late Diana, Princess of Wales. He is first in line to the British throne.

He is married to Catherine, Princess of Wales, and they have three children, Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis.

The Painter

Mr Omofemi, a contemporary visual artist known for his vibrant and evocative works, explores themes of African identity, fashion and cultural memory.

Born and raised in Ibadan, he gained prominence in the United Kingdom's art scene after producing one of the final commissioned portraits of Queen Elizabeth II before her death in September 2022.

Bold colour fields, expressive realism and the integration of African motifs into global narratives often characterise his works.

Currently, the artist is hosting a residency programme at his studio in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, mentoring emerging talents and contributing to the country's growing contemporary art movement.

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Arts & Life

May 5, 2026 by [Ozoluah Uhakheme, Assistant Editor \(Arts\)](#)

Prince William: Continuation of conversation on royalty



"When I worked on this piece, I wasn't trying to make something overly grand. I wanted it to feel present, calm, and relatable. There's a quiet energy in the portrait—not loud or dramatic, but thoughtful. It's about showing responsibility in a way that still feels human, something people can connect with without needing too much explanation.

The yellow tone, which also appears in the Queen's portrait, became a natural link between the two. In both works, it speaks to royalty and continuity, but here it feels softer, more open—like something that is still evolving. It connects the two portraits as part of the same story, while still allowing each one to stand on its

Omofemi said there's a faint image of St Edward's Crown within the piece, which he didn't treat as something fully present or possessed, but more as something approaching.

"Its faded quality reflects that sense of inheritance—something not yet fully claimed, but already felt. It carries a certain weight, more expectation than authority. In that way, it ties closely to the title Heir, placing the portrait in that space between becoming and being.

"I also included subtle references to African textile traditions. They're not meant to stand out immediately. I wanted them to sit quietly within the work, adding depth without taking over. As an African artist, it's important for me to bring my perspective into what I do—but in a way that feels natural and honest.

"In the end, these portraits are less about two individuals and more about a shared story. They speak to legacy, continuity, and change. This work, in particular, sits in that in-between space—where the past is still present, and the future is slowly taking shape," he added.

On what inspired him to produce the work and why now, he said: "This work grew out of my continuing interest in portraiture as a way of exploring identity, memory, and presence. I was interested in creating an image that goes beyond likeness and tries to communicate character and emotional weight. The timing felt right because we are in a moment where public figures are constantly seen, but not always deeply observed. I wanted to make a portrait that invites people to look again."

Explaining the fundamental difference between Queen Elizabeth painting and the portrait of Prince William he said that the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II engaged more directly with history, continuity, and legacy. But that the portrait of Prince William is more immediate and contemporary, as it is less about institution and more about the tension between public image and inner humanity. "So, while both are portraits of major figures, they speak in very different emotional languages," he noted.

Omofemi works on oil on canvas, which gives him the depth, richness, and flexibility he needs in portraiture. It allows him to build the painting gradually through layers, creating subtle transitions in tone, texture, and atmosphere. For him, oil helps carry both the emotional weight and physical presence he wants the work to have.

A Prince, His Portrait and A Painter

NIGERIA | 2 weeks ago



Yinka Olatunbosun

A historic intersection of contemporary African art and British royal tradition, was witnessed recently as Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi captured Prince William in a portrait that serves as a modern companion to his 2022 painting of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Famed for his vibrant, expressive style that hinges on the beauty of Black identity and the significance of hair, Omofemi's approach to the Prince of Wales is one of refined simplicity which the British media deemed "flattering." While Omofemi typically works with a palette of deep oils and intricate textures, this portrait balances the formal expectations of royal iconography with a contemporary, soulful lens.

Omofemi taps into a "Pop Art" sensibility filtered through traditional oil techniques. In his royal works, he uses light and shadow to create a sense of approachability, moving away from the stiff, distant nature of historical court paintings.

Having been commissioned by Tatler to paint the Queen for her Platinum Jubilee, Omofemi's depiction of William represents a bridge between generations as the work reflects the Prince's evolving role as the heir to the throne and a modern face of the British monarchy.

For the artist, the opportunity to paint high-ranking members of the British Royal Family is more than a commission; it is a testament to the global reach of the contemporary Nigerian art scene. Omofemi's work places West African artistic perspectives at the heart of global heritage, reimagining power and legacy in the 21st century.

In a virtual encounter, he revealed the considerations that preceded the creation process.

"When I worked on this piece, I wasn't trying to make something overly grand. I wanted it to feel present, calm, and relatable," he said. "There's a quiet energy in the portrait—not loud or dramatic, but thoughtful. It's about showing responsibility in a way that still feels human, something people can connect with, without needing too much explanation."

While reflecting on his use of colours, he noted how his choice accounts for the continuity in the series of royal paintings.

“The yellow tone, which also appears in the Queen’s portrait, became a natural link between the two,” he explained. “In both works, it speaks to royalty and continuity, but here it feels softer, more open—like something that is still evolving. It connects the two portraits as part of the same story, while still allowing each one to stand on its own.” Even when painting figures outside of his usual subject matter, the artist retains his fascination with light and the “soul” of the sitter, often emphasizing the eyes to create a direct, personal connection with the viewer. This portrait stands as a milestone in Omofemi’s career, further cementing his status as a storyteller who can navigate the nuances of identity, from the streets of Lagos to the halls of Windsor.

“When I was approached by Tatler to do the portrait of Prince William for the cover, I searched all over the internet for inspirational images,” he recounted. “I came up with a few that inspired me from how they brought out the Prince’s essence and gave a sense of what kind of a prince he is and what kind of King he could become. I printed all of them and studied them.”

He found one image in particular on google that intrigued him. Subsequently, he made some blockings on the canvas and added colours.

“I went with the yellow to mirror the Queen’s portrait done a few years ago, to symbolise the past and future. I also added a crown on top of his head as a symbol of the future king. In addition, I included certain elements of my own heritage such as the designs on the tie, which mean a lot to me and where I grew up.”

“There’s also a faint image of St Edward’s Crown within the piece,” he continued. “I didn’t treat it as something fully present or possessed, but more as something approaching. Its faded quality reflects that sense of inheritance—something not yet fully claimed, but already felt. It carries a certain weight, more expectation than authority. In that way, it ties closely to the title ‘Heir,’ placing the portrait in that space between becoming and being.”

By including subtle references to African textile traditions, he added depth and perspective.

“In the end, these portraits are less about two individuals and more about a shared story. They speak to legacy, continuity, and change. This work, in particular, sits in that in-between space—where the past is still present, and the future is slowly taking shape.”

For Omofemi, this work is an offshoot of his continuing interest in portraiture as a way of exploring identity, memory, and presence. The painting communicates character and emotional weight which was not lost on the public.

“The timing felt right because we are in a moment where public figures are constantly seen, but not always deeply observed. I wanted to make a portrait that invites people to look again,” he said.

The portrait of Queen Elizabeth II engaged more directly with history, continuity, and legacy. This work is more immediate and contemporary; less about institution and more about the tension between public image and inner humanity. While both are portraits of major figures, they speak in very different emotional languages.

“I worked with oil on canvas. Oil gives me the depth, richness, and flexibility I need in portraiture. It allows me to build the painting gradually through layers, creating subtle transitions in tone, texture, and atmosphere. For me, oil helps carry both the emotional weight and physical presence I want the work to have.”

With the goal of sparking conversation and engaging people emotionally, the artist creates a timeless portrait of histo-cultural significance.

“I am interested in figures whose presence carries cultural, historical, or symbolic significance. But for me, it is never just about visibility — there has to be something deeper that can be explored through paint.”

Oluwole Omofemi, peintre nigérian : « J'ai voulu représenter Elizabeth II au sommet de sa force »

Auteur de l'un des derniers portraits de la reine, l'artiste a souhaité « insuffler de la nigérianité » dans son œuvre, réalisée pour le magazine britannique « Tatler ».

Propos recueillis par Liza Fabbian (Lagos, correspondance)

Publié le 11 septembre 2022 à 10h00, modifié le 12 septembre 2022 à 09h14

• Lecture 2 min.



La couverture du numéro du magazine britannique « Tatler » consacré au jubilé de platine de la reine Elizabeth II a été réalisée par l'artiste nigérian Oluwole Omofemi. OLUWOLE OMOFEMI / TATLER

Pour réaliser la couverture de son numéro hommage au jubilé de platine de la reine Elizabeth II, paru en juillet, le très chic magazine britannique *Tatler* s'est tourné vers l'Afrique. C'est le Nigérian Oluwole Omofemi (représenté par la galerie londonienne Signature African Art) qui a finalement été sélectionné pour réaliser un portrait exclusif pour cette publication spécialisée dans le style, la mode

Pendant quatre semaines, le peintre, âgé de 34 ans, s'isole totalement de sa femme et de leurs deux jeunes enfants pour s'absorber dans l'étude de la vie d'Elizabeth II. Oluwole Omofemi imprime une centaine de photographies et regarde des dizaines de vidéos en ligne pour élaborer son portrait, finalement basé sur une image prise autour de 1955 et sur laquelle la souveraine porte la ceinture et l'étoile de l'ordre de la Jarretière. « *J'ai dû réfléchir à la manière dont j'allais insuffler de la nigérianité dans ce portrait* », explique l'artiste, dont l'œuvre est centrée sur la représentation de femmes noires aux coiffures imposantes.

Lire aussi : [La reine, le Commonwealth et l'Afrique : « La préservation de cette "famille" sera l'œuvre de son règne »](#)

« *J'ai voulu représenter la reine au sommet de sa force, de son pouvoir et de sa beauté*, détaille-t-il. *Les cheveux naturels sont un symbole de la puissance des femmes noires que je peins, ils sont comme un halo autour de leur tête.* » La coiffe noir de jais de la reine occupe donc une place centrale dans ce portrait aux couleurs vives qui évoquent le pop art. La silhouette de la jeune Elizabeth se découpe sur un fond jaune vif, ceinturée dans une robe bleue ornée de fleurs. « *Ce motif me permet de donner vie à un environnement teinté d'africanité. Mais je ne voulais pas aller trop loin non plus, pour offrir une représentation qui reste universelle* », explique Oluwole Omofemi.

« Un symbole d'espoir pour beaucoup de gens »

Le peintre affiche sa fierté d'être « *le dernier artiste africain* » à avoir représenté la reine de son vivant, même s'il n'a pas eu la chance de la voir poser pour lui, comme son illustre prédécesseur le sculpteur Ben Enwonwu. En 1956, celui-ci avait proposé ses services au secrétaire d'Etat aux colonies britanniques à l'occasion de la première visite officielle d'Elizabeth II au Nigeria. La souveraine posera pour l'artiste nigérian l'année suivante à Londres. La statue de bronze monumentale créé par Ben Enwonwu est aujourd'hui conservée au musée national de Lagos.

« *Je suis moi aussi resté positif dans ma représentation, car je pense qu'elle était un symbole d'espoir pour beaucoup de gens dans les pays du Commonwealth* », déclare Oluwole Omofemi. Le grand-père de l'artiste lui a d'ailleurs raconté avec émotion ses souvenirs de la visite de la reine en 1956, qui l'avait menée aux quatre coins du pays encore sous domination britannique. L'homme, aujourd'hui âgé de 99 ans, avait pu apercevoir la monarque qui saluait la foule à travers la fenêtre de sa Rolls-Royce. « *J'ai peint ce portrait pour ma génération, pour ma famille et mon pays, pour que l'histoire retienne que c'est un Nigérian originaire d'Ibadan qui l'a réalisé* », conclut fièrement son petit-fils.

Liza Fabbian (Lagos, correspondance)

Prince William, a King-in-waiting: *Tatler's* June issue celebrates the Prince of Wales with a spectacular new portrait by Oluwole Omofemi

Four years ago, Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi made a splash when he was commissioned by *Tatler* to paint Queen Elizabeth II to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee. Now, as the world marks 100 years since Her Majesty's birth, the artist's royal portraiture graces the cover again – this time celebrating the Queen's grandson, the Prince of Wales

By Tomiwa Owolade
24 April 2026



A KING IN WAITING: THE JUNE COVER OF TATLER CELEBRATES PRINCE WILLIAM WITH AN EXCLUSIVE COVER BY OLUWOLE OMOFEMI *Oluwole Omofemi*

Some clichés are more true than others. One of them is this: if you grow up in Nigeria, like many other countries in Africa and Asia, there are only a few jobs you can do to make parents or grandparents truly proud. Definitely a doctor. Certainly a lawyer. Perhaps an engineer. Anything else is viewed with varying degrees of scepticism. Say that you want to be an artist, for example, and at best you would get a condescending snigger – at worst a slap on the wrist. ‘Don’t be silly,’ they will briskly tell you. ‘That’s not a real job; how can you support your family by painting and drawing?’ It is seen as a pointless diversion, a road to decadent ruin.

READ MORE

Behind the cover of Queen Elizabeth II: when artist Oluwole Omofemi took on the project of a lifetime for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee

For the July 2022 issue, Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi spoke to *Tatler's* arts editor Helen Rosslyn about his specially-commissioned portrait of Queen Elizabeth II to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee. Now, as his portrait of Prince William graces the June 2026 issue, *Tatler* goes behind the creation of the original.

By Helen Rosslyn



The life and career of Oluwole Omofemi shows that this mindset can and should be challenged. It shows that artistry can lead to the kind of success that would make even the most stern Nigerian patriarch glow with pride. Omofemi's grandfather, the person the young boy looked up to most when he was a child, wanted him to get a 'real job'. Instead, he became an artist. So far, so perfectly conventional: many children and grandchildren don't follow career advice from their family. They do what they want and derive satisfaction from that; most will not reach anything approaching fame or lots of money, and are perfectly fine with that. They do it for the love of the game, even though the safest way to make a buck is by working in an office, not a studio.



ROYAL TREATMENT: AN EXCLUSIVE PORTRAIT OF ELIZABETH II GRACED THE PLATINUM JUBILEE ISSUE IN 2022; THE ANNUAL COVER TRADITION CONTINUES WITH OMOFEMI'S FOLLOW-UP PAINTING OF HER GRANDSON Oluwale Omofemi



FOUR YEARS LATER, OMOFEMI HAS PAINTED THE FUTURE KING FOR A CELEBRATORY TATLER COVER Oluwale Omofemi

But that's not the end of the story. For Omofemi was not just an artist who put on the occasional show in a gallery or sold a few works to dedicated buyers of art. He became, in 2022, one of the last professional artists to create a painting of *Queen Elizabeth II* during her lifetime.

That painting was commissioned by *Tatler* for its Platinum Jubilee issue, and it subsequently went on display at Sotheby's. Based on a photograph from 1955, it portrays a much younger Queen Elizabeth than we are accustomed to – he gave her jet-black hair and a dress in light teal with green flowers dotted all over it, all against a popping yellow background. Her Majesty died less than four months after Omofemi's portrait was announced.



LINE OF SUCCESSION: OLUWOLE OMOFEMI, PHOTOGRAPHED FOR TATLER IN HIS STUDIO IN IBADAN, NIGERIA Akunseye Emmanuel

Four years later, the artist is back on the cover with another *Tatler*-commissioned portrait of a Royal Family member: *Prince William*. The past four years have been a whirlwind for Omofemi. 'It has been a very dramatic turnaround for me as an artist,' he tells me. If anything, that is putting it modestly. In 2021, he was only familiar to people with a keen interest in Nigerian art; now he's known as one of the very last people who painted the late Queen. I ask him what he wanted to achieve then, and he says confidently: 'I was painting for my generation and the unborn. For all of Africa.' He has certainly done that.

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Omofemi is very open and easy to talk to. I don't detect any of the airs and graces, or the manifest insecurities, that might perhaps characterise someone who has hit the big time. All he wants to do is paint.

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MOST POPULAR

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Happy birthday, Princess Rajwa of Jordan! Crown Prince Hussein



TATLER

ART HOUSE: OMOFEMI, KNOWN FOR HIS BOLD PORTRAITS IN VIBRANT COLOURS, IS PART OF A STRONG ARTISTIC SCENE IN THE CITY WHERE HE WAS BORN AND RAISED, BUT ALSO SEES HIMSELF AS AN ARTIST WHO CELEBRATES ALL AFRICAN CULTURE. *Akinseye Emmanuel*

The artist was born and brought up in Ibadan, a large, bustling and historically important city in southern Nigeria, which is famous for a magnificent intellectual and artistic tradition. Two of Nigeria's greatest writers – Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka – were both educated in the same city. The black American activist Malcolm X visited Ibadan in May 1964, where he was given the nickname 'Omowale', which translates as 'the son who has returned'.

In 1988, the year that Omofemi was born, Nigeria was seven years away from being kicked out of the Commonwealth for human rights abuses. It was, back then, a byword for corruption and military dictatorship. A nation full of abundant natural resources with a government that constantly failed its people – a people who prize education but are prevented from fully realising their potential. The difficulties were such that the current Conservative leader, Kemi Badenoch, felt she needed to leave the country in which she grew up – which she did in 1996, when she was 16.



ARTIST OF THE PEOPLE: OMOFEMI, DESPITE AN IMPRESSIVE ART CAREER, BEARS NO AIRS AND GRACES. *Akinseye Emmanuel*

Omofemi, who still lives in Ibadan, but now with his wife and young children, tells me of the poverty he witnessed as a child: 'Every day I saw people struggle,' he says. And this experience has indelibly marked him.

He did odd jobs as a boy, from working in a restaurant to carrying beer around the city. This picaresque, Dickensian life culminated in him being an artist. His mind and hands always returned to art, despite the other jobs. Although Omofemi is now renowned for painting the most famous (at the time) white woman in the world, his life was shaped by the fact that he saw almost exclusively ordinary black faces growing up. 'I wake up every morning and I see black people,' he says while describing life in Ibadan.



WORK IN PROGRESS: OMOFEMI FOCUSING ON THE DETAILS OF HIS PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES BEFORE THE FINAL APPLICATIONS OF VIBRANT COLOUR | Akinseye Emmanuel



THE PRINCE OF OUR TIMES: THE ARTIST USES YELLOW TO CONVEY A SENSE OF AUTHORITY IN HIS PORTRAITS, WHILE RED IS AN ANIMATING FORCE IN HIS ART | Akinseye Emmanuel



MASTER STROKE: OMOFEMI IS INSPIRED BY KLIMT, DESCRIBING *THE KISS* AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING HE'S EVER SEEN | Akinseye Emmanuel

This is reflected in his artwork: row after row of gorgeous paintings of mostly black women, with Afro hairstyles, dressed in vibrant colours. 'I paint my truth,' he says. And that truth is one of visual richness and piquant contrasts. The dark skin tones and darker hair are juxtaposed with bright clothes and backgrounds. I am reminded of the pop art that characterised Andy Warhol, the kind of illustration that is perfect for magazines.

But his favourite artist is Gustav Klimt, and he recounts to me quite vividly a trip he took to [Vienna](#) a couple of years ago to see *The Kiss* in the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere. You can see the influence of Klimt in his own work: the overwhelming power of the colours, the elegant composition. He described the painting to me as one of the most beautiful things he has ever seen. One particular work by Omofemi is a homage to Klimt's masterpiece. Titled *Providence*, it [features](#) a young black woman with a coquettish face staring directly at you, with the intricate golden and orange robes that recall Klimt. It was put on auction at Christie's in October 2022 and sold for almost £140,000. Another painting by Omofemi, *Lady on Yellow Background*, is a second homage to his Austrian hero.

Reclaiming Identity: Oluwole Omofemi's Paintings Reflect His African Roots



Oluwole Omofemi, Sisters II, 2020. Courtesy OOA Gallery

By **PAUL LASTER**, May 2021

Creating art since he was a child and getting portrait commissions since he was a teen, **Oluwole Omofemi** learned the lessons of life early on from his grandfather. Guided by the wise elder, who had set out as a fashion designer and tailor before becoming a driver, the young artist knew what he wanted to do, even if his schools didn't teach it. Self-taught in the beginning and self-motivated once he did study art at The Polytechnic in his hometown of Ibadan in Nigeria, Omofemi has always been a standout in the creative crowd.

Initially inspired by the local urban landscape and community of people who inhabited it, Omofemi found his true calling when he started focusing on idealistic paintings of his peers. "My style changed when I started painting black women with my own dark skin color," the artist shared from his Ibadan studio. "I don't want to just paint a picture. I want a picture that captures the soul. I want a picture that captures personality. These are the things I want people to see."



Oluwole Omofemi, Metamorphosis I, 2020. Courtesy OOA Gallery

Working in his studio in the center of the city, where he also gives young students art lessons for free, and from a second studio at home, where he can quickly respond to ideas that come to him at night, Omofemi captures his striking subjects in a highly realistic manner. Delicately painting the dark skin tones of his black female models, the artist embellishes their faces with scarification marks of past times to identify his subjects' tribal roots and places emphasis on the styling of his sitters' hair to express their independence.

"I use hair as a metaphor for freedom," Omofemi added. "It's a big part of our identity. In my paintings, I try to tell black people to accept who they are; accept their identity; accept their beauty."

Omofemi selects the colorful clothes and scenarios for his models and takes countless photos before narrowing his choices to one or two images from which to paint. Working with the photograph in hand, he draws on the canvas and then begins to paint, which turns into an elaborate process that can take three to four weeks to complete. After mixing his colors, he paints instinctively while letting his spirit take the reins. An optimistic artist, he challenges himself to reflect that spirit with each new painting.



Oluwole Omofemi, Blue atmosphere, 2021. Courtesy OOA Gallery

The painting *Blue Atmosphere* (2021) presents a portrait of a beautiful black woman wearing a flowered blue dress in a blue room. The round shape of her silver-rimmed glasses, which have a glowing yellow tint, is reiterated in the two round forms that create the shape of her silhouetted hair. The light reflecting off her body and face defines her contour, while her soft red lips and sultry eyes further invite the viewer's visual embrace.

Contrastingly, the canvas *Invader* (2021) offers a look at an introspective young woman who's hairless. Engulfed by a rich blue blanket in a stark yellow setting, she stares out into space pondering the future while reflecting on the past. A symbolic reincarnation of the artist's beloved grandmother, who suffered through chemotherapy before losing her battle with cancer, the portrait poetically projects the inner beauty of the soul onto the figure's dark, flawless face.



Oluwole Omofemi, *Metamorphosis II*, 2020. Courtesy OOA Gallery

In *Sisters II* (2020), two black women wearing bright red Afro wigs stand back-to-back in front of an exploding floral background, that's reminiscent of a 1960s Pop Art pattern. While the vibrant graphic ground and the models' complementary blue dresses are rendered in a flat, two-dimensional style, the featured gazing figures seem real enough to walk off the set and straight out of the painting once we have finished looking at it and them.

Three related paintings—*Metamorphosis I, II* and *III I* (2020)—enchantingly employ a black female model to symbolize the three stages of life: childhood, youth and adulthood.

Portraying the same subject in a black and white polka dot dress against a batik floral field, an Afro-flaunting femme fatale with an accentuated pink lower lip and bright yellow earring glances to the side, then captures our glimpse before confidently confronting us with fixed eyes.



Oluwole Omofemi, Invader, 2021. Courtesy OOA Gallery



Oluwole Omofemi, Yesterday has gone, 2021. Courtesy OOA Gallery



PAUL LASTER

Paul Laster is a writer, editor, curator, artist and lecturer. He's a contributing editor at ArtAsiaPacific and Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art and writer for Time Out New York, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, Galerie Magazine, Sculpture, Art & Object, Cultured, Architectural Digest, Garage, Surface, Ocula, Observer, ArtPulse, Conceptual Fine Arts and Glasstire. He was the founding editor of Arkrush, started The Daily Beast's art section, and was art editor of Russell Simmons' OneWorld Magazine, as well as a curator at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, now MoMA PS1.

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Noah Becker: Editor-in-Chief

Oluwole Omofemi: Why we created Piece Unique for artists

10 March 2023 3:57 am WAT By Rapheal



By Henry Akuburo

By sheer hard work, Omofemi Oluwole has emerged as one of the most celebrated, contemporary Nigerian artists.

After a successful 2022 on the global art scene in which he held a number of international exhibitions and becoming the last official, black artist from Nigeria to paint the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, Oluwole isn't resting on his oars.



The artist also intends to initiate a project for his alma mater, Ibadan Polytechnic, which has become an eyesore. "I feel so sad about the whole thing. It's part of the things I discussed with the state governor, who has agreed to step in. This is part of what came from the recognition I got from painting the queen of England. I am happy this is happening in my lifetime."

The portrait of Queen Elizabeth II was not a direct commission from Buckingham Palace, though, but via a UK magazine, *Tatler*, and it's still housed in London. During an exhibition in London last year, however, there were offers from collectors, but he decided not to sell.

He was thinking of returning the portrait to Nigeria to be kept in a museum to attract art aficionados from all over the world, but it wasn't advisable due to the uncertain security situation in the country, he felt.

Very soon, Omofemi will be travelling to Spain for a short residency programme. Most of the works that will feature in the residency were actually painted by him during a visit to Spain. He will also be exhibiting in New York this year.

"One of the major projects for me this year is the museum exhibition coming up in Spain," he remarked.

The artist has a company called Piece Unique, which aims at "promoting art in Nigeria and also, most especially, giving Nigerian artists a platform to locate their artworks both in the country and outside." The initiative is a collaboration between Omofemi and his friends, which will also see Nigerian artists exhibit home and abroad, as well as manage their careers, because it is a marketing, branding and promotional outfit.

Omofemi is excited that more Nigerians are patronising and investing in art: "it's very good to invest in art rather than invest in drugs and cocaine," he said.

together, tell them part of his stories, especially how he rose from grass to grace.

"Ijewuru Day" was designed as an eating competition in which many people won prizes courtesy of the artist, who also invited a couple of secondary school teachers to give encouraging talks on how the youths could be like him or even better.

Omofemi's feat of painting Queen Elizabeth II of blessed memory has given his art "a new dimension entirely," besides "projecting not only myself, family state and country." He also remembered telling himself when he set out to work on the portrait, "This is not just about painting a portrait. It's about me making a visual statement."

In addition, "One of the things that motivated me while I did the portrait was that I knew I was going to do it for posterity; I was going to paint it for myself; I was going to paint it for my country; I was going to paint it for my family and children's children to see that there was a time Omofemi painted the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. Of course, the programme went very well. I have been getting recognition from far and wide," he said.

Recently, he was privileged to meet his state governor, Seyi Makinde, who was exceedingly grateful that one of his subjects achieved the feat of painting the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

"He met with me officially with his deputy, and he was happy to receive me at the Government House, Ibadan, where I discussed with him how the portrait was commissioned and how I was invited to Buckingham Palace by Prince Charles," he recalled.

The artist also intends to initiate a project for his alma mater, Ibadan Polytechnic, which has become an eyesore. "I feel so sad about the whole thing. It's part of the things I discussed with the state governor, who has agreed to step in. This is part of what came from the recognition I got from painting the queen of England. I am happy this is happening in my lifetime."

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Omofemi is excited that more Nigerians are patronising and investing in art: "it's very good to invest in art rather than invest in drugs and cocaine," he said.

"In the contemporary field today, we have beyond traditional collectors, who have seen art as something valuable, worth investing in, not just buying cars and lands. So the turnout has been so impressive, both in Nigeria and abroad," he echoed.

ROYALS

WATCH: Editor of *Tatler* Richard Dennen introduces Oluwole Omofemi – the artist behind the commemorative Platinum Jubilee cover

In the July issue, the Nigerian artist talks to *Tatler's* Arts Editor Helen Rosslyn about his specially-commissioned portrait of Her Majesty the Queen, which is also appearing in Sotheby's new exhibition, *Power & Image: Royal Portraiture & Iconography*

By Helen Rosslyn
20 May 2022



Oluwole Omofemi gave his all to his portrait of the Queen – a special commission for the cover of *Tatler's* Platinum Jubilee issue. The 34-year-old Nigerian artist always immerses himself in a project, but for Her Majesty, he shut out all distraction: he slept for four weeks in a separate room from his wife, who single-handedly looked after the couple's two children, Oluwatomiwa and Itunu, for the duration of the commission. Often, for hours in the middle of the night, he studied his source photograph – a 1950s portrait of the Queen holding a fan – just letting the project take shape: 'Even eating, I am looking at it on my screensaver,' he says. 'God has helped me to do this...[It is] the most important project of my life so far.'



THE JULY ISSUE

The most important project, maybe, but Omofemi – or ‘Femi’, as he is widely known – took his usual approach to this vivid picture: ‘When I start any project, it is not about how beautiful the painting looks but how I can capture the essence of my subject. I needed to imagine I was in front of the Queen, to connect with her. She is the longest-reigning [monarch], and when I look at her, I see someone who has conquered life. She understands what she needs to do and she knows she can do it well.’

The resulting artwork is a celebration of a strong, iconic woman, painted in oil on canvas in his signature pop-art palette. It’s not only on *Tatler’s* cover that the picture appears – it will also be displayed prominently in the specially curated Sotheby’s exhibition *Power & Image: Royal Portraiture & Iconography*, along with one of Andy Warhol’s screenprints from his 1985 *Reigning Queens* portfolio and the Woburn Abbey Collection’s *Armada Portrait* of Elizabeth I.

Omofemi was born in 1988 and spent his childhood living with his mother and two younger sisters in Ibadan, southern Nigeria. His maternal grandfather was a huge influence, instilling in him the importance of his cultural heritage and a strong code of self-discipline. Indeed, his earliest memories of art involve being ticked off for making a mess. His mother would follow him around when he was just four years old, tidying away the artistic ‘installations’ he created out of household objects – ‘I was always piling up cans and paper and things’ – and despairing as he scribbled on walls and floors. (Omofemi now has a two-year-old boy of his own with his wife, Omolade Titilayo, and laughs as he tells me that his son makes exactly the same kind of mess: ‘My wife is very understanding.’)



OLUWOLE OMOFEMI AND HIS PORTRAIT

Even as a young child, he knew that he was born to paint. But becoming an artist was not considered a viable way of earning a living, and his parents wanted him to train as a doctor or pharmacist. Even his beloved grandfather advised him to put his manual skills to practical use by becoming an electrician. But the quiet confidence detectable in Omofemi today was already in evidence. Throughout his teenage years, he worked hard to earn money, hawking beer, working at a restaurant and in a car wash, saving to buy himself oil paints, brushes and sketchbooks.

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He befriended many of the local roadside artists and began to visit the studio of Tope Fatunmbi, an established Nigerian artist who owned a gallery in Ibadan and became a mentor. The young Femi would watch what Fatunmbi was doing, then go home and create something himself. The next day, he would take it back to the gallery to be assessed. By his teenage years, he was known as the best art student in his school, so good that his teachers commissioned him to paint portraits. 'I was very famous in school,' he laughs. 'Everyone would say, "Oh this guy, he's an artist."'

But it was a shocking exposure to the art world that turned Omofemi into a full-time professional artist: 'The first time I went to an exhibition was in Lagos when I had left school. I saw a painting priced for a ridiculous amount of money and it triggered something in me: this could be a way to realise my dream.' The Nigerian painter Ebenezer Akinola introduced him to Alexis Galleries in Lagos, who instantly recognised the young artist's talent and took him on. Their faith was justified: he sold his first painting as a gallery artist when he was just 18 and things snowballed from that moment on. In 2020, he was given his first exhibition in London. Omofemi's work now hangs in Mayfair at Khalil Akar's gallery, Signature African Art, an outpost of one of Nigeria's leading contemporary art galleries.

As an artist, he says, he is constantly looking for new challenges, so he didn't hesitate when he was asked to undertake *Tatler's* commission. 'It was a wonderful opportunity for me as an artist to be able to add my name to a historic list of people who have painted the Queen, so I was very excited about it.'

The first thing he did was to go away and study the life of the Queen. He wanted to find a picture that captured not just what she looks like but more importantly what he feels about her. ‘Growing up, I heard a lot of good things about the Queen and how impactful she is – not just in the United Kingdom but to the Commonwealth and all over the world.’ The royal visit to Nigeria in 1956 had been of great significance to him; his grandfather had been present when the monarch drove past, waving to everyone, and this encounter became part of Omofemi’s childhood stories. The photograph he used as the starting point for his portrait dates from around the time of this visit. ‘She was so young and yet she had already undertaken so much,’ he says.

A striking feature of his portrait is the impasto paint he has used to highlight certain key details: ‘One of the things that makes the Queen is the crown, and I was looking for a way to capture this differently.’ The same technique is used for the star of the Order of the Garter and the necklace she wears, as well as the diamond bracelet around her wrist, a gift from the Duke of Edinburgh – all of them symbols of her role as Queen. Combined with this are elements that root the painting firmly in the oeuvre of this proudly Nigerian artist. The brocade dress from the original photograph has been given an African flower pattern and the white fur of the ermine robe in her right hand has become a bright turquoise.

But perhaps most remarkable in the context of his work is the Queen’s hair. Most of Omofemi’s portraits depict African women, for whom, he notes, their hair is a key part of their identity. His grandfather, who sported an Afro at the time, was a strong advocate of the natural hair movement of the 1960s, encouraging men and women of African descent to embrace the texture of their hair. For Omofemi, it is an artistic metaphor for freedom and power and he has deliberately depicted the Queen with a bold halo of black hair. ‘Many of the great things the Queen achieved came at a very young age, so I have painted her with black hair. I also wanted to introduce my own style into this painting and, for me, hair represents the power of the woman.’

What did Omofemi find most difficult about this commission? His answer comes immediately: ‘Studying the Queen’s skin tone. I knew this would represent a huge challenge for me because I always paint black women, and I had to conquer my fear.’

But as he knows only too well, with every new challenge comes reward, and he is confident that with this painting he has achieved what he set out to do: ‘This portrait is one of my best works because of the emotion that was put into it.’

True, but Omofemi has done more than that. He has given expression to the great qualities for which our Queen is so widely admired and which every portrait tries to capture: the calm confidence with which she has dedicated herself to the role into which she was born. ‘This person has conquered life.’

Tatler’s Platinum Jubilee issue is on newsstands on 26 May.

[Power & Image: Royal Portraiture & Iconography](#) is on at Sotheby’s from 28 May – 15 June 2022.

Nigerian Artist Oluwole Omofemi Breaks Down His 5 Favorite Paintings

OkayAfrica caught up with Oluwole Omofemi in Ibadan, Nigeria, to talk about five standout paintings and the messages he was trying to convey in the work.

BOLAJI AKINWANDE

August 24, 2022 - 7:23 p.m.



Oluwole Omofemi's work has enjoyed widespread attention worldwide, with exhibitions across galleries in London, Spain, New York, and Italy alongside virtual auctions. Photo Photo Credit: David M. Benett/Dave Benett/Getty Images

In May 2022, [Tatler Magazine](#) contacted [Oluwole Omofemi](#) for a commission to paint a portrait of the Queen of England. This became a turning point for the artist; Omofemi became the first African artist to paint the Queen.

Omofemi is no overnight success. Most of his work has enjoyed widespread attention worldwide, with exhibitions across galleries in London, Spain, New York, and Italy alongside virtual auctions.



Photo Photo Credit: Oluwale Omofemi

The three people in the painting and their painted faces metaphorically and literally represent the transformation of African appearance as far as our culture and fashion are concerned. Before colonization, Africans had their way of life and their way of appearing beautifully dressed. When the Europeans came, they made Africans believe that our culture was archaic and thus reshaped the whole structure of our way of life through civilization, thereby creating distortion in the history of our culture.

Face painting, however, is an integral part of our cultural life as far as African beauty is concerned. Not only does it exist as an art form, it is also of cultural significance. The face paintings and the colorful attires are representations of what the African mode of dressing entails. It is part of our cultural heritage and values which constitutes an integral part of our life as Africans.



Photo Photo Credit: Oluwole Omoferi

The U.S slavery era inspired this piece. The painting depicts a time when the white wives of slave owners would use a gentle strike to their teacup to summon house slaves. "Blue Cup" further outlines the idea of race as a natural division of human beings that was invented to legitimize, facilitate, and bolster a racist agenda. Multiple systems of domination present in society, stemming from long-lasting legacies of categorical racism, colonialism, slavery, and imperialism, elucidate the symbolism and the significance of the teacup in preserving this white rule over the Black body.

ART AND CULTURE

Meet Oluwole Omofemi and Bayo Akande, the founders creating a new art community

Oluwole Omofemi and Bayo Akande, are behind Piece Unique, an artist agency that guides and future-proofs emerging artists' careers

BY MAZZI ODU PUBLISHED OCTOBER 9, 2024 IN [FEATURES](#)



Oluwole Omofemi with his work
(Image credit: Courtesy of the artist)

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Newsletter

‘Since we started Piece Unique, the idea has always been to give back to the art world and especially African artists,’ shares Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi, who together with Bayo Akande has created an artist agency that centres its activities on guiding, capacity building, selling and future-proofing emerging artists’ careers.

‘The thing about me is I can’t see a gap and not plug it,’ adds Akande, whose entrepreneurial career coupled with his enviable private art collection positions him as a perfect business- and aesthetically minded foil to Omofemi’s creative ambitions. A successful debut London art exhibition, ‘Contact Zone’ held at Cromwell Place, is being followed up by ‘Contact Zone II’, a special project debuting at 1:54 London, featuring work by Omofemi alongside Blebo, Boris Anje and Elfreda Dali that has been created in Piece Unique’s Artist Residency in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Omofemi is best known for painting the last commissioned portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, and his successful career has included shows in New York, Paris, Barcelona and Los Angeles. However, notions of home, identity and how it informs one’s practice have never been far from view and he chose to explore them in the residency’s design.

‘One of the things that has actually made my journey more interesting is I have lived all my life in Ibadan and I get the inspiration from Ibadan. When I tell people that this is where I live, they find it difficult to believe. I remember the first time I went to London for an exhibition, the first question I was asked was, “Are you from Lagos?” and I would keep asking “Why?”’

Presenting the case for Ibadan, he adds, ‘In the 1970s and 80s, when you talk about the masters like Lamide Fakeye, or Wole Soyinka, some of the notable people out there today, they all went to the University of Ibadan. The impact of the university, you can’t underestimate that. I believed that bringing artists from outside Nigeria here, for instance, would shape them and give them a different perspective.’

OLUWOLE OMOFEMI

hubChoice

For Nigerian artist and curator Oluwole Omofemi, painting is a means of capturing the beauty he sees in the world and in the people around him. It is a language that he uses to tell not only the stories of the people from his hometown, Ibadan, but also his own.

He frequently employs vivid colour with a sensibility and technical mastery reminiscent of the Old Masters. “From the background colours to the skin tone of my subjects, colour usage for me is by all means symbolic. The vibrant background colours are intended to draw attention to the details surrounding my heroes. I believe colour creates life in my paintings; to imitate life is to choose the colours that appeal to life. For example, in one of my recent works titled *Virgin*, brilliant red signifies the sacred art of purity intertwined with the presence of sexuality and a tenderness that alludes to love.”

The subjects of Omofemi’s portraits range from his family to his friends and strangers. Perhaps most notable amongst them are his arresting portraits of Black women, whose halo-esque hairstyles stand boldly against brightly coloured and tonal backgrounds. Every canvas represents an intangible, intimate dialogue between the subject and the artist. “Each time I paint, I work to understand the soulful desires of my subject, their feelings, their subconscious thoughts, and their mind. This creates a very strong sense of awareness and understanding of these people whom I find most interesting in intricate ways. Sometimes, the volatile feelings of my heroes may interfere with my ability to express their true being, but eventually, recognising their unique nature and distinctive qualities helps me to capture their essence in captivating ways.”

With thanks to OOA Gallery (Out of Africa Gallery)



↑
OLUWOLE OMOFEMI
Mixed feelings, 2022
Oil and acrylic on canvas
150 x 120 cm
Courtesy of OOA GALLERY



Actu

SMIN

Elizabeth II vue par les artistes, d'Andy Warhol à Oluwole Omofemi

par Ingrid Lauquet-Gard
Publié le 9 septembre 2022 à 15h15
Mis à jour le 11 février 2026 à 11h05



Lien de l'article complet : <https://www.lesinrocks.com/art/elizabeth-ii-vue-par-les-artistes-dandy-warhol-a-oluwole-omofemi-496902-09-09-2022/>

Culture

Ils révolutionnent l'art africain et leurs toiles s'arrachent pour des milliers de dollars

Tels Amoako Boafo et Oluwole Omofemi, ils viennent du Ghana, du Nigeria ou d'Afrique du Sud, et triomphent dans les ventes d'art contemporain : la peinture africaine connaît un essor sans précédent. Explications et visite guidée.

Par David Caviglioli

Publié le 19 juin 2021 à 16h00 | Lecture : 7 min. Abonné



Lien de l'article complet : <https://www.lesinrocks.com/art/elizabeth-ii-vue-par-les-artistes-dandy-warhol-a-oluwole-omofemi-496902-09-09-2022/>

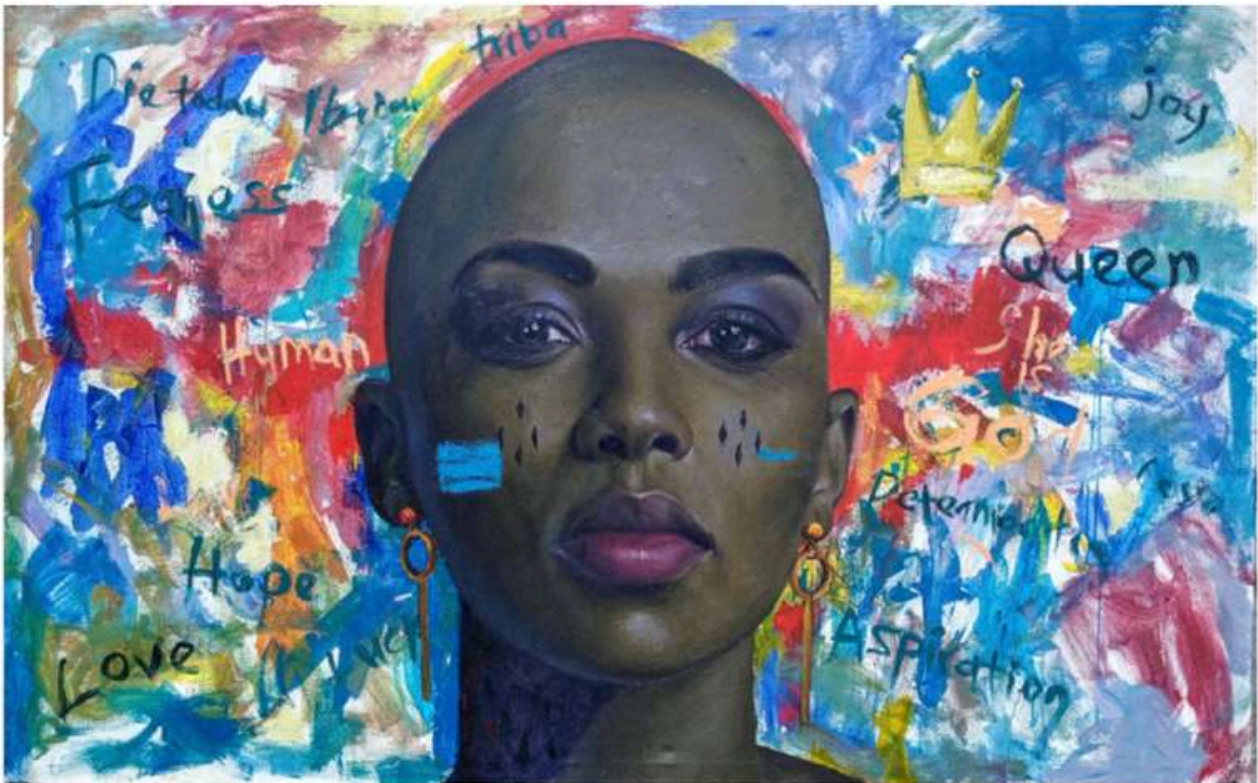
Oluwole Omofemi – interview: ‘In my paintings, I try to tell the black community to embrace their beauty, to embrace their colour’

The Nigerian artist talks about how he uses hair – specifically the afro – as a metaphor for freedom and power, and a symbol of identity

Studio International spoke to Omofemi just before the opening of his first exhibition in London, and before the coronavirus restrictions came in to place, at Signature African Art’s new Mayfair venue.



Oluwole Omofemi (b1988, Ibadan, Nigeria) always wanted to be an artist, despite opposition from his family. As a child, he learned about the civil rights movement and the natural hair movement of the late 60s and early 70s from his grandfather, who, at the time, sported an afro. Omofemi now uses hair in his paintings as a metaphor for freedom and power, and as a symbol of identity. Some of his series use the more muted palette of the old masters, showing how entrenched identity and culture are in a person’s belief system; others use a brighter, pop art palette, portraying energy and strength and looking to the future. Whatever the style, he considers his work to be African at heart.



Oluwole Omofemi. *In Her*, 2019. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 230 x 150 cm. Courtesy of Signature African Art.

One work in particular stands out from the others on display – *In Her* (2019), depicting a bald woman set against a bright, almost street art-style background, covered in words such as hope, love, aspiration and queen. This piece is dedicated to Omofemi's grandmother, who died of cancer, as well as to raising awareness of the disease, and showing that a cancer diagnosis is not necessarily the end of everything: there is always hope. Other works are dedicated to his mother, through the use of floral patterns. In general, Omofemi sees women as close to God, in their ability to love, accept and forgive. This is why the majority of his subjects – and all of those in this exhibition – are female.



Oluwole Omofemi. Omonalisa, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 120 x 120 cm. Courtesy of Signature African Art.

Oluwole Omofemi: The Way We Were
[Signature African Art, London](#)
12 March – 16 April 2020

Interview by ANNA McNAY
Filmed by MARTIN KENNEDY

One Dream at a Time exhibition spotlights rising artists in Ibadan

Tribune Online | August 6, 2025

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By: **Eniola Shobiye**

IN a colourful blend of creativity and celebration, the Oluwole Omofemi Studio in Ibadan, recently played host to an art exhibition titled, 'One Dream at a Time,' organised to spotlight emerging talents in Nigeria's art scene and to commemorate the 30th birthday of visual artist, David Olatoye.

The exhibition featured the works of seven budding artists, whose pieces explored powerful themes of memory, identity, and the concept of home. For many of the artists, it was their first time presenting on such a prominent platform.

Convener of the exhibition, David Olatoye, described the event as a deeply personal project and a symbolic birthday gift to himself. "I am a dreamer," he told the Nigerian Tribune.

In his words "This is my way of laying a legacy, supporting younger artists and showing that dreams can become reality if you commit to them."

Olatoye, who began his journey into art promotion by sharing and selling artworks through Instagram, explained that "One Dream at a Time" marked his transition from digital promotions to curating physical spaces. "I've been mentored and I'm still learning under a mentor, and I believe the same should be done for others coming behind. The vision is to help and position these young artists for global recognition," he said.

Curated by Frances Akintuoye, the exhibition emphasised community-building, growth, and the visibility of underrepresented voices in art. According to her, artists were selected based on their commitment and intentionality. "We wanted to shine a light on artists who have put in the work, even if they're still finding their feet. It's a dream come true for me and, hopefully, a turning point for many of them," she said.

Akintuoye, who began curating exhibitions while still an undergraduate, noted that events like this could reshape the country's art landscape.

"This is not just about Ibadan; it's about creating an enabling environment for young artists across Nigeria," she added.

As part of the initiative, each artwork displayed at the exhibition was available for sale, an effort by Olatoye to ensure that these young talents are empowered to earn from their craft.

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One of the featured artists, Samson Olatunbosun, shared his appreciation for the platform and its impact on his artistic journey. "I have followed David's work for years. His consistency inspired me to believe in my own art. I am thankful for this opportunity and I will keep creating," he said.

With 'One Dream at a Time,' Olatoye and his team may have just opened a new chapter in how young artists are nurtured and celebrated in Nigeria's vibrant, ever-evolving creative space.

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Features | Arts and Culture

'The past glory is returning': Ibadan's nascent artistic revival

Oluwole Omofemi is just one of many rising artistic stars in Nigeria's third-largest city.

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Collectors send emissaries to find Omofemi's Ibadan studio, hoping to entice him to sell his works directly [Oluwafemi Amogunla/Al Jazeera]



By Amber Sijuwade

Ibadan, Nigeria – Less than a year ago, a painting by Oluwole Omofemi hung, unguarded, at the side entrance to the grey concrete building where he maintains his two-room studio.

Just steps above one of Ibadan’s busiest thoroughfares, the young woman in the portrait had a confident stance, her face framed by a halo-like afro. She hung exposed yet unbothered by hundreds of passersby.

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Earlier this year, Omofemi removed the painting for safe keeping in his personal collection after similar works from his Metamorphosis series were sold for more than 100,000 euros (\$96,000) in auctions at Phillips and Christie’s. In March 2022, *Invader*, a painting that had an estimated value of \$10,000 to \$15,000, sold for \$189,000.

Like the painting, until recently Omofemi, 34, has been hiding in plain sight in one of Ibadan’s most active commercial centres, where he established his current studio space in 2018.

“I want to be very quiet,” Omofemi told Al Jazeera. “I want to live a normal life that an average citizen [would] live.”

He recalls a moment at a party when people were discussing Nigerian artists and the subject shifted to him.

“People were saying, ‘There’s this one guy in Ibadan. This guy has been making this, has been doing that,’ and I was just there, quiet,” he said. “A lot of these collectors don’t even know me.”



Butterfly Kiss, 2021 [Courtesy of Oluwole Omofemi]

But Omofemi's hopes of staying under the radar are dwindling.

In April, the third solo show of his career opened at Out of Africa Gallery in Barcelona, with all 10 paintings sold and a waiting list of 75 potential buyers.



Omofemi, 34, has been in his current Ibadan studio since 2018 [Oluwafemi Amogunla/Al Jazeera]

Omofemi's rise is bringing more attention to his hometown of Ibadan – Nigeria's third largest city by population, with more than 6 million people, located some 140km (85 miles) northeast of Lagos.

While Ibadan came to be eclipsed by Lagos as Nigeria's cultural powerhouse, its legacy as an incubator for many of Nigeria's most celebrated artists and intellectuals long precedes Omofemi, and he is just one of the many artists sparking a nascent creative revival in the city.

'Dreams beyond money'

Founded in Ibadan in 1961, the Mbari Club, with its gallery space, library, and performance venue, was not only the artistic centre of the city but of Nigeria as a whole. Members included visual artist Bruce Onobrakpeya and young writers Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Now giants of Nigerian modern art, Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko were both active members.

In the 1960s, Ibadan was Nigeria's most populous city and an international destination. Malcolm X lectured at the University of Ibadan in 1964. Visual artists, including Somali modernist Ibrahim El-Salahi and the widely-acclaimed American painter Jacob Lawrence, travelled to participate in the creative exchanges at the Mbari Club.

When drummer and visual artist Tunde Odunlade moved from Ife to Ibadan in 1973, the city was still "a melting pot where the development of contemporary art [in] Nigeria took off ... there was no artist from Nigeria that would not pass through Ibadan – musical, visual, dance".

But, over almost 50 years in the city, Odunlade witnessed the shift of the country's artistic centre from Ibadan to Lagos.

"Lagos became the commercial hub of the country, and it was easy for art to flow there," Odunlade said.



'Lagos became the commercial hub of the country, and it was easy for art to flow there,' Tunde Odunlade said [Oluwafemi Amogunla/Al Jazeera]

However, Odunlade and others have sought to revive Ibadan's artistic scene in recent years.

As a well-established visual artist in his own right, he founded Tunde Odunlade Arts and Culture Connexions in Ibadan's Bodija district in December 2020. The gallery space features a wide range of works, having displayed the works of more than 80 artists since opening.

Equally notable is that it provides a welcoming and accessible location for young cultural practitioners interested in reviving Ibadan's artistic energy to stage events, meetings and workshops.

"The past glory of Ibadan is now returning, and I'm glad that I'm part of the whole story," Odunlade asserts.

"I'm not surprised about what is happening in Ibadan today, especially with Oluwole Omofemi. I'm not surprised because he lives in an environment where there's peace, where your inspiration will not just disappear because of hullabaloo around you."



About 25 minutes' drive away from Odunlade's centre, luxury handbag designer Femi Olayebi's administrative headquarters and factory occupy two full storeys in an unmarked building in central Ibadan.

During her 30-year career, Olayebi has been selected for a merchandising mentorship programme at Saks 5th Avenue, completed a fellowship at MIT, and founded the Lagos Leather Fair, all while successfully scaling up the business she founded from her home into a team of dozens of employees.

At different points in her career, Olayebi recalls wondering, "If I were in Lagos, would I have succeeded faster? Would I have succeeded earlier? At the beginning, I thought 'yes', but now I'm wiser, and I know that the answer is an absolute no."

Olayebi feels "the stress of Lagos doesn't exist in Ibadan. Ibadan affords you the ability to be creative because you're not sitting in traffic for hours on end ... And then there's also the fact that, in Lagos, to have [the] kind of space that I have, would have cost me an absolute fortune."

Like Olayebi, painter Modupeola Fadugba has had many successes in her career. The former Smithsonian Fellow and recent New York Emmy winner in the category of DEI Long Form Content for her short documentary, *Dreams from the Deep End*, has made a conscious choice to base her practice in Ibadan.

"I've always been someone that doesn't quite like to be in the centre," she explains. "But I can have access to it if and when I'm ready."

Fadugba chose to settle in Ibadan. "It is quiet, so I can think and have a lot more space."



Modupeola Fadugba explains her reason for choosing Ibadan as 'it is quiet, so I can think and have a lot more space'
[Oluwafemi Amogunla/Al Jazeera]

Omofemi also credits Ibadan as being integral to his development.

“I’m very sensitive to the things around me, both the visible and spiritual – very, very sensitive, and I get my inspiration from everything I see.”

While Omofemi has been influenced by Ibadan, it has been the challenges that it has presented that have propelled him to international stardom.

Omofemi’s current studio is less than 10 minutes by motorcycle from the roadside kiosk where he used to sell commissioned portraits for the equivalent of \$10 to \$30, a living that he was comfortable with at the time.



In Him I Trust, 2021 [Courtesy of Oluwale Omofemi]

All of that was disrupted in 2017 when the Oyo State Government launched a city-wide campaign against street vending, forcing him from the location where he had sold his work since secondary school.

Ibadan-based painter and gallery owner Tope Fatunmbi had been encouraging Omofemi's career since secondary school, while respected painter Ebenezer Akinola also served as an important mentor.

Although Omofemi was initially certain that his art career was over, Akinola began to introduce him and his work to established galleries.

"He took me to Lagos, and he introduced my painting to [Alexis] Gallery, and the gallery was so excited to work with me."

He exhibited at Lagos mainstays, including Terra Kulture and Thought Pyramid, but it was Signature Gallery that saw his work as viable in the international market. They launched the opening of their London gallery with a solo show of Omofemi's work in March 2020. The 12 large-scale portraits sold out.

Today, the intensified spotlight on his work has led to multiple offers from the world's top auction houses to broker the sale of *The Queen* along with bidding wars for exclusive auction rights to his other works.

Back in Ibadan, with up to 10 young apprentices in his studio at any given time, Omofemi remains dedicated to nurturing the next generation of the city's artistic talents.

"My thoughts, my dreams [are] beyond just having money," he asserts.

"I spent most of my life here ... I have always wanted to give back to my immediate environment in my community. I don't want to be an artist without impact. I want to be an artist with a footprint in people's lives."

Meet the Nigerian artist whose muse is Black women and their natural hair



Jamilah Rose-Roberts speaks to Oluwole Omofemi about his depictions of natural hair and their shared understanding of the African diaspora.

ART ART + CULTURE CULTURE

July 6, 2022

The Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi certainly has a muse: the Black woman and her natural hair. For Omofemi, hair is a metaphor for freedom, power and identity, and through his wonderfully evocative portraits he seeks to uplift Black women to be themselves and embrace their independence in equal parts. “My message concerning Black hair and Black women is unequivocal and direct,” says

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the artist, who recently gave the Queen a bold crown of black hair in a new Platinum Jubilee portrait. “For a long time African women have been deprived of many things because of their gender. My paintings aim to empower women to stand and fight for their constitutional rights.”

Born in 1988 in South Ibadan, Nigeria, to humble beginnings, Omofemi was singled out as a child for his artistic talents. Tapping into the themes of his seminal work at a young age, he learnt about the civil rights and natural hair movement of the late 1960s and 1970s from his grandfather, who wore an Afro. His grandfather’s wisdom and guidance impressed on the young artist the importance of preserving culture, heritage and historical traditions, which is evident in his subjects. They are often adorned with halo-esque Afros or have completely bald sakora hairstyles, as well as scarification marks to identify their roots. As Omofemi puts it so eloquently: “Hair speaks volumes about our values and cultural heritage as Africans.”

Here, the artist discusses the motif of hair, how emotions influence his far-reaching creativity and his desire to champion Yoruba traditions.

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JRR: It sounds like you share your own emotional experience when painting. Do your emotions impact on your creativity?

OO: My emotions have greatly influenced my paintings and have also helped my creativity as an artist in many ways. As an emotional being, my feelings have dictated the subject of my work, along with my choice of colour palette. For example, the painting *In Her* [2019] was created when I lost my paternal grandmother to the cold hands of death. At that moment my emotional state of mind formed that wonderful piece of artwork.

JRR: Inclusive of your emotions, you're something of an activist, as your portraits champion social-political issues. Why is this so important to you?

OO: My assertiveness and relevance as an artist can be attributed to many key factors. These include diligence, perseverance and hard work – all of which I had engraved on the tablet of my heart. I also like to conduct research before beginning a new piece and strive to bring impact and assiduousness.

JRR: Your paintings of women as antelopes are red-olent. Having learnt about Yoruba tales, according to Ijebu lore, the antelope became a water spirit because of its unwilling involvement in human attempts to capture bothersome spirits. Can you tell us more about why you chose the antelope as a muse?

OO: Well, my perspective or usage of antelopes in my paintings is somewhat different from the general interpretation. Some animals generally possess some characteristics that are sometimes attributed to human beings because of our belief system. An example of this is when someone says that a person is as bold or courageous as a lion. That doesn't mean the person is a lion, he is simply described with an attribute of a lion – to show how

strong or courageous the person is. I have noticed with antelopes that they communicate decisiveness and speed of action, which requires us to step out of our own heads. To stop thinking singularly but try to start to feel everything. Antelopes possess some interesting characteristics that human beings should be encouraged to imbibe.



Untitled Yellow, 2022 ©Oluwole Omofemi. Courtesy of Out of Africa Gallery London.

JRR: You're deeply inspired by African and Black women's hair. Are you seeking to encourage Black people to embrace their natural hair, and thus their implicit power and freedom?

OO: My message concerning Black hair and Black women is unequivocal and direct. For a long time, African women have been deprived of many things because of their gender. My paintings aim to empower women to stand and fight for their constitutional rights. To end any schemes and unfortunate vices fashioned to put a clog in the wheel of their progress.

JRR: I feel empowered by your words! Can you elaborate on your perception of what hair represents?

OO: Where I am from, hair is very peculiar and is seen as mystical. Apart from the fact that hair defines the sumptuous beauty of African women, it is also spiritual. It is a symbolic representation of what hair means and transcends the literal interpretation we give. In the past, hair, particularly Afro hair, represents a movement. It is an expression of resistance, reclamation and actualisation. In this period, when we are still faced with similar racial and tribal challenges, it becomes even more pertinent to deploy the same attitude, given the current globalisation of interactions, whereby cultural clashes are inevitable. Hair speaks volumes about our values and cultural heritage as Africans. Focus- ing on our unique hairstylings helps to salvage our negritude in the face of hybridisation as we confront political disruptions leading to expansions in the diaspora.

JRR: I love your depiction of African women in *Boss Lady* and *Fearless* [both 2021]. The Yoruba tribal marks are scarifications, which are specific identification and beautification marks designed on the face or body of the Yoruba people. It's a cultural signifier that indicates a person's tribal heritage and it's dying, sadly. Can you tell us more about this body of work?

OO: As Africans, we respect our culture and traditions as it constitutes part of our way of life. As you pointed out, the Yoruba tribal mark signifies identity and beauty. Each tribal mark is immediately deciphered by virtue of a person's tribe, spiritual protection, family or patrilineal heritage. During the transatlantic slave trade, tribal identification became important. Consequently I do my best as an artist to rejuvenate this dying tribal heritage through some of my works.

JRR: In Her is a piece that really stands out – the artwork portrays a bald woman against a colourful background, adorned with words and phrases such as “She is God”, “Queen”, “Joy”, and “Love”. I sense that it is a very personal work.

OO: The story behind the painting was inspired by a sad event in my life that I am still struggling to grasp. The bald woman in it represents my paternal grandmother, who died of cancer. After undergoing some tests, it was discovered that the situation would not have deteriorated to that extent if she had paid attention to her health. She battled until she couldn’t any longer. It was a moment I wished had never happened. The painting was to keep her memory alive and signify hope and love for those battling cancer.

Writer Jamilah Rose-Roberts

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HUNGER

Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi gives the Queen black hair in new Platinum Jubilee portrait

Most of artist Oluwole Omofemi portraits depict African women, for whom hair is a key part of their identity



Victoria Ward

Victoria is the Deputy Royal Editor for The Telegraph. See more

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Artist Oluwole Omofemi with his portrait of the Queen Credit: Oluwole Omofemi

The Queen has been given a bold halo of black hair by a Nigerian artist in a new portrait.

The painting, by artist [Oluwole Omofemi](#), was commissioned for a special collector's edition of Tatler magazine to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

It will go on public display at Sotheby's in London as part of the auction house's jubilee season, sitting alongside portraits of each of the seven queens regnant of Britain, including the iconic Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I, on loan from the Woburn Abbey collection.

Most of Mr Omofemi's portraits depict African women, for whom hair is a key part of their identity.

For him, it is "an artistic metaphor for freedom and power" and he deliberately depicted the monarch with what the magazine described as "a bold halo of black hair."

'When I look at the Queen, I see someone who has conquered life'

Mr Omofemi said: "Many of the great things the Queen achieved came at a very young age, so I have painted her with black hair.

"I also wanted to introduce my own style into this painting and, for me, hair represents the power of the woman."

The artist said he was focused on capturing "the essence" of his subject.

"I needed to imagine I was in front of the Queen, to connect with her," he said.

"She is the longest reigning (monarch), and when I look at her, I see someone who has conquered life. She understands what she needs to do and she knows she can do it well."

The photograph used as the starting point for the portrait was taken around the time of the Queen's 1956 visit to Nigeria, when Mr Omofemi's grandfather saw her drive past, waving to everyone.



The Queen during her Commonwealth visit to Nigeria, Feb 1956 Credit: Hulton Archive

He described the piece as the most important project of his life so far, adding: "Growing up, I heard a lot of good things about the Queen and how impactful she is - not just in the United Kingdom but to the Commonwealth and all over the world.

"She was so young and yet she had already undertaken so much."

Richard Dennen, Tatler editor, said he wanted to commission a young Commonwealth artist to honour the Queen's global status.

"It was England rugby player and art connoisseur Maro Itoje who introduced me to Oluwole Omofemi, a young artist based in south Nigeria, whose bold and unique style I knew immediately would lend itself to this historic moment," he added.

Mr Itoje, who supports the Signature African Art gallery, which represents Omofemi, said: "It has been an absolute pleasure working on this project alongside Oluwole Omofemi and Tatler.

"Projects as special as this one do not come around very often... This piece of art captures the strength, elegance and dignity that the Queen has symbolised in her 70 years on the throne and it has been an honour being a part of this historic story."

The painting will be displayed as part of Sotheby's exhibition, Power & Image: Royal Portraiture & Iconography from May 28 until June 15 in London.

Tatler's July issue is on sale from May 26

RISE TO STARDOM

OLUWOLE OMOFEMI



RAPHAEL DAPAAH
@rdapaahgallery
ART CONTRIBUTOR

2020 WILL FOREVER BE ETCHED IN HISTORY AS ONE OF THE

MOST LIFE CHANGING YEARS IN MODERN TIMES.

Between enduring a global health pandemic and the restrictions, disruption and turmoil that came with it, to witnessing a huge uptake in socio-political activism, civil rights campaigns, and revolutionary sentiments spearheaded by the Black Lives Matter movement, the turn of the new decade has been nothing short of seismic.

In the midst of all of this chaos and uncertainty, with the art industry reeling from the hard blows of the pandemic forcing the closure of galleries, and the cancellation and postponement of major art fairs; all artists were faced with an existential dilemma; fight or flight?

To the credit of most artists, and indeed, the art industry at large, and contrary to earlier predictions and expectations of a slump in the market reminiscent of the Wall Street crash a century prior, not only did many artists survive through the pandemic and experience greater productivity and depth in their work, but they also thrived.

With the industry pivoting to embrace the 'new normal' of virtual and online exhibitions, and with the lower barriers of entry and increased accessibility to artists by virtue of social media, a surge

in the rise of new collectors, artists and industry players, reached a fever pitch, creating an unprecedented demand for contemporary art.

The wake of this growing demand and access to contemporary art, took place against the backdrop of a heightened political climate; marked by the murder of George Floyd in the United States, the rise of right-wing nationalism globally, and a growing cultural renaissance and spirit of self-determination amongst the African diaspora.

Enter: Oluwole Omofemi.

Today, as Oluwole Omofemi begins his debut solo exhibition with Out of Africa Gallery, to describe him as a generational artist would be considered not only a matter of fact, but also an understatement.

Much like the post-World War II abstract expressionism artists, such as Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman, Omofemi's rise to contemporary art stardom is rooted in the turbulent and revolutionary socio-political environment of the past, as well as in the times in which he now lives, and works.

When speaking to the peers of Omofemi, artists from his native Nigeria, who he has come up with, or those he now mentors, they all speak with a great deal of pride, and adulation for him, describing him as a torch bearer and a vessel of hope for them.

Born in 1988, and hailing from the inner streets of South Ibadan, Nigeria, Omofemi's humble beginnings and steep ascent to the pinnacle of the contemporary African art scene is nothing short of inspirational. Readily identified

by his neighbors and community as a promising artist from his early childhood, Omofemi would later use the proceeds he would gain from hawking beer, as part of the everyday grind of living in Ibadan, to buy sketchbooks and art materials to facilitate and incubate his passion.

However, it wasn't the hustle and bustle of life in the vibrant Ibadan metropolis, nor the early signs of his natural gift for creativity and art that would inform what would later make Omofemi one of the most serious and influential artists of his generation. That great honor and tribute is owed to his grandfather, of whom Omofemi was deeply fond of, and influenced by. It was his

grandfather's wisdom and guidance that impressed upon the young artist the importance of the preservation of culture, heritage and ancient customs, and instilled in the artist an appreciation for self-love, pride, and determination, which today he captures

EXCLUSIVE



Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi gives 1955 portrait of Queen Elizabeth a pop art twist

news24

Compiled by Bronwyn McKay

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Queen Elizabeth II

Photo: Getty Images

Tatler magazine's July issue is celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee.

The magazine commissioned an oil painting of the monarch by Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi.

The artwork is inspired by a 1950s portrait of the queen.

Tatler magazine's July issue celebrates Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee with a specially commissioned cover.

The oil painting is by Nigerian artist Oluwole Omofemi, who has infused his own style elements in the piece inspired by a 1950s portrait of the monarch.

Omofemi kept some elements of the original photo - including the queen's George IV State Diadem tiara, Nizam of Hyderabad necklace and a sash adorned with the star of the Order of the Garter - but added other elements, including a bright yellow background and a floral pattern to the monarch's dress.



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The photograph that Omofemi, 34, based his painting on dates from around the time of the Queen's 1956 visit to Nigeria, where the artist's grandfather had seen her as she drove past, waving to the crowds.

"Growing up, I heard a lot of good things about the Queen and how impactful she is - not just in the United Kingdom but to the Commonwealth and all over the world...She was so young, and yet she had already undertaken so much," Omofemi told the magazine.

SEE THE ORIGINAL PORTRAIT HERE:



A 1955 portrait of Queen Elizabeth II of England.

Photo: Getty Images

Aside from appearing on the magazine's cover, the artwork will also go on display in Sotheby's exhibition *Power & Image: Royal Portraiture & Iconography*.

It will appear alongside works like Andy Warhol's screenprints from his 1985 *Reigning Queens* portfolio and the Woburn Abbey Collection's *Armada Portrait* of Elizabeth I, *People* magazine reports.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for me as an artist to be able to add my name to a historic list of people who have painted the Queen... This portrait is one of my best works because of the emotion that was put into it," Omofemi said of his creation.

[WATCH A BTS VIDEO OF THE OIL PAINTING HERE:](#)