

CU-ULTURE AND TRADITION: SAME EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT LOCAL

An exhibition curated by Adeola Arthur Ayoola
The Koppel Project Hive

5 October – 16 November 2018

Private View: 4 October 2018 6-8pm

Jumoke Sanwo | Dennis Osadebe | Gbolahan Ayoola
Williams Chechet | Olawunmi Banjo | Uzoma Anyanwu | Ayobola Kekere-Ekun
Habeb Andu | Suraj Adekola | Bob-Nosa Uwagboe

The Koppel Project is pleased to present *Cu-ulture and Tradition: Same Experience, Different Local*, curated by Adeola Arthur Ayoola (Kanbi Contemporary). This exhibition brings together ten mid-career and emerging artists living and working in Nigeria.

Cu-ulture and Tradition: Same Experience, Different Local examines the contrast between local cultural context with 'translocal' experiences to construct the notion of cultural identity in 21st century Africa and its diaspora. 'Culture' is premised on a sense of collective identity bounded by shared ideas within hierarchical societies. Today, we live in an era where there is a shift towards the transfer of allegiance from vertical societies to more fluid, horizontal groups caused by globalisation, technology, and new media. In these horizontal societies, cultural identity is no longer based on rigid social constructs or geographical abstracts, but rather fluid associations or connections across physical and virtual boundaries.

In the critically acclaimed *Things Fall Apart* by African's best-known novelist, Chinua Achebe, he espoused the differences in culture in the context of post-colonial society in the quote "the world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others." But in today's interconnected global community cultural identity is based on 'translocal' experiences, as posited by the writer Taiye Selasi in her famous Ted talk *Don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm local*.

This exhibition is an ensemble of diverse perspectives across photography, painting and digital media to create a representation of cultural identity as an idea less defined by rigid borders. **Jumoke Sanwo's** photographic works navigate postcolonial identities, questioning pre-existing notions of self and identity through her conceptual framework. This framework is largely informed by the Japanese word 'dochakuka' ('glocalization' or 'glocal') where the individual cultures, histories, or traditions are presented as independent components within a global picture.



With his vibrant post-pop style, **Dennis Osadebe** uses play and provocation to invite viewers to critically think about their world and their place within it. Central to his narrative is the symbol of the helmet as protective gear that shields from external influences yet portrays a sense of anonymity to disguise self-identity. **Habeeb Andu's** works are characterised by vibrant colours, large brush strokes, and intricate discarded materials create textured surfaces to explore socio-political themes and the construction of cultural identity in the context of Africa's polity.

Paintings from **Gbolahan Ayoola's** *Blue Woman* series is an introspection on the impact of culture on gender identity. Through apparitions in his dreams, Ayoola depicts modern femininity through the aura of the 'blue woman' adorned beautifully with geometric shapes inspired by African architecture. **Ayobola Kekere-Ekun's** work explores the subtle interplay between time, space, gender, power, and social structures in contemporary society. In her *E No Concern Me* series, she explores the privilege and power dynamics in society; the fabrics are a visual representation of her inclination towards conformity, symbolized by the use of 'aso-ebi' in West African culture. **Uzoma Samuel Anyanwu's** photo-realistic portraits tell extraordinary stories. His use of the Ankara fabric, with intricate lines and colours, creates a seemingly biographical narrative of contemporary African identity.

The series *Sense of Self* by **Olawunmi Banjo** consists of realistic and surrealist paintings and act as an invitation to engage in visual introspection on the construct of self-identity in the digital age of selfies, and as a means of social identity affirmation. **Williams Chechet's** illustrations from his *We Are The North* series combine pop-art and portraiture to provide a fresh perspective of African identity. **Bob-Nosa Uwagboe's** naïvely stylised, but thought-provoking works investigate the dynamics of socio-political issues of contemporary Africa. Through rooftop and market place landscape paintings, **Suraj Adekola's** works details how every individual becomes absorbed into the fabric of the larger cultural community.

Cu-ulture and Tradition: Same Experience, Difference Local aims to illustrate the pluralised 'translocal' African perspective created by new media which is reshaping customs and traditions that are at variance with modernity.

For further information:

The Koppel Project Hive
26 Holborn Viaduct, London EC1A 2AT
info@thekoppelproject.com
www.thekoppelproject.com



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