

Nana Bruce

Love Story: Dancing Hearts

3rd August- 31st August 2023, Gallery II Accra



'In the Shelter of Your Arms' 2023, 152cm x 182cm, Acrylic on Canvas, Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 is delighted to present 'Love Story: Dancing Hearts' a solo exhibition by figurative and portrait artist Nana Bruce following his recent residency with the Gallery in Accra.

'Love Story: Dancing Hearts' is a heartfelt collection of paintings created in the acrylic medium, inspired by the poetic voice through which reality as an impulse is processed and shared by all whether they be conscious or unconscious of it.

In an age of robotic evolution where the frontiers of scientific inventions are being tested and pushed to define their limits, we are fortunate to have the artist embrace his poetic voice as a part of what makes him feel complete, in a world where it is often starved and stifled in the background of our busy schedules and fast paced lives.

Bruce has been intentional, considering this voice as his foremost in respect to the search for the joy of life in relationships, our passions, invitations to lust, desires, secluded thoughts not often shared, et cetera, all of which he has masterfully captured within his impressionistic technique, diverse colour palette and intentional use of masking tape.

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Gallery

Within this collection, Bruce shares stories in paintings as a way to define the spine of the society he finds himself in. Considering that the collection was birthed almost a decade ago through a piece of poetry which has now metamorphosed and been broken into various paintings; an act seeming of the allegory of Jesus breaking his body as bread with the disciples. The poem, titled 'a lost song' reads as follows:

“you do not fall
in love with your heart
use your head /
this song / this been it /
held in pitch by swarms for a choir
who've known nothing
but irking aches
and disappointment.

the heart
is a jewel
many aren't
awakened
to appreciate
though it beats
for all -
in their dreamless
sour sleep /
the spark of this gem
is cast to mud
like pigs at play
grunting to a snore –

in spite of this /
what is it that makes
a woman's charm
divinely captivating /
like bee to pollen
wrestles the eyes
of its agents for her yearning /
keeps their fingers
and tongues
restless without it [?]

look /
look at
this gathering
of muscles for a heart /
like fist to a punch bag
its beats rattling
whispering ripples /
whipping life through
for an unleash -

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knowing no other
exercising but love.

this love
that knows
nothing for a bother
but itself /
i want to know it too
which stakes it'd take
to feel at home
enlivened in the heart
of a lover in synced rhythm /
our tears and traumas
poured to the calm
after the storm.

and in a testimony of faith /
this force that makes me
tremble like the rumblings
of thunder though
i demand not smite /
but the torment of pain
laid to rest
like a wreath
on a tomb /
essence eased
into stone
like an epitaph
engraved.”

This collection is an inquiry into what leads to disagreement or conflicts, while pursuing the joy of living as a shared experience in intimacy. despite this pursuit, people are often plagued with a manner of waves that can sabotage the fulfilment they seek based on the influences of their environment, responses and class distinctions. although these sides of ourselves are often concealed both in life and within gallery spaces, here, Bruce illuminates our shadows, pale bodies and the spaces they inhabit, and projects thoughts, emotions, onto the canvas so that we might enquire within ourselves to find meaning and resolution. working in acrylic on canvas, Bruce has used a number of bristle brushes, ranging from very soft to hard, to create different textures in order to achieve his goal of expression. by that, he's captured various moods for a kind of sensitivity enabling him to create drama to invite his audience into a space or world of inquiry in which the works can be engaged.

In a manner that lends heart to the project / calligraphy / an art form which has almost lost its essence to embracing new technology on the Accra art scene / was used to anchor the complimenting poems / serving as soul and guardian to the paintings.

In conclusion, i dare say that the artist has struck a vein of gold in the context of his process, as an observer of his society, seeking inquiry, making an effort to bring what many would have kept as silent thoughts to the fore for interrogation and critique. expressing brilliance by being bare, not necessarily

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pursuing a trend nor wanting to impress anyone but clarity / a story has been told in inviting tones of colour to serve the value chain of art interestingly made with spirit.

- Curatorial text by Elikplim Akorli

About the Artist

Nana Bruce (b.1988 Accra, lives and works in Accra)

Nana Bruce is a figurative and portrait artist born in 1988. He lives and works in Accra, Ghana. After graduating from Ghanatta College of Art and Design in 2012, he has been practicing as a full-time artist, experimenting with tools and materials, and investigating, researching and experiencing the life behind the spirited crowds and individuals around him. By doing so, he unearths the latest trends in his country, identifies the topics he would like to address, and paints a picture of contemporary Ghanaian society. Ultimately, Nana Bruce offers the observer an inside look of the society through his eyes, both as an artist and a citizen. On the canvas, he applies thick strokes of acrylic paint in an impressionist technique to visualize his narrative.

About Gallery 1957

Based in Accra, with a London outpost opened in 2020, Gallery 1957 has a curatorial focus on West Africa. Presenting a programme of exhibitions, installations and performances by the region's most significant artists, the gallery serves as a vital platform, promoting West Africa's presence within the art scene by hosting ambitious exhibitions, providing resources for residencies, and participating in international art fairs. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, Gallery 1957 has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting. The gallery now hosts three spaces in Accra – one in the Kempinski Hotel and two in the Galleria Mall – and a London outpost in Hyde Park Gate.

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Title: Love Story: Dancing Hearts

Dates: 3rd August – 31st August 2023

Opening Reception: 3rd August 2023 - 6pm-9pm

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