

# Gallery 1957

**Gallery 1957, Accra**

***Homecoming: The Aesthetic of the Cool* A group show by Amoako Boafo, Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe and Kwesi Botchway**

**25 March - 09 May 2021**

**Gallery II, Accra**



Amoako Boafo, *Untitled* (work in progress), Courtesy the artist and Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 celebrates their fifth anniversary with a group show of new works by three leading Ghanaian painters: Amoako Boafo (b.1984), Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe (b.1988) and Kwesi Botchway (b.1994), on view at Gallery II, Accra. *Homecoming: The Aesthetic of the Cool* marks the first presentation to showcase all three artists together in their country of birth.

In *Homecoming*, the three painters explore what it means to be Black, African, and a contemporary artist in the 21st century. All born and raised in Ghana and educated at the prestigious Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra, Boafo, Quaicoe and Botchway's works have collectively redefined contemporary ideologies of Blackness and West African culture - whilst documenting the universal experience of simply being human.

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The past two decades, prompted by globalisation and stimulated by the growth of the internet and social media, have witnessed a movement of connection between Africa and its Diaspora. Unifying concepts of Blackness and filling in fissures brought about by centuries of enslavement and colonisation, the movement has explored the effects of geographical, linguistic, cultural, and familial separations. A singular and significant element of Amoako, Quaioco and Botchway's practice is their relationship to this global Black identity. Each artist depends on chromatic expressions deployed through the abstraction of color. Bold and saturated hues of blue, ochre, purple and grey, in turn, represent the vastness of the Black identity through multivalent, non-monolithic modalities. This conceptual marker does not erase or suppress the African, Ghanaian, or specific ethnic identity that they represent, rather it positions African subjects within the contemporary visual plane, stripping them of fetishised otherness, stereotyping and exotification, all while connecting the subjects of their images to Black people around the world.



Otis Kwame Kye Quaioco, *Cowboy*, 2020, Acrylic and oil on canvas, Courtesy the artist and Gallery 1957



Kwesi Botchway, *Metamorphose in July*, 2020, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 24 x 7 ft, Courtesy the artist and Gallery 1957

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Boafo's formal and technical alignment with traditional portraiture, and artistic dialogue with early 20th century European Expressionism and Modernism, merges seamlessly with West African abstraction found in traditional textile, sculpture and palettes, and the canon of 20th century portraiture notably created by West African descendants of the United States and Caribbean.

Quaicoe uses a gradient gray and taupe scale that visually flattens the richness of brown tones indicative of Black skin, evoking the nostalgia of vintage film and photography, and surreal dreamscapes. Quaicoe's palette creates a cinematic feeling within the narratives of everyday people, elevating quotidian life to the monumentality of historical documentation.

Similarly, Botchway's color palette sumptuously invites a subtle interaction with the subject, by using an intricate pattern composed in a deep purple scale, chromatically highlighted by bright contrasting orange hue, that situates the figure into realms of mythic otherworldliness.

Individually and collectively, Boafo, Botchway, and Quaicoe's images resist pejorative notions that desire African people to remain frozen in time, set apart, culturally and economically stagnant, and reserved for the western world's subjugation.

Danny Dunson, independent curator and catalogue contributor, comments: *'Committed to bringing contemporary West African artists to the fore, Gallery 1957's five-year program of rigorous art residencies and critically framed and captivatingly curated gallery exhibitions, have ushered in a dazzling vanguard of artists hailing from its home base in Ghana, neighboring continental countries, and the African Diaspora at large. It is an exciting moment to see these three friends and peers united for the first time in Ghana's capital city, magnifying their home country's historical, cultural, and artistic legacy. Boafo stands as the poetic innovator and critical groundbreaker, trailblazing for the entry of his young contemporaries: Otis Quaicoe, the elegant visionary and quotidian storyteller, and Kwesi Botchway, the romantic illusionist and regal myth maker. Together they represent a significant moment in the modern renaissance of African contemporary art.'*

Marwan Zakhem, Director of Gallery 1957 comments: *"to celebrate an important milestone, it's our greatest pleasure to present the first ever group show of three renowned Ghanaian artists paving the way for a new vanguard of creatives in the country, and the diaspora at large."*

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The exhibition will be on view from March 25 through May 09, 2021; accompanied by a catalogue, including an essay from independent curator Danny Dunson.

## **About Amoako Boafo**

Born in Accra, Ghana, Amoako Boafo studied at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design, Accra, Ghana before attending the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria. Regarded as a notable young voice in art of the African diaspora, Amoako Boafo has emphasised new approaches to the “representation, documentation, and celebration of Blackness.”

Boafo was awarded with the jury prize, Walter Koschatzky Art Prize in 2017 and the STRABAG Artaward International in 2019 both in Vienna, Austria. In 2019, he participated in a residency with the new Rubell Museum in Miami, Florida and in 2020 collaborated with Dior for their Spring/Summer 2021 Men’s Collection. Important solo shows include *I Stand By Me*, Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago (2020), *I See Me*, Roberts Projects, LA (2019), *Amoako Boafo: Artist in Residence*, Rubell Museum, Miami (2019), *Re-Masculinity*, Brazil House, Accra (2018) and *Step Into The Darkness* Kunsthalle Vienna (2017). Boafo has been presented in group shows including *Xenia: Crossroads in Portrait Painting*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2020) and *OPEN STORAGE*, The Bass Museum, Miami (2020).

Widely collected by private and public collectors and institutions, most recently by Blenheim Art Foundation, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Rubell Museum, Marieluise Hessel Collection, the Aishti Foundation, the CCS Bard College Hessel Museum of Art, the Pizzuti Collection of Columbus Museum of Art and the Albertina Museum in Vienna.

## **About Kwesi Botchway**

Born in Accra, Ghana in 1994 Botchway’s figurative paintings consider colour-consciousness, identity representation, and perceptions of beauty.

Botchway studied Art at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design, before enrolling at the Academy of Visual Arts, Frankfurt. He held his first international solo exhibition *Dark Purple is Everything Black* at Gallery 1957, Ghana in early 2020 followed by *Being as well as Becoming* to open the gallery’s London outpost. His works form part of important private collections internationally. Kwesi Botchway is also the Founder of WorldFaze, Accra, an artist studio and residency space focusing on supporting young artists locally.

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## **About Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe**

Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe was born in 1988 in Greater Accra Region, Ghana. He attended the Ghanatta College of Art and Design for Fine Art, with a focus on painting. He currently resides in Gresham, Oregon. He has been the subject of solo and group exhibitions internationally, including Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, CA (2020) Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2019) and Alliance Française, UNICEF, Accra (2016). In 2021 Quaicoe became the artist-in-residence at the Rubell Museum.

Otis Quaicoe's figuration is built upon a palette where colour becomes its own language of transformation, be it social, political or personal. These are images of empowerment and redemption, sophistication and humility, curiosity and quietude. Each figure becomes a symbol of the reclamation of cultural dignity, embracing the idea of origin and personal narrative as it relates to gender and race dynamics.

## **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 two spaces in Accra - one in the Kempinski Hotel and another in Galleria Mall - and a London outpost in Hyde Park Gate.

**Title:** *"Homecoming: The Aesthetic of the Cool"* A group show by Amoako Bofo, Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe and Kwesi Botchway

**Dates:** March 25 - May 09, 2021

**Address:** Gallery 1957 II, Accra

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