

Gallery

Kwaku Yaro

Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?

Gallery 1957, London

Thursday 22nd January – 7th March 2026

Opening Reception Wednesday 22nd October 2025 | 6-9pm



Kwaku Yaro, Nbratipa, 2025, Acrylic, Woven Nylon And Burlap On Polymer, 228 x 150 cm. Courtesy of the Artist and gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 is pleased to present ***Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?***, the first European and London debut solo exhibition by Ghanaian artist Kwaku Yaro, opening 22 January 2026 at the gallery's London space. The exhibition is the culmination of a three-month residency and was developed during the artist's second residency with Gallery 1957.

Drawing its title from the Book of Ezekiel (37:3), the exhibition reflects on a moment of address rather than resolution. In the biblical passage, the prophet is not asked to restore the dry bones before him, but to speak to them. Yaro's work inhabits this gesture—approaching materials, histories, and bodies not as objects to be redeemed, but as presences to be acknowledged.

For Yaro, the valley of dry bones is not metaphorical. It is Accra: a living terrain shaped by migration, circulation, and survival. Across the city's markets and streets, the residues of global

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consumption—second-hand clothing, plastic materials, worn domestic objects—accumulate and transform through daily use. Yaro’s practice emerges from this environment, insisting on material truth without aestheticizing poverty or romanticizing resilience.

Central to the exhibition is the Ghana Must Go bag, a material deeply embedded in both personal and collective histories of migration. In Yaro’s work, the bag exceeds its historical associations to become a second skin—worn, stretched, and inscribed with memory. No longer a container, it carries lived experience itself.

The exhibition brings together sculptural works that form a familial constellation: figures representing siblings and a maternal origin, their arms cast in gold toned bronze—a subtle reference to the former Gold Coast. These works do not monumentalize heroism, but testify to endurance, continuity, and inherited presence.

Works on paper introduce a parallel rhythm through a pointillist technique, in which each mark maintains its individuality while contributing to a larger whole. This method reflects an ethical commitment to community, patience, and accumulation. A series of small portraits depicting friends and collaborators—including members of Yaro’s collective ARTEMARTiS—further emphasizes a constellation-based understanding of authorship and shared becoming.

The exhibition culminates in works incorporating woven polypropylene mats—portable grounds commonly used across West Africa for rest, prayer, and gathering. Here, the mat becomes a foundation rather than a backdrop, carrying bodily memory and domestic intimacy. As figure and ground begin to merge, the work moves toward essentiality and clarity.

Across the exhibition, a decisive shift emerges: the gaze. Yaro’s figures look back—steady and unwavering. The title functions not as an unresolved question, but as a threshold already crossed. In speaking to what lies before him, Yaro affirms that attention itself is an ethical act.

Son of Man, Can These Bones Live? marks a moment of clarity in Kwaku Yaro’s practice—rooted in familiar materials and histories, yet asserting a new posture of frontal presence and assumed direction.

Nothing here seeks spectacle.
Everything insists on presence.

Son of Man, Can These Bones Live? By Roger Karera

In the Book of Ezekiel(37:3), God leads the prophet into a valley filled with dry bones — remnants of a people, fragments of a broken history. The question He asks is neither rhetorical nor abstract. It is an invitation to faith, but also a demand for responsibility. Ezekiel is not asked to repair the bones. He is asked to speak to them. In Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?, his first-ever solo exhibition in London and the outcome of a three-month residency — his second with 1957 Gallery — Kwaku Yaro inhabits this moment of address. His work unfolds at the precise intersection where the spiritual meets the ordinary, where the sacred emerges not from transcendence but from attention. This exhibition is not about resurrection as spectacle; it is about persistence, about the quiet and stubborn continuity of life within what appears exhausted.

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Kwaku Yaro, Detail: *Nbratipa*, 2025, Acrylic, Woven Nylon And Burlap On Polymer, 228 x 150 cm. Courtesy of the Artist and gallery 1957.

For Yaro, the valley is not symbolic. It is Accra — a living, unstable terrain shaped by circulation, migration, and survival. In its streets and markets, the residues of global consumption accumulate: second-hand clothes, plastic materials, worn objects that have already lived other lives. Yet nothing here is static. Through use, adaptation, and imagination, the discarded is continuously transformed. It is within this cycle of decay and renewal that Yaro's practice takes form. His work does not aestheticize poverty nor romanticize resilience. Instead, it insists on material truth — on what remains, what endures, and what asks to be seen again.

Before the image, there is a decision.
Before the material, there is responsibility.
And before the gaze, there is no withdrawal.

This exhibition marks a decisive moment in Yaro's trajectory. The question of the title is no longer suspended in uncertainty. It has already been confronted. The works assembled here do not hesitate. They stand. What unfolds is a movement from inherited memory toward assumed presence, from collective history toward individual position.

Within this trajectory, the **Ghana Must Go bag** occupies a central place, not as a symbol but as an extension of lived experience. Its presence is inseparable from a personal lineage — his mother's migration from Northern Ghana to Accra, carrying with her only what was necessary to survive. Historically bound to West African narratives of displacement, particularly the mass expulsion of Ghanaian migrants from Nigeria in the early 1980s, these bags have come to signify movement, endurance, and adaptability. In Yaro's practice, however, the Ghana Must Go exceeds its historical reference. It becomes a skin — worn, stretched, marked by passage.

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Here, the bag no longer contains objects; it carries memory itself. Its checkered surface operates as a living archive, inscribed through use, strain, and repetition. Like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, these materials are not lifeless. They wait to be addressed, to be named.

Across four works, Yaro constructs a familial constellation: four brothers and sisters rendered as pillars of continuity, their arms cast in gold-toned bronze — a subtle invocation of the former Gold Coast. Gold appears as a symbol of wealth and knowledge long ignored. These figures emerge from the folds of migration not as heroic icons, but as testimonies of endurance. At their center stands the mother — not as recollection, but as origin. Through her, memory becomes flesh again.

A shift in scale and rhythm emerges through Yaro's works on paper. Executed using a pointillist technique, each composition is built from innumerable dots — each mark asserting its singular presence while contributing to a larger whole. Pointillism here functions less as a stylistic choice than as an ethical position. The individual does not dissolve into the collective; it strengthens it. Meaning emerges through accumulation, patience, and shared presence.

This logic resonates with a biblical understanding of community — the body composed of many members, each distinct yet inseparable from the whole. Yaro's surfaces hold time within them. They resist immediacy and spectacle, insisting instead on duration and care. The grouping of ten small portraits — depicting friends and collaborators, including members of the artist's collective ARTEMARTiS — evokes a communal structure, a constellation rather than a hierarchy. Painting becomes an act of commitment: to share, to decide together, and to advance without erasing difference.

The final movement returns to one of Yaro's most enduring materials: woven polypropylene mats. In many West African contexts, the mat functions as a portable ground — a place to sit, to rest, to pray, to gather. It is where life unfolds when nothing else is stable. Here, the mat is no longer a background but a foundation. It carries bodily memory and domestic intimacy, evoking both vulnerability and resilience. Like the biblical desert, it becomes a space of trial and revelation.

While vivid colors and pop visual elements remain present, Yaro's gesture moves toward essentiality. Camouflage emerges not as concealment, but as integration. Matter, background, and figure begin to merge. The work slows. Breath becomes perceptible. What remains is not austerity, but clarity. These works do not seek to impress; they seek to endure.

Across all these movements, a decisive shift occurs: the gaze appears. The figures look back. The eyes are present and unwavering. This gaze is neither confrontational nor seductive. It is resolute. To look forward, in this context, is to accept one's trajectory — to stand by one's choices without ornament or justification.

The title of the exhibition functions as a threshold. It is not a question posed to the viewer alone, but one the artist has already crossed. Like Ezekiel addressing the bones, Yaro speaks to what lies before him without certainty of outcome. Yet the act of naming, of calling forth, is already a form of belief. Son of Man, Can These Bones Live? marks a moment of clarity in Kwaku Yaro's practice. Rooted in materials and histories long present in his work, this exhibition nonetheless asserts a new posture — one of frontal presence and assumed direction.

Nothing here seeks spectacle.
Everything insists on presence.

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Through fabric, paper, and humble materials, Yaro constructs a visual language grounded in responsibility and attention. Life persists. Meaning gathers. And looking — when fully assumed — becomes an ethical act.

The bones do not ask to be saved.
They ask to be seen.
And they look back.

About the Artist

Kwaku Yaro

(b. 1995, Labadi, Ghana. Lives and works in Accra, Ghana.)

Born and raised in Labadi, Kwaku Yaro has cultivated a fresh and compelling artistic practice that reveals the everyday, the ordinary, and the mundane and transforms them into a space of social, religious and economic contemplation. Through his medium, Yaro advocates for resourcefulness and innovation. Polypropylene, a type of synthetic thermoplastic polymer that is processed into monofilament or multifilament and derived from petroleum, becomes the raw material in the production of the mats and shopping bags predominantly featured in Yaro's work. The artist uses a pointillism technique in his works and each spot represents the people of the town of Labadi, where he resides. His research and development practices go beyond the limitation of his five senses, and his works are a testament to his passion for detail. He is a member of the Artemartis collective in Accra. Yaro's solo exhibitions include: 'A Night Out with Lariba And Friends', Septieme Gallery, Cotonou, Benin (2023).

Group exhibitions by the artist include: 'Filling In The Pieces In Black', Saatchi Gallery & Maruani Mercier, London, UK & Brussels, Belgium (2023); 1-54 Art Fair, Septieme Gallery, London, UK (2023); 1-54 Art Fair, Septieme Gallery, New York, USA (2023); 'When The Birds Fly Home', Artemartis x Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2023); 'Poetics Of Material' Rele Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria & Los Angeles, USA (2022); 'Handwritten', Chilli Art Projects, London, UK (2022); 'The Sown Seeds', Efie Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2022); 'In(de)finite Selfhoods' Citronne Gallery–Athens, Greece (2022); 'Ties That Bind Us', The Cowrie Culture, Accra, Ghana (2022); 'Birds Of A Feather', Phillips Auction House & Artemartis, London, UK (2022); Oneric Art Gallery, Accra, Ghana (2020); Untamed Empire, Accra, Ghana (2020).

About the Curator

Roger Karera

Roger Karera is an French Rwandian independent art curator and cultural organizer known for his work in exhibiting contemporary African and diaspora art. His curatorial practice appears across a range of contemporary art shows, art fairs, and collaborative projects with artists and platforms focused on African creative communities. He has worked with artists and art practitioners across Africa and the diaspora, including being involved with the ABLAKASSA project alongside Jean Servais Somian, focusing on platforms for African artistic expression and visibility.

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About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues – continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

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Title: Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?

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