

Gallery 1957

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Joshua Oheneba-Takyi

A Seat At The Table

13th July – 10th August 2021 Gallery III, Accra.



Joshua Oheneba-Takyi, *Trip to Jerusalem* (2021), Acrylic on Canvas. Image courtesy Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957, is pleased to present a selection of works by Ghanaian artist Joshua Oheneba-Takyi, created while in residence at the Noldor Artist Residency.

In his first solo exhibition at Gallery 1957 entitled *A Seat at the Table* Oheneba-Takyi's large-scale acrylic canvases reveal their visual poetry through his poignantly rendered figures, depicted in a variety of poses, all interacting with chairs of various styles and colors. The overarching idea that runs through these works is the universality of the chair as a functional man-made object that people all over the world use. We all take a seat at the table and yet the chairs we use are different and are conditioned by their unique past and present. It is through the chair that Oheneba-Takyi endows his paintings with emotion and character—their static nature, when juxtaposed with the

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fluidity of the human form, accentuates the latter and allows the viewer to fully embrace each individual's unique character.

In *Trip to Jerusalem* (2021), for example, a series of four African men wearing red tribal robes appears to proceed in a solemn procession. Four simple white folding chairs have been placed next to each man while two chairs dangle playfully from above. While the painting references a funeral procession it also recalls the game of musical chairs where people continue to go around a circle of chairs until the chairs, and the players, are eliminated. "The rule of elimination in the musical chairs game is being used in the painting to understand death and its unpredictable nature," explains Oheneba-Takyi. In using musical chairs as a metaphor to describe the unforeseen nature of death, the painting takes on a funeral setting. The chairs become a metaphor for death and life.

In another work entitled *Things Fall Apart* (2021) a lone figure, this time a man dressed in white sweatpants, sits on a chair amidst four chestnut-colored chairs with his hand on his head in contemplation. Just like the woman in *Sitting in Solidarity*, his facial features have been swapped for a patch of pastel blue paint. Even so, we still sense the power of their emotions; like the chairs that surround them, these figures stop in time to pause and ponder, perhaps the nature of their existence.

Words by Rebecca Anne Proctor.

About the artist

Born in Kumasi in 1997, as a young child Oheneba-Takyi gravitated to drawing and painting. He has sketched since he could remember. A particular instance took place when he was in kindergarten. His teacher told him to switch his pencil from his left to his right hand because he is left-handed. But in doing so the young Oheneba-Takyi struggled to write properly. He then began to draw the letters. "Drawing became a coping mechanism for me," he recalls. Since then, he has never stopped drawing. He began sketching cartoons and illustrations for story books. While he was on a science-focused track at school, he always continued to make art on the side.

After high school Oheneba-Takyi decided that his true calling was to become an artist. Yet given his former schooling in science, he enrolled in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and studied building technology. After university he dedicated himself entirely to his art, painting on his own and with friends. To this day he has never taken a formal art class. He learned the practice of mixing paints and painting on canvas on his own and through his contemporaries. In 2018, he started Paintspree with a friend and colleague. The non-profit organization turns any space into an art-friendly environment where participants can relax and paint for fun as a way to invest in their creative selves. His work has been exhibited at various galleries in Ghana, and is in several private collections in Europe, including the Sir David Adjaye Private Collection in Accra and London.

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As a young artist Oheneba-Takyi now spends most of his time in his studio, presently located in Accra's Labadi district as part of the Noldor Art Residency. There he works throughout the day on his large-scale works, sketching, painting, and researching.

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.

Artist: Joshua Oheneba-Takyi

Title: *A Seat At The Table*

Dates: 13th July – 25th July 2021

Opening: 13th July, 2021 - 6pm

Address: Space III, Gallery 1957, Located at the Galleria Mall, Kempinski Gold Coast Hotel, Accra - Ghana.

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