

# Gallery 1957

Afia Prempeh  
*We Could Be...*

19 Nov - 31 Dec, 2021. Gallery III Accra, Ghana.



Gallery 1957 is delighted to present the debut solo exhibition of extraordinary portraits by Kumasi born Ghanaian artist **Afia Prempeh**. Over a 7-month long residency Prempeh moved her practice to Accra, Ghana to complete an ambitious body of work depicting women and the circumstances of those close to her.

Prempeh composes her portraits in a grand manner - her sitters are very real, but the backgrounds and props represent an imaginary combination of each sitter's material universe. Personal objects, decorative props, and even artwork within the paintings give a sense of each sitter's journey through life, every detail alluding to a part of their identity.

Sampling from the lives of a dispersed flock of women around her, Prempeh explores their real and imagined stories as her personal means of scratching at some kind of universal experience. In her own words:

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*There's something deeper about the paintings that even I myself can't point out. It's not just the physical—there's some force behind it. My whole being, my whole soul, is in there. Every single detail is telling a story.*

*My portraiture is not just portraiture. The object can also become the subject. I started off as a landscape and still-life artist, so when I finally learned to paint the human figure, I wanted to do it differently. Full-figure, classical style, with object and background details. And I wanted to make it about the person. I wanted it to tell a story.*

*This body of work has to do with transition. The subjects are on a journey. I, myself, am also on a journey. It's a spiritual journey: searching... seeking... believing... I had to go through certain transformations; I had to discover certain things about myself to get here.*

This exhibition opens on the 19th of November, 2021 in Gallery III Accra, Ghana and runs through 31 December, 2021.

## **About the artist**

Afia Prempeh (b.1986 Kumasi, Ghana.) Afia Prempeh is a painter born and raised in the historic capital of the Asante Kingdom. A proud graduate of the prestigious Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (K.N.U.S.T.), Prempeh earned a Bachelor in Fine Arts in 2009 and has been a practicing artist ever since - developing her practice through commissioned landscapes, still lifes and portraits. Her insistence on a 'carte blanche' approach to the backgrounds of her portraits has matured into her signature style of incredibly detailed backgrounds full of personal objects and artifacts - giving a sense of undeniable truth to even the most flattering portrait.

Prempeh recalls Monday morning "Philosophy in Painting" seminars led by Professor Kari Kacha Seidou and his beckoning to look "beyond the surface" being influential in her approach to painting - it was these seminars that introduced her to the landscape portrait works of renowned American & European Master painters. Technical sessions led by Dr Godfred Y. Anum at the college laid a sound foundation for her realistic depictions of the human figure. After graduation, Prempeh completed obligatory National Service at the Manhyia Palace Museum giving tours to guests wishing to learn of the history and culture of the Asante Kingdom. Working closely with the broad collection of royal regalia, photographs, medals, furniture and deeply personal belongings of the Asantehene and Asantehemaa of stools past, Prempeh was inspired to imbue her own portraits with personal artifacts that tell the story of her sitters.

## **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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Afia Prempeh is photographed in her Accra Studio in front of two works in progress for her upcoming solo show 'We Could Be' at the Gallery. Photo by Nii Odzenma courtesy Gallery 1957.

Artist: Afia Prempeh

Title: *We Could Be*

Dates: 19 Nov - 31 Dec, 2021

Opening: 19th November, 2021 - 6pm

Address: Gallery 1957, space III.

Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast & Galleria Mall

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