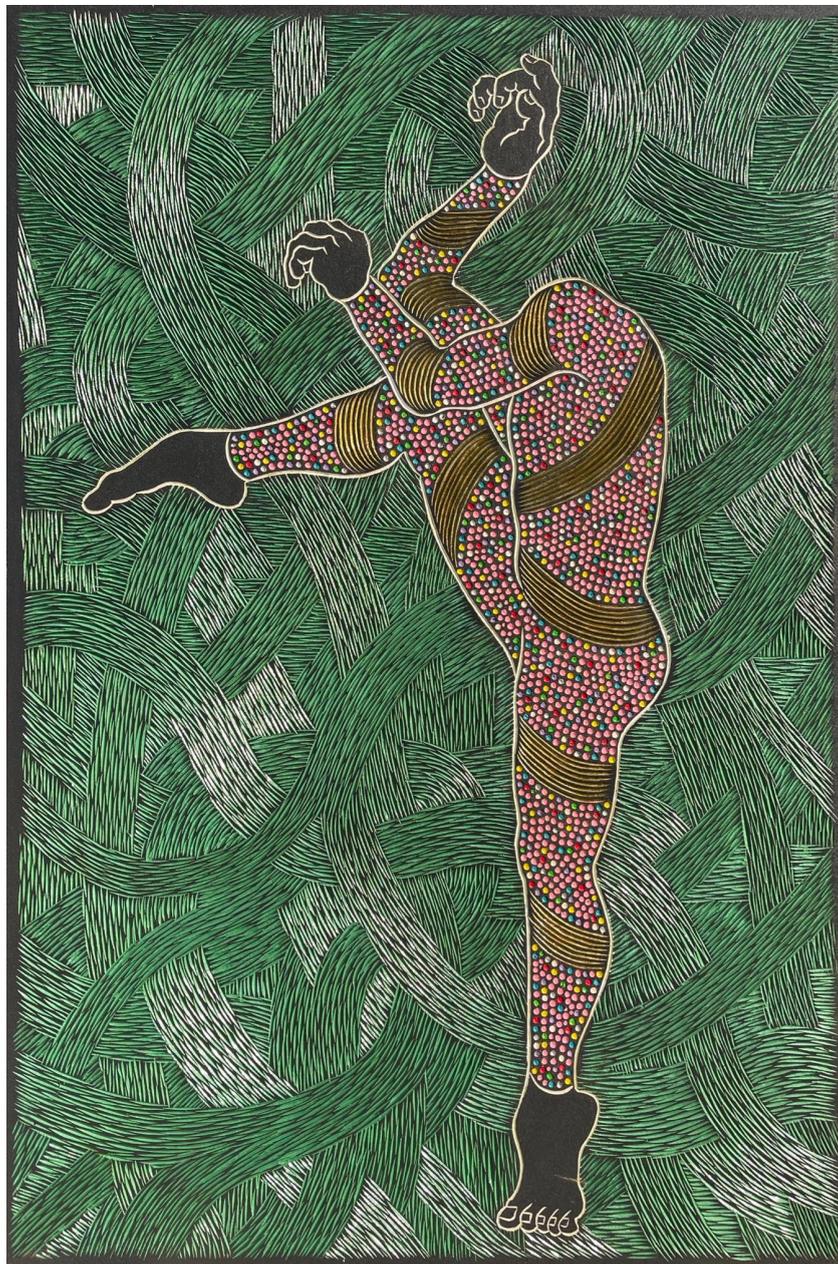


## PRESS RELEASE

Sthenjwa Luthuli

*Imbewu Yokhokho (The Seed of our Ancestors)*

September 24 – October 22, 2022 Accra, Ghana, Gallery III



Sthenjwa Luthuli, *Zinyobulala*, 2022. Hand carved super wood block mix media and paint, 136cm x 92 cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 is proud to announce the first solo exhibition in Accra, Ghana of Sthenjwa Luthuli (b. 1991, South Africa) featuring a new body of work.

In this grand exhibition Sthenjwa Luthuli interrogates time and its role in shaping his cosmos, artistic practice and visual narratives. He has produced a series of paintings in his signature style, sculpted in relief form on board. If there is one noun that captures Luthuli's technique, it is: recursiveness. The most apt metaphor that captures his practice is the image of the metronome ticking away nicely

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synchronised to the artist's tonal calibration. The recurring theme of synchronised visuals of figures in stillmotion of Luthuli's suspended personages floating freely in space and etched onto hardboard plates evokes a sense of freedom. It is perhaps testament to a mind that works within a patient recursiveness that interrogates and gnaws at his subject matter until it is resolved.

Luthuli's suspended personages are an active retrieval of memories of these ancestors narrated through his grandmother and aunts throughout his childhood. The erasure and destruction of family archives and photographs through the violence of South Africa's brutal colonial history are resurrected through a reversal of the iconoclasm of the desolation of his personal family archives. This body of work, *Imbewu Yokhokho (The Seed of our Ancestors)*, is a referential revival, restitution if you will, of memories that explore the relationship with oral histories of the unknown through his innate need to inscribe physical marks and create symbols which transcend time. There is figuration but not faithful portraiture, a rhythmic confluence of forms dotted with lines that embrace figures to resurrect ancestors suppressed through time. The absence of faces is a deliberate effort to avoid the anachronism in translating oral histories of ancestors through the pollution of the superfluity of contemporary images we consume today.

Luthuli's work draws focus to the interdependence between masks, artefacts, objects, personages and their position in archiving histories stashed in oral literature. It achieves all this without commonplace representation of contaminated ideas of anatomical concepts around 'beauty', form and aesthetes. There is a marked awareness and refusal of images of human bodies as offered by transitioning contemporary trends, market forces, recent and trending cultural identities toward a fresher visualisation around liberated bodies that do not need to conform.

Luthuli is grateful to be existing at a time that is transitioning away from post dystopia toward a new reality. For Luthuli, 'now is the time' as we emerge into a new timeline for humanity.

## Extract from text by Azu Nwagbogu

### About the Artist

Sthenjwa (b.1991, Botha's Hill, South Africa) attended Thornwood Secondary School. In 2010, he joined the B.A.T. Centre visual art classes which familiarised him with the art industry and encouraged him to further explore and develop his creativity. In his early age, he was challenged in school by the education system, which stirred up fear and anxiety in him. Sthenjwa therefore found peace in art after discovering that his fear was as a result of synthesised mindsets and doctrines that percolated his family and surroundings through generations. He pursued his passion for art by enrolling in Velobala's Saturday Art Classes, an initiative hosted by the African Art Centre at the Durban University of Technology that offers art education to young creative artists. Attaining distinction, he was selected to further take part in the Velobala Mentorship Program in 2012, which exposed Sthenjwa to a more formal and extensive art knowledge. He was mentored by Themba Shibase; artist and fine lecturer at the Department of Fine Art at the Durban University of Technology. He is inspired by a number of artists including, Ai Weiwei, Wangechi Mutu and Yinka Shonibare. Since 2011 he has participated in a number of group exhibitions in KwaZulu Natal and Johannesburg. In 2012 he participated in various exhibitions in Bremen, Germany, and completed a mural project in the Concordia Tunnel, which runs along the international collection of the Leiterin der städtischen Galerie in Bremen Germany. Sthenjwa, in 2017, was selected to take part in a residency for 3 months in Germany, where he was awarded second prize after participating in the Sasol New Signature Competition. He was also selected to take part in the National Art Bank at Oliewenhuis Museum in Bloemfontein. He went on to exhibit at the Latitudes Art Fair in 2019, where his works sold out. In the same project he was selected to collaborate with McLaren, where he wraps one of their design cars with his patterns.

### 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

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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: Sthenjwa Luthuli  
Title: *Imbewu Yokhokho (The Seed of our Ancestors)*  
Dates: 24th September – 22nd October  
Opening Reception: 24th September, 2022 - 6pm-9pm

Address: Gallery 1957, Accra, Gallery III  
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