

Arthur Timothy

POSTCARDS FROM A PROMISED LAND

Gallery 1957, London

9 December 2022 – 28 January 2023



Arthur Timothy, triptych, *ISABELLA'S HEAD START (LAKKA)* (2022), Courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957, London, is proud to announce an exhibition of new works from artist Arthur Timothy (b. 1957, Ghana) based on memories and photographs of Sierra Leone. Titled *POSTCARDS FROM A PROMISED LAND*, the exhibition surveys the people, architecture, and natural beauty of Sierra Leone, against a wider backdrop of the nation's history and hopes.

Painted from family holiday pictures taken from 1985 until the present day, Timothy's new series presents Sierra Leone as a country in an ongoing state of renewal. Depicting abandoned buildings reclaimed by nature, alongside snapshots of neighbours hurrying to church services, Timothy's reflections on the structures, people, and natural landscape of the country where he grew up, offer a beautiful and nuanced insight into its development as a whole.

Marking a departure for the artist, *POSTCARDS FROM A PROMISED LAND* sees Timothy focusing increasingly on nature, celebrating Sierra Leone's beauty and resilience in the face of adversity. Many of the works are based in or around the capital of Freetown, a city founded in 1792 as a settlement for freed African American, Afro-Caribbean and Liberated African slaves (many who had received freedom from the British in return for fighting against the US in the American War for Independence). Celebrating it as a place of great natural beauty, despite struggles endured in the wake of slavery, colonialism, Ebola, and civil war, Timothy's artworks encapsulate both the dreams and failures of the 'promised land' this city offered for the displaced Creoles for whom it was created.

In works such as *THE COCONUT SELLER*, the viewer glimpses street life on the corner of Earl Street and Mends Street in Freetown, the site of Timothy's grandmother's house (now occupied by his son Duval) and the streets in which he used to play as a child. In *LAKKA* and *GENESIS*, we see abundant flora and fauna overwhelming architecture, the effects of rain encouraging nature to fight back and reclaim states of construction. However, the two sites embody very disparate histories for the artist and the country, the first depicting an unfinished property abandoned during the Rebel War, the second exploring the new life his son is breathing into Timothy's former family home.

1957

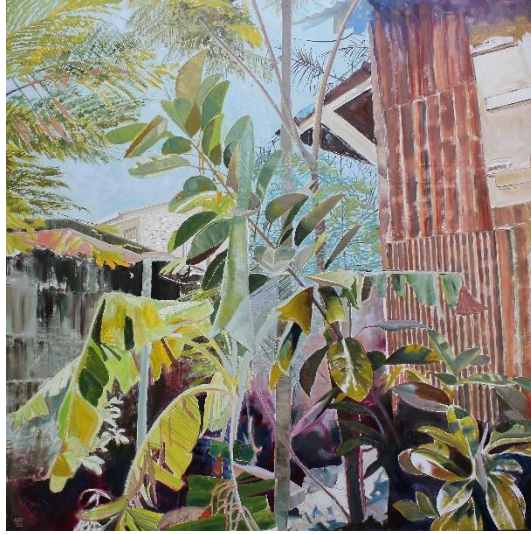
Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
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Arthur Timothy, *GENESIS* (2022), Courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957

'Nature is kind of eating away at it all,' explains Timothy reflecting on the organic matter within the work, *'almost every year you have to rebuild or re-paint it, a further reminder of the country's sustained state of metamorphosis and the ongoing triumph of beauty over hardship.'*

The exhibition is accompanied by a text from literary activist, editor and publisher Kadija George, who comments:

'Memories of aunts, sisters and cousins beam through the portraits of children of extended family members in POSTCARDS FROM A PROMISED LAND, whilst the varied textures, tones and structures in his landscapes also embody poignant remembrances for Timothy. For me, much is centred on what I see as the heart of the collection, the triptych ISABELLA'S HEAD START (LAKKA). Here Timothy paints his family playing along a long sandy beach around the peninsula in Western Sierra Leone, close to Freetown. Straying from his previous portraiture imagery, Timothy presents beaches that are deserted, quiet, and peaceful, allowing for a moment of reflection. The work is based on a memory of a family race in Lakka, whereby everyone was given a head start according to their age, and Isabella, the youngest, was given a large one; Arthur wanted to win, and everyone overtook Isabella, who then burst into tears. This prominent memory truly captures sorrows and triumphs and the enduring essence of family, which runs throughout the series, as well as the artist's joy in revisiting the ravenous beauty of Sierra Leone.'

About Arthur Timothy

Arthur Timothy (b. 1957, Accra, Ghana) is an artist and architect who lives and works in London and Bath. He spent his early childhood in Freetown, Sierra Leone. His artwork has been exhibited at the Royal Academy (London), Ronchini Gallery (London) and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery (online). It is part of important international collections, including the permanent collection of ICA Miami. Timothy's recent work *Brothers*, 2020 was exhibited in ICA Miami's first major exhibition to showcase its permanent collection, with a focus on recent acquisitions, entitled *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*. His most recent solo exhibition *Grandma's Hands* (2021) was co-curated by writer, journalist, broadcaster, and curator, Ekow Eshun, and was exhibited at Gallery 1957, in Accra.

Timothy studied Architecture at the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield and the work of his architectural studio has been widely published and exhibited.

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About Kadija George

Dr. Kadija George Sesay, Hon. FRSL, FRSA, is a literary activist of Sierra Leonean descent, who works in literary project management and creative professional development.

From 2001 - 2015 she published SABLE LitMag, a black and white magazine for emerging writers of colour. She has curated a series of anthologies, including GLIMPSE: the first anthology of Speculative Fiction by Black British Writers (2022). She co-founded the Mboka Festival of Arts, Culture and Sport in The Gambia and founded AfriPoeTree, a Selective Interactive Video of Poetry and Pan-African history. She has also written poetry for arts projects, The John Blanke Project and The World Reimagined. She received an AHRC / TECHNE fellowship to undertake doctoral research in Black British Publishing and Pan-Africanism at Brighton University and then an Early Career Fellowship at the School of Advanced Studies in Inclusion, Participation and Engagement, developing her research ideas further.

She is an award recipient for her work in the creative arts, namely, Cosmopolitan Woman of Achievement, Candice magazine Woman of Achievement, Voice Newspaper Award for work in the Creative Arts, a Woman of the Millennium, STARS of Sierra Leone Award (for outstanding women of achievement), Recipient of LBA (Leeds Black Award – Arts Category). She is a Kennedy Center Fellow in Performing Arts Management and a Kluge Fellow (The Library of Congress). She received an MBE for services to Literature.

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.

Notes to Editor

Title: *POSTCARDS FROM A PROMISED LAND*

Dates: 9 December 2022 – 28 January 2023

Opening: 8 December, 6-9pm

Address: Gallery 1957, 1 Hyde Park Gate, London

www.gallery1957.com

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