

## PRESS RELEASE

Peter Ojingiri

*Encountering the Disrupted pt. 2*

3<sup>rd</sup> February - 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023, London



*In this chaotic place, you went by me*, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 182.9 x 121.9cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957

Further to Peter Ojingiri's solo exhibition *Encountering the Disrupted*, (Accra, 2022), Gallery 1957 is proud to present a continuation of the same body of work, expanding unto the artist's most recent experimentations. Ojingiri deepens the subject of *The Disrupted*, previously defined in his paintings as those who remained home or *stayed* in the context of slavery and colonisation of Nigeria, as opposed to *The Departed*, forced to abandon the motherland. The exhibition is on show from 3<sup>rd</sup> February – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

*The Disrupted* are painted as *meta-humans* standing at the crossroad between metaphors and reality, between a real Nigerian person and the idea of who that person could be. Their bodies appear as *meta-bodies*, sculpted with realistic attention yet with a metallic rendering of the skin that allows them to shine in the moonlight. Their faces carry tribal marks that reference Ife Bronze Heads. Reminiscent of African masks, these hybrid figures traverse metaverses and resist a fixed designation, serving the sole purpose of this meeting, of this encounter with us in a *meta-garden*. Ojingiri's magenta garden is of an uncertain kind, glowing under the light of dawn or perhaps sunset; it features vegetation characteristic to Nigeria, whereby the artist nudges the nation's uniqueness.

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The continuative series of large-scale paintings present the same aesthetic and visual language of the previous works as for the metallic rendering of the subject's skin, the signature reference of the Ife head's holes as a facial feature, the vivid magenta garden and general translucent palette of almost fluorescent greens and pinks. *Encountering the Disrupted pt. 2*, however, pays a new tribute to womanhood. The same repeated pair of women inhabit several paintings, perhaps sisters, easily distinguished by their different braided hairstyles. Their bond with one another and their comfortable proximity, is a reminder of Ojingiri's desire to create, in his paintings, a safe space where the condition of being *disrupted* is allowed and can be embraced. More so, a space where it can be loved.

The works also manifest a new notion of intimacy accentuated by Ojingiri's referencing of polaroid, which exaggeratedly zoomed-in perspective and playfulness are associated with the fast and random capturing of moments of domestic privacy. The artist's essence remains that of a storyteller. He is more interested in the viewer wondering what story is behind these figures, and more importantly, interested in the encounter itself. In his own words, his figures are simply "to be encountered in chaos and beauty." Yet, Ojingiri's elaboration of visual elements is everything but simple.

In this exhibition, we are introduced to this artist's latest frontier of his dialectic on *the disrupted*, incorporated into "African walls." Today's great African cities -such as Accra, where the artist carried out this new research- are made, or we should say fragmented, of a thousand scattered and abandoned walls rarely serving a purpose. These walls are an expression of the rapid development, often without a master plan, of these large metropolises. They are the cities' canvases, their sensitive surfaces unto which the marks left by each one remains imprinted. They are, from Ojingiri's perspective, an urban collaborative work in the making.

After recreating the walls' form layered by the randomness of events such as a stranger's urine or meteorological traces of the passing of time, as well as recurrent alerts about the land being "not for sale," Ojingiri inhabits his walls with the *Disrupted*. He does so by transforming political posters' faces into his characters, immediately recognizable by their nuanced evanescent way of being painted, almost evaporating.

Ojingiri's use of political posters does not concentrate on the political narrative they carry but instead serves to develop the wall's aesthetic into the realm of painting. In this regard, the artist also says that "existing and surviving on his own is already a political act." That also applies to the rebellious final act of ripping off the posters. Their repetition and demolition only reinforce the idea of the chaotic point of the paintings and *the disrupted* quality of his character as opposed to being politically engaged.

All in all, this exhibition addresses the same questions but expands their territories; it is at the same time the expansion of Ojingiri's research on his theme, i.e., the act of encountering *The Disrupted* and the newly found desire for it to be developed through abstraction.

—Curatorial essay by Angelica Litta Modignani

## About the artist

Peter Ojingiri (b. 1997, Nigeria. Lives and works in Ilorin, Kwara State) is a self-taught artist based in Nigeria. He studied Biology at Kogi State University and began his art practice in 2017. His most recent body of work centres on West African Folklore and Postcolonial Theory within the realm of Blackness, unpacking critical themes that refer to a time in Africa before the colonial encounter. Ojingiri brings a new and exciting depth to the figure, creating mask-like visages instead of hyperrealist faces and bodies that objectify Blackness. He renders the

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bodily features of his subjects referring to traditional African masks, focusing on expression beyond the materiality of skin's colour.

*Collective Reflections*, his first group exhibition with the gallery took place in 2020 in Accra. Previous group exhibitions include *[West] African Renaissance*, Gallery 1957 and Christie's, Dubai, UAE (2021); *The Medium Is The Message*, Unit London, London, UK (2020); *Drawn Together*, Unit London, Online (2020); *Liminality Of Infinite Space*, African Artist Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria (2020). Solo exhibitions include *Encountering the Disrupted pt. 2*, Gallery 1957, London, UK (2023) and *Encountering the Disrupted*, Gallery 1957, Gallery II, Accra, Ghana (2022).

Ojingiri participated in 1-54 Art Fair, New York with Gallery 1957 (Artsy Presentation) in 2021. The artist completed a residency with Gallery 1957 in January 2023 and has been written about in *Latitudes, How Will Curators Institutionalise And Interpret The Portraiture Trend?* by Mary Corrigan; *Arab News, Christie's stages first West African art exhibition in Dubai* by Rebecca Anne Proctor; *Art Plugged, Liminality in Infinite Space* and *Something Curated, Collective Reflections: Contemporary*.

## 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:** Peter Ojingiri

**Title:** *Encountering the Disrupted pt. 2*

**Dates:** 3<sup>rd</sup> February – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Opening Reception:** Thursday, 2nd February 2023 | 6pm - 9pm

Address:

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