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Annan Affotey: Ghanatta Strong

4 June – 1 July 2021 Gallery I, Accra Ghana



Francis Annan Affotey, *Amakai (Teacher and inspiration)*, 2021, Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy the artist and Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 are pleased to present *Ghanatta Strong*, its first solo exhibition by Ghanaian portrait artist and Ghanatta College alumni Francis Annan Affotey.

For the artist's solo exhibition at Gallery I Space in Accra, Ghana titled *Ghanatta Strong*, he reveals the portraits of his Ghanaian artist contemporaries—who all attended the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra. Established in 1969, the school is regarded as the nation's premier school for the study of art and design. Unfortunately, it recently closed down. Affotey began what he calls his "Ghannata Series" last year, and included many of the artists who attended the famed school. These include artists who've gone on to be extremely successful to those who are still struggling. What's important, believes Affotey, is that "they are still painting." Portraits of artists such as

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Kwesi Botchway, Amoako Boafo, Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe and Serge Attukwei Clottey—recognizable to an international art audience are joined by those who are still yet to be discovered. Painted with Affotey's lively palette and intricate attention to detail, many hold paint brushes in their hands, while others are identified by unique pieces of clothing or hairstyles—also identifying traits. Their titles all carry the artist's name and the year that they graduated. Affotey has also included his own self-portrait that is entitled *Yellow Flower* and depicts himself with an unpainted hand carrying one lone yellow flower. He hopes that he along with other graduates can come together and find a way to bring back Ghanatta College.

The portraits of Ghanaian artist Annan Affotey are bold portrayals of his subjects' inner worlds—captured through their expressive eyes, accentuated forms, and rich colorings. His work is derived from a fascination with the unique narratives and experiences of his subjects—often family and friends, and, at times, himself. Yet they also take inspiration from public figures, celebrities and models who derive their power of expression from their body language. For Affotey, the movements of his subjects are key in uncovering and then relaying through his painting, their unique individuality, painted in his characteristically realistic style heightened through the use of electric hues against more seductive ombrés. As we stare into his sitter's intense eyes, we feel suddenly vulnerable and yet connected to their personal history. It is a history we might never know nor completely understand but because of their intense stare we feel we do, even but momentarily, as we exchange a moment of empathetic union with a stranger in a painting.

Text by Rebecca Anne Proctor

About the artist

Annan Affotey likes to think of his portraits as exploring several worlds: Ghana and the places where he has lived in the United States and now in Oxford, United Kingdom where he is currently based while his wife finishes her MBA, as well as the physical and imaginary worlds. The unpainted parts, he says, leave room for the imagination to play. When the viewer is prompted to question why a work is left unfinished, this act in itself is part of the experience of one of Affotey's works. He is now attempting to work more in full figure portraiture, incorporating elements from the sitter's surrounding space or the room in which they are painted. Still, for Affotey it is important that something is always left unsaid, unfinished, so more can be questioned.

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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.

Artist: Annan Affotey

Title: *Ghanatta Strong*

Dates: 4 June – 1 July 2021

Opening: Friday 4 June, 2021 - 6pm - 10pm

Address: Gallery 1957, Space I, located in Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City & Galleria Mall

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