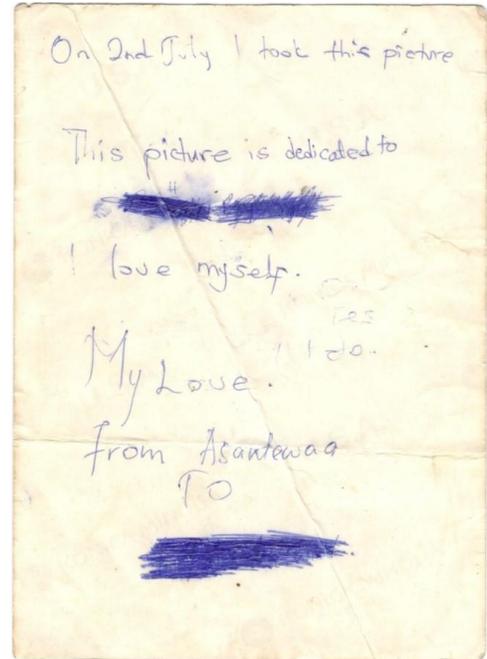


# Gallery 1957

Gideon Appah  
*Love Letters*

Curated by Katherine Finerty and Michael Babanawo

29 June – 15 August 2019



Gideon Appah, *Lakenight* (2019) and *Love Letter* (2019). Images courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957

This summer, Gallery 1957, Accra hosts its first solo exhibition of Ghanaian artist Gideon Appah, running from 29 June to 15 August 2019. With reference to his last body of work, *Memoirs Through Pokua's Window* (2018), Appah delves further into a nostalgic and surreal visual language unearthing hidden recollections and shared visions.

This multi-media exhibition presents a journey through the individual and collective memories defining Appah's West African childhood and personal narrative. A dreamlike world of deep soulful blues is punctuated by painterly vignettes from both physical reality – expressive, hopeful figures in white during a confessional church service – and psychological spirituality – a vibrant and seductive purple lake from a clairvoyant dream. This landscape, home to mysterious male spirits emerging from melancholy waters, sits alongside joyful family photographs and interiors from Ghana during the 1980's and 90's. Together they create an exhibition where surrealism meets domesticity and folklore meets religion: a family tree with many branches, each occupying a space between spirituality and physicality.

Within the gallery a large facade of a Ghanaian house – a physical and figurative window into the artist's upbringing, family life, and memories – recontextualises the space as a domestic realm where reality mixes with fantasy, as if on a Gollywood movie set. Multi-layered stories of a large family emerge, where tales of mystic visions are passed down through generations, forgotten love

# Gallery 1957

letters on the back of photos are found in the thin sheets of saturated family albums, and Ghanaian films are played on a Gold Star VHS recorder. For Appah, Ghanaian videos serve as not only potent sources of nostalgia, but also poignant portals in a search for identity. Reflecting on tropes relating to gender, religion, and romance, Gollywood movies from the 1980's onwards often mirror tensions between preserving local traditions and indulging global desires. Viewers are welcome to discover a TV playing iconic classics such as *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980), *The Bitter Results* (1995), and *Jennifer: So Lovely, So Deadly* (1998), and immerse themselves in cinemascesapes that disrupt western world narratives, timeframes, and gender roles.

Through this gesture of hospitality Appah welcomes us into his family home: to reflect on a dream-like memory inherited from generations past, to watch a nostalgic Rom Com pulsing with existential individualism, and to read deeper into a lost love letter. For whether our languages of love express themselves as spiritual visions, guilty pleasures, or secret whispers, this is a world where romance can be radical.

The exhibition is co-curated by Katherine Finerty and Michael Babanawo.

## **About Gallery 1957**

Based in Accra and working internationally, Gallery 1957 has a curatorial focus on West Africa. The gallery presents a programme of exhibitions, installations, and performances by the region's most significant artists currently bridging the gap between local and international practices. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, Gallery 1957 has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting. Opened in 2017, Gallery 1957 II is the gallery's second space, situated in Accra's Galleria Mall. 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.

## **About Gideon Appah**

Appah was born in Accra, Ghana in 1989. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts at The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi in 2012. Appah has held exhibitions in Ghana including his first solo show *Sensation* at the Goethe Institute in Accra (2013) and an End of Year Exhibition at the KNUST Museum (2012). In 2015 he was chosen as one of the top ten finalists in Ghana for the Kuenyehia Art Prize for Contemporary Ghanaian Arts. That same year Appah became the first international artist to win the 1st Merit Prize Award at the Barclays L'Atelier Art Competition in Johannesburg. This awarded him a 3-month artist residency at the Bag Factory Studios (2016) and a solo show at the Absa Gallery, Johannesburg (2017). Appah had a solo booth with Gallery 1957 at the 1-54 Contemporary Africa Art Fair, New York City (2018).

## **About Katherine Finerty**

Finerty was born in New York City and practices as an independent art curator and writer in London. She focuses on socially engaged practices, translocal identity politics, and contemporary African art. Finerty holds an MA in Curating from the Royal College of Art, London; studied History of Art at the University of Cambridge, and received her BA in Art History and Africana Studies from Cornell University, New York. She was the Curatorial Assistant for the Göteborg International Biennale for Contemporary Art 2015 and *Rencontres Picha: Biennale de Lubumbashi* 2013, and has interned in the curatorial departments of The Met and Studio Museum in Harlem.

# Gallery1957

## **About Michael Babanawo**

Babanawo was born in Nsawam and currently lives and practices as an artist, curator, and creative strategist in Kumasi. His recent projects focus on initiating indigenous creative hubs aiming to internalise and stabilise the local contemporary artscape. He is currently pursuing his MFA in Curating at KNUST where he received his BFA in Painting and Sculpture.

## **Notes to editors:**

**Exhibition:** Gideon Appah: Love Letters

**Artist Curators Talk / Opening Reception:** 29 June 2019, 5pm -10:30pm

**Dates:** 29 June – 15 August 2019

**Address:** Gallery 1957 II, Galleria Mall Gold Coast City, PMB 66 — Ministries, Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue, Ridge — Accra, Ghana

**Telephone:** +233 303967575

## **For press information or images please contact:**

Victoria Cooke at Gallery 1957

**Email:** victoria@gallery1957.com

**Tel:** +233 54 531 1683

**[www.gallery1957.com](http://www.gallery1957.com)**

**[@Gallery1957](#)**