

Kwesi Botchway

The Sun Must Come Down

Curated by Azu Nwagbogu

7th to 12th October 2024

French Protestant Church

8-9 Soho Square, London W1D 3QD, UK



Apostle of the Sun (One), Oil on Canvas, 83 x 110 cm.
Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957.

For an exceptional one-week special presentation in London this autumn, Ghanaian visual artist Kwesi Botchway (b.1994) presents new paintings entitled *The Sun Must Come Down*. The interdisciplinary experience will take place over one week in a French Protestant Church, invoking a sense of fellowship and community with a harmonising performance by London Community Gospel Choir at 7:30pm on the opening night on Monday 7th October. The exhibition is accompanied by a curatorial text by Azu Nwagbogu (attached below).

Renowned for his seamless fusion of French impressionism and African realism that exalts the Black portraiture, Botchway's poignant yet intense figures emerge from mountainous and mystical vistas. For the artist, the sun is omnipresent: an entity that unifies humanity and our experience of each passing day. His deeper concerns with his immediate environment are underwritten by sunset hues, potent yellows and earth tones which ground us in a universal encounter. Colours, Botchway believes, are characters much like the subjects of his paintings, and so each pigment is chosen with precise and calculated intention.

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Gallery 1957, I, II and III Accra
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The spatial undertones are an obvious evolution in Botchway's approach to composition and in this new body of work, we see a palpable shift in his schematics of the portrait tradition that summons poetic landscapes. Looking at religion through a more humanitarian, less nationalistic lens, Botchway invites his audiences to redefine divinity and reflect upon the duality of art and faith, iconography and identity, and an uncharted ethereal nature.



The Sun Must Come Down - Kwesi Botchway's new paintings By Azu Nwagbogu

Together, we rise from the ashes,
Under the sun's fierce and tender gaze.
Its heat sears, yet it gives life,
A force both terrible and rejuvenating.
In the crucible of its fire, we are forged,
Our pain melting into resilience,
Scars cauterized by its brilliant glow.
The burdens we carry grow lighter
As we share them beneath its radiant warmth.
The sun's radiance burns away despair,
And in its light, we find our strength.
Tears we've shed become rivers,
Flowing into an ocean of renewal,
Where hearts are ignited by unity,
And the warmth of collective healing.
As the sun rises, so do we,
Its light a beacon, guiding us home—
Reborn, we cast new shadows,
Together, we heal in the brilliance of a new dawn.

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In Kwesi Botchway's London solo exhibition *The Sun Must Come Down*, we witness a captivating blend of the numinous, rapturous, and subversive. Botchway's paintings are esteemed for their exploration of empowered Black subjects within a meta-universe where fantasies and local Ghanaian folktales intertwine with his utopian vision, creating a narrative that transcends reality. With *The Sun Must Come Down*, Botchway brings this universe into palpable existence, expanding its dimensions. The convergence of these ethereal beings embodies his signature indescribable spiritual universe, but in *The Sun Must Come Down* the beings journey across the Earth's surface, ascending from the lowest to the highest points. This cosmic voyage is accompanied by a symphony of song, connecting them through intertwining braids—a natural antenna facilitating communion. The passage from the Earth's surface, through the troposphere, and into the exosphere carries a profound message of our shared humanity—we all exist equally under this universe. While works like Marc Chagall's 'Joshua Stops the Sun' (1958) and John Martin's 'Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon' (1816) implore the sun to linger for acts of violence, Botchway commands the sun to descend, beckoning peace and rest, heralding the arrival of a new dawn.

- Excerpt from a curatorial text by Azu Nwagbogu

About the Artist Kwesi Botchway

(b. 1994, Lives and works in Accra)

Kwesi Botchway lives and works in his city of birth which inspires his artistic representations of Black beauty, joy, and futurity. Botchway locates himself firmly in the Black Art genealogy, using his work to respond to anti-Blackness as experienced by Africans as well as those in far-flung African diasporas. Resonant across his work is the mission to represent Blackness beyond the limits of dominant narratives, representing its loveliness, vitality, and expansiveness.

Kwesi Botchway is the Founder of WorldFaze Art Studio in Accra, a studio and residency space focusing on supporting young local artists. This support for emerging talent is deeply inflected by his own introduction to painting through apprenticing with a Ghanaian street artist at a young age. He studied art at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra before enrolling at the Academy of Visual Arts in Frankfurt, Germany. He has held solo exhibitions in Denmark, Ghana, the UK, and Belgium, some resulting from his residency at Gallery 1957 in Ghana in 2020. Group exhibitions have featured his work across Ghana, South Africa, the UK, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, while he has been exhibited at fairs such as Art Brussel Week in 2021. Botchway was nominated for the GUBA Awards USA as an Influential Artist in 2019, and has received significant press attention, profiled by publications such as Vogue, Financial Times, Flash Art, The Art Newspaper, Stylist, ArtNews, and Frieze.

About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's

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presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues – continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

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Title: The Sun Must Come Down
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