

## I AM & ... NOTHING ELSE

20 March - 16 April 2022

Donna Duke | Nene Mahlangu | Roanna Tella | Buqaqawuli Nobakada | Tomilola Olumide



Buqaqawuli Nobakada, Downtime, acrylic paint on laced paper, 121x130 cm, 2022.



Nene Mahlangu, Time Stood Still, oil paint on canvas, 150x150 cm, 2022.

In celebration of International Women's month, **Affinity Art Gallery** presents "I AM & ... Nothing Else", featuring five visionary female artists from Nigeria and South Africa. The exhibition draws inspiration from the book "Women who Run with the Wolves: Myths and stories of the Wild Woman Archetype" by psychoanalyst, author, and poet Clarissa Pinkola Estes.

The works in the exhibition engages with themes of healing, identity, community, wholeness, femininity, and what it takes to exist in today's world as an African woman while paying homage to past generations. Through the medium of materials such as lace, fabric, gold leaf, and embroidery, the works lend texture and nuance which reveals that African women can simultaneously embody softness, fortitude, delicacy, and resiliency. The artists draw connections across time and space to the emergence of the African woman as a wholesome being.

Inspired by people around her, Donna Duke's work is a contemplative study of the unknown possibilities of walking into new scenarios, situations and territories in the exploration phase in the life of a young woman. The use of materials such as motifs of gold and copper leaf in Duke's work signifies the need for recognition of power, fortitude, and strength in the historical and contemporary context through black female storytelling. The figures in Nene Mahlangu's works depict vulnerability,

healing, confidence, wholeness, and a transcendent sense of power. Her works are evocative and thought-provoking, reasserting the rhetoric of authority of the female voice in the everyday world. Roanna Tella creates an alternate reality by situating herself in dreamscapes where she gets to be at rest and unperturbed by external expectations of the chaos in her present reality. Tella incorporates hand-sewn narrative embroidering texts along the borders of her paintings which serves as a meditative practice, helping her think through the work.

Using the relationship between paint, paper, and lace, Buqaqawuli Nobakada, celebrates women for simply being, challenging the notion that women have to be strong. Instead, lace serves as a metaphor for the delicacy, beauty, and complexity of the women she is surrounded by. Tomilola Olumide's absorbing three-dimensional installation responds to the language, gestures, tones, and microaggressions towards women in a misogynistic society. Through her sculptural medium of 'fabric drawing,' she envisions a world where women can be "the very best versions of ourselves", without being oppressed, restricted, or compromised by irrational and systematically regressive ideals.

**Donna Duke** (b.1998) in Houston, Texas, is a self-taught artist pursuing her Masters in Art and Cultural Enterprise at the University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins. The composition of her paintings explores mixed-media through the use of acrylic, oil, metal, and 24k gold leaf and resin. Duke's influence originates from historical and contemporary accounts of the black experience while weaving a personal narrative within each piece. Duke's work has featured in group exhibitions such as Erudite, Alliance Francaise, Lagos, Nigeria (2021), Feminism in Nigeria Exhibition - Women in Art, Bogobiri House, Lagos, Nigeria (2020).

**Nene Mahlangu** (b.1992) is a visual artist based in Johannesburg, South Africa. She uses her oeuvre as an affirmative escape and a reminder of the beauty, divinity, and blessing of being a woman. In celebration of 25 years of democracy, Mahlangu made history by being the youngest woman to design two coins for South Africa, championing education and children's rights. Mahlangu's work has featured in group exhibitions such as ART the Hague Art Fair, Den Haag, Netherlands (2021), WomenInArts, French Residence, Pretoria, South Africa (2021) Venice International Art Fair, Italy (2020).

**Roanna Tella** (b.1999) is a visual artist living and working in Lagos. She received her bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from the department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos, where she majored in painting. She creates a universe that explores various emotional states, mental resilience, and coping mechanisms. Tella's work has featured in group exhibitions such as Inward, Stayhome Gallery, USA (2021), iDesign Art VI, Nimbus Gallery, Lagos Nigeria (2020), Impart Fair, Lasmara, Lagos Nigeria (2019), and Last Image Show, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (2018).

**Buqaqawuli Nobakada** (b.2000) is an emerging contemporary and mixed media artist born in the Western Cape, South Africa. Nobakada is currently in her 3rd year of Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her primary medium is acrylic paint on laced paper, often accentuated with custom clay or gold jewelry. Nobakada uses the relationship between paint, paper, and lace to explore themes about growth, intimacy, sensuality, and womanhood. She has exhibited in the "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt" Open City group exhibition by FNB Art Johannesburg and the SOMA exhibition in France.

**Tomilola Olumide** is a Nigerian multi-disciplinary visual artist. She earned her Bachelor's in Fine Arts from the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton. Her work contextualizes the storytelling and projection of her personal histories and experiences in wedges of experimental autobiographical exercises. Olumide has exhibited at Ecobank's Pan African Centre's Opening Ceremony Art exhibition by Tim and Carol Gallery of Art, Lagos, Nigeria (2021), Beyond Otherness, Openhand OpenSpace, Gallery, Reading, UK (2021).

For more information, interviews, and images, please contact:

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Exhibition Opening Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm

Sundays are by appointment only.

Affinity Art Gallery,

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[www.affinityart.gallery](http://www.affinityart.gallery)

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Affinity Art Gallery is a modern and contemporary gallery dedicated to the promotion and celebration of African artists who are passionately sharing the African narrative with their works.

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