

## Press Release

**MITOCHONDRIA GALLERY PRESENTS LIFE IN COLOR: A GROUP EXHIBITION BY RISING ARTISTS FROM THE WEST AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE****May 2021**

**Houston, TX - Mitochondria gallery specializes in artworks from emerging and established artists from Africa and the African diaspora, with a mission to educate, and expand the public awareness of contemporary African art. We present a group exhibition titled, "Life in Color." This exhibition features works from five artists making their North American debut; four from Nigeria, and one from Senegal.**

"Life in color," is an ode to the exciting and shocking experiences we encounter, as we navigate through the world in different stages of our lives.

The vibrant abstract figurative paintings by Kwami Da Costa, born 1980, explore the intersectionality of immigrant families living in a new environment as an ethnic minority. Da Costa explores the quest to improve their socioeconomic status and provide for their families in the work titled "Retour au bercail" translated in English as "Return to the fold." There is a drought in the new land of "opportunities." Isolated and away from their families, the desire to return to their homeland rises. However, the means and viability for a safe return presents a challenge.

Slam Austin creates contemporary figurative scenes with mixed media and his signature use of acrylic fingernails. The incorporation of acrylic fingernails to create a collage was mastered over many years. Acrylic fingernails are used as an expression of one's personality, beauty, and style. Slam also uses bold colors to convey his message in the style of pop art. For this exhibition he addresses the experience of oppression that occurs between high-ranking members of society, oppression in intimate environments, the illusion of social media, and the beauty of the human form.

Contemporary artist Yusuff Aina, born 1997, explores the anguish associated with the contorted behavior of humanity and the hope for humanity to work together and deplete our self-centeredness. Aina employs figurative paintings in the style of pop art with motion lines to capture the struggles associated with the character "Eni-Yan", who is always present in his works. Eni-Yan, means "Human/Person" in the Yoruba language. Eni-Yan is a character Aina uses to strip off the identity of a person, by using one face to represent all humans. The face of Eni-Yan is inspired by sculptural wooden and metallic masks that have been present in different African cultures for centuries.

Matthew Eguavoen, born 1987, explores the effects of love, depression, injustice, and societal expectations on the Nigerian youth in today's world. His narrative scenes draw attention to the lack of conversation regarding mental health in Nigeria. Intersecting with the inadequacies of mental health awareness and treatments, is the injustice that occurs from interactions with the ruling class of the society. Matthew also explores the vulnerability of a young man expressing his desire for love and the concerns of their potential love interest to protect their delicate heart from ill intentions.

Olajumoke Lateef is a multidisciplinary contemporary artist from Nigeria, born in 1982. His tertiary education was attained at Lagos State Polytechnique. His artistic prowess ranges from paintings, to sculptures, performance art, and installations. He employs abstraction as his method of conveying his

Mitochondria Gallery  
Houston, Tx. USA  
+1-832-271-0193  
info@mitochondriagallery.com



@mitochondria.gallery

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## **Mitochondria Gallery**

artistry. He paints figurative and portrait subjects using wavy lines to create a color blocking collage which form semi-abstract figurines.

The exhibition presents works by these five artists, in a series of paintings with intelligent and bold use of color. The works selected for this exhibition cover two specific genres: portrait and figurative paintings.

The show opening will occur in parallel to its virtual exhibition available to the public through our website.

*“Color is a power which directly influences the soul”*

*Wassily Kandinsky*

**Life In Color opens in May 7, 2021.**

Participating artists: **Slam Austin, Yussuf Aina, Kwami Da Costa, Matthew Eguavoen, Olajumoke Lateef.**

For more information please contact:

*Timi Etebu*

*Principal | Mitochondria Gallery*

[info@mitochondria.com](mailto:info@mitochondria.com)

+1 832 271 0193

Mitochondria Gallery  
Houston, Tx. USA  
+1-832-271-0193  
[info@mitochondriagallery.com](mailto:info@mitochondriagallery.com)



@mitochondria.gallery