

Ayanfe Olarinde

In The Beginning And So It Goes...

13 April – 6 May 2023



Ayanfe Olarinde, *Oluronbi and the tree*, 2023, Ink, acrylic and oil pastel on canvas, 48 x 48 in, 121.92 x 121.92 cm

JD Malat Gallery is delighted to announce the opening of *In The Beginning And So It Goes...*, a solo show by Lagos-based artist Ayanfe Olarinde (b. 1996). On display from 13 April to 6 May 2023, this exhibition offers a visual narrative of mythological traditions of Yoruba, one of the most prominent and widely recognized cultures in Nigeria and West Africa. The viewers will find themselves on a journey of discovery and enlightenment, as Olarinde's paintings pose questions and ignite curiosity, while offering a pause to reflect on the fluidity of art and life.

In The Beginning And So It Goes... directly references *Creation Myth*, a folktale exploring the origins of the Yoruba people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa with a population of about 40 million. Yoruba thought is characterised by its predominantly

oral narrative structure, which serves to elucidate and reveal knowledge about the causes and essence of phenomena that impact both the material and spiritual realms.

Frequently featuring animals and supernatural beings as protagonists, Yoruba folktales have been passed down through generations with the aim of teaching moral lessons to both children and adults. Olarinde's practice translates these ancient folktales – to which she was exposed as a child – into contemporary mixed media art that speaks to the complexities of modern life.

My Grandmother, whenever she came visiting from the village, would gather my siblings around at specific times to tell us stories, many of which were accompanied by songs with plenty of meanings. This became a culture and a continuous ritual whenever she came around.

– Ayanfe Olarinde.

The profound influence of her Grandmother's verbal ekphrasis comes across most clearly in the narrative structure of Ayanfe's paintings and their emphasis on moral principles; the ink, acrylic and oil pastel canvas *Oluronbi and the tree*, for instance, visually references the story of *The Spirit in the Tree*, in which a desperate sales-woman offers up her child to a spirit tree who in exchange promises her great success. Vibrant and multilayered, Ayanfe's work offers an exciting visual chronicle, but above all, a narration of the desperation of humanity, the sanctity of promise and the consequence of deceit.



Ayanfe Olarinde in her studio, 2023

Intricately woven with a diverse range of mediums, Ayanfe's practice is a visual symphony of colour and texture that reflects her deeply personal and introspective approach to the creative production. The artist notes, *as an evocative artist influenced by my passage through life, my oeuvre has evolved to include works in photography and sound installations*. Olarinde draws her inspiration from a South African artist, Simphiwe Ndzube (b. 1986), who is known for his innovative practice characterised by a versatile interplay between painting, sculpture, installation, and performance art.

Ayanfe's mixed media approach also allows her to explore the fluidity of form, as well as societal critique. Her engagement with a scribbling technique, for instance, imbues her work with a raw, evocative quality that resonates with audiences on a profound level, while her use of coffee in a form of paint questions the commercialisation and popularisation of coffee, and consequently, its undeniable impact on climate change, global economies and social structures.

In The Beginning And So It Goes... is Olarinde's debut solo show in London, through which she seeks to share her unique perspective on the world and offer a glimpse into the flamboyant tapestry of Yoruba culture. Her paintings are not just a celebration of tradition and heritage but also an exploration of the human condition, touching upon themes of identity, self-image, and mental health. As Ayanfe Olarinde highlights, a painting is never truly finished but rather serves as a pause in the artist's ongoing conversation with the world.

For more information, images and comment, please contact: press@jdmalat.com

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