

GALLERY 1957

BOLUWATIFE OYEDIRAN

Gallery 1957, Accra, is proud to present "For Boiz Like Me Who've Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf", a solo exhibition of works by artist Boluwatife Oyediran, adduced from Ntozake Shange's 1975 choreopoem, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf". The exhibition will run from 11th August, 2022- 7th September, 2022.

"...Black men are expected to be high achievers, to make it at all costs, to be bread-winners. When it's tough they must not cry, break down or show vulnerability. It almost reads like the opposite of that part of Chimamanda Adichie's essay Beyoncé quotes in "Flawless". What the society does not understand is that these expectations are consuming the 21st century black male..."

-Boluwatife Oyediran

For his second solo show, Boluwatife Oyediran draws inspiration from multiple sources. While his mission to use figuration to correct and add nuanced representations of non-white characters remains intact, in this new body of works titled "For Boiz Like Me Who've Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf", the writer and painter explores Black Masculinity through three key notions/symbols: suicide, rainbow and cotton.

The artist preferred the term "Boiz" to the too common and heavily charged phrase "Black Men". The choice of the word 'Boiz' rather than Men could be indicative of a longing for along gone childhood and feelings associated with that period: innocence, thoughtlessness, lightness and softness. Feelings that emanate and radiate from some of the artworks. Here, the protagonists seem to have freed themselves from any judgmental gaze, daring to endorse flamboyant outfits and shimmering imposing gold-leaf jewelry, staring boldly but not defiantly at the viewer. "Boiz", used in many slangs over the world, becomes a federator term that erases borders and creates community. A community of Black men worldwide 'who've considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf'. The men who seem to have it all and struggle emotionally, the Black men who seem (on the outside) to be alright when anxiety and suicidal thoughts are overwhelming and debilitating. As it reads on one of the canvases, "soft men never cry, they consider suicide", most likely because the most common representations, reduce Black men to very few archetypes – macho man, violent man, silent man brewed in patriarchy and racism.

Oyediran's works shift the fallacious narrative that presents economically developed countries as self-made countries to a new more accurate one, centred on the crucial role Black people played in the world's industrialisation and development as well as the traumatic experience it constitutes. A physical and psychological trauma that transcends time, geographies and generations. This visually translates as subtle greyish touches of paint, minuscule fluffy cotton buds, quasi imperceptible backgrounds of cotton fields. As elusive as it may appear on some canvases, the cotton is actually omnipresent as an allegory of trauma and abuse of the Black body, contrasting with the inherent softness of cotton itself.

The rainbows are omnipresent. Depicted with thick coarse layers of acrylic paint, they contrast with the sophisticatedly, gently applied thin layers of oil paint used for the bodies. The characters' skin colour is obtained by applying several layers of paint, including a first layer of dripping blood-like vermilion paint, imperceptible by the viewer, as an analogy of the trauma boiz carry around, a trauma buried deep down, invisible to the outside world. The delicate characters seem affixed to the background, ready to jump out of the frame and start a new life, the life they chose. A new start, that is what the rainbow may suggest, symbol of the sun rising after a rainy day. Interestingly here the rainbows are not accompanied by clear skies, but rather starless moonless deep blue skies as a reminder that hope thrives even through the darkest of times.

In definitive, Oyediran's work celebrates Blackness, Black bodies, Black skin and Black identity in all their diversity, not only making a strong statement by diffusing feeling of pride but also producing new representations, new canons, for the Black man, by the Black man, of the multifaceted and unrestricted identities Black men can embrace.

-Extract from curatorial essay by Esse Dabla-Attikpo.

For full details and larger images, please see the end of this document.



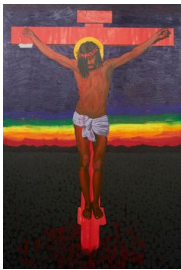
Boluwatife Oyediran
"Before the Light Goes Out", 2022
Oil and acrylic on canvas
150 x 200 cm
59 x 78 3/4 in
(G1957BO001)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"Swimming Lesson", 2022
Oil and acrylic on canvas
150 x 200 cm
59 x 78 3/4 in
(G1957BO006)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"For He was a Man of Like Passions", 2022
For He Was a man of Like Passions
300 x 200 cm
118 1/8 x 78 3/4 in
(G1957BO008)

[View detail](#)



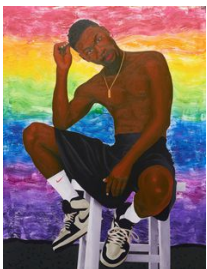
Boluwatife Oyediran
"Breaking Point", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO003)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"We Never Knew What Was Coming", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO004)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"Everything is Going to be OK", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO011)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"Do Not Say We Have Nothing", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO005)

[View detail](#)



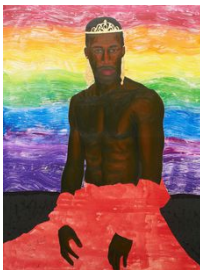
Boluwatife Oyediran
"It's Not Bad to Feel a Little Bit of Your Self", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO009)

[View detail](#)



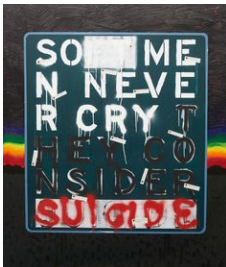
Boluwatife Oyediran
"Nights Dark Beyond Darkness", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 in
(G1957BO002)

[View detail](#)



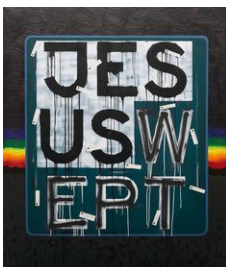
Boluwatife Oyediran
"In His Image", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
200 x 160 cm
78 3/4 x 63 in
(G1957BO010)

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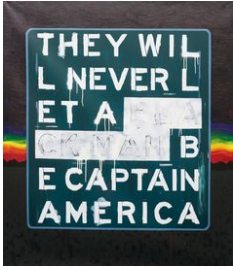
Boluwatife Oyediran
"Soft Men Never Cry", 2022
Acrylic, stickers and spray paint on canvas
200 x 170 cm
78 3/4 x 66 7/8 in
(G1957BO007)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"Jesus Wept", 2022
Acrylic, stickers and spray paint on canvas
200 x 170 cm
78 3/4 x 66 7/8 in
(G1957BO013)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"They'll Never Let a Black Man be Captain America", 2022
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas
200 x 170 cm
78 3/4 x 66 7/8 in
(G1957BO020)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"The Wasteland", 2022
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO012)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"The Wasteland 2", 2022
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO014)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"You're the Thing Around My Neck", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO015)

[View detail](#)



Boluwatife Oyediran
"Hey, Brother", 2022
Oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO016)

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Boluwatife Oyediran
"Imagine Me Gone", 2022
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 70 cm
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Boluwatife Oyediran
"Look into My Eyes", 2022
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO018)

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Boluwatife Oyediran
"Apollo", 2022
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 70 cm
35 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
(G1957BO019)

[View detail](#)

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"It's Not Bad to Feel a Little Bit of Your Self", 2022



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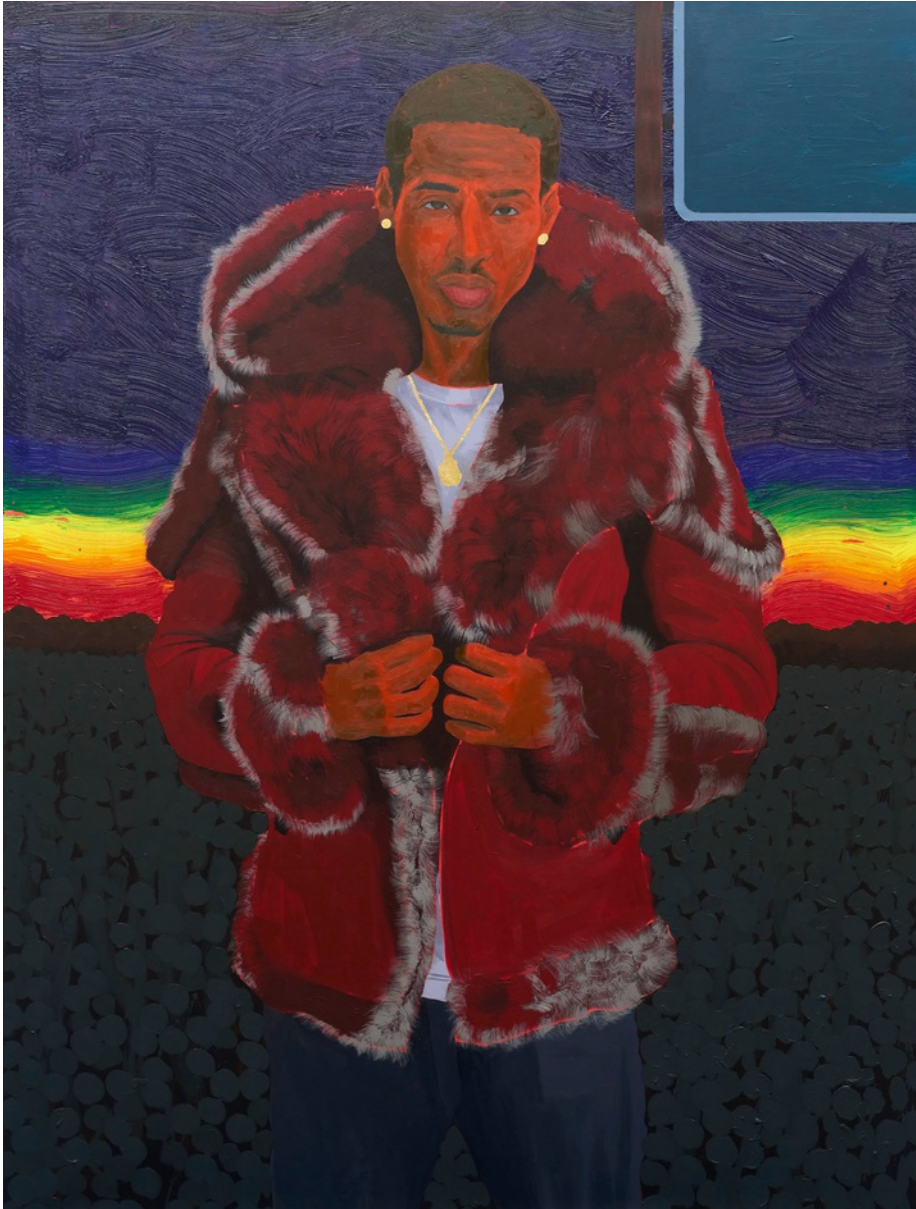
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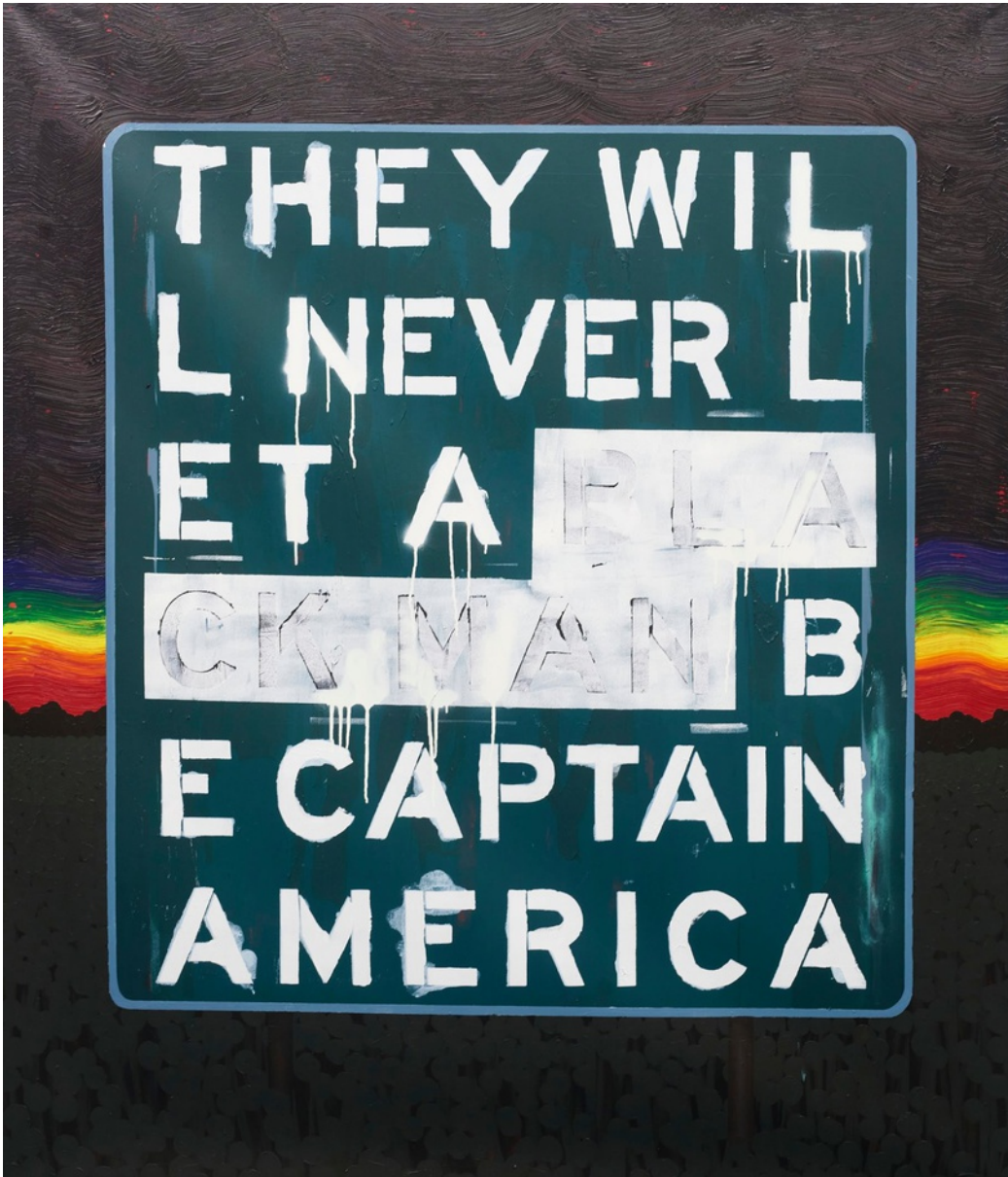
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About the Artist

Boluwatife Oyedirán (b. 1997 Ogbomoso, Nigeria) is a contemporary painter working primarily with figuration and text. His practice is informed by a deep commitment to reimagining and reorienting black identity in the canons of history, religion and Western art, using cotton as an essential symbol of interrogation. His works prompt reflection on long-standing systemic oppressions, particularly through his interrogation of the connecting link between the history of fashion, the history of cotton, and how these histories are related to black people—most recently black men. This informs his signature approach of placing black people dressed in high fashion in cotton fields, as well as his installation of black people in spheres of power that are hostile to them, rebuilding them with the inclusion of black possibilities and representation. Bolu studied Literature-in-English at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He is currently a Presidential Fellow and an MFA in Painting candidate at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. His works have been exhibited in Paris, Rome, New York and Switzerland. His latest writing published by Iskanchi Press in the United States is forthcoming in “The Best of Isele Anthology”, in fall 2022.