

# MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

## ***Worldmaking***

534 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, New York

July 13 – August 25, 2023

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 13, 5-7 PM, with a performative intervention by **Nana Yaa Poku Asare-Boadu**



This summer, Mitchell-Innes & Nash is pleased to present ***Worldmaking***, a group exhibition of ten emerging artists living and working in Ghana, with many showing their work in New York for the first time. Encompassing significant new commissions and recent work spanning painting, sculpture, photography, video, and site-specific installation, the exhibition offers a glimpse into the vibrant art scene that characterizes Ghana today. *Worldmaking* features work by **Hawa Ali Awanle Ayiboro, Dela Anyah, Rita Mawuena Benissan, Eric Gyamfi, Kelvin Haizel, Gideon Hanyame, Al Hassan Issah, Godelive Kasangati Kabena, Kay Kwabia, and Araba Opoku.**

Co-curated by Ghanaian artist Gideon Appah, who has been exhibiting with the gallery since 2020, and curator and Gallery Director Ylinka Barotto, *Worldmaking* explores the environment in light of Western consumption, architectural influences that derive from years-long domination, colonial impact on ecosystems and economies, and the use of traditions as conduits to preserving the past and understanding the present. Rhizomatic in scope, *Worldmaking* mirrors the richly varied artistic ecosystem in Ghana today featuring artists who by pushing the boundaries of their respective mediums formally and conceptually, contribute compelling perspectives to the discourse of contemporaneity.

“This exhibition is an opportunity to provide a New York platform to my extremely talented peers,” said Appah. “Ghana’s art community is strong and thriving with creativity and is built upon a tradition of mutual support. I am thrilled to show these remarkable artists and contribute to increasing their visibility and expanding the conversation around their practices.”

“Gideon has long wanted to curate an exhibition of his fellow Ghanaian artists,” said Lucy Mitchell-Innes. “We are so proud to help realize his dream as part of our mission to champion our artists’ ideas, and to amplify awareness of the amazing work created by these visionary artists.”

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For the opening reception, British-Ghanaian artist **Nana Yaa Poku Asare-Boadu** will intervene in the gallery space with a new durational performance titled *Rhizome*. Dance and movement-based, *Rhizome* will present a bodily investigation of the works on view in *Worldmaking*.

Research across multiple disciplines informs the practice of **Eric Gyamfi** (b. 1990, Bekwai, Ghana), who integrates natural and botanical elements into his analog photographic process. Gyamfi's major site-specific installation, enveloping viewers in a colorful maze at the entrance of the gallery, is a continuation of his ongoing project *Teak Atlas: from where do we begin?* which questions the colonial introduction of teak trees to the region. The 12-foot-high translucent cotton panels feature teak leaves and their venation patterns, which are obtained



by treating the fabric with teak dyes and photo emulsions, translating the materiality of nature into multisensorial objects. Central to the exhibition is a new commission by Ghanaian-American artist **Rita Mawuena Benissan** (b. 1995, Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire) whose practice is based on in-depth research into the history of the Asante chieftaincy tradition and the use of ceremonial umbrellas. Made with the help of local professional chief's umbrella makers, *The Damson of Succession* (2023) features embroidered figures sourced from archival image and repeated at different scales on the deep purple velvet surface adorned with bright yellow stars. By reclaiming history, Benissan celebrates past and future tradition-making.

Ghana receives millions of tons of global waste, from second-hand clothing to electronics which, in the city of Accra, becomes an unsettling part of the urban landscape. Sculptor **Dela Anyah** (b. 1986, Accra, Ghana) collects discarded bicycle, truck, and motorcycle tires to make intricately woven tapestries that hover between sculpture, avant-garde fashion, and traditional Ewe-kente cloths. Continuing his practice of "Afrobutylism," named for his signature medium of butyl inner tubes, Anyah has created two large-scale commissioned works *ABIOLA* and *ALAKE* (both 2023) that expand upon his preoccupation with upcycling, rebirth, and identity while foregrounding the importance of sustainability through art making. **Gideon Hanyame** (b. 1996, Teshie-Zongo, Ghana) repurposes string water filters, using them as a painterly device that he hand-knots into tassel-like shapes to form colorful patterns reminiscent of expansive landscapes, such as in *Hope* (2022). The artist emphasized the labor involved with the "construction and deconstruction of the material" and the mutational aspect of mundane objects while referencing how essential purified water is to human existence.

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Water and its scarcity also is the main focus of multidisciplinary artist **Araba Opoku** (b. 1998, Accra, Ghana). In her paintings, faucets and toilets often appear in hallucinatory dreamscapes, inspired by the artist's own experience of sourcing water mostly at nighttime. In *Untitled* (2023), made for the exhibition, the sinuosity of the canvas, reminiscent of a veil, enhances the overall kaleidoscopic abstraction. Opoku's work considers the limits of reality and the elusive nature of the mystical and spiritual that exists around it. The enduring performative interventions of **Godelive Kasangati Kabena** (b. 1996, Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo) often include the artist's interaction with the natural environment. The video on view, *Made 5* (2023), results from a four-hour performance in which Kabena sat still on a throne-like chair positioned in a local river, letting the water flow around her. It poetically underscores the potency of nature, while reminding us that the coexistence between nature and humans is intrinsic to our existence.

Self-taught painter **Hawa Ali Awanle Ayiboro**'s practice (b. 1997, Nima, Ghana) is influenced by her own conservative Muslim upbringing. The female characters that populate her paintings, such as in *Family Portrait* (2023), stand for the women like her, who fought for their own rights of freedom and liberation, as well as those who gave up their personal freedom to adhere to traditional family expectations. Moving seamlessly between fashion and fine art, the intimate and sensual photographs of **Kay Kwabia** (b. 1996, Mpraeso, Ghana) grapple with compositional and formal explorations through portraiture and still life. The cut papaya at the center of the composition of *Play With Your Food* (2020) transforms the fruit from an object of nutrition to one of desire. *Kwasi* (2022), a portrait of fellow photographer Kwasi Darko, adds elements of surrealism and sexuality.

The opulent sculptures of **Al Hassan Issah** (b. 1993, Kumasi, Ghana) are deeply grounded in the history of the Asante region. Inspired by Kumasi, the city where he works and lives, Issah's works are a sculptural investigation of architectural, colonial, and trade histories and revolve around "canons that emerged from Africa's encounter with the Islamic religion, the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, colonialism, and modernism." *Web of Love* (2022) recalls a tabernacle with gold elements in a nod to the Asante kingdom. Accra's urban environment is the source of inspiration for **Kelvin Haizel** (b. 1987, Accra, Ghana), whose dynamic abstract paintings reference the city's incessant energy and serve as a memory board of lived experiences. The brilliant multi-layered colors in *Colour of a Life Jacket* (2023) are applied by mimicking paint tests conducted directly on canvas while the composition reflects on the artist's visual and sonic encounters.

## About Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Founded in 1996 by Lucy Mitchell-Innes and David Nash, who previously headed the worldwide Contemporary and Impressionist & Modern Art divisions of Sotheby's, Mitchell-Innes & Nash places exemplary contemporary artists within a historical context revealing a continuity of ideas and aesthetic distinction from the Modern era through the present day. Lucy Mitchell-Innes has served as a member of the selection committee of Art Basel Switzerland and is a former president of the Art Dealers Association of America.

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Mitchell-Innes & Nash's renowned exhibition program fosters excellence within artistic practice while forging an informed dialogue between emerging and established internationally recognized artists. From acclaimed surveys of 20th century masters such as Jean Arp, Anthony Caro, Willem de Kooning, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth Noland, Roy Lichtenstein, and Nicolas de Stael, to solo exhibitions of Sarah Braman, Keltie Ferris, Daniel Lefcourt, Eddie Martinez, Pope.L, Martha Rosler, and Jessica Stockholder, Mitchell-Innes & Nash has proven expertise in both advancing the careers of emerging artists and maintaining the superior standard set by established artists.

## **Images:**

HAWA ALI AWANLE AYIBORO, *Family Portrait*, 2023, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 64 by 64 5/8 in. 162.5 by 164 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Artemartis, and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

GODELIVE KASANGATI KABENA, *Made 5*, 2023, Two channel color video with sound, RT: 04:05. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

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