

50 GOLBORNE

Press Release

Larry Amponsah: *"When a Stone Cracks, We Don't Stitch"*

EXHIBITION: 30th September – 15th November, 2019

EVENTS:

- PRIVATE VIEW with Golborne Market Food and Music by Andrew Hart:
Thursday 17th October, 6- 9pm

VENUE: 50 Golborne Gallery, 50 Golborne Road, London, W10 5PR



In Your Blood We Float With Confidence (2019) Inkjet Print, Melted Glue-sticks, and Acrylic on Hahnemuhle Archival Paper; 111.5cm X 161cm

50 Golborne Gallery is pleased to announce artist Larry Amponsah's first solo show in the UK: *When a Stone Cracks, We Don't Stitch*, curated by Katherine Finerty.

This immersive, multi-media exhibition explores the unique street and neighbourhood in North Notting Hill, which the gallery calls home through the eyes and experiences of a young Ghanaian artist. Rejecting restricted identifiers such as foreigner or outsider, Amponsah – who was born in Accra and studied painting in Kumasi, China, and then London, where he lives and works now – investigates how people from around the world travel, connect, and create communities.

In his explorations of the market street of Golborne Road and its surrounding area characterised by waves of immigrants including the Caribbean Windrush Generation the artist has gathered secret histories, collective memories, and personal confrontations as material to create a new body of work. In his search for black excellence within diverse spaces, he references his own West African upbringing within a greater global narrative of how displacement and refraction can lead to collaboration and resilience.

Amponsah, traditionally trained as a painter, creates collages made of archival images, objects, and stories from various cultures in order to negotiate systems of power and create new ways of transcending boundaries. His interest in collage emerged from an early fascination with Ghanaian

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calendars, which are often stacked in many layers upon each other, year after year, in distinct contexts such as homes in less privileged communities and market stalls run by petty traders. Throughout his travels and upbringing across Ghana, Amponsah continued to perceive this need to collect, layer, and collage – a gesture of gathering not only images, but also historical documentation and socio-political reflection. Anything from political leaders and cultural festivals to popular advertisements and natural phenomena may grace the pages of these calendars, and thus their contents become at once accessible yet also reverential within the layers of their hybrid print hanging-cum-archive. Amponsah has since continued to embark on his own journey of collecting pictures and narratives, nurturing a creative practice where curiosity, chance, and conversation become modes not only to survive, but moreover, to thrive. The exhibition itself thus functions as a collage of both materials and experiences, from paintings and sculptures to audio-visual installations and special events hosted by the artist's creative network alongside people from the local community.

A selection of large-scale, colour-blocked collages will provide key entry points for viewers to enter this hybrid cultural landscape. *In Your Blood We Float With Confidence* (2019), for example, functions as an immersive portal where different peoples and places are combined like diverse styles of music. One corner is like a Rhapsody in Blue: a liminal world where the Blues born in the Deep South meets the Underground Blues Parties that rocked Notting Hill in the lead-up to Carnival. This assemblage weaves together layers of memory, imagination, and history, combining photographs from Black British historical archives providing the foundation of Amponsah's research alongside images of iconic sound systems to create a new kind of monument.

The artist thereby invites us to be a part of his journey, and to join him in asking: how can we comprehend the many layers and cracks of immigrant imaginaries with sight of a cosmopolitan future? How can we find unity within our differences without forgetting, or silencing, our pasts? A leading principle behind this search can be expressed through the Asante Twi proverb '3boɔ Pae a Y3 Mpam' (translated by the artist as *'When a Stone Cracks, We Don't Stitch'*), which has inspired the title of this exhibition. It means you don't have to, or indeed can't, mend fissures in life and history. Amponsah remembers his grandparents imparting this wise saying to him, activating the rich tradition of proverbs in Ghana in which specific phrases connote powerful ideas that give agency to a wide spectrum of ages, social roles, and perspectives. This expression is also featured in a song by leading folk musician Koo Nimo, who often weaves tales of traditional pasts through his Palm-wine and Highlife rhythms.

From this point of origin, Amponsah searches for his connections to, and understandings of, Black British history, starting from the vibrant cacophony of Saturday's Golborne Road Market and the cosmopolitanism pulsing through Greater London. From the unsung heroes of black servicemen during the World Wars to Windrush Generation immigrants starting small local businesses – what transatlantic journeys have their memories and stories survived? Through the cracks of Amponsah's expressions we can find secret histories of Notting Hill throughout the ages, such as the radicalised early 90s when Golborne Road was a hotbed for ideas, mixing cultures, and challenging morality. If you look or listen carefully when inside the artist's immersive installation, you may catch sly exchanges about the Profumo Affair political scandal, critiques of the notoriously exploitative landlord coining the term "Rachmanism", or traces of London's underground reggae history in which the Caribbean, Africa, and UK were interconnected through vibrant cultural resonances.

With the spirit of *"When a Stone Cracks, We Don't Stitch"* in his heart, Amponsah seeks to embrace the transformative disjunctions of histories – of a street, a neighbourhood, a community, a country, a translocal identity – through another, more recent, proverb that guides him: "I will have spent my life trying to understand the function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its lining. We do not remember. We rewrite memory much as history is rewritten. How can one remember thirst?" – (Chris Marker, French filmmaker)

Text by Katherine Finerty

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Artist's Biography:

Larry Amponsah (b. 1989, Accra-Ghana) is a multi-media artist whose practice investigates traditional modes of image-making whilst employing unconventional strategies of production to look at the contemporary politics of imagery. He received his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London (2018) after studying for an MFA in Chinese Traditional Painting at Jiangsu University China (2016) and gaining his BFA in Painting at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana (2015). Larry is currently a Trustee of The Kuenyehia Art Trust in Ghana, shortlisted for the 2019 Dentons Art Prize, and recently won the Be Smart About Art Award in 2019.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *The Open City of Many Gods Billboard*, Bloc Projects, Sheffield (2019) and *Imaginary Direction of Time*, The Fine Art Gallery, CSU-Pueblo Hoag Hall, Colorado (2018). Recent group exhibitions include *DEAR*, Dyson Gallery, RCA Battersea, London (2019); *DAMNED IF I DO... DAMNED IF I DON'T* for Open Space's: Of Hosts & Guests, Pushkin House, London (2019); *FBA Futures Exhibition*, Mall Galleries, London (2019); *SURGE*, East Wing Biennial 13, Courtauld Institute of Art, London (2018); *YOUNG GUNS*, Sulger-Buel Lovell Gallery, London (2018); Open House CCA, Delfina Foundation, London (2017); *What is your local word for 'Smile'?*, ArtXanady's Pop-up Gallery, Labone, Ghana (2016); and *The Gown Must Go To Town*, Museum of Science and Technology, Accra (2015), amongst others.

Katherine Finerty (b. New York City) is currently an Assistant Curator at The Showroom, London. Her independent curatorial work focuses on socially engaged practices, translocal identity politics, and contemporary African art. She holds an MA in Curating from the Royal College of Art and studied History of Art at Cornell and Cambridge Universities.