

IN THE BEGINNING

MIDEGBEYAN OJISUA

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (...) God called the dry ground ‘Land’ and the gathered waters he called ‘seas.’ And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “*Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.*” And it was so. (...) Then God formed man from the dust of the ground; he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.”

Like a breath coming from afar and sweeping across continents, the words of Genesis resonate in the work of Midegbeyan Ojisua. When viewing his paintings, the earth – its texture, complexion, materiality –, seems to be the sole subject. It is the earth that brings forth the figure, as if it were emerging from a fragile, shattered chrysalis. It is also the earth that speaks of itself, that is, of the beginning and the common origin of each and every one of us. The emotion that arises from the realization of a shared commonality, of origin blending with the horizon, is the very same emotion that shines through, discreet and fragile, in Midegbeyan Ojisua’s paintings. Something of the emergence of life manifests itself without ambiguity. A painting by Midegbeyan is like a day of creation witnessing the delicate appearance of a figure, making its way through the earth-like paint.

Continuing this exploration of time, the Nigerian artist creates paintings imbued with a sense of time that seems rooted in the past. Portraits of fleeting figures, everyday life scenes, and lavish still lifes evoke the gentleness of bygone moments. Having never had access to museum collections, Midegbeyan Ojisua developed a passion for the Renaissance at a very young age. An avid reader and lover of images, he built up his library with catalogs raisonnés and exhibition publications, creating his own personal iconography. In Midegbeyan Ojisua’s compositions, the color palette, the subtlety of the tones, and the enigmatic expression of the subject are reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci’s and Italian Renaissance paintings. The artist offers a fresh, touching, and unique interpretation of these works.

The reference to the sketch, which is very prominent in certain parts of the paintings, contrasts with spaces that are more textural. This constant interplay between opposites, the suspension of the spatio-temporal framework, and the atmospheric depth of the light evoke in the viewer a state of latency, sometimes melancholic, sometimes simply dreamy. An oneiric state sets in, and the mind wanders.

In parallel with the gallery exhibition, new paintings will also be presented at our booth at the AKAAs fair dedicated to African art. A special scenography will be designed for the booth to invite visitors to step into a boudoir-like atmosphere that mirrors that of the paintings. This dual exhibition is conceived as a complementary whole. We invite our visitors to explore the gallery and the Carreau du Temple to enjoy a unique immersion in the work of Midegbeyan Ojisua, who will be present throughout the duration of the fair.