



## IN OUR NATURE

APLERH-DOKU BORLABI

11.02

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*In Our Nature*, Aplerh-Doku Borlabi's first international solo is a continuation of his reflections on home, first presented in his debut solo *Shia hiε nyam woo: Honouring Home* (Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana 2022).

Hailing from Coco Beach, Nungua, a beach town in the burgeoning art capital, Borlabi's work is very much influenced by his time spent by the Atlantic Ocean; not only a source of inspiration but also where he seeks solace and guidance from his ancestors. Derived from *nu ŋma* (the smell or essence of water), Nungua serves as a spiritual site for the artist whose signature use of the coconut sheath explores the relationship between humans and Nature.

A collection of intimate close-ups, *In Our Nature* showcases the natural beauty of the people Borlabi interacts with within Ghana as a way of further interrogating the unique characteristics that make us we. Rendering their skin with coconut sheath, he captures the various hues of their highly melanated skin and accentuates their defining features illuminated by the sun. Each face, skin with a rich tone of brown, stands out against a muted background allowing the viewer to lean in closer.

Upon inspection, the true nature of the individual, crafted from Nature's gift, is revealed. Beyond the 'Solemn Gaze' or 'Red Cap' is a person with a story to tell and secrets held between the minute hairs that cover their skin. Like water, their nature is expansive, and their range vast. They feel emotions fully and love deeply. Lived is a multifaceted and multilayered life. *In Our Nature*, seeks to reclaim the personhood of African people, whose narratives are often reduced to a monolithic story of 'Blackness'. When viewing each individual, Borlabi encourages you to remain present whilst you freely allow Nature to guide you on your journey into the individual's interior world, going beyond the surface to appreciate the idiosyncrasies of the individual fully.

Chantel Thompson

### BIOGRAPHY

APLERH-DOKU BORLABI is a Ghanaian artist who was born in 1987. He was formally trained at Ghanatta College of Arts and Design, the alma mater of his mentor, acclaimed contemporary artist, Amaoko Boafo and his studio is today part of the Amoako Boafo Studio. Borlabi grew up in the CoCo Beach area of Accra, where he draws his inspiration for his current work. Borlabi's early works applied his foundational learning in academic painting, creating naturalistic compositions, and for years he grappled with finding a visual language that felt authentic.

### INFORMATION

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