

A NIGHT OUT WITH LARIBA IN PARIS

KWAKU YARO

SEPTIEME

A Night Out with Lariba in Paris, seconde exposition solo de Kwaku Yaro chez SEPTIEME Paris, constitue une variation de son premier solo show présenté à Cotonou en février 2023.

Cette exposition avait proposé une soirée imaginaire, où Lariba et ses amis se retrouvaient dans le quartier populaire de Labadi, au Ghana, après son retour à Accra suite à ses études à l'étranger. Dans cette itération parisienne, Kwaku Yaro poursuit son exploration de la communauté et de la mémoire, tout en approfondissant les thèmes de l'hybridation et de l'identité multiple.

Au centre de cette série, Lariba, désormais ancrée à Accra, revient à Paris, ville de ses rêves et amitiés. Ses rencontres avec des amis de la diaspora africaine dessinent une tapisserie de connexions, où les souvenirs et les nouvelles relations façonnent son identité et son appartenance à plusieurs lieux. Ce soir, Lariba voit Paris à travers ces amitiés, alors que les souvenirs et les nouveaux liens s'entremêlent pour approfondir son sentiment d'identité.

Dans cette itération, les retrouvailles de Lariba sont à la fois empreintes de nostalgie et de changement, une convergence entre le passé et le présent.

Paris, ville connue pour son multiculturalisme, devient le cadre de nouveaux dialogues, ravivant d'anciens liens et en créant de nouveaux. Ici, les amis de Lariba sont des personnes qui, comme elle, se déplacent avec fluidité entre les mondes – chacun mélangeant la mémoire d'une origine avec l'expérience d'une destination, et chacun marqué par une empreinte culturelle distincte qui les unit et les différencie.

Les spectateurs sont invités à se joindre à Lariba et à ses amis, comme s'ils pénétraient au cœur d'un rassemblement, d'une fête bondée où les conversations, les rires et les moments de connexion silencieuse révèlent les liens tacites qui unissent cette communauté. Au lieu de s'asseoir sur des nattes tressées comme à Cotonou, l'installation s'inspire d'une atmosphère typiquement parisienne, invitant les invités à interagir plus étroitement avec

TEXTE CURATORIAL

chaque personnage et, en fin de compte, avec les autres. Grâce à cette expérience immersive, Yaro encourage les spectateurs, qu'ils soient parisiens, diasporiques ou visiteurs, à entrer dans l'œuvre et à créer leurs propres liens, à l'image du voyage de redécouverte de Lariba.

Dans ce cadre parisien, la nuit se déroule avec des souvenirs superposés, explorant l'expérience de la diaspora : la résilience, les identités complexes et le désir constant de combler les distances, tant géographiques qu'émotionnelles.

Le passage de l'intimité tranquille de Cotonou au cosmopolitisme trépidant de Paris reflète non seulement le retour de Lariba, mais aussi un regard plus large sur la diaspora elle-même, où chaque personnage incarne la poussée et l'attraction de l'appartenance. À travers des vêtements drapés et des personnages posés, peints à l'acrylique et ornés de tissus trouvés, Yaro capture la tension entre l'individualité et l'expérience collective, la mémoire et la réalité présente.

Cette soirée avec Lariba est une histoire de continuité et d'évolution. Ce n'est plus un rassemblement tranquille sur des nattes en plastique à Cotonou, c'est maintenant une fête parisienne animée où des étrangers et des amis se redécouvrent en présence les uns des autres. C'est une soirée non seulement de narration mais aussi de réflexion partagée, où le spectateur devient participant d'une expérience qui l'invite à voir la diaspora de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur, à ressentir la chaleur, la complexité et la résilience d'une communauté liée non pas par une origine unique, mais par une connexion en constante évolution.

TEXT CURATORIAL

A Night Out with Lariba and Friends in Paris, Kwaku Yaro's second solo show at SEPTIEME Paris, is a variation on his first solo show presented in Cotonou in February 2023. That show featured an imaginary evening in which Lariba and her friends met up in the working-class neighborhood of Labadi, Ghana, after returning to Accra to study abroad. In this Paris iteration, Kwaku Yaro continues his exploration of community and memory, while delving deeper into the themes of hybridization and multiple identity.

At the center of this series, Lariba, now anchored in Accra, returns to Paris, the city of her dreams and friendships. Her encounters with friends from the African diaspora create a tapestry of connections, where memories and new relationships shape her identity and her belonging to multiple places. Tonight, Lariba sees Paris through these friendships, as memories and new ties intertwine to deepen her sense of identity.

In this iteration, Lariba's reunion is one of nostalgia and change, a convergence of past and present.

Paris, a city known for its multiculturalism, becomes the setting for new dialogues, reviving old ties and creating new ones. Here, Lariba's friends are people who, like her, move fluidly between worlds – each blending the memory of an origin with the experience of a destination, and each marked by a distinct cultural imprint that unites and differentiates them.

Viewers are invited to join Lariba and her friends, as if entering the heart of a gathering, a crowded party where conversations, laughter and moments of silent connection reveal the unspoken bonds that unite this community. Instead of sitting on woven mats as in Cotonou, the installation is inspired by a typically Parisian atmosphere, inviting guests to interact more closely with each character and, ultimately, with each other.

Through this immersive experience, Yaro encourages viewers, whether Parisians, Diasporans or visitors, to enter the work and create their own connections, much like Lariba's journey of rediscovery.

In this Parisian setting, the night unfolds with superimposed memories, exploring the diasporic experience: resilience, complex identities and the constant desire to bridge distances, both geographical and emotional.

The shift from the quiet intimacy of Cotonou to the hectic cosmopolitanism of Paris reflects not only Lariba's return, but also a broader look at the diaspora itself, where each character embodies the push and pull of belonging. Through draped garments and posed figures, painted in acrylic and adorned with found fabrics, Yaro captures the tension between individuality and collective experience, memory and present reality.

This evening with Lariba is a story of continuity and evolution. No longer a quiet gathering on plastic mats in Cotonou, it's now a lively Parisian party where strangers and friends rediscover each other in each other's presence. It's an evening not just of storytelling but of shared reflection, where viewers become participants in an experience that invites them to see the diaspora from inside and out, to feel the warmth, complexity and resilience of a community bound together not by a single origin, but by an ever-evolving connection.

BIOGRAPHIE

KWAKU YARO

Kwaku Yaro est un artiste ghanéen (né en 1995) dont le travail célèbre la fierté, la résilience et l'esprit de la communauté de Labadi, un quartier populaire d'Accra où il est né et a grandi. Son art est un hommage à la force de cette communauté, utilisant des nattes en plastique tissé traditionnelles d'Afrique de l'Ouest comme toile—objets essentiels au quotidien pour dormir, prier, se réunir, et plus encore. Yaro réutilise des sacs recyclés, souvent ceux servant à transporter des marchandises comme le riz, en écho au labeur qui caractérise son environnement. Certains de ces sacs proviennent même de déchets renvoyés d'Occident vers le Ghana, symbolisant un cycle créatif de réutilisation.

Dans ses œuvres, Yaro crée des scènes en couches représentant les habitants de Labadi, capturant leurs histoires et attitudes uniques avec fierté. Il peint ses sujets à l'acrylique et ajoute des tissus pour créer des plis et des drapés qui reflètent leur individualité et leur beauté. À travers un pointillisme particulier, chaque point de couleur représente une personne de Labadi, que ce soit une vendeuse du marché ou un aîné aidé par des jeunes. Son art célèbre la diversité des corps africains, valorisant toutes les formes et tailles, au-delà des standards conventionnels de beauté.

BIOGRAPHY

Kwaku Yaro is a Ghanaian (b.1995) artist whose work celebrates the pride, resilience, and spirit of the working-class community in Labadi, a district of Accra where he was born and raised. His art is a tribute to the strength of this community, using traditional West African woven plastic mats as his canvas—objects central to daily life for sleeping, praying, gathering, and more. Yaro repurposes recycled bags, often those used for transporting goods like rice or other merchandise, echoing the labor that defines his environment. Some of these bags are even made from waste materials sent back to Ghana from the West, representing a creative cycle of reuse.

In his works, Yaro crafts layered scenes of Labadi's people, capturing their unique stories and attitudes with pride. He paints his subjects in acrylic and adds fabric to create folds and drapes that reflect their individuality and beauty. Using pointillism, he creates each color spot to represent the people of Labadi, whether it's a market vendor or an elder being aided by youth. His art celebrates diverse African body types, embracing all shapes and sizes beyond conventional beauty standards. His work is a tribute to the resilience, beauty, and pride of Labadi, inviting viewers to connect with its rich texture, depth, and story.

LARIBA

Lariba is a young woman from Accra, back in Paris for a visit after completing her studies there. The city feels both familiar and new, stirring a mix of nostalgia and excitement as she reunites with old friends. Lariba is thoughtful and observant, her quiet grace and contemplative nature drawing others to her. She navigates Paris with the poise of someone who has lived there before but carries the heart of someone deeply connected to her roots.

AKOSUA TINA

Akosua Tina is the intellectual of the group, a woman of few but impactful words. Known for her sharp wit and perceptive mind, she has a knack for cutting through noise to get to the heart of the matter. Though she values her independence, she's deeply loyal to her friends, often offering quiet but steadfast support. Akosua's measured approach to life reflects her belief in balance, whether it's in her relationships or her personal aspirations.

SIKABA

Sikaba is the group's firecracker—a musician whose vibrant energy and infectious laughter light up any space she enters. She's always in motion, brimming with creative ideas and stories, and never afraid to laugh at herself. Known for her unabashed love of shopping and playful humor, Sikaba is as generous as she is impulsive, bringing levity to her friends' lives. She lives with a carefree spirit, never letting life's challenges dim her shine.

MAAME ABA

Maame Aba is the leader of the group, a natural organizer who thrives on bringing people together. A successful entrepreneur in Paris, she balances ambition with compassion, offering both guidance and care to her friends. Maame is the one who always knows what to do, but beneath her composed exterior, she carries a quiet longing for the familiarity of home. Her strength lies in her resilience and her ability to inspire those around her.

FAFA

Fafa is the dreamer, the artist who sees life as a playground for creativity. Her world is full of vibrant ideas and unconventional approaches, whether in her conversations or her ever-changing projects. She's the friend who challenges norms, encouraging those around her to think differently and embrace new possibilities. Fafa's whimsical spirit and unshakable optimism make her a beacon of inspiration, always finding beauty in the unexpected.

NANA ABA

Nana Aba is fiercely independent and unapologetic in her approach to life. She has weathered challenges with grace, carving out her own path and embracing every aspect of who she is. Nana Aba's strength lies in her ability to stay true to herself, no matter the circumstances. She's the friend who tells it like it is, pushing others to own their worth while leading by example. Confident and self-assured, Nana Aba is a force to be reckoned with.

SHERIFFA

Sheriffa is the heart of the group—compassionate, nurturing, and always putting others first. She has an uncanny ability to sense what others need, offering comfort, encouragement, or simply a listening ear. Sheriffa's presence is grounding, her kindness and patience creating a safe space for everyone around her. She carries a quiet strength, reminding her friends that true power lies in love, empathy, and unwavering support.

WALK WITH ME HOME

Walk With Me Home, as she is affectionately called, is the enigma of the group—a free spirit whose curiosity and sense of adventure set her apart. Always in motion, she is drawn to the unknown, seeking meaning in every journey she takes. Her mysterious nature captivates those around her, balancing a deep desire for connection with an equally profound need for independence. She invites others to explore the world alongside her, embracing the thrill of discovery while navigating the tension between solitude and companionship.

CV

KWAKU YARO

B. 1995, LABADI, GHANA

LIVES AND WORKS IN ACCRA, GHANA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 Material Muses, Loft Art Gallery, Marrakech, Morocco.
- 2023 Look at What You've Seen, Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana.
When The Birds Fly Home – Artemartis x Gallery 1957 – Accra, Ghana.
A Night Out With Labadi and Friends, SEPTIEME Gallery, Cotonou, Benin.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 In Communion, SEPTIEME Gallery, Paris, France.
Viewing Room, Pearl Lam Gallery, Hong Kong.
- 2023 1-54 Art Fair – Septieme Gallery – New York, USA.
When The Birds Fly Home – Artemartis x Gallery 1957 – Accra, Ghana.
- 2022 Poetics Of Material, Rele Gallery, Lagos & Los Angeles, USA.
Handwritten, Chilli Art Projects, London, UK.
The Sown Seeds, Efie Gallery, Dubai, UAE.
In(de)finite Selfhoods, Citronne Gallery, Athens, Greece.
Ties That Bind Us, The Cowrie Culture, Accra, Ghana.
Birds Of A Feather, Phillips Auction House & Artemartis, London, UK.
- 2021 We Find What We Seek, Coningsby Gallery, London, UK.
Cognizant, London, UK.
- 2020 Oneric Art Gallery, Accra, Ghana.
Untamed Empire, Accra, Ghana.

COLLECTIONS

Phillips Collection, USA.
Private Collection, UAE.
Farah Fakhri, Cote D'Ivoire.
Private Collection, UK.
Private Collection, Ghana.