

ABE ODEDINA - TENDER HARVEST

Project Loop, 19 - 29 November, 16 Orsman Road, N1 5QJ

PV: 19 November, 6 - 9 pm

"His is an enterprise with a mission to divine and mark the meaningful and the miraculous in everyday life"

In the artist's first London solo since 2023, Abe Odedina presents a major new body of work created between Brazil and Brixton curated by Ed Cross in collaboration with Project Loop.

Odedina's work is forged amidst the cacophony of contemporary life where almost everyone has a platform. His is an enterprise with a mission to divine and mark the meaningful and the miraculous in everyday life, using the human figure and iconic and ubiquitous objects from ladders to handbags, using acrylic paint, plywood or sterling board to create allegories that if they don't ring true get "covered" to uses the artist's phrase for erasure.

Whilst not all of the paintings have human figures, most do. And often one central figure is the litmus for a work that can't proceed until the posture, and therefore the attitude, convinces the artist and later the viewer. Once that conviction materialises, the painting can set out on its bold yet perilous course, guided by its subject, walking a tightrope that can lead to its immortality or ultimate destruction.

The paintings of the extraordinary ordinary and the plain extraordinary are loaded with significance and narrative and attract countless more associations and meaning from viewers. They stand or fall on their power to make their presence felt in a multi-channel era - but not in a shouty way. They are about human connections and recognition of truths, offering themselves as elemental wooden, talismanic objects.

Creating stories in the tradition of Giotto or the anonymous Ife sculptors, with the power to stop the viewer's world momentarily. They spark fantasy without manipulation or seduction, with technique as servant of meaning not for its own sake. These are paintings you look at with your eyes wide open.

"Tender harvest" is a scientific term for using natural means to improve the quality of a crop. The title embodies the artist's sole developmental aim - to continue to sharpen his skills in the service of universal truths that defy descriptions. As with all his previous exhibitions, there is no constraining theme but there is a deep coherence as the paintings are all created within a time span and all interrelated. This is the first time that Odedina has formally alluded to his work as "offerings" but it is now clear that this is what they have always been, from the beginning of his art practice when, as a successful architect holidaying in Brazil, he started to make paintings on plywood in response to re-encountering the Yoruba pantheon of Gods there.

It is fitting that two of the central works from the exhibition (*Raising Hope* and *Look no hands!*) were initiated and largely created in Salvador, Brazil where the artist now lives for part of the year. This is the first time that he has worked at scale in his Brazil home. It is also fitting that these two paintings depict magicians at work - human beings defiantly doing the "impossible" which has been a central theme partly inspired by Odedina's undergraduate encounters with the Hull Fair in the late seventies, but more generally arising out of a reverence for magical spectacle whether referencing Gods of all creeds or magic circle practitioners like Professor Peller who was ubiquitous in Nigeria when Odedina was growing up.

The paintings create a virtuous loop between subject, viewer and creator, because the subject matter is about the suspension of belief which is itself a metaphor for the viewer's relationship with the painting and art in general, and about the artist's function as illusion-maker conveying a truth.

Abe Odedina

Odedina's work has been featured in *Harpers* and *World of interiors*, it is in a numerous public and private collections including The Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, The British Government Art Collection, and the collections of the Jorge Pérez, Robert Devereux, Danny Boyle and Femi Akinsanya.

Solo exhibitions: *Just like that*, Obida, ArtX, Lagos (2024) *For crying out loud*, Ed Cross at 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, London, (2024); *Son of the Soil*, British Art Fair, London, (2024); *I'm a Believer*, Ed Cross, London, (2023); *Independent Art Fair*, New York, (2023); *You Give Me Fever*, Diane Rosenstein, Los Angeles, (2022); *Cutting Edge*, Ed Cross at Clerkenwell Gallery, London (2021); *Just Looking*, Ed Cross at ArtX, Lagos, (2020); *Birds of Paradise*, Ed Cross at Copeland Gallery, London (2019); *True Love*, Ed Cross at The Department Store, London (2018); *Say it Loud*, Ed Cross at 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Somerset House, London, (2017); *Eye to Eye*, Ed Cross at Copeland Gallery, London (2016); *Hi-Life*, Brixton East (2014); *Under the Influence*, The Lookout, Aldeburgh (2013).

Group exhibitions: *Her Stories Untold*, London (2026), *Summer Contemporary*, (2026), *Drawn Together*, Paul Smith, (2025), *Sirens, Women and the Sea*, Ferens Gallery (2025), *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2022); *In the Beginning*, Ed Cross Fine Art, Online (2021); *Stop, Listen!* CFHILL, Sweden, Online (2021); *Folk Art*, London Art Fair, Online (2021); *Art X Lagos*, Online (2020); *Diaspora*, New Ashgate Gallery, Farnham (2019); *Get Up, Stand Up Now*, Somerset House, London (2019); *Talisman in the Age of Difference*, Stephen Friedman Gallery (June 2018), Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy (2017), Brixton Design Trail, Street Gallery (2015); *Global Artists Consortium*, Knight Webb Gallery (2013); and *BP Portrait Award*, National Portrait Gallery, London (2013).

Illustrated above: Abe Odedina, *Raising Hope*, 2026