



Luke Agada: Arms, Feet, and Fitful Dreams at Monique Meloche Gallery

The Nigerian artist examines themes of globalization, migration, and cultural dislocation.

Opening September 14, 2023



Luke Agada, *Arms, Feet, and Fitful Dreams*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery.

Monique Meloche Gallery announces a solo exhibition by Nigerian artist Luke Agada, titled *Arms, Feet, and Fitful Dreams*. This is Agada's first solo show with the gallery and will be featured in the gallery's viewing room in conjunction with Sanford Biggers: *Back to the Stars*.

Agada's practice examines themes of globalization, migration, and cultural dislocation within the framework of a postcolonial world. His abstracted paintings present warped figures and dream-like compositions as symbols of hyphenated identities and reference

the transformation of the art historical postmodern human figure. Considering how both time and space produce complex bodies of difference, Agada's works address the ambiguity of our identity within post-structuralist theory.

Arms, Feet, and Fitful Dreams presents a series of new paintings by the Lagos born artist which respond to the constantly shifting landscape of the African diaspora. Agada, a self-taught artist who came to the US to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, reflects on the instability of the transitory human. His surrealist-like paintings of disembodied figures floating in ethereal spaces references the present moment of transit formed where time and space in a postmodern world intersect to produce complex bodies of difference and identity, past and present. The title of the exhibition Arms, Feet and Fitful Dreams comes from the New York Times article African and Invisible: The Other New York Migrant Crisis (Jan 2023) which covered the resource drought and physiological perils migrants from Africa face upon entry to the United States, and specifically, one man from the Bronx, Imam Omar Niass and his efforts to house hundreds. It was reported that the migrants seeking refuge on the floor of Niass's house was a "tangle of arms and feet and fitful dreams." Within the canvases are visible references to architecture, the body, trade symbols, and animals, seemingly neither present nor absent but existing in limbo within Agada's liminal spaces. His color palette of dark browns, reds, blues, and tans suggest a psychological space wherein old memories are embedded but not always clear.

Agada places equal focus on the formal qualities of his paintings. Recalling surrealist works from the 1920s and 30s, his intense painterly quality and attention to formal compositions underlines how painting can simply exist as painting. With no single approach to how his paintings come together, Agada juggles the immediacy of the medium and constant movement in flux to embody the artist's experience of being alive in a perennial space, and at a time when the politics of representation is of growing importance. Heavily inspired by the postcolonial writings of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and literary works by Nigerian authors Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Agada's work is a continuous reflection of his investigative approach as a consummate student of history and critical theory in examining the culture of subtle dominance through globalization.

About Luke Agada

Luke Agada (b.1992, Lagos, Nigeria) received his MFA in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) (2023) and a DVM at Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (2018). He has had recent national and international exhibitions with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2023); African Artist's Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria (2021); and Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana. He has also been a recipient of various awards and fellowships including: The James Nelson Raymond Fellowship Award (2023); Dean's Grant, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2023); Janet and Russell Doubleday Award at The Art Students League of New York (2022); The Helen Frankenthaler Award at SAIC in (2022); George and Ann Siegel Award, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2021); Global Warming International Art Prize, New York, New York (2020). Agada is a 2023 Summer/Fall fellow at MASS MoCA's Studio Residency.

He lives and works in Chicago, IL and is currently teaching at SAIC as a lecturer in the Painting and Drawing department.

moniquemeloche | 451 N Paulina Street, Chicago

On View September 14-October 28, 2023

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