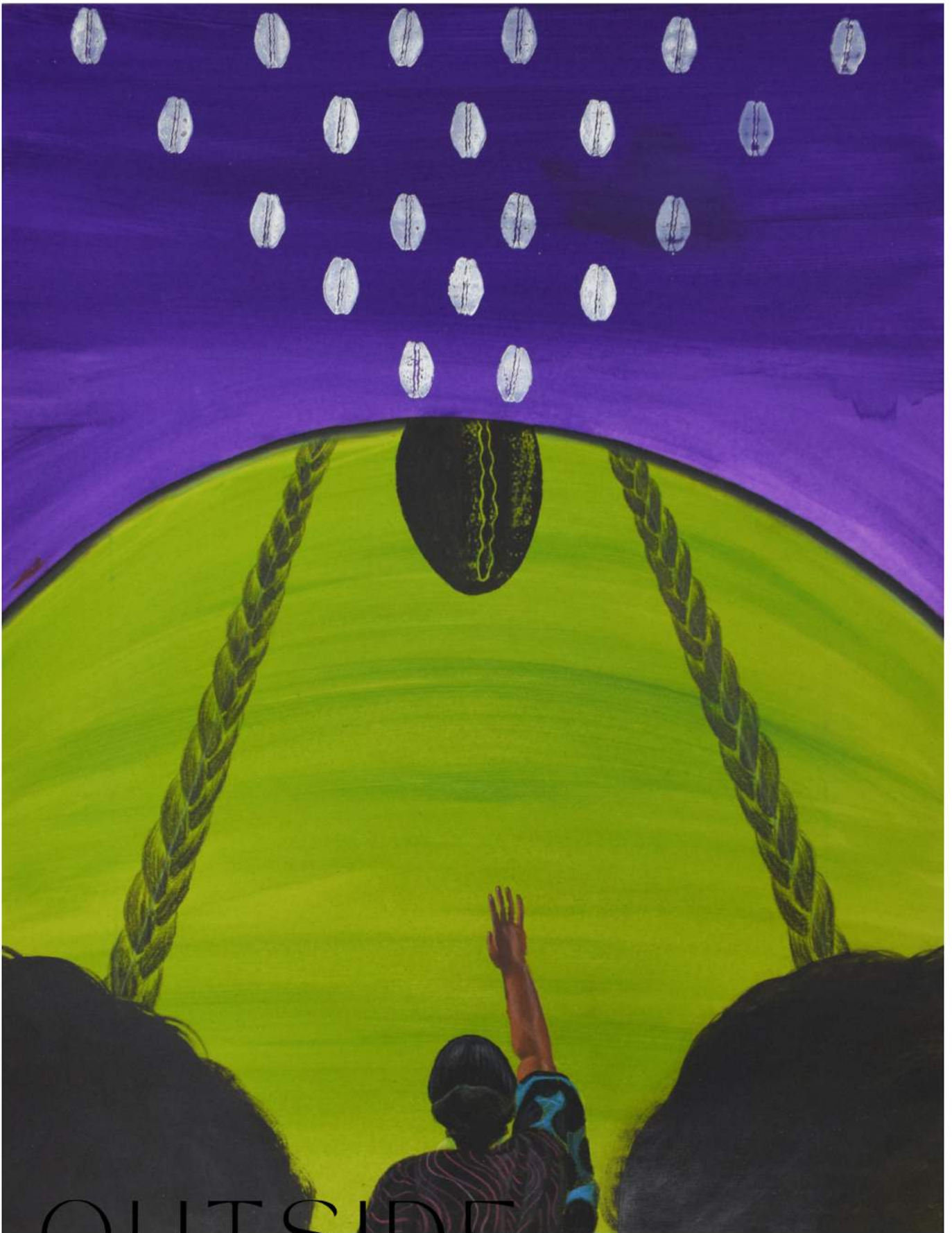


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# OUTSIDE

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY BUNMI AGUSTO

kó is pleased to present *Outside*, an exhibition of pastel paper works by Bunmi Augusto. *Outside* is the artist's first solo exhibition in Nigeria.

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**IN *OUTSIDE*, BUNMI AGUSTO DRAWS US FURTHER INTO *WITHIN*, THE NAME SHE GIVES THE IMAGINED WORLD THAT HAS REMAINED AT THE HEART OF HER PRACTICE. FOCUSING ON THE INTERACTIONS OF THREE HYBRID SIBLINGS, ARUARO, AGAMA, AND IRUNOJI, THE PAINTINGS EXPLORE THEMES OF ANCESTRAL MEMORY, BELONGING, AND LOVE.**

Agusto's practice follows the inhabitants of a surrealist wonderland in her mind called *Within*. She uses this world as an exploratory site for how psychological and cultural theories contribute to the construction of selfhood. The indigenous inhabitants of *Within* are hybrids whose mutations are based on objects the artist finds integral to her sense of self and culture. Human family members, friends and passersby are also present in *Within* as cross-reality migrants. She works predominantly with pastel pencils and mixed media on paper.

Agusto renders Aruaro, Agama, and Irunoji as active participants in *Within*'s evolving landscape. The viewer sees their individual perspectives and motivations radiate at the centre of Agusto's intricate and dynamic world-building. One sibling, Irunoji, is shown to possess a creative capacity that allows them to manipulate the natural and supernatural elements of their environment. In *Irunoji Pulls Blessings Down with the Night*, Irunoji brings the night into view with their hands. In *Two Lizards The Day They Met and We Started Something*, a romance unfolds between Agama, another sibling and half-human half-lizard hybrid, and an unnamed character. Their intimacy is emphasized through the angles of their bodies and a repeated motif of encircling agama lizards. In works like *They Were Dancing With An Ancestor*, we see the third sibling, Aruaro, play a more observant and meditative role. Using "ancestral eyes," they are able to perceive spiritual agents and phenomena.

As highly conceptual as they are deeply personal, these works document the characters, customs, and experiences that make *Within* as much a testament to Agusto's verdant imagination. The series is an inventive mosaic, whose formal and thematic qualities extend the narrative possibilities of contemporary art.

Bunmi Augusto (b. 1999, Lagos, Nigeria) earned her BA in Fine Art in 2020 from Central Saint Martins, where she graduated with First Class Honours and was awarded the Cass Art Prize twice. She graduated from SOAS University in 2022 with a distinction in MA History of Art & Archaeology. She is now an MFA candidate at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford where she has been awarded the Clarendon Scholarship for outstanding academic merit.

Agusto has been the subject of solo exhibitions at TAFETA, London (2022) and DADA Gallery (2021). Select group exhibitions include ASSEMBLE, V.O Curations Mayfair, London (2022); Art X Lagos (2021); 1-54 x Christie's, London (2021); Now, Now, TAFETA, London (2021); and London Grads Now, Saatchi Gallery, London (2020).

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



BUNMI  
AGUSTO



CURATOR'S  
STATEMENTCURATED  
AND  
WRITTEN BY  
OTSHOLENG  
POO

In *Outside*, Augusto draws us further into *Within*, the name she gives the imagined world that has remained at the heart of her practice. Focusing on the interactions of three hybrid siblings, Aruaro, Agama, and Irunoji, the paintings explore themes of ancestral memory, belonging, and love. Rather than as still, inert figurines beholden to the artist's whims, Augusto renders Aruaro, Agama, and Irunoji as active participants in *Within's* evolving landscape. The viewer sees their individual perspectives and motivations radiate at the center of Augusto's intricate and dynamic world-building.

Irunoji, for example, is shown to possess a creative capacity that allows them to manipulate the natural and supernatural elements of their environment. In *Irunoji Pulls Blessings Down with the Night*, Irunoji does just as the title suggests, bringing the night into view with their hands. In *Two Lizards The Day They Met and We Started Something*, a romance unfolds between Agama, a half-human half-lizard hybrid, and an unnamed fellow hybrid. Their intimacy is emphasized through the angles of their bodies and a repeated motif of encircling agama lizards. In works like *They Were Dancing With An Ancestor*, we see Aruaro play a more observant and meditative role. Using 'ancestral eyes', they are able to perceive spiritual agents and phenomena.

Around them, Augusto weaves a backdrop whose broad surrealist influences are grounded in clear Afrocentric politics. "Similar to the artists of the Zaria Art Society" she says, "I believe in combining precolonial traditions with techniques which prove useful to us from foreign territories". If there is a discernible spiritual system in *Within*, its practices and aspirations draw from cosmologies developed by African societies. Thus, the border between the world of the living and the world of spirits is shown to be consistently porous, allowing for an atmosphere charged with varied identities, potentialities, and kinds of knowledge.

As the title suggests, spatial orientation is a critical element in Augusto's work. The movement between states of reality, cultural meanings, and visual languages inform the thematic scope of the paintings. In the paintings themselves, the dynamics between exterior and interior spaces are sharply delineated. Breeze blocks, a style of concrete block design popular in mid-century architecture and strongly associated with tropical modernism, reinforce this delineation and point to the artist's interest in highlighting African design practices in their historical contexts.

Altogether, *Within's* formal and thematic qualities extend the narrative possibilities of contemporary art and demonstrate the breadth of Augusto's imagination.





**A COWRIE APPEARED  
IN THE SKY**

2022  
Pastel pencil, ink & acrylic  
on pastel paper  
100.4 x 89.4 cm



**ABIEMWENSE**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper

21.0 x 15.0 cm

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**ANOTHER LIZARD**

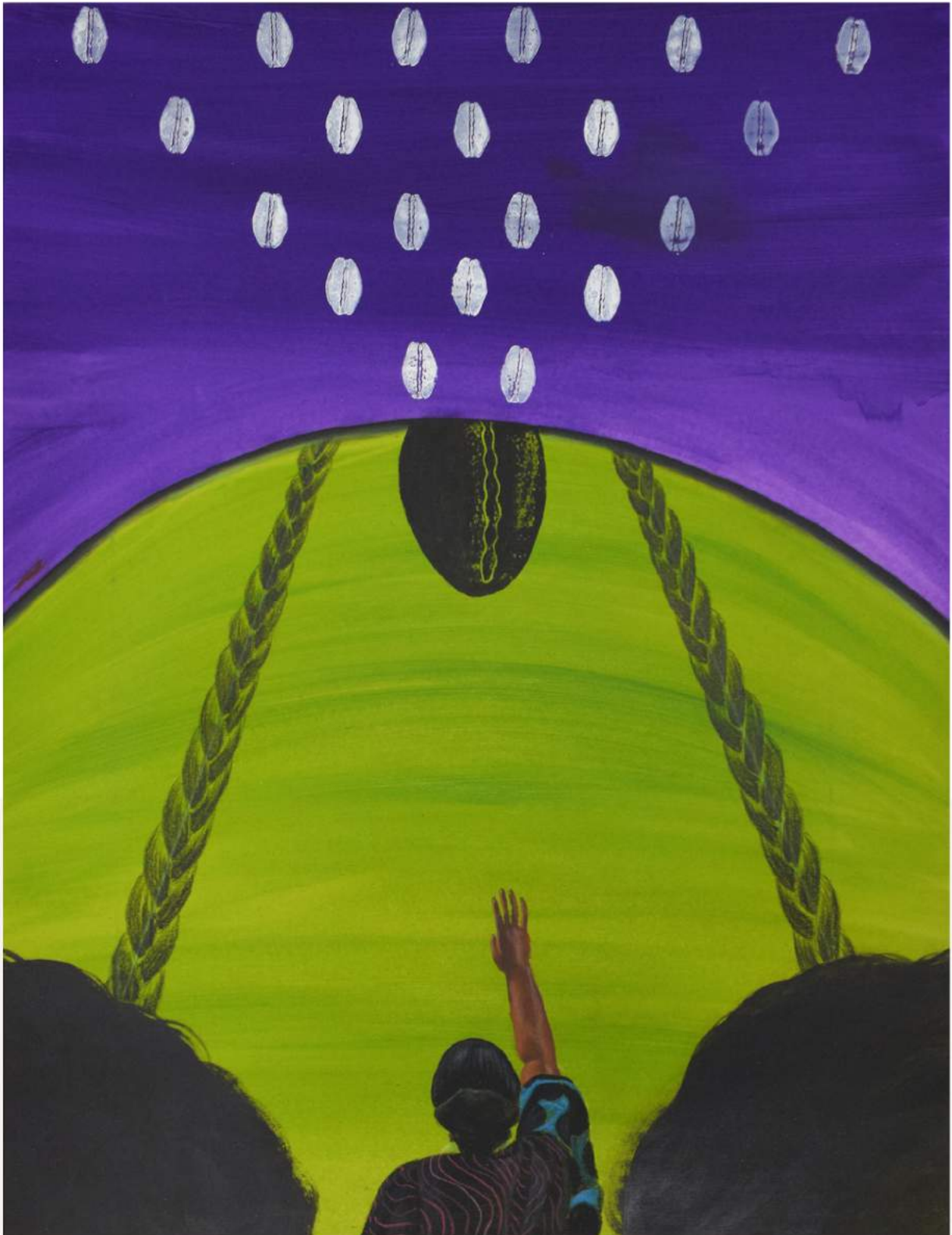
2022

Pastel pencil & acrylic  
on pastel paper

21.0 x 15.0 cm



kó



**IRUNOJI PULLS  
BLESSINGS DOWN  
WITH THE NIGHT**

2022

Pastel pencil,  
coloured pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper  
69.0 x 53.0 cm

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**IS IT RAINING...  
LIZARDS &  
COWRIES?**

2022

Pastel pencil,  
coloured pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper  
69.0 x 53.0 cm

kó

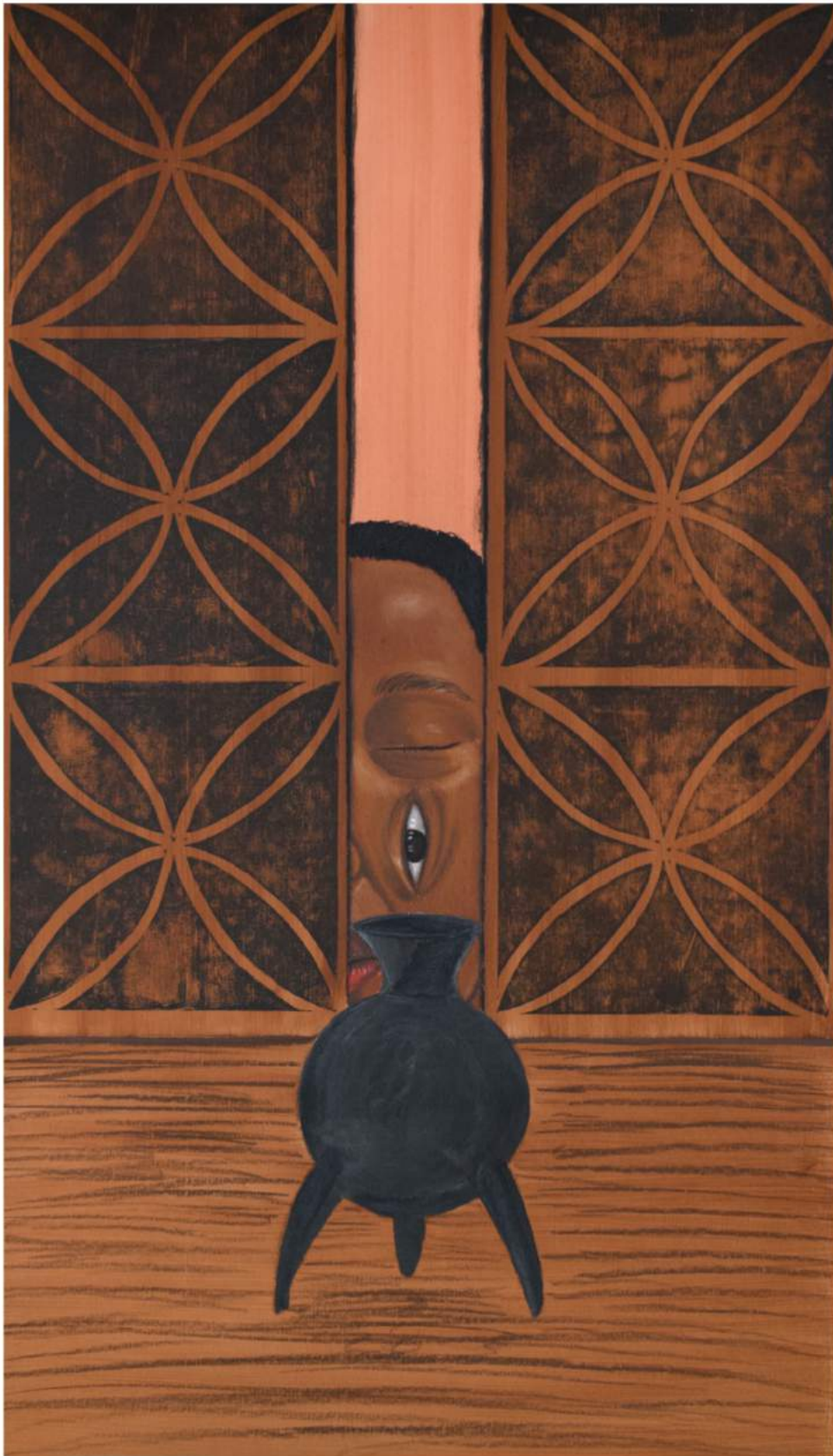


**LOOKING AT  
LOOKING**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper  
21.0 x 15.0 cm

kó



**PEERING ARUARO**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper  
62.8 x 36.2 cm

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**STILL LIFE #1**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper

94.5 x 52.0 cm

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**STILL LIFE #2**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper

96.0 x 52.3 cm

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**THE INVISIBLE  
HAND SPRAYS  
MONEY TOO**

2022

Pastel pencil,  
coloured pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper

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**THEY WERE  
DANCING WITH AN  
ANCESTOR**

2022

Pastel pencil,  
coloured pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper  
50.9 x 142 cm



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**WE STARTED  
SOMETHING**

2022

Pastel pencil, ink &  
acrylic on pastel paper

50.7 x 142 cm

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**YOUNG IRUNOJI**

2022

Pastel pencil & acrylic  
on pastel paper

21.0 x 15.0 cm

