



MAK@VENICE
A Transdimensional Vision

DAMILOLA MOSES OPEDUN

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JUNE 26 2021



Signature-beyond
— Art Gallery —

THE SIGNATURE GALLERY
107 AWOLOWO ROAD, IKOYI, LAGOS, NIGERIA.

MAKOVENICE
An Exhibition of New Paintings by
Damilola Moses Opedun

SIGNATURE BEYOND ART GALLERY
107, Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Saturday June 26th - Saturday July 10th, 2021

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SIGNATURE BEYOND ART GALLERY
in collaboration with
TSTTV STUDIO 2

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Published by
TSTTV STUDIO 2
Third Floor, 14, Ajayi Aina, Ifako, Gbagada, Lagos, Nigeria

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A WORD FROM SIGNATURE BEYOND GALLERY

This exhibition titled Makovenice by Damilola Opedun is one of our best exhibits yet. The artist goes beyond a master by right in his craftsmanship, he is also behind The Seed of the True Vine Foundation, a non-governmental organization that cares for the education and welfare of children living in ghettos since 2015.

Damilola is a reflection of what we stand for.

We are professionals, sincere and transparent, purely designated for the art and art alone. When we sell what we're selling we want you to be fully aware of who you're buying so we are not here to impress you with a glass of champagne or a red carpet. When you buy art from

us and when you wake up the next morning you realize that you did the right thing.

Signature has been around for a long time and we all know what we stand for, we all know how long we've been in this business, we all know how far we've come and what we've contributed to the art scene.

Opedun is an amazing artist as well as a great human being. We hope to see you all at the show as we are sure you'll love the works.

Rahman Akar

Founder, Signature Beyond Art Gallery



FOREWORD

Every good thing we see created by an artist comes from within. Every positive creation enjoyed in a physical, tangible form comes from a long journey of conscious and subconscious search by its creator. Sometimes even the remotest Eureka is as a result, tedious internal search geared towards the crystallisation of a novel idea.

Creatives over the years have used the tensed periods of their creative growth in an intense manner. A lot has resulted in the discovery of a new form that adds to the already saturated novel creative field. The result of the creative search to be found in this exhibition, titled Makovenice: a transformational vision which in other words, holds that anything is possible is as a result of the numerous turns that this artist have walked and experienced as a creative spirit.

Most art comes out of a 'Noticer' of all transient phenomena that abound in our environment, be it physical, lucid, tangible or spiritual.

The artist speaks the truth always. Knowing that his truth is not the truth, he presents his slant of the story of the world as he perceives it.

His environment, neighbourhood, settlements, people's and culture forms up what becomes the elements of his physical documentary.

Of all these, there is always a period of decision experienced by every artist. This is the period that he examines an alternate creative milieu. A period of a deeper personal truth when the artist gets out of the order to create his own new order. At this point, he combines his formal usual tableaux into direct but simplistic spatial space of symbols and form. Now he responds to issues with direct no figurative elements. This the art takes its own form dictated only by the artist. This is his clear record of his synthesis of his world within delivered to the world without.

Only the discerning and the trained will be there with him. It is a period of awareness, enlightenment combined with experience. This time the artist has evolved in a conscious, structured order.

He simply creates.

Sam Ovraiti



ARTIST STATEMENT

Makovenice is an idea that portrays Life as beyond what is seen with just the physical eyes. It is seeing and living beyond the limits of any environment one finds himself regardless of the prevailing conditions. In other words, it is a trans-dimensional vision or perception of reality and a deep belief that all things are truly possible.

Through my interactions with people I come across -- especially the children I teach in Makoko Oko-Agbon -- I have become increasingly aware of the lack of this type of vision, which is an inevitable element for advancement. And this should not be the case for us.

Therefore, with Makovenice, I hope to activate in the audience this wonderful intrinsic perception of reality, to live beyond current limitations in our world. I also hope, through this show, to intelligibly convey my unflinching love and desire to be the voice for the marginalised people, especially that of the children of the stilt community of Makoko Oko-Agbon. Through acting as a bridge between them and the intellectual world, I intend to attract the desired assistance to them, especially in the area of education.



THE MESSENGER & HIS MESSAGE

I clearly recall walking into a gallery space here in Lagos one bright, sunny afternoon about a decade ago. Amongst the many works on display, screaming for attention, a particular pastel on paper piece winked at me and – 'BOOM!' – an instant connection was made. I drew closer to visually feast on the incredible, yet soothing, suggestive strokes with deft and vibrant colour play, reminiscent of the Auchi Art School, as well as spotting the sleek signature of the artist inherent in the piece, which I quickly memorised. With the conviction that the Lagos art scene would get more exciting based on the huge potentials I'd seen in this artist's piece, I began to be on the lookout for more (inclusive of other chances just to see the artist's beautiful signature). Big thanks to technology and social media that eventually made my visual delight odyssey a lot easier to access and enjoy more pieces by Opedun Damilola.

As times moved on, beyond his usual array of well composed paintings that would hardly allow the viewer's eyes to blink, around 2015 I began to see more about an artist with a deeper sense of purpose... more like a messenger whose medium of the core message as well as his pulpit is Art. As times moved on, beyond his usual array of well-composed paintings that would hardly allow the viewer's eyes to blink, around 2015 I began to see more about an artist with a deeper sense of purpose... more like a messenger whose medium of the core message as well as his pulpit is Art. It was, and still is, interesting to see what was then birthed as THE SEED OF THE TRUE VINE FOUNDATION (<http://tsttv.org/>) – a transformational platform where art is used as a tool to mould and reshape young minds and also spread the sweet good news...THE GOSPEL!

As an artist, I strongly believe it all starts with that indescribable feeling where your gut feeling leads you to go all out on a creative adventure to essentially search deeper, to uncover some innate truths, to ask questions, to challenge thoughts and ideals so as to create new experiences. The above summation, to my knowledge, propels Opedun Damilola's creative journey. Firmly rooted in faith, his undying hunger for humanitarian work and new discoveries has always been driven by his 'WHAT IFs' and 'WHY NOTs'. This is evident in the short documentary on his Makoko adventure, themed BUDDING ARTISTS, which is an articulation of TSTTV's intervention in Makoko where the children's mind-set are developed using the arts. It is a movement that basically started from taking a step to visit Makoko on a friend's suggestion to take a few shots for painting references. Then, the 'What if' question would lead to the thought of meeting with the 'Baale' of Makoko to seek permission to engage and teach the community's children art.

With an open mind and the quest for breaking new grounds, one can only imagine the effect and power in asking 'What if'. Having explored Makoko from a creative viewpoint over the years, Damilola must've pondered and asked himself more than a zillion times 'What's next?'. Drawing from the similarities between Makoko and Venice, the idea to create a hybrid experience out of his numerous contemplations on bringing both ends together took shape, hence 'MAKOVENICE', the title of his first solo exhibition here in Nigeria. Here, he brings a strong message, letting the viewers experience a trans dimensional vision, in his bid to communicate hope and to state that with faith anything is possible. His desired impact is to shed some light at seeing prospects and opportunities that abound beyond our five senses as he interrogates and links together the aquatic lifestyle of both places where livelihood literally 'floats'. This is a move that illustrates the power of the mind.

The body of works comprises 14 strong pieces in total but created in sets of aquascape and figurative pieces. In the 'Revelation' series, Opedun displays both his conceptual and executional prowess by using sets of tertiary warm and grey tones of colours to visualise the fusion of historic Venetian architecture with the Makoko shanties, marrying both elements to reveal amazing beauty in both places regardless of contrast in their geographical locations and social status. Same applies to the pieces titled 'In and Out' and 'The Kingdom is Here'. His understanding of the basic principles of art and breaking the rules with creative license to highlight his focal points alongside his sense of capturing mood, 3-dimensional and atmospheric feel on a 2-dimensional surface with paints is exceptional. His ability to create textures while capturing depths, smoky feel, water reflections and the likes always births a captivating visual story. In the figurative pieces, he chooses to immortalise the children of the Makoko Oko-Agbon community in the series titled 'The Beloved', by showcasing how dear they are to him as he registers their innocence and by extension, documents their significance in our history.

Opedun chooses to push the creative barriers further in the pieces themed 'Sacrifice' and 'Help For My Unbelief'. In these, he creates a mirage that reflects individual and collective dreams of the children in each of the pieces with the 'I have a dream' inscription well situated as part of the design elements in the compositions alongside other elements that complement the main singular subject positioned in the middle. In all, as we say in local parlance, 'Opedun head dey hot!'. He has taken the audience on a dreamlike journey that points towards a higher realm or reality. Also, he's availed everyone the privilege to view life from his lens of possibilities. With a strong stand that each person has the power to be the

light to the world, he also believes that every being, especially artists that connect to the Divine will, can positively transform the ugly narratives of this embittered nation. As you enjoy Opedun's visual tales, WHAT IF you step off the comfort-zone map with an activated faith and let your light shine?

Ibe Ananaba





BEAUTY AND SPIRITUALITY

This essay is going to fill the gaps. He is a very spiritual and gifted individual. He paints and loves to paint. His subjects are interesting and rendered intimately. The paintings in this collection are beautiful. The religious symbols are intentional.

He has painted on few “Venetian” in his cityscapes. He has married different neighbourhoods on these canvases. The intensity of his artistic desires is seen in all the paintings. All the city spaces have serious architectural details; pillars, balconies, windows. The intricate designs are not ignored.

The colours are bold, warm and the greys show a deliberate attempt to inform and educate. I am tempted to walk through these cities he has built with colour. I am staring at the browns, the reds, the shades of blue and purple. There is a good interaction between creative thought fullness and physical sight. The paintings have been worked. He has put a lot of work. His paintings are magical and beautiful. The drawings are skilful.

The paintings are descriptive in nature. The interplay of opulent traditional middle-class neighbourhoods and slums on the canvas is interesting. Dreams come true - that is the message. We all can break the norm. If we dare.

The portraits are subtle. The colours “quiet” and modern. Talking about design, Opedun's paintings show a lot of planning.

I have moved inside and outside these paintings. These paintings will add to the visual collage and create more sparks.

Duke Asidere



“ *_Vision
is the beginning of all creation,
not the starting point of
the act of creation. _* ”

ARTWORKS ▶



“
For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end - it will not lie. If it seems
slow, Wait for it it will surely come; it will not delay.
- **Habakkuk 2:3**”

REVELATION I

Oil on Canvas
36" X 48"
2019



IN AND OUT 36" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021





HELP FOR MY UNBELIEF 36" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021



SACRIFICE 36" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021

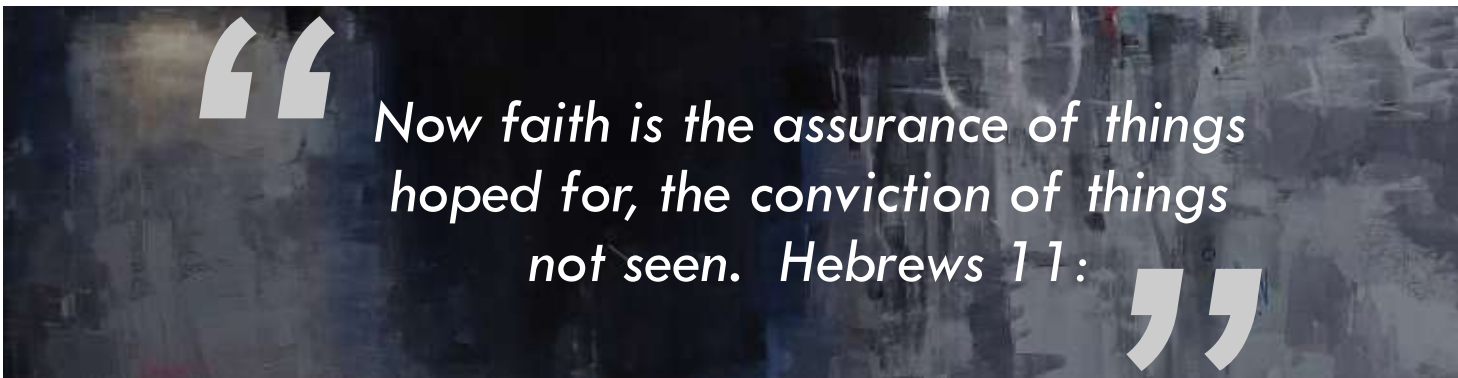




REVELATION IV Oil on Canvas 48" X 48" 2020



TRANSITION 48" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021



“

*Now faith is the assurance of things
hoped for, the conviction of things
not seen. Hebrews 11:*

”









THE KINGDOM IS HERE Oil on Canvas 48" X 48" 2020



REVELATION V 48" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021





REVELATION II Oil on Canvas 36" X 48" 2021





REVELATION III Oil on Canvas 48" X 48" 2021



REVELATION VI 48" X 48" Oil on Canvas 2021



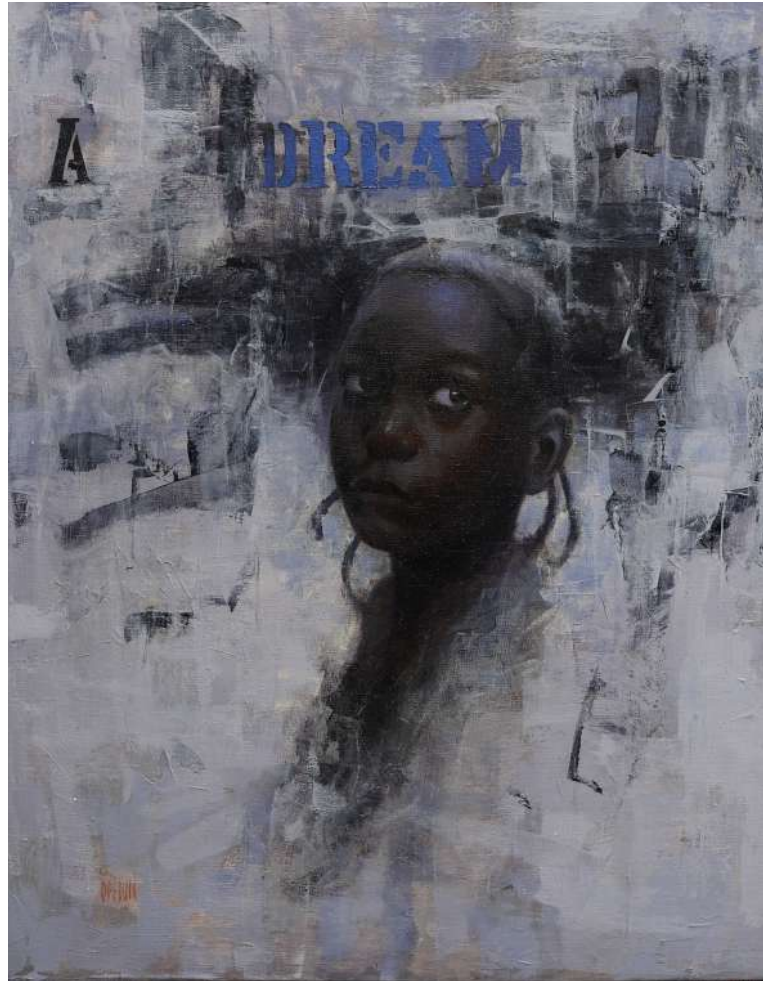




THE BELOVED I Oil on Canvas 30" X 24" 2021



THE BELOVED II Oil on Canvas 30" X 24" 2021



THE BELOVED III Oil on Canvas 30" X 24" 2021

“ Therefore, with Makovenice,
I hope to activate in the audience this wonderful
intrinsic perception of reality, to live
beyond current limitations in our world ”



WITH ART, DAMILOLA OPEDUN SOWS SEEDS OF HOPE IN MAKOKO...

Jacob might just as well be any of the many nondescript teenage boys flitting about the Makoko community. Could that be why Damilola Opedun offers no further – not even sketchy – details about the 15-year-old? Makoko, where Jacob lives is, by the way, is an informal Lagos mainland littoral community. Some apparently informed sources estimate that a third of this community is built on stilts on the fringes of the Lagos Lagoon, across which the Third Mainland Bridge spans. Most of its residents, who are mostly fishermen, are widely believed to have migrated from Badagry and Benin Republic.

Back to Jacob. What matters here is that Opedun got talking to the youth one day. The fact that Jacob's poor class attendance was taking its toll on his grades has not escaped his attention. Nor has the fact that the boy hadn't been seen that often lately in his Saturday art classes...

After the boy's father gave up the ghost last year, his mother has been piling on the pressure on him to become the family's new breadwinner. And one way she thought he could do this was to offer water taxi services within the Makoko community. Meanwhile, Jacob has since his father's passage moved in with his uncle.

Of course, making much money in a poor community like Makoko was out of the question. Hence, there were days Jacob couldn't even make up to N2000, which would be just about \$ 4.89. This, he told Opedun, would make his mother so angry that she would accuse him of not being serious enough with the canoe taxi business. Sometimes, she would beat him when they were left with very little profit after the deductions of the cost of renting the canoe had been made. And the sad thing, for Opedun, is that Jacob is a very talented and promising art student in his Saturday classes, who is committed to becoming a successful professional visual artist in the future.

Not much better is the case of another youth, called Lazarus, who is at the top of Opedun's Saturday art class. Previously attending a French-speaking school back in his country of origin, the Benin Republic, he has since his family's relocation to Makoko been forced to be out of school. His father, a fisherman, and his mother, a fishmonger, can no longer afford his education since Lazarus is just one – the fourth

child actually – among their 10 children. On the brighter side, Lazarus offers his skills and services to training younger and new students joining the art classes.

Opedun first visited the famous slum community sometime in September 2014. He had accompanied an artist friend of his, Adebajo Mesagan, to a part of the community called Oko Agbon to take photographs as reference materials for painting. After he graduated from the Auchu Polytechnic in 2010, Opedun was posted to Lagos State for the mandatory one-year National Youth Service Corps programme. He had, at the end of the service year, opted to stay back in Lagos, where he at first tried to eke out a living by hawking his paintings to art galleries. This was before he crossed the path of an old friend Tenne Fatona. Fatona, who owned a hotel in the middle-class residential mainland neighbourhood Gbagada, literally took him off the streets by offering him a job as a manager of this hotel. But this did not stop Opedun from continuing to work on his paintings.

Shocked by the horrific living conditions he found among the Makoko slum-dwellers, Opedun resolved, as they approached the community chieftain's house for permission to take photographs, to make an additional request. And that was to be permitted to train the children in art skills.

The permission to impart art skills to the community's children was eventually granted after the elders had held several consultations among themselves and done their background checks on the artist. Thus, with the approval granted, his first art class in Makoko held on Monday, January 26, 2015. The art classes, which at first held thrice weekly, soon tapered off to holding just once a week (on Saturdays) after he got married on Saturday, April 25 that same year.

During the first two years, Opedun saw no need to publicise his activities in the informal settlement. He at first cringed at the Pharisaic thought of announcing his good deeds from the rooftops. But then, on second thoughts, he reasoned that publicity would help the cause of these underprivileged children. Hence, by January 2017, he had started posting his activities on Facebook, with the hope that well-meaning people

out there would be inspired enough to wish to help the children.

Yet, there were moments he was assailed with despair and self-doubt, even toyed with the idea of giving up on the project. Having only two or three students sometimes showing up for the art lessons, because the others had gone to work to support their families, didn't help matters. "I have also discovered from my interactions with the kids that most of the parents do not wish their children to pursue any other profession outside the common profession of fishing or whatever will keep them within the community for life."

Then, another encounter with a preacher almost convinced him that he was wasting his time with the children. This preacher, whose denomination failed to thrive in the community, condescendingly alluded to the fact that some soils were destined not to produce good fruits no matter how much work one puts into them. Besides, he recalls being so broke that he couldn't afford the transportation cost to the community. "But because I'm dedicated to the vision, I would somehow manage to go. The Almighty has always met my needs at the end of the day."

Of course, it wasn't easy looking on, as his colleagues sold works in exhibitions and went for art residencies. And here he was going to Oko-Agbon, Makoko every week to teach and inspire underprivileged children! "Often times, I have been asked what my inspiration for visiting this community was without any sponsor," he muses. "To think that I'm a young man still trying to find his feet in Lagos. Well, my answer is that there is an indescribable and profound love that I have for the kids. I'm gratified to see the joy in their faces every week they see me. I believe God is behind my vision and the inspiration that has fuelled my passion these years."

Now, the Ondo State-born artist seemed to have successfully put those periods of self-doubt behind him. "Now, I'm more passionate about this work because the effect is so visible on the children that attend my weekly class," he enthuses. "Their behaviour and perceptions are positively dramatically different from other kids around them, they are really becoming beacons of light for their peers."

He remains grateful to the Almighty that he has also been able to provide 100-page sketch pads, pencils and erasers for each participant in the art classes and that he had remained resolute since the day he vowed to dedicate his life in the service of building good moral values people that cross his path.

Meanwhile, back in 2017, one Idowu Opaleye and his friends Gbenga Ijamakinwa and Banji Akande sponsored the registration and the creation of the website of his NGO, The Seed of The True Vine (TSTTV) foundation. Their efforts were later complemented by those of the architect Samuel Okai, who designed the proposed Makoko art studio, the chartered accountant Conerlius Okai, who is in charge of the TSTTV accounts, Damola Ogunbambo who is in charge of the website and social media accounts, the University of Benin undergraduate Emem Ibanga, who creates content for the social media accounts and the artist Azeez Salami, who doubles as a facilitator at the Makoko art classes and Ezekiel Onwuka, who handles the logistics.

The recently-acquired studio space housing the TSTTV Studio Two, which is along Ajayi Aina Street in Gbagada, was inaugurated on Saturday, January 16 this year. "We hope in this new year to build a wooden structure in Makoko for the children and that will be the Studio One."

Perhaps, a precursor to this TSTTV studio would be a studio space he used to have in a small compound at 10, Olufeyisan Street in the Lagos Lagoon-front neighbourhood Oworonsoki in 2016. This was where he worked with a group of six students from the Yaba College of Technology's art department, who solicited for an internship programme in his studio.

Okechukwu Uwaezuoke

Editor: Arts and Review, THISDAY

Welcome to

The seed of the True Vine Foundation.

Helping less privileged children
discover and utilize their talents especially within
the scope of arts.

[DONATE](#)

[CHECK OUR PROGRAM](#)

 info@tsttvf.org
 +2348062086131
 @tsttvf
 www.tsttvf.org

Help support the education of these Children

No one has ever become poor by giving

To give less privileged children life changing opportunities within the scope of fine arts, theatre arts and fashion design.

BECOME A PARTNER

Our Vision

We aim to have all the children under our mentorship and training get education to a reasonable degree, train them to become reputable fine artists; make them self-reliant and very importantly, become good role models of positive societal virtues. At the end of every child's encounter with our organisation, their talents in arts would have been discovered, they would have realized their potentials, and they would have understood the value of giving back to the community.

Our NGO serves the less privileged children

in Makoko

Makoko - OkoAgbonis a slum in Lagos State, Nigeria and is located along the third mainland bridge where one-third of the community survive on stilts built along the Lagoon.

CHECK OUR PROGRAM

The background is a dark, textured painting. It features a lighthouse with a red and white striped tower on the right side. The overall color palette is dominated by dark browns, greys, and blacks, with some lighter, textured areas at the top. The lighthouse has a red top section. The painting style is expressive and somewhat abstract, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of depth.

*“_Our Imagination is what makes us fruitful
....we all have a spiritual womb to conceive
and give birth to greatness. _”*

CLASS IN **SESSION** ►

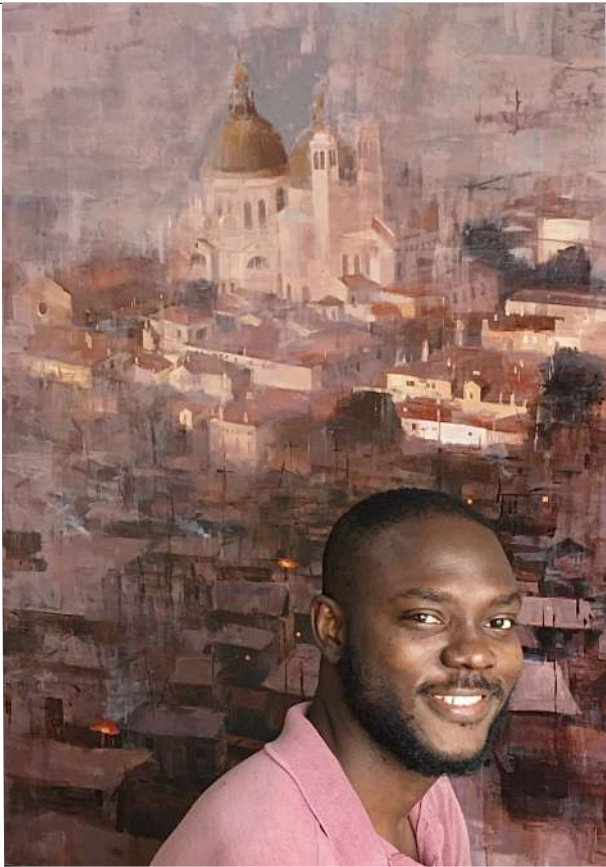




TSTTV FOUNDATION STUDENT'S ARTWORK







DAMILOLA MOSES OPEDUN

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damilolaopedun@gmail.com,
Instagram:@damilolaopedun

Place of birth: Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.
B. 1983, Ondo state, Nigeria.

EDUCATION:

CAC Primary School, Olugbode, Ibadan, Oyo State (Primary)

Apata Community Grammar School, Ibadan, Oyo State (Secondary)

Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State. Nigeria.

QUALIFICATIONS:

National Diploma, General Art. 2007.

Higher National Diploma in Painting. 2010.

AWARDS:

-2017. Jack Richeson & Co. Silver Award.(45th Annual Exhibition of
The Pastel Society of America

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021- Makovenice, a trans dimensional vision, Signature Beyond
Gallery, Lagos

2021- Human Emotions, by Signature Beyond Gallery, London.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018-Generations Art Exhibition (the future masters Series) by Mydrim
Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria.

2017- Enduring Brilliance, 45th Annual Exhibition of The Pastel Society of America.

2017- Generations Art Exhibition (the future masters Series) by Mydrim Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria

2016- Fate III, the 3rd edition of a group show put together by Alexi's Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria.

2016 – The Cyber Art Show by Keith Linwood Stover.www.thecyberartshow.com

2016 – Lagos Living And Working Exhibition by Indigo Arya.

2015 – Mydrim Gallery, 15th Annual Pastel Exhibition

2015 – Oreze III (The King's Crowd), Onitsha.

Exhibition in Honor of His Royal Majesty, Obi of Onitsha.

2013 – “Illumination” Nimbus Gallery, Lagos. A Group Exhibition by the Ingenious Minds.

2008 – “The Creative Minds” The Harmattan Workshop Gallery, Victoria Island Lagos.

PUBLIC PROJECTS:

2015 – Till date - The Seed of The True Vine Foundation, a non-governmental organisation focused on the education and welfare of children living in the slums.

https://youtu.be/R2V8Oky_m4s

SELECTED REVIEWS:

2020 – <https://artbeat-ng.com/a-mantra-spirituality-became-for-damilola-opedun/>

2021 – <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/01/17/through-art-damilola-opedun-serves-true-humanity/>

2021- <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/04/04/with-art-damilola-opedun-sows-seeds-of-hope-in-makoko/>

APPRECIATION

My sincere appreciation goes to my Heavenly Father and
God, JEHOVAH.

My amazing darling wife Abimbola Opedun
Mr Rahman Akar and the entire staff of Signature Beyond
Gallery

Mr Duke Asidere

Mr Sam Ovraiti

Mr Ibe Ananaba

Mr Okechukwu Uwaezuoke

Mr Bob-Nosa Uwagboe

Mr Abass Kilani

Mr & Mrs Idowu Opaleye

Mr & Mrs Kolapo Olaleye

Azeez Salami

Lawal Bamidele Opeyemi &

Damilola Makinde



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