

SIGNATURE BEYOND ART GALLERY
PRESENTS

WHAT REFUSES TO BE FORGOTTEN

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

AN EXHIBITION OF MEMORY,
MASQUERADE, IDENTITY AND
CULTURAL CONTINUITY

BY
YAKUBU KAREEM

2026





SIGNATURE BEYOND ART GALLERY
PRESENTS

WHAT REFUSES TO BE FORGOTTEN

Sat 19 of September - Sat 26th of September 2026

Time : 12:00pm - 6:00pm

107 Awolowo Road Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

AN EXHIBITION OF MEMORY,
MASQUERADE, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL
CONTINUITY

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Dust and Fire



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FOREWORD

What Refuses to Be Forgotten

Art has the remarkable ability to preserve what time attempts to erase. It gives form to memories, emotions, traditions and stories that may otherwise disappear, allowing them to remain present across generations.

What Refuses to Be Forgotten is an exhibition that invites us into this space of remembrance.

The works presented in this exhibition are deeply rooted in the visual and spiritual language of masquerade. Through expressive colour, layered textures, movement and powerful figures, the artist explores the relationship between the visible and the unseen, the individual and the ancestral, the past and the present.

Titles such as The Ancestor, The Elder Sits With Fire, The One Who Watches, The General of Spirits, The Quiet Roar and The One Who Comes First immediately suggest a world where memory is alive and where the past continues to speak to the present.

Yet these works are not simply representations of masquerades. They are reflections on identity, inheritance and cultural continuity. The figures seem to carry stories within them. Some appear to dance, some watch, some arrive, some follow, while others stand with an almost commanding stillness. Together, they create a procession of memory.

The exhibition reminds us that culture is not preserved only in books, museums or archives. It survives through people, ceremonies, gestures, symbols, stories and collective remembrance. It survives because each generation finds a way to carry something forward.

In this sense, the masquerade becomes a powerful metaphor for memory itself. Beneath the layers is history; within the movement is tradition; behind the mystery is identity.

What Refuses to Be Forgotten therefore asks us not merely to look at these works, but to listen to them.

What are our ancestors still saying to us?

What traditions continue to shape who we are?

What memories have we inherited without even knowing it?

And what must we refuse to allow the passage of time to erase?

As you encounter these works, I invite you to slow down and look beyond their colour and movement. Allow each figure to become a doorway into memory, history and imagination.

May this exhibition remind us that what is remembered is never entirely lost.

What refuses to be forgotten continues to live.

Signature Beyond Art Gallery

GALLERY STATEMENT

What Refuses to Be Forgotten
An Exhibition by Yakubu Kareem

At Signature Beyond Art Gallery, we view contemporary art as more than an expression of the present—it is also a powerful connection to the histories, traditions, and memories that shape who we are.

What Refuses to Be Forgotten by Yakubu Kareem presents a compelling collection of works that explores memory, ancestry, spirituality, cultural identity, and the enduring influence of tradition.

At the heart of the exhibition is the masquerade, presented as both a cultural symbol and a dynamic visual language. Throughout the works, masquerade figures appear in moments of movement and stillness—dancing, observing, arriving, blessing, following, and commanding attention. Each figure contributes to a broader reflection on how cultural memory continues to exist within contemporary life.

Kareem's expressive treatment of colour, texture, movement, and form gives his figures a striking sense of vitality. They seem to emerge from a space between memory and imagination, carrying an atmosphere that is at once mysterious, celebratory, spiritual, and contemplative.

Works including *The Ancestor*, *The Elder Sits With Fire*, *The Blessing Dance*, *The Smiling Spirit*, *The One Who Comes First*, *The General of Spirits*, *The Trickster Dance*, *The Quiet Roar*, *Dust and Fire*, and *Falling Unbound* form part of a larger visual narrative about identity, heritage, and what survives across generations.

For Signature Beyond Art Gallery, this exhibition speaks to the im-

portance of keeping cultural narratives alive through contemporary art. Kareem demonstrates that tradition does not need to remain confined to the past. It can be reinterpreted, transformed, and experienced through new artistic languages while retaining its emotional and cultural power.

Ultimately, *What Refuses to Be Forgotten* is an exhibition about presence—the presence of those who came before us, the presence of tradition within modern life, and the presence of memories that continue to influence our understanding of ourselves and our communities.

We invite visitors to encounter these works with curiosity and openness. Look beyond the colours and figures. Observe the movement, textures, expressions, and symbolism, and allow the works to reveal their own stories.

Because the past does not always disappear.

Sometimes, it waits to be remembered.

Signature Beyond Art Gallery

ARTIST FEATURED

Yakubu Kareem

Painter

Yakubu Oluwaseun Abdulkareem

Born in 1996 and originally from Edo State, Nigeria, Yakubu Oluwaseun Abdulkareem grew up in Ikotun, Lagos, where he completed his primary and secondary education. He went on to study General Arts at Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, earning his National Diploma (ND) in 2017, before pursuing his Higher National Diploma (HND) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos.

Abdulkareem is a contemporary artist whose practice is deeply rooted in experimentation, material exploration and the continuous search for new visual possibilities. His creative process begins with the materials available to him and develops through an intuitive investigation of how different mediums can interact, complement, challenge or transform one another. He may combine as many as six or seven different mediums within a single painting, allowing the unexpected relationships between materials to become an important part of the work.

His approach is deliberately experimental. He moves between techniques such as impasto, washes and dry-brush applications, often combining contrasting methods within the same composition. Accidental marks, spontaneous strokes and unconventional processes are welcomed as part of his artistic language. Rather than repeating

a fixed formula, Abdulkareem continually changes his approach from one work to another, seeking something unfamiliar and allowing the process itself to influence the final image.

The human form occupies a central position in his practice. His interest in figure drawing began during his secondary-school years, when he developed a strong fascination with life-drawing classes. That early engagement has continued to shape his artistic development, making the human body a subject he regards as both endlessly challenging and endlessly revealing.

The female figure appears frequently in his work, particularly because of the complexity and visual possibilities it presents to him. Through variations in posture, gesture, physical character and expression, he approaches the figure as a continually unfolding subject—one that offers new questions and possibilities with every painting.

For Abdulkareem, the human form functions as a universal language. A gesture, pose or physical expression can communicate emotions and narratives without the need for words. His figures therefore become vessels through which different human experiences can be explored, including intimacy, desire, vulnerability, pleasure, pain, excitement and emotional tension.

At the heart of his practice is a desire to discover. Abdulkareem does not simply paint what he knows; he experiments in order to encounter what he has not yet discovered. Through material combinations, spontaneous marks and the expressive possibilities of the human figure, his work reflects an ongoing dialogue between control and accident, familiarity and discovery, technique and intuition.

Selected Auction Participation

SOGAL Modern & Contemporary Art Auction — 2018

SOGAL Modern & Contemporary Art Auction — 2019

SOGAL Modern & Contemporary Art Auction — 2020

Education

Higher National Diploma (HND) — Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria

National Diploma (ND) in General Arts — Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria, 2017

Primary and Secondary Education — Lagos, Nigeria

ARTIST STATEMENT

I paint Egungun not as costume, but as presence.

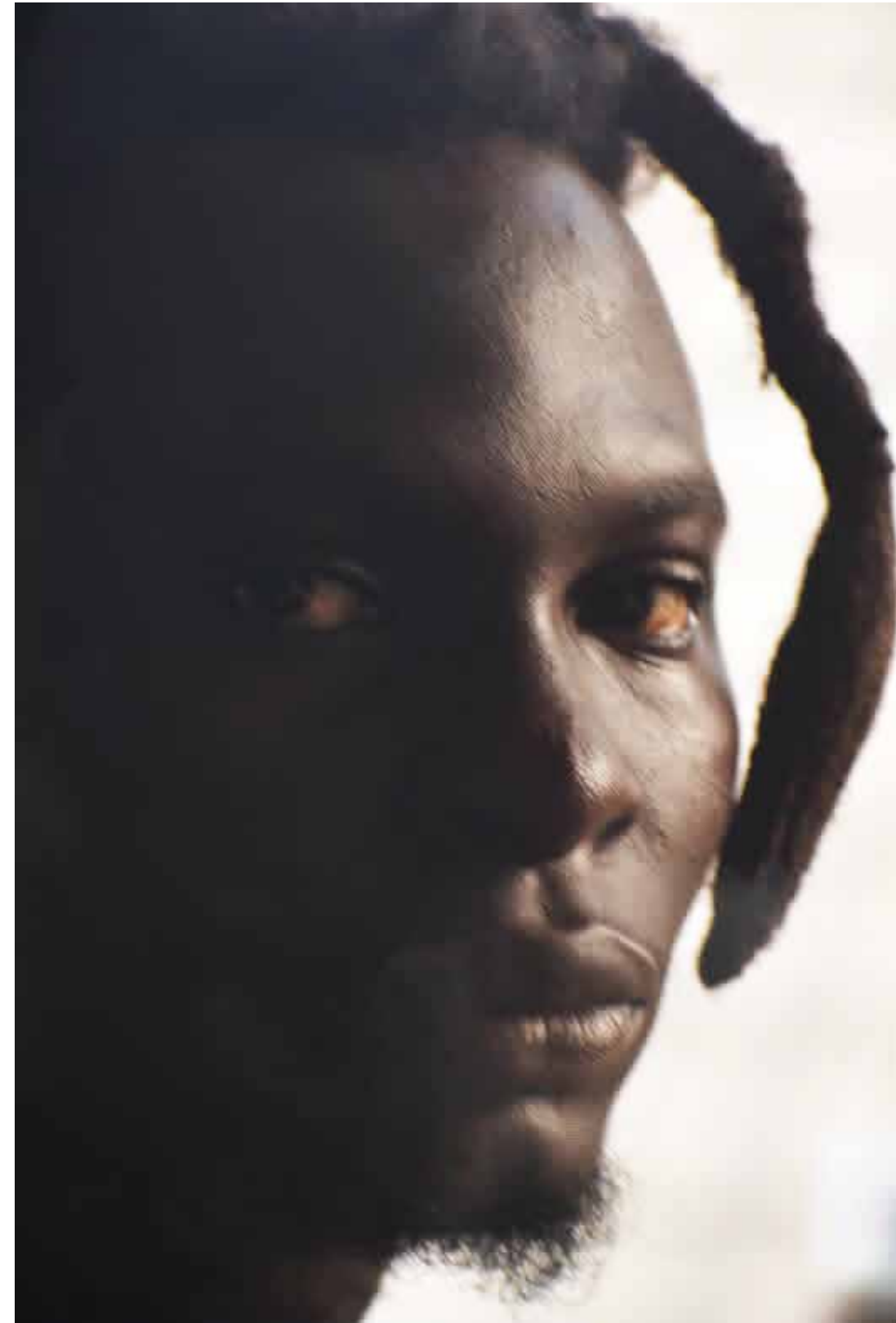
In Lagos 2026, the ancestors did not disappear. They changed clothes. They took raffia and turned it to brushstroke. They took ritual and turned it to color.

These 14 works are 14 conversations. Some come with power. Some with laughter. Some sit. Some run. Some come in pairs, because memory never walks alone.

The blue faces are not masks. They are the sky remembering us. The yellow raffia is not decoration. It is grass, fire, and gold all at once. The pink, purple, and orange grounds are Lagos itself — loud, spiritual, and alive.

I am not documenting tradition. I am proving it is still moving. That what our fathers danced is what we still need to see.

This show is for anyone who has ever felt a hand on their shoulder that no one was standing behind.





Wildfire walker

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
90 x 102cm

“Yellow, green, gold. He does not dance — he spreads. A red mouth in the middle of a storm. The ancestors came dressed as the land.”



The One Who Cannot Be Held

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Canvas
122 x 122cm

“The One Who Cannot Be Held
Arms, legs, raffia — all flying. Peach sky,
green ground. He dances at the edge of
dawn. If you blink, he becomes myth
again.”



The elder sits with fire

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
122 x 122cm

“The Elder Sits With Fire”

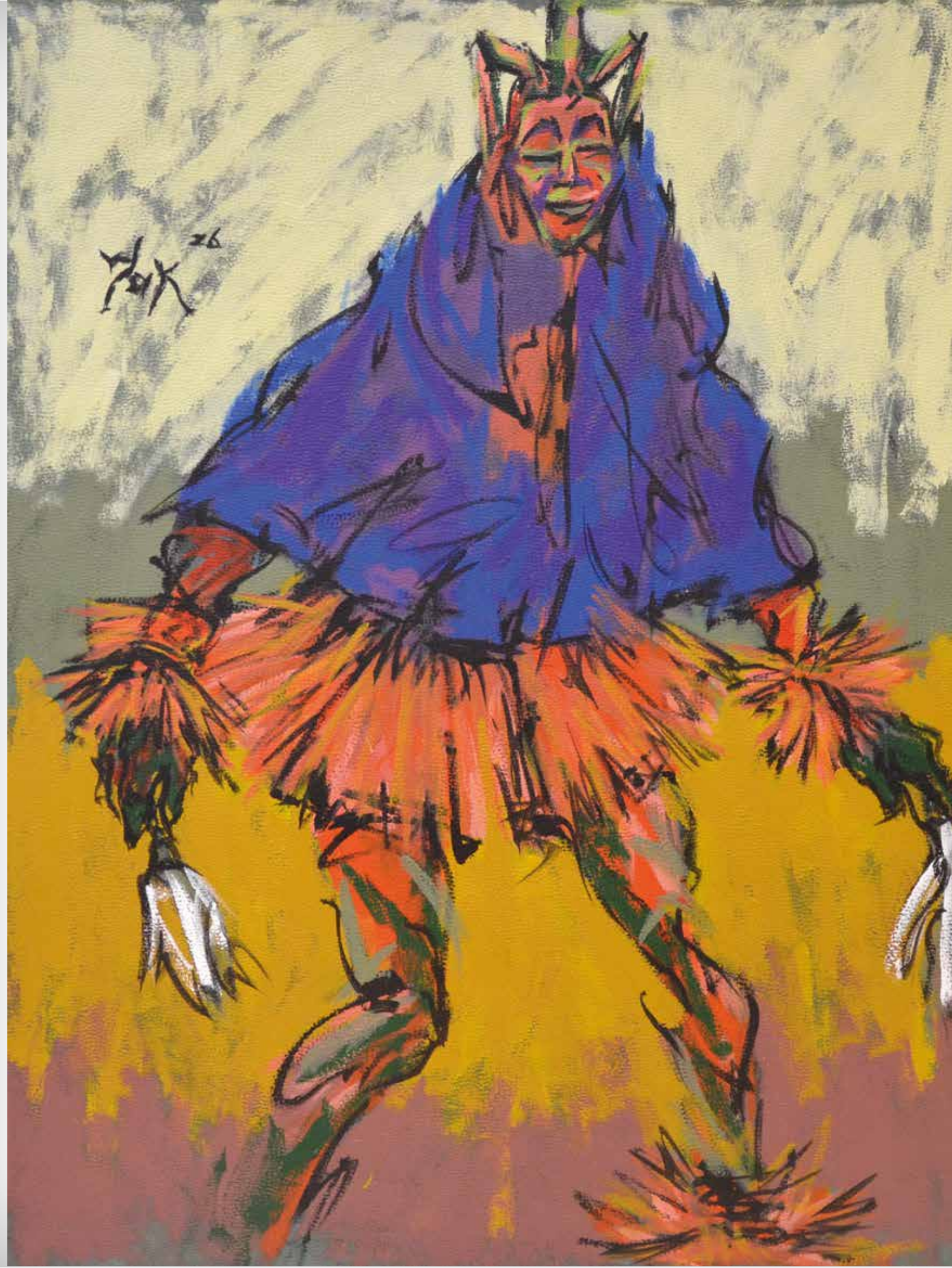
Orange for courage. Pink for blood.
He holds the staff not to walk, but to
remind. The ancestors are not gone.
They are just sitting down to talk.



The Quiet Roar

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
76 x 90cm

“The Quiet Roar
Closed eyes. Open spirit. This is not silence
— this is power gathered. Blue for depth,
white for purity, gold for glory. Egungun at
rest, but never asleep.”



The Smiling Spirit

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
90 x 122cm

“The Smiling Spirit
Blue robe. Red fire. Horns to the sky. Eyes
closed, but he sees everything. This is what
happens when the ancestors remember how
to laugh.”



The Blessing Dance

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Canvas
116 x 117cm

“The Blessing Dance
Arms open. Heart open. He dances so the
city can remember how to breathe. Yellow
for harvest. Purple for spirit. This is the
ending that is also a beginning.”



Egungun Unbound

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Charcoal, Acrylic, Fabric, Newsprint
on Canvas
122 x 183cm

“Egungun Unbound
He comes not to haunt, but to remind.
In raffia and rage, in color and drums,
the ancestors walk through Lagos traf-
fic and still find space to dance.”



The General Of Spirits

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Fabric, Acrylic, Charcoal, Nylon, Newsprint
on Canvas.
82 x 120cm

“The General of Spirits
Blue for wisdom. Yellow for crown. Raffia
for battle. He does not dance. He arrives.
When he speaks, even the wind listens.”



The One Who Follows

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
46 x 60cm

“The One Who Follows
Deeper purple. Deeper mystery. He
does not speak. He echoes. Where the
first walks, he seals the path.”



The One Who Comes First

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
46 x 60cm

“The One Who Comes First
Purple storm. Red warning. He steps out of
the bush with the sky behind him. The first
footfall. The first drum.”



Dust and Fire

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
60 x 153cm

“Dust & Fire
She doesn’t walk. She erupts. Anklets
rattling, raffia spinning, the ground
can’t hold her. This is what joy looks
like when it refuses to be quiet.”



The Trickster Dance

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Charcoal, Acrylic, Fabric, Newsprint on
Canvas
107 x 81cm

“The Trickster Dances”
He grins with all his teeth. No crown, no
fear. Just anklets, laughter, and dust. In
Yoruba land, even the ancestors know how
to joke.



Awon Ancesta

Yakubu kareem, 2026

Acrylic, Charcoal, Fabric, Newsprint
on Canvas
91 x 120cm

“Awon Ancesta

Blue face, fire cloth, dancing feet. When the
ancestors wear raffia, the ground remem-
bers. Egungun walks not to scare, but to
bless.”

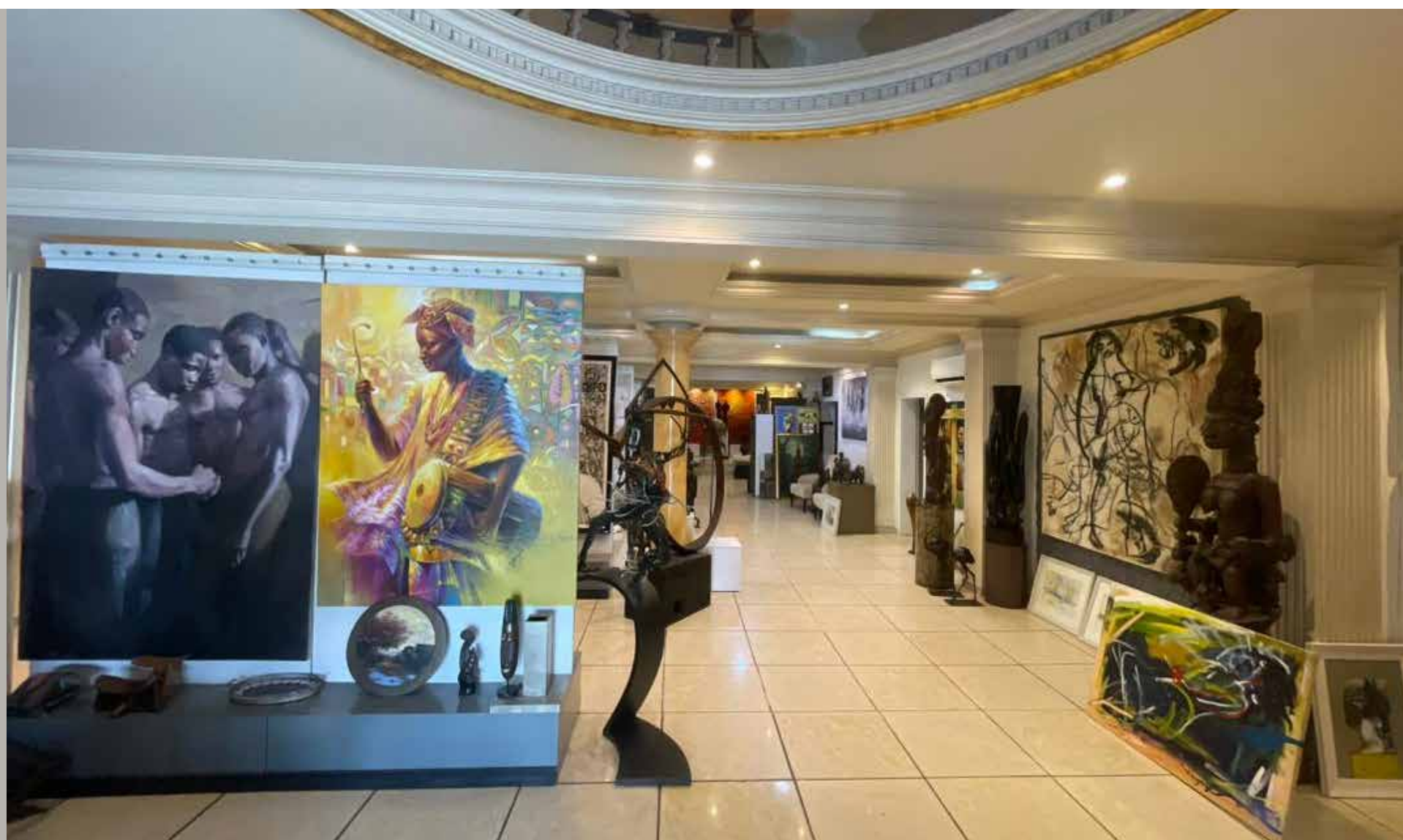


The One Who Watches

Yakubu kareem, 2026
Acrylic on Textured Canvas
91 x 107cm

“The One Who Watches
Two horns to the sky. Two eyes to your
heart. He comes at dusk when the world is
soft. Not to scare, but to see. To remember
what we try to forget.”

S I G N A T U R E



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