

NoForYes

An Exhibition of Paintings

By Dr Samuel Viyaje



2026



Presented and Sponsored By

Signature Beyond Gallery

NoForYes

An Exhibition of Paintings

By

Dr Samuel Viyaje

at

Signature Beyond Art Gallery

107 Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Time: 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm Daily

The exhibition runs through March 28th - April 4th, 2026.

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Signature-Beyond

On the Occasion of Samuel Viyaje's Painting Exhibition

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Works Review: NoForYes

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Acknowledgements

In every act of resistance, there is a quiet affirmation. **NoForYes** was born from that paradox — from the tension between refusal and becoming, between contradiction and clarity. This body of work emerged not merely as images on canvas, but as conversations with the self and with society — moments where “No” becomes an opening, and resistance becomes a form of truth.

I begin with profound gratitude to **Signature Beyond Gallery** for providing not only a space, but a field of trust where this dialogue could unfold. Your commitment to bold inquiry and artistic integrity makes it possible for ideas such as these to breathe, confront, and exist unapologetically.

My sincere appreciation goes to **Prof. John Ogene**, whose intellectual generosity and critical insight continually remind me that art must interrogate as much as it must inspire. Your engagement with thought as a living practice strengthens the foundation upon which this exhibition stands.

I am equally grateful to **Prof. Jean Borgatti**, whose scholarship and presence affirm the importance of cultural depth and historical consciousness in contemporary expression. Your encouragement reinforces the responsibility of the artist to remain attentive — to memory, to meaning, to humanity.

To **Dr. Sullayman Taiwo**, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your steady support and thoughtful dialogue. Your belief in the transformative power of art echoes within the layers of this work.

My appreciation also goes to **Pharm. Priscilla Viti and Vijo** for your unwavering encouragement and quiet strength. Your support reminds me that creativity does not exist in isolation — it is sustained by community, by care, by presence.

Finally, to **my friends and colleagues**, thank you for walking this journey with me — for the conversations, the questions, the disagreements, and the affirmations. You have shaped this process more than you know.

NoForYes stands as a testament to the courage of contradiction — to the understanding that resistance is not denial, but declaration. In saying “No,” we carve space for a deeper “Yes.” For everyone who has stood with me in that space — I am profoundly grateful.

Foreword

No for Yes: A Journey of Contrasts

In the intricate dance of art and expression, Samuel Viyaje's "No for Yes" presents a captivating exploration of duality - which I consider to be "closure as opening." Through a vibrant collection of paintings, Samuel invites us to navigate the spaces between oppositional forces, where refusal and acceptance entwine, and where the tensions between constraint and freedom give birth to something new. Call it a disguised affirmative response if you may, where negativity is concealed as a positive option.

With bold strokes and evocative colors, Viyaje's works challenge us to reconsider our assumptions, to see the "yes" hidden within the "no", and to recognize the beauty in the push and pull of life's complexities. While some see "NO" as an end, the artist sees it as means to an end. It is the beginning of positive outcomes as could be seen through this exhibition as a testament to the power of art to question, to provoke, and to illuminate.

Join us as we journey through the intriguing landscapes of Viyaje's "No for Yes", where every canvas whispers a story of possibility and paradox.

Professor John Ogene FSNA FIPMD JP

Deputy Vice Chancellor Emeritus

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

Introduction

Samuel Viyaje brings great energy to the canvas, whether working with a brush, a spray can or a cursive line. His work is neither representational nor abstract, but highly evocative. His greatest gift is the line that captures form and suggests motion – so that faces and figures emerge from the mixture. To my mind, his most effective paintings are those that employ the canvas as a neutral ground along with a limited use or range of colour. “Selling” is an impressive example of less being more, as is “Staying Ready,” where Viyaje suggests expression through the tilt of the head, simplified features, and a face that is startlingly green. Congratulations on this new body of work.

Jean M. Borgatti, PhD (she/her/hers)

Visiting Fellow, Akademie Schloss Solitude '25, '26

Fulbright Scholar (2002-2003, 2014-2015)

Professor, Fine and Applied Arts, University of Benin - Nigeria (2013-2017)

Long-term Affiliations - Clark University and Boston University

Consulting Curator - Global Africa, First Peoples - N. America & Oceania

FITCHBURG ART MUSEUM

www.fitchburgartmuseum.org

Gallery Statement

Signature Beyond Art Gallery is profoundly proud to present NoForYes, a groundbreaking exhibition that challenges the very boundaries of contemporary mixed-media painting. In this bold new collection, the artist presents an audacious, experimental twist on minimalism, inviting the audience into a space where artistic rebellion becomes a visual feast.

At its core, NoForYes is a deliberate and masterful betrayal of expectations. The title itself suggests a paradox—a rejection of the familiar in order to affirm something entirely new. The artist seeks to construct what can only be described as a "beautiful frustration of tradition." By subverting classical painting norms, the work intentionally disorients the viewer, dismantling preconceived notions of what mixed-media art should look and feel like on the canvas.

This conceptual rebellion is achieved through a highly distinctive visual language. The artist employs scintillating, kinetic brush strokes combined with unconventional, almost eccentric touches that are as weird as they are deeply entertaining. It is within these playful yet intense layers of mixed media that the spirit of the exhibition truly lives. The minimalism here is not about a lack of detail, but rather a fierce concentration of energy.

Comprising an intimate yet powerful collection of eleven major paintings alongside a curated selection of drawings, the exhibition refuses to spoon-feed a singular narrative. Instead, the delightfully weird and spontaneous touches deliberately leave wide, expansive room for the viewer's own interpretation. The audience is not just a passive observer, but an active participant tasked with finding their own "yes" within the artist's initial "no."

NoForYes is more than an exhibition; it is an engaging, provocative dialogue between the creator, the medium, and the observer. Signature Beyond Art Gallery Lagos is thrilled to host this remarkable body of work, and we invite you to immerse yourself in the scintillating frustration, the unexpected entertainment, and the brilliant defiance that defines this collection.

Mr. Akar Rahman

Founder, Signature Beyond Art Gallery,
Lagos.

Artist Statement

My practice is driven by a continuous search for beauty within contradiction. I create works that balance the familiar with the strange, using painting as a space to question convention and assert authenticity. Over time, this approach has become a deliberate refusal of rigid traditions in favour of instinct, experimentation, and personal truth.

I am particularly interested in opposites—the tension between acceptance and resistance, order and disruption. By working against expected visual norms, I explore how scarcity, contrast, and difference can heighten presence and value within an artwork.

Through expressive brushwork and experimental colour relationships, I aim to create compositions that feel alive, immersive, and quietly provocative. No for Yes marks a continuing exploration of this visual language, inviting viewers to engage with painting as a site of curiosity, tension, and discovery.

NoForYes | SAMUEL VIYAJE

NoForYes

Artist Biography



Dr. Samuel Viyaje (b. 1974) is a contemporary Nigerian painter, academic, and curator. An indigene of Ogaminana in the Adavi Local Government Area of Kogi State, he was born in Oziokutu into the family of Samuel Isezuo.

Dr. Viyaje holds an extensive academic pedigree in the fine arts. He earned his National Diploma (ND) from Kogi State Polytechnic, his Higher National Diploma (HND) from Auchi Polytechnic, and his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Ambrose Alli University. He further advanced his Scholarly and artistic pursuits at the University of Benin, where he obtained both His Master of Fine Arts (MFA) and his PhD.

Currently, Dr. Viyaje balances a rigorous studio practice with academia, serving as a Lecturer and the Curator of the Art Gallery at Auchi Polytechnic. A prolific artist, his work has been showcased extensively across numerous solo and group exhibitions. To God's glory, he is happily married to Pharmacist Priscilla, and they are blessed with two children, Viti and Vijo.

NoForYes | SAMUEL VIYAJE

Plates



STAYING READY
Mixed Media on Canvas
75cm x 90cm



SYMBOL OF CARE
Acrylic on Canvas
120cm x 120cm



WATCHING THEM
Acrylic on Canvas
120cm x 150cm



RESTING IN MY KINGDOM
Mixed Media on Canvas
76cm x 107cm





PEACEFUL WORLD
Mixed Media on Canvas
214cm x 275cm



SWEET DREAMS
Mixed Media on Canvas
7cm x 107cm

NoForYes | SAMUEL VIYAJE



SELLING
Mixed Media on Canvas
90cm x 90cm



RURAL FUN
Mixed Media on Canvas
35cm x 40cm

NoForYes | SAMUEL VIYAJE



SYMBOL OF BEAUTY
Oil on Canvas
90cm x 90cm



NEW DISCOVERY
Mixed Media on Canvas
122cm x 182cm



SELF EVALUATION
Mixed Media on Canvas
90cm x 90cm

Analysis of Exhibited Works

SYMBOL OF BEAUTY

"Symbol of Beauty" is a captivating mixed-media artwork measuring 120 by 120 centimeters. The piece features a reclining female figure, intentionally posed to exude beauty, allure, and sensual appeal. A striking element of the painting is the artist's use of spiral patterns to depict the figure's breasts. This stylistic choice creates a visual "ripple effect"-a metaphor for the lasting, magnetic impression the female form leaves on the viewer's mind long after they have looked away. At its core, the artwork explores the powerful design of nature. It reflects on how physical attraction is a primal, undeniable force used by nature to draw humanity together and ensure the continuation of life.

WATCHING THEM

In the evocative mixed-media work *Watching Them*, the artist employs a striking minimalist approach to explore the complex, often paradoxical theater of human existence. Measuring 120 by 150 centimeters, the painting immediately draws the viewer in through its unique textural execution. The piece is painterly achieved using delicate, thread-like paint strokes-a deliberate technique that strips away visual clutter to focus entirely on the emotional weight of the subject. At the conceptual heart of the painting is a seated male figure, positioned as a silent, vigilant observer. He is captured in a state of quiet intensity: watching, spying, and eavesdropping on the world around him. The scenario he monitors is the grand tapestry of human existence, a reality that the artist acknowledges is wonderful, yet frequently terrifying, cruel, and inhuman.

The figure's stillness is not born of apathy, but of a profound desire for self-preservation. He has made the conscious, difficult decision to separate

himself from the "dark world" and its malicious activities. However, rather than simply closing his eyes to the evil, he studies it. By closely observing the ways and operations of those who cause harm, he learns how to navigate the world safely, ensuring he never becomes a victim himself. His physical distance becomes his psychological armor.

The minimalist aesthetic of the painting perfectly mirrors this narrative of separation. By removing unnecessary background elements, the artist isolates the figure, emphasizing his detachment from the chaotic society he observes. Furthermore, the thread-like paint strokes beautifully represent the fragile boundary between the observer and the observed—a visual metaphor for how thinly we are separated from the darkness of the world.

Ultimately, *Watching Them* is a quiet yet powerful meditation on survival, boundaries, and the wisdom of stepping back. It invites the audience to reflect on their own proximity to the chaos of modern life and the protective power of watchful distance.

NEW DISCOVERY

In my latest work, "New Discovery," I explore the profound relationship between human curiosity and the digital tools we carry in our pockets. The painting depicts a woman completely immersed in her mobile device, her focus unbroken as she scrolls through what seems like an endless stream of information. The central theme of this piece is the "world at our fingertips." We live in an era where the GSM (mobile phone) acts as a gateway to the unknown. By capturing the subject in a state of deep concentration, I wanted to illustrate that the act of scrolling is not always a passive distraction; rather, it can be a purposeful journey of exploration.

The message behind "New Discovery" is one of empowerment and growth. It suggests that if we apply ourselves and stay committed to navigating these digital landscapes with intention,

we will always find something new. It reminds us that knowledge is no longer locked away-it is constantly accessible, waiting for us to stretch our minds and discover it through the screens we hold every day.

SELLING

In Selling, the canvas becomes a stage for an intricate dance of strategy, presence, and human nature. Through a minimalist lens, this composition of women strips away the chaotic noise of the marketplace to reveal the fundamental mechanics of commerce: that the seller is often as vital to the transaction as the product itself.

The work operates on the premise that positioning is a language of its own. By utilizing a minimalist approach, the spatial relationships between the figures are heightened. The viewer is invited to see that where one stands and how one occupies that space-dictates the flow of attention and value. In this series, the "goods" are secondary to the geography of the subjects; it is a study of how strategic placement creates opportunity.

Central to the narrative is the concept of "showing up." Selling emphasizes the quiet power of consistency. By depicting these women in a manner that suggests a recurring, disciplined presence, the work reflects the reality of any marketplace: success is built upon the reliability of being seen. This consistency, paired with a strategic vantage point, forms the bedrock of the "sell."

Beyond the surface of trade, the painting touches on the inherent competitive nature of our social and professional structures. It suggests that we are, at our core, "sales beings." Whether we are exchanging goods, ideas, or ourselves, we are constantly navigating systems that require us to learn their hidden rules to survive and thrive. Selling does not just document a transaction; it captures the psychological architecture of human interaction. It

challenges the viewer to recognize the "sales" inherent in their own lives and to appreciate the silent, strategic labor of those who master the system through presence, position, and the profound act of simply being there.

SYMBOL OF CARE

In Symbol of Care, I utilize a minimalist and stylized approach to explore the profound connection between the female form and the concept of nurturing. The piece features a woman in a dramatic seated posture, stripped down to essential lines to focus the viewer's attention on specific symbolic transformations.

The focal point of this work lies in the anatomical reimagining of the figure. Her face and breasts are intentionally shaped into the universal symbol of love-the heart. This visual metaphor suggests that care is not just an action performed by women, but something woven into their very physical existence. By aligning these physical traits with the iconography of the heart, the painting honors why women are globally revered as the "mothers of the world." They are, in every sense, the living symbol of care.

Artistically, this piece functions through a strategy I call the "betrayal of expectations." I have placed the figure within a "weird" or unconventional composition that defies standard portrait rules. This is a deliberate choice intended to stir intrigue and provoke the viewer.

By presenting a familiar subject in an unfamiliar, dramatic arrangement, I challenge the audience to look past their initial assumptions. This tension between the soft message of "care" and the sharp, unexpected nature of the "composition" ensures that the viewer remains engaged, questioning the balance between nature, form, and the roles we assign to the figures in our lives.

SWEET DREAMS

Sweet Dreams is a visual exploration of the profound connection between physical rest and the manifestation of our deepest aspirations. In a world that often prizes constant motion, this piece serves as a reminder that stillness is not an absence of progress, but the very foundation of it.

The painting features a resting female figure, rendered through a series of scintillating, energetic paint strokes. These vibrant marks suggest that even in repose, the body is alive with the quiet work of healing and restoration. Surrounding the figure is a landscape that transitions into a dreamy, ethereal state of mind, bridging the gap between the physical act of sleep and the internal world of the subconscious.

The core analogy of the work is simple: just as the body heals during sleep, our "dream life" - the reality we wish to build for ourselves - requires moments of pause to come into focus. Through this mixed-media composition, I aim to show that well-being is the gateway to clarity. When we allow ourselves the grace of rest, we pave the way for a "sweet realization" of our goals, turning the abstract visions of the night into the tangible successes of the day.

Rural Fun

Rural Fun is a celebration of life without borders. It transports the viewer to a natural haven where birdsong fills the air, trees reach freely toward the sky, and flowers bloom in unapologetic color. In this world, animals play unexpectedly, and homes sit without fences—openly inviting neighbors in and nurturing true community. From the fertile soil right outside the door to the magical glow of the moonlight, every element speaks to the everyday wonder of the rural experience.

I brought this concept to life using mixed media and playful, energetic paint strokes that

dance across the canvas. My goal was to capture the sheer fun and the organic, "accidental" beauty of village layouts. Unlike the strict, sometimes lifeless grids of urban cities, this painting breathes with spontaneity. Driven by an experimental color scheme, Rural Fun is an invitation to step away from the rules and simply enjoy the vibrant, beautifully unplanned rhythm of rural life.

Resting in My Kingdom

At first glance, resting in My Kingdom presents a highly stylized female figure captured in a moment of profound repose. Her confident and relaxed posture immediately suggests a person of wealth, comfort, and quiet authority—someone with a great vision for her life.

However, the true essence of the painting lies beneath the surface. At the center of her chest, her heart is depicted as a magnificent palace brimming with treasures. This striking detail shifts the viewer's focus from her physical surroundings to her inner world. The artwork reveals that her true comfort and hope do not stem from material possessions, but from the boundless richness of her imagination. She has cultivated an inner sanctuary that is far more beautiful than the physical reality of her kingdom.

Ultimately, Resting in My Kingdom serves as a visual metaphor for inner peace. It leaves the viewer with a powerful philosophy: to truly find rest and success in the "game of life," one must first cultivate a restful and peaceful mind.

LIST OF PAINTINGS

1. Staying ready, mixed media on canvas, 75cm x 90cm
2. Symbol of care, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 120cm
3. Watching them, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 150cm
4. Resting in my kingdom, mixed media on canvas, 76cm x 107cm
5. Sweet dreams, mixed media on canvas, 7cm x 107cm
6. Selling, mixed media on canvas, 90cm x 90cm
7. Rural fun, mixed media on canvas, 35cm x 40cm
8. Symbol of beauty, oil on canvas, 90cm x 90cm
9. New discovery, mixed media on canvas, 122cm x 182cm
10. Self evaluation, mixed media on canvas, 90cm x 90cm
11. Peaceful world, mixed media on canvas, 214cm x 275cm





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