

REWA

All Roads Led Here

11 April – 27 May 2023

(New Orleans, LA) **JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY** is proud to present *All Roads Led Here*, the third solo exhibition of Nigerian artist **REWA**. Twelve new and recent paintings expand beyond her characteristic, evocative portraiture as the artist explores capturing movement and depicting deeper narratives. Her subjects are independent, refuse an external gaze, and reject projections of societal pressures. Through these figures and the tales which they enact, REWA shares with the viewer a personal insight of her recent trials and triumphs, positing this exhibition the most intimate to date.

The artist says of her latest work . . .

It is quite rare for me to paint a self-portrait. I am far less interested in myself as a subject for a painting than I am in capturing the essence of others. If anyone wants to know a thing about me or my heritage, they ought to take a very close look at my paintings. My culture and heritage provide me with a strong and unique language to express myself. The naming of each piece is deliberate and gives a deeper meaning to my works that only my native tongue can capture.

*My subjects in **ebube dike** and **achalla ugo** casually observe the observer, as they are themselves, being observed. They are in an ever-familiar setting, **obodo oyibo**, the foreign land. This interaction, in a familiar setting, is an occurrence that resonates all too well. My subject in **afu-ekuu** has just left her home, **ka'anyi puta n'ogbo** and **onye-ije, nno** are en route to a new destination. They are a reflection of my mental space at the time of their creation. My subjects represented a liberation that I wished to know. **Fools Rush**, as she is referred to, and **Beer for Progress** represent the casual bystanders in the spectacle that was my life during a period of instability; present but disengaged. **adaugo, adiba** and **adaeze** are manifestations of where I want to be; a daughter of the people - using my story to uplift others, a daughter of wealth – ensuring survival for myself and my son and a daughter of a king – an inherence.*

*The works on show all culminate in **mmili malu ugo wulu ugo aaru | The Rain That Bathed The Eagle**. This is an Igbo proverb which translates to the insight that unfortunate events can turn into blessings in disguise. My subject is finally in her rightful home, at peace within herself and in her surroundings. She is living her life on her terms as presented by the bottles of champagne in her fridge, her favourite condiments on the shelves and of course, full freedom of self-expression in pink. All roads have indeed led here, and it is a happy place.*

REWA was born and raised between Nigeria and England and received a BSc. in Physiology and Pharmacology from University College London (UCL). She previously worked as the Head of Corporate Development and Investor Relations for a Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed company. Prior to this, she was the Specialty Insurance Executive for Old Mutual West Africa and a Management Consultant at Accenture (UK).

Never having received formal art training, she is self-taught and developed her innate talent from a very early age. Growing up, her father encouraged her creative drive, his expansive art collection from West Africa, providing further impetus for her development. Her formal training as a physiologist / pharmacologist at UCL also prepared her for what has become an exciting journey; she learned to observe in greater detail and to seek deeper meaning.

She knew a few truths about what ignited a frenzy - when going for long stretches creating art with a particular song or artist playing on a continuous loop - but still sought a clear "artistic direction". She finds that her spirit is moved by what she refers to as "depicted sentience" and through the celebration of the female form and bright, vivid colours. Her preferred medium of acrylics and watercolours on cartridge paper provides the immediacy, proximity, and transparency



to express her most personal experiences and influences living between Lagos, London and Johannesburg, cities she considers home.

REWA decided to pursue art as a form of catharsis following a nadir. She created her first 14-piece body of work, *The Pantheon*, celebrating Nigerian deities which was very well received and led to her appointment as ReLe Gallery's 2017 Young Contemporary in Lagos, Nigeria. In this same year, the prestigious Gallery of African Art (GAFRA) in Mayfair, London invited REWA to participate in a joint exhibition, *Her Story: Sisterhood That Transcends*, alongside an acclaimed Dutch photographer, Dagmar van Weeghel. Her collection, *Onicha Ado N'Idu* delved into the significance of naming rites and traditions within the Igbo culture in Nigeria – how the names shape the identity of the individuals they are bestowed upon.

REWA's work was featured at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn, New York as part of MoCADA's annual 2017 gala. Most recently, she participated in the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery's *No Dead Artists* 22nd Annual show in New Orleans, USA.

REWA's artwork represents and glorifies women in our numerous forms, as goddesses, as travelers and most recently, as inexorable forces behind naming rites of the Igbo culture.

The exhibition will be on view from 11 April through 27 May 2023 with an opening reception on **Saturday 6 May** coinciding with the Arts District of New Orleans' (ADNO) event **JAMMIN' ON JULIA** - the annual event that turn New Orleans' most creative corridor into a stage; featuring musical performance, food trucks, and art-centric block party – as part of the monthly *First Saturday Gallery Openings* from **5 – 9 PM**.

For more information, press or sales inquiries please contact Gallery Director Matthew Weldon Showman at 504.343.6827 or matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com. Please join the conversation with JFG on Facebook (@JonathanFerraraGallery), Twitter (@JFerraraGallery), and Instagram (@JonathanFerraraGallery) via the hashtags: #REWA, #JonathanFerraraGallery, and #ArtsDistrictNewOrleans.