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WILD JOY

January 10 – February 16, 2019

Skoto Gallery is pleased to present *Wild Joy*, a group show of paintings, drawings, sculpture and photography by a selection of artists affiliated with the gallery. The opening reception is **Thursday, January 10, 6-8pm.**

This exhibition brings together the works of sixteen artists including **Jelili Atiku, Olu Amoda, Osi Audu, Gopal Dagnogo, Sokey Edoth, Mor Faye, Romain Ganer, Khalid Kodi, Wosene Kosrof, Aime Mpane, Afi Nayo, Chriss Aghana Nwobu, Pefura, Zerihun Seyoum, Jimi Solanke and Juliana Zevallos.**

Despite their varied experiences, personal cultural backgrounds and styles their approach to making art is through a contemporary experience, their metaphysics is distinctly new and refreshing, celebrating the moment of apprehension and the fugitive moment of response in their search for creative excellence. The works included in this show are phenomenal in their own right, embodying individual creative distinctions as well as group configurations. Besides the visual power and the politico-historical significance imbued in the works, the show is also a meditation on the flow of aesthetic influence - and the larger claims of Modernism to subsume or complete the ambitions of all other art stories.

There is a lyrical beauty in the recent mixed media drawings by the Nigerian multimedia artist Jelli Atiku (b. 1968, Lagos, Nigeria) that belies its surprising seamlessness between the spiritual and physical worlds. He draws from both figuration and abstraction, combined his with a wide spectrum of cultural references as well as his long standing political concerns for human rights and justice to expand the medium's definition in relation to gesture and form. There is a sense of value for spontaneity and improvisation that engages the viewer directly and viscerally as ideas are distilled into swirling or meandering lines in his work. A pioneer of contemporary performance art in Nigeria, he has participated in numerous performance/exhibitions/talks in Lagos (Nigeria), 2017 Venice Biennale and 2018 Manifesta 12 in Palermo, Italy among others. He recently completed a year-long residency/faculty at Brown University. Providence, RI

Also included is a selection of mixed media portraits on wood panel by Aime Mpane (b. 1968, Kinshasa, DR Congo) that poignantly chronicle contemporary historical upheavals in post-colonial Africa, including the present turmoil in his homeland over the control of natural resources. He utilizes the extreme gesture and emotionality of his medium by slashing, chipping and chopping with the *adze* – a traditional wood carving tool - on wood panel, illuminating the various faces of war in their raw, awkward and blunt forms evocative of the diverse states of the human condition from the political to the metaphysical - a fit metaphor for the violence and dire conditions that have befallen the country throughout most of its modern history. Mpane recently completed a sculpture commission titled *New Breath* - a giant latticework head sculpted from wood and placed over a crown etched on the floor of the rotunda of the newly renovated Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. He is also included in the exhibition *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* at Columbia University's Wallach Gallery, New York which will be expanded and travel to Musée d'Orsay from March 26 to July 14, 2019.

Wosene Worke Kosrof (b. 1950, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) continues to draw upon an individual reserve of personal and collective memories to activate a meaningful form of engagement that celebrates the richness of Ethiopia's visual culture. For years, he has consistently explored strategies that combine the dynamic interplay between text and image with the abstract dimensions of the Amharic script, a modern language of Ethiopia and one of the oldest indigenous to Africa. He fuses a vocabulary of signs and symbols drawn from reconfigured Amharic script with a mastery of the nuances of color and composition as well as an open-ended improvisational sensibility to create work that comes alive to convey temporal and spatial dimensions of the written word. He is a widely exhibited artist whose work is in several public and private collections.

Afi Nayo's (b. 1969, Lome, Togo) work is intensely personal and displays a blend of fragility, modesty and refinement. She uses the pyrogravure and mixed media technique on wood panel to create pictures that consist of fantastic dream images, wit and imagination as well as overtones of fantasy and satire. They are dense with sensual surfaces, formal rigors and color harmonies that demonstrate a playful openness to art historical influences while simultaneously encouraging multiple layers of meanings. She uses a complex language of symbols and signs drawn from the unconscious to obtain a poetic amalgam of abstraction and reality. She presently divides her time between Paris, France and Lome, Togo.

Mor Faye (Dakar Senegal, 1947-1984) was a versatile and complex artist whose ability to express a vivid interior existence while simultaneously opening up to some of the larger issues of our time was reflected consistently throughout his career. As an artist, Mor Faye absorbed and engaged the outside world, drawing from a multitude of sources yet claiming allegiance to none. Rather than the inward-focused images of a solitary recluse, Faye's art connects personal experience to the larger world, revealing a multi-layered reality. His works are rich in meanings and metaphors as they transform observed reality and yet, remain uninterested in creating a mere description of this reality, giving priority instead to the representation of the ideal. Since his death in 1984 at the age of 37, Mor Faye's reputation as a troubled artistic genius has reached mythic proportions. A prolific artist, he lived a short and very productive life, and left behind a rich body of work that will help liberate as well as enrich contemporary thinking in Africa.

Juliana Zevallos's (born in Los Organos, Piura region of Peru, South America) recent work is inspired by nature and drawn from personal experience, combining movement in form and content in which lines sculpted in space are invested with the attributes of the employed materials. She explores notions of perception, memory, transience and the ephemeral nature of existence in her work. There is a sense of persistent experimentation and search for aesthetic tranquility that seeks to balance spatial and structural concerns with a sensibility that speak of an inner life that is sometimes fraught with anxiety. She is aware of the creative process as a restless engagement with fleeting properties and strives to convey to the viewer the mental and physical engagement of the artist with her work. She presently divides her time between Lima, Peru and Paris, France.

Born 1942, Jimi Solanke is a Nigerian film actor, dramatist, folk singer, poet, playwright and prolific artist. His small-sized collages are rich in materials, colors and textures. A master story –teller, he draws from his rich Yoruba cultural heritage and present-day realities in contemporary African society to create works that are seemingly simple, serene and as matured as thought

Romain Ganer (b. Guadeloupe, Caribbean) experiments with a wide range of media and materials to address contemporary concerns. His roles shift and conspire between artist and activist, through a distinct voice that is somewhere within the spectrum of 'learned humor' and engages with the politics of a nation in flux. His work approaches a perspective universal enough to include all of us. He lives and works in Paris, France.

