



Peju Alatise

We Came With The Last Rain

22 February – 23 March 2024

Rele London, 5-7 Dover Street W1S 4LD

Rele Gallery is delighted to announce the solo exhibition *We Came With The Last Rain* by Glasgow-based, Nigerian artist, Peju Alatise, running from 22 February - 23 March 2024. Marking the inauguration of the gallery's new London space at 5-7 Dover Street, Alatise debuts five series of sculptures and installations, central to her continuous work and societal reflection on issues concerning children. Alatise's multimedia body of work is whimsical, offering a realm of fantasy and escapism woven together with intricate narratives and elements of magical realism.

The exhibition serves as a compelling exploration of contemporary societal issues, cultural heritage, and personal narratives. An advocate for girls' rights, Alatise pioneered the Child Not Bride campaign against child marriage, a cause she continues to champion since relocating her studio to the UK in 2021. *We Came With The Last Rain* explores themes of hope for a brighter future, establishing a platform that allows children to experience their innocence. Presented in the artist's signature style, the works in the exhibition form part of Alatise's highly recognisable and consistent practice encompassing storytelling, sculpture, painting, and architecture yet remains deeply anchored in her cultural heritage.

By revisiting Yoruba cosmology and folklore within her artworks, Alatise relays the heritage and history of Nigeria as a means of considering its present and its future. *We Came With The Last Rain* explores the nuanced storytelling inherent in Yoruba folklore, with the presence of rain as the common thread. *We Fell with the Rain (Part 1)* is crafted from hand blown glass from steel mirrors and magnifying glass, displayed in the shape of droplets and with portraits of children inside. By combining these elements, Alatise aims to spark wider conversations about the identity of the child, challenge historical narratives and present an alternative future whilst celebrating Yoruba culture.

Drawing on her background as an architect, works on display in the exhibition include large wooden window frames that act as portals for the children to escape their realities. The titles of the works on show also hold messages that reflect Alatise's visual and poetic storytelling. *When It Rains, I'll Send For You* is a sequel to the larger installation 'Sim and the Yellow Glass Birds' previously seen at Frieze Sculpture, 2022. It expands on the story of a nine-year-old child called Sim, who was rented out for five years as a domestic servant, something that is not uncommon in Nigeria. Alatise's work does not focus on the perpetrators, or the exploitations, but creates a place where children can believe in fantasy worlds, and where adults can connect to their inner child,

Alatise comments, *Art has the power to untangle the threads of societal complexities, weaving stories that transcend time, provoke thought, and inspire change.*



About Peju Alatise

Peju Alatise (b.1975, Lagos) lives and works between Lagos, Nigeria and Glasgow, UK. She is an interdisciplinary artist, architect and author of two novels. She started her professional career as an architect, studying at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Nigeria while running a private art studio. She produces works across various mediums, techniques and materials, including but not limited to paintings, film, installations and sculptures.

In 2017, Alatise was selected as one of the exhibiting artists at Nigeria's debut pavilion at the Venice Art Biennial. In the same year, Alatise was announced as the winner of the prestigious FNB Art Prize. In 2018, Alatise founded the Alter-Native Artists Initiative, an incubatory artist collective that offers training programs, and residencies to young, emerging artists. In 2020, Alatise was selected as an exhibiting artist for the Venice Architecture Biennale by curator, Hashim Sarkis. Most recently she participated in Frieze Sculpture, London in 2022.

Alatise is a fellow at the National Museum of African Art, part of the Smithsonian Institution and The Smithsonian Institute collects her work. Her debut novel *Orita Meta*, chronicling the interwoven path of three women, was nominated for the ANA/Flora Nwapa Prize for Women's Writing in 2006.

About Rele Gallery

Rele Gallery is a dynamic contemporary art gallery with 3 locations between Lagos, Nigeria, Los Angeles, USA and London, UK, founded to act as a critical interface between the African and international art worlds. It dedicates its programme to representing and exhibiting emerging and established artists working across diverse media in Africa and the diaspora.

Established in 2015, the gallery is focused on promoting a larger appreciation and engagement of African art, making it accessible to both a local and global audience. Rele Gallery's latest London space provides a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

In keeping with its mission of situating art and artists from Africa in broader, international contexts, Rele gallery participates in global art fairs and established a non-profit in 2016, The Rele Arts Foundation, which hosts a yearly residency program.

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