



Prospect and Refuge

Artist Q&A:

Richard Ayodeji Ikhide

David Surman: I have a couple of questions that I'd like to ask each artist in the show and then some more specific ones. The experience of artists has diversified greatly in recent years so it's always intriguing to get a sense of where and how they're working.

The exhibition is inspired by the ideas of Jay Appelton, particularly his observation that our ingrained comprehension of the landscape influences our aesthetic sense. Could you describe your journey to the studio or place in which you make your work, the place itself and your view from that place.

Richard Ayodeji Ikhide: My journey to the studio is just a simple one, usually walk down a motorway close to my home towards the station and sit on the Jubilee line for about 20 minutes to get to central London where my studio is, while I'm on the train I'm either reading or playing some games on my Nintendo Switch. The studio is based in central London which has its perks and it mostly surrounded by high end stores and a few commercial galleries, having moved into a larger space the view from my studio window is of the car park currently so nothing special in terms of what I see on a day to day, but it's a nice large empty space for the mind to wonder.

DS: Should a studio be a comforting place or an antagonistic zone with potential artistic hazards? Do you clear away obstructions to make a clear way toward opportunity or do you trap yourself in order to find new intensities?

RAI: I like to keep the studio space free and liberating with a bit of room for discomfort and some intensity, a mixture of things really because as people we all go through various states of being in our day to day, so the studio for me a reflection of these different states and how I approach and deal with them can change. Sometimes I want to almost trap myself in the studio and other times I do want quite a bit of room to breathe and expand.

DS: You studied textiles before moving into drawing and painting, and your large-scale works are richly coloured and patterned compositions. Costume and silhouette seems to still play a big



role in your work. What brought you to study textiles and do you think textile-thinking informs your painting and drawing?

RAI: I was initially interested in fashion and menswear during my time in college and was thinking textiles would be a good way of approaching menswear and making clothes hence the decision to study Textiles -- during my time at CSM I specialised in print design and would work across several screens to print a design, so this layering is something I feel has informed how I paint with watercolour as these different topographies are layered over each other, as I usually start from a lighter layer and build up colour.

During my time studying Textiles I had read Joseph Albers' Interaction of Colour and that was something which helped to changing my understanding of colour and how I could use the different colour temperatures effectively, this is something which plays a big role in how I paint as colour is another thing that informs the context of a painting and how it is read.

DS: A lot of your works show people engaged in craft activity, with children, elders and spirits accompanying them. I feel like this points to your view on the place of art in relation to everyday life and spiritual life. How do you see these scenes?

RAI: For me these scenes within my paintings speak to how our imagination and creativity have helped to shape society, customs, traditions and ritual are usually informed by some sort of artwork to accompany it whether it's printed or woven clothes from a particular culture or monumental sculptures of rulers in the ancient world, Art has always played a role in how we structure and understand our society.

On a psychological level I look at engagement in the Arts through human history as the development of the human psyche in terms of how we have come to understand ourselves and how we look at the world we inhabit. Our understanding of metaphysical ideas about reality are quite different to the past in modern times, When I look at Art I think of as our way of making these abstract ideas that exist on the nonphysical side tangible, I feel it's been our way of connecting with spirit through human history.

I feel that if we wish to understand ourselves as a species creativity (and engagement with it) is a way for us to develop solutions to a lot of the problems that seem to continuously plague us. As some of these problems are cyclical and through the Art of previous cultures, we have seen how these problems have played out resolved and unresolved, so this gives us certain pointers as to how we approach some of the current issues we may be facing as a species.

DS: We've spoken before about our shared love for video games and comics, and in your work you celebrate those influences. When I first saw your book Yiya and flicked through the pages I



felt like I was looking at a concept publication for a larger world -- perhaps a videogame or a science fiction movie. Do you think about worldbuilding when you're creating your works?

RAI: Worldbuilding plays a large role in how I think about my practice, thinking about cave paintings as us trying to represent a microcosm of the large macrocosm that is the world, human beings have always engaged in world building its how we developed society as we have it today. So it's interesting to play around with this idea of worldbuilding in terms of the Self, the internal world can be just as vast and infinite and the physical, so the idea of being able to create some kind of nonphysical microcosm through painting is fascinating to me.

We see these ideas evolve further through media like videogames where we are now able to interface with this nonphysical microcosm through hardware. So, I feel videogames are really pushing the idea of worldbuilding in many ways and for me as an artist who mostly works in two dimensions is an interesting challenge in terms of how does one engage in this idea of world building with a limited medium like painting, hence videogames being of such interest to me and how I conceptualise ideas around my practice. I treat my sketchbooks as places to play around and develop ideas, I spend a lot of time looking at concept art for film, videogames, anime e.t.c to understand how these types of media engage in worldbuilding so in some ways it rubbed off on me in terms of how I might use my sketchbooks.

DS: Finally, you're a Nigerian born-artist, living and working in the UK, influenced by Japanese illustrators like Yoshitaka Amano among others, and using watercolour in a large-format method. Do artworld categories like nationality, high-low culture, or medium-tradition figure into your thoughts or approach?

RAI: I think it's important to understand how these categories affect how we develop work and go about defining the work and ourselves, but given the history of categories and how hierarchal they can be it also important not to get trapped by them so I try my best to find the balance between these things when I think about my approach to my practice. I like to be able to find something useful from these categories but not lock myself into a box, feeling I have to adhere to certain ideas if it doesn't benefit the development of me as an individual and as an Artist.

DS: Thankyou for your time!