



Kolawole Adedeji Israel (Nigeria)

Contemporary African Art

Kolawole Adedeji Israel, a visionary contemporary artist from Modakeke, Osun State, Nigeria, captivates audiences with his distinctive style that fuses vibrant colors, gem-like elements, and intricate details. Deeply inspired by human emotions and experiences, his work celebrates the uniqueness of being human. Kolawole's art reflects the inner brilliance and hidden beauty of the human spirit while exploring themes of unbreakable love, purity, and the complexity of relationships.

With notable achievements, including being recognized as one of the top 100 artists at the LIMCAF competition in 2022, and exhibitions at renowned galleries such as Ogirikan Art Gallery and Luna Grande Gallery in Turkey, Kolawole continues to redefine the boundaries of creativity. His creations invite viewers to delve into the depths of emotion and discover the transformative power of compassion and inner radiance.



"As I navigate the complexities of human existence, my art serves as a testament to the inherent brilliance within each individual. I depict faces as diamonds, symbolizing the radiant potential that lies within. Through my paintings, I aim to remind viewers that we are each born with a distinctive and magnificent future, waiting to be realized. I believe that our efforts, though imperfect, are the catalysts for unlocking our true glory. My art is a call to action, encouraging all to strive for their dreams and fulfill their destinies."

Kolawole Adedeji Israel

Interview



How did your upbringing in Modakeke influence your journey as an artist?

"Growing up in Modakeke has played a significant role in shaping my life. It broadened my perspective, exposing me to the rich cultural heritage and ways of life in our society. As a child, I often wondered why many kids, including myself, had to hawk goods on the streets to make a living. Despite the hardships, we would come together every evening to play, sharing laughter and camaraderie.

However, I realized that child labor should not be the norm in my town or country. Many parents, driven by selfish desires, bring children into the world without considering the consequences. This often leads to neglect, aggression, and a difficult journey for the child.

I recall the story of a friend who was denied access to education and suffered maltreatment while under the care of a guardian in our area. This experience had a profound impact on me, and I firmly believe that this cycle of neglect and exploitation must be broken.

As an artist, I aim to shed light on these issues, inspiring change and promoting a better future for our children."

What does incorporating gem elements into your art mean to you, and what symbolism do they hold?

"Incorporating gems into my art holds deep significance. From the beginning, I've pondered the future, reflecting on resilience, inner strength, and inner glory. However, I firmly believe that children are more precious than gems. In my culture, we say that our kids are our future.

Through this artwork, I aim to convey a crucial message: we must not squander our most precious resource – our children – due to selfish desires, emotional instability, and fleeting pleasures. We must learn to love genuinely, rather than solely for physical gratification, as this mindset harms countless children.

The gems in my art symbolize various themes, including:

- Wealth and Prosperity
- Value and Rarity
- Eternal Love, Fidelity, and Loyalty
- Romance and Passion
- Purity and Innocence
- Inner Light and Guidance
- Protection and Good Fortune
- Strength and Resilience
- Clarity and Transparency
- Achievement and Success
- Undying Love

Ultimately, my art explores the complexities of human relationships, intertwined with love, hatred, purity, and innocence."



Which human emotions and experiences inspire you most in your work?

"I'm deeply inspired by the human emotions and experiences that reveal our shared vulnerability, resilience, and capacity for connection. Specifically, I'm drawn to themes of Hope and optimism: The human spirit's ability to persevere and find light in darkness fascinates me. Empathy and compassion: I believe that art can foster deeper understanding and kindness towards others.

Self-discovery and growth: Exploring the complexities of human identity and the journey towards self-awareness resonates with me. These emotions and experiences not only fuel my creativity but also remind me of the transformative power of art to touch hearts, spark meaningful conversations, and inspire positive change."

How do you choose the themes and concepts for your exhibitions, such as "Ephemeral Elegance" or "Soulstone"?

"My exhibition themes and concepts emerge from a combination of personal experiences, cultural observations, and philosophical reflections. I'm drawn to ideas that explore the human condition, the fragility of life, and the power of art to transcend and transform. Each exhibition is a unique opportunity to share my vision, spark meaningful conversations, and connect with audiences on a deeper level."



What makes the connection between art and emotion so significant in your creative process?

"The connection between art and emotion is paramount in my creative process because I believe emotions are the universal language that transcends cultures, boundaries, and experiences. Through my art, I aim to tap into this emotional realm, creating a profound sense of connection and resonance with my audience.

By infusing my artwork with emotions, I hope to:

- Evoke empathy and understanding
- Spark meaningful conversations and reflections
- Provide a cathartic release for viewers
- Inspire hope, healing, and transformation

For me, the emotional significance of art lies in its ability to capture the complexities, vulnerabilities, and beauty of the human experience. By exploring the intricacies of emotions in my art, I aspire to create a sense of community, shared understanding, and emotional resonance that lingers long after the viewer has experienced my artwork."

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How have your exhibitions in Nigeria and internationally, like at Luna Grande Gallery in Turkey, shaped your artistic perspective?

"Exhibiting my work in Nigeria and internationally has broadened my artistic perspective, exposing me to diverse audiences, cultures, and artistic traditions. These experiences have encouraged me to experiment with new techniques, explore fresh themes, and refine my unique voice. By engaging with global art communities, I've gained a deeper understanding of the universal language of art and its capacity to bridge cultural divides."



How do you hope your art will inspire or touch others on a personal or emotional level?

"I hope that my art will inspire viewers to reflect on their own experiences, emotions, and relationships. I aspire to create art that resonates with people on a deep, personal level, encouraging them to explore their own vulnerabilities, strengths, and passions. Ultimately, I hope that my art will foster empathy, spark meaningful connections, and contribute to a more compassionate and inclusive global community.

- Spark meaningful connections and foster empathy
- Encourage self-reflection and introspection
- Provide a sense of comfort, solace, and validation
- Inspire hope, resilience, and determination
- Challenge social norms and promote positive change

Ultimately, I aspire to create art that resonates with people on a deep, personal level, leaving a lasting impact that extends beyond the initial viewing experience."

What challenges have you faced as an artist, and how have they influenced your work?

"As an emerging artist, I've encountered several challenges that have tested my resolve, creativity, and perseverance. One of the most significant hurdles I've faced is self-doubt, which has often led to creative blocks and uncertainty about my artistic direction.

Additionally, navigating the complexities of the art world has been daunting, from understanding the business side of art to finding my niche in a crowded market.

Furthermore, limited financial resources have restricted my ability to sponsor my art, forcing me to seek alternative funding sources, collaborate with other artists, and get creative with materials and mediums. Despite these challenges, I've tried to overcome them as opportunities for growth, innovation, and self-improvement. By embracing these obstacles, I've: Experimented with new techniques and mediums to stay creative and adaptable Sought inspiration from diverse sources, including nature, culture, and personal experiences Developed a stronger sense of purpose and conviction, clarifying my artistic vision and values. Explored my artistic voice, ensuring that my work remains authentic, innovative, and meaningful. Expanded my creative horizons, exploring new themes, styles, and collaborations. Ultimately, overcoming these challenges has made me a more resilient, resourceful, and determined artist, and I'm grateful for the lessons learned along the way!

Do cultural or personal experiences shape your choice of colors and intricate details in your art?

"Yes, both cultural and personal experiences significantly influence my choice of colors and intricate details in my art. Growing up in Nigeria, I was surrounded by vibrant colors, textures, and patterns that have become an integral part of my artistic vocabulary. My personal experiences, emotions, and relationships also inform my color palette and attention to detail, as I seek to capture the essence of the human experience in my work."



What message do you hope to convey through your art in the future, and what long-term vision drives your creativity?

"As I continue on my artistic journey, I hope to convey a message of hope, resilience, and the transformative power of love and compassion. Through my art, I aim to inspire viewers to recognize the inherent greatness within themselves and others, regardless of their circumstances.

My long-term vision is to create a body of work that not only reflects the complexities of human emotions but also serves as a catalyst for positive change. I envision my art being a source of comfort, inspiration, and empowerment for people from all walks of life.

Specifically, I hope to explore more deeply the themes of identity, community, and social justice, using my diamond motif as a symbol of the shining potential that resides within each individual. I also aspire to collaborate with other artists, activists, and change-makers to create large-scale, immersive installations that foster empathy, spark meaningful conversations, and inspire collective action.

Ultimately, my goal is to leave a lasting legacy of art that continues to inspire, uplift, and connect people long after I'm gone."

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Portfolio

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