

The logo for Art PANTHEON, featuring a stylized white temple pediment above the word "PANTHEON" in a serif font, with "Art" in a smaller script font to the left.

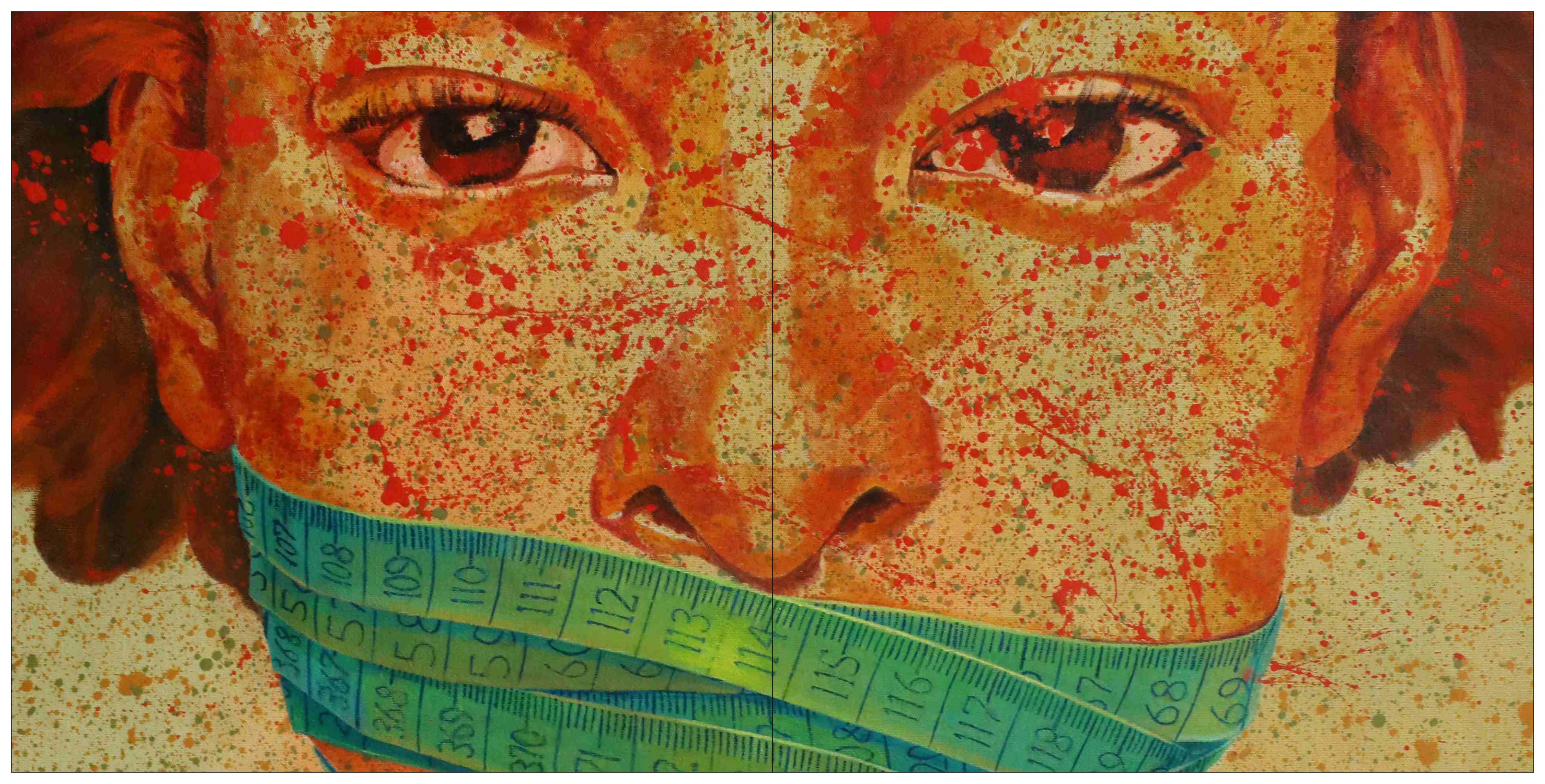
Art PANTHEON

A large, textured painting by Benedict Olorunisomo. It is split vertically. The left side shows a profile of a person's face with closed, glowing yellow eyes, set against a background of dark, vertical, textured lines. The right side shows a close-up of a person's ear and the back of their head, with a red garment visible. The overall style is expressive and textured, using a palette of greens, yellows, reds, and dark tones.

**PERSONAL  
CONTACT**

**BENEDICT OLORUNISOMO**

31ST JULY-21ST AUGUST, 2022



## PERSONAL CONTACT

A solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by

**Benedict Olorunisomo**

Art pantheon Gallery  
12D Bosun Adekoya Street,  
Oniru, Lagos.

31st July - 21st August, 2022

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## GALLERY STATEMENT

Art Pantheon presents a series of works by Nigerian artist Benedict Olorunnisomo in the solo exhibition *Personal Contact*. The show, according to Olorunnisomo, addresses themes that everyone can relate to. In working towards universality in his art, he hopes to move audiences of all kinds.

*Personal Contact* features works such as *Autumn on My Lips*, *Powerless*, *The Builder*, *The Graceful Cleaner*, and others. The paintings, made between 2021 and 2022, show people in different attitudes and activities, people working, people reflecting, people resting. All of the works evoke themes of strength and resilience, work and rest, nature and seasons. Some of the themes are direct, while others are woven subtly into the composition.

The title *Personal Contact* calls to mind the sense of touch and the gesture of reaching. Understanding the exhibition in these ways extends its meanings and potential. The works are made primarily as a personal address, rather than a general abstracted one. The idea is to get as close as possible to the viewer and create an atmosphere where audiences feel seen, spoken to and touched.



## Artist Biography

My name is Benedict Olorunnisomo. Ever since my early years, I have been driven to create by my love for beauty. This eventually led me to study Fine Arts at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, graduating in 2001. I am and have been a full-time studio artist since 2003 with the privilege of participating in some exhibitions/ auctions. I predominantly paint in acrylic and love to incorporate the drip technique in my more recent works.

## Artist Statement

I believe in the potency and uplifting power of visuals, especially with regard to paintings. Moods can be lifted, vision can be shared, and passion relayed. Man is universal and upliftment is essential. This is a major factor in my art, and it leads me to my themes. As we navigate through life day after day, we realize an ardent need for direction. I find and share this in my own little capacity through my paintings. For me, these can be little lights that reveal a pathway.

## ***Personal Contact*—An Exhibition of Visual Meditations**

*Joseph Omoh Ndukwu*

Mood, dreams, spirituality, seasons, work, rest—all of these are contained in Benedict Olorunnisomo's solo exhibition *Personal Contact* at Art Pantheon Gallery, Lagos. Seeing all of these reinforces the fact that we are looking at collages of life. The aim of the works, as the title shows, is to make personal contact with us across different spectrums of life. According to Olorunnisomo, the works in the exhibition are built around universal themes which we can all identify with.

The thematic build-up follows the path of renewed commitment to the cycles of life. Looking at *Autumn on My Lips*, I imagine the layering of time and seasons across who we imagine the individual to be. It is a painting of a face with golden amber eyes, prominent cheekbones, and a fading autumn leaf plastered across the lips. There is also a cluster of leaves in the background. This is not a simple and straightforward portrait. It is an approximation of the interaction between a person and a season, between an internal world and an external reality.

A useful way to think of the works are as visual meditations. It is how the artist manages to layer what is obvious and direct with what underlies it all, creating surreal works that possess a spiritual charge. The paintings are in effect an uncovering of the spiritual dimensions of the quotidian, even banal, aspects of existence.

Olorunnisomo handles his themes and concepts in ways that emphasize a strong, almost exclusively visual language as opposed to a sonic or verbal one. In the works *Tongue Tied*, *Dying in Silence*, *Slow and Steady Wins the Race*, and *Autumn on My Lips*, we instantly notice the different things—a length of measuring tape, a scarf, a snail, a leaf—plastered or tied over the mouths of the subjects, restricting speech. In placing these items over the mouth, Olorunnisomo ensures that the subjects still speak. However, this time they speak to the eyes and, via that route, straight to the mind.

This restriction of speech echoes an insistence on silence and solitude. It undergirds the meditative and spiritual aura surrounding the works. This spirituality is not necessarily something religious, although it can be read that way. It is more the result of an increased attentiveness to life and the common bonds we share with each other. This spirituality is the fruit of the seriousness the artist pays to the world and scenes he paints. It is the artist maintaining, as does Beckett in the play *Waiting for Godot*, that the experience of living is weightier than any noisy speech humans can fashion about living.

*The Builder* is a painting that underscores the quiet in how Olorunnisomo creates meaning. Leaves swirl about the figure of a man placing a brick onto a wall of similar bricks. The man's eyelid is closed as if in repose and his body seems to be in slow motion. The colours are muted tones of blue, purple, wine and gold. Everything about this kaleidoscopic painting is reminiscent of a fairytale world or a dreamscape. This somnolent, unhurried quality is further highlighted by the caption Olorunnisomo gives to the painting: "Focus, one brick at a time."

Another painting which shares a similar mood is *The Jungle, the Need and the Light*. There is the same dreamy feel, the same swirl of leaves, the muted colours in the same spectrum. The figure, whose hair is plaited in beautiful braids, holds a lamp before her. She is shedding light onto her path. There is the peace and clarity of direction that light signifies. There is also the idea of illumination.

This is likely what Olorunnisomo meant when he spoke of making works that are universal, works that draw their power from basic human concerns. He paints so that meaning and relevance are not situated in subject or composition, but rather in mood and subtext. The heart of the work is in its metaphysical leanings.

Something else to note is that most of the works in the show are portraits, with a tight focus around the face. This creates the feeling of looking closely into people's faces, of trying to peel back their layers to see what lies underneath.

In *The Graceful Cleaner*, a woman holding a broom attached to a stick cleans some surface. There is a similar quiet in the painting. Her eyes are closed and her face is relaxed. Her pose resembles a woman rowing a boat or strumming a guitar. Cleaning is transformed into a calming act, an engagement that confers grace. Or it could be the other way around: the woman makes a thing of grace out of something considered menial, undignifying, ungraceful. She confers on this seemingly lowly task her own grace, the music of her movements.

In this way, we are made to take double looks at what we otherwise dismiss or demean. We are made to reinvent our perceptions and impressions, to re-examine our notions of work and rest, silence and solitude, strength and resilience.

Among other things, a painting is an object around which thought weaves itself, what we know of ourselves building up in a steady forward progression. Where does the private and public experience of looking at a painting leave us? Allowing ourselves into the meditative spaces created by the paintings in *Personal Contact* helps us reap meaningful insights from such a question, insights that keep our appreciation and meaningful engagement with everyday life aflame.

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**Joseph Omoh Ndukwu** is a writer and editor living in Lagos, Nigeria.



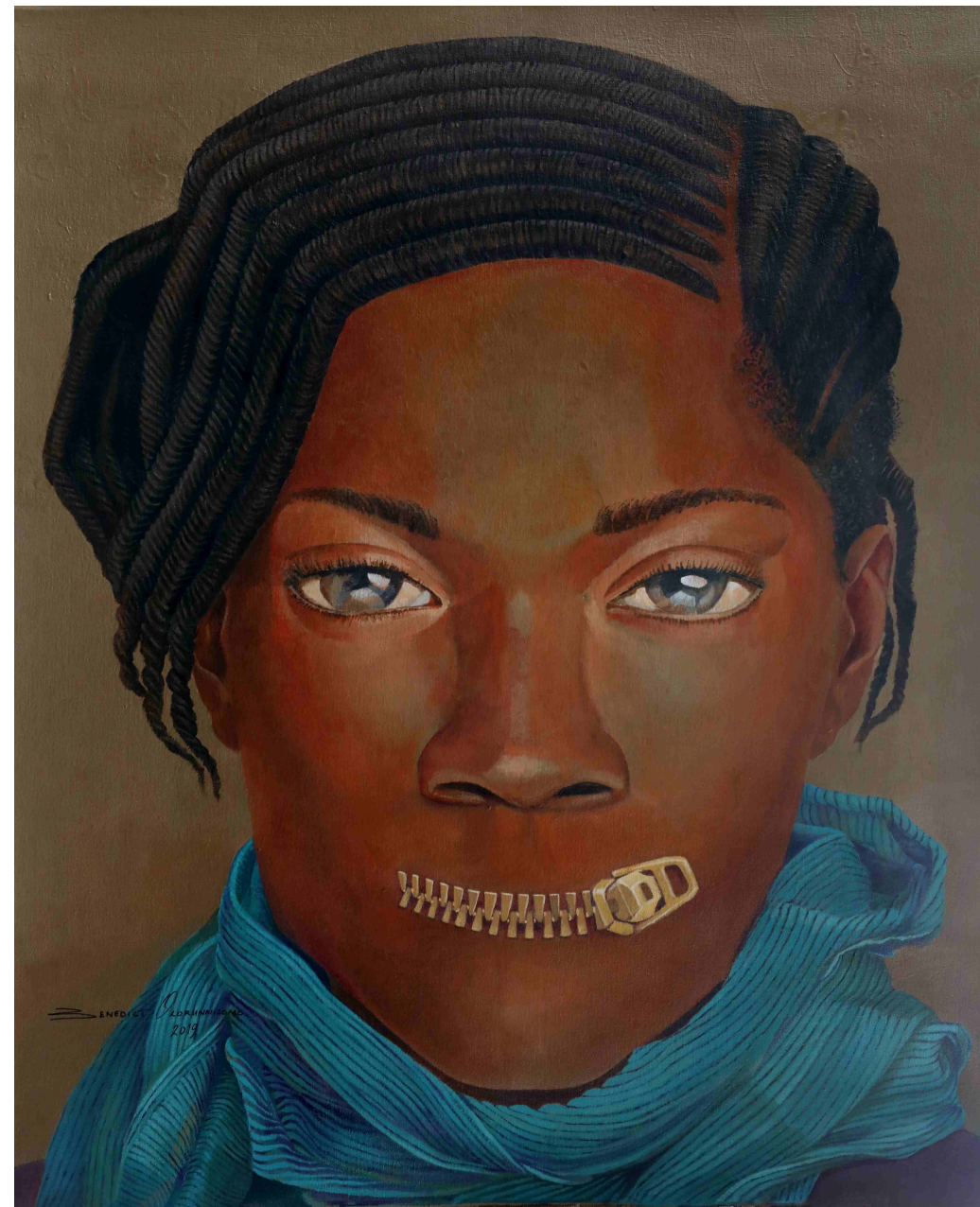
**EDEN III, HARMONY**  
2015, Acrylic on Canvas, 27 x 21.5 in. (69 x 55 cm)



**EDEN IV, THE CHALLENGE**  
2015, Acrylic on Canvas, 27 X 21.5 in. (69 X 55 cm)



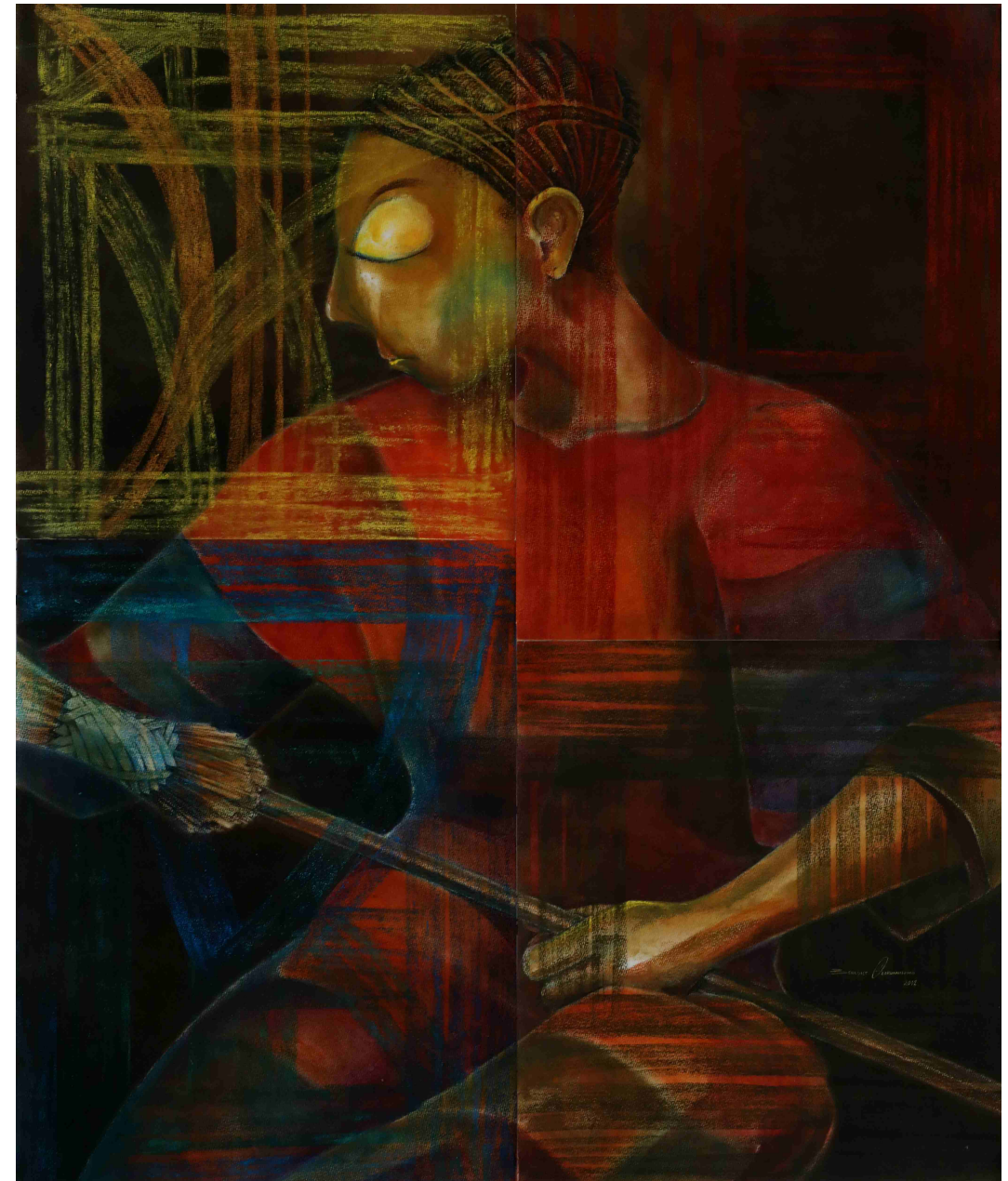
**AUTUMN ON MY LIPS**  
2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 31 in. (91.5 x 79 cm)



**SELF CONTROL II**  
2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 31 x 25 in. (79 x 64 cm)



**SOMETIMES ITS OK TO CRAWL, TO STOOP TO CONQUER**  
2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 55 x 49 in. (140 x 125 cm)

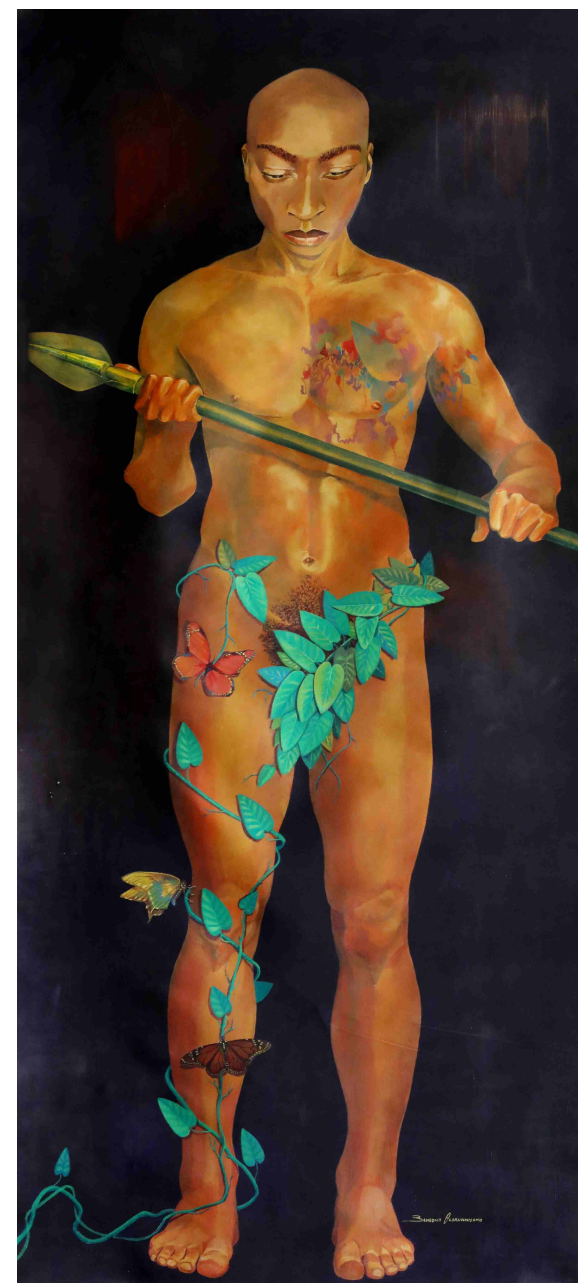


**GRACEFUL CLEANER**  
2012, Pastel on Paper, 47.5 x 39 in. (123 x 99 cm)





**I DREAM IN PATIENCE II**  
2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 40 in. (152.5 x 102 cm)



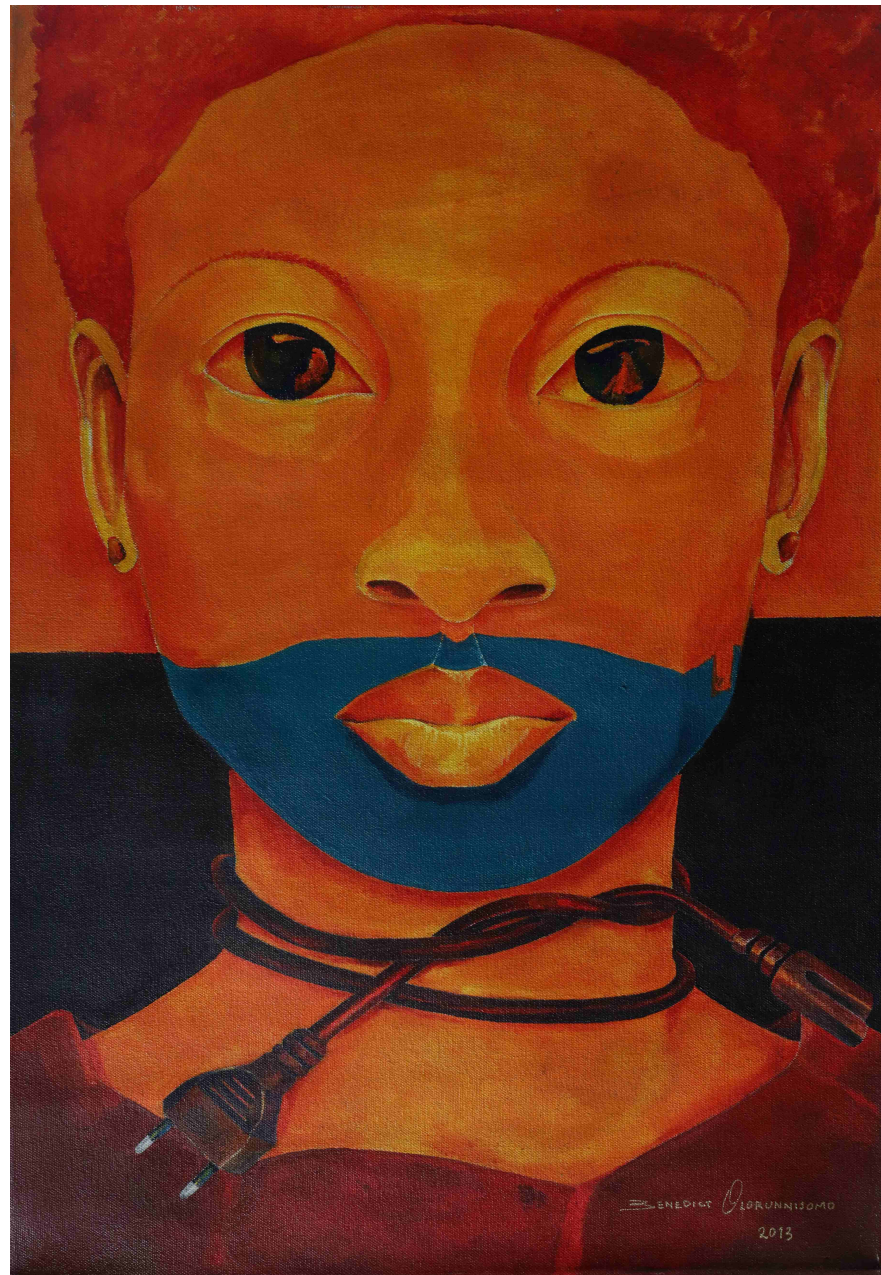
**DIGNITY UNDER NATURAL PROTECTION**  
2018, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 73.5 x 33 in. (187 x 84 cm)



**TONGUE TIED**  
2021, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 31.5 in. (91.5 x 80 cm)



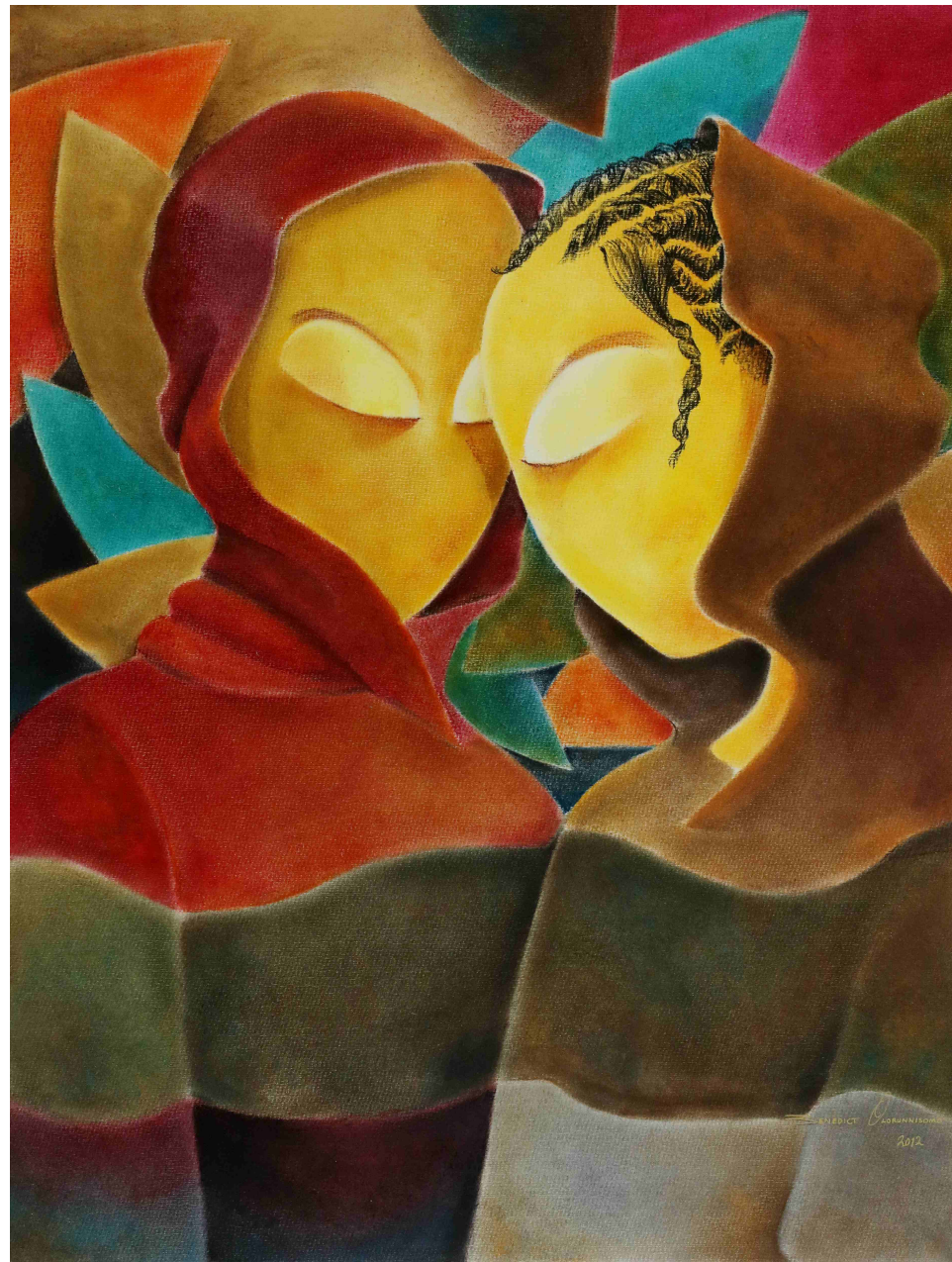
**SLOW & STEADY, YOU WIN THE RACE**  
2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 47 x 40 in. (120 x 102 cm)



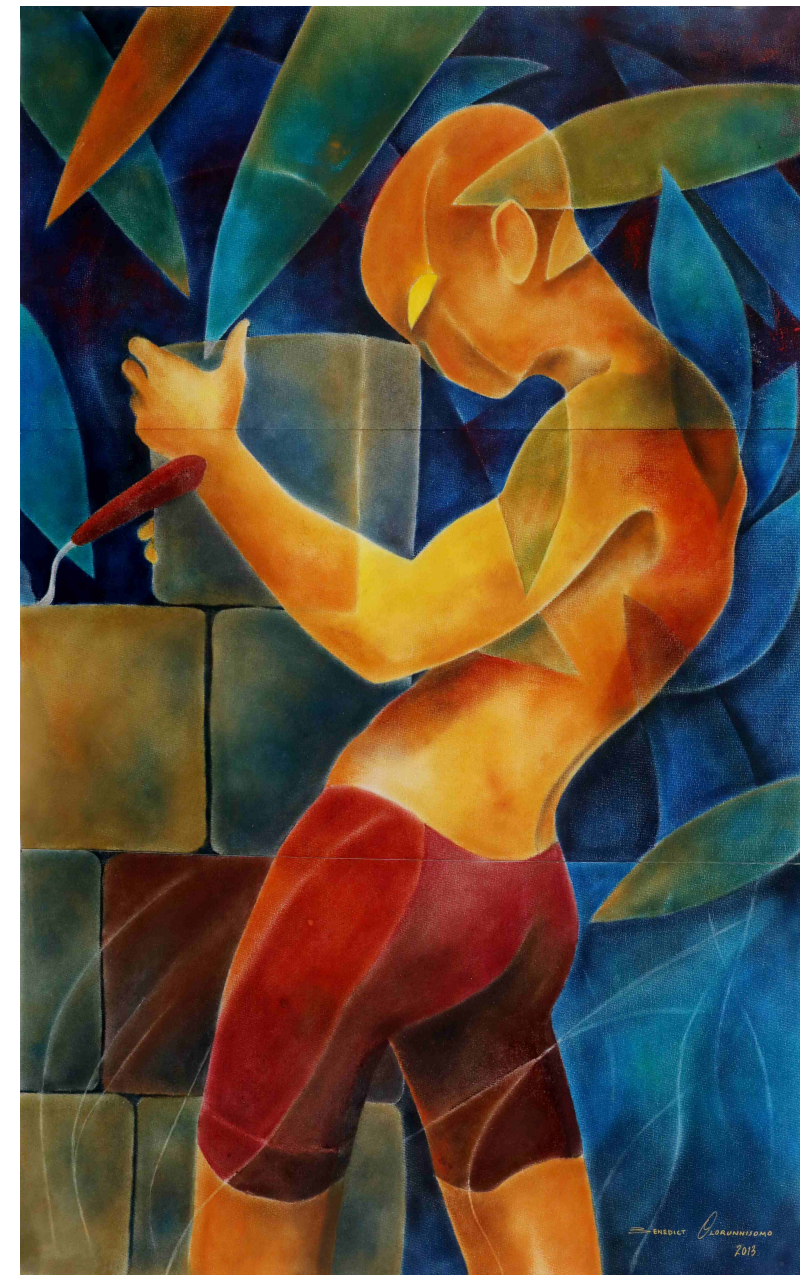
**POWERLESS**  
2013. Acrylic on Canvas, 22.5 x 15.5 in. (57 x 39 cm)



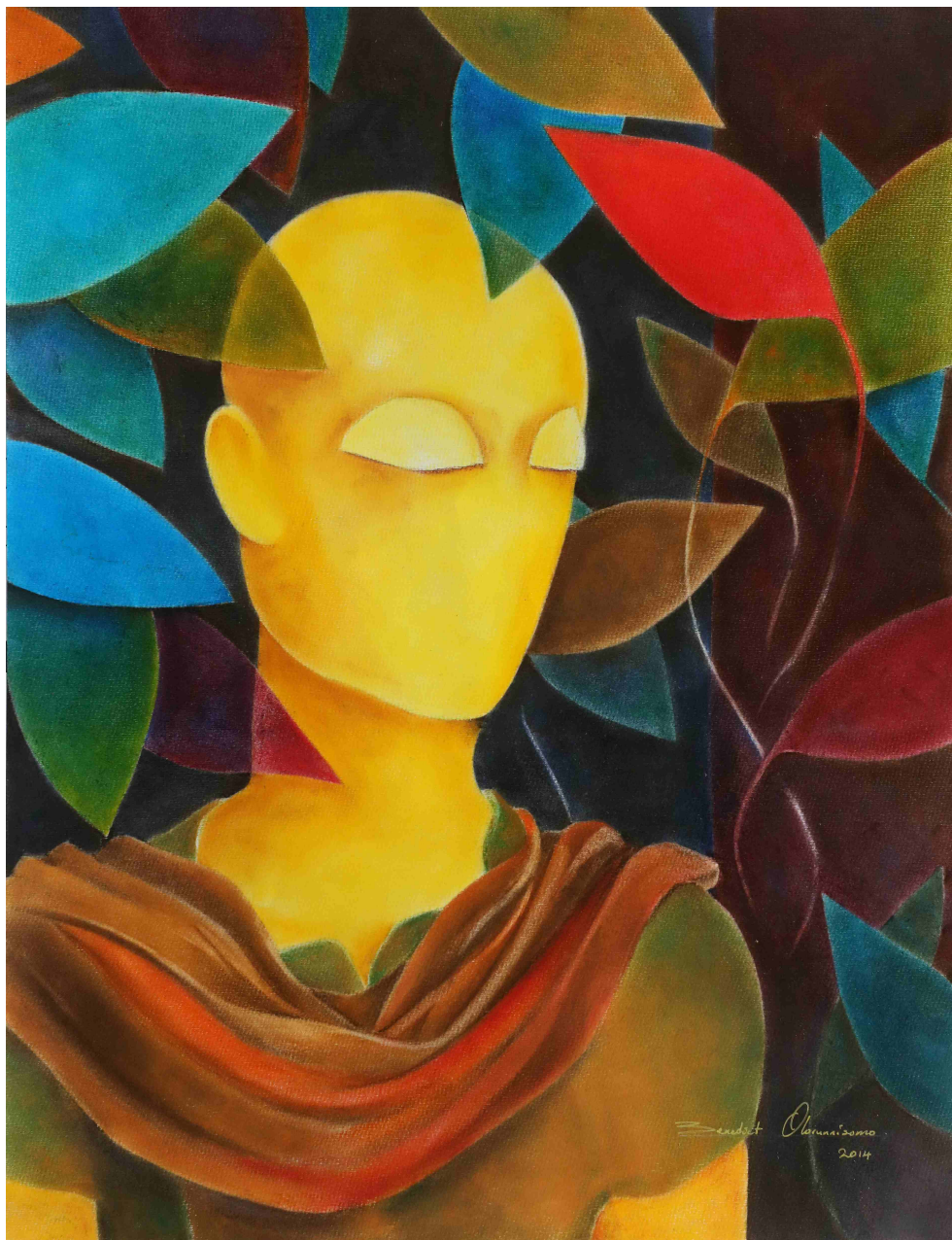
**THE NEED TO OPEN UP**  
2013-2021, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in. (65 x 50 cm)



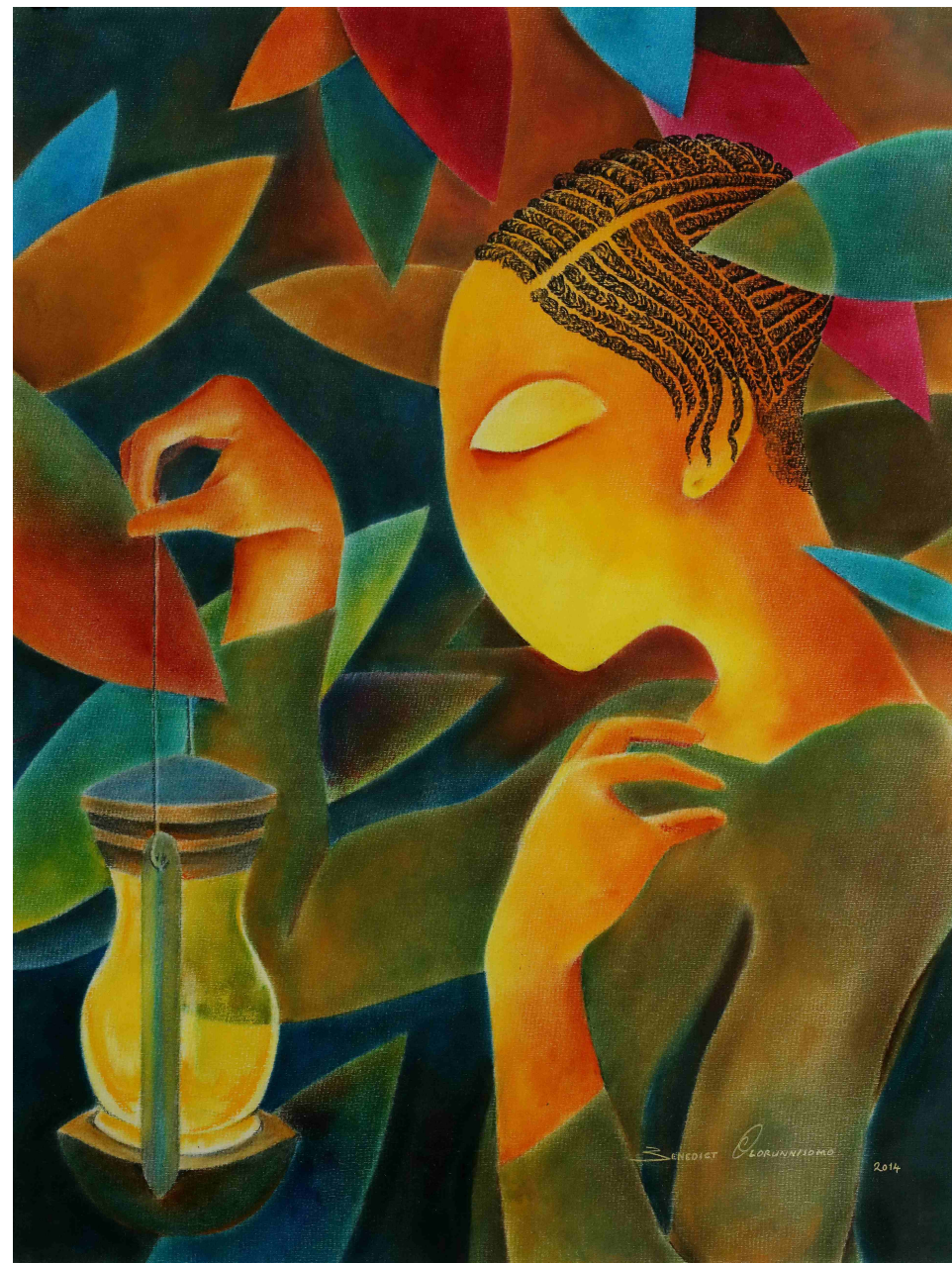
**SISTERHOOD II**  
2012, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in. (65 x 50 cm)



**THE BUILDER**  
2013, Pastel on Paper, 41 x 25.5 in. (104 x 65 cm)



**MAN**  
2014, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in. (65 x 50 cm)

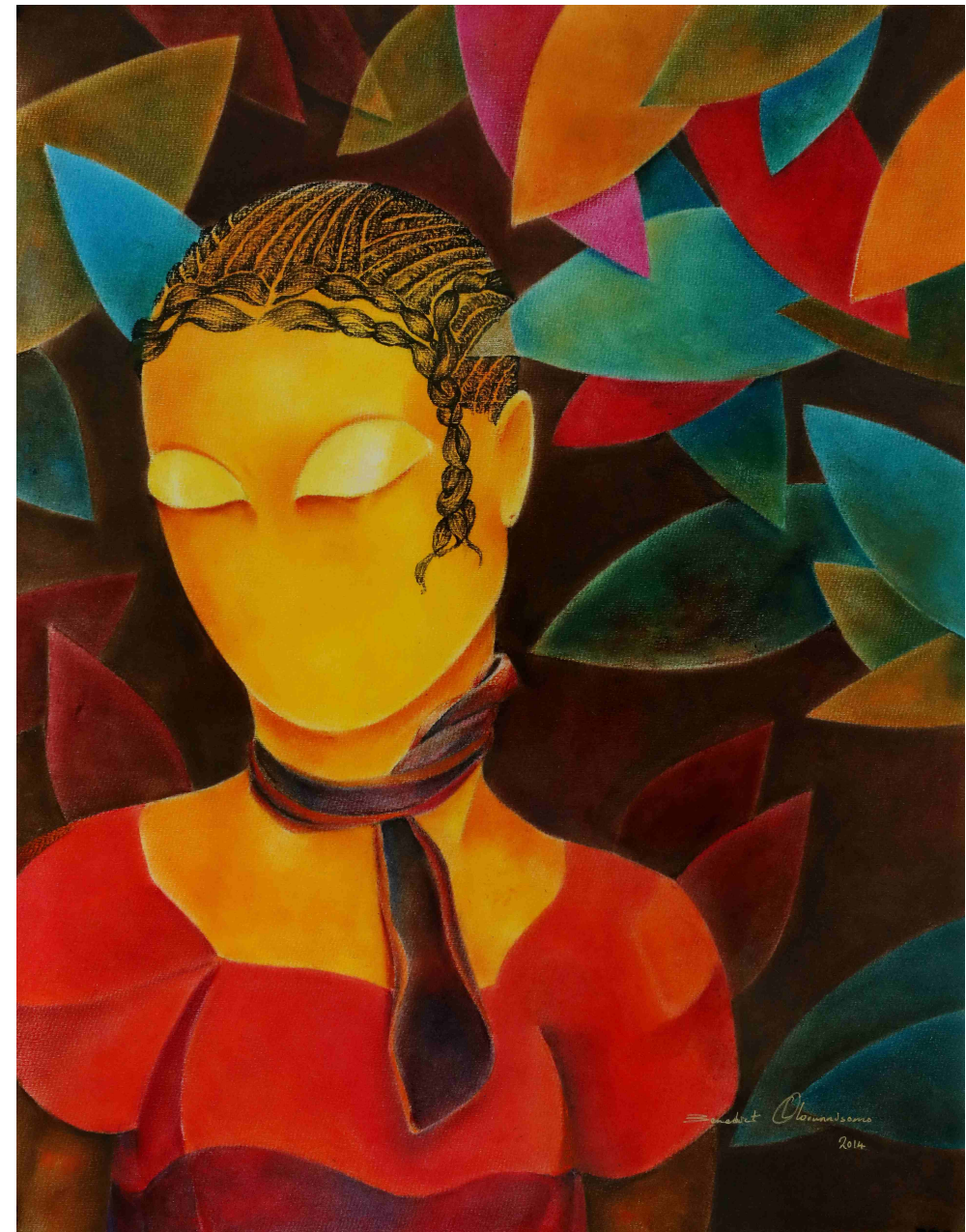


**THE NEED, THE JUNGLE, THE LIGHT**  
2014, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in. (65 x 50 cm)



**A DOMINICAN PURPOSE**

2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 42 x 54.5 in. (107 x 139 cm)

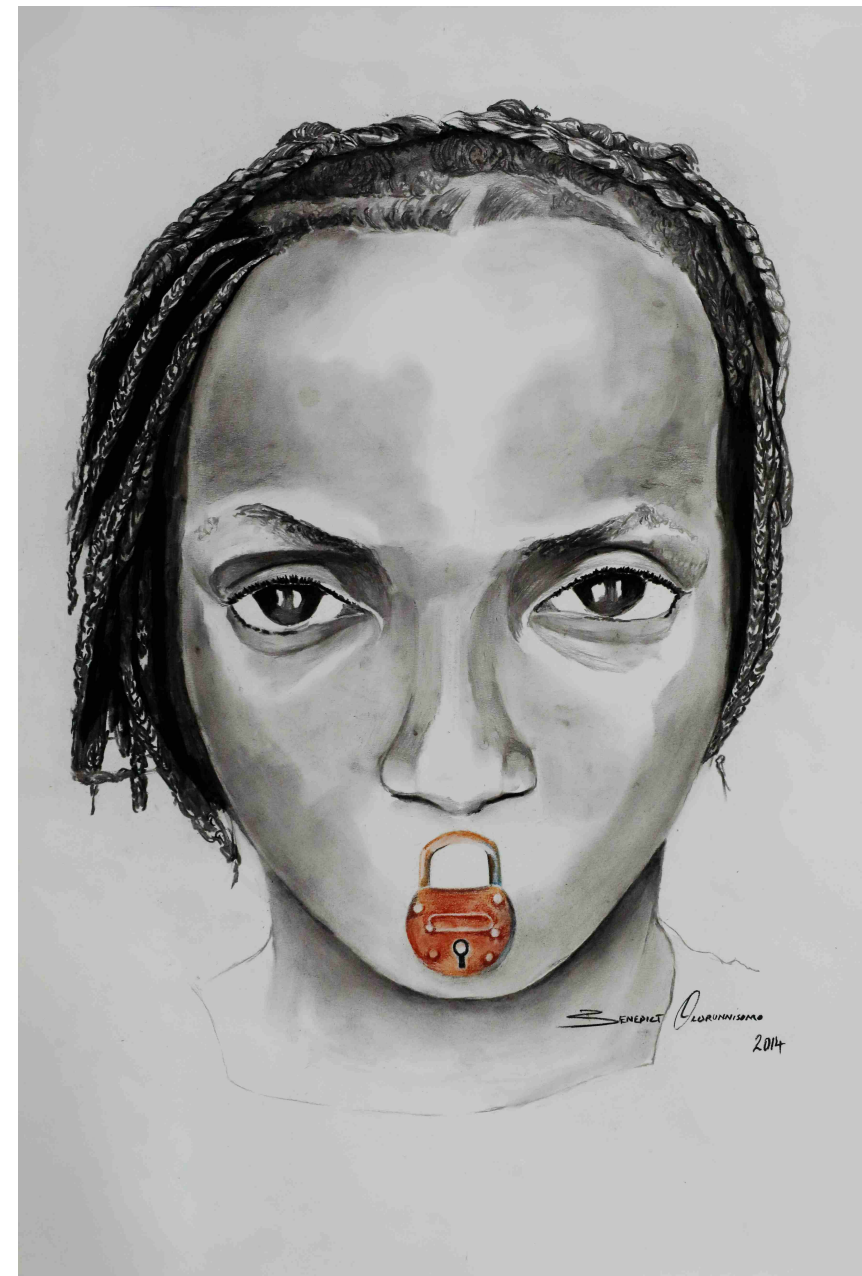


**WOMAN**

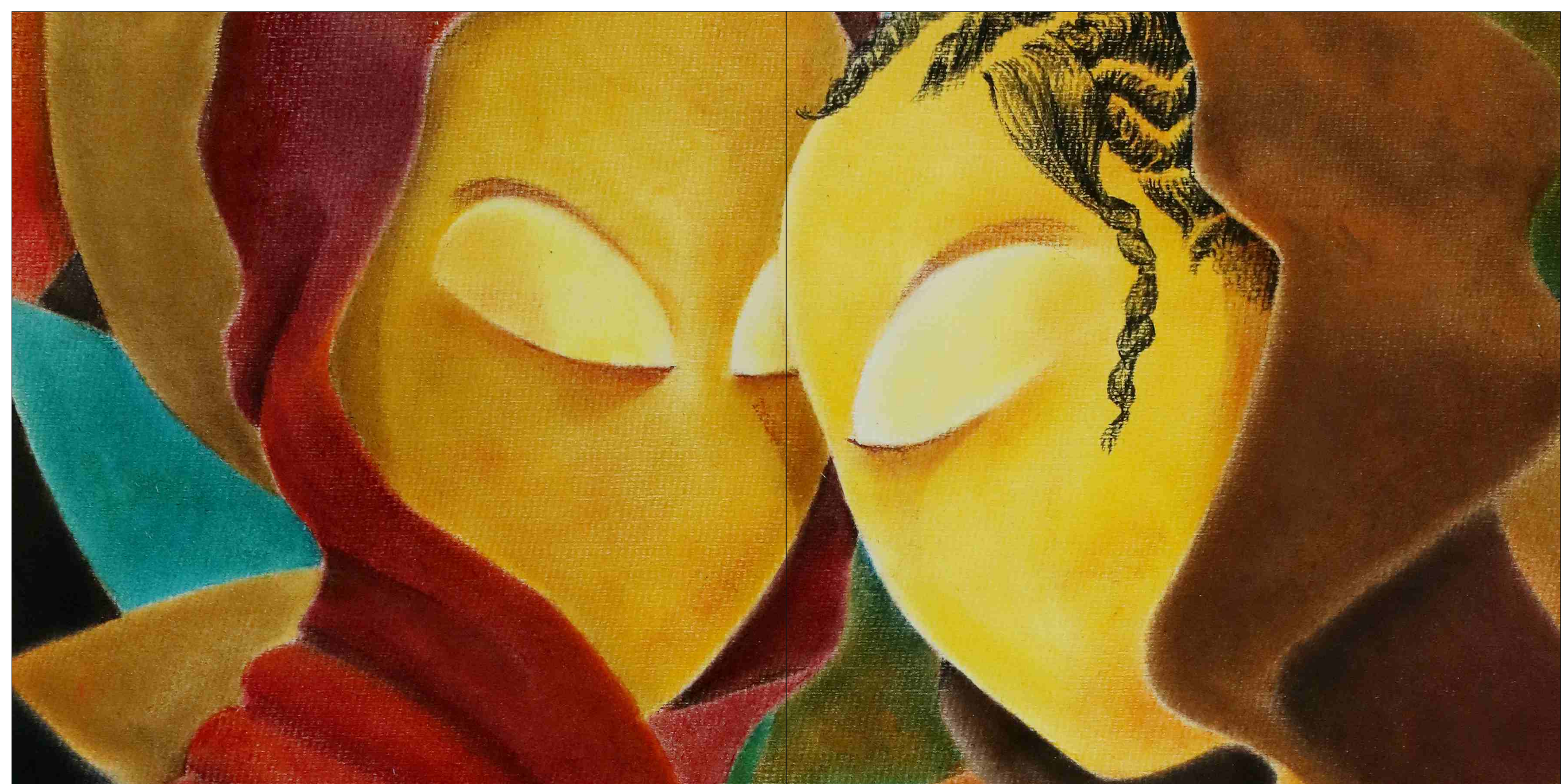
2014, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in. (65 x 50 cm)



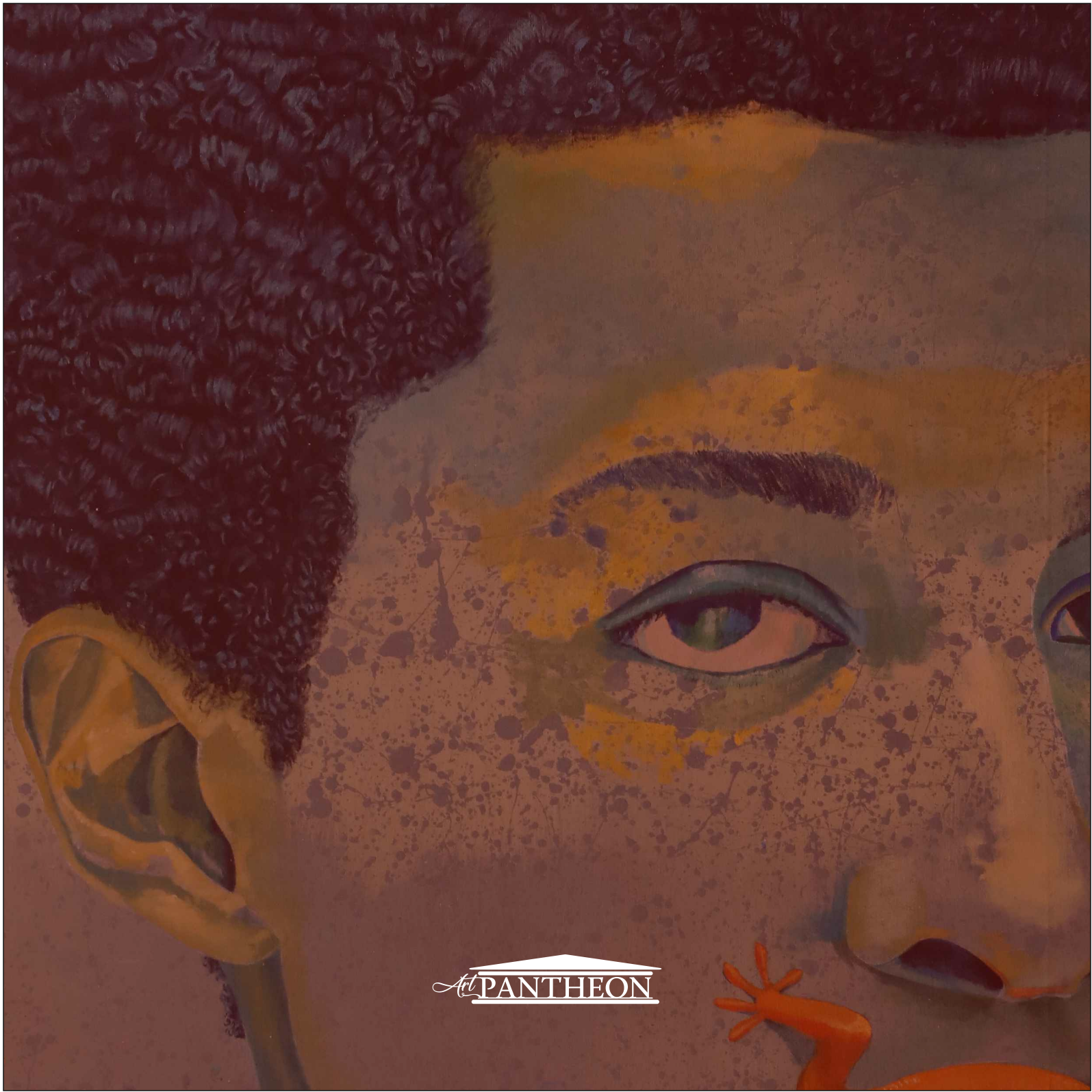
**DROUGHT**  
2014, Charcoal On Paper, 29 x 20 in. (74 x 51 cm)



**MY FREEDOM, YOUR HELP**  
2014, Charcoal on Paper, 29 X 20 in. (74 x 51 cm)







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