

Artist statement:

Taiwo 'TAIYEWO' Ajose is a self-taught artist-curator from London that uses her artwork as a way of visualising emotional reflections, cultural identity, storytelling, and messages. Ajose has recently completed an Art & Design course at the University of Wolverhampton where she aimed to expand her knowledge in the history of Art and artistic exploration across disciplines. Her latest practice has highlighted her experimentation with more raw self-expression paintings as a healing tool and as a form of transparency and vulnerability to a wider audience. One of Ajose's key motives is to create more representation of her race beyond the main stereotypes through her chosen specialism, oil painting. Another main theme is community and throughout the creation of works, Ajose constantly questions what wider message is being presented to the community and does it contribute to more growth and understanding.

ISED A (project concept):

The visual exploration of 'Iseda', which directly translates as Nature from my native language: Yoruba. Nature is a genre in which many Yoruba proverbs take form from:

Sometimes the rain might force a man more than once to seek shelter under the same tree.

If all seeds that fall were to grow, then no one could follow the path under the trees.

A tree does not move unless there is wind.

It's important for me to show this part of my culture as personally, like the proverbs have played a role of guidance and healing, nature has too. It had a healing and profound effect on the intuitive and instinctive parts of my being. Nature acted as my place of relief, shelter and introspection. ***A place that held me, spoke to me and guided me back home.*** This experience led to the creation of the poems *ILE* and *ORUN* which gave birth to the visual of the central painting image entitled *ISED A*.

Out of faith and curiosity, I wanted to investigate the universally beneficial qualities of nature to highlight that its healing is not exclusive to one's identity but to all of us. As through different charities that focus on ethnic minorities in the great outdoors, I discovered that many people come outside to take a solidarity moment of peace, and a few had embraced walking in nature more since the global pandemic. Inspired by the work taken by Steppers UK for British Science Week (2021), I asked each muse for three words to describe how they felt around a walk. The answers confirmed nature to be a healing tool.

My chosen words were ***peace of mind, guidance, and rest.***

During the creation of this project, I felt guilty for remaining silent when institutions fail to hold peers accountable and tone-police those that challenge such individuals. I began to question how my silence juxtaposes the very notion of the *ISED A* project, leading to a brutal realisation: although the overarching message remains clear and strong; in that we are united. There is still an individual duty that needs to be upheld - we must speak against those who are mistreated when the lens is not in grayscale. As by disrupting the conditioned silence in these circumstances, we advocate for justice and equality for all.

Thank you to Coventry Artspace for exhibiting the works earlier and listening to the lens of those that were tone-policed by your staff and others; and may the space for honest conversations lead to the maintenance of core values such as equality, care, and justice within your organisation and individual retrospection.

Thank you to all the muses - the conversations were priceless and were a pleasure to listen to; and to those who have been a helping hand, and those who provided this opportunity.

To Herbert Musuem - I thank you kindly, for providing this opportunity and importantly, your patience and understanding in the creation of this project.

A special thank you to nature and its' creator.

Social media handles:

Instagram: @taiyewoajose_

Twitter: @taiyewo_

Website: www.taiyewo.co.uk