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## PRESS RELEASE

### Larry Amponsah

*The Soil From Which We Came*

11 January - 17 February 2023

Lawrie Shabibi presents *The Soil From Which We Came*, the first solo exhibition of Larry Amponsah (b. 1989, Ghana) in the UAE. The exhibition continues the artist's experimentation, reconfiguration and modification of archival imagery through collage and painting, in order to evoke a deeper awareness of interconnectivity and focus on contemporary Black culture, identity, politics and history.

As a whole the exhibition can be considered a love story — one that explores connections: person to person, the inhabitant and the inhabited, and the relationship between things and people. It also looks at the extent to which one can pursue and push the possibility of painting and mixed media as an artist. Amponsah embarked on a journey to reinvent painting through a horticultural approach, which is full of vitality, hope and possibilities while confronting some of the unresolved questions of the language of painting, and the possibilities of representation in the history of art.

Central to the exhibition is Amponsah's latest series of large-scale paintings, brimming with intricately cross-pollinated images seemingly torn from magazines and other media. Images of fruits, plants, vegetables and flowers that would normally seem difficult to intersect naturally are cleverly planted into each work. The compositions materialise from smaller collages which are scanned, digitally manipulated, printed onto canvas and worked on further using traditional painting techniques. Illusive to the senses, these works do not fall under the category of painting when looked at, and/or under collage when observed closer. They are neither shaped by reality nor fiction, but reside in the space between the physical and imagined. Amponsah's visual approach has the ability to deceive, enhance, grow, revive, protect, invade, and blossom, just like the natural world. The result is a new series of dynamic, fluid, ethereal ecosystems within which the characters come to life. Amponsah invites viewers to immerse in this flourishing environment and to join his heart-felt discussion about the politics of representation and to rethink and celebrate the beauty of Black resilience, achievements and contributions to the world.

In his smaller portrait series seen on a vibrant floral backdrop, Amponsah deploys a succession of painting techniques on paper, meticulous layering and then re-collaging archival imagery to produce eminent yet unrecognisable portraits - blurring the lines between glossy contemporary depictions in print media and true identity. Similarly in his medium paper works such as *Intellectual Gangster* (2021) the artist adds layers through painting to create fluid and unique spaces for his characters. "My practice in itself has been deliberately designed to dissect some of the many key discourses of painting by way of complex layering or by reduction (simplifying) at times." The layers give weight and depth to this body of work as a whole and enrich each character's narrative, reference Amponsah's upbringing and create a conversation about global

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Black narratives. With reference to materiality, identity and culture, this series displays a rich community of people that conjure notions of mystery, fluidity, complexity and independence.

The sculpture, mirroring his latter works with fragments of ripped media, is embellished and overflowing with flora and embodying the idea of growth. In the context of the exhibition it is positioned to become both the trigger and interrupter of dialogues. This is not the first time the artist crosses the disciplines of painting, collage and sculpture, but he considers this to be the most dynamic.

### **LARRY AMPONSAH**

Larry Amponsah (b. 1989, Accra-Ghana) is a multimedia artist whose practice investigates traditional modes of image-making whilst employing unconventional strategies of production to look at the contemporary politics of imagery.

Larry Amponsah is an Associate Lecturer at the Camberwell College of Art - UAL and received his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London (2018) after studying at Jiangsu University China (2016) and at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi in Ghana (2015). From 2018-2020 he was a Trustee of The Kuenyehia Art Trust in Ghana, was shortlisted for the 2019 Dentons Art Prize and won the Be Smart About Art Award in 2019.

Recent solo exhibitions include: 'Genesis, The Plan & The Promise', The Breeder Gallery, Athens (2022); 'When A Stone Cracks, We Don't Stitch', 50 Golborne, London (2019); 'The Open City of Many Gods' Billboard, Bloc Projects, Sheffield (2019) and 'Imaginary Direction of Time', The Fine Art Gallery, CSU-Pueblo Hoag Hall, Colorado (2018).

Recent group exhibitions include: 'Reconstruction' – Thessaloniki Film Festival, The Project Gallery, Athens (2022); The 63rd Thessaloniki International Film Festival - The Metropolitan organisation of Museums of Visual Art – MOMus, Thessaloniki (2022); Frieze London, The Breeder Gallery, London (2022); 'The World Reimagined', TWR, London & Leeds (2022); 'DEAR', Dyson Gallery, RCA Battersea, London (2019); 'DAMNED IF I DO... DAMNED IF I DON'T' for Open Space's: Of Hosts & Guests, Pushkin House, London (2019); 'FBA Futures Exhibition', Mall Galleries, London (2019); 'SURGE', East Wing Biennial 13, Courtauld Institute of Art, London (2018); 'YOUNG GUNS', Sulger-Buel Lovell Gallery, London (2018); 'Open House CCA', Delfina Foundation, London (2017); 'What is your local word for 'Smile'?', ArtXanady's Pop-up Gallery, Labone, Ghana (2016); and 'The Gown Must Go To Town', Museum of Science and Technology, Accra (2015), amongst others.

### **LAWRIE SHABIBI**

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organises art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presenting Middle

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Lawrie Shabibi

Eastern artists to the international contemporary art community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit: [www.lawrieshabibi.com](http://www.lawrieshabibi.com)

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