

AFROFUTOURISM

FIRST. FEMALE. FORWARD



AN ALL FEMALE - DIGITAL ART EXHIBITION

Jessi Gunnars

Cover Art: *Gatekeepers*. Jesse Jumanji. 2022. Digital Mixed Media

AFROFUTOURISM FIRST. FEMALE. FORWARD.

CURATED BY SOMI NWANDU

MARCH 20 - 25, 2022

AN ALL FEMALE - DIGITAL ART EXHIBITION
LAGOS, NIGERIA

AFROFUTOURISM

Afrofuturism is the reimagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology that combines ideas from the culture and history of Africa.

Over the past few decades, the scope of technology has critically transformed the face of Africa. Today, technology has also afforded the continent the most comprehensive and effective opportunity to rethink the Global African experience by examining the spectrum of technology within many sectors. This is notable within the creative industries, specifically through digital and new media art practices. These technology-driven arts created today give way to more timely, expansive freedom for the black community to further reimagine an African narrative.

How is technology transforming the face of Africa with regards to contemporary arts in the digital, futuristic, and mobile paradigm?

Can we say that technology has spiraled the scope of African futurism?

AFROFUTOURISM

Today, modern culture depends on technology for connectivity, movement, and transportation, all of which are essential features of human survival. This current technological age is also enabling artists to tell stories in ways like never before and to present their works in new contexts and mediums.

AFROFUTOURISM is a traveling and ongoing exhibition series on African artists and artists of African descent exploring a reimagined African future through a personal or societal perspective while utilizing digital technology in their processes or presentations.

FIRST. FEMALE. FORWARD. is this premier edition and subtheme of this ongoing series. This exhibition includes an international selection of women artists that utilize technology in their process and connect to the rest of the world with their cultural and personal interpretations. This exhibition highlights how technology has enabled storytelling by these female artists, of their past, present and the visions they reimagine for the future.

FIRST. FEMALE. FORWARD. aims to bring a stronger focus to the lack of female digital artist representation within the African arts setting and continuously celebrate historical contributions by female artists to the art and creative industries.

“

The effective scope of African futurism has been considered across time and space and enhances the spectrum of what Africa pushes to be. The rise in the appreciation and awareness of African contemporary and digital art is sweeping across all corners of the world, and as it continuously advances, it shows no signs of slowing down.

”

- Somi Nwandu, Curator

ARTISTS

KARO DUROJAIYE

JESSI JUMANJI

UZO NJOKU

MARCIA ANNOR

GHERDAI HASSELL

ALEXIS TSEGBA

DIGITAL: EXCRETA

ZIDA KALU

FIYIN KOKO

MARYJANE UZODINMA AKUNNA

SOMI NWANDU



KARO DUROJAIYE

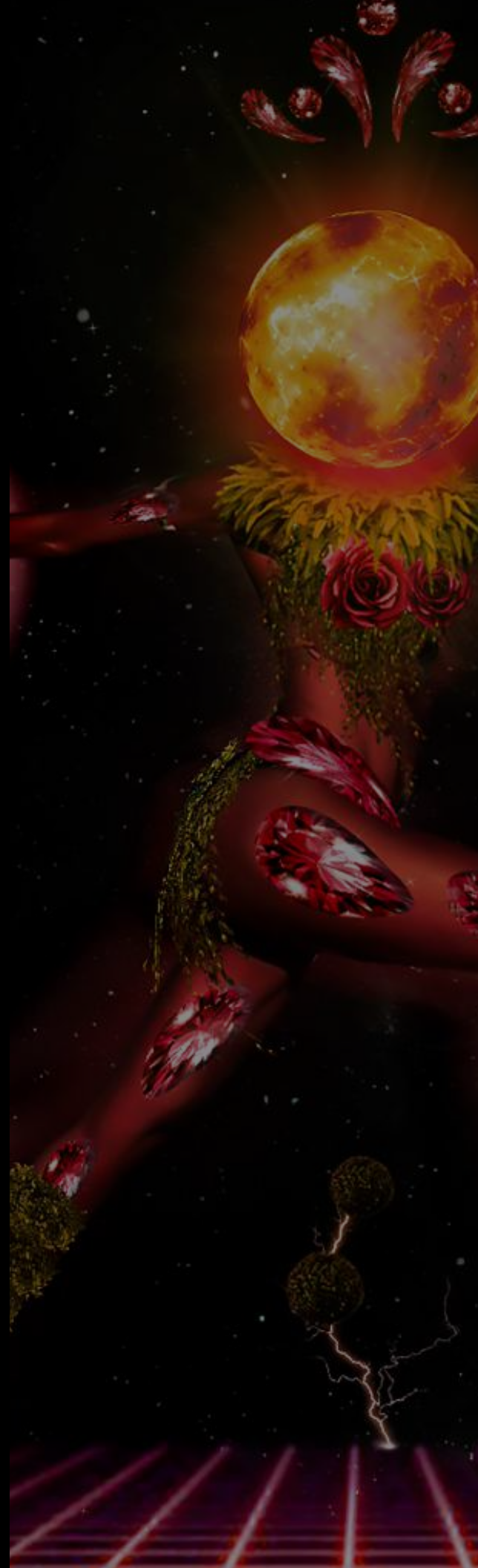
Karo Durojaiye is a Digital Artist, UX Designer, and Creative Consultant. Karo was born in Nigeria, raised in Ireland, and is currently based in the United States. Karo fuses art and technology to craft immersive visuals and emotive experiences. Guided by imagination and the spirit of innovation, her spheres of impact include the Ethics in Technology, Sustainability, and Conscious Living.

Recently, she received her professional certification in Virtual & Augmented Reality from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which adds to her well-decorated background in Computer Science. Her work has circulated around notable spheres in the Afrofuturist Community and currently, a few of her pieces are featured in Carnegie Hall in New York.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am deeply intrigued by the divine nature of dreams, and the seemingly infiniteness of our mind. Therefore I use my art to explore these mysteries in an attempt to express our existence. By fusing digital art and motion design, I craft "Visual Poetry"- a term I coined to describe the composition of my work. Some of my work was born out of dreams while some are uncalculated streams of consciousness. The computer is my medium, and it is a multidimensional well of possibilities.

@karoduro





Woman of Sun and Stone. Karo Durojaiye. 2020. Computer. Digital Composition.



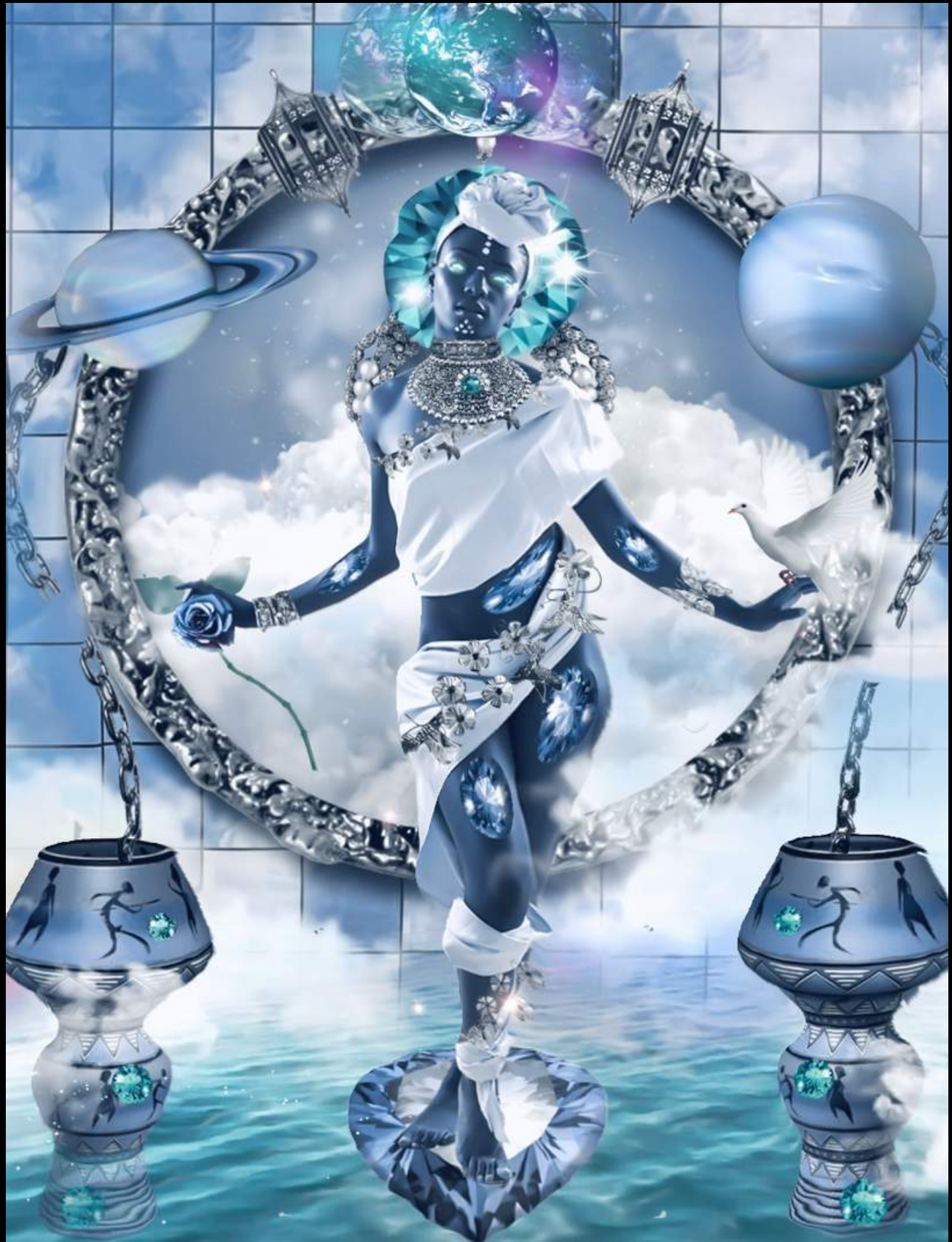
Resurgence. Karo Durojaiye. 2020. Computer. Digital Composition.



Oshun. Karo Durojaiye. 2020. Computer. Digital Composition.



Healing the Heart. Karo Durojaiye. 2019. Computer. Digital Composition.



Age of Aquarius. Karo Durojaiye. 2020. Computer. Digital Composition.



JESSI JUMANJI

Jessi Jumanji is a multifaceted visual artist from Memphis, TN, currently residing in Los Angeles, CA. With a proverbial fervor for history, nature, and the otherworldly, Jessi Jumanji's artistry lends a contemplative perspective of the black experience, born of Africa via the Deep South. Exploring the many dimensions of Afrofuturism through digital collage and painting, Jessi inspires the essence of Africa from antiquity to contemporary generations, illustrating the Motherland, reconciled with her past and optimistic for the future.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Jessi Jumanji regards her disciplines of artist, archivist, and historian as duties to the Ancestors and people of the diaspora. She strategically and creatively uses collage as a tool to undermine anti-black narratives by deconstructing and recontextualizing media derived from the colonial gaze.

Her art unfolds at the intersection of historical and futuristic, manipulating scale and perspective to illustrate the immeasurable contributions of African culture throughout time. Scale and perspective to illustrate the immeasurable contributions of African culture throughout time.

@jessijumanji

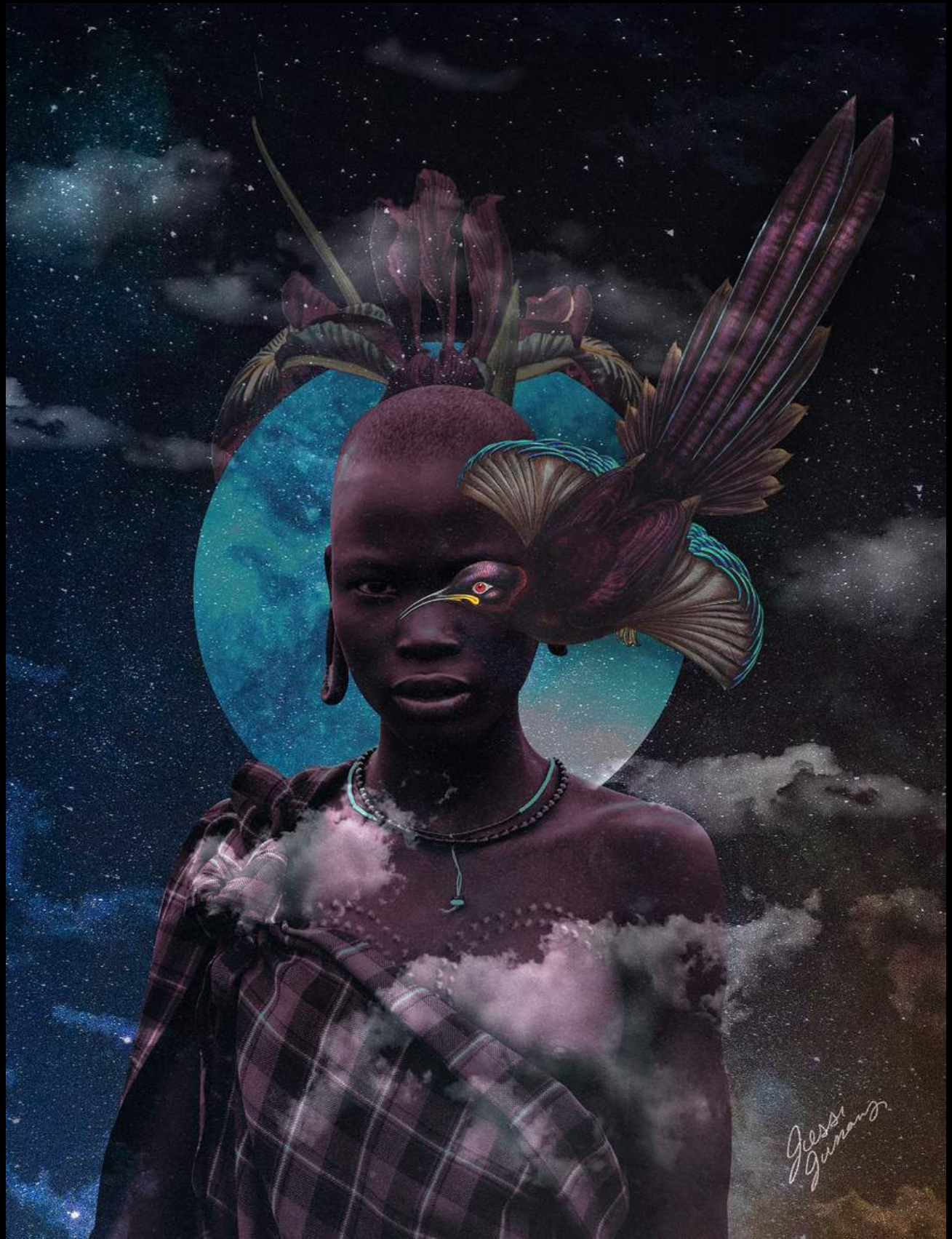




Gatekeepers. Jessi Jumanji. 2022. Digital Art.



Afrimagination. Jessi Jumanji. 2022. Digital Art.



Blue Dusk. Jessi Jumanji. 2020 Digital Art.



UZO NJOKU

Born in Lagos, Nigeria and raised in the USA, Uzo Njoku (b. 1996) is a breakout painter and determined businesswoman set on bridging the gap between fine art and the commercial world of design. Having received her bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia in Studio Art in 2019, she is now enrolled in the MFA programme at the New York Academy of Art. Surprisingly, Njoku originally registered to study Statistics at university, yet switched majors as her artistic interests and talents became more apparent. One of Njoku's art heroes Njideka Akunyili Crosby followed a similar path. This encouraged her to transfer courses, and she has since keenly followed Akunyili Crosby's successful career. Njoku, however, considers herself to be coasting in her own lane, paving a path that suits her unique way of working. Due to a lack of funding, Njoku started making and selling prints to financially support herself whilst at college. Her early works were well received and widely collected. Almost overnight, her business came into being.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Artist block is not a familiar feeling to Uzo Njoku. It is also something she doesn't allow for as her time is of the essence. Her dynamic way of working means that she switches between different materials and mediums comfortably and with intent. Each process employed informs each of her creative endeavours. When she can't or doesn't want to paint, she'll tuft rugs, sew, or make patterns. Individual outcomes then reappear in the larger and more finalised artworks. Her symbols and motifs reoccur; the ideas come full circle. In this case, Njoku's work has the familiar distinction that a cohesive brand would. Once accustomed to the artist's signature style, one would recognise her artwork in any context.

David Hockney, one of Njoku's influences, also carries this unique distinction. His work is recognisable yet not without nuance and shifts in mood. Njoku celebrates the way Hockney's work has developed over the course of his career, and always strives to welcome and embrace change in her practice. This includes accepting mistakes and flaws, whilst remaining open and transparent.

Njoku feels strongly that art shouldn't be limited to a canvas. With the art world's lack of accessibility in mind, the artist challenges herself to find alternative ways in which art can enter the home or be lived with at an affordable price. A brief stint at Central St. Martins (UAL) in London taught her vigour and the importance of approaching art from a multitude of angles. It was during her time there that she saw the possibility of being both a highly regarded fine artist and a successful commercial designer. The high concentration of craft's people in the city and at CSM itself opened her eyes to this.

@uzo.art





Ghana Must Go. Uzo Njoku. 2020. Digital Art



Through the Looking Glass. Uzo Njoku. 2020. Digital Art



Working Woman. Uzo Njoku. 2020. Digital Art



MARCIA ANNOR (INUQO)

London based artist, Marcia Annor, has been honing her skills and creativity from a young age. While studying for a degree in Animation, she decided to teach herself digital illustration and graphic design. This led her to earning a Bachelor of Art in Animation from the University of Westminster as well as progressing her career to create illustrations for companies such as Tumblr, animated music videos, as well as illustrated covers for book publishing companies such as Penguin Random House. After going through an inner awakening, she began to find her style, inspiration and purpose for creating her unique pieces.

She tackles the everyday challenges and subjects of humanity from race, love, poverty, homelessness, psychedelics, nature and so much more using digital and fine art mediums with the intention of creating art for the uprising of humanities consciousness.

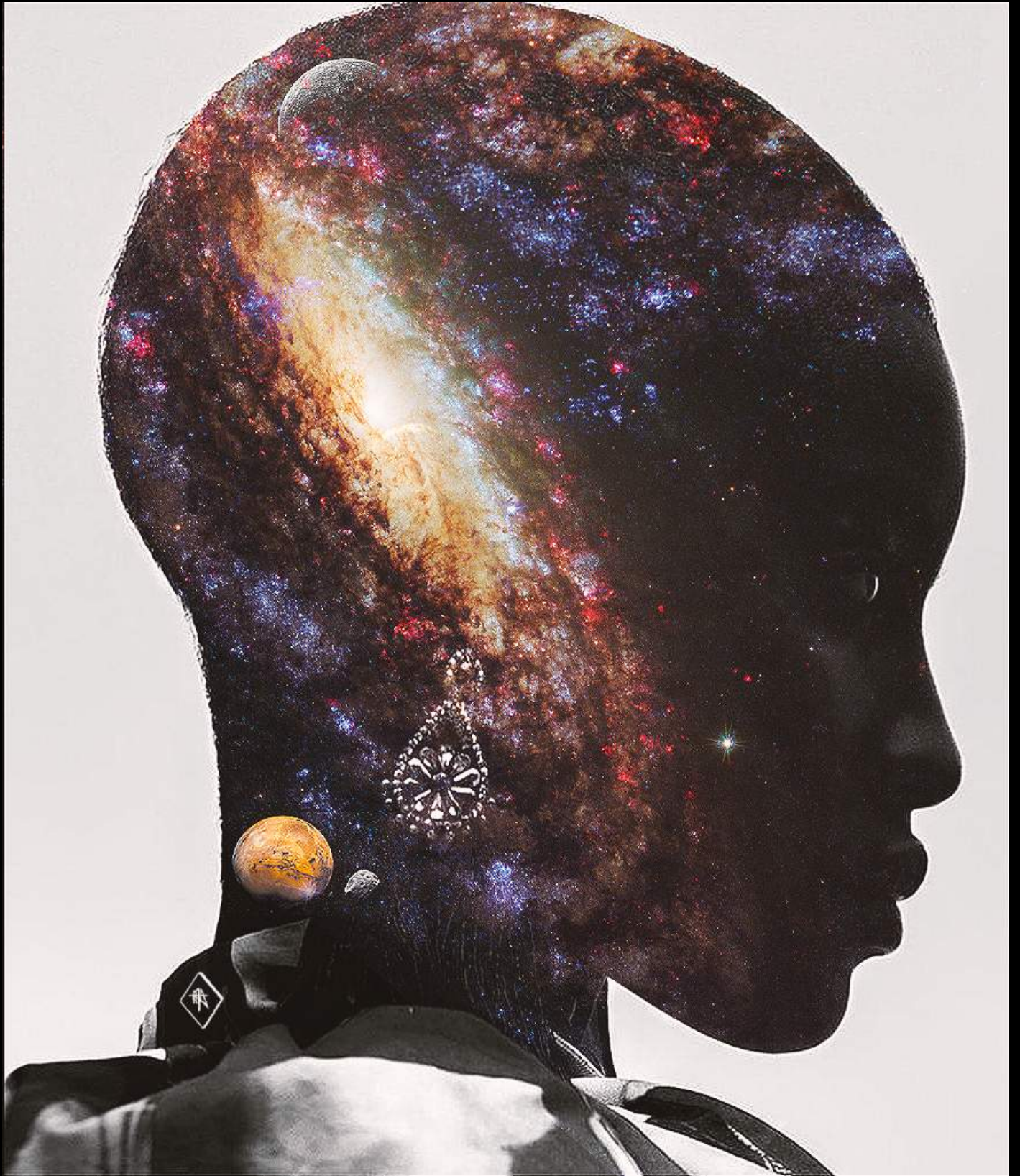
ARTIST STATEMENT

These collections of images and videos are a representation of African tribes and African people and their connection to the cosmos. Their connection to the Universe and their connection to the source of all life. With the use of technology, I hope to help people become more aware of their deep connection to the spiritual side of life, balancing out the material (technology) with the spiritual (energy).

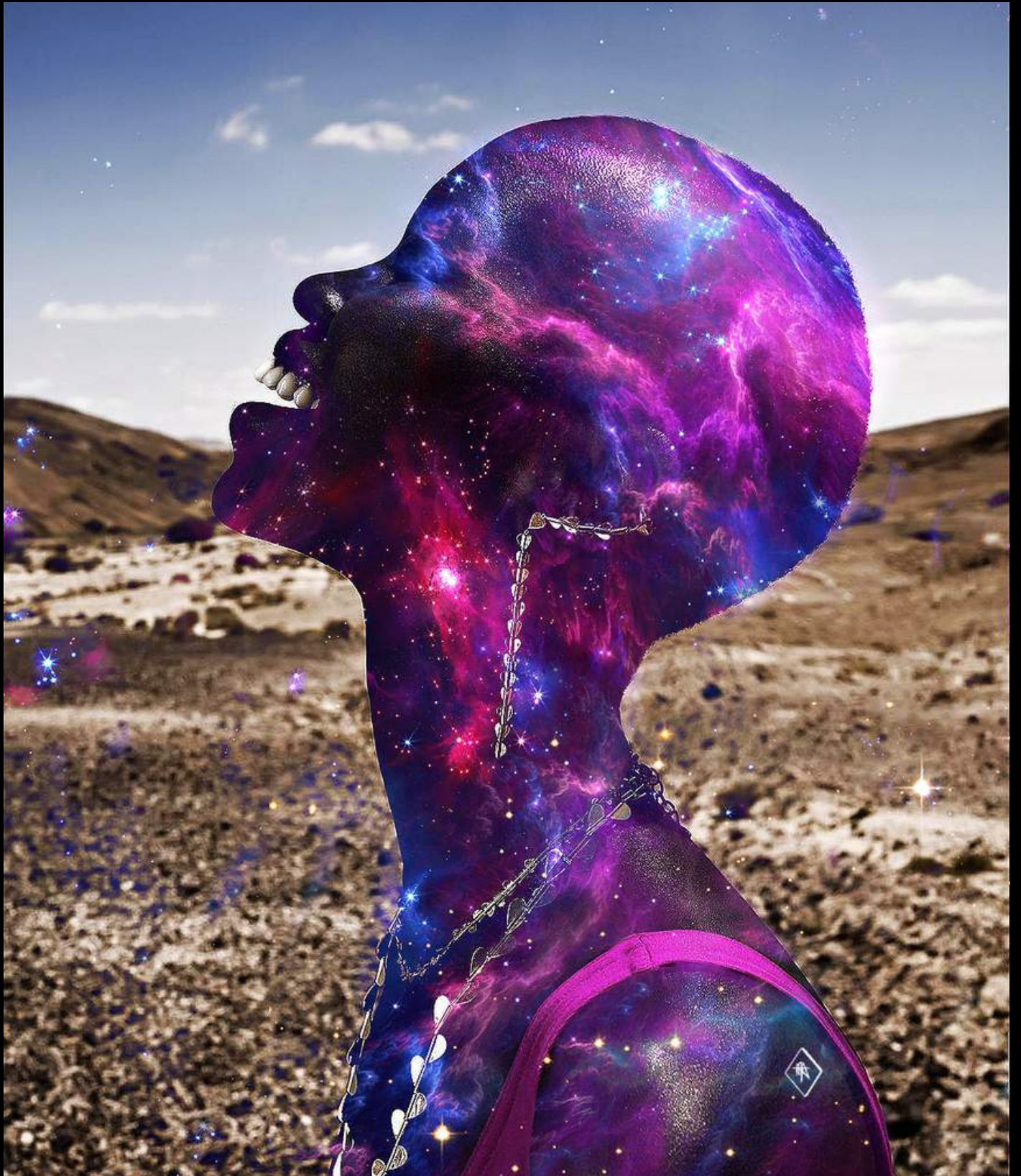
"I aspire to create art that brings people together, that connects them to something higher. My vision and purpose is to show that we are all one".

@inuqo

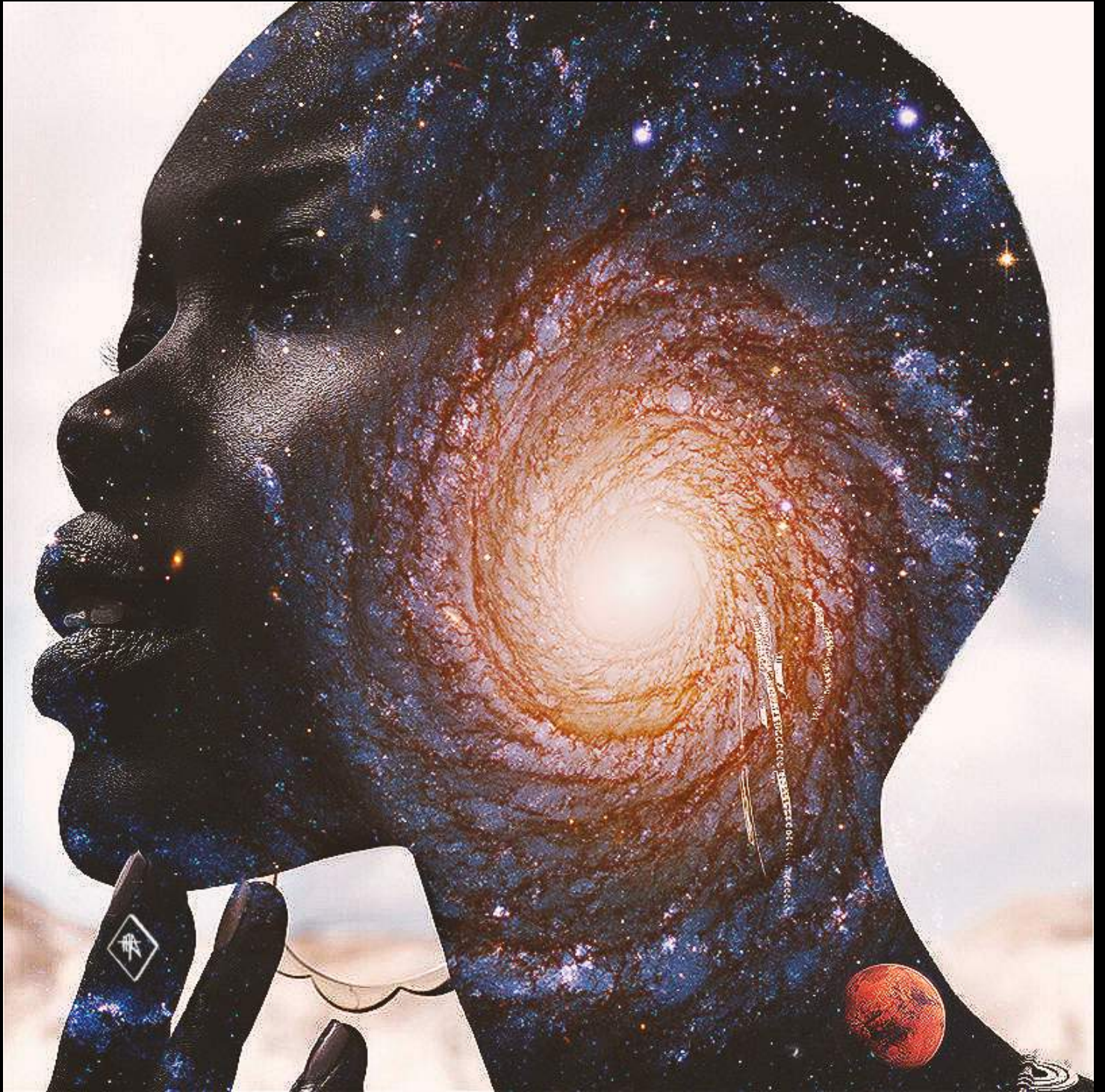




Universe Within. Marcia Annor. 2020. Digital Art



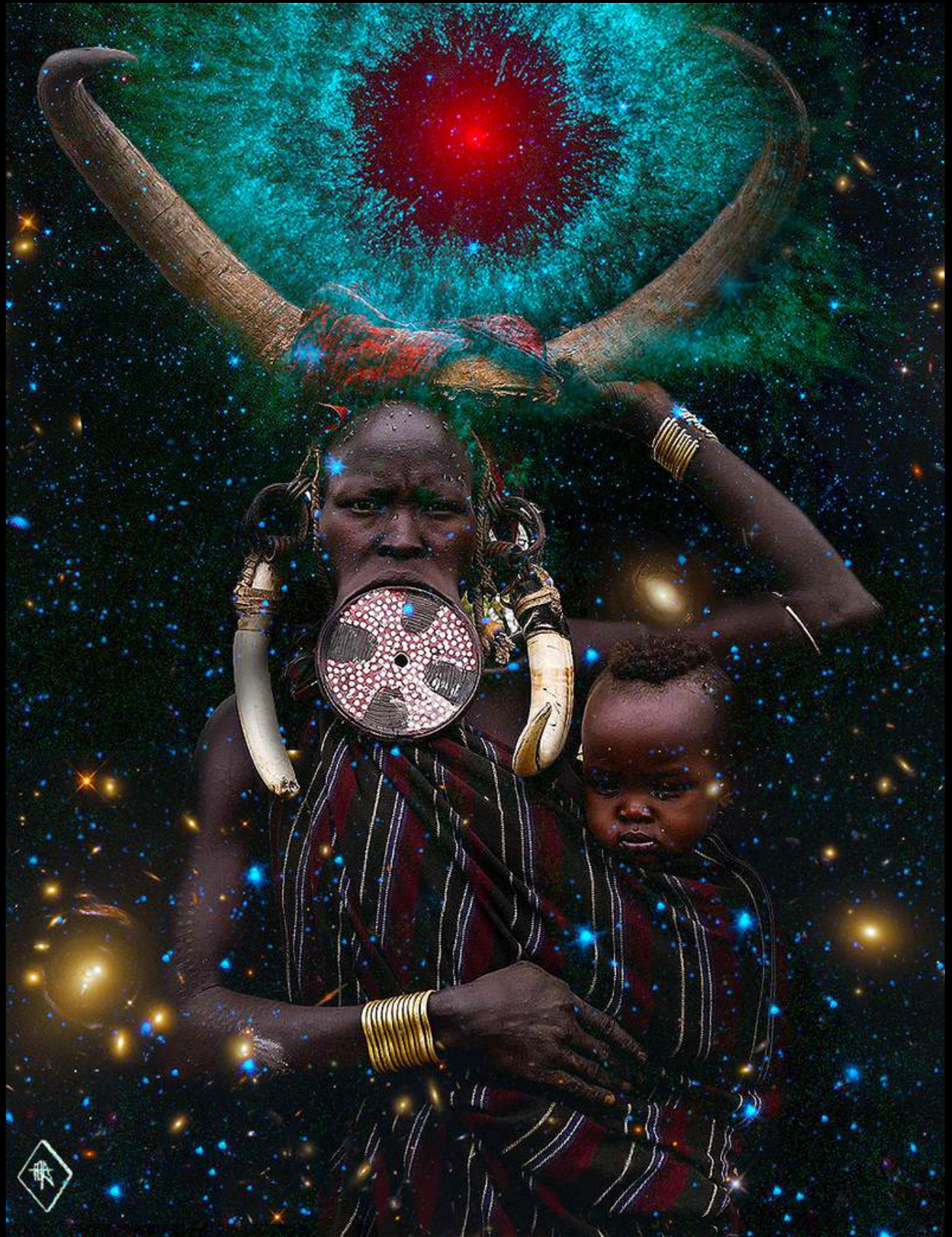
Enlightened. Marcia Annor. 2020. Digital Art



Cosmic Insight. Marcia Annor. 2020. Digital Art



Lip Plate. Marcia Annor. 2020. Digital Art (Collage/Photo Manipulation).



Mursi Tribe. Marcia Annor. 2020. Digital Art (Collage/Photo Manipulation).



GHERDAI HASSELL

Gherdai Hassell is a Bermudian born, China trained, multidisciplinary contemporary artist, writer and storyteller, based in Manchester, UK. Her work investigates memory and nostalgia to create unexpected narratives surrounding identity. She uses collage to thread and weave histories, and tales of transformation passed down through family lineages. Her work typically centers female bodies, simultaneously existing within realms of past, present, and future. Diasporic pasts become re-informed by Black futures, where the resulting present is experienced as a living “Artifacts”, an act toward afrofuturism. Her work is an exploration of identity as an exploration of materials, and social practice. The work suggests that identity should be self-determined and understood, and contextualized through connection with others. Her multimedia work reimagines relationships with the body as avatar, social space and the invisible world.

Her artwork is a part of public and private collections across the world and on permanent display in the Government Administration Building, Hamilton, Bermuda. Her work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions and biennials in Bermuda, USA, UK and China. Gherdai is currently an MFA candidate at the China Academy of Art.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My digital collage “alibii” figures are hybrid female forms exploring identity through rest, being, and fashion. I use the layers on the eyes as a lens through which postcolonial, diasporic futures might be envisaged and imagined. Using past images, I collect photographs, sourced from the print media and internet. I give each image a new life and meaning by cutting, sculpting, manipulating and re-assembling the images using computer software. This is a way for me to investigate home, and safe spaces. The work comes out of digital space, using the figure to explore outer and inner spaces black female bodies inhabit and move through. The work is ultimately about migration, a gradual process of being and becoming the future. This work does not just position which futures are imaginable, it's also what pieces of our collective past would survive in such a future.

@hassell_free





1. Cherdai Hassell. 2022. Mixed Media,



1. Cherdai Hassell. 2022. Mixed Media,



1. Cherdai Hassell. 2022. Mixed Media,



ALEXIS TSEGBA

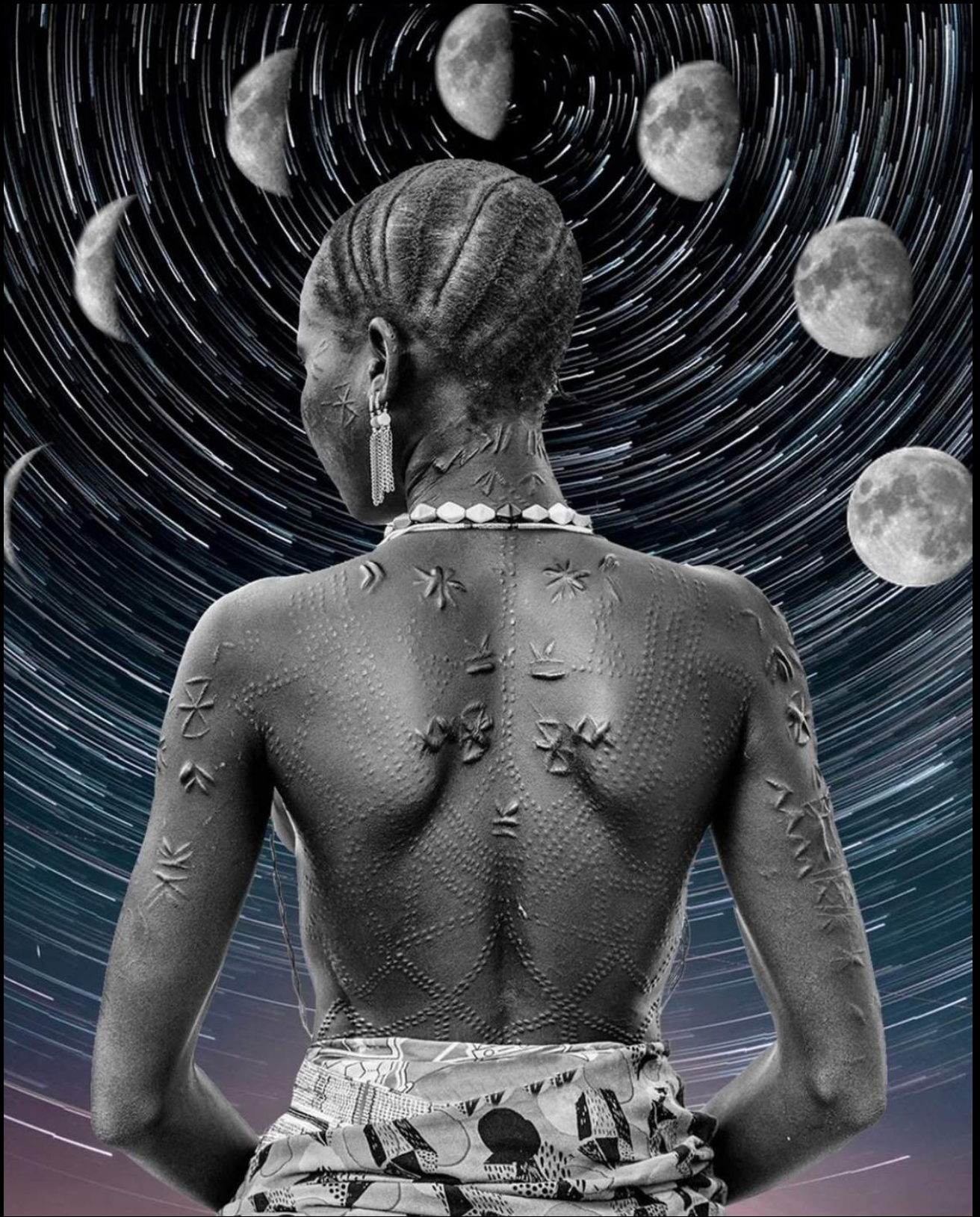
As a person with eclectic interests in various art forms including painting, photography and architecture, digital collage making has proven the ultimate medium to merge her interests in a way that allows her tell stories and express herself without limitations. Nigerian born artist, Alexis Tsegba, finds inspiration by observing. She is always looking for patterns in people and nature while attempting to remain open to the emotions that are held in both. She is driven by a desire to convert these feeling into art and somehow express the way that she sees the world.

ARTIST STATEMENT

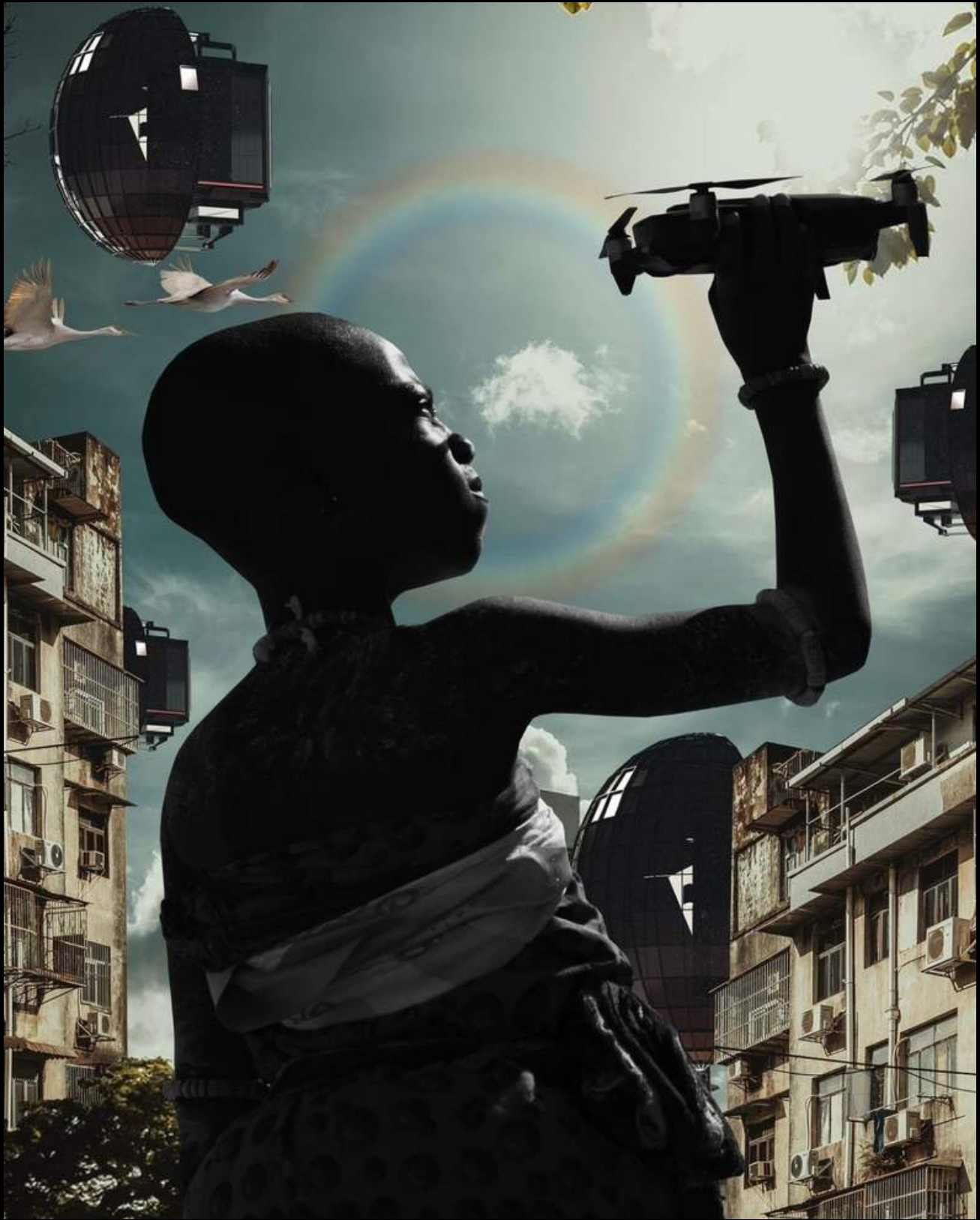
The artists' work contributes to Afrofuturism inspired by afrocentric sci-fi/fantasy genre (especially by authors such as Octavia Butler). Alexis is drawn to reimagining alternate futures where positive aspects of culture and technology are merged to foster our relationship with nature. Still, while fantasy and surrealism may be immediately evident in her work, there is also an intention to convey the joy and resilience that makes up the everyday African in real life and how this too is a strong part of Afrofuturism.

@alexistsegba

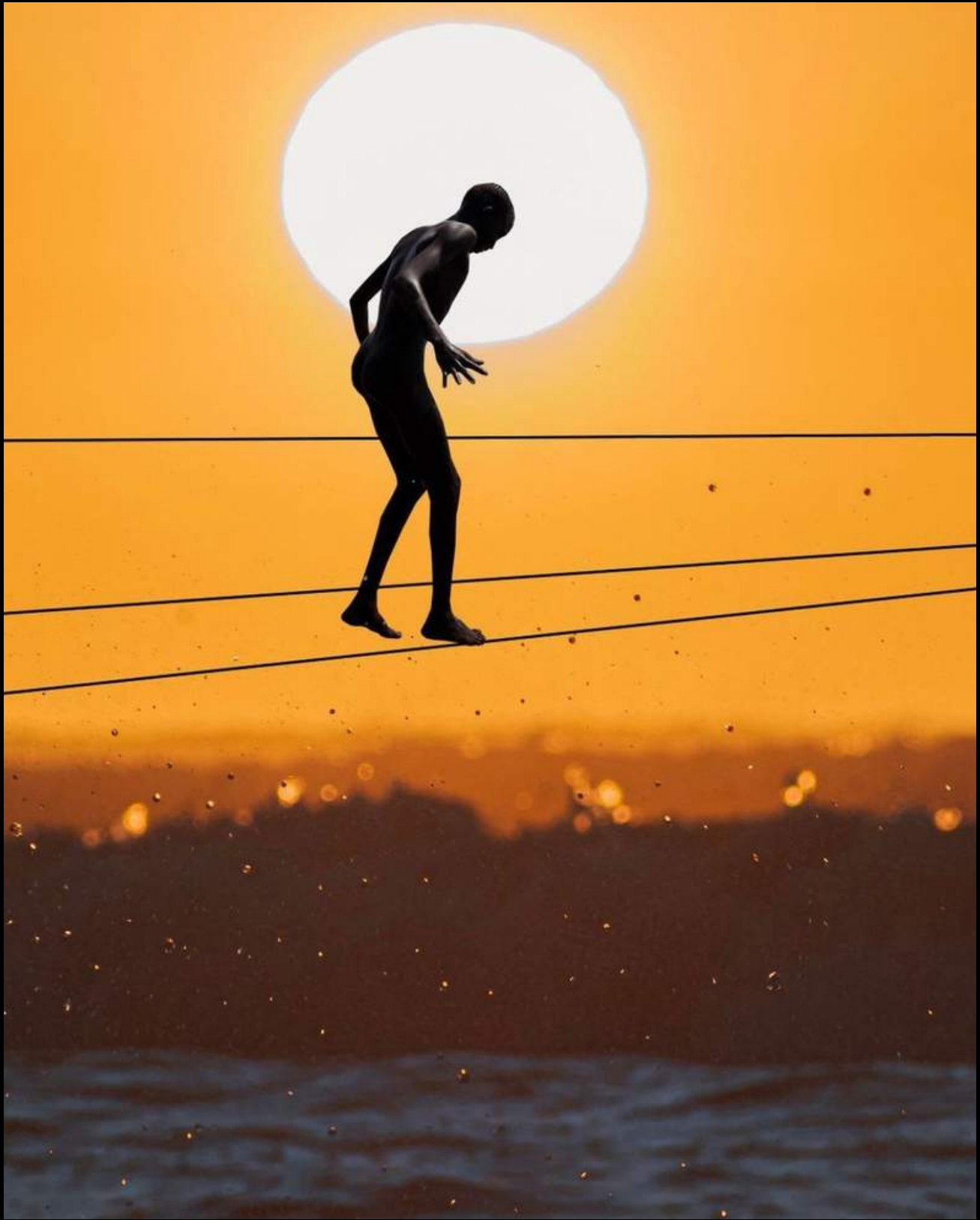




Constellations. Alexis Tsegba. 2019. Digital Collage.



New Age Dreamer. Alexis Tsegba. 2022. Digital Collage.



Walking The Tightrope. Alexis Tsegba. 2020. Digital Collage.



DIGITAL: EXCRETA

Digital: Excreta works as a digital landfill. Full of discarded beauty standing strong in a field of decay; exploring the sublime.

From Dallas, Texas, Digital: Excreta works in various digital mediums with 2D and 3D art. Exploring the infinite possibilities of New Media and watching human ideas manifest themselves through the web, her work expresses the beauty in embracing chaos life presents and creating something new. Fortitude is a fundamental aspect of true beauty and that beauty is represented with Afro-futuristic expressions. It is all a journey of strength and diligence through the chaotic digital space, accelerating towards a new era. Her work has been featured in various galleries and magazines around the world physically and digitally.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I often explore ideas which revolve around pursuing concepts of beauty, power, and it ultimately consuming you in my art. We all have our passions, we all have our struggles. I like the fine line between beauty and decay; the uncanny and hyper-real. While these are two separate concepts, I want to blend them into each other.

Most 3D rendering programs already produce photorealistic images, as it's a physics-based program, the real beauty comes when you personalize it and realize the unlimited possibilities you can create in this world.

This digital space has morphed into a massive sea of data; our thoughts, lives, hopes, dreams and visions all fuel this crashing frenzy of information. It is inevitable, as more of everyday life is being pushed towards a digital existence. We, as a people, are now reliant on using technology to express simple and complex emotions and ideas. It's a way for us to materialize our inner world. My hope is that we use this technology to expand our understanding of our surroundings and things we don't have access to physically and create something new and beneficial for us all. Legitimately, I think open source software will change the world.

@digitalexcreta





Salvation through ruin. Digital: Excreta. 2020. 3D Render



Chained with you. Digital: Excreta. 2018. 3D Render



ZIDA KALU

Zida Kalu (b.1998) is an intuitive self taught abstract and portrait digital painter who lives in Lagos, Nigeria.

As a child, growing up within a creative family, she has always been fascinated by the ability to make something out of almost nothing. After discovering digital art as a mere distraction in 2018 while in her final year in university, she received support from her family and it grew her confidence and desire to explore her creativity which has now evolved over 4 years.

She graduated with honors in Business Administration from the university and has since then created over 200 artworks. Zida has featured in exhibitions including; The VIVIR Experience 2018, Days Like This 2019, CurateYourArtShop 2019, The Noire Art Exhibition 2020 & Split Exhibition 2022.

ARTIST STATEMENT

“My work is a colorful tangle where unusual shapes, vibrant colors and distorted lines interact to keep the viewer fascinated in an ambience of vast and deep imagination.”

Her art is a blend of uplifting beauty of black women and abstraction in visual form. She creates art using her fingers and mobile devices (iPhone/iPad). Her vibrant paintings evoke feelings of belle, hope, peace, curiosity and substance. Zida’s beautifully orchestrated compositions are enhanced in totality by her versatile exploration and use of colors and unusual patterns. She harmonizes and balances fantasy and reality through her art. Her current foci are experimenting with colors and neutral lines on dark backgrounds to create abstract pieces and portrait art. She wants every person that sees her work to assign their own meaning to it. My journey is one of experimentation and exploration, while of course learning and getting more comfortable with.

@zidakalu

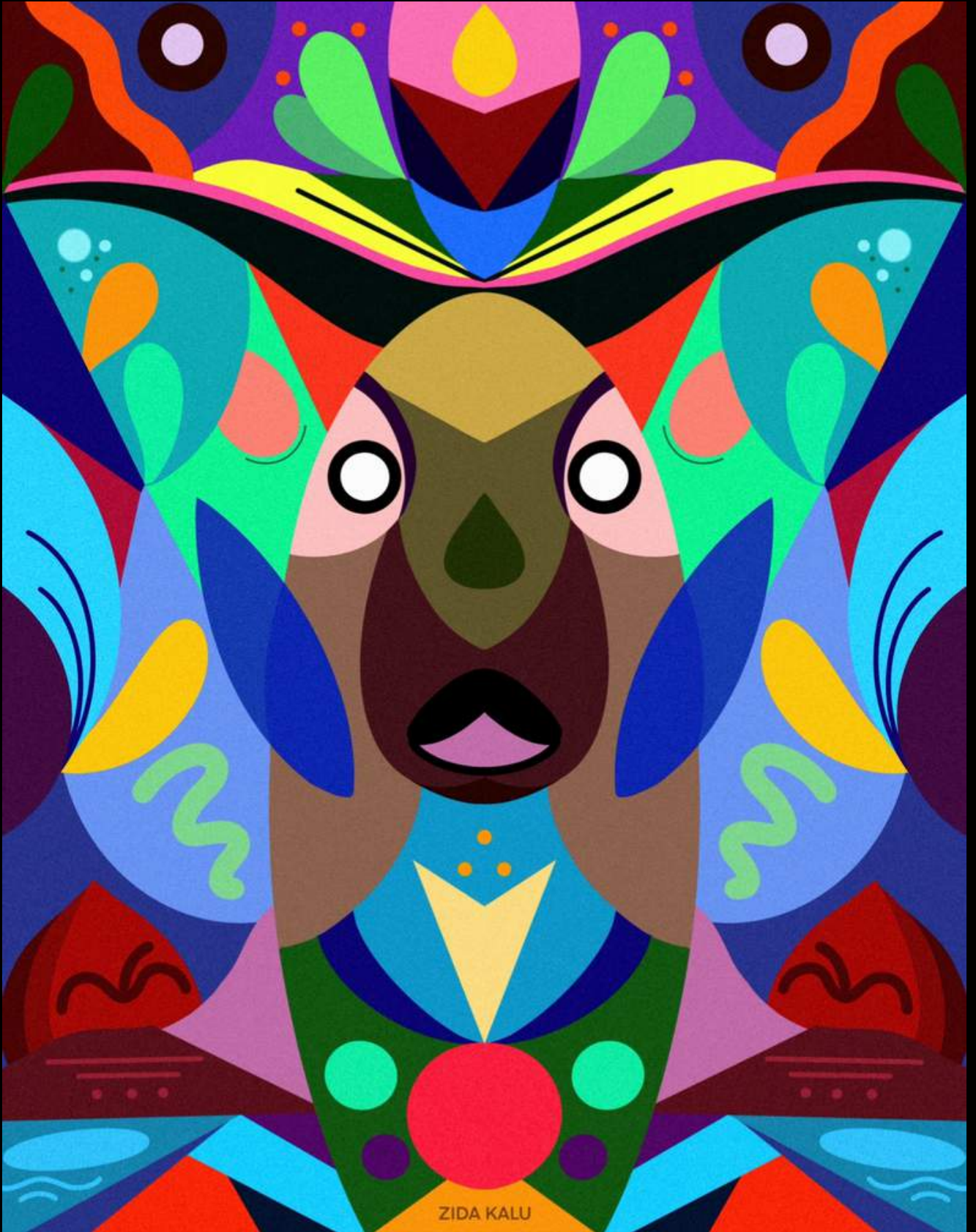




Outsider. Zida Kalu. 2021. Digital Art.



Enigma. Zida Kalu. 2021. Digital Art.



ZIDA KALU

Sailing Bunny In My Head. Zida Kalu. 2021. Digital Art.



FIYIN KOKO

Fiyinfoluwa “Fiyin Koko” Tunde Onadele is a figurative Nigerian artist and painter. She was introduced to art at a young age by watching her mother paint. This impelled her innate artistic talent to become a self-taught artist.

Her work is inspired by all facets of womanism and encapsulates the unerring beauty of the Black Woman. Black women, popularly portrayed as strong and showing resistance are often viewed from a masculine only point of view. However, Fiyin Koko expresses their feminine resilience in a delicate, often humorous and ethereal style.

Fiyin Koko focuses on the prime use of symbolism to coalesce her personal experiences, hopes and dreams. By configuring light, and bold color palettes in her mixed media paintings and digital illustrations; she imparts feelings of harmony and a deepening fondness for and of black women

ARTIST STATEMENT

I ground myself with my six guiding pillars: womanism, conversation, body positivity, movement, love, and femininity. For as long as I can remember these pillars have been staples in my life and as I grew as an artist, they became my credos. My work is a constant search to interpret these pillars in everyday life. My pieces encapsulate the essence of fantasy, vivid imagery and my dreams while telling a story and connecting to whoever is open to receive it.

My art sparks conversations about the woman's experience. I want my audience to be impacted by the harmony, softness and versatility of the black woman. My work explores sexuality, diversity, nudity, culture and whimsy; a variety of issues that are not usually experienced in black art. I am deliberate in the message my pieces impart because I want black women to see themselves more as ethereal beings.



ARTIST STATEMENT

I build on different mediums and textures while illustrating the bearings and movements of the female body and the power inherent to that of the black woman; to pull you in to communicate with my pieces. I am always exploring and experimenting with my art and more recently delving into “artivism”- through sustainability and breast cancer awareness. Ensuring that my pieces are ecologically balanced while bringing awareness to a cause I am passionate about. My journey is continuously evolving by pulling from my past, dreams, my present interactions with women and my hopes for the future.

@fiyinkoko





Miss On A Beam. Fiyin Koko. 2022. Digital.



Shared Beam. Fiyin Koko. 2022. Digital.



We Say, Fiyin Koko. 2022. Digital.



MARYJANE UZODINMA AKUNNA

Maryjane Uzodinma Akunna is an 18-year-old Nigerian Digital artist , Illustrator and Robotic Engineer who loves to create dynamic illustrations and art focused around black female and African women, highlighting our unique identity and hairstyles bringing ideas to life with my creative skills.

ARTIST STATEMENT

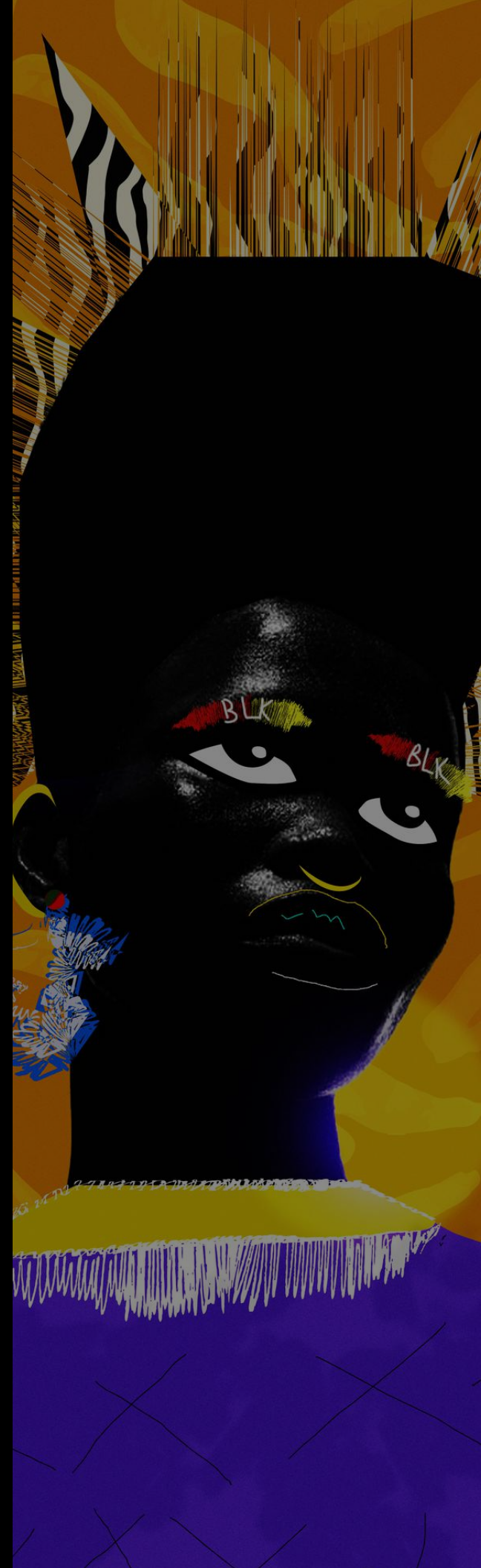
As a black woman, it is important for me to acknowledge that our hair and cultural identities are not appreciated as they should be and I have taken it upon myself to depict both & share with the world.

It brings me great pleasure to celebrate black women whilst showcasing our unique and diverse hairstyles through digital art - Our Hair is Our Identity, we should be proud of it.

My use of vibrant colors simply represents standing out, portraying black women as Queens - initiating deeper conversations about hair, skin tone & culture.

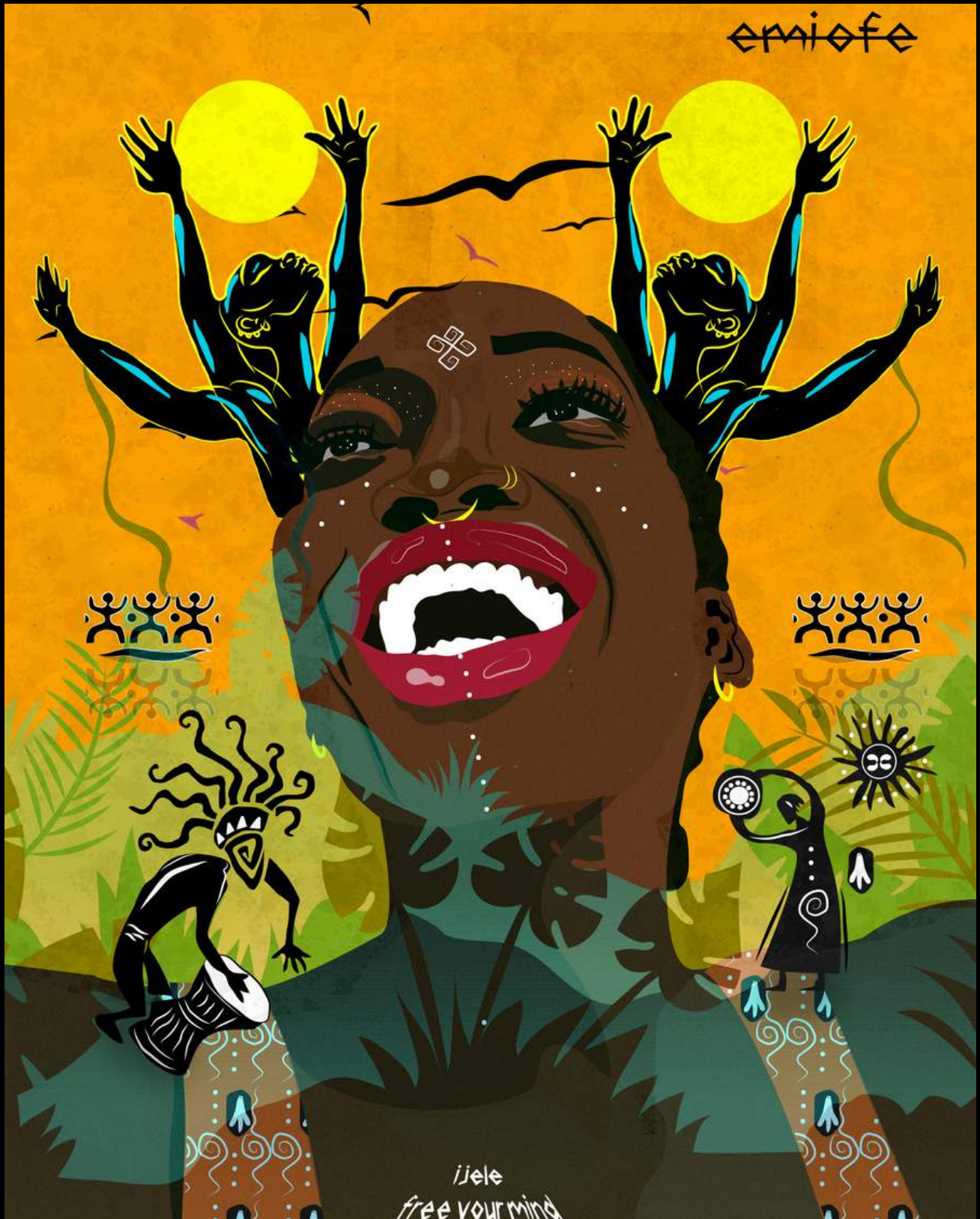
My works also give voice to difficult conversations about hair in a world where black women are often sidelined, bullied & looked down on, particularly in the academic & corporate worlds because of the texture of their hair - in an attempt to encourage appreciation, empathy, dialogue and eventually, change.

@designwithmj





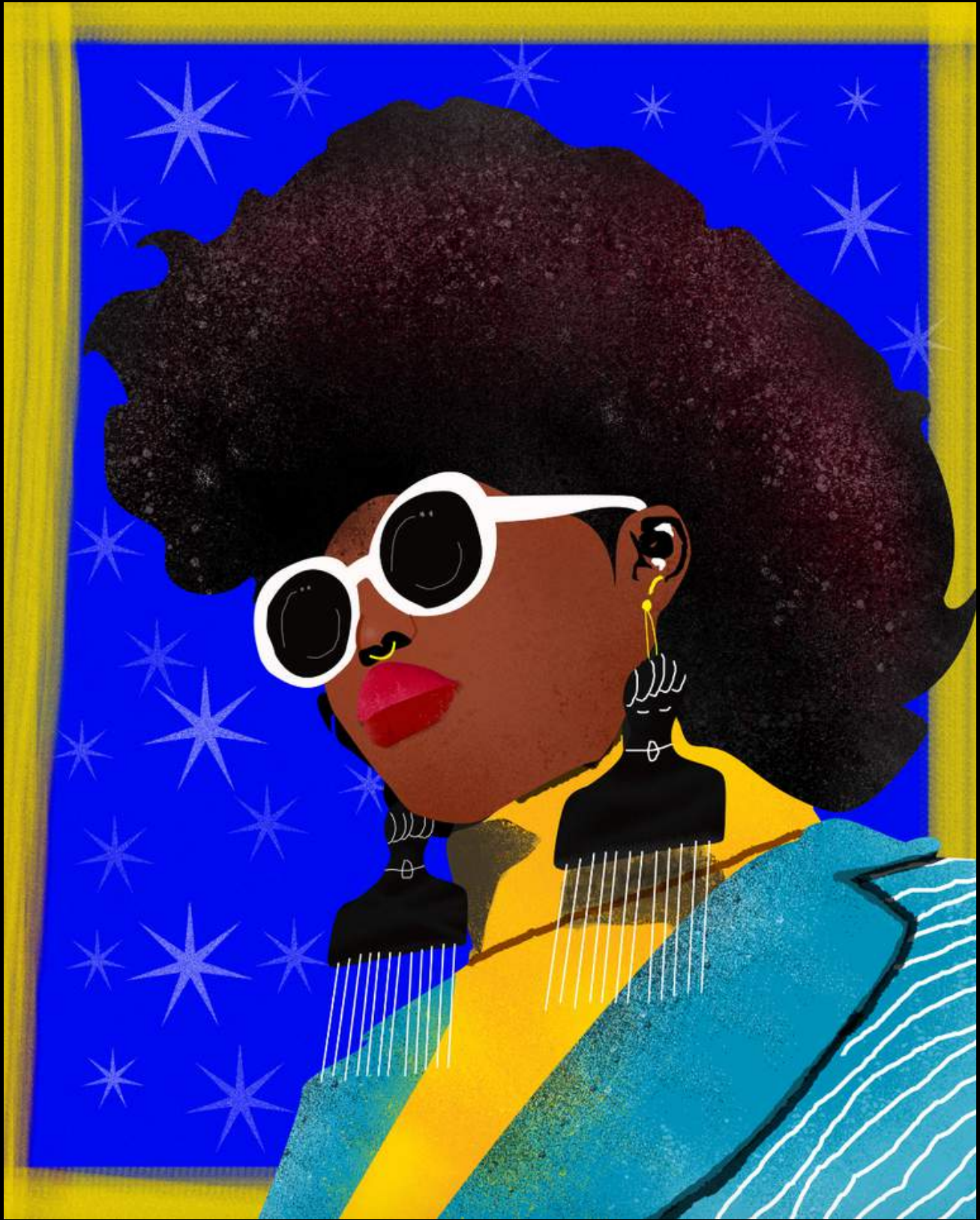
Crowned Jewels. MaryJane Uzodinma Akunna. 2022. Digital Art.



The African Spirit. MaryJane Uzodinma Akunna. 2022. Digital Art.



Black Queen. MaryJane Uzodinma Akunna. 2022. Digital Art.



Black Queen. MaryJane Uzodinma Akunna. 2022. Digital Art.



SOMI NWANDU

ARTIST; CURATOR OF AFROFUTOURISM

Somi Nwandu is a multidisciplinary artist, an art curator, and cultural enthusiast. Somi has had the opportunity to plan, develop and showcase major initiatives in globally recognized institutions like Tom Ford, Art Dubai, Expo 2020 Dubai, Macy's and more. Most recently, she oversaw external affairs and communications at the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C and has now go on to become an independent art and cultural curator.

She recently completed her MA in Global Creative and Cultural Industries from SOAS University of London while actively pursuing her arts.

At 28, Somi Nwandu has studied, lived, and worked in 8 cities, across 6 countries on 4 continents and has travelled to over 35 nations. Born in Maryland, U.S.A. and raised there as well as Enugu, Nigeria, Somi has always been fascinated with artistic matters which she expresses and explores through visual arts, fashion, writing, photography, and the digital world.

Somi is a quintessential, creative soul with a deep desire to forge cross-cultural ties specifically through the Arts. She believes in the union of art and technology to uplift, unify and inspire a people.

ARTIST STATEMENT

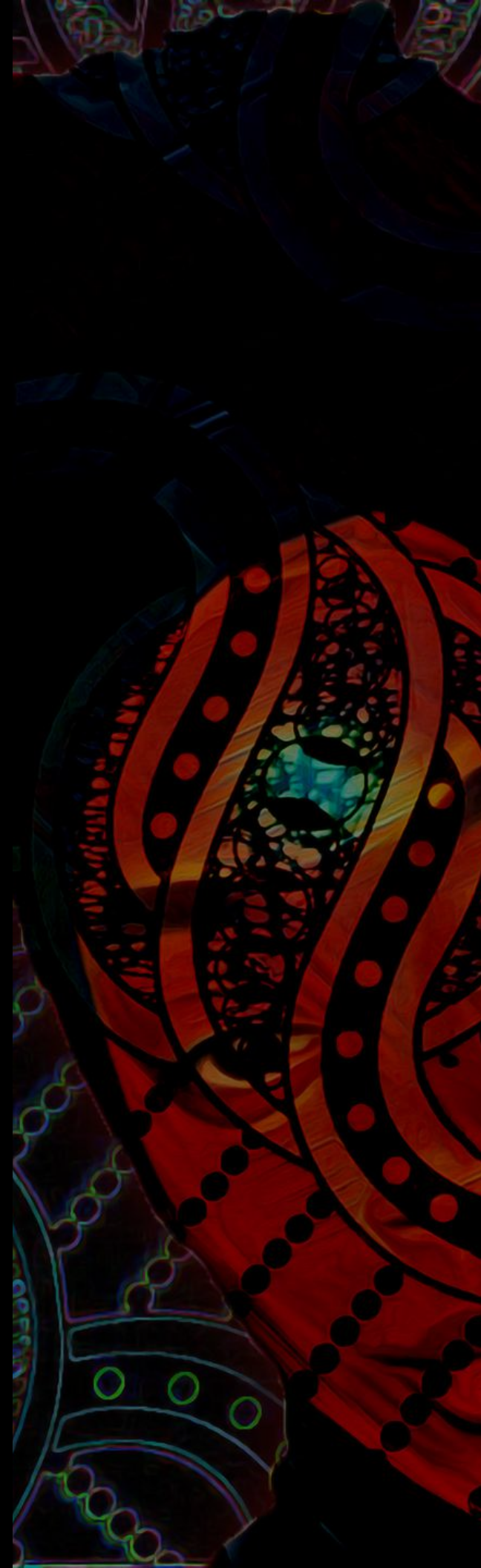
My artwork presents a story of the future and the past: my future and my past. I express the desire to hide and be seen, simultaneously, and the hesitations to treasure true beauty and strength while exploring the sui generis nature of individuality.

I am my own muse. My thoughts and truths inspire me and express the universal struggle of identity and mental soundness – a merging of inner worlds with the textures of reality. My works show my facial features interwoven with patterns that reflect my powerful heritage.

In this collection, Her Space, I explore, through Afrofuturistic expression, the waves of African femininity parallel to a supreme value of human existence in mental, and psychological organization.

The pieces layer emotion, craft, sound and motion to focus on three areas: mental stabilization advancements, the utilization of an African woman's femininity to personalize Afrofuturism, and electromagnetism as a metaphor.

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by the traditional understanding of the universe. Through the lens of Afrofuturism, we can speculate upon ways to subvert this



ARTIST STATEMENT

understanding and effect future change. Afrofuturism is the reimagining of a future imagined with arts, science and technology, and typically invokes themes of reclamation, Black liberation, and the revisioning of the past combined with predictions of the future through a Black cultural lens.

I believe Afrofuturism strives to break down racial, ethnic, and social limitations to empower and free individuals to be themselves. Although it is currently making waves in the media and continuing to open up endless ways of interpreting and changing our history, it has the potential to offer an increased intersectionality through the perspective of a Black, African woman: a perspective that is often whitewashed, demonized, or completely silenced.

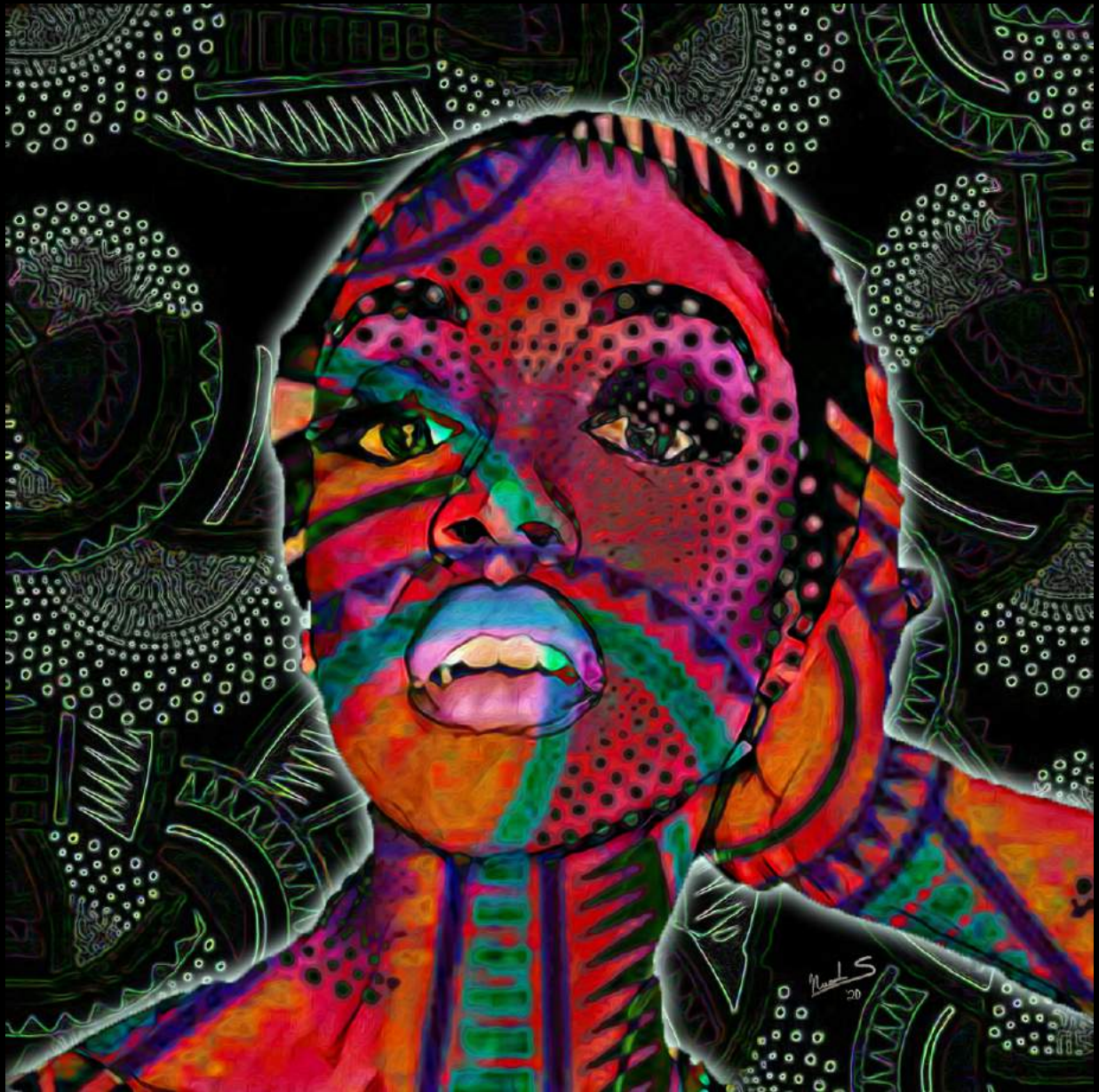
Afrofuturism allows her to write and create without needing permission nor parameters. It is at the heart of this collection. Though the one chosen to be explored is centered on that of the African woman and the dichotomy of her femininity and mental state. She is a world within herself; full of beauty and struggle and deserving of far more discovery and exploration.

@thesomieffect / @sominwandu

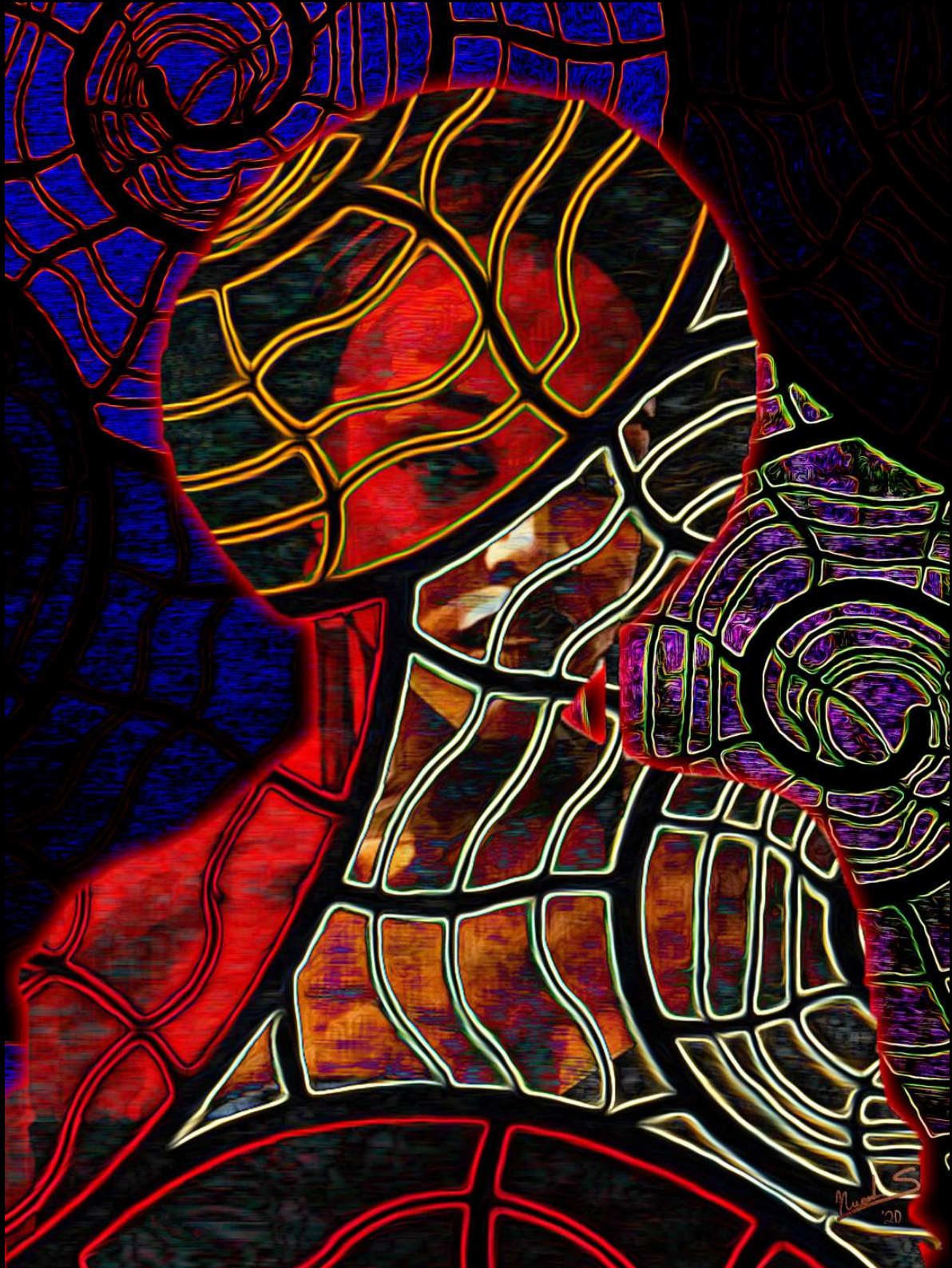




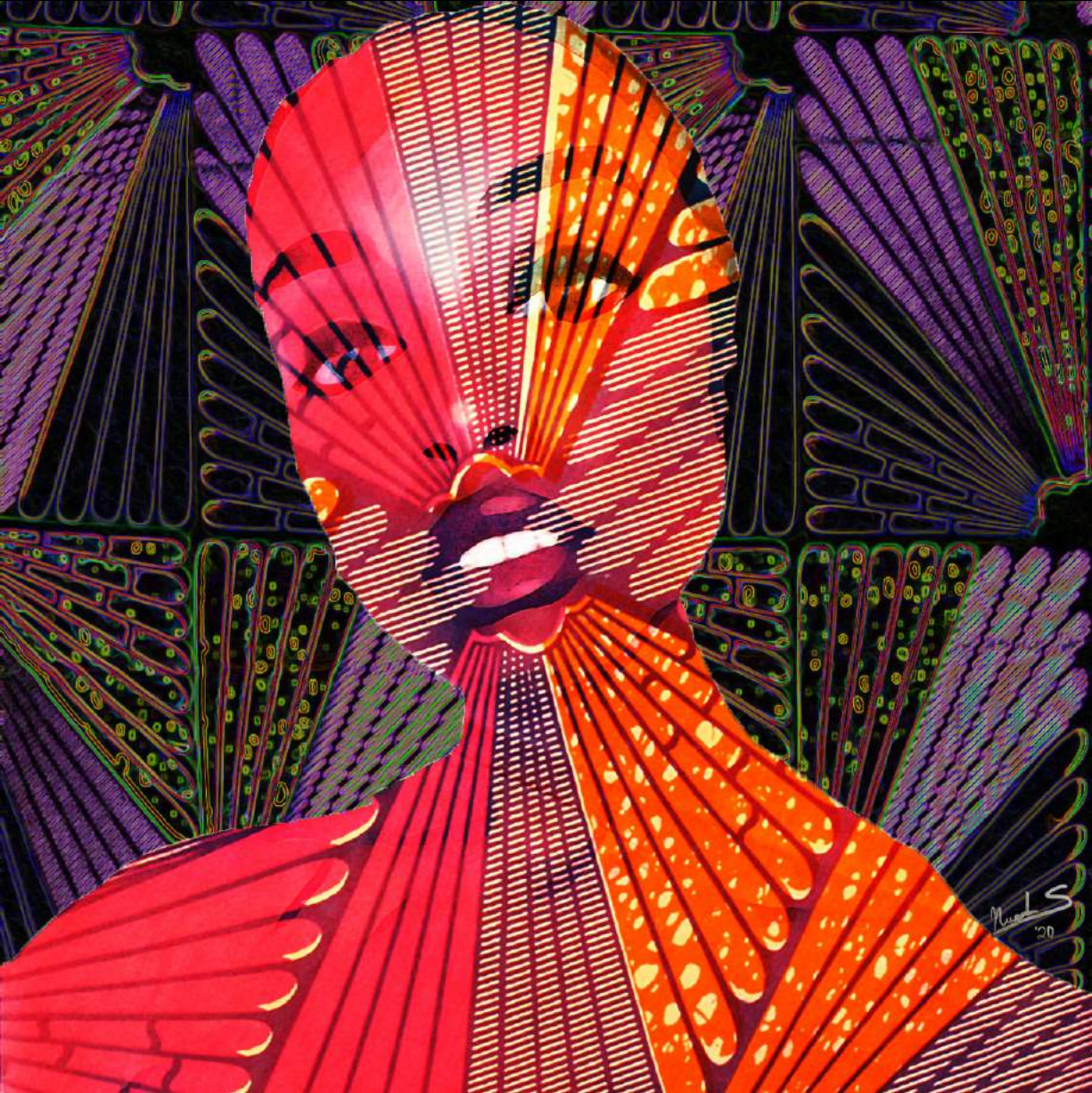
Cosmic Cortex: She in Omnipotence. Somi Nwandu. 2020. Digital Mixed Media



Terrestrial Magnetism: Her I(c)onic Bond. Somi Nwandu. 2020. Digital Mixed Media



Solenoid Supreme: Her Dynamic Force. Somi Nwandu. 2020. Digital Mixed Media



She/Her in IN Isomorphic Rays. Somi Nwandu. 2020. Digital Mixed Media



RED DOOR GALLERY, LAGOS

Red Door Gallery provides a platform for artists to express their creativity without any societal boundaries. We promote "unpredictable art" as predictable art is neither inspirational nor is it collectable. Red Door Gallery serves the entire Art value chain. Ranging from collector consulting/advisory to valuation, restorations, private & public commissions and exhibitions. Our passion is driven by the belief that art is the ultimate form of expression of man's inner most thoughts.



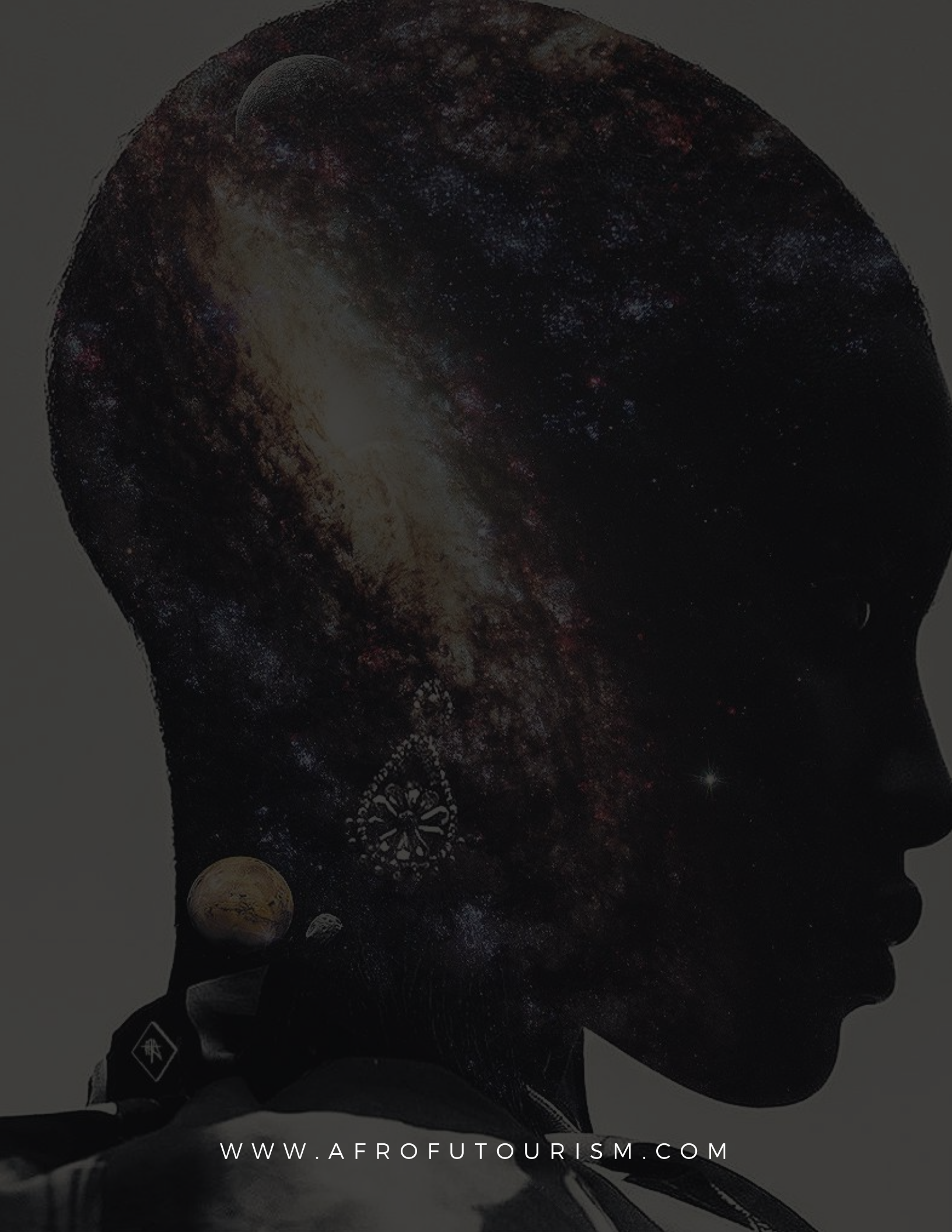
AFRICAN DIGITAL ART

African Digital Art Network is an international award winning digital platform and archive. The network boasts the largest digital collection of African Art to date. Created, developed, and established in 2009 by Jepchumba, the platform has featured projects and artists from Africa and across the world.

Since its inception African Digital Art has presented unparalleled ideas, individualistic works and insightful designer solutions by the African creative. Digital art covers a wide range of artistic productions; audio/visual production, animation, interactive projects, websites, short films, graphic art and design. ADA has become a platform for innovation and inspiration with a sophisticated blend of fresh talent and successful designers and artists. Pushing Digital Boundaries has become the tag line that is now fused with ADA's identity. ADA constantly strives to foster the growing technology driven creative community throughout the African Diaspora.

Back Cover Art: *Untitled*. Marcia Annor. 2022. Digital Mixed Media

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