

# Artists to watch at this year's 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair

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1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair returns to Somerset House from Thursday 14–Sunday 17 October 2021 for its 9th London edition, the largest yet. *New African* previews 15 of the artists whose work is on display.



## Sahara Longe

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### Ed Cross Fine Art

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*Born 1994 in London, UK; lives and works in London*

Sahara Longe trained at Charles H Cecil Studios, Florence for four years. Steeped in traditional oil painting techniques, Longe's practice wields a canon's hallmarks in service of identities historically excluded from it.

Gently revisionist canvases reframe Old Masters' go-to tableaux, placing Black bodies into a markedly white visual history. Across delicate to-scale still-lives as well as large canvases more than two metres high, Longe takes on established languages of power and makes work which ushers them into new arenas.

Longe's work is featured in the Timothy Taylor London summer show and has been acquired by a number of prestigious collections including Josef Vascovitz and Lisa Goodman, and Simon Nixon.



## **Gio Swaby**

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### **Claire Oliver Gallery**

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*Born 1991 in Nassau, Bahamas; lives and works in Toronto, Canada*

Gio Swaby is a mixed media artist whose practice encompasses installation, textiles, collage, performance, and video. Her work revolves around an exploration of identity, more specifically, the intersections of Blackness and womanhood, with attention to the ways in which this physical identity can serve as a positive force of connection and closeness, while also examining its imposed relationship to otherness.

As she states, 'I want my work to function as a love letter of sorts to Black women.'

Swaby was raised in Nassau, Bahamas where she obtained her Associate of Arts degree at the College of the Bahamas in 2012. In 2014, she moved to Vancouver, British Columbia to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree majoring in Film, Video, and Integrated Media at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Swaby completed the programme in 2016.



## Banele Khoza

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### Nil Gallery

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*Born 1994 in Hlatikulu, Eswatini; lives and works in Pretoria, South Africa*

Banele Khoza first enrolled at the London International School of Fashion, now STADIO Higher Education, Johannesburg, but soon realised his passion was drawing.

Khoza holds a BTech in Fine Arts from Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria. In 2017 he won the prestigious Gerard Sekoto Award and with it a three-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

His solo exhibitions include *LOVE?*, Smith Studio, Cape Town (2018); *Lonely Nights*, Lizamore Gallery, Randburg (2017) and *Temporary Feeling*, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria (2016).

Khoza also headlined the solo exhibition titled LGBTQI+: Banele Khoza as part of the Curatorial Lab at Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2018). In 2018 he curated *A Letter to My 22-Year-Old Self*, a fundraising show to provide grants to South African art students dealing with economic hardship.



## Helina Metaferia

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### Addis Fine Art

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*Born 1983 in Washington D.C., US; lives and works in New York*

Helina Metaferia is an interdisciplinary artist working across collage, assemblage, video, performance, and social engagement. Through a hybrid of media, Metaferia's practice is concerned with exploring overlooked stories relating to the Black experience, mainly in the context of the West.

She approaches this by centring Black bodies, mostly women, in positions of power and vulnerability to interrogate complex histories of systemic oppression, questioning how it informs personal experiences and interpersonal relationships. As a research-based artist, Helina's work is informed by written and oral archives, dialogical art, and somatic practices.

Metaferia received her MFA from Tufts University's School of the Museum of Fine Arts and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow/Assistant Professor at Brown University. Her solo exhibition, *Generations*, will open at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in autumn this year.



## Marlon Amaro

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### HOA Galeria

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*Born 1987 in Niterói, Brazil; lives and works in Niterói*

Currently studying painting at the Escola de Belas Artes (UFRJ| EBA), with complementary training at the Escola de Artes Visuais d Parque Lage (EAV) in Rio de Janeiro, painting is Marlon Amaro's primary medium.

In his research, the artist focuses on bringing to light, through personal experiences and daily iconographic research, social patterns that perpetuate structural racism. With a strong influence of urban aesthetics, he builds scenes that function as visual traps when playing with the contradiction of his characters and the strong chromatic appeal in relation to the socio-political content of his work.



## Nana Yaw Oduro

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### AFIKARIS

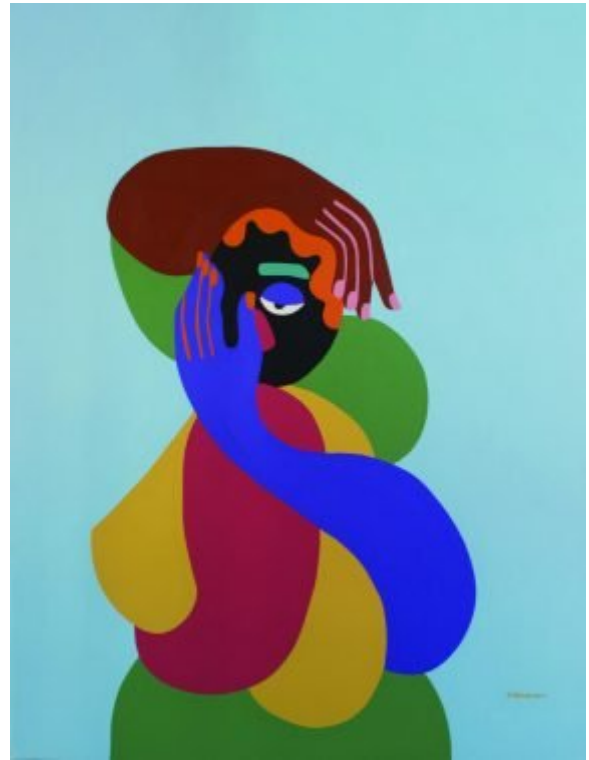
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*Born 1994 in Accra, Ghana; lives and works in Accra*

Nana Yaw Oduro studied business at the University of Ghana in May 2017 but started photographing in 2015. Oduro uses his images to reflect a depiction of himself and his sensibility with staged models. As a result, the stories emerging through his lens are inspired by his history.

The photographer explores topics echoing his personal life through masculinity, boyhood, and self-awareness. Arousing curiosity in the viewer, what is captured seems out of time. His photos embody a desire for freedom with the only existing boundary being the photographer's imagination. Oduro has had a number of group and solo exhibitions in Ghana, China, and the US.

In 2021 the artist had a solo exhibition, SÍSIFO, at HOA Galeria, São Paulo, and participated in a group show, Between Rivers, Waterfalls and the Deepest Sea, at M+B Gallery, LA (2021).



## Deborah Segun

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### SMO Contemporary Art

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*Born 1994 in Lagos, Nigeria; lives and works in Lagos*

Deborah Segun is a multi-disciplinary artist whose inspiration stems from her personal and shared experiences as a woman, as well as observations of spaces she occupies.

She captures these experiences through her unique and experimental use of colours and shapes, and exaggerates the figures or displaces them, as she believes it is her way of confronting reality. She also likes to isolate shapes from the subjects/objects and put them together to create a new composition.

Segun has a degree in Fashion Design from the Polimoda Institute of Fashion Design and Marketing, Florence (2017). During her studies in fashion, she translated her art production into clothing, creating conceptual and sculptural wearable pieces. Her recent solo exhibition *Being Free* took place at SMO Contemporary Art, Lagos (2020).





## Lulama Wolf

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### THK Gallery

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*Born 1993 in Johannesburg,  
South Africa; lives and works in Johannesburg*

Lulama Wolf's work is at the intersection of neo-expression and modern art movements from across the continent, whilst interrogating pre-colonial African experiences through the contemporary mind by using smearing, scraped, and deep pigment techniques used in vernacular architecture.

Through such a broad scope, Wolf endeavours to 'pick up the world's contradictions.' Inspired by Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi and Ernest Mancoba, she explores the human condition in her creation of hyper visualised characters.

Her motivation is tender and protective of her imaginary world or rather, her symbolic view of how her world looks in an alternate universe. She is set on creating a photographic/graphic experience that morphs and shapes her work beyond the two-dimensional. Her work has been exhibited in South Africa.



## Hana Yilma Godine

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### Fridman Gallery

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*Born 1993 in Arssi Negele, Ethiopia; lives and works in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

Hana Yilma Godine's use of flattened perspective, evenly distributed light, and elongated figures brings to mind Ethiopian icons, and the work of modernist masters, such as Tadesse Mesfin, one of Godine's teachers.

Unburdened by the rules of realistic representation, Godine is able to bring parallel worlds onto a single plane without mixing them, to overlay exterior and interior spaces. Often grounded on traditional fabrics and yellowed newspapers, the paintings appear to time-travel, depicting the protagonist at different stages of her life, side-by-side.

Godine received an MFA from Boston University in 2020, having previously studied at Casa Da Zhventude de Ourence, Spain, the Abyssinia School of Fine Art and Design, and the Allé School of Fine Art and Design, Addis Ababa, where she was taught by Tadesse Mesfin.

Fridman Gallery hosted the artist's first show in New York, Spaces within Space in mid-2020.



## Dickens Otieno

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### Circle Art Gallery

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*Born 1979 in Migori, Kenya; lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya*

Dickens Otieno's tapestries draw attention to the potential beauty in objects that would otherwise be dismissed as useless and discarded. He shreds aluminium cans and weaves them in a process informed by the weaving of natural materials such as papyrus, raffia, or palm that he observed growing up.

He spent many hours in his mother's tailoring workshop amongst lesos and kitenges (both popular fabrics), whose colours and patterns have since influenced his aesthetic. This engagement with fabrics grows from an interest in the way pattern, colour, and iconography imbue functional objects with meaning and identity.

Otieno draws heavily on his immediate physical surroundings, particularly the urban environment of Nairobi, to create his compositions.

Objects piled high in markets, the constantly shifting skyline, the pockets of nature in the concrete and steel haze of Nairobi – these are the sources of Otieno's inspiration for his richly hued, increasingly sculptural compositions.



## Frantz Lamothe

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### October Gallery

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*Born 1961 in Haiti; lives and works in Paris, France*

Frantz Lamothe's raw and visceral paintings reflect fragments of his varied past. Born in Haiti, he left at the age of four when his father was involved in an abortive coup against the dictator 'Papa Doc' Duvalier.

He spent his childhood in Brooklyn, and by the age of 16, was living on the streets and painting graffiti in the subways of New York. This way of life came to an end when, along with fellow graffiti artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lamothe was taken up by the New York gallery circuit.

Following the death of Basquiat, Lamothe decided to escape the excess and superficiality of the art scene and return to Haiti. The combination of Haiti's vibrant artistic life and political instability gave a new edge to his work. His work garnered international acclaim, and has been shown across Europe, Japan, and the USA.



## Oluwole Omofemi

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### OOA Gallery

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*Born in 1988 in Ibadan, Nigeria; lives and works in Ibadan*

Delicately painting the dark skin tones of his Black female models, Oluwole Omofemi embellishes their faces with scarification marks to identify his subjects' roots and places emphasis on the styling of his sitters' hair to express their independence.

He states, "I use hair as a metaphor for freedom," adding "it's a big part of our identity. In my paintings, I try to tell Black people to accept who they are; accept their identity; accept their beauty."

Echoing Afropunk street styles and the liberating spirit of Fela Aníkúlápó-Kuti's Pan-African vision, the artist looks to the past while exuberantly eyeing the future. His work has been shown at solo and group shows in Nigeria, Ghana, Belgium, UK, and Spain.



## Mona Taha

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### Afriart Gallery

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*Born 1988 in Kampala, Uganda; lives and works in Kampala*

Mona Taha was born to an Egyptian father and a Rwandese mother and is a self-taught artist. She primarily works with charcoal on paper. Her drawings are figurative and oftentimes self-portraits depicting herself in intimate, yet mundane poses.

The figures depicted in her work seem to oscillate between movement and stillness. As drawing is a therapeutic process for Taha, she is drawn to themes that revolve around her personal introspection as a woman, Muslim, wife, mother, and daughter.

Themes around gender, femininity, self-discovery, and self-awareness come to the fore. Taha's quest for self-discovery and self-empowerment is a rebellion and a call to action for those who are restless, looking for defiance and resilience.



## **Anthony Ngoya**

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### **Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix**

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*Born 1995 in Limoges, France; lives and works in Brussels, Belgium*

Anthony Ngoya prefers to use found objects such as used fabric and pieces of floor tiles in his old artist's studio, or waste found on construction sites. Facing these beaten-up materials, which are already infused with meaning, he channels their innate beauty beyond the hackneyed concepts they are associated with.

Ngoya's work breathes; it is in good part due to the artist's pronounced sense of space that he instils this into every work and installation, combined with his almost seasoned use of colours.

Following his studies in Brussels, Ngoya's work has been exhibited across Europe.



## Rufai Zakari

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### Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

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*Born 1990 in Accra, Ghana; lives and works in Accra and Bawku, Ghana.*

Rufai Zakari completed his apprenticeship under Mozzay, a senior artist in Nima, Accra. In 2011, Zakari graduated from the Ghanatta College of Art and Design, Accra.

In his work, Zakari examines consumerism, environmental pollution, labour, trade, and the perils of industrialisation in contemporary Ghanaian society.

The founder of Rujab Eco-Art Foundation in his hometown of Bawku, Rufai Zakari bases his practice on the recycling of waste in the streets of Ghana. After decades of conflict which took countless lives and left the city in ruins, Zakari is now looking to the future with optimism and a strong ambition to rebuild what has been lost, while inspiring hope in his community.