RONCHINI

Annan Affotey
Windows to The Soul
6 May – 18 June 2021

Annan Affotey, *Paul and Norma*, 2021, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 180 x 150 cm / 71 x 60 in. © The Artist and Ronchini, London

Ronchini is proud to present the first European solo exhibition by Ghanaian born, British based artist, Annan Affotey. Featuring the artist's striking 'red-eye' paintings, this exhibition will introduce the European audience to the large scale, bright portraiture that has commanded the artist's recent practice.

Initially beginning as a semi-abstract painter, after the birth of his son, Affotey yearned for a way to provide a voice for the marginalised, and he began to paint portraits of friends and relatives in an effort to re-frame and re-examine the context of people of colour in society. The arresting red-eyes are suggestive of a full life, with emotions and stories that transcend the colour of their skin. Affotey states:

> When I moved to the US from Ghana, I was often questioned why my eyes were red and whether it meant I hadn't slept or was doing drugs, neither of which was true. And it became a symbol for misinterpreted identities... It's the classic "a picture is worth a thousand words." The first assumptions made about people are based on sight. So things like skin colour, clothing, accessories, background, setting, and pose dictate emotion. There's no guarantee those things match the character underneath.

Annan Affotey, *Bond*, 2021, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 180 x 150 cm / 71 x 60 in. © The Artist and Ronchini, London

The colourful backgrounds and accessories of the sitters are not only reminiscent of his home-country of Ghana, but also used as a way to highlight the contrast between the colour of someone's skin and what surrounds them, both physically and metaphorically. With many of the paintings in the exhibition, Affotey further develops the backgrounds into a more dimensional interior setting, re-placing his captivating figures into a new setting underlining how what surrounds you can contextualise, but not identify one's character.

Subjects in the works include friends and social media followers of Affotey. Affotey will find a photograph which he finds inspiring and will subtly adjust the surroundings and features of the sitter. *Paul and Norma* depicts a friend of the artist from his time in Wisconsin. The friend, who is also of Ghanaian descent, purchased an early landscape painting of the artist's work and Affotey places that work in the background of the painting, connecting the sitter and the artist in the past and present. Affotey realised that placing this painting, a nod to his former artistic style, in a painting in his new style highlights his personal growth from the original time someone pointed out his red eyes as well as his growth as an artist. He has been able to transcend that experience and turn it into something positive. He has decided to include references to former paintings of his in many of the backgrounds in the works in *Windows to the Soul*.

Heavily inspired by Van Gogh, Affotey's paintings feature impassioned knife marks and brushstrokes, adding further emotional and mysterious context to the already charged paintings.

Annan Affotey in his studio, Oxford, 2021. ©The Artist and Ronchini, London

About the artist
Born 1985, Accra, Ghana.
After graduating from Ghanatta College of Art and Design winning Best Student of Still Life, Best Imagination and Composition, and Best Abstract Drawing awards, Annan joined the Revolution Art Organization and displayed his work in several group and solo exhibitions in Accra. In 2013, Annan helped found the African Young Artist Organization (AYAO), an organization dedicated to supporting African youth in the arts through programs and exhibitions. Annan lived in Wisconsin from 2014-2019 and currently lives in Oxford, UK.

Exhibition: Annan Affotey: Windows to the Soul
Dates: 6 May – 18 June 2021
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Annan Affotey in his studio, Oxford, 2021. ©The Artist and Ronchini, London