

An abstract painting featuring a large, dark, circular shape in the upper center, surrounded by various shades of blue and white. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is dominated by cool tones, with the dark shape providing a focal point of contrast.

Ruth Ige

Studio Ponderings

Vol 1.



WELCOME

Hello everyone!!! I hope all of you are doing well. Welcome to the first volume of studio ponderings! I am so excited to begin this journey with all of you. It is a fun way to document a very small fraction of my complex studio practice, but also to connect with everyone and keep you all updated. I will be doing a studio pondering every month or every two months. Still figuring that aspect out. Studio ponderings will just be a summary on things I am currently researching, things I am currently intrigued by, experimentations, thoughts, questions etc. Sometimes they will be brief and other times lengthier. It will depend on what is on my heart and what I feel like sharing. They will be casual, but informative. Plus, they are purely designed by me. So again, welcome and a million warm wishes and blessings to every single one of you. Have an amazing, day, week and month.

THE FOUNDATION

Thought to begin this studio ponderings with my artist statement for those who are unsure about the themes of my work. It is a brief summarization and there is still so much not covered. However, this statement is a good introduction to what I am trying to convey and explore with my work.

ARTIST STATEMENT

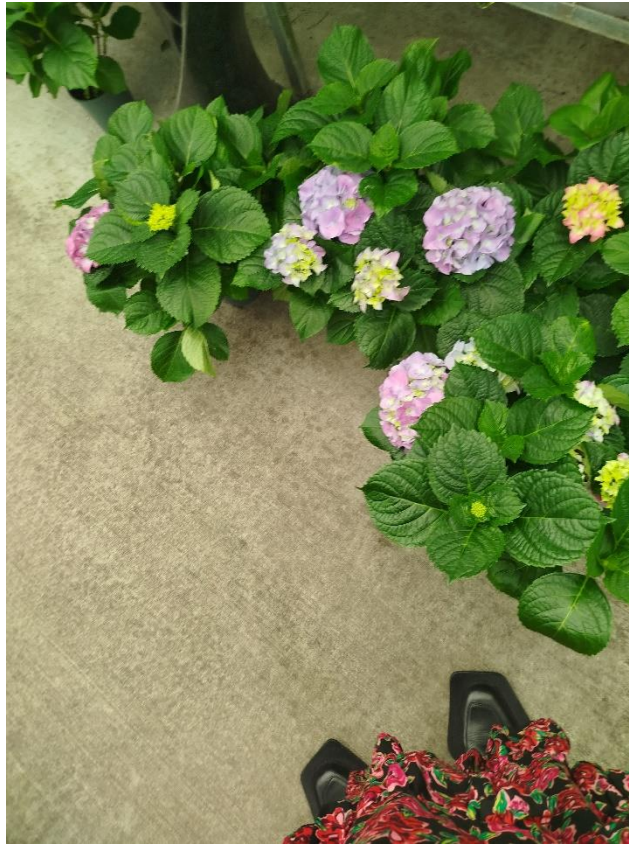
My work centers the black figure and explores blackness in relation to representation, history, art history, documentation, and existence. Though firmly rooted in history and the present, my paintings often delve into future imaginings. I am interested in creating images that are not easily understood, where there is this sense of being outside of a specific place or time. Where the past, present and future collide, converse and coexist within the same space. Where the figures roam between dimensions of history and fiction. In almost a shapeshifting manner the familiar and fantastical are constantly interchanging. I am interested in exploring the movement between two things and their coexistence: figuration and abstraction, the familiar and the otherworldly, stillness and movement, beauty and pain, certainty and uncertainty, etc. Especially using secrecy and mystery as a form of empowerment in the portrayal of blackness through the constant concealing and revealing that occurs by moving between abstraction and figuration. The figures are powerfully seen, but also seem to be lovingly protected and hidden. Overall, my main aim is to explore and show the multiplicity of blackness.

THINGS I AM CURRENTLY INTRIGUED BY (these are in addition to what is already fundamental to my work in general)

- The ethereal - I want to explore this in greater depths. It has always been a part of my practice, but I feel it is an important aspect to further explore and research in the representation and exploration of blackness.
- To continue to create my own mythologies
- Flowers in relation to the symbolism and language they convey. The language they hold. Creating and deepening my own mythologies around them.
- African indigenous plants and the history, culture and beliefs attached to them
- Precolonial perspectives, beliefs and practices
- Precolonial art practices
- Cultural materials as painting pigments and how they can be used as visual poems and documentation of culture, black life, black legacy and the diasporic experience
- Pigments as cultural archives
- Paintings as cultural hosts or vessels of imagination and documentation
- The coexistence of the mundane and the otherworldly
- Worldbuilding
- Scenes – This is something I am going to be exploring in a greater scale and depth. I am currently obsessed with gardens. I find gardens to be mysterious, magical and healing places that evoke this sense of rest and wonder. I love that they can be seen as mundane, but at the same time have this otherworldly atmosphere to them. I recently had a painting called **Garden (midnight)** in an amazing triennial exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki here in New Zealand. It was a part two exploration of the painting **Garden** which was in the solo show **And you are of the heavens and of the earth** in Cape town South Africa.



Garden



AUGUST 30TH

Been preparing and brainstorming ideas for a solo show happening in December in Wellington, New Zealand. Trying to find ways to push the worldbuilding aspects of my practice. I have already been doing that through the poetry, titles and the paintings themselves. However, I have been looking for more ways to transport people into these places I am creating through my paintings. I have always loved flowers and plants since I was in primary school. I even studied horticulture in high school and have owned many plants throughout the years. I am thinking of doing a garden amongst the paintings for this particular show. On August 30th I went to my local shop here in Albany, Auckland that has an amazing selection of plants and flowers.



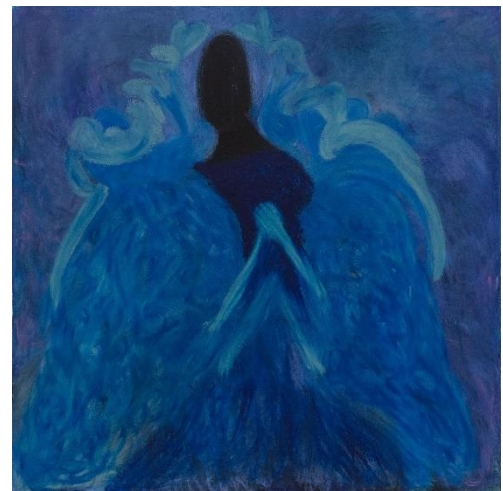


FURTHER EXPLORATIONS AND EXPERIMENTATIONS AROUND CULTURAL DRY PIGMENTS

In my recent solo show in Cape town South Africa called, **And you are of the heavens and of the earth**, I added indigo pigment from the West African country Guinea to four specific paintings: **Protected by heaven, Queen from the 7th earth, Woman with bouquet dress** and **Woman with two flower guides**. These four paintings are quite dear to me as they embody this new exploration of using actual cultural materials and cultural pigments as a way to archive and document black culture, cultural practices and experiences whilst still creating these imagined worlds. As a person living far from the continent my access to cultural materials is not the easiest. I was so happy when I was able to purchase this indigo pigment from Guinea. It felt like I had found a treasure. This indigo pigment from Guinea is from the *Philenoptera cyanescens* (alternative name is *Lonchocarpus cyanescens*) plant species the indigenous source of indigo in West Africa. This plant is also found in Nigeria and is called Elu in Yoruba. I have tried to get indigo pigment from Nigeria, but it has been quite difficult. I will keep you updated on that. In Yoruba culture indigo represents love. It also used in traditional medicine. It is also used in Nigerian traditional fabrics such as Adire (Yoruba fabric). I will go into further detail on the importance of indigo to Nigeria, the continent as whole and the black diaspora in the next studio ponderings.



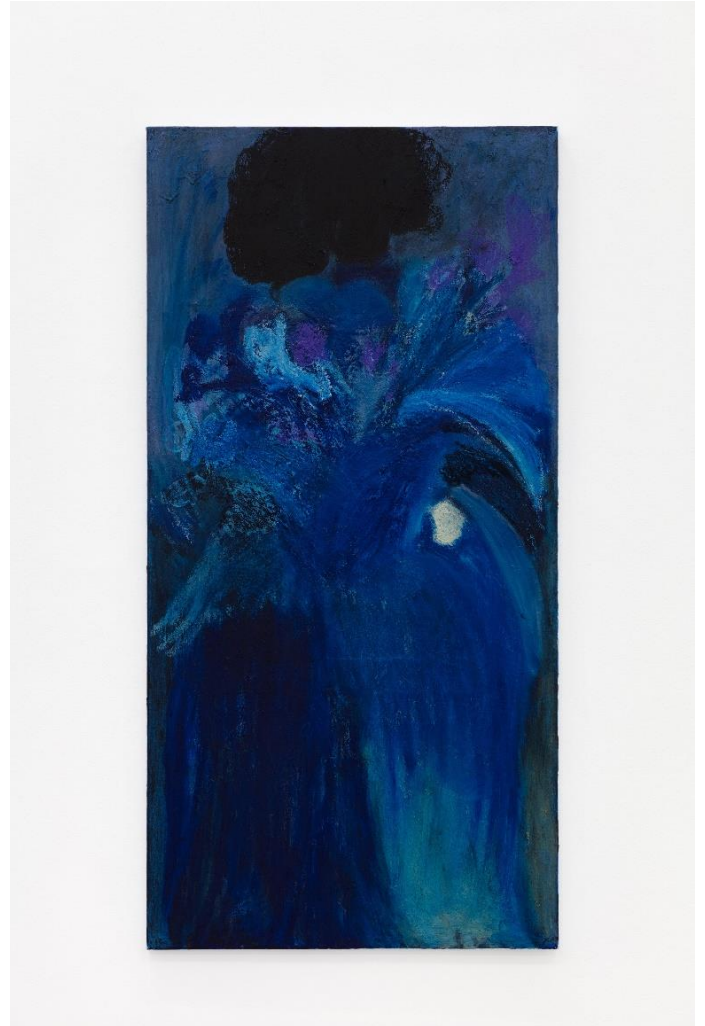
Woman with two flower guides



Queen from the 7th earth



Protected by heaven



Woman with bouquet dress

Using West African indigo pigment truly reawakened something in my heart that was always there. I want to further explore more cultural materials from Nigeria, various African countries and other parts of the diaspora. I have been looking at different Nigerian leafy vegetables/plants that are used in our traditional food and medicine as possible pigments I could use in my paintings. As a Nigerian living abroad the only versions of these I can acquire are the dried versions. The dried versions might be easier to use. As I am thinking of crushing them into a fine powder and adding acrylic binder or using them in an oil stick

technique I do. I feel that also using the dried version of these plants adds this extra layer of the ways those who are away from the continent stay connected to their land and culture despite the distance.

NIGERIAN LEAFY PLANTS/VEGETABLES I AM THINKING OF USING

- Bitter leaf (Ewuro in Yoruba and Onugbu in Igbo)
- Ugu leaves (Igbo)
- Ukazi (Igbo)
- Oha (Igbo)
- Ewedu (Yoruba)
- Efo Tete (Yoruba)
- Waterleaf (Efo Gbure in Yoruba)
- Scent leaves (Efirin in Yoruba)
- Uziza (Igbo)

POSSIBLE OTHER CULTURAL MATERIALS AS PIGMENT

- Crushed cowrie shells as a possible pigment. In Nigeria cowries are symbols of prosperity and fertility. Also, in Yoruba religion they are used in divination for communication.
- Spices
- Cocoa as a possible pigment. My grandfather owned multiple cocoa farms a very long time ago. I never met my grandfather. The possibility of adding cocoa could be a good way of archiving both cultural and ancestral history, legacy and tradition.
- Uziza seeds
- I have another possible material, but I am keeping it a secret for now.



Picture above from left to right: Ugu dried leaves, Oha dried leaves, West African indigo pigment and black ochre



UPDATE (UGU DRIED LEAVES)

I used a mortar and pestle to crush the dried Ugu leaves into a powder. For now, I will be using the powder with an oil stick technique. Later on, I will use a glass muller and slab to create my own acrylic paint using the Ugu powder and acrylic binder, which I will use for an upcoming show in Havana.



PHOTOGRAPHY

The first foundation of my practice has always been portraiture. Here are some photographs of black woman with flowers. The photograph I acquired I do not think it was flowers she was holding. However, it feels reminiscent of a bouquet of flowers. Months ago, I stumbled upon a person selling old portraits of Nigerian people from an old Nigerian photo studio. I purchased a bunch of them. So excited to start a collection. I will probably show more of the vintage photographs I purchased during various studio ponderings. I do not paint from photographs, but it does feed into my practice.



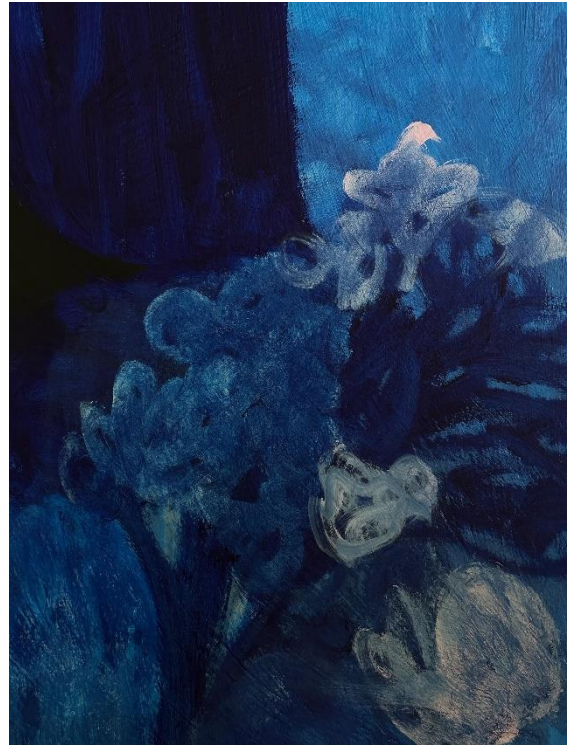
Photograph I acquired



Both photographs are by Solomon Osagie Alonge (1911-1994). A Nigerian photographer I recently found out about.

AND FLOWERS STILL GROW

The flowers that bloomed beside the ruins
Nourished from the tears I cried
I held them tightly
A monument so fragile
So small
And though they
Will soon wither away
They remind me that
Though there is despair
Beauty is there
Still emerging



GROUP SHOW

I have a group show here in Auckland in October called, **The secret life of plants.** It borrows its title from a book where it was theorised that plants had these amazing abilities such as communication with animals and even humans. The show is exploring ideas around healing, mysticism, growth and spirituality. For the show I am doing a continuation of the paintings **A gift (to weather the storm)** and **A gift (to know you're not alone)** from the 2022 Joburg solo show **Freedom's recurring dream** where freedom the mothering entity gave spiritual gifts shaped as flowers to the black community.

PAINTINGS FROM 2022

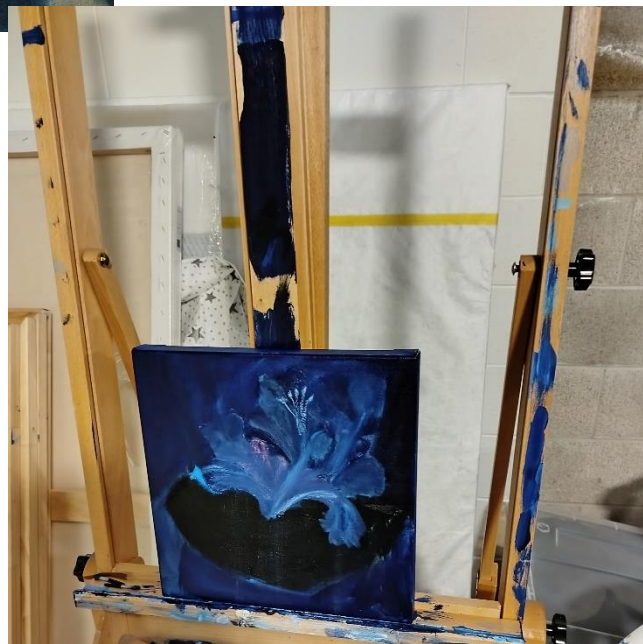
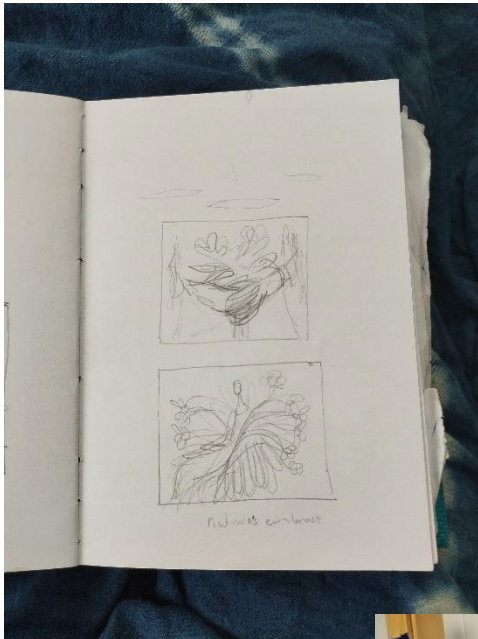


A gift (to weather the storm)



A gift (to know you're not alone)

THE BEGINNING STAGES (GROUP SHOW)



Just acrylic paint and oil stick used in these first stages of the painting **A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2**

UPDATE 1 (GROUP SHOW)

I have now added dried Ugu powder to parts of the painting. It is the parts where you see those splotches of green/brown. Materials used in this stage of the painting is oil stick, acrylic paint and dried Ugu powder.



A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2

UPDATE 2 (GROUP SHOW)

More paintings being made for the group show, **The secret life of plants.**



TOP PAINTING: A gift (to weather the storm) part 2

LEFT: A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2

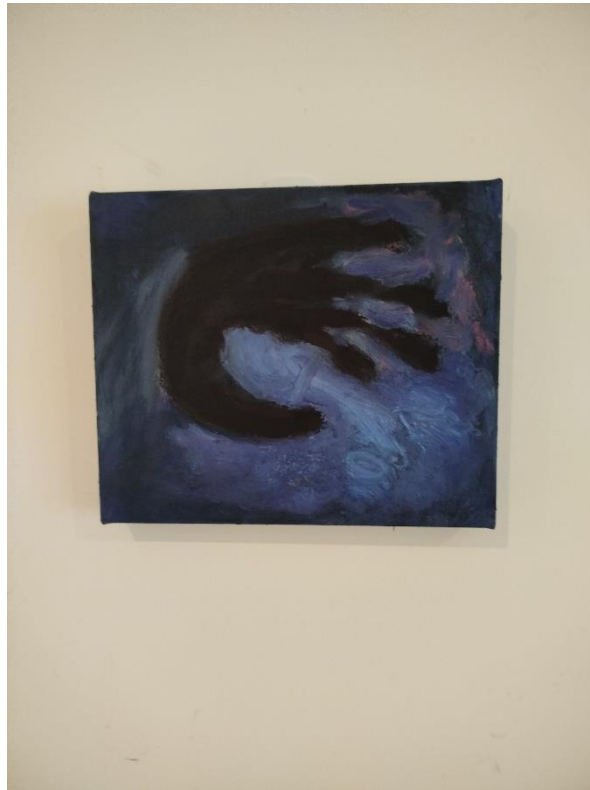
RIGHT: Courage

UPDATE 3 (GROUP SHOW)



A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2

Some major changes done to this painting since update 2. I added some light blues, created softer lines between the flowers and forms and rearranged the position of the hands. I also decided to change the acrylic painted hands to black ochre dry pigment. I feel this works with the materials I am currently using for this show. Still working on this painting. It still needs a ton of work. Materials used at this stage of the painting is Ugu powder, West African indigo pigment, black ochre, oil stick and acrylic paint.



A gift (to weather the storm) part 2

Decided to make the colour more muted and deeper in tone than was previously seen in the last update. I was looking at update 2 again and it looked quite great then. Wondering if I made the right choice to change it. However, painting is all about taking risks and not being afraid to do so. Let us see how this painting ends up. Oil stick, black ochre pigment and West African indigo pigment used at this stage of the painting.



May it strengthen you when your spirit is weary

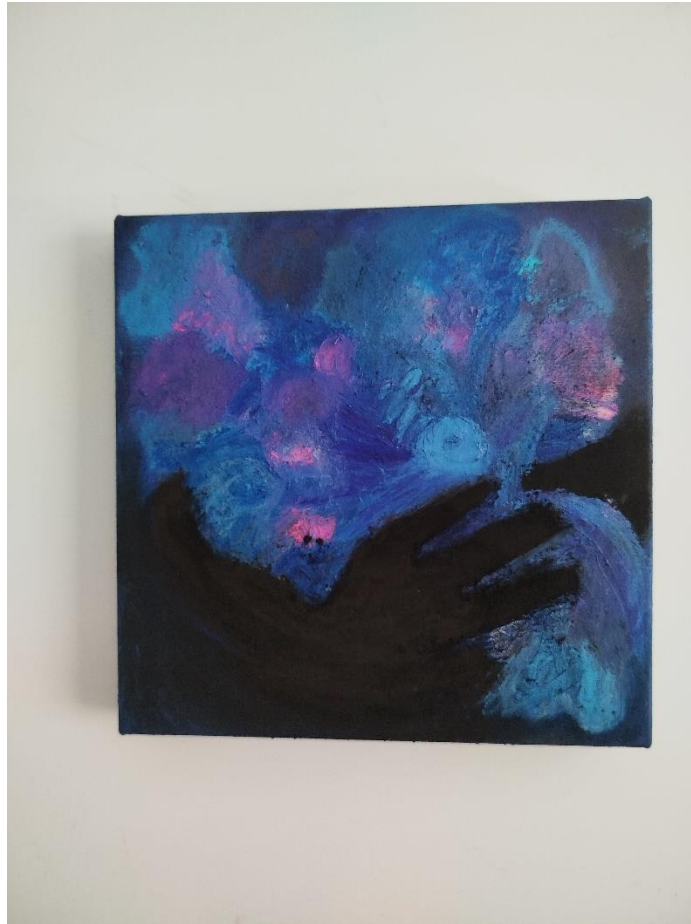
Extremely happy with this painting. The base is acrylic paint. I then added some Ugu powder to acrylic binder and brushed it over the acrylic painted background. Once dried I began creating my image. I do not think I will be changing this painting from how it is now. Everything feels right about it. Acrylic paint, acrylic binder, Ugu powder, black ochre, West African indigo pigment, Ylnmn blue pigment and oil stick at this stage of the painting.



Courage

Not much has changed in this painting since update 2. I just added white to the stem of the flowers. I added various blues to give more depth to the flowers. I have also added Ugu powder and West African indigo pigment to the flowers. Oil stick, Ugu powder, black ochre and West African indigo pigment used at this stage of the painting. I do not think I will make any more changes to this painting after this.

UPDATE 4 (GROUP SHOW)



A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2

Just a quick update. I decided to add more colour and more defined forms. There is still a softness, but the flower forms are more visible. It looks and feels better than in the previous update, but it is still not where I want it to be yet. I also might change the positioning of the fingers.

UPDATE 5(GROUP SHOW)



New painting I am working on the left and **A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2** on the right. As you can tell a lot of changes have been made. It is still not there yet, but it is on the right track. I have worked more on the hands, and I am happy with the placement. I have added more bolder lines, forms and colour. However, some of that is going to get concealed. I think as you have seen my updates you would have noticed that there is this process of concealing and revealing that is happening. Where elements are added, and then partly concealed and certain elements are left to be revealed. This happens numerous times until it gets to a place where it sings. In a way there is this visual negotiation happening. It is also a conceptual act that mirrors the concealing and revealing that happens whilst we as humans navigate space. We conceal and reveal aspects of ourselves, and this is particularly true within the black experience.

This will also be the last making update for all the paintings. I will show you the final results at the end.

UPDATE (FOR GROUP SHOW)

I am going to be adding a poem I have written as part of what I am presenting at the group show **The secret life of plants**. I feel it suits the body of work and gives some context to the paintings in a poetic way. I usually do a poem and a prelude text for my solo shows. This will be the first time I am presenting a poem in a group show setting.

AND SHE APPEARED AT YOUR SIDE (FREEDOM)

And that day you called out to the void
You called out to the sea beside you
And to the moon above you
You called out to distant realms
And she appeared at your side
Like an apparition

She placed a handful of flowers
Within your palm
And said
Keep this near
Pull it within the chambers of your heart
Guard its light
May it strengthen you
When your spirit is weary

OCTOBER 11

Went to drop my paintings off at the Melonie Roger gallery for the group show **The secret life of plants**. Spent some time with Melainie figuring out the arrangement of the paintings and how we were going to present the poem on the wall. Photographs from the day.



Unwrapping and leaning the paintings on the wall before figuring out the arrangement.



Now arranging the paintings. The printed poem on the paper is a visual stand in for where the poem could possibly go. We decided to go with vinyl straight on the wall in a smaller scale. Mirroring the size of the paintings.

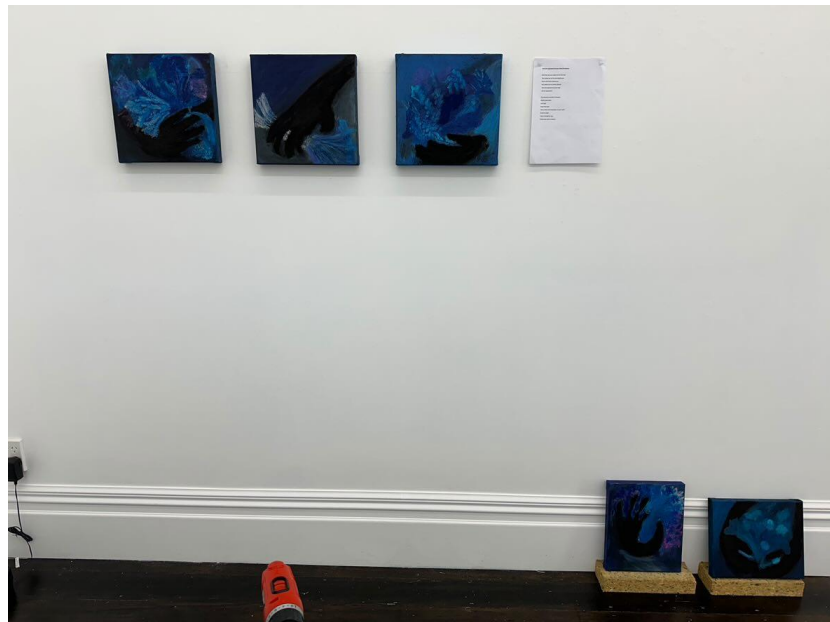




Melanie came up with this arrangement for the paintings. I feel this arrangement is quite beautiful.

Installation day!!!

Photo from Melainie sent to me when she was installing the work. I was not present at the time. We decided to go with these set of three paintings instead of the initial five due to space as it is a group show. The poem is still a stand in at this point of the installation whilst waiting for the vinyl to be printed. The amazing Phillip took charge of the logistics for getting the poem onto the wall such as, the fonts, colour, printing etc. Truly grateful.



FINAL WORKS (THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS)

Five of the paintings are still part of the group show and are listed on the gallery site. However, three were only exhibited due to space. **Courage, May it strengthen you when your spirit is weary** and **A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2** are the paintings that were exhibited. Will share installation images in the next studio pondering as the show is still going on. Images courtesy of Melanie Roger gallery.



A gift (to know you're not alone) part 2

Acrylic paint, oil stick, Ugu powder, black ochre pigment and West African indigo pigment
12x12 inches
2024



May it strengthen you when your spirit is weary

Acrylic paint, acrylic binder, black ochre pigment, Ugu dried powder, West African indigo pigment, Ylmn blue pigment and oil stick

12x12 inches

2024



Courage

Oil stick, black ochre pigment, Ugu powder and West African indigo pigment
12x12 inches

2024



In times of doubt

Oil stick, black ochre pigment, Ugu powder and West African indigo pigment
10x12 inches
2024



A gift (to weather the storm) part 2

Oil stick, black ochre pigment, Ugu powder and West African indigo pigment
10 x12 inches
2024

P.S. I decided to turn the painting around to portrait instead of how it was landscape during the making of it. It feels more emotive this way. What do you think?

HIGHLIGHT



Super honoured to be part of the triennial exhibition **Aotearoa Contemporary** at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki with incredible artists. The whole team is amazing. The exhibition officially opened on July 6. Installation shots by photographer Joanna Wright courtesy Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki .



Yoruba Woman (year 2031)

Garden (midnight)

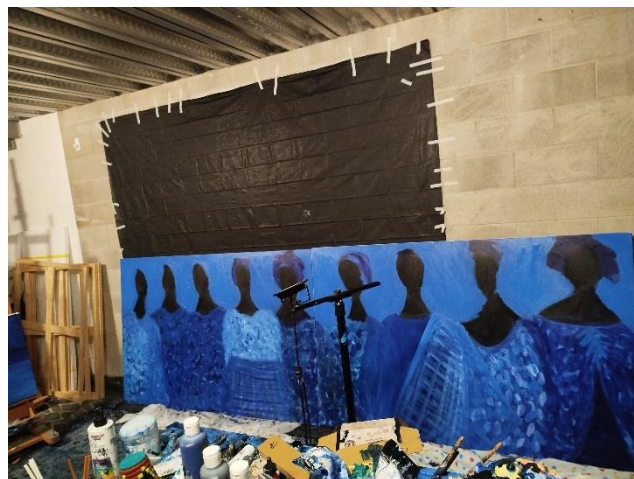
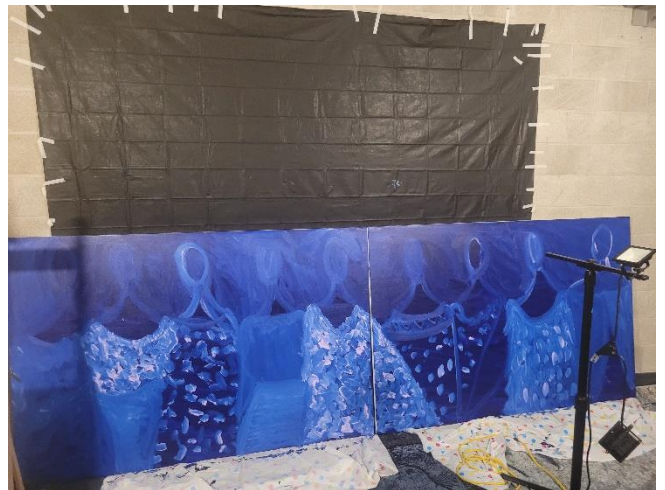
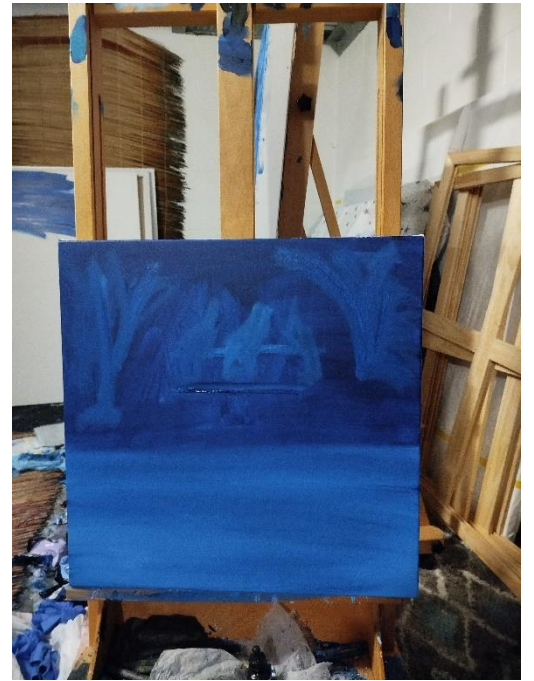
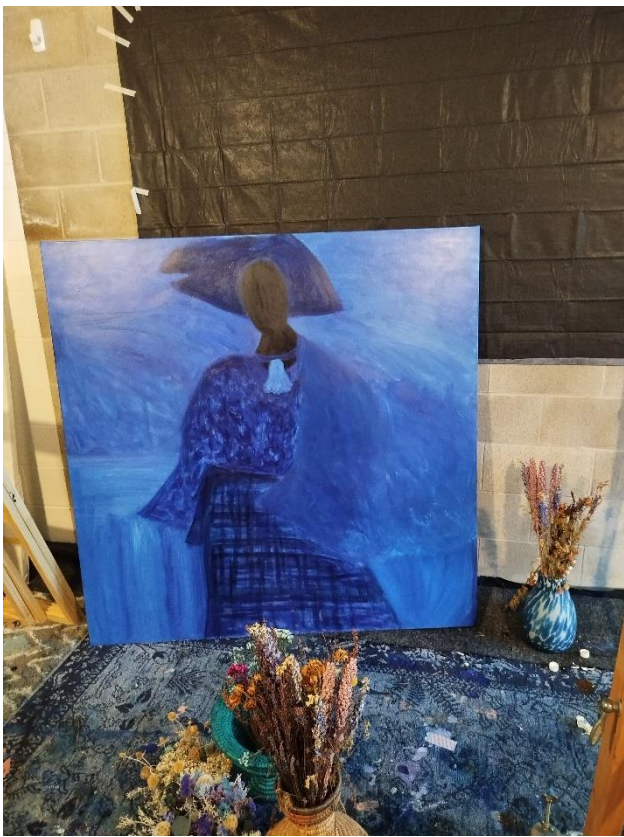


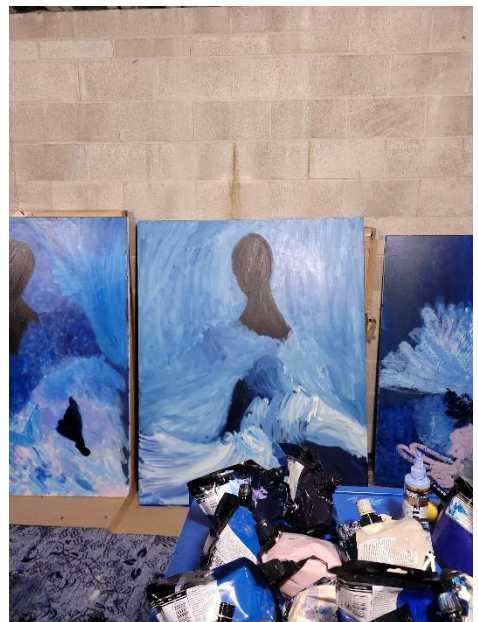
Artists, seers, writers, poets, healers...

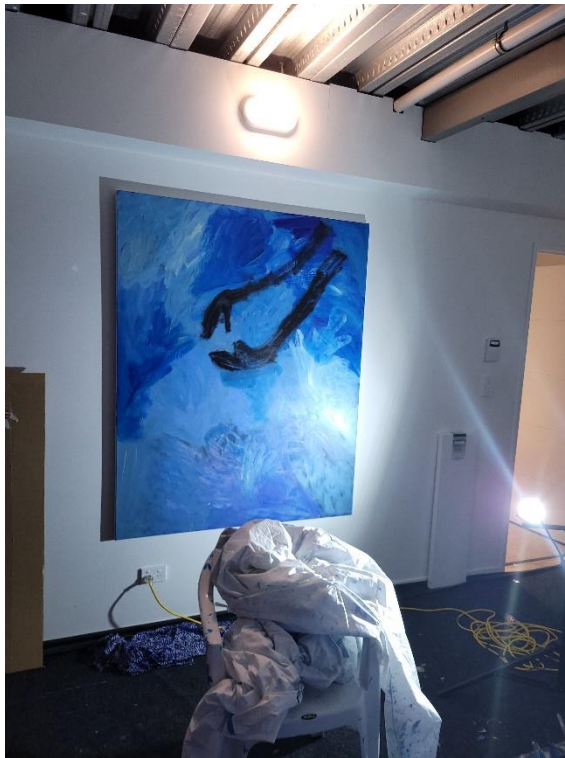
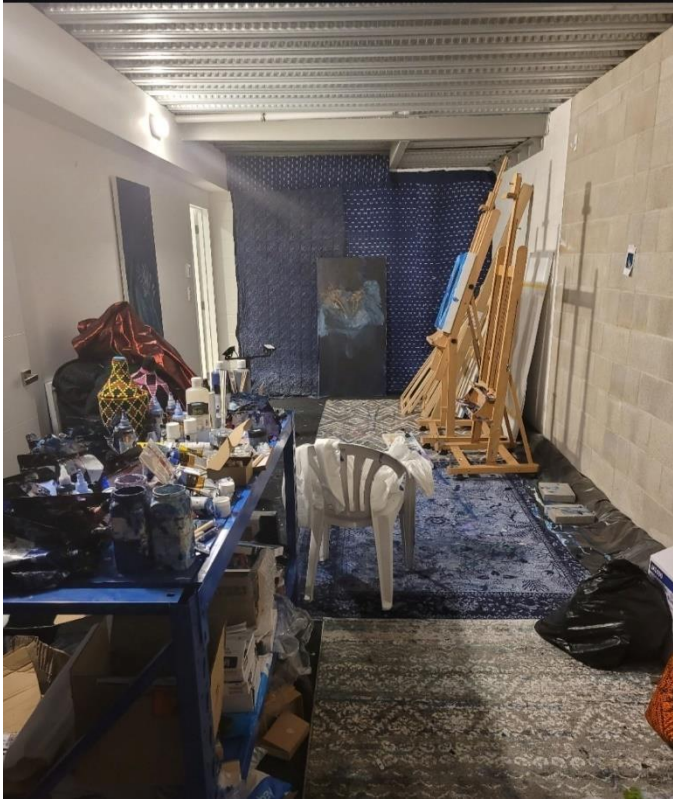
RANDOM STUDIO SHOTS (during the making of various exhibitions and art fairs)













See you for the next studio ponderings in December!!!
Hope you enjoyed reading the first volume. If you have any questions
or just want to say hello my email is ruthige3@gmail.com
Have an amazing day. Take care.



