

# TIWANI CONTEMPORARY

Sikelela Owen: *Where My Gaze Falls*

27 September 2024 – 11 January 2025



Sikelela Owen, *Boys In The Park (Eli & Kaiden)*, 2024 | Oil on Canvas | 160 x 200 cm | 63 x 78 3/4 in | SOW 005

We are delighted to welcome and present recently elected Royal Academician, artist, Sikelela Owen RA, to her first solo exhibition in Lagos and on the African continent.

Owen coheres a loving eye on family intimacies and connection in her paintings, of which her gestural style, softly, and atmospherically transposes the patina of her own youthful experiences and memories with her present sightlines on her growing children, family and friends, of whom she captures at leisure, play, downtime at home, or at excursions in the outdoors.

*Where My Gaze Falls* pays attention to the nature and spirit of communion, particularly the familial and sociocultural events that underpin and shape our everyday encounters. Alongside the influence of 19th century Impressionist painters such as Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), Édouard Manet (1832-1883), and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) who were capturing the conditions of new urban life and leisure in turn of the century France, Owen recollects the relative independence, ease and freedom of being outdoors during holidays spent with family in Zimbabwe and Jamaica. Her young son's growth and flourishing friendships, inquisitiveness and exploration correlate with another earlier period in her life

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facilitating and witnessing the small transformations and learning of pre-teen and adolescent charges at summer camp in Markham, Virginia, United States.

Owen and her partner's personal milestone of becoming parents on the onset and during the Covid 19 pandemic is another present reference— joyous and full of learning, during a period marked by great loss, isolation, and restricted access to public space. Each subsequent lift of the restrictions renewed a sense of common rights to green space for all to enjoy, of which municipal parks are a regular meeting point for not only Owen and her family and friends, but countless others who don't have homes with gardens.

## Biography

Sikelela Owen previously studied at Chelsea College of Art and Design (2006). She makes loose figure paintings that are based on friends, family and people of interest.

Depicted in moments of leisure, there is a prevailing insouciance that harks back to early modern painting of the 19th century, which championed leisurely pursuits of the new middle classes born of industrial capital wealth. Yet there is also an exoticism to Owen's work, as predominantly black figures enact everyday rites amongst family and friends.

Undefined landscapes suggest foreign climes by means of electric, monochromatic under painting, and figures cast shadows across the picture plane. Though it is not the main drive of the artist, these subtly intimate paintings allude to a complex history of the modern to post-modern age, through an intelligent combination of adopted vernaculars.

Recent exhibitions include: *Soundscapes*, Dulwich Picture Gallery London, UK (group - 2024); *The Air is Thick with Love*, Taymour Grahne Projects, London, UK (solo - 2023); *Eden*, James Freeman Gallery, London, UK (group - 2022); *Intimacy*, Taymour Grahne Projects, London, UK (group - 2022); *Reclaiming the Nymph: A Force of Nature*, Gillian Jason Gallery, London, UK (group - 2022); *Steady Love*, Taymour Grahne, London, UK (solo - 2021); *Sikelela Owen*, James Freeman Gallery, London, UK (solo - 2021); *Laying Eyes*, with Sola Olulode, Alessandro Albanese Gallery, Milan, Italy (group - 2021); *Together*, James Freeman Gallery, London, UK (solo - 2020); *Supper, Sleep and Sorrows*, LdM Gallery, Florence, Italy (solo - 2020); *Sikelela Owen*, James Freeman Gallery, London, UK (solo - 2019); *Muse*, James Freeman Gallery, London, UK (group - 2018); *Love, Eat, Sleep, Repeat*, HSBC Canada Place, London, UK (solo - 2017); *100 Painters of Tomorrow*, Beers Gallery, London, UK (group - 2015); *Good Figures*, The Mall Gallery, London, Jerwood Space, West Sussex, UK (group - 2015); *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Gesso Arts Space, Vienna, Austria (group - 2015).