

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S COLLABORATE WITH EFIE GALLERY, DUBAI, TO PRESENT *MATERIAL EARTH*

A DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABILITY, MATERIALITY AND WASTE

FEATURING THE GHANAIAN ARTISTS
EL ANATSUI | YAW OWUSU | ISSHAQ ISMAIL

28 APRIL TO 13 MAY 2022

- Christie's are collaborating with Efie Gallery, Dubai, to present an exhibition of three pioneering Ghanaian artists, El Anatsui, Yaw Owusu, and Isshaq Ismail
- The exhibition offers an artistic dialogue that traces the legacy of two generations of contemporary Ghanaian art
- El Anatsui and Yaw Owusu both transform everyday materials to create works of complex beauty, while Isshaq Ismail is known for dynamic, grotesque portraits
- The exhibition will offer viewers the first opportunity in Europe to view a new series of wooden sculptures by El Anatsui
- Ten works will be on display at Christie's King Street from 28 April to 13 May 2022



London – Christie's will present *Material Earth*, an exhibition in collaboration with Efie Gallery. Founded in 2021 and based in Dubai, Efie Gallery's programme focuses on art from Africa with an emphasis on West Africa. *Material Earth* showcases the work of three pioneering Ghanaian artists: El Anatsui, Yaw Owusu and Isshaq Ismail. These artists have each established their own distinctive visual languages. El Anatsui has emerged as one of the world's foremost contemporary sculptors while Isshaq Ismail is internationally renowned for his portraits that manipulate the

human figure and question our sense of identity. Born in 1992, Yaw Owusu is a young artist who, like El Anatsui, reconstitutes upcycled materials including coins to create rich, shimmering abstractions. The exhibition, *Material Earth*, seeks to stimulate the current global dialogue on sustainability, materiality and waste. The viewer is invited to consider the materials that contribute to the complex beauty envisioned in the work of Anatsui and Owusu. When arriving at Isshaq Ismail's grotesque figures, the context within which they are viewed intends to focus viewers on how environmental waste in the world can be seen as a reflection of ourselves.

Isabel Millar, Specialist, Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie's: *"Christie's is thrilled to collaborate with Efie Gallery, a recently established gallery based in Dubai, on a focused presentation of three Ghanaian artists. El Anatsui's visionary sculptures incorporate found materials to create shimmering, abstract installations and his influence can be seen in the work of Yaw Owusu. Owusu's richly textured wall-sculptures use the Ghanaian 'pesewa' coin to create sumptuous, yet politically charged pieces that question the origins of value. Verging on abstraction, Isshaq Ismail's bold portraits explore ideas of contemporary beauty. We are honoured to stage an exhibition that will show the breadth of these three artists' work and engage in a dialogue on upcycling through art."*

Kwame Mintah, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Efie Gallery: *"We at Efie gallery are excited to showcase in Europe for the first time by way of a unique collaboration with historic institution Christie's. Following our successful debut exhibition in 2021 and our ongoing El Anatsui solo exhibition *Shard Song* in Dubai, we strive to present art from Africa at the highest levels. Thus, the presentation of *Material Earth* in Christie's head office in London seeks to continue in this vain. This exhibition will present works by internationally revered artist El Anatsui, alongside pioneering painter Isshaq Ismail and fast-rising sculptor Yaw Owusu. The works on display will include work from El Anatsui's newest series of wooden sculptures that are yet to be shown in Europe. Ultimately, *Material Earth* seeks to contribute to the current global dialogue on sustainability, materiality and waste, inviting the viewer to question the transition of a natural world into a material one, due to environmental waste."*



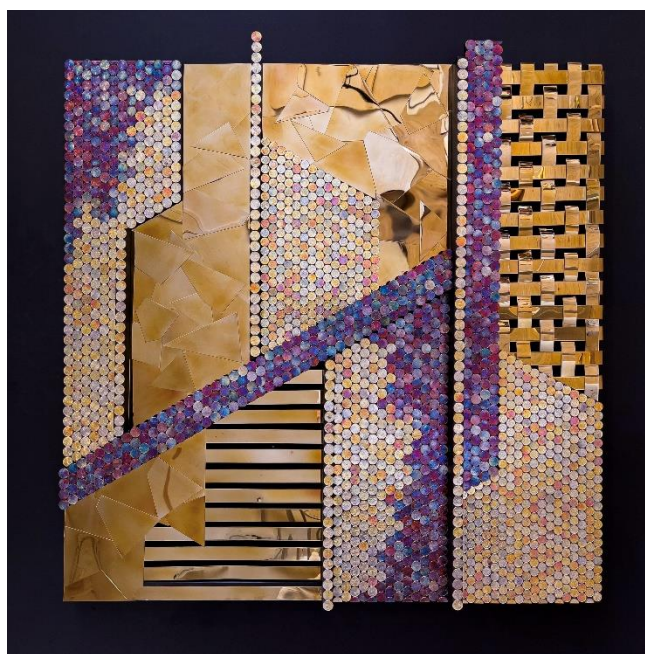
El Anatsui

In the 1970s, Anatsui engaged with clay but made a lasting return to wood as a medium the following decade. While he states that his work with wood started as a way of keeping alive some of the traditions he grew up with, the work is unquestionably contemporary: his exploration of the expressive qualities of the chainsaw in his wood works dispels preconceptions of the traditional West African wood sculptor. Mining the detritus of commercial products became a way for El

Anatsui to delve into the complicated histories with which he was working. Having stumbled across a bag of bottle caps in the Nsukka countryside, he began to explore the aesthetic and conceptual properties of these objects. Indeed, spirits including whiskey were a key commodity used by Europeans to trade with in 19th century West Africa, a notorious period of commodification taken to its most horrifying extremes. With the help of studio assistants, he developed mastery over the medium, allowing him to work on a monumental scale. His development of a multitude of techniques to treat the bottle caps —specific ways of crushing, folding, twisting and cutting them to form vast arrays of patterns, motifs and textures—has created an inimitable aesthetic vocabulary. He also adopts a non-prescriptive approach to the display of his sculptures, encouraging others to arrange or drape them without instruction, insisting that we consider the works as organic and changing over time.

Isshaq Ismail

Isshaq Ismail creates vivid and dynamic portraits which explore notions of the grotesque. Despite being portraits, the works often verge on the abstract: bold form and raw feeling are favoured over a realistic figurative rendering. There is an urgency to the way the paint is applied to the canvas and the textures are richly layered and applied thickly. The resulting portraits are wildly expressive and boldly coloured. The appeal of Ismail's figures lies in his distinctly brash and unapologetic style and his ability to create a searing impression through the feelings and emotions his figures convey.



Yaw Owusu

Yaw Owusu creates glittering large-scale wall sculptures. One of his key materials is the 'pesewa' coin, a piece of loose change that he uses to make gleaming fields of abstract pattern. First circulated in Ghana in 2007 in an attempt to combat the country's rising inflation, the copper coins have almost no financial value today, despite having been deemed the saviour of the country's economy at the time. An important dimension of Owusu's practice is that he had to negotiate with Ghana's banks in order to acquire the coins. Owusu insists that this difficult bureaucratic process is a crucial conceptual element of the work, and of equal importance to the physical sculpture. The coins themselves are treated using a variety of methods to chemically alter their surface: chemical compounds such as vinegar and salt are applied, changing the colouration and texture of the metal to create vivid chromatic effects. In his work, Owusu plays with the idea of alchemy and explores notions of value as well as addressing politics on local and global levels.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Efié Gallery

Efié Gallery is a contemporary art gallery located in Dubai specialised in the promotion of artists from Africa, both within the continent and the diaspora, with a particular focus on artists ranging from West Africa. The gallery represents both mid-career and established artists and supports the sharing of their works in the Middle East, creating a unique platform for collaboration and exchange between the two regions. This platform for collaboration goes beyond the mere exhibition of artists from Africa, rather an artist studio for residency programmes caters for both the gallery's artists and local artists, presenting itself as the active site for said collaboration.

Efié Gallery's mission is threefold, embedded in the notions of artist promotion, protection and preservation. In its approach, the gallery is focused on building strong relationships with artists to appropriately represent and shape a narrative bound to their artwork and the vision they have for this artwork.

The mezzanine hosts a record gallery which exhibits rare and important vinyl records from around the world. Through the exhibition of records, the gallery seeks to highlight the intersection of art and music, ultimately allowing for a holistic celebration of the Arts. The record gallery also offers an intimate space where visitors can enjoy a relaxed environment, serving an assortment of speciality bites and beverages.

Efié Gallery was founded by Valentina Mintah, Kobi Mintah and Kwame Mintah.

About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert live and online auctions, as well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's offers a full portfolio of [global services](#) to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, with flagship [international sales hubs](#) in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It also is the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai).

Christie's [auctions](#) span more than [80 art and luxury categories](#), at price points ranging from \$200 to over \$100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvador Mundi*, 2017), for a single collection sale (the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller, 2018), and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' *Rabbit*, 2019).

Christie's [Private Sales](#) offers a seamless service for buying and selling art, jewellery and watches outside of the auction calendar, working exclusively with Christie's specialists at a client's individual pace.

Recent innovations at Christie's include the groundbreaking sale of the first NFT for a digital work of art ever offered at a major auction house (Beeple's *Everydays*, March 2021), with the unprecedented acceptance of cryptocurrency as a means of payment. As an industry leader in digital innovation, Christie's also continues to pioneer new technologies that are redefining the business of art, including the creation of viewing and bidding experiences that integrate augmented reality, global livestreaming, buy-now channels, and hybrid sales formats.

Christie's is dedicated to advancing [responsible culture](#) throughout its business and communities worldwide, including achieving sustainability through net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and actively using its platform in the art world to amplify under-represented voices and support positive change.

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