

## Adjani Okpu-Egbe Wins the Inaugural Ritzau Art Prize

The International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) and 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair are delighted to announce the inaugural recipient of the Ritzau Art Prize, Cameroonian painter and installation artist Adjani Okpu-Egbe (b. 1979), whose raw, expressive art investigates African colonial history and political activism. Due to restrictions brought on by COVID-19, the prize announcement originally scheduled for May 7, 2020 at The Caldwell Factory in New York will be made online today on 1-54.com and @154artfair. A special event for the artist will take place during the 2020 edition of 1-54 London, scheduled October 8 to 11.

Beginning in 2020, and over a three-year, annual cycle, the Ritzau Art Prize will provide global visibility, professional development, and career enhancing residencies in New York City to three promising visual artists from the African continent. The prize was initiated by ISCP in collaboration with 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and is funded by Tauck Ritzau Innovative Philanthropy.



Adjani Okpu-Egbe, *Takumbeng's Creed, Ambazonian Fortress* (Diptych), 2019, mixed media on wooden door panels. 74.8 x 59.8 x 1.6 in. (200 x 152 x 4 cm). Image courtesy of the artist

“Mr. Okpu-Egbe’s sensitive, politically charged work unfolds a range of issues, and we are delighted he is the inaugural recipient,” said Colleen Ritzau Leth, Vice President at Tauck Ritzau Innovative Philanthropy. “The contemporary African art scene is vibrant and expansive, and the creation of the prize builds on a commitment at our foundation to provide young African artists with cross cultural opportunities and increased exposure to the international art community.”

Added Leth: “Art, and especially in this uncertain time, brings people together, and we look forward to celebrating his extraordinary art practice this October in London.”

Afro-Expressionist Okpu-Egbe, using a sensitive and energetic visual language that incorporates autobiography, explores the realm of social justice movements. His paintings and works on found objects address themes such as the complex legacy of colonialism in his native Cameroon, the self-declared state of Ambazonia, and beyond.

Okpu-Egbe will participate in ISCP’s arts residency program from October to December, 2020. He will benefit from 24-hour access to a private studio, participation in the program’s well attended Open Studios, meetings with visiting critics, opportunity to speak about his art and practice in an ISCP public talk, and field trips alongside 34 peers from at least 25 different countries at any given time, among other benefits. ISCP’s residencies focus on building community and professional discourse among residents. With an open-door policy and monthly events including lunches, internal critiques, and gallery walks, residents are provided a space and platform to share their work. After leaving the residency, Okpu-Egbe will join an even larger network of over 1,450 ISCP alumni in over 85 countries.

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The artist was competitively selected by the 2020 inaugural cycle of distinguished contemporary African artists and specialist jurors: Omar Berrada, writer, curator, and director of Dar al-Ma’mûn; Adrienne Edwards, Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance at the Whitney Museum

of Art; and Olu Oguibe, artist. An open call took place with the criteria that applicants be visual artists whose work is exhibited at 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair's New York edition in 2020. Factors considered in the jurying process included excellence of work and potential for career impact on the awarded artist and their greater networks.

The shortlisted artists for the 2020 Ritzau Art Prize are Anjel (Boris Anje), represented by Out of Africa Gallery, and Sungi Mlengeya, represented by Afriart Gallery.

#### About Adjani Okpu-Egbe

Adjani Okpu-Egbe (born 1979, Kumba, Cameroon) lives and works in London. Okpu-Egbe's work investigates African colonial history and political activism reflective of and transcending Southern Cameroon's Ambazonian movement through intersectional themes of feminism, patriarchy, and archeology among others. Okpu-Egbe often paints on found materials, leveraging their power to serve as metaphors for the larger topics around global social justice that he highlights throughout his practice. Noteworthy group exhibitions include *Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art and *The Underdog*, Somerset House, London. He has had solo shows at Sulger-Buel Gallery, London; The Fourth Wall Gallery, Oakland; Knight Webb Gallery, London; and Mok Space Gallery, Bloomsbury. Okpu-Egbe is represented by Sulger-Buel Gallery, London.

#### About the Ritzau Art Prize, a commitment to African artists

The Ritzau Art Prize is funded by Colleen Ritzau Leth, Vice President at Tauck Ritzau Innovative Philanthropy, a private family foundation that since 2017 has supported residencies for young, promising African artists at the Brooklyn, New York ISCP program. The Ritzau Art Prize builds on the foundation's commitment to provide artists from the continent with dynamic, immersive residencies that create visibility and advance their careers and earlier this year announced a significantly increased residency. In the past, Tauck Ritzau Innovative Philanthropy supported ISCP residencies for artists from the African continent including Younes Baba-Ali (2019), whose wry, subversive art often takes place in the public streets of North Africa; Nigerian artist Modupeola Fadugba (2018), whose affecting paintings and works on paper explore issues of identity representation and access; and Kiluanji Kia Henda (2017), a self-taught Angolan artist and recipient of a sculptural commission on view during the 2019 edition of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair in London.

#### About Colleen Ritzau Leth

Colleen Ritzau Leth is a specialist in museums, cultural affairs, and international relations and has worked internationally with government and cultural organizations. She holds a B.A. in Art History from Barnard College, Columbia University; an M.A. in Art History from The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; and an M.B.A. from the University of Oxford. Together with Robin Tauck, a philanthropist and business leader, Tauck Ritzau Innovative Philanthropy invests in individuals and organizations creating bold and daring cultural responses to today's challenges. A special area of focus includes artists and thinkers active in creating cross cultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and more inclusive, welcoming societies. For more, [tripgiving.org](http://tripgiving.org)

#### About 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair

Founded by Touria El Glaoui in 2013, 1-54 is the first leading international art fair dedicated to contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora with annual editions in London, New York (since 2015) and Marrakesh (since 2018). Drawing reference to the fifty-four countries that constitute the African continent, 1-54 is a sustainable and dynamic platform that is engaged in contemporary dialogue and exchange. For more, [1-54.com](http://1-54.com)

#### About ISCP

The International Studio & Curatorial Program supports the creative development of artists and curators, and promotes exchange through residencies and public programs. Housed in a former factory in Brooklyn, with 35 light-filled work studios and two galleries, ISCP is New York's most comprehensive international visual arts residency program, founded in 1994. ISCP organizes exhibitions, events and offsite projects, free and open to all, sustaining a vibrant community of contemporary art practitioners and diverse audiences. Over 1,450 artists and curators from more than 85 countries, including the United States have undertaken residencies at ISCP. For more, [iscp-nyc.org](http://iscp-nyc.org)