

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PETER OLOYA

A Journey from Adversity to Artistry

PANGOLIN
LONDON

17th January - 2nd March 2024

Pangolin London are thrilled to introduce Peter Oloya, our extraordinary artist in residence, whose journey is as inspiring as his work. This exhibition is the culmination of his residency and features a brand-new body of work. Highlighting his remarkable talent and the profound narratives he brings to life through his art, this show resonates far beyond cultural boundaries.



Peter Oloya working at Pangolin Editions foundry, 2019

Born in Uganda in 1979, Peter Oloya was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army as a child where he endured the horrors of being a 'boy soldier'. Despite this harrowing experience, Oloya's spirit remained unbroken, and he managed to escape after being wounded in a fierce battle.

Returning to his forever-changed hometown, Oloya turned to the wisdom imparted by his grandmother who was a potter. With unwavering determination, he embraced art as a means of self-education and emotional healing. From making and selling toy cars as a child to working as a DJ, he earned the funds necessary to pursue his education, ultimately graduating from Makerere University in Fine Art. Beyond his artistic pursuits, Peter has also set up a charity supporting former child soldiers and abducted girls through drawing and sculpture.

Oloya's creative prowess spans both painting and sculpture, and he has gained acclaim through prestigious commissions and residencies. Notable among these is his sculpture *Crane*, presented by the people of

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Culture and Modernity: Phone Dress, 2021, Bark cloth and phone pieces, Unique



Bride Mask, 2023, Mixed Media, Unique

Uganda to Queen Elizabeth II at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2007. He also designed the 'African Footballer of the Year' BBC award trophy. In 2019, Oloya received the PJLF Pangolin London Sculpture Prize, allowing him to explore a new body of work delving into the modern African cultural experience. In an era marked by the waning of traditional activities in Africa, Oloya's art articulates the complex and rapidly evolving cultural responses to contemporary issues.

Living and working in Uganda, Oloya's exploration of African culture is profound, presenting himself as both a custodian of tradition, close to his Acholi roots, and a man of the modern world. This new body of work intricately weaves together elements of traditional and modern African culture, and covers themes such as modernity, ideals of beauty and the climate.

In *Bride Mask*, Oloya has incorporated mobile phone keypads into the figure's headpiece, presenting a thoughtprovoking observation on the integration of technology into modern life in Uganda. Similarly, the striking piece *Culture and Modernity: Phone Dress*, combines phone parts with traditional bark cloth, symbolizing the evolving interplay between cultural heritage and the relentless march of modernity. Adding to this, the work incorporates cowrie shells around the collar and hemline of the dress. Traditionally used for millennia as symbols of femininity, decoration, and currency, the shells create a fascinating contrast with the phone parts, the latter representing more modern forms of currency and status.

Oloya's intricate 'Gourds' bearing logos of international megabrands such as 'Coca Cola' and 'Fanta' also examine the dynamic between tradition and modernity. Originally used as vessels for water, beer, milk or honey, these gourds bear contemporary designs, serving as symbols of transformation.

A pivotal theme in Oloya's work centers on the concept of beauty. Crafted from exquisite white marble quarried in Moroto, East Uganda, the breathtaking portrait of a woman powerfully challenges traditional notions of beauty. Another work *Aspects of Beauty: Lawino* pays homage to 'the most beautiful girl in the village' - a term steeped in cultural significance. This sculpture echoes the iconic poem 'Song of Lawino' by Okot p'Bitek, 1966, which reflects on the impact of colonisation on African society.

The artist's powerful works *My Planet My Child I* and *My Planet My Child II* convey messages about our relationship with the Earth. The former depicts a figure holding a ball symbolising the earth, while the latter portrays a baby standing with a seedling growing from its hand, urging us to consider the Earth as our child, entrusted to our care, rather than thinking of the planet as 'Mother Nature' and assuming she will look after us. Oloya's art becomes a poignant commentary on the challenges faced by Africa's natural environment, emphasizing the urgent need for environmental stewardship.

Peter Oloya's exhibition opens in January 2024, with prices ranging from £500-£15,000. The show promises to be a visual and emotional journey, and offers a unique perspective on the vibrancy and diversity of Oloya's artistic expression.



Aspects of Beauty: The Mother, 2022, Marble, Unique



My Planet My Child II, 2023, Bronze

A catalogue will be available on request.

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Pangolin London would like to thank the PJLF Arts Fund and the Ruwenzori Sculpture Foundation for their unwavering support, playing an integral part in bringing this exhibition to life.