

eclectica
contemporary

Figures of Control

1
54 Contemporary
African Art Fair

Artists

Justin Dingwall

Ebenezer Samuel Akinola

Nedia Were

Johannes Phokela

Ayobola Kekere-Ekun

Figures of Control

Figures of Control brings together five artists who examine the figure through systems of containment, visibility, belief, memory and transformation. Across painting, photography and sculptural approaches to image-making, the exhibition considers how bodies and identities are constructed, regulated and disrupted through visual language.

Johannes Phokela establishes the exhibition's conceptual point of departure by reworking Lucio Fontana's Spatialist cut. Where Fontana's rupture opens onto an infinite, metaphysical space, Phokela inserts the figure into the void. Absence becomes occupied space, revelation becomes restriction. The figure is simultaneously exposed and contained, turning the modernist gesture into a meditation on borders, exclusion, history and power.

The exhibition then moves through different registers of control. Nedia Were's spirals disrupt linear time, drawing on Kenyan cosmologies to propose cycles of return and continuity. Justin Dingwall subjects the photographic image to physical intervention, using stitching to expose the ways beauty and the body are constructed and disciplined.

Ebenezer Samuel Akinola's Yoruba-inflected figures exist in states of flux, where movement and spiritual transformation resist fixed identity.

Ayobola "Zak" Kekere-Ekun extends the question into materiality. Through fabric, folding and relentless repetition, she constructs surfaces in which memory becomes physical. In Terrains of Memory, the fold operates as both structure and trace, accumulating histories of pressure, experience and transformation.

Together, the artists complicate the figure as a stable or autonomous subject. Instead, it emerges as something produced through forces that frame, contain, conceal and transform, while continually creating possibilities for resistance and reconfiguration.

Justin Dingwall



Justin Dingwall's (b. 1983, South Africa) riveting photographs challenge traditional beauty ideals. Known for his theatrical portraits, Dingwall constructs staged images noted for their surreal and fantastical elements. Dingwall studied photography at the Tshwane University of Technology. Since graduating in 2004, he has gained recognition for his work in his native South Africa and abroad.

Dingwall is particularly noted for his explorations of taboos, stigmas, and how beauty ideals are conditioned by cultural attitudes and politics, particularly in African contexts. The artist addresses albinism in a portrait series of South African model activists Thando Hopa and Sanele Xaba titled "Albus," which he began in 2014. In the whimsical "Fly by Night" series (2015–19), made during a heightened period of racial violence in South Africa, the artist tackles Black Swan Theory. The idiom refers to a surprising or unprecedented event and takes its name from the ill founded assumption that black swans didn't exist. Dingwall was the 2015 winner of the SA Taxi Foundation Art Award.

Dingwall's first solo exhibition with Eclectica Contemporary titled When I Stare at the Night Sky opened in May 2025. Dingwall was a part of Eclectica Contemporary's Main booth presentation at Investec Cape Town Art Fair 2025. In addition, Dingwall had a Solo presentation at Photo London and participated in Scope Miami in 2024.



Justin Dingwall

Voyager, 2026

Mixed Media Photography with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

86.5 x 60 cm

GBP 4,800



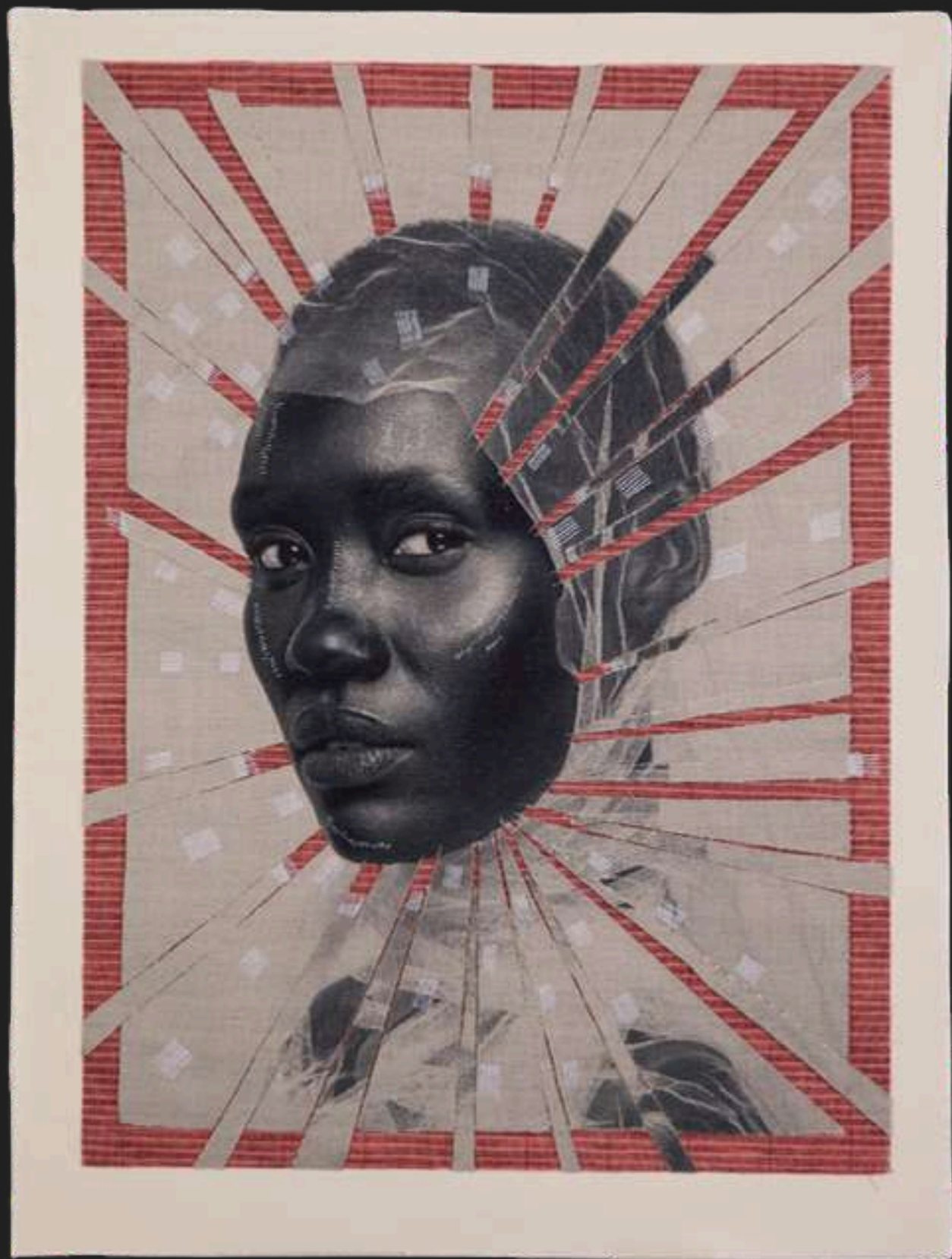
Justin Dingwall

Pathfinder, 2026

Mixed Media Photography with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

89 x 70 cm

GBP 4,950



Justin Dingwall

Nova, 2026

Mixed Media Photography with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

73 x 55 cm

GBP 4,000



Justin Dingwall

The Road Not Taken, 2026
Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching
46 x 34 cm
GBP 2,550



Justin Dingwall

Prospect, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

39 x 25 cm

GBP 1,850



Justin Dingwall

Enigmatic, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

40 x 29 cm

GBP 1,950



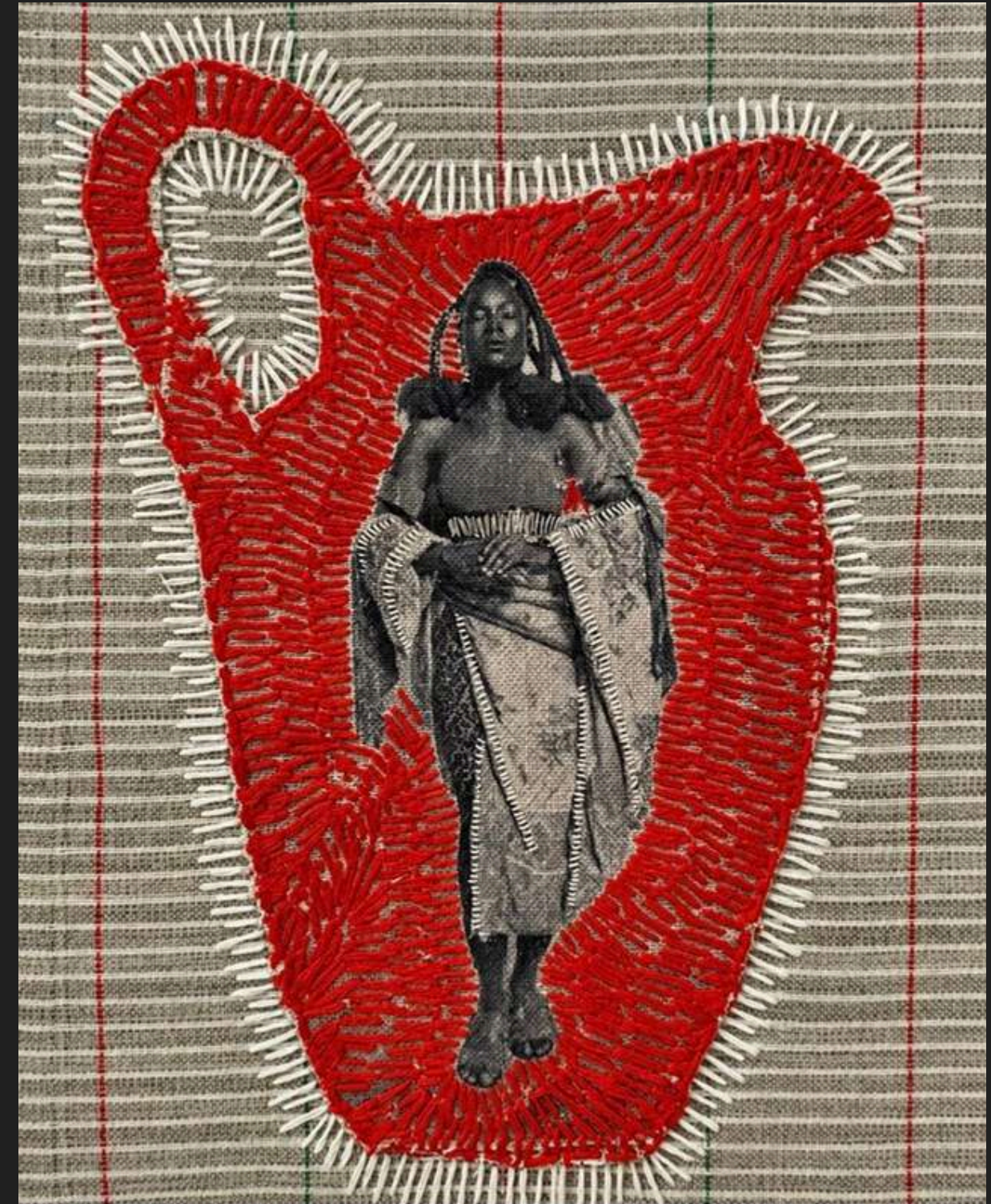
Justin Dingwall

Eye of the Beholder, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

35.5 x 26 cm

GBP 1,660



Justin Dingwall

Drop by Drop, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

31 x 23.5 cm

GBP 1,470



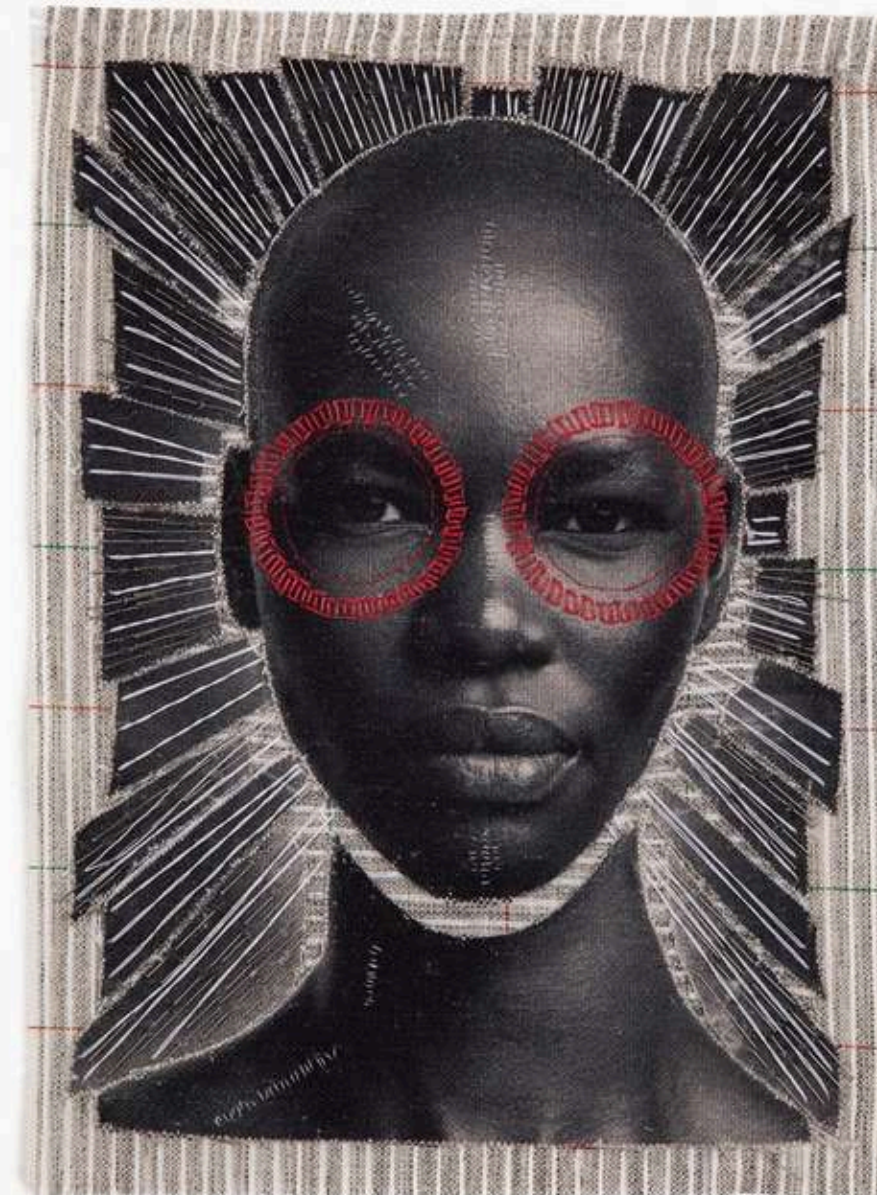
Justin Dingwall

Has the Time Come, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

35.5 x 26 cm

GBP 1,660



Justin Dingwall

Southern Sky, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

31 x 22.5 cm

GBP 1,480



Justin Dingwall

Is This a Love Letter, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

35.5 x 26.5 cm

GBP 1,680



Justin Dingwall

What Does the Future Hold, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

25 x 35 cm

GBP 1,600



Justin Dingwall

Under the Same Sun, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

25 x 32.5 cm

GBP 1,600



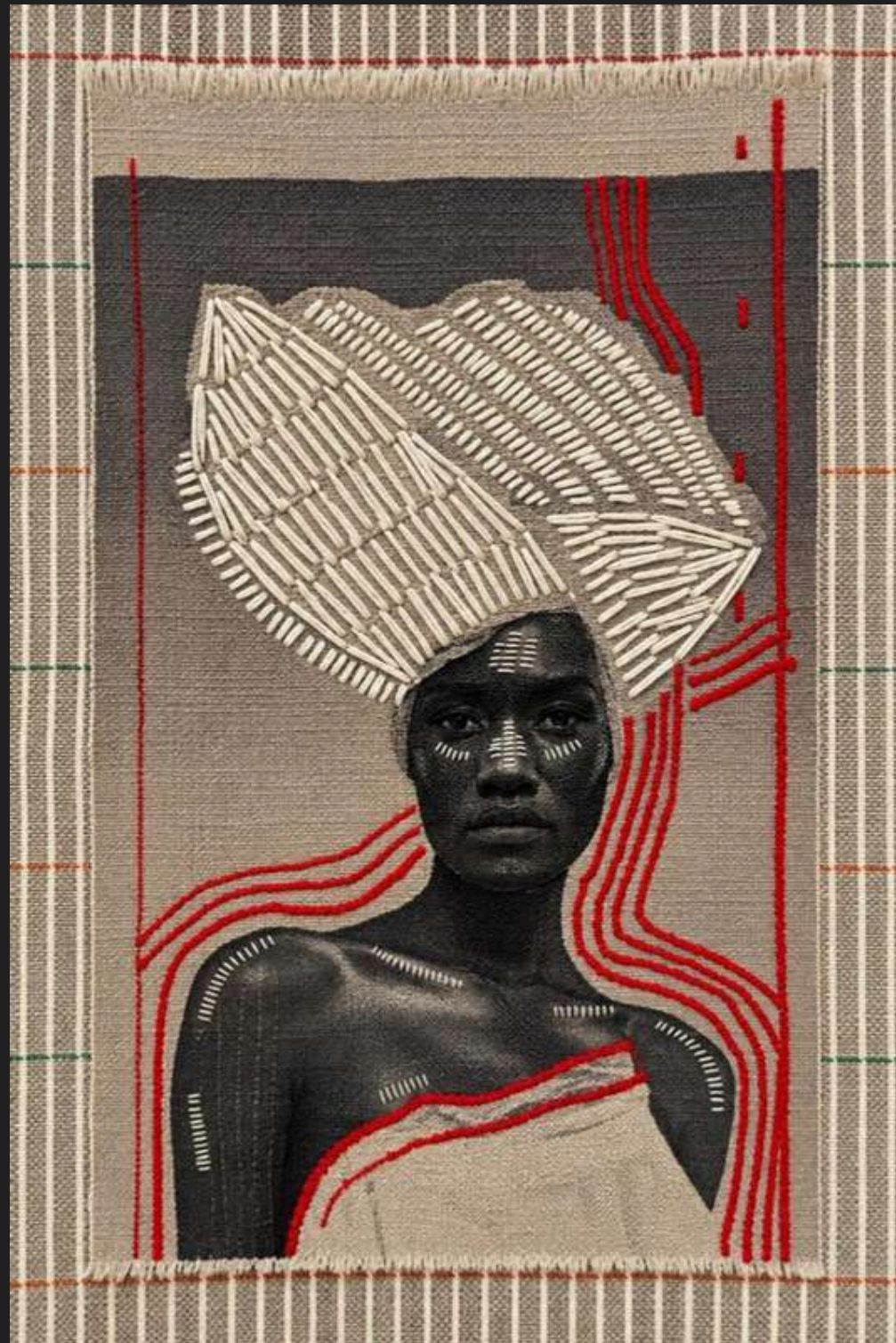
Justin Dingwall

Celestial Horizon, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

28 x 20 cm

GBP 1,350



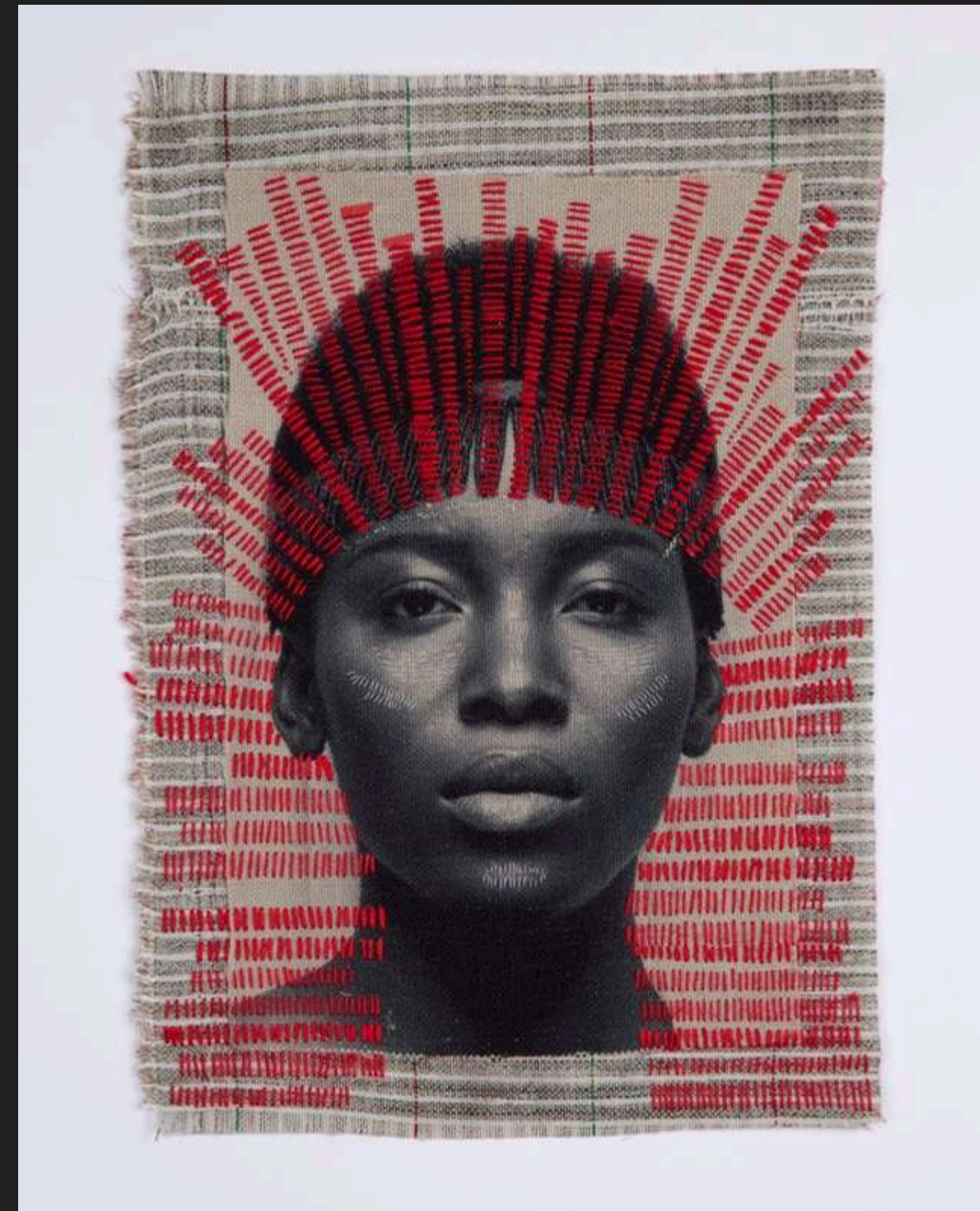
Justin Dingwall

A Moment in Time, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

30.5 x 20 cm

GBP 1,390



Justin Dingwall

Rise, 2026

Mixed Media Photography,
with Fabric and Hand-Stitching

20 x 27.5 cm

GBP 1,300

Ebenezer Samuel Akinola

Born in 1968 in Ibadan, Nigeria, Ebenezer Samuel Akinola is a leading voice in contemporary African art. He graduated at the top of his class with a Bachelor's degree in painting from the University of Benin in 1989.

Akinola's work challenges stereotypical narratives about Africa and Black culture, using his art to engage with and critique notions of race, gender, beauty, spirituality, identity, and the political landscape of modern Africa. A central theme in his work is the deliberate darkening of his subjects' faces, symbolizing strength, grandeur, sophistication, and inherent dignity.

Akinola masterfully weaves realistic and abstract elements, creating pieces rich in detail and depth. His subjects, often portrayed in portraits and figure compositions, come alive with intricate layers that draw attention to key aspects of his message. Widely recognized and celebrated, Akinola has received prestigious commissions, including portraits of former Nigerian leaders Nnamdi Azikiwe, Abdulsalami Abubakar, and Olusegun Obasanjo, which are displayed in the National Gallery of Art in Nigeria. His impact extends beyond national borders, with exhibitions in renowned venues across the United States, Belgium, Italy, Morocco, and Spain.





Ebenezer Samuel Akinola
Our Silent Guardians, 2026
Oil on Linen
48 x 69 cm
GBP 4,600



Ebenezer Samuel Akinola
The Silent Procession, 2026
Oil on Linen
54 x 70 cm
GBP 4,600



Ebenezer Samuel Akinola

Guardians of our Heritage I, 2026

Oil on Linen

83 x 100 cm

GBP 5,700



Ebenezer Samuel Akinola
Guardians of our Heritage II, 2026
Oil on Linen
76 x 101 cm
GBP 5,700

Nedia Were



Nedia Were (b. 1989, Kenya) is a self-taught contemporary visual artist who lives and works in Nairobi. Drawing from childhood influences rooted in comic books, newspapers and sign painting, Were developed a distinctive figurative language centered on Black identity, representation and Afro-optimism. His practice interrogates historical Western ideals of beauty while reimagining Black subjects within lush, dreamlike environments that speak to dignity, spirituality, rebirth and self-possession.

Known for his rich use of black pigment and psychologically charged portraiture, Were creates paintings that position African figures within moments of tenderness, contemplation and quiet power. Nature functions as a recurring symbolic element in his work, reflecting transformation, fluidity and interconnectedness between the self and the environment. Influenced in part by Kerry James Marshall, Were's paintings challenge traditional art historical exclusions while contributing to broader conversations around African and Afro-diasporic visibility in contemporary art.

Were has exhibited extensively across Africa, Europe and the United States, participating in fairs and exhibitions including Florence Biennale, AKAA Paris, FNB Art Joburg, and Investec Cape Town Art Fair. In 2024, his work was included in an exhibition at the Stefan Gierowski Foundation in Poland. His work has also been featured in Vogue Magazine in relation to the "Black Excellence/Black Elegance" exhibition presented during Miami Art Week and Art Basel Miami Beach.

His works are held in notable private and corporate collections, including the RMB Collection, as well as international collections such as the New Museum collection in Berlin



Nedie Were
Avakhana I, 2026
Oil on Canvas
70 x 60 cm
GBP 3,000



Nedie Were
Avakhana II, 2026
Oil on Canvas
69 x 58 cm
GBP 3,000



Nedie Were
Avakhana III, 2026
Oil on Canvas
68.5 x 60 cm
GBP 3,000



Nedia Were
Avakhana IV, 2026
Oil on Canvas
73 x 61 cm
GBP 3,000

Johannes Phokela



Johannes Phokela is a South African artist born in Soweto in 1966. He began his formal art career in 1984 at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) Academy in Johannesburg, where he obtained a three- year diploma.

In 1987, he moved to London, where he completed a year-long foundation course at Central St. Martins: University of the Arts London before acquiring a bachelor's degree at Camberwell College of Art: University of the Arts London (1988). He then completed a master's degree at the Royal College of Art (1993) and returned permanently to South Africa in 2006.

Phokela has established a distinguished career both locally and internationally.

He played an advisory role in establishing The Bag Factory, Johannesburg (1990) and was awarded the prestigious year-long residency at Delfina Studio Trust, London (1993). He was also one of the founding members of the Gasworks Studios, London (1994 – 2005), producing studio work as well as participating in the International Residency Programme. He did volunteer work for The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1995 and led to his participation in a residency programme in Senegal through the British Council (1997). He is a recipient of the Decibel Award from the Arts Council of England (2004).

Phokela has exhibited extensively worldwide, including exhibiting 8 works at the Venice Biennale.



Johannes Phokela

Pan [Fried] I, 2026

Oil on Canvas

165 x 130 cm

GBP 19,000

Ayobola Kekere-Ekun



Ayobola “Zak” Kekere-Ekun (b. 1993) is a Nigerian-born contemporary artist living and working in South Africa. Born and raised in Lagos, she holds a BA and MA in Visual Arts from the University of Lagos and a PhD in Art and Design from the University of Johannesburg.

Working primarily with quilling and sculptural fabric-based painting, Kekere-Ekun transforms material through meticulous folding, layering and repetition. Her practice explores movement, memory, identity and transformation, considering how matter can register experience and hold traces of time.

In *Terrains of Memory*, the fold becomes a landscape, an accumulation of surfaces, pressures and gestures through which memory is continually formed and transformed. The works occupy a space between painting and sculpture, their undulating surfaces suggesting geological formations, organic structures and shifting emotional terrains.

Kekere-Ekun’s work has been exhibited internationally, including at UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles; HOFA, London; the Japan-Africa Contemporary Art Association, Yokohama; Art021, Shanghai; Arte Fiera, Bologna; and ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg. She is a recipient of the 2021 Absa L’Atelier Award, the 2025 Future Awards Prize for Art, the 2018 Future Awards Prize for Creativity, and the Dean Collection 20 St(art)ups Grant.



Ayobola 'Zak' Kekere-Ekun

Truth Nugget VI, 2026

Sculpted Fabric on Canvas

27.2 x 35.1 x 6.3 cm (Framed)

GBP 550



Ayobola 'Zak' Kekere-Ekun

Truth Nugget IV, 2026

Sculpted Fabric on Canvas

27.2 x 35.1 x 6.3 cm (Framed)

GBP 550



Ayobola 'Zak' Kekere-Ekun

Truth Nugget I, 2026

Sculpted Fabric on Canvas

24 x 29 x 6.3 cm (Framed)

GBP 500



Ayobola 'Zak' Kekere-Ekun

Truth Nugget II, 2026

Sculpted Fabric on Canvas

24 x 29 x 6.3 cm (Framed)

GBP 500

Eclectica Contemporary is a Cape Town–based gallery dedicated to contemporary artistic practices from Africa and its diaspora.

The gallery presents a dynamic program of emerging and established artists and has participated in leading international art fairs. Artists represented by the gallery have participated in major international biennials and their works are held in significant institutional collections including the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, the Rupert Museum, and the Iziko South African National Gallery, as well as major international foundations and private collections.

Through exhibitions, international presentations, and collaborations with curators and institutions, Eclectica Contemporary contributes to the global discourse surrounding contemporary African art.