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## OLU OGUNNAIKE DID I FALL HERE

Preview: Thursday 24 September, 6-8 pm  
Exhibition: 25 September - 31 October 2026

Hollybush Gardens is pleased to present *Did I fall here*, Olu Ogunnaike's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The show brings together a new body of prints, sculpture and installation, which examine what it means to construct an image or identity.

On entering the dimly lit space, viewers encounter *What are you holding onto* (2026), a wall spanning the height and width of the entrance, which reroutes the main passageway into the gallery. It holds a two-way mirror, built to the artist's height, which offers a partial image of the space beyond. Ogunnaike writes, 'you are immediately aware that you are looking into somewhere that you are not of', while on the other side, the viewer is met with their own reflection. The mirror is encased in a frame made from the lumber of a locally fallen London Plane tree. The aluminium stud wall is clad using panels of the artist's handmade version of the industrial sheet material Oriented Striated Board (OSB).

Ogunnaike considers trees as repositories of memory within the places and communities in which they grow; he often works with salvaged wood, adopting a tactile approach to probe the material's inherent past and potential future. He began to work with offcuts of wood to develop his version of OSB in 2013; the panels are carefully built up in layers using compressed fragments of ebony, walnut, rosewood and mahogany, that would otherwise be discarded. This relational process - of the composite and accumulative nature of our identities - is inextricably linked to community, labour and the transaction of exchange. Here, the reverse of the sheets, previously rendered with plaster and mud, then painted with gloss white paint, have been beaten to reveal the various species of wood that constitute the composite material underneath.

In the main space, *Empty nests* (2026) is a series of three large-scale UV prints on plywood boards, a sheathing material comprised of pine veneers often used for construction site hoarding, references the printing technique which overlays colours CMYK - (C)yan, (M)agenta, (Y)ellow and blac(K) to build a full-colour image. The three prints are made from photographs taken by Ogunnaike in Nigeria and London, and reference three generations of his family. The images, he writes, 'are a reference to what gave birth to the traits that make me whole'.

The Cyan image, *20:06 \_ 24 Feb 25 \_ Lagos*, was taken close to the birthplace of Ogunnaike's paternal grandmother in Lagos, Nigeria, and shows two men setting up a lamp in front of a concrete wall, a block of high rise flats visible behind, with a fluttering treescape in the foreground. The Magenta image *19:27 \_ Mon 17 Feb 25 \_ Warri* was taken through a car window while driving through the landscape close to his mother's place of birth in Warri, Nigeria, and captures a group of figures relaxing in front of the gates to a compound; the setting sun casts an intense magenta light through a halo of tall trees. The yellow image *19:54 \_ 13 Sep 26 \_ London* was taken at night in Brixton, close to where Ogunnaike grew up, and shows a figure sitting on a railing at the entrance to a park, illuminated by a street light in the distance. Together, the three landscapes speak to the idea of the threshold: the trees that grow outside or amongst these residential spaces as representative of the communities within.

The eight 'black' images, representing 'K', titled *More than a glimmer* (2026), form a new series of Ogunnaike's silkscreen prints on mirrored stainless steel, which are made using charcoal dust, the final material state of wood. This diaristic imagery depicts moments of the artist's daily life documented on his iPhone and often taken at night time from celebrations with friends; moments shared under and around trees, or products made of wood. In the last stage of the process, Ogunnaike carefully excavates the image by removing the fragile charcoal dust from the surface of the print. Sometimes upside down, cropped or partially obscured, the layered complexity of the image gradually reveals itself to the viewer, while the finish, which takes dust to show scenes of life, refers to the material cycle of wood as a metaphor for destruction and regeneration. Alongside these works are a series of eight *Leftovers* (2026), silhouettes of the stainless steel prints, made by dusting off the charcoal excess on the surface of the

images. Ogunnaike writes: 'All of the works are markers of a place and time that made me feel whole. Be it wholly awkward or wholly at ease, they are moments taken in and around the cities I love, with the people I love, using a material I know well.'

*Did I fall here* (2026) is a row of twelve charred wooden frames, the same size as the silkscreen prints, which together with *Leftovers* and *More than a glimmer* make up 28, the number of days in February - the artist's month of birth - and in a lunar calendar month. Placed in sequence along the floor, and on top of debris from the handmade OSB panels, the frames redirect the movement of the viewer through the space. Each is veneered with a different species of wood; through the act of burning them, Ogunnaike questions what happens when these finishes - usually used to heighten or enhance the appearance of wood - are reduced to an essence.

A *Companions* booklet published to accompany the exhibition features a newly commissioned text by Joycelyn Longdon.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Olu Ogunnaike** (b. 1986, London; lives and works in London) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Solo exhibitions include: *Fix Your Face*, Spike Island, Bristol; *A Quick Spin*, Rathbone Institute, London (both 2024); *An Enclosed Garden*, gb agency, Paris (2022); *I'd rather stand*, Museum Folkwang, Essen (2021); *CRUMBS*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux; *The Same Way You Came In?*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (both 2021); and *London Plain*, Cell Project Space, London (2020).

Selected group exhibitions include: *Blackground: murmures des mornes*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2026); *Das öffentliche Grün*, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Bochum (2026); *From The Cosmos to the Commons*, Stadtkuratin Hamburg (2025); *Reluctant Gravities*, Hollybush Gardens, London; *Communion*, Bold Tendencies, London; *Entangled Pasts, 1768-now*, Royal Academy, London; *Your Presence is a Present*, CCS Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson, New York, USA (all 2024); *Systemic Love*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2023); *To the fire next time*, Villa Arson, Nice (2023); *Testament*, Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022); *Domestic Drama*, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz (2021); *Reconfigured*, Timothy Taylor, New York (2021); *Memory Game*, Villa Lontana, Rome, Italy (2020); *Premiums Interim Projects*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (2019).

His work is held in institutional collections including Arts Council Collection, UK; CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France and Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany.

For press enquiries and further information, please contact: [grace@hollybushgardens.co.uk](mailto:grace@hollybushgardens.co.uk)

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm or by appointment.