

It Began with a Doodle; Emotions in Motion

A Retrospective Feature on Betty Acquah

Closing Reception: 5pm – 9pm

BERJ ART GALLERY

February 20th – March 20th



Berj Gallery is delighted to present "It Began with a Doodle; Emotions in Motion," a retrospective and captivating solo exhibition by acclaimed artist Betty Acquah. This retrospective celebrates Acquah's decades-long profound artistic journey, showcasing her evolution and mastery across various mediums.

From her early explorations of identity and heritage to her poignant reflections on societal change, each artwork in this exhibition echoes Acquah's unique perspective and unwavering commitment to storytelling through art. Her bold strokes and intricate compositions invite viewers into a world where the past meets the present, inviting contemplation and dialogue.

Join us as we honor Betty Acquah's remarkable contributions to the art world and celebrate her enduring legacy. As she turns 60 on March 20th, we will mark this milestone with a special closing reception in her honor. "It Began with a Doodle; Emotions in Motion" promises to inspire, provoke thought, and resonate deeply with all who experience it.

Curatorial Statement by Sally Polley

It starts with a whisper of inspiration, eagerly playing at the fingertips of those who strum music from the wind, and *desire to taste colour*. Magic; innocent and everywhere, waiting for us to take that one step...

...or brush.

Artist Betty Acquah [b. 1965], discovered this magic in 1988 on a sheet of paper, capturing the shores across her home in Cape Coast in watercolour in the daydream of a doodle. This would mark the beginning of a beautiful dance with colours and an evolution of a visual language of self-expression that would mesmerize audiences for decades.

"It began With a Doodle."—are the unassuming sentiments that recapitulate a powerful manifesto about embracing one's inner magic. Her work during and after the completion of her studies at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, from where she would obtain a First Class B.A. (Hons), would only allude to an exciting path ahead. While finding beautiful images in the spill of watercolours in hues of ochres, yellows, blues, reds and greens, during her afternoons spent at the Berj Gallery where she worked at the time, a chapter would begin to write itself out as she would return to pointillism in a manner that water would envy.

Betty Acquah proves alchemy and stuns as she further bends the lens to explore *Emotion in Motion*, breaking down her practice into the atoms of the work she produces in the movement of pointillism. One medium dissolves, the other constructs, yet both seek the same truth: *to give form to feeling, to translate the intangible into something seen, felt, and experienced*. In the realm of dance, this concept is vividly embodied, as the movement vivify a direct expression of emotional energy, from which Betty Acquah finds inspiration while documenting traditional dance culture in Ghana.

Her work easily transmutes movement to colour, capturing raw motion into a living spectrum of emotion, conveying her understanding of mastery of musicality and control. The body, in its fluidity and tension, becomes both pigment and brushstroke, sweeping across the canvas in bursts of vibrancy or settling into soft, muted stillness.

The seamless blends of watercolor gave way to pulsating dots, where motion was no longer implied by fluidity but built through precision. The women in her paintings still moved - the beacons in society she identified on her trips to the

market. Amazed by their caricature proportions of weights of a visit's shopping balanced atop their heads, she discovered the song of unsung heroes- the *Kayaye Girls* and *Market Women*. Composed of thousands of static points, turning into ribbons that whipped in synchronization in a breeze; stories of expertise, resilience, the mystery of their dreams, and colour of their personalities strung together. They vibrate with life—as if, at any moment, they might step off the canvas and into the rhythm of the world. Pointillism grounded them, placed them firmly in the present and visible in the grace of their wonder.

Through carefully placed dots of colour, she builds not only form but feeling, inviting the viewer to step closer, to experience the vibrancy, dynamism and equanimity of her subjects. In her facundity in the depiction of landscapes, a serendipitous appreciation for the neurolinguistics of colour is achieved, teleporting the audience to Biriwa Beach as it hums with stillness and expectation, at the *Crack of Dawn*. As if the ocean holds its breath before the day begins, the poetic composition of meditation on movement results in a warmth that diffuses across the skyline in ineffable beauty in a mental exhale of reality's hues. The meticulous placement of colour illuminates a world where the ocean is more than a subject; it is a storyteller, a dancer, and a keeper of secrets. Betty Acquah's memories from her mind's camera are often executed with choreographed intensity—each leaf, the wind in its silent whisper, and drop of water rendered in vibrant points of colour, effervescent with life.

This retrospective is not just an exhibition; it is a dance floor, a gathering of colour and movement, and a festivity of emotion in motion. Betty Acquah's *white glove* creates figures that do not stand still; they march, dance, and celebrate. Betty Acquah's living bodies of work speak of the fluidity of tradition and innovation, the balance of spontaneity and discipline.



Betty Acquah, a distinguished Ghanaian artist born in 1965, crafts a remarkable artistic narrative that centers on the resilience of ordinary women. Having embarked on her artistic journey at Wesley Girls' High and Holy Child Schools in Cape Coast, Betty honed her skills at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, where she achieved a First Class in the B.A. Hons (Art) Degree and later pursued an M.F.A. (Painting) Degree. Betty's unique artistic approach involves utilizing the pointillist technique in her oil and acrylic paintings, employing shadows and points to convey profound feminine themes. Her meticulous process begins with a small sketch that evolves onto the canvas, showcasing her dedication to capturing the trials, ambitions, celebrations, and triumphs of women. Betty's influence extends beyond borders, with her works featured in exhibitions across India, Japan, Nigeria, Spain, the U.K., and the U.S.A. Her global recognition was solidified by her first solo exhibition at the Pan African Festival of Arts and Music (PAFAM) in Accra and subsequent collaborations with eminent Ghanaian painters. Since July 2009, Betty has lent her artistic prowess to Berj Art Gallery, where her distinctive style and commitment to depicting the profound stories of women find resonance with audiences worldwide. Her works contribute to the gallery's rich tapestry of artistic endeavors, offering a captivating ode to the strength and spirit of ordinary women through intricate techniques and vivid storytelling.

Born, March 20, 1965. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana

EDUCATION

Wesley Girls' High School, Cape Coast, Ghana Holy Child School, Cape Coast, Ghana

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana B.A. Hons (Art) Degree - First Class

M.F.A. (Painting) Degree

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Art Course at the Tokyo School of Art (T.S.A.), Tokyo, Japan

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Worked at the Centre for National Culture, Accra, Ghana

Worked at Berj Art Gallery, Accra, Ghana

EXHIBITIONS

Solo Exhibition at PAFAM (Pan African Festival of Arts and Music), Trade Fair Grounds, Accra.

Solo Exhibition at AMAHEMA Art Gallery.

Exhibited at Nubuke Foundation in July 2009 at Rendezvous.

Participated in a four-man show with renowned Ghanaian painters Amon Kotei, Professor Ablade Glover, and Tafa Fiadzigbe.

COLLECTORS

Private Collection, United States.

Private Collection, India.

Private Collection, Japan.

Private Collection, Nigeria.

Private Collection, Spain.

Private Collection, United Kingdom

Joyce Quarshie Collection (Berj Art Gallery) Accra, Ghana



Jubilee Jubilation, 2007

Acrylic on Canvas

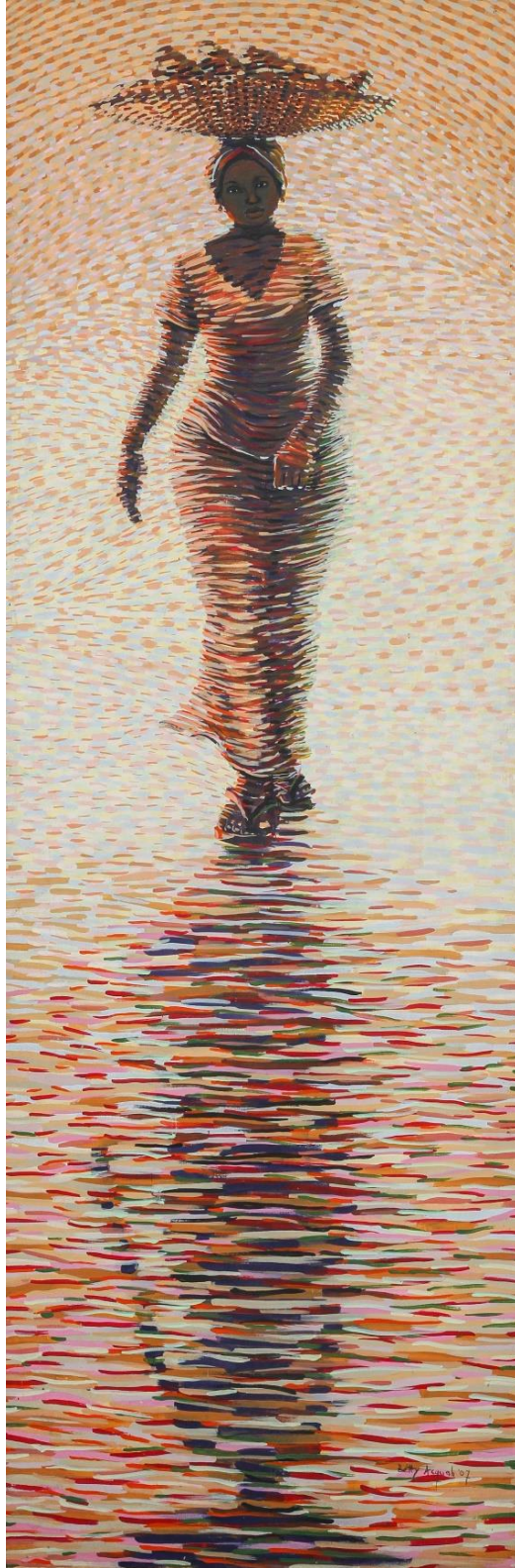
40x60 Inches



Swaying to the Rhythm, 2009

Acrylic on Canvas

40x60 Inches



In Step with Tradition, 2007

Acrylic on Canvas

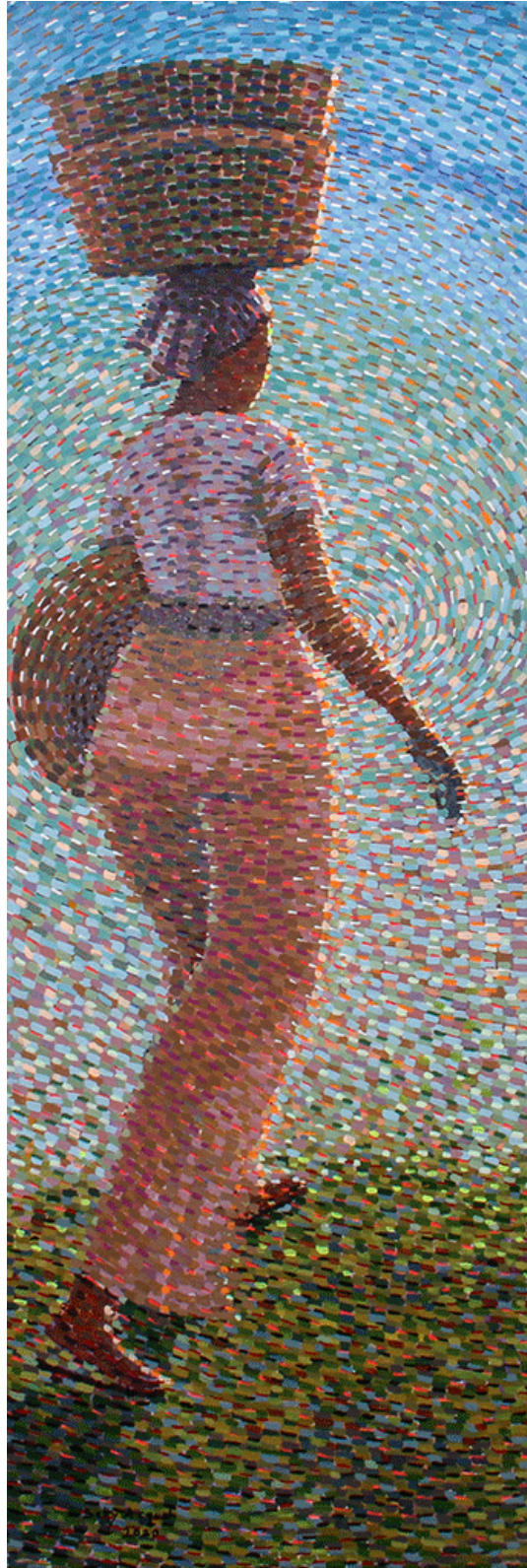
60x20 Inches



Into the Light, 2007

Acrylic on Canvas

60x40 Inches



Ideal Women II, 2020

Acrylic on Canvas

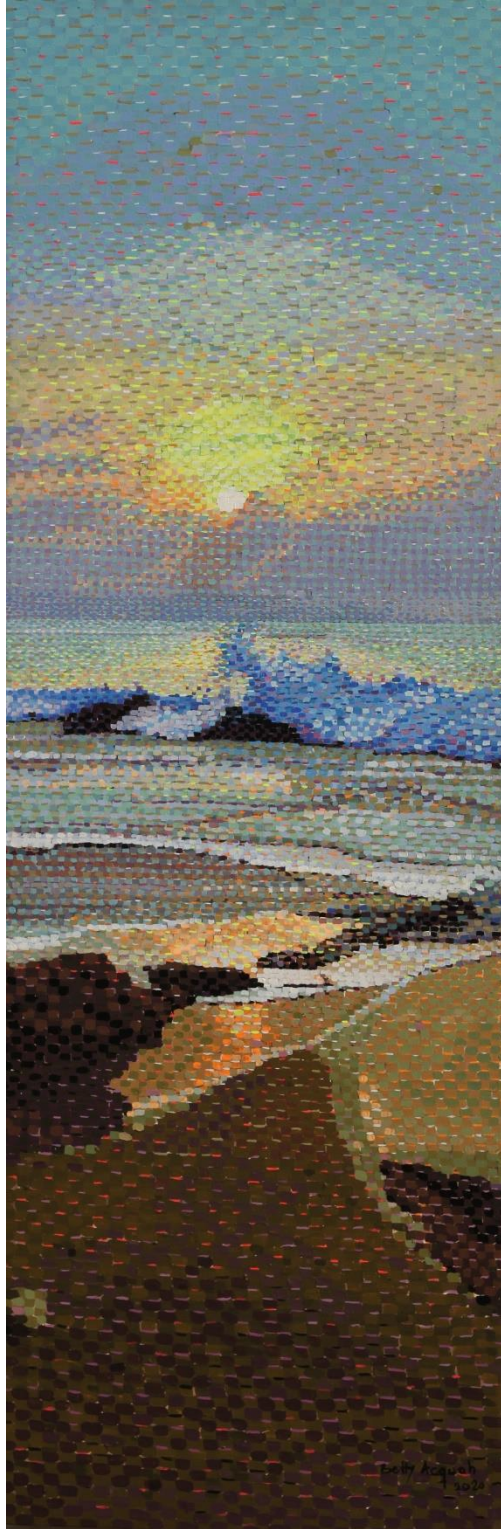
60x20 Inches



Ideal Women I, 2020

Acrylic on Canvas

60x20 Inches



Splashes at Biriwa Beach, 2020

Acrylic on Canvas

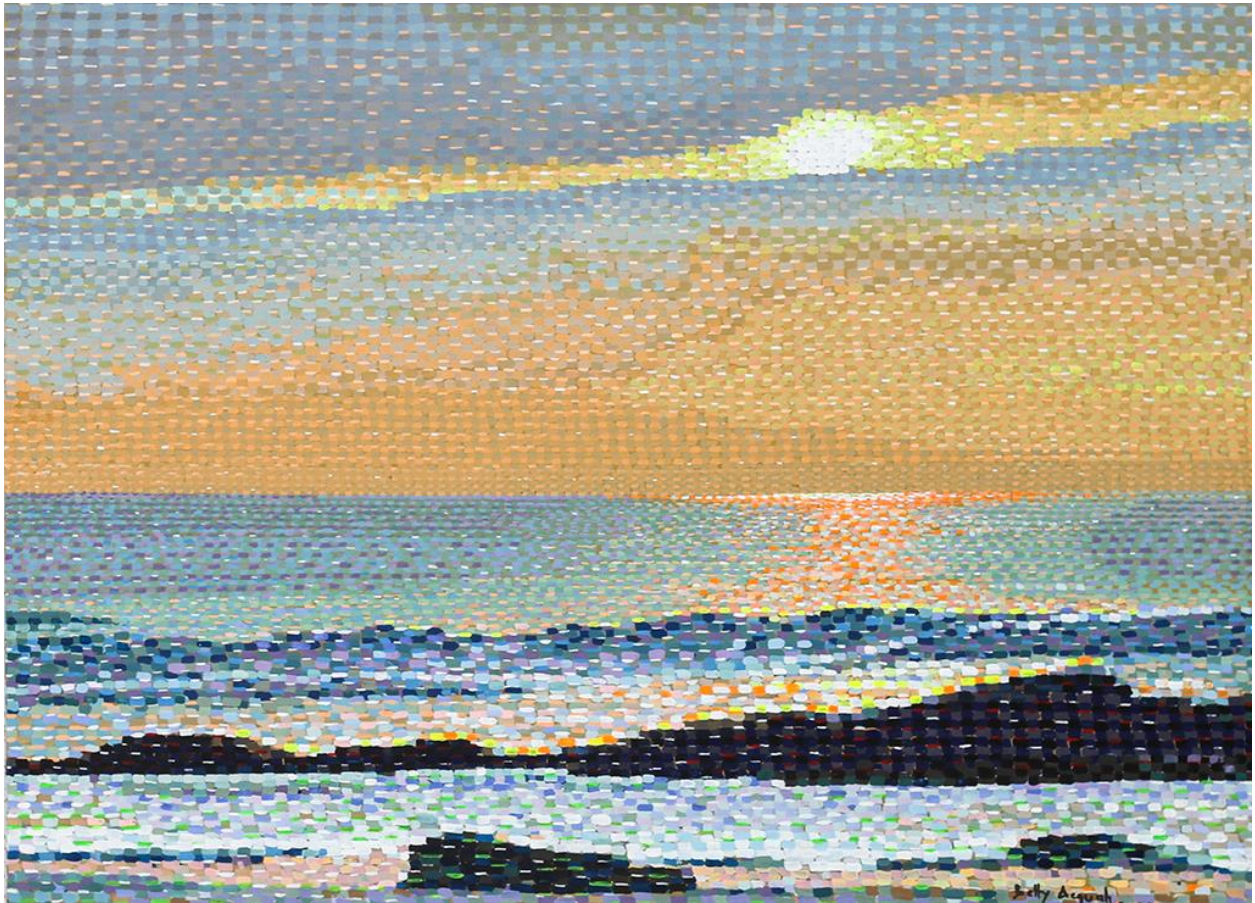
60x20 Inches



Splashes of Joy at Biriwa Beach, 2020

Acrylic on Canvas

12x50 Inches



Crack of Dawn at Biriwa Beach, 2020

Acrylic on Canvas

30x40 Inches



Earth Palette, 2021

Acrylic on Canvas

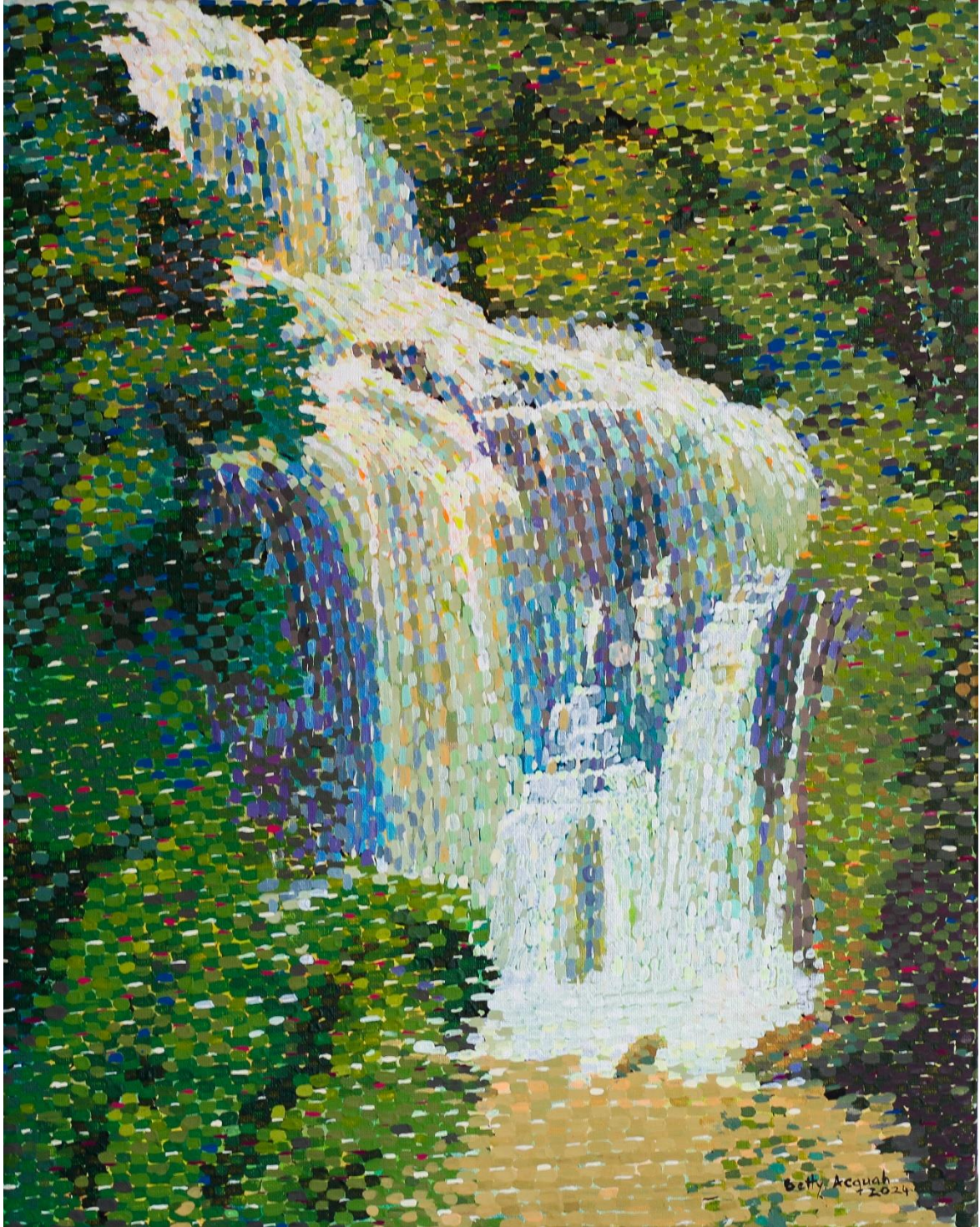
40x60 Inches



Four Wise Women II, 2024

Acrylic on Canvas

36x48 Inches



Oboadaka Falls, 2024

Acrylic on Canvas

20x16 Inches



Untouched Beauty III, 2009

Acrylic on Canvas

19½ x 15½ Inches



Valentine I, 2004

Watercolour on Paper

26x16½ Inches



Back view, 2004

Watercolour on Paper

11x19 Inches



Child of the Universe, 2006

Watercolour on Paper

8½ x 10½ Inches



Sweet Thought, 2003

Watercolour on Paper

7½ x 6 Inches



Waiting Basket, 2003

Watercolour on Paper

10½ x 9 Inches



Red Riding Hood, 2004

Watercolour on Paper

11 x9 Inches



Valentine II, 2004
Watercolour on Paper
26x16½ Inches



Untitled, 2004
Watercolour on Paper
30x37½ Inches



Untitled, 2004

Watercolour on Paper

30x37½ Inches

BERJ ART GALLERY

37 Labone Crescent, Accra, Ghana.

+233 20 186 1187 / +1 (702) 969 5310

info@berjartgallery.com | www.berjartgallery.com