

A Longing for Home Ndidi Emefiele

Curated by Pájú Oshin



Ndidi Emefiele, *Shiny Pants Gister II*, 2026, acrylic, damask, paper collage, compact disk on canvas, 132 x 132cm

Home, in Ndidi Emefiele's hands ceases to be solely about the physical and leaves room for us to consider what home means as an emotional and spiritual state. What happens when home becomes a radical site for transformation where we continue to meet ourselves over and over again.

A Longing for Home asks what fictive kinships we make of the walls that raised us: the homes where our immediate family laid foundational ideologies, the schools where our world view first expanded, and the campuses where the *Search Party* for our sense of self widened. Many years later, the sediments of each iteration continue to settle in, even in this present moment.

This new body of work emerges after a return to Nigeria, Ndidi's first back in three years. What met her were the places she had left behind and the sobering truth that we all must face in that time alters. When Ndidi walked alone past her old primary and secondary school she video-called a childhood friend from the compound where they once played, floods of emotions came back. She asked her friend to bare witness to their shared memory that held in their minds but had shifted in reality.

As we take a look *Behind The Glass* and the glasses of the figures Ndidi paints, it is clear to see that she is a rebel, a daredevil, an experimentalist. Her practice resists the idea that a body of work only begins the weeks before it is shown. To know her is to understand that its roots go back to a shared university bedroom, where she consistently gathered items she stored under her bed, the strange and beautiful. Stories of bravery against scorpions lurking amongst her found materials, and tenderness of a big sister who let her sleep on her bed, as she forfeited her own half of the room in service of a growing artistic practice. Whatever the world around her offered, she folded into the work, sanding stripped CDs and DVDs down for texture, stitching them in as eyewear that doubles as protection and as mirror. What began as youthful resourcefulness became method, and the method never left her, even once a dedicated studio space finally arrived.

Ndidi's personal longing for home gently reveals a longing to understand its material culture. Her mothers damask head tie, carried into the work as a kind of collected home – a throughline to the first home we ever knew, our mothers bodies. A wardrobe of memory which became an unintentional archive of what it is to be a woman moving through the world. The sofas which function as sites of gist (general chitchat/gossip) floral, striped, deliberately soft and echoing the ones from her childhood living room, discovered again through old photographs of Nigerian interiors from the seventies and eighties.

Elsewhere there are musings on devotions in the Morning Call works - a strict, watchful household where the soul and its integrity are more important than the body. The guidance of our parents that buzzes annoyingly around us like a mosquito until in our adulthood we appreciate the breadth of their sentiments.

A Longing for Home remind us of the moments we rarely recognise until they've passed. The last night on a childhood bed, the last ordinary walk past a school gate, the last time we hold those closest to us. These lasts do not vanish; they wait, dormant, for the chance to become known again, resurfacing in a colour, a pattern, a fold of borrowed cloth. In this body of work, Ndidi Emefiele builds an architecture of longing; intimate, unfinished, and entirely her own.

Curated by Curator and writer Pájú Oshin, the exhibition is accompanied by a programme of public talks and events. This exhibition is in dialogue with a second exhibition open at Frieze No9 Cork Street becoming *Behind the Glass: A Longing for Home*.