


## Emerging Ghanaian painter gained the attention of art enthusiasts in China

 by ELIZABET SUN about 15 hours ago in ART

Early this year, Luqman Boateng, a Ghanaian painter known under his brush name Olukus, submitted his works to be featured in a newly launched online gallery for young talents. Just a few months later, he was contacted by art collectors from China willing to invest into contemporary African art.



Boateng was born and raised in a town of Kwadaso, Ghana, and was introduced to painting by the local artist Sam Otu living next door, who painted houses and created hand-painted signage for a living. Encouraged by Otu to continue practicing to improve on his talent, Boateng pursued visual arts at secondary school and then went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in painting at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Over the following year, Boateng has explored in diverse ways and painted in realistic, abstract, impressionist as well as post modernist styles before developing his unique style, which is characterized by the bold use of colour. He has exhibited his artworks in a number of venues in his home country.

However, for artists in Ghana it might be challenging to grow their careers to critical acclaim and commercial success since art market is not yet established in Africa. Many Ghanaians do not understand the quality and significance of their culture, which makes it problematic for young painters who cannot afford to move to Europe or US to promote and market their art.

Other than this, many young artists can even experience difficulties with acquiring painting materials that can only be obtained from overseas.

According to Boateng, the decision to put up his works on the online gallery has become his moment of transition, when people started to recognize the value of his paintings. An investor from mainland China discovered Boateng's works in the BE OPEN Art online gallery, which, as its website reads, was founded by international entrepreneur and philanthropist Elena Baturina to connect young talents who do not have financial support and art collectors interested in investing in the art of tomorrow. The collector contacted Boateng directly via social media and after a short exchange expressed an immense interest in supporting his career. He did not stop at buying his paintings but helped the artist to open his own art studio in his hometown on the outskirts of Kumasi. The cooperation between the two will be ongoing next year, for the collector has already commissioned Olukus a series of works dedicated to everyday life and culture of Ghana for their private collection.

What we see is a great example of what new online platforms have to offer to young talents, like Boateng. Even though Chinese buyers are known for their healthy risk and resolve to invest in under-the-radar living artists, this new-age-Cinderella kind of story would have been impossible without the online promotion the artist received after having submitted his artworks to the BE OPEN Art online gallery. BE OPEN Art is one of the brand new type of art platforms to showcase the range and capabilities of artists at an early stage of their career who do not have their own resources, patronage and promotional opportunities: graduates, self-taught artists, - and specifically, artists with a deprived background. Unlike existing trading platforms and art marketplaces, that is an online gallery that exists purely for philanthropic reason; using the platform is free both for artists and collectors.

As for the hero of our story, Boateng believes that this extraordinary opportunity to be introduced to thousands of art enthusiasts around the globe previously unaware of his work has opened doors for him and brought him one step closer to fulfilment of his dream of becoming internationally recognized as an artist. His other plans and hopes for the future involve opening and operating his own gallery and pursuing further studies to become an art professor to take Ghanaian art to greater heights.