

The Republic of This and That

In his powerful new body of work, Ugandan artist Odur Ronald (b. 1992 in Uganda) interrogates the harsh disparities in global freedom of movement, particularly the complex, invasive, and often dehumanising processes faced by Africans seeking visas both within the continent and beyond. His work offers a sobering meditation on what it means to ask for permission to move: the forced disclosure of personal histories, family ties, and possessions; the high financial cost; and the psychological weight of a system designed to exclude.

These sculptural works shimmer with contradiction: the metallic surfaces suggest impermeability, yet they are intricately sewn and scarred, evoking both vulnerability and survival. The inclusion of sound and performance extends this tension, inviting audiences into an immersive experience that mirrors the emotional and bureaucratic terrain of seeking permission to move.

The artist questions how movement and access are shaped by privilege and recognition, particularly for people from marginalised backgrounds. The passport, both a symbol of identity and a gateway to international opportunity, serves as a central motif, highlighting the intersection of autonomy, systemic restriction, and personal narrative.

Beyond aesthetics, Odur's intent is clear: his works are calls for awareness and education. They amplify the lived experiences of many who have faced the indignity of proving their legitimacy, and the desperation of those who risk it all to cross treacherous borders in search of possibility.

Odur graduated in Interior Design from Kyambogo University, Uganda, in 2017. His work has been featured and shown in several exhibitions and biennales both globally and in his home country Uganda, at the Dak'art Biennale 2024 and the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024, at Afriart Gallery (Uganda), the African Union Headquarters (Ethiopia), CoCuDI Center (Israel) and Ugly Duck London, to mention but a few. He is currently showing a large-scale installation at the Liverpool Biennale 2025.