

Press Release

ZOLLAMT<sup>MMK</sup>, 01 April – 30 July 2023

Opening: Friday, 31 March 2023, 7 pm

## THE CRITICS COMPANY: ONE CAN ONLY HOPE AND WONDER



The Critics Company, *One Can Only Hope and Wonder*, 2023, film still

“But those wise men have gone to the future. They will use their tears to paint. They will run mad and create something new.”

—Emose in *One Can Only Hope and Wonder*, 2023

In February 1897, British colonial troops conquered, destroyed, and looted the Kingdom of Benin, which had been defending itself for almost 500 years. Between 3,500 and 4,000 works of art were looted, about 40 percent of which ended up in the British Museum in London. The rest was auctioned off and a large part was purchased by German museums. The descendants of the Oba of Benin began demanding the return of these artifacts as early as the beginning of the 20th century. Nigeria has been making official demands for restitution to the Federal Republic of Germany since the country gained its independence in 1960. Self-assurance through one’s own history and culture was considered essential for building a strong sense of identity while founding an independent state. Until 2022, German museums had refused to return the more than 1,100 stolen works. Finally, 125 years after the looting, Germany is returning some of these artifacts.

The emptiness of a history without reference points—without the prospect of examining available works of art—is enormous. It can lead either to madness or the decision to move forward and create new works.

The Critics Company is a Nigerian artist group formed in Kaduna in 2015, consisting of Godwin Gaza Josiah, Victor Josiah, Raymond Yusuff, Richard Joshua Yusuff, and Ronald Yusuff. For their very first exhibition, the group has created a new work especially for ZOLLAMT<sup>MMK</sup>.

Press photos can be downloaded here: [www.mmk.art/en/about/press](http://www.mmk.art/en/about/press)

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