SMO Contemporary Art is pleased to present “Joy”, an exhibition of 49 paintings, sketches, sculptures and mixed media works by members of the Guild of Professional Fine Artists of Nigeria, hosted by the Wheatbaker. This exhibition collectively conveys messages of hope and resilience and takes viewers on a captivating journey through a multitude of themes, including environmental concerns, the state of our nation, culture, tradition and the joy of reaching creative independence.

*Joy* presents works by seasoned artists Abiodun Olaku; Abraham Uyovbisere; Ade Ogundimu; Aimufia Osagie; Alex Nwokolo; Ben Ibebe; Bunmi Babatunde; Diseye Tantua; Duke Asidere; Edosa Ogiugo; Emenike Ogwo; Fidelis Odogwu; Gbenga Offo; George Edozie; Gerry Nnubia; Joshua Nmesirionye; Kehinde Adewuyi; Norbert Okpu; Sam Ebohon; Tayo Quaye; and Tola Wewe.

“The artists in this exhibition have taught and mentored generations of younger artists through academic courses, workshops, studio internships and apprenticeships”, said Sandra Mbanefo Obiago, the Wheatbaker’s long standing art curator and founder of SMO Contemporary Art. “They have exhibited their works in Nigeria and abroad, and have collectively made huge sacrifices and contributions to the development and growth of contemporary art in Africa. This long creative path is the essence of their *joy*.”

Works by Gerry Nnubia, Duke Asidere, Diseye Tantua, and Tayo Quaye serve as political commentaries, addressing the socio-political difficulties experienced at a challenging time in our nation. In the same vein, Emenike Ogwo's heavy impasto paintings tackle environmental issues due to global warming, including desertification and flooding, and their serious impact on the lives of rural and urban communities across Africa.

'*Joy*' also reinforces the essence of urban and rural life, shedding light on the importance of love, peace, and safety within families and communities, as depicted in the works of Gbenga Offo, Aimufia Osagie, Edosa Ogiugo, Fidelis Odogwu, among others. Portraits by George Edozie and Norbert Okpu celebrate our cultural wealth and diversity, while Abiodun Olaku, Ade Ogundimu, and Joshua Nmesirionye explore our unique cityscapes and universal themes of nature’s healing powers.

‘*Joy’*  is proof of the strong spirit of artists who, despite the complexities of our contemporary world, have channeled their energies into creating art that reflects not only their personal journeys but also the collective human experience”, explained Dr. Jess Castellote, Director of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos. "*Joy* showcases the maturity and purpose in the creations of diverse artists, each with a unique identity and voice”.

“In search of new epiphanies of beauty to heal an ailing nation, this important art exhibition presented by the Guild of Fine Artists of Nigeria opens as the world is experiencing a cataclysmic shift in consciousness. A time of great upheaval and strife punctuated by humanity’s cry for freedom, justice, and a level playing field for all….these artists, modern day prophets, have dared to present their individual manifestos for a more equitable planet,” wrote Chike Nwagbogu, curator and founder of Nimbus Gallery, in his critical essay on the exhibition titled “the Joy of Sankofa”.

"The GFA was established in 2005, and the first set of members was inaugurated in 2008. All the members are professionally trained and have made significant contributions to the development of art in Africa," concluded George Edozie, President of the Guild. "We are excited to present our latest body of work in collaboration with SMO and the Wheatbaker. We trust that the messages in our work will help uplift our collective spirits during this difficult time in our nation.

*Joy* is supported by the Wheatbaker and is open to the public from October 3 - November 17, 2023.