

## **George Edozie's GATHERINGS**

(Lagos, Nigeria – March 18, 2024) – The Wheatbaker is proud to host GATHERINGS, a solo exhibition of recent works by George Edozie, a celebrated Nigerian artist, curator, conservator and community activist. Curated by SMO Contemporary Art, this exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculpture explores Edozie's multifaceted artistic expression, which touch on current socio-political themes which critically affect Africa's sustainable growth and progress.

George Edozie, an alumnus of the University of Benin with a Bachelor's degree in Fine and Applied Art, has been working as a full time studio artist for over 25 years. His distinctive style, characterized by vibrant colors, bold texture, and experimentation with diverse media including textiles, showcases a versatile artist, inspired by traditional and contemporary African realities.

In his latest series, Edozie delves into themes of unity and collaboration by depicting diverse micro and macro gatherings in his expansive canvases and powerful portraits. His exploration of family dynamics, and the complexities of human interactions on the communal, national and regional levels, provides a rich tapestry of meaning and conjecture in his work.

As the current president of the Guild of Professional Fine Artists GFA, Edozie spends much of his time gathering his peers, and finding solutions to improve and strengthen opportunities for artists, by providing training for the younger generation, and advocating for fair representation and government support. Edozie curates the yearly Oraeze art festival which he has nurtured and developed alongside the annual Ofala festival in his hometown of Onitsha for the past nine years. Through this platform, Edozie has showcased the works of hundreds of artists from across Africa, Europe, Cuba and the wider Diaspora. Through mentorship, workshops and symposia, Edozie has contributed significantly to the growth of Nigeria's creative industry and this commitment to the greater good of the community is depicted through his works in GATHERINGS.

In his bold charcoal and pencil portraits, interspersed with works using acrylic and collage on canvas, Edozie interprets traditional African iconography and cultural traditions and values through a contemporary lens. A large metal and fabric sculpture is an homage to traditional kingship, exploring how royalty dating back to the Ife and Benin Kingdoms, have protected,

nurtured and influenced artistic expression, strengthened cultural appreciation, and fostered a strong and positive identity.

“In an era dominated by artificial intelligence, it becomes imperative to acknowledge and celebrate the authentic creativity and craftsmanship of artists like George Edozie,” Sandra Mbanefo Obiago, the curator and creative director of SMO Contemporary Art commented. “It is critical that we document important African artists like Edozie, who has not only contributed significantly to contemporary art, but who worked as a conservator of modernist masterpieces in many private and institutional collections; Edozie is arguably one of the leading professional art conservators currently restoring works in Nigeria.”

“As an experimentalist, I endeavor to transcend cultural barriers and foster a sense of global unity through my art,” Edozie explained during an interview. “My paintings serve as reflections of the universal human experience, transcending racial and ethnic boundaries.”

“ **Gatherings** offers viewers a chance to traverse narratives shaping our shared humanity, transcending superficial boundaries.” Says Jess Castellote, Director of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art. “It celebrates an artist who, with each stroke, invites us to look beyond the surface and immerse ourselves in the stories woven through the fabric of his body of work.”

GATHERINGS runs from March 25th to May 30th, 2024 at the Wheatbaker in Ikoyi.

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