

# The Collectors' Series





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# contents

welcome 5

the collectors:

joe obiago 7

robert mbonu 9

the artists:

kelchi amadi obi 10

duke asidere 16

yetunde ayeni-babaeko 22

the curators:

sandra mbanefo obiago 28

cca (bisi silva and jude anogwih) 29







# welcome

Welcome to the maiden edition of The Collector's Series! We are delighted to be able to host you at the beautiful new Wheatbaker hotel, to celebrate the best of Nigerian art together!

The idea behind The Collectors' Series was birthed two years ago, when about 35 collectors, curators and senior artists met over dinner on a starlit night, on the shores of the Lagos Lagoon. After pre-viewing an exciting new exhibition together in a private garden setting, we spoke about our experiences in collecting art, exhibiting our collections locally and internationally, and the needs within Nigeria's artistic space.

We agreed that there were great opportunities for joining forces to exhibit Nigeria's artistic treasures internationally, and some within our midst, shared their experiences in lending their prized pieces to globally recognized institutions, like the Smithsonian.

An overwhelming conclusion that night was the need to foster art appreciation locally, and to strategically invest in strengthening individual artists; there was a call for greater investment in the documentation, research and publication of Nigerian art. We agreed to move our collections from private decoration to active assets, and work towards benchmarking our art for future generations. We agreed to make a greater investment in showcasing more art in public spaces and use art to develop our people while focusing more on celebrating Nigeria's creative wealth internationally.

The Collectors' Series is an attempt to fill this gap, by having distinguished Nigerian collectors host each series, and share their unique perspective on each exhibition. The Collectors' Series is also a clarion call to Nigeria's leading art patrons that we have to move from acquiring and enjoying our private collections, to strategically influencing art for development in all its ramifications, in Nigeria, Africa and globally.

Ten percent of the sales of each exhibition will go towards supporting new art initiatives, training, local and international residencies for Nigerian artists, and supporting innovative new artistic movements and the documentation of our artistic heritage.

We are deeply indebted to the Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos (CCA) for helping to curate this exhibition, and to Bisi Silva for inspiring our Collectors with a powerful speech two years ago. The Collectors' Series will be reaching out to other distinguished curators and art experts for advice and support.

We are also most grateful to be able to partner with the Wheatbaker, whose Director, Mosun Ogunbanjo, a celebrated Nigerian architect, always wanted her hotel to be a powerful platform for strengthening Nigerian arts.

Many thanks also to the Legacy Hotel and Resorts Group, and specifically to Mr. Simon Grindrod, the Wheatbaker General Manager, for supporting the concept of the Collectors' Series, and for providing the hotel's public spaces to this initiative. Sincere thanks to Bart Dorrestein, the Legacy Group Chairman, for embracing art at the Wheatbaker and exploring how to showcase more Nigerian art in South Africa and Europe.

We would like to sincerely thank Joe Obiagio and Robert Mbonu for their personal commitment to art, and for being the first collectors to support the series, hopefully encouraging other collectors to join forces with us.

And most importantly, we thank our amazing artists, Kelechi Amadi-Obi, Duke Asidere and Yetunde Ayeni-Babaeko, for allowing us to showcase their amazing art and making us all proud of their exceptional creativity!

We hope you enjoy the show!

Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio

Founder of The Collectors' Series





# the collectors

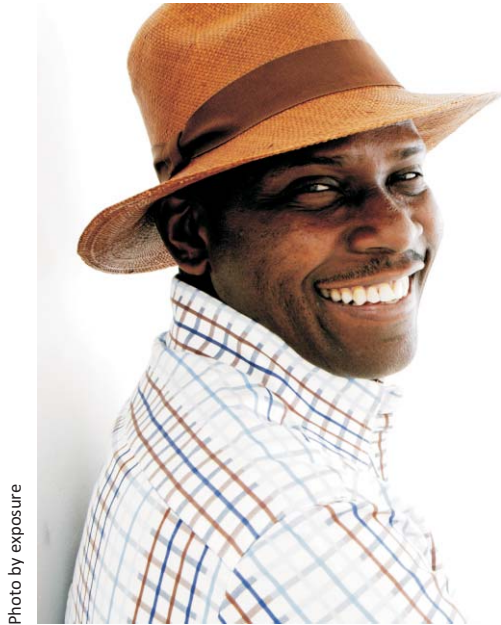


Photo by exposure

## joe obiago

Joe Obiago is a trained Economist and built a career as a Banker with Citibank, before venturing into entrepreneurship in the oil & gas sector. He is the Chairman of the Global Energy Group, and has been a passionate collector of Nigerian and African art since his student days.

Obiago has supported many art initiatives including co-sponsoring numerous publications such as *Lagos City at Work* and most recently *101 Nigerian Artists*. He has been a corporate investor in many major art events including co-sponsoring *CrossCurrents* in 2011 with Oando & the ENI Group, and *Stepping into Universality*, with TAK & CFC in 2009, as well as Society of Nigeria Artists events.

Obiago has a vibrant relationship with many Nigerian artists, including Duke Asidere who is being celebrated in this show. He is a trustee of the Ben Enwonwu Foundation (BEF) and several other philanthropic organisations.

*"Our Collection is balanced between Modern and Contemporary Art, which includes works from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, South Africa, Congo, Kenya, and Uganda. I strive to strike a balance between a keen sense of value and my personal joy in collecting works which have aesthetic depth, artistic merit and economic value. In my opinion, balancing these three elements is actually what sets a collection and collectors apart."*

*Beyond collecting I am committed to the preservation of Nigerian art through private sector led institutions, the documentation as well as the strengthening of the wide spectrum of the arts in Nigeria – and investing in general art education, foreign collaboration and international exposure of our best Nigerian works. I believe that sharpening the vision of our Nigerian artists will become a reality when they get more international exposure and spend time in international artistic spaces, being inspired by other cultures, cutting edge innovation and universal philosophy."*





# the collectors

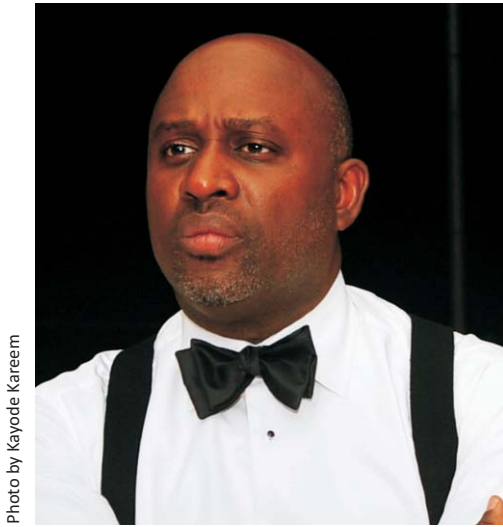


Photo by Kayode Kareem

## robert mbonu

Robert Mbonu is a trained engineer with a passion for art, and has worked in the finance industry for over 20 years. He is a patron and pioneer member of the Visual Arts Society Of Nigeria (VASON) and has supported Nigerian art initiatives for many years.

Mbonu founded *The Art Exchange Ltd.* (The AE), a company established to increase the level of awareness and recognition of Nigerian contemporary art.

Working with an advisory board of distinguished Nigerian experts and art personalities, the AE aims to create value for art owners through a careful process of identifying and documenting specific works of art into a distinct category of investment grade assets. This process will bring such selected works into known existence through compilation and displaying them on the company's database.

Artists benefit from the AE by being recognized, while art collectors, banks and investors benefit from the AE's reference source and an important secondary market for the trade and exchange in art.

The Art Exchange is the proud sponsor of the *Virtual Museum* of The Pan African University ([www.pau.edu.ng/museum/](http://www.pau.edu.ng/museum/)) which was recently launched.



# kelechi amadi obi



**Kelechi Amadi-Obi** is one of Nigerian's most celebrated fashion photographers. He started his career as a lawyer, before venturing into full time art in 1993. His artistic journey began with painting, giving his photography its unique creative edge, with a mastery of aesthetics and creative lighting. Besides shooting creative images for leading advertising agencies PrimaGarnet Ogilvy, SO&U, and InsightGrey, he has shot photographs for leading corporate clients such as Guinness Nigeria Plc, MTN Nigeria Plc, PZ Nigeria Plc, British American Tobacco, and Nigerian Flour Mills. In 2010 Amadi-Obi launched *Mania*, Nigeria's first international standard glossy fashion magazine. His work has been exhibited locally and internationally, including in *Snap Judgement—A New Position in Contemporary African Photography*, at the International Centre of Photography, New York, USA in 2006, in *Depth of Field* at the South London Gallery, UK, in 2004, in *Lagos* at the Ifa Gallery, in Stuttgart, Germany in 2005, in *Transferts* at Africalia, in Brussels, Belgium in 2003. In 2004, Amadi-Obi won the prestigious St. Moritz Style Award for Photography.

## Artists' Statement

**Gele in Bloom Series (2011)** *The Gele\* is an explosion of color. Interestingly, the visual impact of the Gele as a fashion accessory is unique to Nigeria. To me it always looks like an elaborate crown. And against black skin, it takes on an even stronger dimension. It reminds me that every individual has a colorful essence, which is what I see when I photograph.*

*\*Gele is the Yoruba word for Headtie*

**Emotion Series (2000)** *I see the human form as a language that communicates emotion and introspective thought processes. I shot these photographs with only a sliver of natural light coming from my window.*

*Green Gele in Bloom, 2011. Photograph, 41cm x 58.5cm*





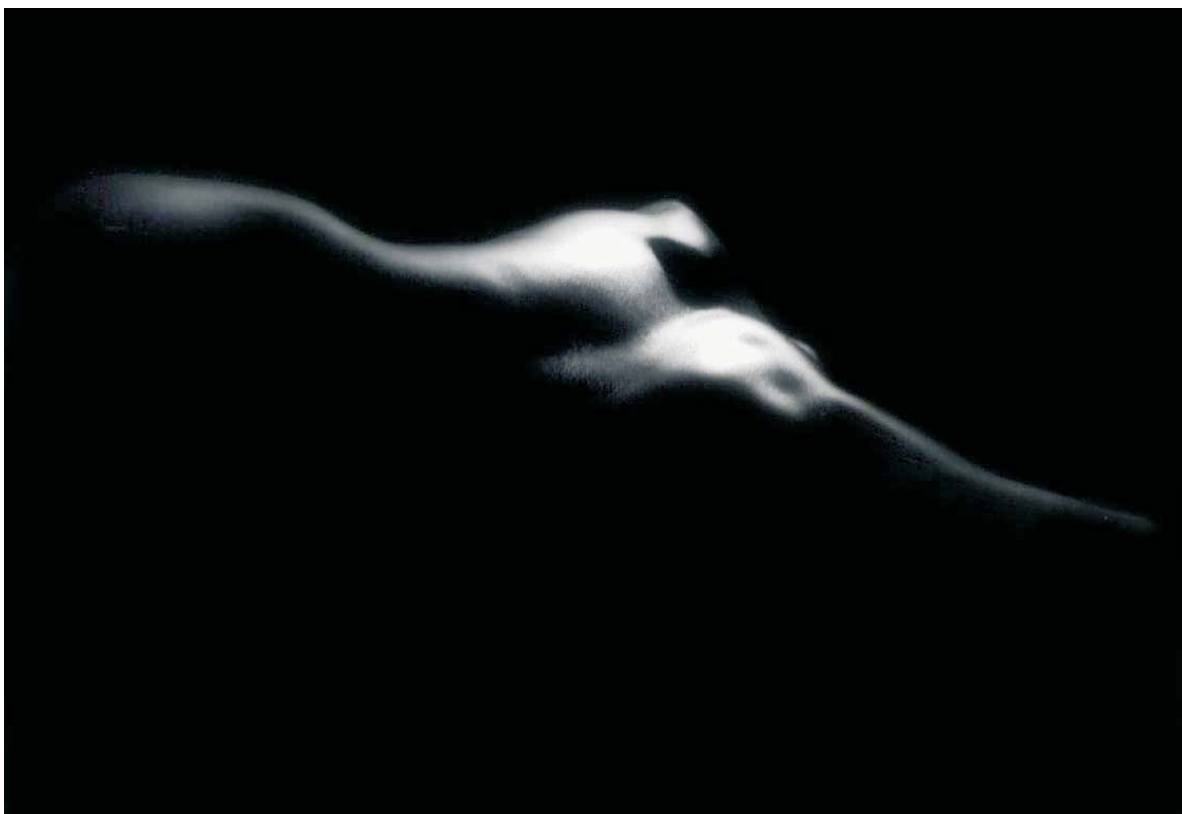
*Yellow Gele in Bloom*, 2011. Photograph, 41cm x 58.5cm

*Red Gele in Bloom*, 2011. Photograph, 41cm x 58.5cm

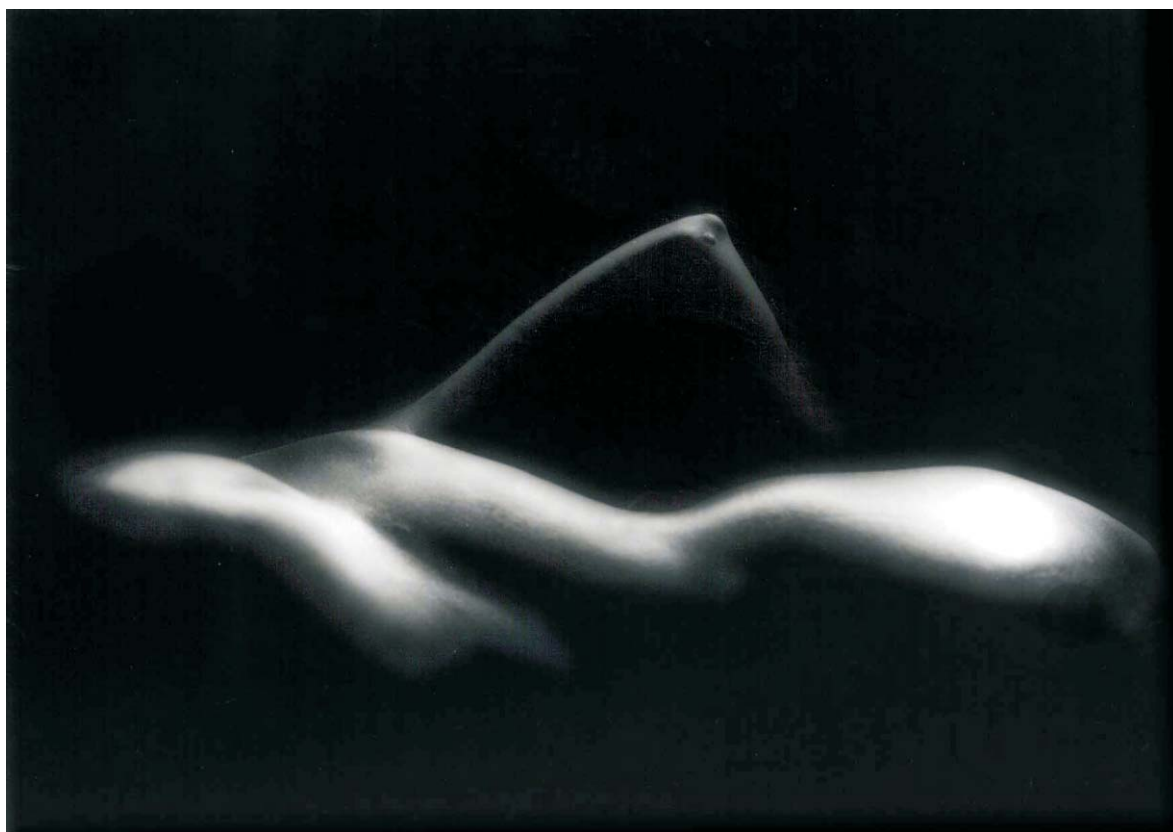








*Whisper of Light*, 2000. 72cm x 52cm



*Dunes of Memory*, 2000. Photograph, 72cm x 52cm

*Thoughts from Within*, 2000. Photograph, 52cm x 72cm



# duke asidere



Duke Asidere is one of Nigeria's most celebrated contemporary artists with a keen following internationally and in his native Nigeria. He was born in 1961 and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree with first class honours in Fine Arts (painting) from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1988 and a Masters of Fine Arts in painting in 1996 from the same university. He taught painting, drawing and art history at the Federal Auchi Polytechnic for five years before starting full time studio work Lagos.

He was mentored by Prof. Bruce Onabrakpeya and taught by Gani Odutokun, Jerry Buhari, Richard Baye, Tony Okpe, Colonel Agim, Ajayi Murphy, who had a profound impact on his life and artistic expression. His influences also come from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century fauvist inspired modern artists, as well as the expressionists. His peers who were born around Nigeria's independence in the 1960's have also had a positive impact on him, such as the painter, Ben Osaghae.

Asidere expresses himself boldly through a wide variety of genre including pencil work, engravings, oil and acrylic, pastels and even transparencies. He was raised in a household of women, which is reflected in his recurring theme of the female form in his portrait and face series. His architecture series are a fresh perspective of African land- and cityscapes, and his number and spray series have underlying political statements.

Asidere has participated in and facilitated numerous international and local workshops on painting, photography, and drawing, including *Colour Masters* (Auchi Polytechnic, March 2011) and in a number of the annual *Harmattan Workshop Series*. Asidere's passion for painting is reflected in the *Orelope Street Goes Global* initiative in which he organizes painting and photography workshops with his colleague, James Uche Iroha, focusing on indoor and outdoor artwork.

Asidere has held ten solo exhibitions and been showcased in 43 joint exhibitions in Nigeria and Europe. His works are sought after by art collectors and are currently being exhibited in London and Paris. He is a member the Society of Nigerian Artists and the Guild of Professional Fine Artists' of Nigeria.

## Artist Statement

*Art is not as complex as many artists try to make it. I look at art from a very simplistic point: just get it done. Since 1981 there's not been a day I have not drawn or tried to paint. I have a soft spot for life paintings & pencil drawings. I look at working as an artist the same way Lionel Messi looks at playing football; having the same passion they have in 90 minutes of game. For anyone trying to run a successful studio - you must be disciplined.*

*Is my work emotional or political? Yes it is. I don't follow the flow, I make the flow. I like to paint streets under the sun, to feel the intensity of the bricklayers. My work is a consistent search, hence I am not stuck in one ideology. I am not interested in modernism, I am interested in today.*

*Three Women, 2000. Oil on canvas, 72cm x 111cm*











*The Lady* , 2011. Oil on canvas, 121cm x 137cm

*Architecture*, 1999. Oil on canvas, 86cm x 190.5cm



*Spray Series*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 122cm x 136cm

*The Banetti Experince*, 2009. Oil on canvas, 70.5cm x 121.5cm







# yetunde ayeni-babaeko



Yetunde Ayeni-Babaeko is a talented young Nigerian photographer, born in Enugu, Nigeria in 1978. After completing her German Abitur (A-Levels), she studied photography with a major in advertising at the prestigious *Studio Be* in Greven, Germany. On completing her studies, she returned to her fatherland in 2003, and joined *Ess-Ay Studio* in Lagos, seconded for a year from *Invent* in Germany. Spurred by her love for photography she enrolled at *Macromedia*, a school for Art and Design in Osnabrueck, Germany in 2004, and eventually returned to Nigeria in 2005 to pursue her art.

By 2007 Ayeni-Babaeko had set up CAMARA-Studios ([www.camara-studios.com](http://www.camara-studios.com)), a professional photo studio in Ikeja, focusing on commercial advertising photography. Always looking for ways to express her art, she has taken part in numerous exhibitions including *Body Landscapes* in 2008, and two photography exhibitions at the Omenka Gallery in 2009 & 2010. She recently facilitated a photography course for Nigerian female photographers, *The X-Perspective*, at the Goethe Institut in Lagos.

## **Artist Statement**

*I work a lot with women in my photography. Being a woman myself, I am always fascinated by our ability to multitask and by all the different layers of a woman. And this is what I want to express in my images: women's beauty, strength, power, sensitivity and sexuality. I think portraying women from a woman's viewpoint makes my work more real and convincing. Also most of my work is done in the studio; it is very conceptual and designed with experimental lighting.*

*Keeping your Senses*, 2010. Print on Aluminium, 50cm x 75cm









*Neckstretcher*, 2010. Print on Aluminium, 50cm x 75cm

*The X-Perspective*, 2010. Print, 50cm x 75cm



*Callas*, 2010. Print, 50cm x 75cm

*The Drag*, 2010. Print, 50cm x 75cm





# curators

Photo by Kayode Kareem



## sandra mbanefo obiagio

**Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio** is an art collector, curator, award winning film producer & director, writer, and convener of artistic events, workshops, conferences & exhibitions. She has worked as founding Executive Director of Communicating for Change since 1998 and her expertise includes artistic direction, advocacy, communications, and photo-journalism. In 2011 she produced and co-directed *RedHOT*, a 5 part documentary film series on Nigerian creativity, showcasing 17 artists in visual & performing arts, film & music. She curated and hosted *Stepping into Universality*, an exhibition showcasing the Universal Studios in Lagos in 2009. She was the organizer of *The Future of Development Film in Africa Conference in Lagos*, Nigeria in 2005 & 2008, and has collaborated with and been supported by many international and local organizations including the Ford & Rockefeller Foundations, TVE, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the MTN Foundation, Shell, the Olu Akinkugbe Foundation, & the UK's Department of International Development (DFID). She helped develop a course on *Media Enterprise* at the Pan African University (Lagos Business School) and was a free-lance instructor from 2007-2010. She is a social activist and her documentaries and short dramas have been broadcast in 41 countries including on the BBC, Channel Four, and ORF. She worked as a Technical Director for Limelight Studios and as a Producer/Reporter for the European Business Channel in Switzerland from 1988 to 1990. From 1991-1998 she worked as Africa Communications Manager for the World Wide Fund for Nature, where she did photo-journalism and set up and managed a Communications Network in Sub-Saharan Africa. She is a member of the Advisory Council of the Nigerian National Film Institute and has served as a trustee of the Convention on Business Integrity (CBI), one of Nigeria's foremost business ethics organization. She served as a member of the jury of the Nigeria Media Merit Awards and the African International Film Festival (AFRIFF) awards. Obiagio is a Fellow of the Aspen Institute Africa Leadership Initiative for West Africa (ALIWA) and has attended executive education courses at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; she received an M.A. in Telecommunications from Michigan State University, USA, and a Bachelors of Education degree from the University of Manitoba, in Canada. She is happily married with three children.

## bisi silva

Photo by Natalie Slow



**Bisi Silva** is an independent curator and the Founder/Director of Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos) which opened in December 2007. She is co-curator of J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere: Moments of Beauty, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (April-Nov 2011). She was co-curator for the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Greece, 'Praxis: Art in Times of Uncertainty' September 2009. In 2008 she was co-selector with Portuguese curator Isabel Carlos of the prestigious international Artists' Prize, Artes Mundi 3 in Wales, UK. Silva was part of the curatorial team that organised the Dakar Biennale in Senegal in 2006.

As director of CCA, Lagos, she has curated several exhibitions including Fela, Ghariokwu Lemi and The Art of the Album Cover, (2007), Ndidi Dike, Waka-into-bondage: The Last ¾ Mile (2008) and George Osodi, Paradise Lost: Revisiting the Niger Delta (2008) as well as 'Like A Virgin...', Lucy Azubuike (NIG) and Zanele Muholi (SA) (2009), Okhai Ojeikere: Sartorial Moments and the Nearness of Yesterday (2010) and All We Ever Wanted (2011) and Owambe, Aso-Ebi and The Politics of Dress, Jide Alakija (2011).

Silva has written for national and international newspapers, art magazines and journals such as Agufon, Artforum, Artinfo.com, Art Monthly, Untitled, Third Text, M Metropolis, The Guardian and 234Next. She is on the editorial board of N Paradoxa, an international feminist art journal. She has also participated in several seminars and conferences locally and internationally. She has held curatorial residencies at NIFCA (2006) and HIAP (2009) in Helsinki, Finland and at IASPIS (2010), Stockholm, Sweden. Silva is a Summer 2011 *Clark Mellon Curatorial Fellow* at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass, USA. and is currently working on the first comprehensive monograph of Nigerian Photographer J.D Okhai Ojeikere. Silva has an Master of Arts in Curating and Commissioning of Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London.

Silva is a recipient of the prestigious *Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Research Residency Award*, Summer 2012, in Bellagio, Italy. She will work on her research paper 'Curating in Africa'.

## jude anogwih

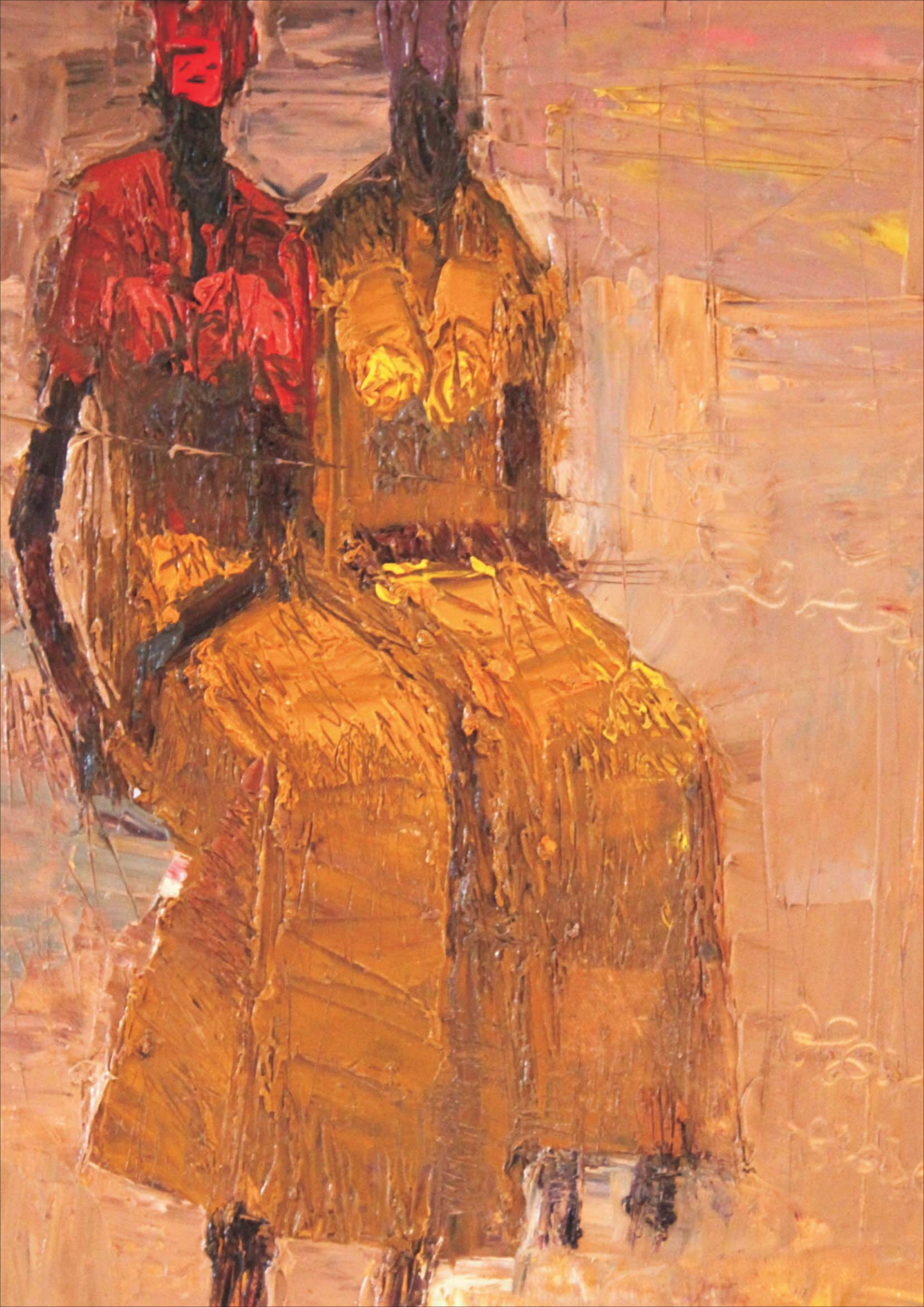


**Jude Anogwih** is a curator and multimedia artist living and working in Lagos, Nigeria. Anogwih was co-curator (with Oyinda Fakeye) of *Identity: An Imagined State*, Lagos (2009), co-curator (with Kerry Greenberg) of *Contested Terrains* (2011- 2012) Level 4 Gallery, Tate Modern and CCA, Lagos. He has been with the CCA Lagos over a period of time coordinating, organising and curating several national and international projects. Recent curatorial projects include working with artists such as Kainebe Osahenye (2009 Trash-ing exhibition) and over thirty-one others in the Old News #6 project (2009), 'The Green Summary', a retrospect developed around the theme of Independence through the eyes of 9 contemporary Nigerian artists, (2010).

Anogwih's work has been featured at several international art exhibitions and projects such as the Festival International D'Art Video de Casablanca FIAV (2009 and 2010), Festival Miden, Greece (2009), SMBA, Amsterdam (2009), Old News #6 Malmo, Lagos, Copenhagen, New York (2009 -2010), Visionary Africa Project; Geo - graphics, Brussels (2010), Green Summary, (2010 – 2011), CologneOFF VII, 2011. He has also participated in several international art workshops, projects and events including the Stockholm project, STHLMSTHLMSTHLM, Sweden (2009); FIAC, Algiers, Algeria (2009) Linha Imaginaria video art workshop, Lagos (2009), Video Art Workshop, Goethe Institut, Lagos (2010), OFFLINE Film & Video Exhibition, Houston, Texas, USA (2010) among others.

He is a founding member and co-coordinator of Video Art Network, Lagos ([www.vanlagos.org](http://www.vanlagos.org)) and member Society of Nigeria Artists, Lagos ([www.snalagos.com](http://www.snalagos.com)).







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partners and friends who provided support and  
inspiration for this project.

Exhibition space provided by the Wheatbaker

Editorial, Design & Photography by Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio  
Layout by Adeyinka Akingbade

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i am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination.  
imagination is more important than knowledge.  
knowledge is limited.  
imagination encircles the world.

albert einstein