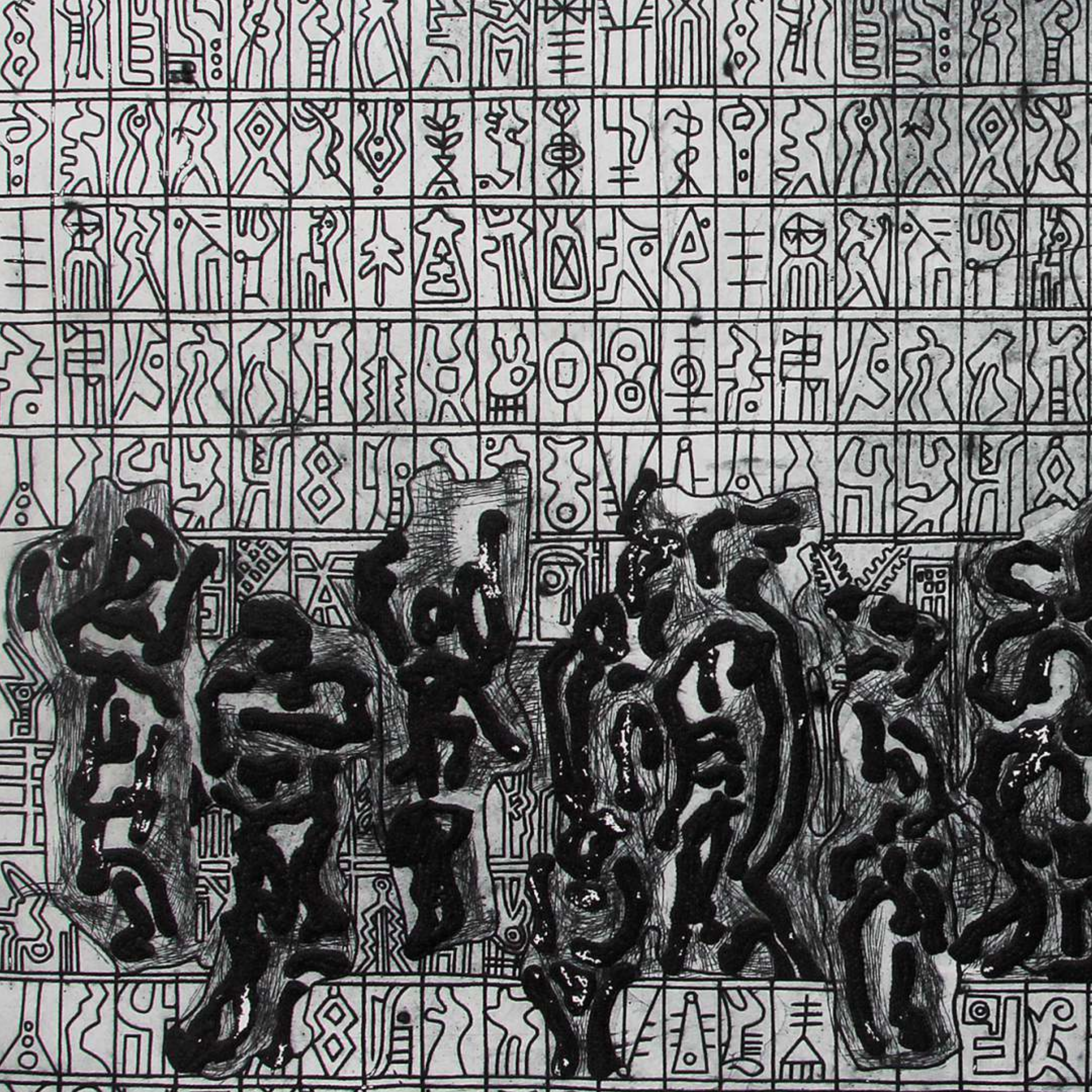


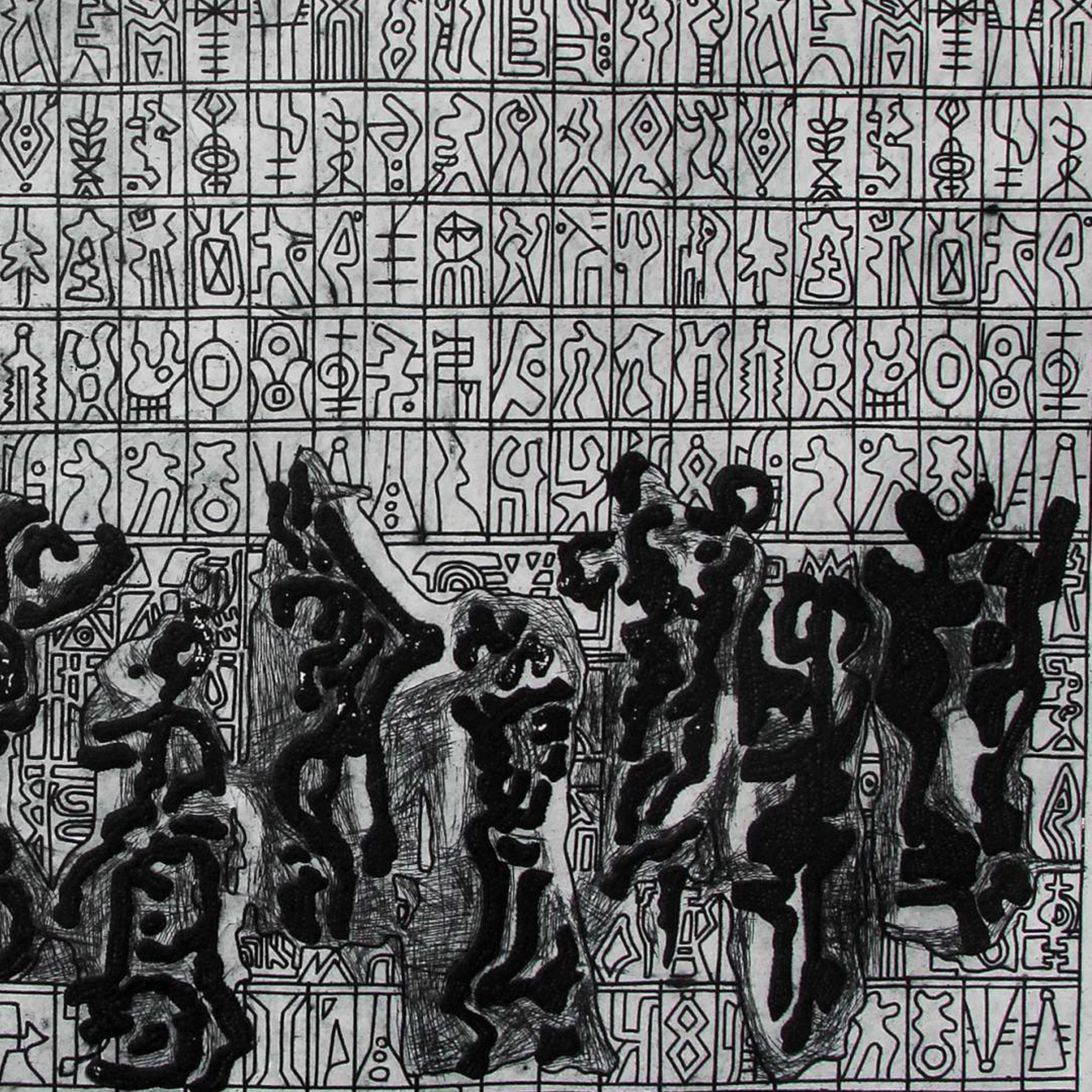


**BRUCE ONO BRAKPEYA**

















**You can always tell where  
the elephant has passed by**







# BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA

*Celebrating 60years of Studio Practice*

CURATED BY SANDRA MBANEFO OBIAGO



APRIL 27, 2019 - JULY 20, 2019

THE WHEATBAKER,  
LAGOS, NIGERIA









LOUIS GUNTRUM







# CURATORIAL FOREWORD

Bruce Onobrakpeya:

*ENI! You can always tell where the Elephant has passed by*

It is a great honor to curate this special exhibition of prints by Prof. Bruce Onobrakpeya to celebrate his sixty years of studio practice. Onobrakpeya's odovan, or self given Uhrobo praise name, is "Eni", which means elephant. He explained to me, "when they call me 'Eni', my response is, 'you can always tell where the elephant has passed by'. Aside from being big, the elephant is also a very protective animal with a long memory. Even small animals can feed from the water that accumulates in the elephant's large and deep footprints".

As we celebrate and acknowledge the immense impact Onobrakpeya has had on art in Africa and on generations of artists who reflect the creative soul of Nigeria, the large tracks of the elephant, the largest land animal, are a perfect metaphor for his gigantic lifetime contributions to art.

As one of Nigeria's most important experimental artists, Onobrakpeya, who is small in physical stature, stands larger-than-life in the annals of this nation's post-colonial history. His vibrant creative expression through diverse media including paintings, sculpture, prints, low relief foils, large installation works, and experimenting with new media, has inspired generations of artists. His restless artistic experimentation and exploration of new media, which ranges from intricate drawings and sketches, to creating large works out of fragments of computer motherboards and large engine parts, continues to push the boundaries of his visual language.

Onobrakpeya held his first exhibition in August 1959 in Ughelli, Delta State, during the summer holiday after his second year of university. As a young artist, he decided to pour his energy into an exhibition of artworks when the vacation job he had been looking forward to did not materialize. That summer marked the formal beginning of his creative journey as a studio artist, while still schooling at the Nigerian College of Arts Science and Technology (NCAST) in Zaira, which was later re-named Ahmadu Bello University.

Nigeria was at the brink of independence, and Onobrakpeya was a member of a dynamic group of young art students, including Yusuf Grillo, Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Simon

Okeke, Oseloka Osadebe and others, who were asserting their freedom and flexing their intellectual muscle. They called for a new African consciousness and identity by forming a group called the Zaria Arts Society, which was later given the popular name of 'The Zaria Rebels'.

Onobrakpeya was inspired by his peers, especially Uche Okeke, who encouraged him to write as a complementary form of expression alongside his visual art. Sixty years on, Onobrakpeya is probably the best documented of all his peers, and has spent a lifetime teaching and experimenting in the studio.

He has developed new techniques of printing and low relief sculpture, and has personally documented the growth of a young nation through his art, exploring the culture and mythology of diverse ethnic groups, while commenting on current events. His series of works called Totems of the Delta exposed the environmental degradation and human rights violations against Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni people in the 1990's. He documented the protests of women through history, and continues to comment on socio-political happenings and inequities, such as the plight of the kidnapped Chibok girls.

This is the fourth exhibition of Onobrakpeya's works I am curating. In 2016, I curated a four month long exhibition at the Lagos Court of Arbitration which included examples of diverse media from tiny prints to foil panels to large metal installations. We also exhibited over three hundred artworks created by more than one hundred artists who took part in his important bi-annual Harmattan Workshop series.

This year will mark twenty-one years since he started the important Harmattan workshop series which has provided a safe and inspiring space for artists from Africa, Europe, America and India to meet and explore diverse art forms in the retreat he built in his home town of Agbarha-Ottor. Onobrakpeya continues to look for sponsorship for these yearly retreats, as he supports a new management team lead by artist Sam Ovrati.





For this exhibition, I wanted our presentation to be a much more personal story. The backbone of *ENI! You Can Always Tell Where the Elephant has Passed by* is an interview I did with Onobrakpeya as the grandfather of contemporary art in Nigeria. I asked him questions about coming into his own, as well as universal questions of existence, inspired by *The Prophet*, a book of poetry by the late Lebanese poet, Khalil Gibran.

Onobrakpeya's beautiful and detailed renderings are multi-layered in meaning and significance, and his minutest drawings and carvings explore cultural nuances and universal wisdom, which he reflects on in his interview. This exhibition of rare prints showcases works which explore the natural world, our culture, philosophy, mythology and religion, as well as historical events.

As always, we thank the Wheatbaker for providing a wonderful platform for celebrating and presenting the best of our creativity for local and international guests to appreciate. We also thank our long-standing drinks sponsor, Louis Guntrum, for providing beautiful German wine for our exhibitions.

I hope you enjoy this walk down memory lane with Prof Bruce Onobrakpeya, who is one of the most wonderful, generous, inspiring, kind, wise, spritely and patient people, and whose elephant legacy will continue to be felt and celebrated.

Sandra Mbanefo Obiako  
Curator





BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA







Professor Bruce Onobrakpeya (born 1932) is one of Nigeria's most prestigious artistic pioneers, and presents 36 rare prints spanning his prolific career. He grew up in Delta State, Nigeria, and obtained a Diploma in Fine Arts and a Teacher's Certificate from the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (now called Ahmadu Bello University) in Zaria in 1962. Onobrakpeya was a pioneer member of the Zaria Art Society, a student group which sought to develop a new aesthetic language deeply rooted in African tradition and philosophy. The group included Uche Okeke, Yusuf Grillo, Demas Nwoko, Oseloka Osadebe and other students who drew strength from the post-colonial independence movement. These aspiring young artists were later called the "*Zaria Rebels*" and quickly made their mark internationally. "We were not rebelling against anything as such but thought that the idea of just using the western art technique without relating it to our culture wasn't right," commented Onobrakpeya, who began to experiment with diverse media that showcased Nigeria's rich history, culture & philosophy, environment, as well as chronicling the nation's socio-political development through paintings, sculpture, prints, and installations.

Onobrakpeya has received many awards and his works have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1990, the Tate Modern in London, the National Museum of African Art of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., The Malmö Konsthall in Malmö, Sweden and The National Gallery of Modern Art, Lagos to name a few. He received the UNESCO *Living Human Treasures Award* in 2006.

Onobrakpeya lives in Lagos and spends most days working in his studio, if not teaching art at his Harmattan Workshop retreat in his home town of Agbarha-Ottor.





I use my art to  
comment, question  
and advise. The prints  
help me to reflect on  
aspects of life such as  
our philosophies,  
history, environment  
and conceptualizing  
the future. The prints  
help you to dream and  
dream very well.

- Bruce Onabrakpeya



OUR NATURAL WORLD







**Okpogho (The Hornbill)**

Lino Engraving

10 x 15.2 cm

1959





Detail, **Erhue Orise (Orise Cow)**





**Erhue Orise (Orise Cow)**

Lino cut  
78 x 107 cm  
1987





Detail, Oberokpa Vayeroye (Farmer and wife)





**Oberokpa Vayeroye (Farmer and wife)**

Block Print

127.3 x 100 cm

2017







**Efioto Vephran (Hunting Rabbits and Birds)**

(Black and White)

Deep Etching

95 x 67.6 cm

1977













OUR CULTURE







**Odovan (A self given social name)**

Etching  
70 x 51 cm  
1973







**Erhele (Red Base)**

Deep Etching

72 x 53 cm

1970

## **Osiobe**

Osiobe is a philosopher. In Urhobo it means 'writer'. All these images around the periphery are part of the Ibiebe idiograms and the face in the center is that of a learned old philosopher.

Bruce Onobrakpeya





**Osiobe**

Additive Plastograph

106.6 x 79 cm

1999







**Agbranran (Thunder)**

Etching  
(Ebony series II)  
56 x 38 cm  
2014









Miniature images panel III  
Plastograph  
106.5 x 79 cm  
1990





Detail, Afieke (Black and White extra)





**Afieke (Black and White extra)**

Plastograph  
105.5 x 75 cm  
1978





Detail, Emedjo VI





**Emedjo VI**

Block Print  
92 x 123 cm  
1980/2017







**Okunovu**  
 (Thanksgiving Dance I)  
 Deep Etching  
 53 x 79 cm  
 1970





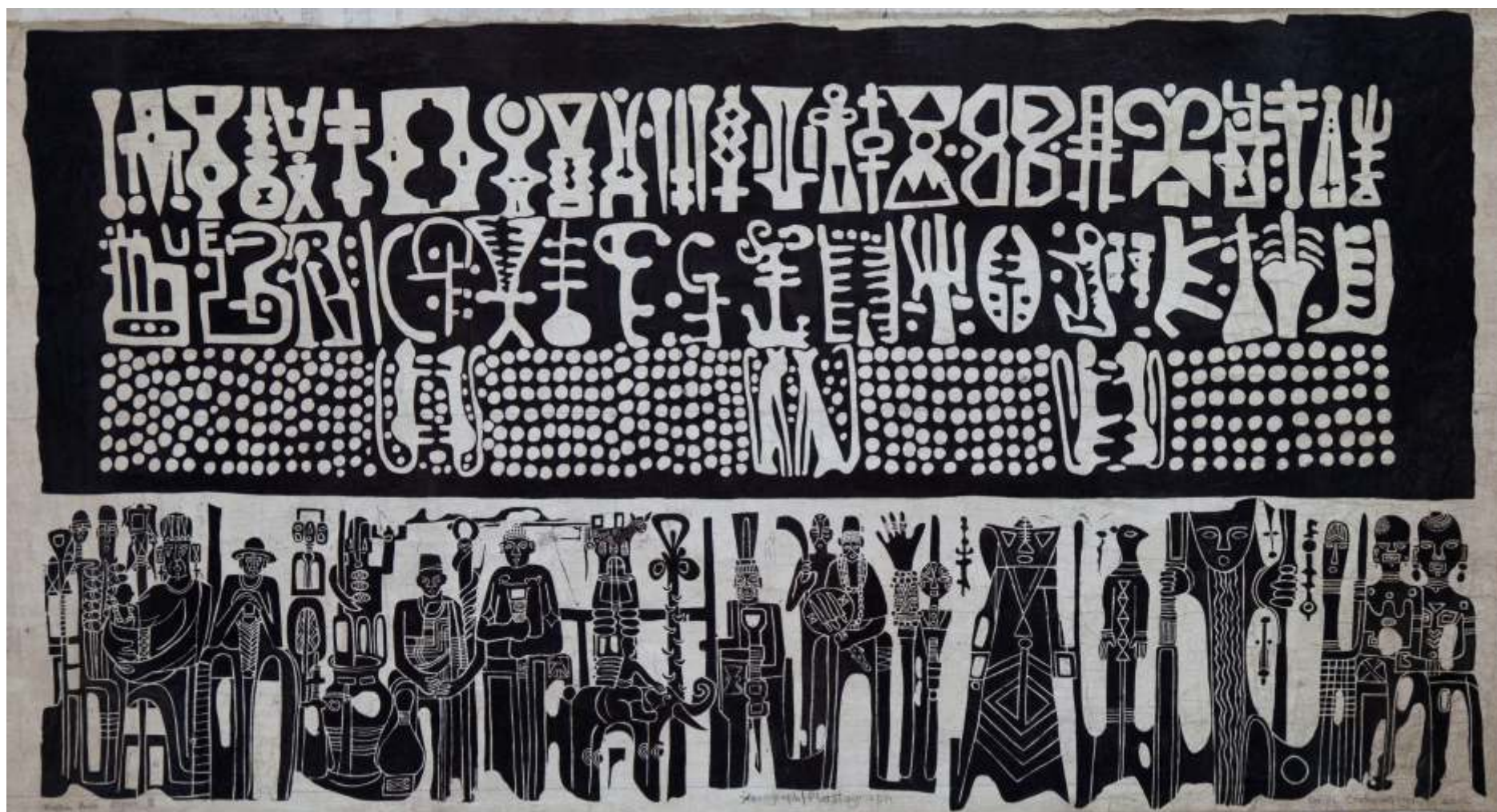












**Ibiebe Aro Ogwa II**  
 Xerograph Plastograph  
 100 x 163 cm  
 2002

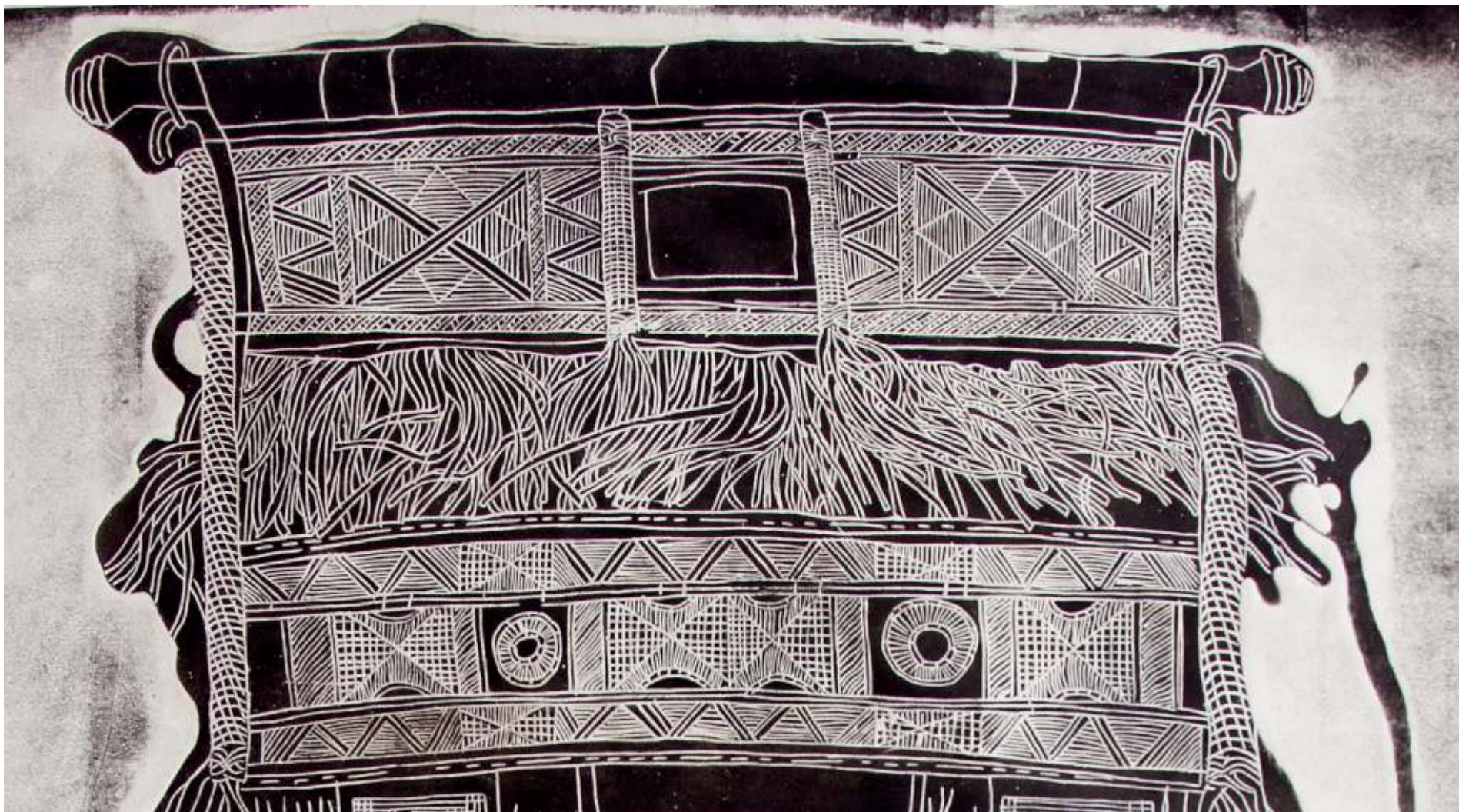












Detail, Ekpu Idolo (Money Bag)





**Ekpu Idolo** (Money Bag)

Plastograph

106.5 x 79 cm

2015





PHILOSOPHY & MYTHOLOGY







**Aro Emamiwata**

Lino Engraving/Xerograph

196 x 146 cm

1976









**Egobo Emamiwata**  
 Lino engraving/Xerograph  
 208 x 144 cm  
 1976



### **On 'Aro Osomo'**

'Osomo' is supposed to be the father and he has many responsibilities including what he already has in his hands. These are all the people for whom he is responsible for.

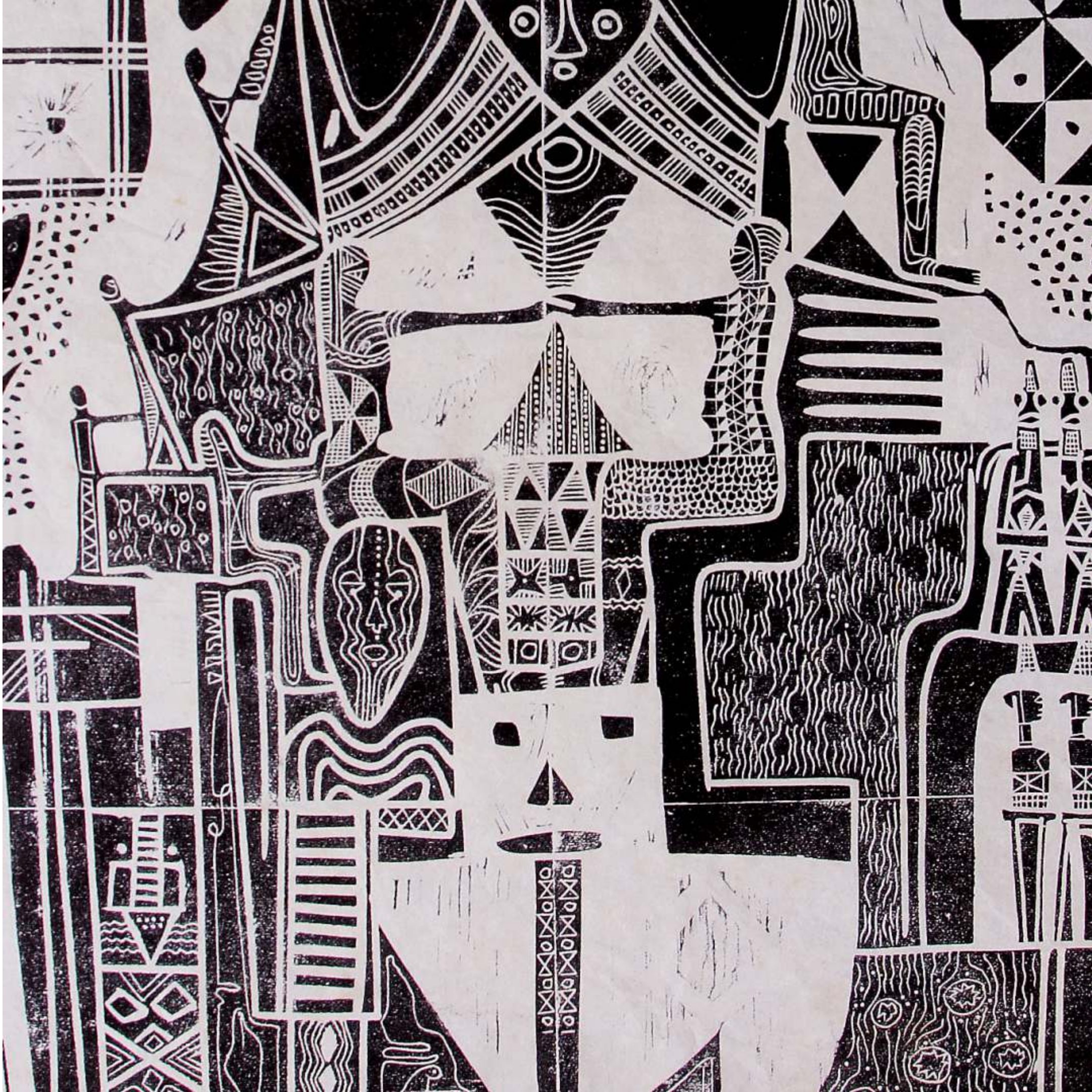




**Aro Asomo (Tribute to Fathers, black & white edition)**

Plastograph  
87.5 x 69 cm  
1974









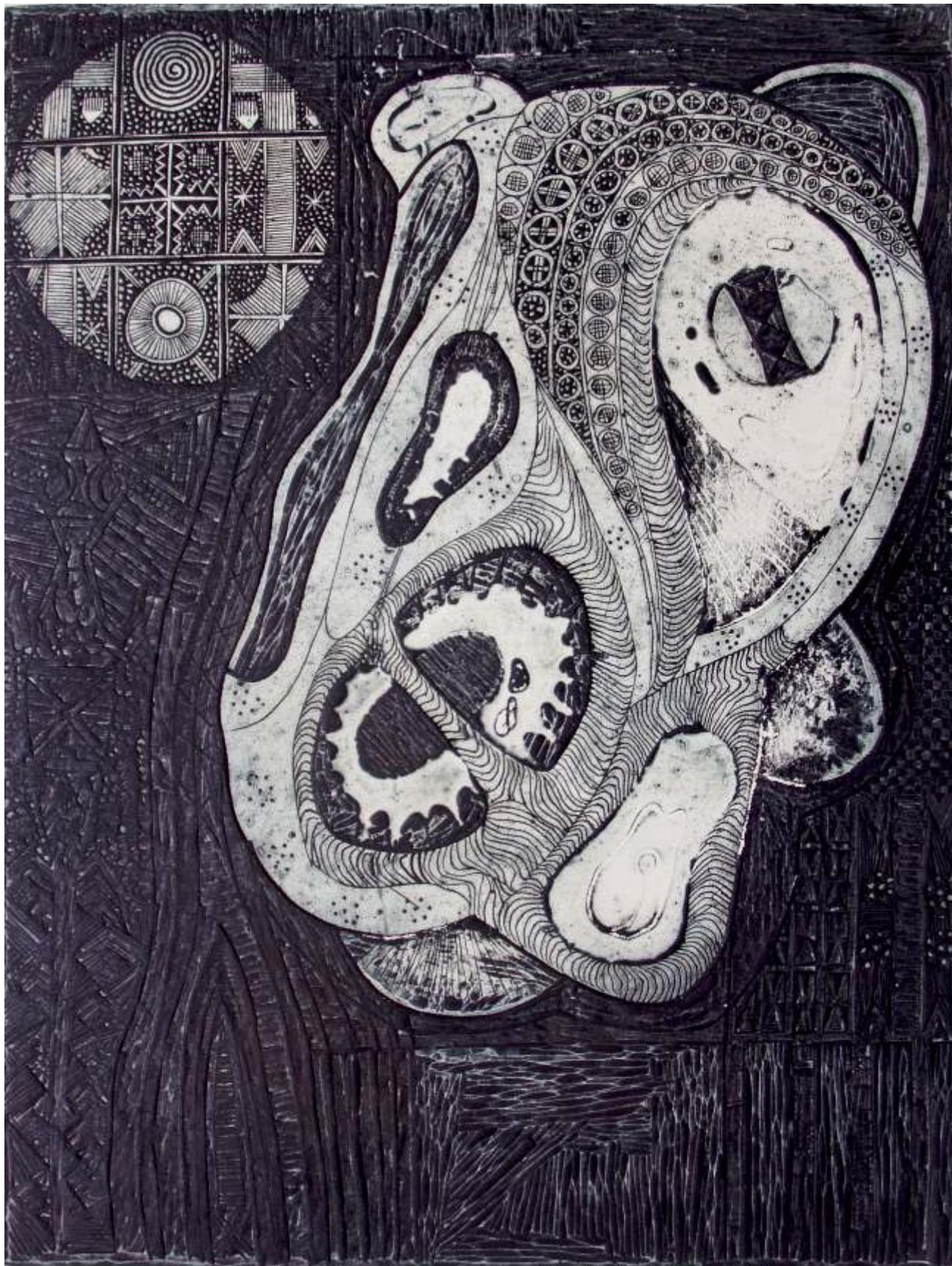


### **'Ivwie'**

Actually, this image was the logo of my first exhibition. It is a concept of suffering although you have been equipped to avoid suffering. In those days people had large families for whom they built large compounds. Hooligans or rascals dared not enter or molest any of the women because the young men in the family would band together to deal with the culprits. But someday someone who has such an arsenal might wander into a situation without them and end up suffering the consequences. That kind of situation is called 'Ivwie' by the Urhobos. The image shows a man crying out for help but there's a bar across his mouth preventing him.

Bruce Onabrakpeya





**Ivwie**  
Deep Etching  
78.5 x 53.5 cm  
1972





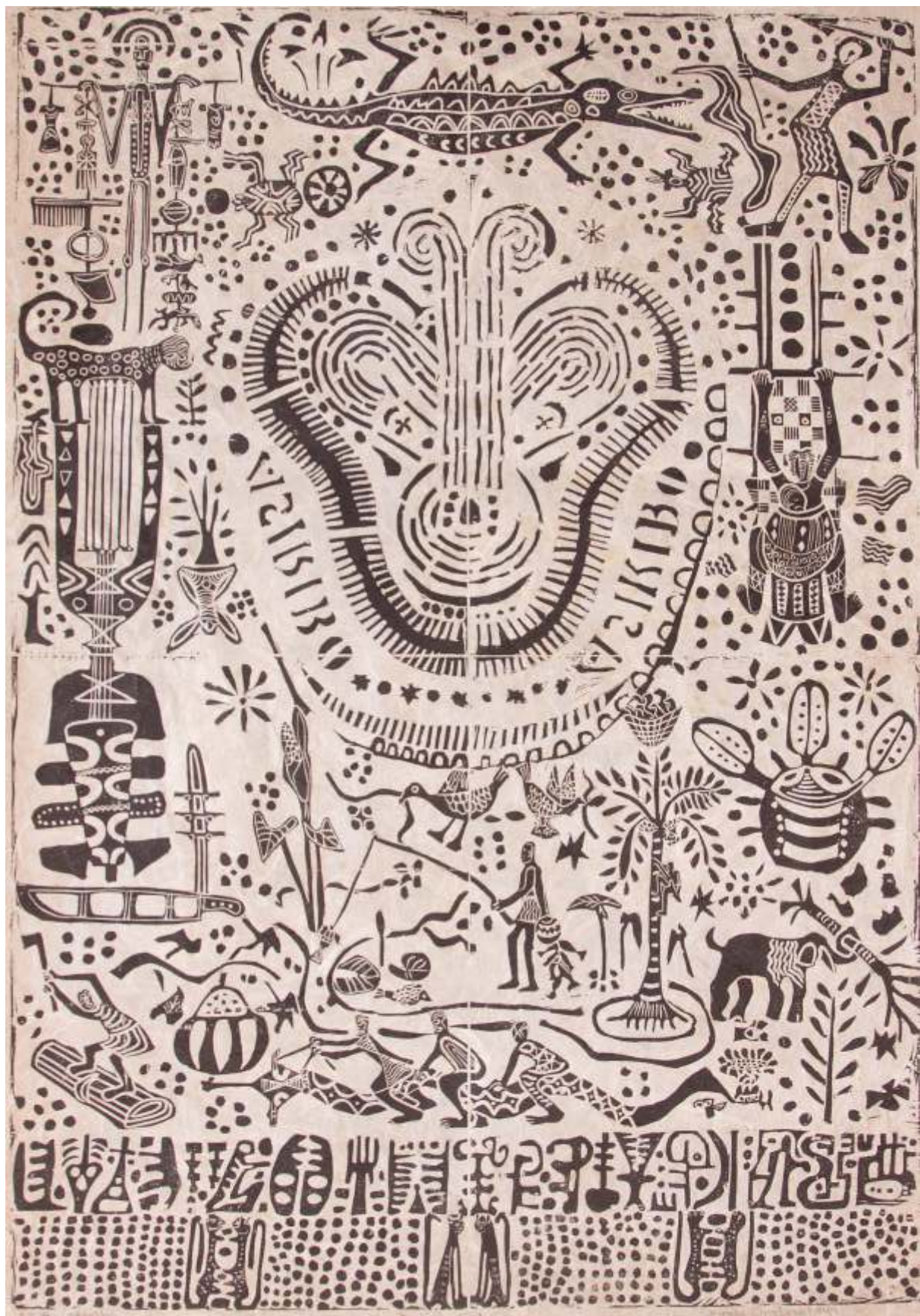












**Asiribo (May Your Secret Remain covered)**

Lino Engraving on rice paper

85 x 59 cm

1974







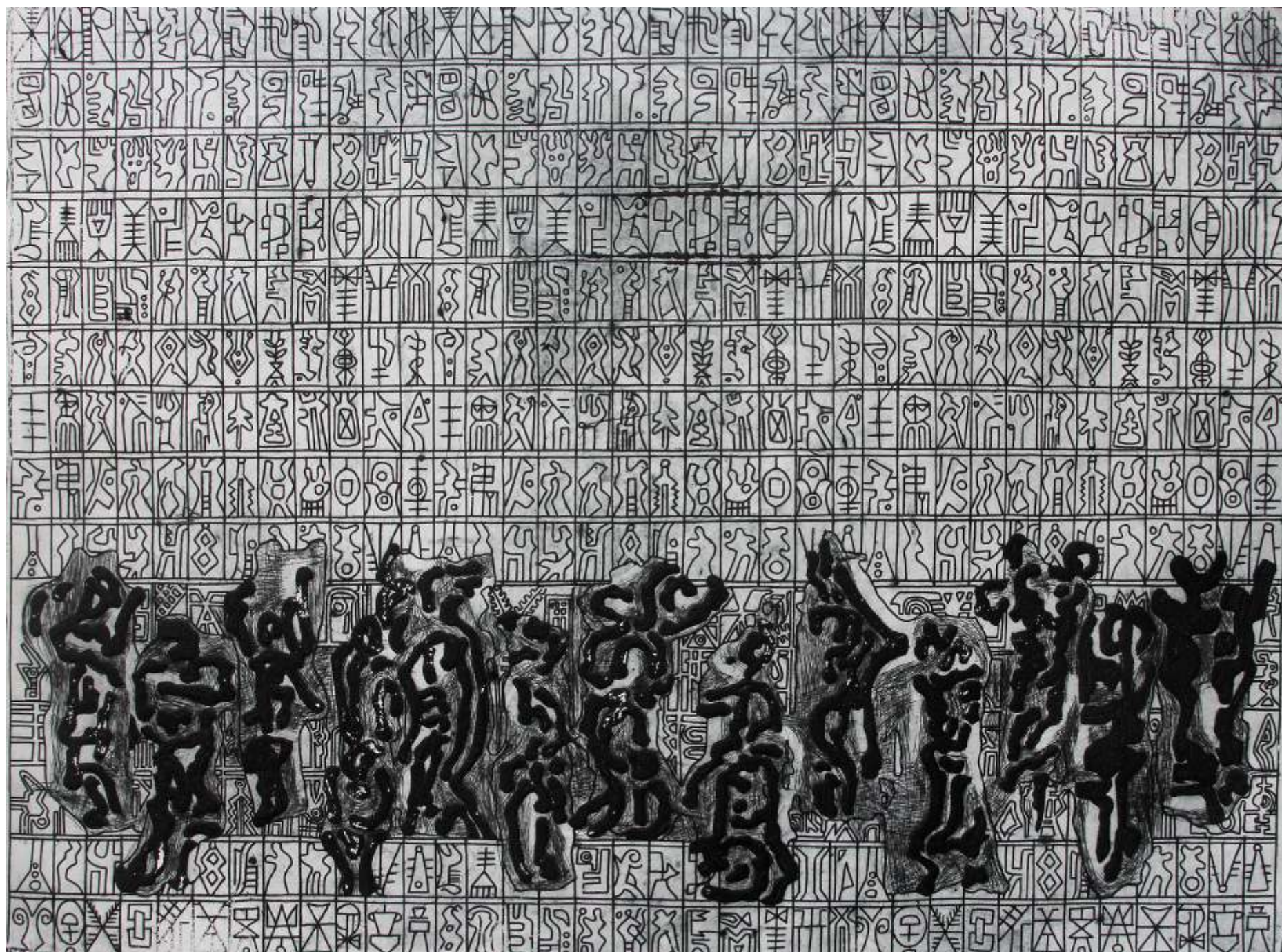


Large, stylized, high-contrast characters, likely a form of ancient or traditional script, possibly Chinese or Japanese, arranged in a horizontal row at the bottom of the image.



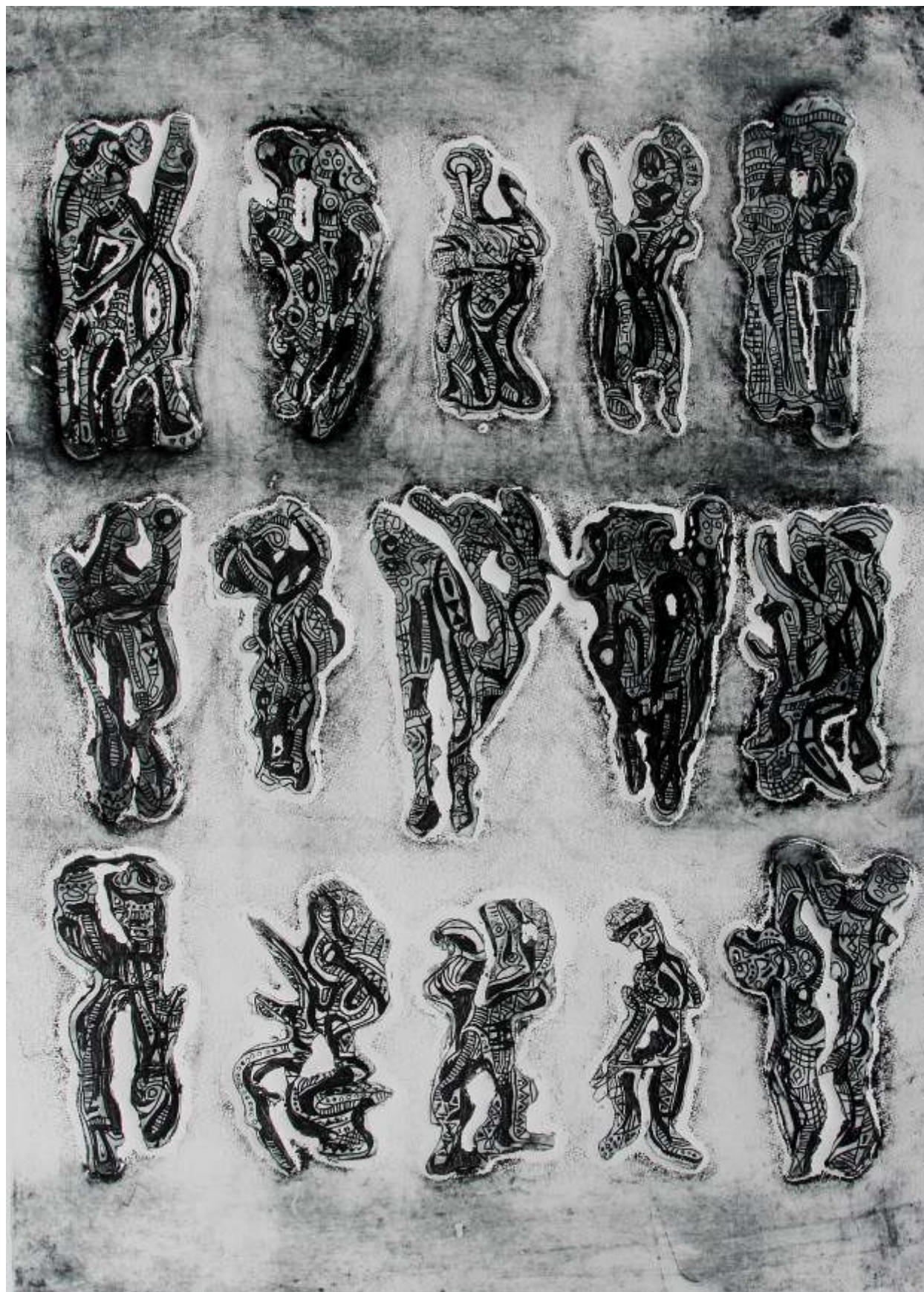






**Ibiebe**  
(Thanksgiving Dance I)  
Plastograph  
56.7 x 76 cm  
2019





**Atasa I**  
Deep Etching  
95.9 x 56.7 cm  
2019





**Atasa II**  
Deep Etching  
95.9 x 56.7 cm  
2019



### **Atasa I & II'**

'Atasa' is an Urhobo narrative invocation. Sometimes in a gathering where someone is telling a story, someone will interrupt the narrator to say "Atasa oh!" and then there'll be a response of "Ume!". That was the word I chose to bring out the Urhobo feeling about life. I use this series to highlight different feelings which epitomise what the Urhobo consider being human is all about. I assign names and concepts of different things into the figures in the work. For example Erhie is a butterfly and our people believe that the Erhie that is flying about represents a human's guardian spirit.

Bruce Onobrakpeya













Tive Ephrana Danure, Tive Edara?  
(Where do these birds come from, where are they bound?)

Plastograph  
75 x 107 cm  
1985



**TIVE EPHRA NA DANURE, TIVE EDARA**  
**(where do the birds come from, wither are they bound?)**

Cosmic Hawks!  
The omen was clear  
The summon urgent.  
No time to say goodbye  
As a sudden eruption  
Sets survivors afloat!  
On a tortious  
Sometimes charless  
Refugee trail. Where do these birds come from,  
Wither are they bound?

A replay of refugee episodes  
Laden on the wings of the birds  
And projected on the wide sky screen  
Shows horror, frequency  
And global magnitude  
Of one man's greatest scourge.

See the Red Sea open  
To allow the Isralietes  
Pass into forty years  
Rample in the desert  
See the same Red Sea  
Give water-burial  
To pursuing Egyptian  
Soldiers

These phantoms  
Agents of destabilisation  
Also force nature to rebel.  
Is not the sahara.  
In a reckless  
Territorial expansion  
Waging a south bound war  
Of drought and deluge?

What name shall we give  
To that child  
Born prematurely,  
In a filthy  
Refugee camp  
Where the mother ad to wait  
Three months for her supposed countrz  
To send a boat to pick her?

Man is not helpless  
He can break the jinx  
With controlled pronouncements  
Actions and reactions  
Preparedness for emergency  
And prompt response to SOS  
We can tame these birds  
Even harness them<sup>1</sup>  
For human progress.

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Onobrakpeya : Poems & Lithographs, print notes and comments No 9, 1989, p 22











CHRISTIANITY









**Ore Ri Canaan (Feast in Canaan) Red Base**

Plastograph  
55.5 x 76 cm  
1982

















**The Lord is my Shepherd**

Plastograph  
53 x 78 cm  
1974













Detail, Saint Paul





**Saint Paul**  
Plastograph  
77 x 58 cm  
1979





Detail, Mother Teresa (Black & White)





**Mother Teresa (Black & White)**

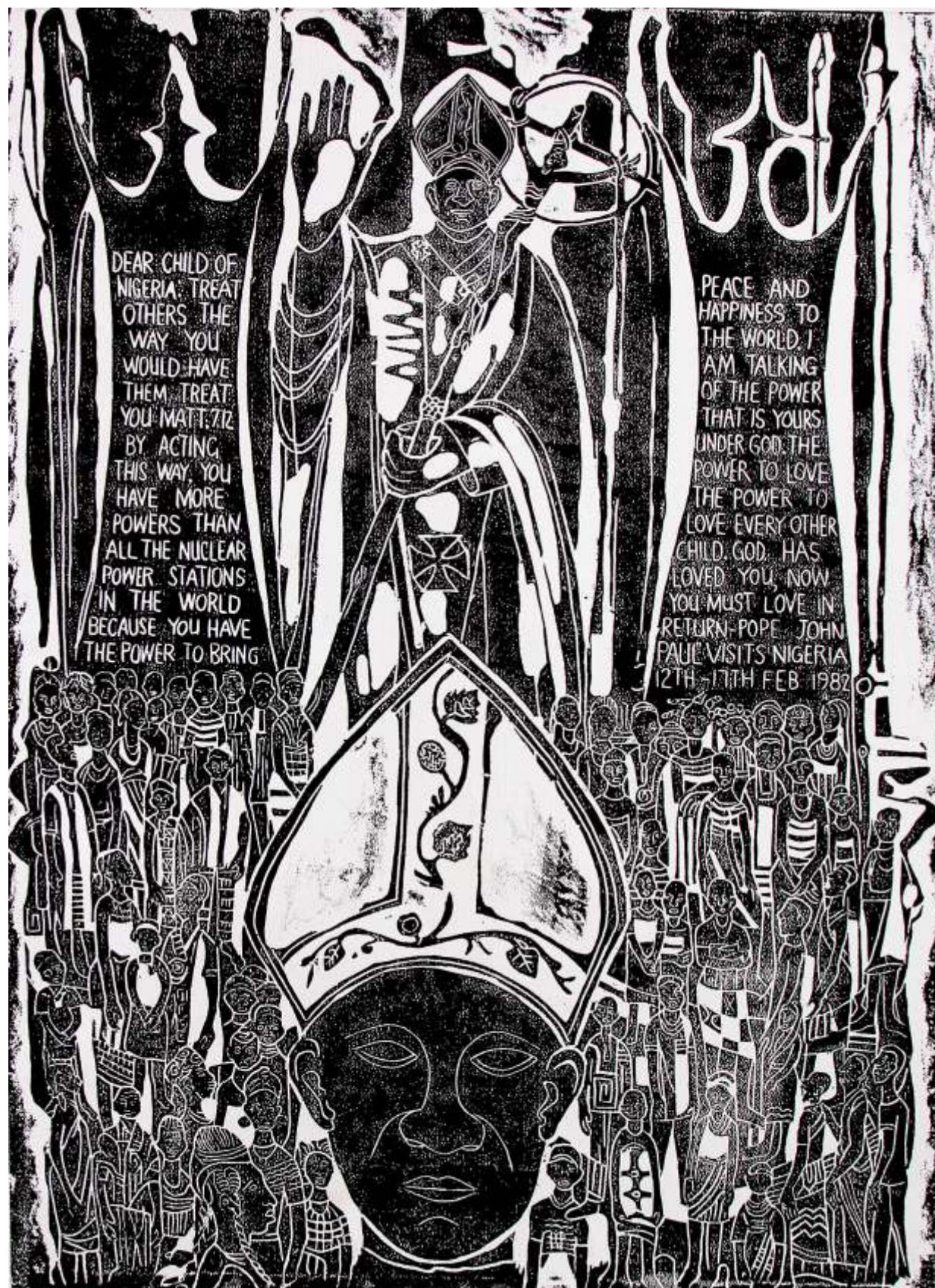
Block Print  
131.4 x 93 cm  
2017





Detail, Pope John Paul (Second edition)





**Pope John Paul (Second edition)**

Block Print  
131.4 x 96 cm  
2017







WOMEN









**Nudes and Protest**

Prints  
2007









**Chibok Girls (3/7)**

Plastograph

73 x 53 cm

2017





09-09-15


Dear Chibok girls,

This is to let you know that our spirits are there with you in the Sambisa Forest where you have been suffering in the hands of kidnappers for a period of over 510 days. As grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, citizens of Nigeria and the World, we share your pains. We daily work and pray for your release from the forbidden forest. I feel intensely what you are going through because I too had been kidnapped as a child during the Ekene festival, but was miraculously rescued before being taken away into the forest.

I dedicate this installation called "Sambisa Forest" to you. It is a prayer to the Supreme intelligence for your release.

In the picture protesting mothers parade behind totems which represent you girls, the armed insurgents, denied or delayed laurels, and most importantly, slaves of empowerment which you will receive at the end of your travail.

Finally dear girls, don't lose hope, your present state may be a design by the creator to put you at the top of the world.

Sincerely,  


Obọ-mẹ-yoma









Detail, I love my wives, (Eyame Jewwe)





**I love my wives, (Eyame Jewwe)**

Etching (Ebony series II)

56 x 38 cm

1988





Detail, Opha ve Ikopha (Bride & Maids)





**Opha ve Ikopha (Bride & Maids)**

Plastograph

38 x 28 cm

1994









**Ubiebi Fude**

Black Beautiful & Timeless

Plastograph

76 x 56 cm

1988

















**Igbento (Woman with Plaited Hair)**

Plastograph  
76 x 56 cm  
1988







IN CONVERSATION





L-R; Uche Okeke, neighbor & Bruce Onobrakpeya



wagboje, Jimoh Akolo and Afolabi at one of the Mbari workshops



A young Bruce Onobrakpeya admiring a piece of art at NCAST in Zaria



Group of Art students at NCAST Zaria. From L-R; Demas Nwoko, Oseloka Osadebe & Bruce Onobrakpeya



# In Conversation: Prof. Bruce Onobrakpeya & Sandra Mbanefo Obiago

**Sandra Mbanefo Obiago:** This is a very big month for you Prof. Please tell us what happened sixty years ago.

**BO:** We thank God. Sixty years ago I was in the same class with Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko and they were talking about exhibitions and I felt left out because I hadn't shown any of my works yet. So during my second university year summer holiday, I went to Ughelli where I was to do a vacation job which never materialized, but instead, I decided to show my works. That's how I got started. In August 1959 I put on my first show in Ughelli, which was opened by then Canon, but later Bishop Agori Iwe. It's been 60 years and I felt like marking the time with several small shows, such as the one you are opening at the Wheatbaker with my prints, then one at Freedom Park showcasing my new installation works, and later in August, we will hopefully do an exhibition at the Harmattan workshop in Agbarha Otor.

**SMO:** Let's take a walk down memory lane. Do you still remember the artworks you showed at your first exhibition?

**BO:** Yes I still have some of them. One of them, which you really liked, was the hornbill. I was inspired by what the Urhobos think about life and creation. I also showed a few prints of the northern landscape.

**SMO:** Tell me a little bit about what it was like as a student at NCAST – the Nigerian College of Arts, Science & Technology in Zaria (later renamed Ahmadu Bello University). Did the school encourage students to show their works?

**BO:** No they didn't. Dr. Taylor, who was in charge of the graphics department, frowned on students showing their art. He believed they would regret it in the future because the works would look immature. But this helped us build confidence in ourselves and our production outside the school.

**SMO:** Who or what was the biggest positive influence during your school years? What prepared you for your years as a practicing artist?

**BO:** Well, first and most important was that I acquired skills such as drawing and painting; those basic elements of art. The other influence was positive peer influence from Nwoko, Okeke, Grillo and others. We discussed art with each other after classes and I think that was a powerful background to our studies.

**SMO:** This was also a very exciting time in the political arena because Nigeria was about to become independent as a nation. How did this affect your work and your mood?

**BO:** The political giants were at their best: Azikiwe, Awolowo, Nkrumah, and Kenyatta, and we felt a part of it all. We were preparing ourselves to be the new African.

**SMO:** How did you experience this new African consciousness? What were your aspirations at the time?

**BO:** What was going on before that time was that Nigerians were ashamed of their ideas and afraid of sharing them. Only things from abroad were accepted. The Zaria Arts Society taught that we should go back, look at ourselves, and bring out some of the good things from our history, use them, and carry them forward to create a better future. The atmosphere of nationalism helped to give us new ideas and identities, and helped us get motivated to create.

**SMO:** Were you among the first class of art graduates?

**BO:** No, we were not the first. The first class began in 1956 with Yusuf Grillo and others. We were the third set and what was significant about us was we dared to look different from the others. We were "abnormal" because we accepted we were art students and carried our easels about without shame, drawing things from all around our environment.

**SMO:** This really comes through in your work. Like the Sahelian Masquerades series, which reflected a celebration of our culture.

**BO:** Celebration and building up of our identity.



**SMO:** It is interesting that identity is still a universal theme which we are still struggling with today. With globalization and the influence of social media, young people are still grappling with the concept of identity. As a grandfather, what do you think would be a key to unlocking our identity as Africans.

**BO:** We have to know that as Africans we've existed for millennia, and there are so many good things our society created. We want our people to be aware of those things and use them to propel us to the future. We'll continue to teach and inspire the young people so that they can learn and be familiar with who they are.

**SMO:** After your first successful exhibition in 1959, you returned to Zaria to complete your last two years of university?

**BO:** Yes, I actually stayed another three years because I completed one extra year and got a certificate in pedagogy. Nwoko and Okeke left after four years but I stayed behind to teach. Grillo also stayed for five years and went through the teaching course.

**SMO:** It's been a long journey since graduation. How did you become a globally celebrated artist?

**BO:** I think it's by accident. Nothing was planned. The happiest accident was that someone in Ikoyi was very helpful. She opened her parlor and invited people for two hours only every Thursday to come and see and buy art. That was when it dawned on me that art could be a valuable profession. From then, I did not look back. I had the opportunity to teach in universities but I turned it down because I thought that developing myself would bring me greater happiness.

**SMO:** But you did teach for many years through your Harmattan Workshop series.

**BO:** Yes I did. But the teaching was to provide a means to develop my art and later the art was what helped me to teach.

**SMO:** Would you say that printmaking was your first medium?

**BO:** No. In art school I studied painting. Taylor, who was the Graphics Director, wanted me to study graphics but I didn't understand what graphics was at that time. Uche, Grillo, Demas, and Simon were all doing painting or sculpture and I thought recognition came faster to painters and sculptors so I went into painting. It was after I left college and was invited to attend the art workshops organized by Ulli Beier that I realized

what Taylor wanted me to do and that graphics was more in my line of interest. From that workshop I started developing as a graphic artist and using it to develop art which was equivalent to painting and sculpture.

**SMO:** Tell us about that art.

**BO:** Printmaking involves conceptualizing an idea, drawing it and then using tools to engrave it on a platform and then pulling those ideas from the platform using a press. Instead of having one painting, you can get multiples using a plate. But there is experimentation even before getting out the first print and the experiment will produce different versions of the original idea and some of which are more beautiful than the initial thought. That's printmaking. It's a democratic medium because once a plate is made, the work can be multiplied to reach a large number of people. The work might be cheaper but there is a joy that comes from reaching a large number of people with just one work.

**SMO:** What was the reason you wanted an exhibition on prints? What is the essence of the joy you get from printmaking?

**BO:** Printmaking has a kind of finish that can't be gotten from any other medium. It combines painting, sculpture, graphics and other aesthetics and art forms. In art schools abroad the printmaking studio is in the center and everything, from painters, sculptors and ceramists, revolves around it, because printmaking is the core. They create happy accidents with color and form. It is like striking a mine, you strike it and it comes out strong.

**SMO:** Are there any of the prints being shown in this exhibition that you're particularly excited about?

**BO:** There are a few pieces that came out of what I'd describe as a hydrochloric acid experiment or the baptism of the acid bath. They were the beginning of a lot of the innovation that created something new that can be labeled as "Nigerian printmaking" and can't be found anywhere else in the world. It was the basis on which I developed other techniques and innovations which will be featured in this exhibition.

**SMO:** What are some of the main themes that you've tried to communicate through your work over the 60 years of your artistic journey?

**BO:** The first prints were to investigate what our people thought about the world and its creation. They addressed folklores and mythology. We did not have writing in the olden days, so folktales were a way of passing down information. It was very important to explore those concepts and beliefs in





L-R; Prof. Bruce, Uche Okeke, Pat Oyelola, Dr. Dike, Mrs. Ego Okeke & Demas Nwoko in 1997



Ben Enwonwu & Bruce Onobrakpeya at Onobrakpeya's exhibition in 1961



Prof. Bruce at an exhibition of his works in New Delhi, India



Prof. Bruce at his 70th birthday preparations in August 2002



art. As time went on, I became interested in the Nigerian people and they are reflected in my work. I use prints to show development in the country as well as issue and ideas. Some of the works talk about the totems of the Delta which highlight the environmental problems in the Delta, mentioning names like Ken Saro-Wiwa. Lately I've used prints to speak about the Nigerian girls who were kidnapped into the Sambisa forest. I use my art to comment, question and advise. The prints help me to reflect on aspects of life such as our philosophies, history, environment and conceptualizing the future. The prints help you to dream and dream very well.

**SMO:** You've also done quite a lot of prints on women such as the Chibok girls as you just mentioned, and a series on Nigerian women protesting. Would you call yourself a feminist?

**BO:** Well, I haven't thought about that. I just know there are issues that affect women that I'm interested in, for instance the issue of inheritance. Daughters do so much more for their parents than sons, regardless of whether they are married or not. In the 'Aba Na Nya' series I talked about what I described as *Omotejuoho*, meaning the girl is also a human being. I talk about the importance of women in society and according them more rights. If you say that's being a feminist, I guess I am.

**SMO:** I see you as a feminist and an enabler. You've also done so much for the youth. You've mentored so many generations of artists through your Harmattan Workshop series. Tell us how the series started and what joy you've derived from it.

**BO:** The Ulli Beier workshops led me to creating my own workshop. He gave me a remedial course which made me go back to printmaking. I also really liked his idea of teaching so when the time was ripe I decided to create something that was like the Mbari Mbayo workshops in Ibadan, Osogbo and Ife. I decided to acquire land in Agbarha-Otor and create an atmosphere that would bring in professional artists and youth who have never studied art; a place for Nigerians and foreigners to interact, share ideas and learn skills. It took ten years to build and complete and in 1998 we opened the first workshop and this year will be our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. We've had people from all over Nigeria, Africa, Europe, America and India attend the workshops. What is holding us back from getting even more people from around the world is money to take care of their transportation. We want to be able to bring people who cannot pay their way. It's been a tremendous success that has helped develop artists and the entire surrounding community. It has become a center of learning where all the schools in the area from Asaba, Benin, Abraka, Warri and Ughelli bring busloads of children. It has brought a sense of pride, employment, education, recreation as well as tourism and development in the area.

**SMO:** That is a perfect example of art being an engine of development in a community.

**BO:** Yes, that's it. Once something like that is established in a community, you find that life revolves around it. In our gallery upstairs there are pictures of traditional rulers and ordinary people frying garri. It inspires people to be alive because it inspires everyone to develop.

**SMO:** I want you to speak a bit about your personal inspiration. You've been going for 60 years, been celebrated around the world and called a UNESCO *Living Human Treasure*. How do you manage to continue to fuel your creativity?

**BO:** It's like a journey and once you start you don't look back. It's like the proverb which says if you are rowing upstream you have to keep the oars working because the moment you rest you go downstream. In art what you create leads to something else and once you've developed your inner eye to see beauty all around you, new ideas will always come. It is essential for the youth to know that to create art you need a body of people not just one person. Once that group is created, the burden of creativity is shared and everyone shares in the glory of what is being created.

**SMO:** You've spoken about the communal aspect of creativity and being emotionally connected to your community but what about your personal walk? It's not always easy, and I'm sure you've had ups and downs. How do you keep going?

**BO:** Everything that happens can always be connected to art and joy can be gotten out of it. As soon as you're engaged with an idea that is beautiful any other ugly ideas vanish. If you're a creative person, although unpalatable things might be happening, the moment you get excited about and start working on an idea, all the other gloomy thoughts vanish. It becomes a weapon for continuous growth and creativity.

**SMO:** How did you become so good?

**BO:** I don't know how good I am (laughter). I always tell people that sometimes one has to understand the value of not being so good. Uche Okeke was able to enter the civil service by passing the civil service examination. I took the exam but didn't pass. Perhaps if I had passed I would be in the civil service and would have followed a different path.

**SMO:** I asked you once how you became so good and you told me "if you do the same thing every day, you will eventually become good." You're an amazing artist and it's such a joy and an honor to showcase your work. You have works that explore



both traditional and Christian religion. What do you think is the difference between religion and spirituality?

**BO:** That is a very tough question. I was thinking you wanted to ask what the difference between traditional and Christian religion is, and I'll tell you that they are one and the same.

**SMO:** You've led me down a different path so let me rephrase my question. We talk a lot about religion but I think that the important thing is the spirit. I see a lot of beauty in your work which touches my spirit and gives me hope. So maybe a better question is what gives you hope?

**BO:** I think that everyone is created for a particular purpose and perhaps the struggle people experience is for them to figure out their purpose. Once you come to understand there are certain advantages God has given to you and certain questions he wants you to answer, it brings happiness because you know your purpose. As the first born, my father told me before he died that he carried the load of the family, but that I would have a bigger load to carry. I didn't understand because I was too young. Now as an adult I realized he was telling me that I would take care of my brothers and sisters and the family. There is goodness and joy in knowing you can help someone else move forward. That kind of joy is spiritual and once you identify it, you have no problem living because you are living according to your purpose.

**SMO:** You've always had a strong connection to literature and explored the work of the literary masters through your works. Please tell us about your writing and your favorite literary works.

**BO:** When I was in university, I was struggling with trying to express myself. Uche Okeke, who was already a prize-winning poet, told me not to worry and just write what I wanted even if it was in pidgin. He said someday what I write will become something people will want to read but I didn't take him seriously. When I read the works of Amos Tutuola and noticed that he wasn't writing in the Queen's English, I realized that what is important are the ideas you have. Apart from creating works, I also like to write about them, because doing so helps people understand my drawings and paintings. It has led to many volumes where I write about each work. Literature and art go hand-in-hand. I admire Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and J.P. Clark and sometimes I take extracts from their works and illustrate them.

**SMO:** What is your prayer now that you're celebrating 60 years of studio practice?

**BO:** My prayer is for my works to be in places where they can be studied and seen and where they can inspire people who are up-and-coming. The second prayer is to be able to develop the Harmattan Workshop to a position where others can sustain it from where I left off and continue to use it as I conceived it.

**SMO:** You are handing over to the next generation. That's wonderful. Please would you share your thoughts about joy?

**BO:** That's a tough one. You wake up in the morning and can stand on your feet and move around, you can breathe and eat, you can see the beauty around; these are all joyful things. Being with family and friends, sharing my experiences with people, opening exhibitions, receiving recognition for my contributions to art; they are a source of joy. I have a tree behind my house and at 6:35am every day, there is a particular bird that sings and brings me joy.

**SMO:** That is so beautiful. Tell us your thoughts about love.

**BO:** There are different levels of love. One goes through boyish infatuation and eventually gets married and then has children, and also brothers and sisters in-laws and friends. Sharing food, ideas, experiences and so on are elements of love. In my career I meet people who are passionate about what I do and who go out of their way to help me solve problems; those are elements of love that are very dear to me.

**SMO:** Beautiful. Now speak to us about pain, because we all go through pain.

**BO:** All I want to say about pain is the one I experienced when I thought things weren't going well for me. I had issues matriculating from secondary school and entering university so I started teaching. It was difficult because at that time they changed the scheme from Cambridge examination to what we now call GCE. It got to a point that I started to feel stagnant, so much so that some of the students I was supposed to be teaching got matriculated and left and so I felt ashamed. By the third year I decided to leave Benin, although I had no ability nor funds to actually leave, but I got a teaching appointment in Ondo. While there I met someone in the education system who enrolled me without my knowledge to take the entrance exam for Ahmadu Bello University. What I'm trying to say is that I felt the pain of failure in Benin, but all of that pain was meant to push me out of Benin to a place where my future could take off. Sometimes when we have pain and we think it was sent by the devil as punishment, it might have been sent by God to elevate you.



**SMO:** What about success, how have you dealt with it?

**BO:** I think success is even more difficult to manage than failure. I had friends whose names I won't mention who were victims of their success. The way you have to manage failure is the way you need to manage success, which is even more difficult to manage.

**SMO:** Thank you sir. What you said is so true.  
Let's discuss some of your works, like 'Lunar Myths'

**BO:** It explores mythology and folklore and how our people account for the heavenly bodies and what they associate with it. The 'Lunar Myths' has two tales; the first one is what the Urhobos think about the moon. They believe it's like any animal and that it can come down to vegetate. But once it came down, it was held by someone and there was no moonlight for many years until the elders found out and released it. The second one shows someone lying down from an early Urhobo Christian myth. In violation of the injunction not to work on the Sabbath, the figure on the moon disobeyed and was put on the moon as punishment and as an example to others who might want to disobey the law.

**SMO:** Interesting. You also have quite a few prints which illustrate biblical stories and prayers like 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and 'Saint Paul' where Paul is depicted as African.

**BO:** I did the 'Stations of the Cross' for the church in Ebutte-Meta and right from the beginning the people never liked it. But the Cardinal was very advanced and consecrated my stations of the cross. The stations were there for about forty-five years before they were finally taken down. The main issue was that the people in that church and some reverends said I distorted history by showing the figures as Nigerians and that there were no Nigerians at the time when Christ was born and I was wrong for doing so. My argument was that one should show Christ-likeness instead of mimicking the dress and nationality of Jesus Christ. The people that were depicted in early Christian illustrations were done by the Romans and not the Jews. The Romans used the people in their studios to pose for those images. So it's wrong to copy the Roman depictions instead of putting our own people there and bring out the spirit of Christ. But the people didn't understand the importance of relating it closer to home. Recently when we were in Agbarha-Otor, Sam Ovraiti asked me about the *Igbe* which is a kind of traditional worship and religion where they sometimes dance into a trance and why they weren't in Agbarha-Otor anymore. I told him they were still there and to look at how people dance in the church. The spirit of the *Igbe* people has been incorporated into the new Christian religion. What I'm trying to

show is that you can worship Christ better if you include your best expression of joy the way you know it and not the way it is done in Jerusalem or Rome.

**SMO:** Why did you do a print of Mother Theresa?

**BO:** My son Ejiro came to me with a request from a catholic church in Kenya that wanted an image of Mother Theresa. I'd heard of her but I never really knew how deeply involved she was in developing life in Calcutta. I did several of them, one of which went to the church for their celebratory festival. They sold it and raised money for the church. When I have a subject I typically turn it into a series so I started the Mother Theresa series.

**SMO:** Tell me about the print called 'Tive Ephrana Danure, Tive Edara? (Where do these birds come from, where are they bound?).

**BO:** It is inspired by Gauguin's painting from Tahiti '*Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*' In the painting he traces a lifespan from childhood to old age. The first part of it is Exodus as it is depicted in the Bible where the Egyptians pursued the Israelites through the Red Sea. The middle part shows the exodus of Fulani herdsmen and their animals from drought in the Sahelian regions. The third part is the Ghana-must-go syndrome where Nigerians asked Ghanaians to leave. It is a commentary on the forced movement of people from one place to another. The question becomes what made these things happen, where did it come from and where is it headed.

**SMO:** What about 'Asiriabo'?

**BO:** It is a Yoruba proverb that means 'may your secrets remain secret'

**SMO:** That's so beautiful and it's on special paper too. Where did you get it from?

**BO:** I got some of them from Amsterdam and London after the Ulli Beier workshops back in those days. But for a very long time I haven't had rice paper.

**SMO:** What about the 'Odovan (A self-given social name)' print from 1973. It is very interesting.

**BO:** In a gathering you have a name which you give yourself which everyone knows you by. It isn't your given name or a title that is given to you. This is a name you give yourself borne from your personal experiences. When in a small gathering you have to call everyone's odovan unless you'll offend them.



The exceptions are chiefs who are called by their titles or in large gatherings where you can't call everyone's name so you only call a few and ask everyone else to hold their odovan.

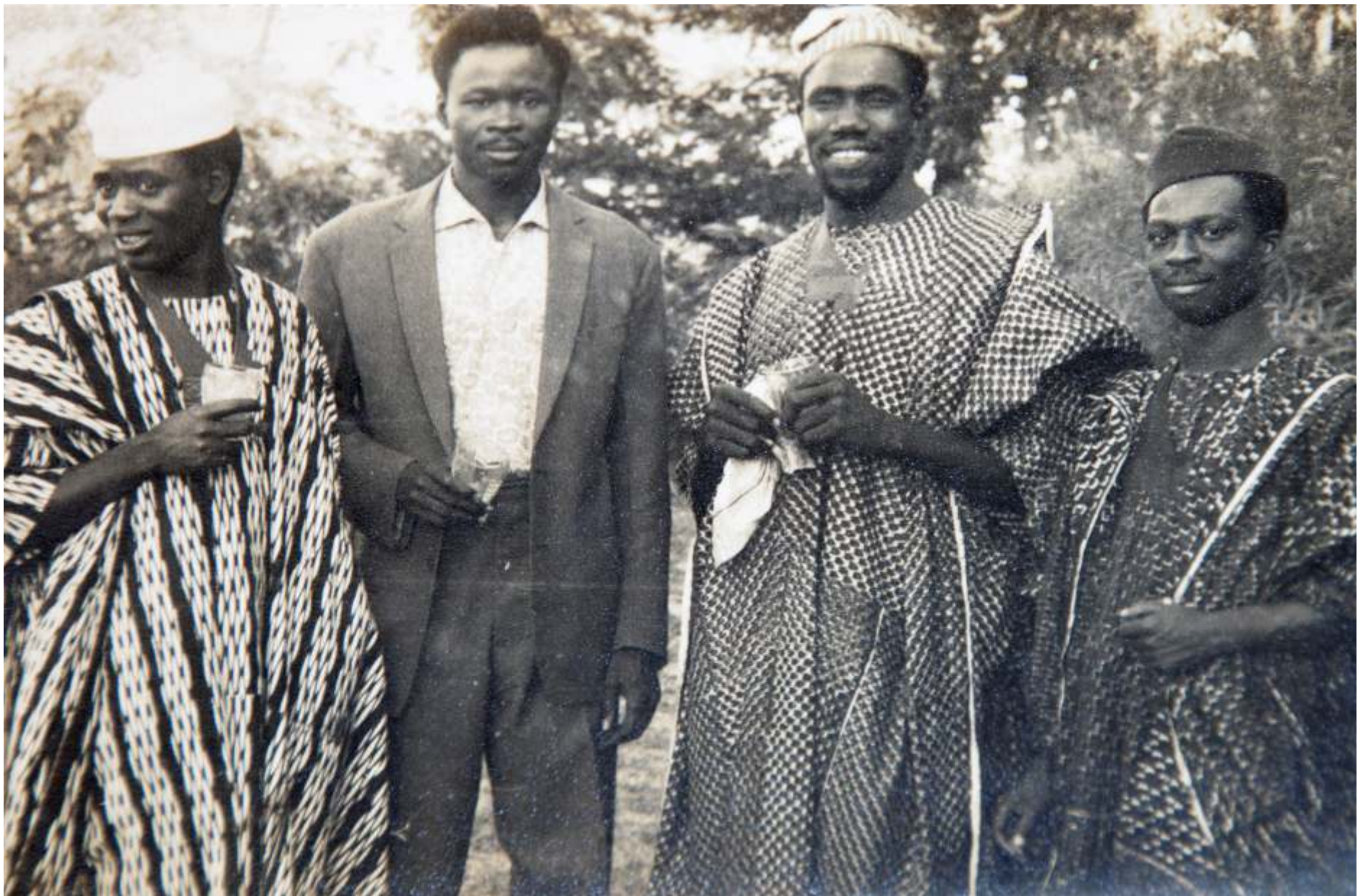
**SMO:** What is your odovan?

**BO:** My odovan is *Eni* which is elephant. When your odovan is called, you will respond by telling everyone the importance of

the name you have chosen to bear. When they call me Eni, my response is "you can always tell where the elephant has passed by". Aside from being big, the elephant is also a very protective animal with a long memory.

**SMO:** I can definitely see why your odovan is *ENI*. You are indeed leaving us an elephant legacy. Thank you so much Sir for sharing highlights of your incredible 60 year journey. God bless you.

Lagos, April 2019



R-L; Bruce Onobrakpeya, Oseloka Osadebe, Adamu Baike, frmr VC University of Benin, and Ajayi in Zaria







DREAMS



### **Eghrighri' (Rainbow)**

The rainbow series is the myth about the rainbow. Our people believe that the rainbow could fall from the sky. You can go to the point where it touches the ground with a cutlass and strike it. Once you strike it, you might be lucky and get a lot of riches. On the other side you might not get riches but instead you receive the spirit of adventure. So here is the man lying down with a cutlass and he has cut the rainbow.





**Eghirighri (Rainbow)**

Plastograph  
79.5 x 107 cm  
1985













Detail, Lunar Myths II





**Lunar Myths II**

Plastograph  
53 x 79 cm  
1970







# CURRICULUM VITAE





Prof. Bruce and Dele Oluseye, studio assistant at Ovuomaroroo Studio & Gallery, April 2019



# CV

|  |  |      |   |
|--|--|------|---|
| FULL NAME:                                     | BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA  | 1984 | Artist-in-Residence, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan                                     |
| DATE OF BIRTH:                                 | 30th August, 1932  | 1989 | Artist-in-Resident, Tacoma Public School, Tacoma, Washington State, U.S.A.                                  |
| PLACE OF BIRTH:                                | Agbarha-Otor, Delta State  | 1991 | Artist-in-Residence, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare   |
| NATIONALITY:                                   | Nigerian   | 1991 | Artist-in-Residence, MOJA: An African American Arts Festival, Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A.            |
| MARITAL STATUS:                                | Married Victoria (Nee Quel), 3 Sons, and 2 Daughters   | 1998 | Initiated and participated in the 1 <sup>st</sup> Harmattan Workshop at Agbarha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria. |
| EDUCATION AND TRAINING                         |  | 1999 | Organized and participated in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Harmattan Workshop at Agbarha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria  |
| 1941 – 1951                                    | ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS Ughelli, Sapele and Benin   |      |   |
| 1957 – 1962                                    | Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria  | 2000 | Organized and participated in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria. |
| QUALIFICATIONS                                 |  | 2002 | Organized and participated in the 4th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| Diploma in Fine Arts (Dip. F.A.)               |  |      |   |
| Post Graduate Arts Teacher's Certificate (ATC) |  | 2003 | Organized and participated in the 5th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| ACADEMIC CAREER                                |  | 2004 | Organized and participated in the 6th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| 1953 – 1956                                    | Arts Teacher, Western Boys' High School, Benin City  |      |   |
| 1957   | Arts Teacher, Ondo Boy's High School   | 2005 | Organized and participated in the 7th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| 1961   | Printmaking workshops under Ru Van Rossen Organised  |      |   |
| 1963   | by Ulli Beier in Mbari Artists & Writers Club, Ibadan ,Mbari Mbayo Oshogbo                         | 2006 | Organized and participated in the 8th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| 1973   | And Department of African Studies Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife                                  |      |   |
| 1963 – 1980                                    | Arts Teacher, St. Gregory's College, Obalende, Lagos   | 2007 | Organized and participated in the 9th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.             |
| 1975   | Artists-in-Residence in Haystack Mountain of Art and Craft, Maine, U.S.A.                          | 2008 | Organized and participated in the 10th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.            |
| 1979   | Artists-in-Residence (Associate Professor), Elizabeth City State University, North Carolina, U.S.A | 2009 | Organized and participated in the 11th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria.            |



2010 Organized and participated in the 12th Harmattan Workshop at Agharha-Otor, Delta State, Nigeria. Also in 2011,2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and the 19<sup>th</sup> edition in 2017.

2014 & 2016 Attended the annual workshop and conference at Haystack Mountain School of Art and Craft Deer Isle Maine USA.

#### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

1959 First one-man exhibition, Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria.

1960 Group show of contemporary Nigerian art in the Independence Exhibition, Lagos.

1962 Art From Africa, Phelp-Stokes Fund, New York.

1965 Commonwealth Exhibition of Art, Cardiff and London.

1967 Biennale of Illustrations, Bratislava.

1967 Group show of nine Nigerian artists. Show toured London, Moscow and Warsaw.

1969 International Book Fair, Bologna

1970 St. Andrew's School, Middletown, Delaware Howard University, Washington, D.C.

1971 Commonwealth Art Gallery, London.

1972 Gallery, Watatu, Nairobi  
Newark State College, Newark, New Jersey  
Art Society of the International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C.

1973 Afro Centrum Gallery, Berlin.  
African Heritage Gallery, Nairobi

1974 Contemporary African Festival, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, and Museum of Natural History, New York.

1975 Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, D.C. Sponsored by African-American, Women's Association.

1976 Gallery of Litterio Calapai, Glencoe, Illinois.

1977 FESTAC '77 Lagos.

1977 The Best of Africa, Toronto  
Saint Paul in Contemporary Art, Vatican Museum, Rome

1978 Tenth one-man exhibition at the Goethe Institute, Lagos.

1979 Participated in the Sixth International Print Biennale, Cartwright Hall, Lister Part, Bradford, England

1979 Held a one-man exhibition of prints in Amersfoort Holland. The show was arranged by Mrs. DeVries and sponsorship was by DHV of Lagos and Amersfoort. It was opened by Prof. Ru Van Rossem of Tilburg University.

1980 Held a one-man exhibition of prints (with emphasis on printing on metal foil) at the Best of Africa Gallery, Toronto, Canada.

1980 One-man exhibition in Glatt Centrum, Zurich, Switzerland. It was sponsored by CIBA-GEIGY and SGS.

1981 – 1982 One-man exhibition of prints and paintings arranged by Galerie Glahe and opened by Nigerian Ambassador to Bonn H.E. Mohammed Lawal Rafindadi.

1982 Had a one-man exhibition of prints and paintings during the official opening of African Universities Press offices and Warehouse at the Oluyole Lay-out, Ibadan.

1983 Held a one-man exhibition of prints and painting titled Sabbatical Experiments 1978 – 1983, co-sponsored by Goethe Institute (German Cultural Institute) NIJ House, Victoria Island, Lagos, and the Society of Nigerian Artists (Lagos State Branch). The guest of honour at the opening was Susanne Wenger from Oshogbo.

1984 Held a one-man exhibition titled Bruce Onobrakpeya: 25 years of creative search, at the Foyer and Courtyard of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

1984 Held a one-man show of plastograph, prints and plastocast relief paintings to mark the Netherlands/Belgium Week at Goethe Institute Victoria Island, Lagos.

1986 Exhibition titled *Symbols of Ancestral Groves* at the Whitney Young Centre (United States Information Service), Lagos.

1988 Exhibition of Sahelian Masquerades, Italian Cultural Institute Lagos

1989 The Sahelian Masquerade was shown in: Kew Garden London, Greenwich Citizen Gallery near London, and Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington State.

1990 Participation in Group show titled African Contemporary Art-Changing Traditions, organized by studio Museum, Harlem, New York. Participated in the 44th Venice Biennale.

1990 The Horns of Freedom, National Museum Onikan, Lagos in honour of Wole Soyinka at his 50th birthday.

1990 Riegelsberger Gallery Mannheim, Germany. A show of recent art works sponsored by ABB (Asea Brown Boveri).

1990 Unity Through Arts, National Museum Onikan, Lagos sponsored by Guinness (Nigeria) Limited.



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| 1990 | Nigeria Images, Annual art show by Society of Nigerian Artists at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.  | 1999      | Amos Tutuola Show – Folklore inspired art in Honour of the novelist – Aina Onabolu House, National Gallery of Art, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.  |
| 1991 | Rebirth, Onime Arts Gallery, Fatai Atere Way, Matori, Mushin, Lagos.  | 2000      | Exhibition of paintings, prints sculptures, installations etc by Otu-Ewena Artists, Aina Onabolu, Building National Theatre Complex, Iganmu, Lagos.  |
| 1991 | Sahelian Masquerade, exhibition in National Gallery of Zimbabwe.  | 2001      | Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis – Tate Modern Gallery London.   |
| 1991 | Sahelian Masquerades, Gibbes Museum of Art Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A. College of Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A; African American Gallery Charleston, South Carolinas, U.S.A.<br>Zaria Art Society Exhibition: New Consciousness, ABU, Zaria.  | 2002      | 3rd Harmattan workshop Exhibition, Aina Onabolu Building, National Theatre Complex, Iganmu, Lagos.   |
| 1992 | Through the Sands of Time, Didi Musuem, Victoria Island, Lagos.   | JULY 2002 | Exhibition of paintings, Sculpture Mixed Media prints ceramics and installations by Otu-Ewena Artists International, Aina Onabolu, Building National Theatre Complex, Iganmu. Exhibition was in honour of Dr. Bruce Onobrakpeya at 70.   |
| 1992 | Bruce Onobrakpeya -- A retrospective. One of the events which was organized by Society of Nigerian Artists to mark the artist's 60 <sup>th</sup> birthday at the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos.  | AUG 2002  | Bruce Onobrakpeya : Window Into his Art: Retrospective Exhibition of selected works from various periods of his artistic career spanning 1957 to date, held at the National Gallery of Art , Aina Onabolu Building, National Theatre Complex, Iganmu, Lagos  |
| 1993 | The Spirit in Ascent accompanied with a 270-page monograph, a press conference and a symposium were sponsored by The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited and launched by Chief Philip Asiodu, Hon. Secretary of Petroleum and National Resources at the NIIA Victoria Island, Lagos. The Society of Nigerian Artists was a co-organizer of the events. | AUG 2002  | Participated in Exhibition organized by African Foundation for the Arts in conjunction with the Society of Nigerian Artists in Exhibition in honour of Tonie Emordi at Mmili- Mma Gallery Victoria Island, Lagos.  |
| 1993 | Grapholies – Abidjan Biennale '93   | SEPT 2002 | Exhibition: RHYTHMS OF THE FORGE: A presentation of the fourth Harmattan Workshop Series (Agbarha Otor), at the French Cultural Center, Kingsway Road ,Ikoyi, Lagos. The presentation comprised lectures demonstrations, seminar and exhibition of artworks selected from the Four Harmattan Workshops so far held i.e. 1998,1999,2000 & 2002.   |
| 1994 | Inaugural Group Show at the Pushkin Art and Antique Gallery Victoria Island, Lagos  | SEPT 2002 | Exhibition: JEWELS OF THE CRUCIBLE: This exhibition presented works produced at the 4 <sup>th</sup> Harmattan Workshop, showcasing recent developments in jewelry bronze casting, wood carving and several other media. Works of the Otu Ewena Artists International were also shown at the Nimbus art Center, Maitama Sule Street, Ikoyi Lagos. |
| 1995 | Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa – Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. One of the events of Britain's global showcase Africa '95.  | OCT 2002  | Participated in Exhibition: RHYTHMS OF FULFILMENT organized by Akwa Ibom Chapter of the Society of Nigerian Artists. Exhibition was in honour of Bruce Onobrakpeya at 70 and was opened by Governor Victor Obong Attah of Akwa Ibom State and featured the works of over 30 artists.   |
| 1996 | Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa – Malmo Konsthall, Malmo, Sweden. Ivorex Engravings including the Shrine II entered for the Seven Stories About Modern Art exhibited in London and Malmo.  |           |  |
| 1997 | Richard Singletary Collection, Partsmouth, U.S.A  |           |  |
| 1998 | Wise Art Gallery, Norfolk State University, U.S.A. Christine Gerlach Show, German Community, Abuja, Nigeria.  |           |  |
| 1999 | Exhibition of prints and paintings Alliance Francaise, Ikoyi, Lagos.<br>Promoter of Nigerian Art-Goethe Institute, Victoria Island, Lagos.<br>Christine Gerlach Show, German Community, Abuja, Nigeria.   |           |  |
| 1999 | 1st and 2nd Harmattan Workshop Exhibition, Aina Onabolu House, National Gallery of Modern Art, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.   |           |  |



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| NOV 2002   | Exhibition: 7th INTERNATIONAL GROUP SHOW AND ART FESTIVAL. This exhibition was organized by the Global Culture Center in collaboration with National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Enugu, featuring several artists from all over the world including Japan. | MAR. 2010  | Africa Now. Auction / Exhibition “African Modern and Contemporary Art” organized by Bonhams, Manhattan, New York, USA,  |
| 2002       | Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta: Showed Installation <i>Akporode</i> at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Exhibition expected to tour various cities in the U.S.   | APRIL 2010 | Retrospective Art Exhibition by Bruce Onobrakpeya at Grillo Pavilion, Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria. This Exhibition was accompanied with a lecture – Bruce Onobrakpeya: The Legacy by Prof. dele Jegede.   |
| 2003       | Portfolio of Art and Literature. Exhibition / Book Launch at Nimbus Gallery, Falomo, Ikoyi, Lagos.   | APRIL 2010 | African Art Auction 1 organised by Nike Art and Culture Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria.   |
| 2005       | Celebrate! “Nigerian Art for the Commonwealth” (CHOGM) Show, Abuja   | APRIL 2010 | Terra Kulture/ Golden Jubilee of Nigeria Art auction, Lagos, Nigeria.   |
| 2005       | Art and Democracy, a group exhibition mounted during 5 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Democracy in Nigeria; held at Nelrose Hotel, Asaba, Delta State.   | MAY 2010   | Group exhibition “Evolving Currents” Art Exhibition in celebration of 50 years of Nigeria’s Independence Anniversary, organized by Iroko Arts and Lifestyle, in Abuja, Nigeria.   |
| 2006       | WHERE GODS AND MORTALS MEET. - New York, Columbia and Washington Dc.   | MAY 2010   | Africa Auction/Philp de Pury and Company, New York, U.S.A.  |
| MAY 2006   | Jewels of Nomadic Images, held at Quintessence Gallery, Falomo, Ikoyi, Lagos.  | AUG. 2010  | Group Exhibition. Third edition of the International Art Expo, jointly organized by AGAN and NGA  |
| MAY 2006   | Dakar Biennial for Arts (Dak’Art 2006) Dakar, Senegal.   | NOV. 2011  | “Beyond Imagination” An Exhibition of Artworks by Nigerian Masters (Artists exhibited include Ben Enwonwu, Twins Seven Seven, Muraine Oyelami, Erhabor Emokpai, Bruce Onobrakpeya and a few others) at the Thought Pyramid Exhibition Center, Abuja, Nigeria. |
| FEB 2007   | Living Masters Exhibition, coordinated by Mydrim Gallery, Held at Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, Lagos.   | OCT. 2012  | “Jewels of Nomadic Images” Exhibition at Skoto Gallery, New York, USA.  |
| APRIL 2008 | Auction / Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civi Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.   | MAY 2012   | Auction / Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.   |
| MAY 2008   | Art Expo, organized by Art Gallery Association of Nigeria (AGAN) in conjunction with National Gallery of Art (NGA), held at the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos.  | MAY 2012   | Group exhibition “Bruce Onobrakpeya and the Harmattan Experiments” at the 10th edition of the Dakar Biennale, Dakar, Senegal.   |
| OCT 2008   | October Rain. Society of Nigerian Artists (S.N.A) group exhibition – Held at the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos.   | MAY 2012   | Auction/Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.   |
| NOV 2008   | Auction / Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.  | MAY 2012   | Group exhibition “Bruce Onobrakpeya and the Harmattan Experiments” at the 10th edition of the Dakar Biennale, Dakar, Senegal.   |
| APRIL 2009 | Auction / Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.  | NOV. 2012  | Retrospective Exhibition at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.   |
| APRIL 2009 | Africa Now. Auction / Exhibition at Bonham, London, United Kingdom.  | 2012       | Award by Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria for Annual Convocation Fine Art Education.   |
| OCT. 2009  | October Rain. Society of Nigerian Artists (S.N.A) group exhibition – Held at the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos.   | NOV. 2013  | “Recent Experimental Prints, Paintings and Low relief Sculptures” at Temple Muse, Victoria Island, Lagos.   |
| MAR. 2010  | Auction / Exhibition organized by Arthouse Contemporary Limited, at Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos.  | 2013       | Totem of The Delta Exhibition, Ugbowo Campus University of Benin, Benin City. Printmaking Odyssey lecture, Ugbowo Campus  |



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|------|---|
| 2014 | University of Benin, Benin City.<br>Master class, lecture and demonstration,<br>Faculty of the Arts, Ekewain Campus<br>University of Benin, Benin City.<br>Dubai Art fair, curated by Mydrim Art Gallery.<br>Art in the Nigerian Century – an Exhibition on<br>Nigerian Contemporary art, curated by<br>Adhiambo Odaga of Clear Coast<br>Communications.<br>Exhibition of mixed media and prints at Temple<br>Muse, Victoria Island Lagos.<br>Attended Art Conference at the Haystack<br>Mountain School of Arts & Crafts<br>Deer Isle, Maine , USA.<br>UHS (Urhobo Historical Society) Life -Time<br>Service Award for high professional<br>achievement and patriotic acts that enhance<br>the image of the Urhobo people. Awarded to<br>Professor Bruce Obomeyoma Onobrakpegya<br>for extra ordinary and pioneering achievement<br>in printmaking and for authoring history –<br>making painting and sculpture that resonate<br>Urhobo culture and the Urhobo spirit<br>developing Urhoboland including citing for<br>training young artists in his home town if<br>Agbarha-Otor. |
|      | The Lagoon School presents this plaque to<br>Bruce Onobrakpeya as a guest speaker in 2015<br>Vocational Day Celebrations to Art Education.<br>Participated in the exhibition of Artists'<br>Book at the Museum for African Art<br>Smithsonian Institution Washington DC.<br>The Harmattan workshop in partnership with<br>shell SPDC, trained 70 people from the<br>different oil producing regions of Nigeria.<br>Art Exhibition at CVL as part of Tribute Bruce<br>Onobrakpeya.<br>Group Art exhibition at Stanbic IBTC<br>Collectors Evening, Victoria Island, Lagos.<br>Exhibition of Art works curated by Sandra<br>Obiagio at the Temple Muse Art Gallery, Victoria<br>Island, Lagos.   |
|      | Led the Harmattan workshop team to conduct<br>a six months printmaking workshop at the<br>Grange School Ikeja, followed by the exhibition<br>of the products at the Didi Museum Victoria<br>Island, Lagos.  |
| 2016 | Exhibition of Art works titled Bruce<br>Onobrakpeya and the Harmattan workshop.<br>At the Lagos Court of Arbitration, Lekki, Lagos.<br>It was sponsored by Hogan Lovells and curated<br>by Sandra Obiagio.  |

## AWARDS AND APPOINTMENTS

|      |   |
|------|---|
| I    | Scholarship to Nigeria College of Arts, Science and<br>Technology, Zaria to study Fine Art, 1958.   |
| II   | Third Prize, Gottschalk Textile Competition NCAST,<br>Zaria, 1959.  |
| III  | Honourable mention for Children Book Illustration,<br>Bratislava, 1967.   |
| IV   | Culture America – United State of America Travel<br>Award, 1970   |
| V    | British Council Award to visit London Art Institutions<br>and Museums, 1969.  |
| VI   | U.S.A State Department Award to tour America on<br>Programme America Culture, 1970.   |
| VII  | Pope Paul VI Gold Medal for Painting Life of St.<br>Paul's 1977.  |
| VIII | Fulbright-Hays Award by America CIES (Council for<br>International Exchange of Scholars), 1979  |
| IX   | Fifth Triennale – India Award of Silver Medal and<br>Twenty Thousand Rupees, 1982   |
| X    | Presented to the President of the Federal Republic of<br>Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, 1982.   |
| XI   | Certificate of Honour in recognition of distinguished<br>services contributed to the development of<br>Nigerian Art by the Council of Management of Asele<br>Institute, Nimo, Anambra State, Nigeria, 1985. |
| XII  | 1985 Solidra Circle of Lagos (Founded 1947) Award<br>for having excelled in Printmaking and Deep<br>Etching, Lagos, November 1985   |
| XIII | Mentioned in the Czekoslovak encyclopedia, 1986   |
| XIV  | Travel grant by British Council to study and tour<br>Britain, 1987  |
| XV   | Appointed Board Member of Nigerian Copyright<br>Council, Lagos, August, 1989.   |
| XVI  | SNA (Society of Nigerian Artists) award in<br>recognition of contribution November, 1989  |



|        |  |             |   |
|--------|--|-------------|---|
| XVII   | Honorary Degree, Doctor of Letters by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, November, 1989  | XX X        | In grateful recognition of outstanding contribution to the Development of the Nation.   |
| XVIII  | United State Information Service Travel Award to attend the opening of the exhibition of Contemporary African Art – Changing Traditions, The Studio Museum, New York, January, 1990.                     | Association | St, Gregory's College Old Students (1928-2003 set). January 26 2003.  |
| XIX    | Classique Magazine – Star Award of achievement for contribution immensely to society on Night of a Hundred Star, 11th August, 1990.  | XXXI        | Grand Fellow of Nigerian Art Award. In recognition of his achievements as the artist's teacher, father, mentor and founder of Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF) and on whose instance the Harmattan Workshop is held for the improvement of artist skills. Society of Nigerian Artists (S.N.A.), Akwa Ibom State chapter. September 23 2004. |
| XX     | Bendel State Merit Award 1990 -- A Certificate of Merit and Gold Medal in recognition of outstanding contribution to the development of Bendel State (Nigeria) a humanity in Arts and Culture, November, | XXXII       | In recognition of his contributions to the promotion of Art and Artists in Nigeria.   |
| XXI    | Member of International Jury which adjudicated Zimbabwe Heritage '91 in Harare, July 24th to August 2nd, 1991.   | -           | School of Art and Design, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.   |
| XXII   | Delta State Government Award for Excellence, 1995.   | XXXIII      | Honours Award. In recognition of outstanding personal accomplishment, as an internationally acclaimed artist and distinguished alumnus given by Western Boys High School, Benin City old boys association, Lagos State branch. 2006.  |
| XXIII  | President Saddam Hussein Travel Award to visit artists, art institutions, cultural and historic place in Iraq.   | XXXIV       | Lifetime Accomplishment Award for Arts by Delta state Tourism Board. March 2006.  |
| XXIV   | Award – Glimpses of Our Stars.   | XXXV        | Honours Award for Promoter of Nigerian Culture through Visual Arts. National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC). March 30 2006.  |
| XXV    | 4th Annual Distinguished lecture, National Gallery of Art, 1999.   | XXXVI       | Living Human Treasure. In recognition of invaluable contribution in the area of “Artist-Traditional Craftsmanship”. Award given by Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with UNESCO. May 2006.  |
| XXVI   | Mentioned in <i>The News Magazine's</i> “People in the News” – A survey of 100 outstanding Nigerians of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.  | XXXVII      | Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his contribution to the development of Nigerian art industry by African Art Resource Centre (A.A.R.C.). December 9 2006.   |
| XXVII  | Outstanding Pioneer of Nigerian Art Award by the Fine Arts Students' Association of the Obafemi Awolowo University (May 2002).   | XXXVIII     | Outstanding Art Promoter award in commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Oyo, Nigeria.  |
| XXVIII | MFR (Member of the Order of the Republic of Nigeria) 2002.   |             |   |
| XXIX)  | Art Master Per-Excellence award by the St. Gregory's College Old Students Association Ikoyi Lagos.   |             |   |



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| XXXIX  | Won first prize (ground prix) at The Vie Biennale Internationale de la Gravure d'Ile -de- France 2007.   | St. John the Evangelist Church, Shogunle, Ikeja.   |
| XL   | Lifetime Achievement Award by St. Gregory's College Alumni Foundation. August 18 2008  | Museum of African and African-American Art and Antiquities, Buffalo, New York.   |
| XLI  | Master of the council of the Guild Award. Presented by the Guild of Professional Artist May 2009.  | Eda Lord Demarest Memorial African Art Collection, University of Redlands.   |
| XLII   | SPANFEST Excellence Award. Lifetime Achievement Award in the Arts. Lagos,Nigeria.  | University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.  |
| XLIII  | FAAN award of honour conferred on Dr. Bruce Onobrakpeya for your support and contribution to the growth of female artists in Nigeria. 2011   | Vatican Museum, Rome.  |
| XLIV   | Sun Lifetime Achievement Award 2013 Investure into the Living Legend Hall of Fame Distinguished Legend presented to Dr. Bruce Onobrakpeya in recognition of your profound and outstanding contributions to the important process that have shaped and are shaping Nigeria from phase of development to another And your consistency in exhibiting an exemplary character 2014. | National Museum of African Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.   |
| XLV  | Award for the development of the visual art by Faculty of the Arts, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos. 2016  | Hvittrask Suomi - Finland (Eliel Saarinen's Studio Home and Exhibition)<br>Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Ikeja.                |
| XLVI   | Award of excellence to exceptional leader in recognition of your outstanding contribution in the arts industry presented at the 25th CVL leader without title (LWT) sector leadership colloquium 2016.   | Leader of Victory Museum, Baghdad, Iraq.   |
| XLVII  | Award by UHS   | Victoria and Albert Museum London.   |
| GALLERYYS, MUSEMUMS AND PUBLIC PLACES WHERE MY WORKS CAN BE SEEN |  | Metropolitan Museum<br>Minneapolis Institute of Arts<br>The British Museum London.   |
| University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos.                       |  | The Barrack Obama Collection White House Washington DC.  |
| Catholic Chapel, University of Ife, Ile-Ife                      |  | King Mohammed VI collection Morocco.   |
| St. Paul's Church, Ebute-Metta, Lagos.                           |  | MONOGRAPHS   |
| National Gallery of Modern Art, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. |  | BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA Published by Robert Barde, The Best of African (Nigeria's Master Printmakers) Art Gallery, Canada, 1979                |
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|  |  | BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA Sabbatical Experiments (1978 - 1983) with Introduction by Prof. Babatunde Lawal by Ovuomaroro Art Gallery, Lagos, 1983 |



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|---|--|---|--|
| BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA                             | 25 Years of Creative Search with Introduction by C.O. Adepegba, Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos, 1984            | BABALOLA, ADEBOYE   | <i>Iwe Ede Yoruba, Apa Kini</i> Longmans of Nigeria 1961   |
| BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA                             | Symbols of Ancestral Groves with Introduction by Prof. Babatunde Lawal Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos, 1985.    | EKWENSI, CYPRAIN  | <i>An African Night's Entertainment,</i> AUP Lagos, 1962   |
| BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA                             | Sahelian Masquerades, Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos, 1985.   | EKWENSI, CYPRAIN  | <i>Juju Rock,</i> AUP Lagos.   |
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| BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA                             | The Spirit in Ascent, Introduced by Dele Jegede, Ovuomaroro Gallery, Lagos.                                | NWANKWO, NKEM   | <i>Tales Out of School</i> (Cover lustration) AUP, Ibadan.   |
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PAUL CHIKE DIKE & PAT OYELOLA

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## FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Nigerian Art-Kindreds Spirits – A production of Smithsonian World Washington, D.C.

The Magic of Nigeria, Produced by Delka/Polystar directed by Ola Balogun.

Recalling the Future Art by Joanna Grabski. Produced and directed by Claudine Pommier  
Executive Director Chekh Tidiane N'diaye / Arts in Action Society (Vancouver, Canada), 2002.

The Harmattan Workshop Experience: The Journey so far: Film and Documentary on 10 years of the Harmattan Workshop Experience produced and directed by Bruce Onobrakpeya, 2009.

Red Hot Nigerian Creativity produced and directed by Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio. A Communicating for Change Production 2011.





# TIMELINE INDEX





The Hornbill  
Lino Engraving  
10 x 15.2 cm  
1959



Lunar Myths II  
Plastograph  
53 x 79 cm  
1970



Okunovu (Expt)  
(Thanksgiving Dance I)  
Deep Etching  
53 x 79 cm  
1970



Erhele (Red Base)  
Deep Etching  
72 x 53 cm  
1970



Ivwie  
Deep Etching  
78.5 x 53.5 cm  
1972



Odovan (A self given social name)  
Etching  
70 x 51 cm  
1973



The Lord is my Shepherd  
Plastograph  
53 x 78 cm  
1974



Aro Asomo (Black and White Edition)  
Plastograph  
87.5 x 69 cm  
1974



Asiribo (Black and White)  
Lino cut  
54 x 64 cm  
1974



Egobo Emamiwata  
Lino engraving/Xerograph  
208 x 144 cm  
1976



Aro Emamiwata  
Lino Engraving/Xerograph  
196 x 146 cm  
1976



Efieto Vephran  
(Black and White)  
Deep Etching  
95 x 67.6 cm  
1977



Afieke  
(Black and White extra)  
Plastograph  
105.5 x 75 cm  
1978



Saint Paul  
Plastograph  
77 x 58 cm  
1979



Ore Ri Canaan  
(Feast in Canaan)  
Red Base  
Plastograph  
55.5 x 76 cm  
1982



Tive Ephrana Danure,  
Tive Edara?  
(Where do these birds  
come from, where are  
they bound?)  
Plastograph  
75 x 107 cm  
1985



Eghirighri (Rainbow)  
Plastograph  
79.5 x 107 cm  
1985



Orhale Orise  
Lino cut  
78 x 107 cm  
1987





I love my wives  
(Eyame Jevwe)  
Etching (Ebony series II)  
56 x 38 cm  
1988



Ubiebi Fude  
Black Beautiful & Timeless  
Plastograph  
76 x 56 cm  
1988



Igbento (Woman  
with Plaited Hair)  
Plastograph  
76 x 56 cm  
1988



Miniature images panel III  
Plastograph  
106.5 x 79 cm  
1990



Opha ve Ikopha  
(Bride & Maids)  
Plastograph  
38 x 28 cm  
1994



Osiobe  
Additive Plastograph  
106.6 x 79 cm  
1999



Ibiebe Aro Ogwa II  
Xerograph Plastograph  
100 x 163 cm  
2002



**Nudes and Protest**  
Prints  
2007



Agbranran (Thunder)  
(Ebony series II)  
56 x 38 cm  
2014



Ekpu Idolo (Money Bag)  
Plastograph  
106.5 x 79 cm  
2015



Emedjo VI  
Block Print  
92 x 123 cm  
1980/2017



Oberokpa Vayeroye  
(Farmer and wife)  
Block Print  
127.3 x 100 cm  
2017



Mother Teresa  
(Black & White)  
Block Print  
131.4 x 93 cm  
2017



Pope John Paul  
(Second edition)  
Block Print  
131.4 x 96 cm  
2017

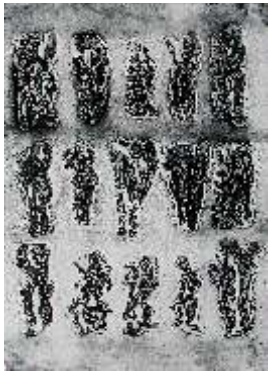




Chibok Girls (3/7)  
Plastograph  
73 x 53 cm  
2017



Ibiebe  
(Thanksgiving Dance I)  
Plastograph  
56.7 x 76 cm  
2019



Atasa I  
Deep Etching  
95.9 x 56.7 cm  
2019



Atasa II  
Deep Etching  
95.9 x 56.7 cm  
2019

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & CREDITS





# CURATOR



Adolphos Opara

Sandra Mbanefo Obiago is a multi-faceted writer, photographer, poet, art collector & curator, and award winning filmmaker. She has curated art shows and worked with the local creative industry to promote the best of Nigerian art.

She ran the communications program in Sub-Saharan Africa for environmental group, WWF International for eight years before founding and running Communicating for Change, a media for development social enterprise in Nigeria for fourteen years. She is a social activist and her campaigns, films, radio programs and publications have touched on themes such as human rights, women's empowerment, health including HIV & AIDS, environment, democracy and good governance. She organized conferences, workshops, and symposia for Nigeria's growing film industry and helped develop a course on *Media Enterprise* at the Pan African University.

Obiago produced and directed many films over the years, including a five-part documentary film series, *Red Hot: Nigeria's Creative Industries*, featuring artists from the film, music, performance and visual arts sectors. She was Associate Producer of the feature film, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, adapted from the award winning novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

She has been involved in many community initiatives and served as a trustee of the Convention on Business Integrity (CBI), was a member of the Advisory Council of the Nigerian National Film Institute and has served as a member of the jury of the *Nigeria Media Merit Awards* and the *African International Film Festival (AFRIFF)* awards. Obiago is a Fellow of the Aspen Institute's *African Leadership Initiative for West Africa (ALIWA)* and has served as Sunday School teacher since her teens. She received an M.A. in Telecommunications from Michigan State University, and a Bachelor of Education degree in English and German from the University of Manitoba, in Canada. She is happily married with three children.



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