

Mike Omoighe





EQUAL RIGHTS

Unule Unuile Ozese

by

Mike Omoighe

Curator:

Sandra Mbanefo Obiako

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The Wheatbaker

Lagos, Nigeria



Curatorial

Welcome to *Equal Rights: Unule, Unuile, Ozese* by Mike Omoighe. This exhibition is the culmination of a conversation that started a number of years ago, when I first saw Omoighe's amazing, bold, intense, colorful, and yet minimalist works. What immediately struck me is that he is a man of few words – slow to engage – quiet, reflective, and very deep. The more one interacts with him, the more you realize his breadth of experience, not just as an artist, but his rich understanding of culture and art history, and how the movements, trends, schools and philosophies within the Nigerian art space and how it has evolved and crescendoed at different times.

To say that Mike is complex is an understatement. His complexity and depth is what gives his art the kind of energy that makes you step back, take a deep breath, and then try to visually digest the rich interplay and creative dialogue being depicted across large and small paper and canvas works. We can recognize abstracted humanity, cultural themes and symbols in his work. But there is a much deeper essence, a questioning, a sometimes puzzling, always fascinating textural alacrity, which teases and beckons us to keep asking questions.

In his piece *Igbaboneli on the Threshold*, we definitely see echoes from his mentor Yusuf Grillo in his use of rich dark blue, scarlet and purple. We notice the back of a stylized human form, but the surprising specks, dabs, and planes of layered multi-media materials depict a style of his very own. His use of fabric to punctuate a deep understanding and exploration of cultural symbols gives the work a rich, uneven patchwork feel that begs one to actually run one's hand over the crinkles in an effort to feel and experience the work.

Omoighe is a master of form, space, frantic activity, and minimalist understatement. He oscillates from heavily painted canvases that are full to the brim with color, patterns, sweeping movement and loads of energy – to works which are playfully void of “too much talk” – works like the two *Okha-Igbaboneli Visual Narrative* pieces, which depend on the simplicity of clean negative space to tell an equally compressed story with very little conversation.

Mike cannot be simplified. He is a master who has expertly presented the acrobatic pulsating energy of masquerades dancing wildly under the noon day sun in a few deft, minimalist strokes of charcoal dancing lightly over paper. I admire his skillful depiction of festival scenes and traditional wrestling and am actually transported back to my childhood watching my grandfather, the Odu of Onitsha, perform during the yearly Ofala festival. Besides watching my grandfather's graceful, commanding dance performance wearing a huge, heavy, highly decorated traditional ensemble, I remember that the excitement of watching the masquerades amidst the dust, the ebb and flow of the mass village audience responding to the masquerade's dance spectacle was both awe and fear inspiring – and one had to be constantly aware of one's surrounding, seeking shelter in the strength of one's friends and age group, ever ready to quickly “pick race” if the masquerade were to turn, engage you, and chase you down the road.

But what I have found fascinating, is how Omoighe has depicted this traditional performance art and taken it many steps further. He has used the symbol of the masquerade to shed light on its' role in traditional dispute settlement, ensuring that the excesses within the traditional community were regularly pruned and brought into check. This then is his way of commenting on how our political history is a story of greed and power that has corrupted, reminding us that we have failed to learn from our rich heritage of traditional philosophy of equal rights. The artist through this body of work asks us to reconsider and embrace a more equitable way of conflict resolution, while reminding us in *Merciless Rider* of the squandering of our wealth and the rage that welled up on the streets of Lagos during the “June 12th” socio-political uprising in the 1990's with the annulment of the elections and the military crackdown.

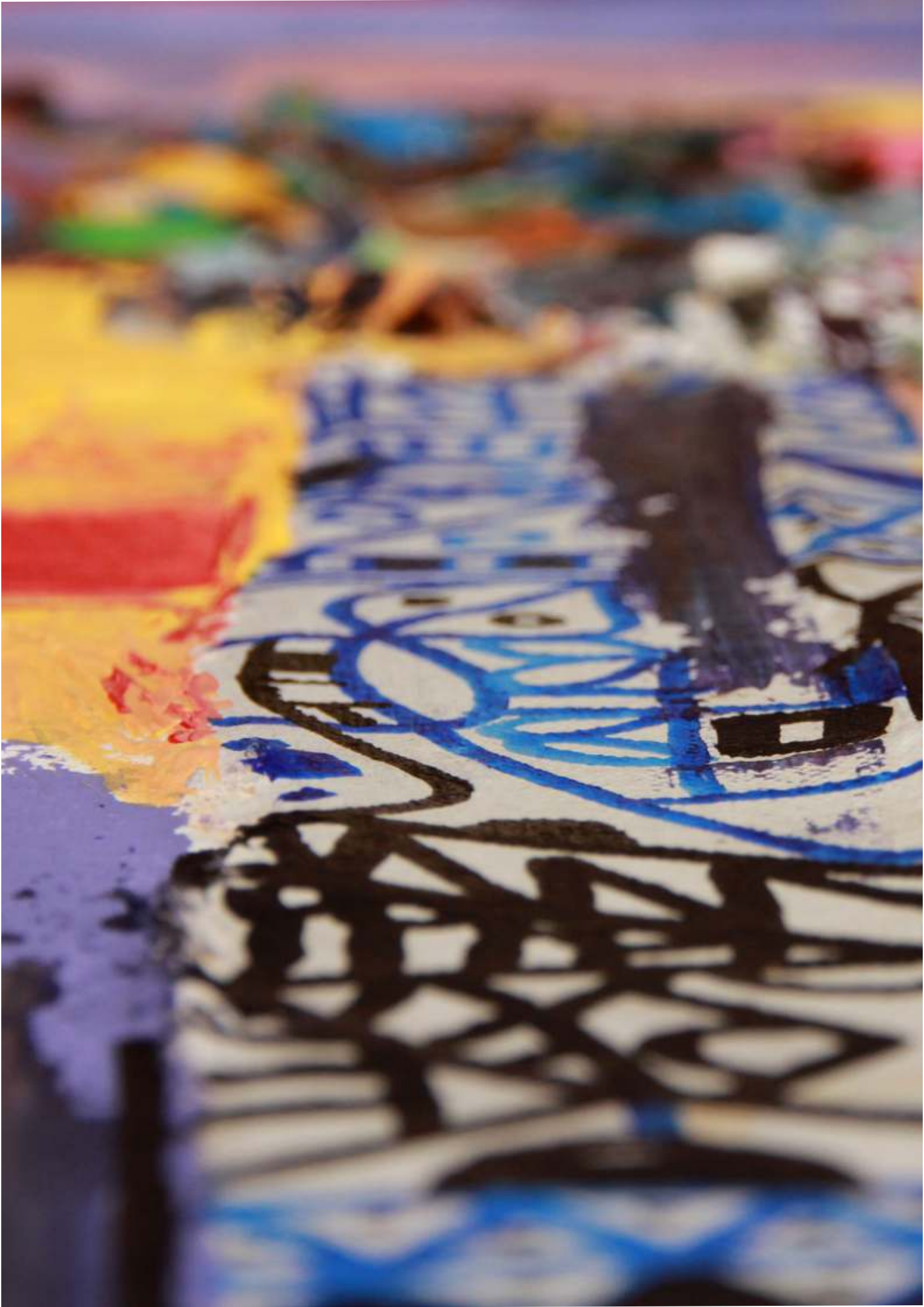
I guess spending years within academia, tucked away from the commercial stress of the unforgiving art market, has allowed Mike Omoighe's pure and unapologetic talent to blossom. He has not yet been given his rightful place in Nigeria's contemporary art scene. It is my desire that this exhibition will re-introduce Mike Omoighe's amazing talent to our young bloggers and writers at the helm of social media which puts the

spotlight on the here and now but fails to tell the story of how we got here. I want to re-introduce a great but slightly reluctant art teacher who has had an amazing influence on a whole generation of Nigerian artists who found their creative voice at the Yaba College of Technology.

As one of his students recently told me, "Mr. Omoighe opened up abstract art to us. He taught us how to draw. He showed us how to be guided by our inner creative energy and let our talent flow. He taught us how to take our eyes off the paper and while looking intently at the model posing before us, let our hands and mind interpret what we saw by letting go of inhibitions and simply going with the flow."

Equal Rights is an invitation to us to let go, claim our creative space, and allow his dynamic images and narratives to wash over us.

Sandra Mbanefo Obiago
Curator



Mike OMOIGHE



Unule, Unuile, Ozese: Equal Rights

Visual Narrative in Drawings and Paintings by Mike Omoighe

History is constantly being made on a moment by moment basis through thoughts, words and actions. Images in time and space capture the moment in every chosen medium of communication. When such images are viewed years after, the incidents they represent often appear as serious imaginative perception. In this exhibition, I am presenting two viewpoints from my sketches and jotting diary. First is the implication of military rule in Nigeria which didn't initially matter much to me until, when recently, I looked back at my reactions in jottings, sketches and paintings exhibited in 2005 in *Survival Romance*. Also, the cultural object of Ukpo-Esan-Fibre art in the *Igbaboneli* masquerader's costumes is being recreated and documented in a contemporary medium of paintings on canvas to communicate a visual poetry and metaphor as an activist's social commentary.

Childhood Memory

My indifferent attitude to military rule then was perhaps due to the environmental influence of my early life, growing up in Lafiaji Island, Lagos. I attended Ereko Methodist Primary School, at Berkley Street, Araromi and St. Gregory's College, Obalende, Ikoyi Lagos. Both schools were around the Nigerian Police Force headquarters and Army First Battalion based in Dodan Barracks, Obalende Lagos. Those were the days when the Nigerian nation's seat of power (civilian and military) was in Lagos. Therefore, growing up in Lafiaji Island of Lagos at the Lewis, Igboere, Araromi, Onikan and Obalende axis, meant that the public spaces of the Federal Cabinet Building, the House of Assembly (Representatives), Government House Marina, the General Post Office, National Museum, the historical Onikan Stadium and Love Garden, High and Supreme Courts, General Hospital, King's College, Western House, Nigerian Independence Building and the legendary Race Course were our playground. The freedom of movement in and around the borderless public buildings and private compounds at the time allowed children to explore and tame their environment. Vividly I recall '*Baba Odon*', *Kokoro*, *Sunday Gboku-Gboku*, *Hassan* the master weekly horse rider at the Racecourse grounds, our escalator riding expedition and experiences at the famous Kingsway stores and the Nigerian Independence building.

Therefore, the military at that time was not in any way strange to me until, the unimaginable rude shock at the behavior during the 'JUNE 12' riot from the same colourful enviable military through the eye of the child

at both induction and passing out parades. Like most children in the neighbourhood, we knew almost all the military officers. Most of them played with children and were very nice officers full of compassion and love in the neighbourhood.....the names of Benjamin Adekunle 'the Red Scorpion' and Joe Garba "The Big Joe!", readily come to mind. Military was a career for them.

Pa Julius Omoighe, aka *Baba oni foto* was well known in Campos and Lafaji Lagos. He was then a staff at the photographic section of the Federal Ministry of Works headquarters in Lagos. He was an official photographer of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and an officially registered photographer at the Dodan Barracks First Battalion of the Nigerian Army. His photographic experience automatically rubbed off on all children in the family and extended relations that lived with us. Photography and its processing from the "dark room" experiences to the final framing of printed pictures became a family trade. Pa Julius Omoighe's photographic documentation of top government officials, the yearly military parades of the Nigerian army, police, prisons, and other related events, was in no doubt the influence and inspiration for us all in the family.

Unule, Unuile, Ozese: Visual Narrative

The theme of this solo art exhibition is a philosophy of the Esan People meaning 'Equal Rights'. It is a visual narrative on the delicate balance of love and power in life. Perhaps the temporal experimentation in today's medium of expression or materials exploration would have had an immediate imprint and realities at that moment's incident, on the seemingly too busy or lazy visual communication of an illiterate audience. The events of the 1990's annulment of the presidential election which Moshood Kasimawo Abiola was believed to have won, the curfew imposed on Lagos, the horrific images of tanks, bonfires, and protests were not only a shocking experience of 'war' to Nigerians but were too heavy to bear. While civil society and the print and electronic media were relaying the events, I resulted to adopting a view point of a 'child in the wilderness' in a series of drawings, watercolours, acrylics and oils paintings. A segment of the visual narratives were shown at the National Gallery of Art in 2005. But two decades after the events, I can now reflect better on what I saw and experienced in those unbelievable but true-to-life days of military rule in Nigeria -- "Merciless Rider".

The situation was actually a full scale war on Lagos streets. My art exhibition 'E-motion' opened at that time at the National Museum Lagos but only the bold and adventurous saw the exhibition. The book scheduled to accompany the art exhibition did not see the light of the day even though it was at the press at the time.

Without necessarily running cartoon strips, another strong medium of communication, I have in my little humble way, like artists during Hitler's Germany in Europe, made personal visual statements which perhaps need decoding for common understanding for obvious reasons. The visual narratives are now more revealing to even myself. The spontaneous reaction to the moment then, never gave me the feelings I have today. Such temporal strategies in the representation of shocking images, residues of post war expressions, like the Germans or Europeans expressionists, would only maximally serve a society that is sensitive to the images presented. Most temporal art experiments or explorations that could catch the attention of Western or American audiences, are common scenes of lunacy in the daily lives of people living on streets, in markets, under bridges and in slums of Africa's big cities.

Time is of the essence in the consequence and possible profound effect the experience of the military rule had on the Nigerian nation. Showing some of these art pieces in Nigeria as already in Germany has a fulfilling mission and perhaps a healing effect on wounds of those days, though the scars are all around. The tiny stains and doddles on unconventional surfaces bring home the realities of that time through the images and the essence of these 'visual narratives' art exhibition. The big question: "Is it any better in DEM-O-CRAZY as against Democracy in philosophy and not necessarily in practice?. Where has it been successful?

Fela Ransome Kuti raised a pertinent critical question during the probe of the burning of 'KALAKUTA REPUBLIC' in 1978. The military are teaching us democracy. Where did they learn it?

'HE WHO DEFACATES, FORGETS EASILY. BUT HE WHO CLEANS UP THE MESS REMEMBERS'

The theme *Unule Unuile Ozese* is a visual narrative in paintings and drawings made up of impressions from the military rule in Nigeria, and the inspiration of Ukpon Esan fibre art as a communications metaphor..

Mike Omoighe
January 2016

(Detail) *Igbaboneli- Emelen: Dance performance as a monkey, 2015, 61x61cm, mixed media on canvas*





Dance

Igbabonelimi



The return of *oneze*: The return of the soft dance steps, 2015, 61x61cm, mixed media on canvas



Igbaboneli-Aeroplane: Dance performance as Aeroplane, 2015, 61x61cm, mixed media on canvas



Igbaboneli- Emelen: Dance performance as a monkey, 2015, 61x61cm, mixed media on canvas



Ugholo-Ukpon-Esan: Planet Venus motif in esan fabric, 2015, 61x61 cm, mixed media on canvas

....A poet put it this way:
"Look back and thank God
Look forward and trust GOD
Look around and appreciate GOD
look inside and find GOD!"

All of us, artist or not, are "gods" bestowed with powers to create. We refer to these powers as talents. Our mission in life is to discover who we really are - to identify our true talents.

Artists like Mike Omoighe are looking inside to find GOD: to discover themselves.

We have all been created with the ability to create but mammon has made discovering oneself a Herculean task. So many red herrings have been introduced. Not all of us were created (given the talent) to be visual artists. So some now run after mammon and flounder, plagiarize, forge, fake, etc. ; their talent lies in other disciplines but they pursue Mammon instead of patiently searching for their true selves, they force themselves into visual art.

Mike, since his debut into exhibitions, remarkably early in life (at 23) has been identified as a talented, prolific dreamer. He has to his credit near to 20 solo and several group exhibitions- more than a life-time achievement for many artists; he is also a very intuitive scholar, teacher and

administrator. **Study his works and you can see clearly the evolution from the realistic to the abstract. He achieves PEACE in his colors and compositions.**

Mike is consistently a dreamer- awake or asleep - and is doing an integration (between) both levels of consciousness on his canvases.

Prof. Yusuf Grillo



Igbaboneli on the threshold, 2015, 61x61cm, mixed media on canvas

When Mike Omoighe was accepted for the 1981 SNA group exhibition, **his paintings drew great crowds and attention.** It was a deserved recognition both by artists and art lovers. The “Journeys through the Savannah” seem to have started from Ishan, Mike’s home district, where the “Igbaboneli” masquerade is famous. These beautifully arrayed spirits spin during their performance in response to the cracking of sticks and songs, producing a whirlwind nebulous color effect – a mood, eloquently captured in Omoighe’s Igbaboneli series.”

Prof. Bruce Onobrakpeya
Artist & Recipient of UNESCO Living Human Treasure Award



Igbaboneli in trance, 2015 61x 61cm mixed media on canvas



Okha-Igbaboneli-Visual Narrative, 2015. 61x92cm, mixed media on canvas



Okha-Igbaboneli-Visual Narrative, 2015. 61x92cm, mixed media on canvas



Unule Unuile Ozese

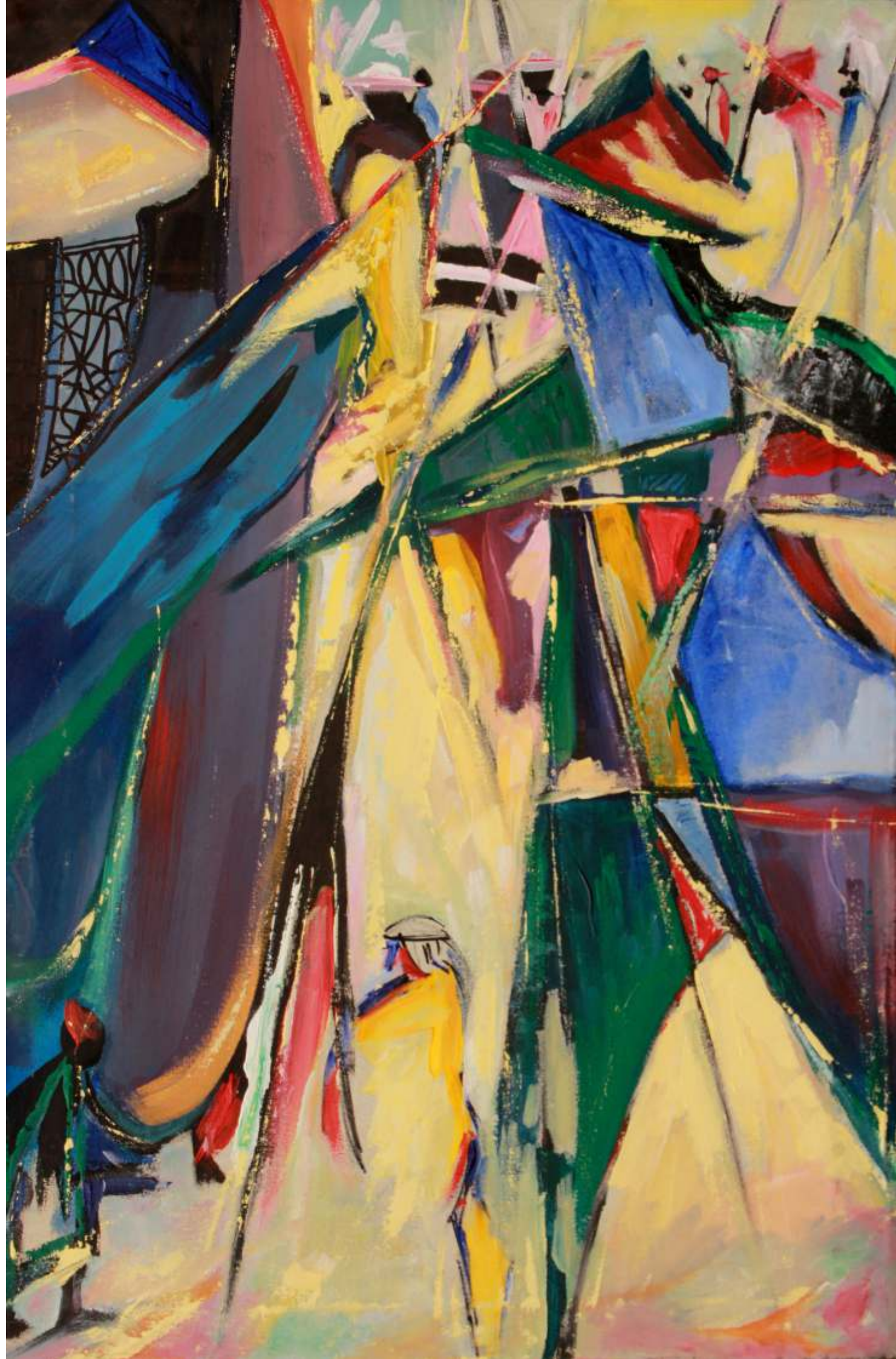
Equal Rights

With myriad of activists' agitation for equal rights all over the world, one is tempted to ask: Is equality attainable? Is there a world where everyone can be equal irrespective of being disadvantaged in a plethora of considerations? Can everyone be equal economically, socially, educationally, politically, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually? These are questions that may not be answered in a hurry but one thing is certain for the social activist- everyone has equal right and need to live. This being so, it is commonsensical that for one to live, there must be availability of the barest essentials of life such as food, medicine, shelter and clothing. These are resources needed for survival in every society. So long as there exists inequality in distribution of these resources, there are bound to be problems particularly where such resources are lean. However, it becomes exasperating when resources abound, yet they hardly get to those who need them most. One element that drives such lack of equal distribution of resources is greed. While a privileged few have more than they need, the masses suffer in abject poverty. This is where Mike Omoighe's principle of Inclusiveness comes to fore - Unule Unuile Ozese. Mike as an activist of sort, demands that resources should be made available to all and sundry since everyone in society cannot be equal in ability to compete, particularly on a tilted playing ground. Literally put, if a mouth is actively engaged in continuous chewing as a result of providence, it should recognize that those who are less fortunate would be restless. The history of our country is checkered in shades of inequality especially during the military regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha. Today, even in the face of democracy, it is still far from Uhuru for the common man. Yet, the masses continue to applaud the privileged minority whose wardrobe allowances alone would go a long way towards solving most of the basic needs of the people. While the bourgeois are the spirits, those that applaud are the mortals. It is ironical therefore that those who clap for the spirits are also clapping for self denial of the oppressed (proletariat) who made such resources available in the first instance by their workforce. This brings us to the diegesis of Esan cultural dynamics of igbaboneli a narrative of the rich eating, while the poor clap. In other words, it is an ovation of mortals to spirits and accolades that run counter to the logos and pathos of equal rights and live and let live. Unule Unuile Ozese foregrounds that one should eat and let others eat too. Let us therefore not monopolize the viewing of this exhibition. Rather, as we enjoy what Omoighe has provided, let us allow others to savor the aroma of Unule Unuile Ozese.

John Ogene (PhD.)
Associate Professor and Acting Head
Dept of Fine and Applied Arts
University of Benin
Nigeria

His work interrogates the temporal and spiritual. The medium of exchange in Mike's work is what one terms the philosophy of theory, the intra and international relations and practice. This covers our politics, culture, history, economy, social life, festivals, family life, and our values in abstract and semi-abstract forms. 'A potpourri of what we are,' according to Mike. His works are quite unique to him and only him and can be said to have gone deep into his **elongative exuberance and vibrant style**. There is also a great balance in his use of colour. Mike is not new to solo exhibitions, having started exhibiting since 1980 and his body of work *Survival Romance* in 2000, *Seasons and Chains of Coincidences* in 2005, and *The Concept of the Village Square* elicited a lot of excitement in the industry. In his work **he employs symbols, metaphors, allusions, associations, narratives in socio-cultural and political themes.**

Moses Ohiomokhare
Art Curator & Sociologist



Mike Omoighe and the modernist tendencies in contemporary Nigeria Art

From where did Mike Omoighe acquire conceptual expressiveness that characterizes his restless canvases? Where did he derive the modernist formal explosiveness that, transverse geographical borders? Where could he have garnered so much energy with which he works the prolificity of the craftsman? And where actually does this creative soul repose?

Mike Omoighe worked himself to recognition. He perspired to relevance. He consciously and assiduously took a creative dash, and like the eagle, he mounted up with wings to artistic and aesthetic accomplishment. In order to understand Mike's works, one needs to comb through a personality tangle and unravel by way of perception, the intricate state of his mind, and thus decipher the creative processes of a modern painter. Mike is a complex personality that must be studied in the round in order to have an insight into his creative exercises. He among a few others of his age group cannot be pinned down to stylistic affinity with a Nigerian school. His art is drawn from a creative well that has its source in the ocean; an enormous body of fluid images and ideas. He is an enigma of some sort. He started having serious exhibition in the early eighties, when most of his mates were still suffocating in the euphoria of becoming graduate artists. By the time Mike was thirty he had become one of the well-known contemporary Nigerian artists having participated in over ten major outings. At forty, Mike seems established as an artist yet the journey has just begun. It was Toyin Akinosho who wrote in an art column in 1984 that Mike Omoighe is a likeable fellow at first meet. "...he literally has an impact on you if only for his humour spiced frankness". This statement still holds for Mike today. His experiences have expanded and his remarks are more philosophical. He is comfortable to discuss any issue, ranging from culture to politics. He tendentiously presents his points: often accomplished with skilled loquacity. Mike is widely read, and as a keen culture enthusiast he has visited many historical points in both northern and southern Nigeria- also worldwide. He has brought to play this diversity of interest in his approach to art, especially to painting; the area of his magic.....

For Mike, painting seems to be an obsession. This is an understatement for an artist who has been exhibiting almost yearly since 1982. In recent years he has enlarged his canvas to monumental scapes.

The recent series of paintings done with gouache, acrylic and charcoal titled "Head Load Romance" seems to be the threshold of intellectual approximation of Mike's genius. They are particularly striking in the way the figures are modeled with stilt like frames. Yet with the economy of means of lines and colours, he is able to simultaneously create the impression of volume and void in the picture plane. He seems to be saying- "Less is more" The broad lines running vertically across the picture and the horizontal strokes used in delineating the figures are like slabs of effulgent fittings. The result achieved is that of illusory beholding of stained glass. Heraldizing the columns and contours on the images are synthesized design abstracted for human forms and African traditional motifs.

Kunle Filani, PhD.
Artist, Writer, Critic

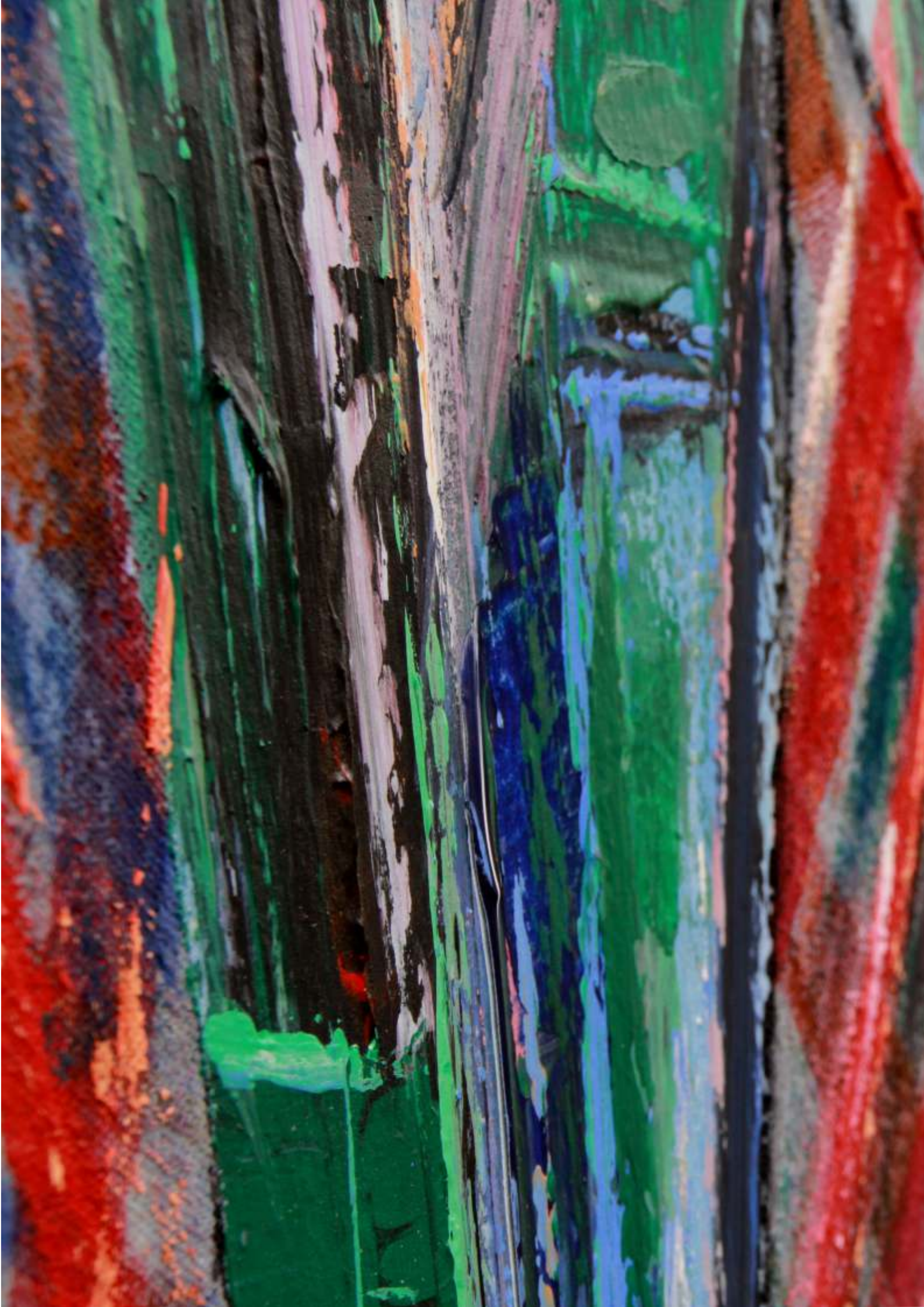


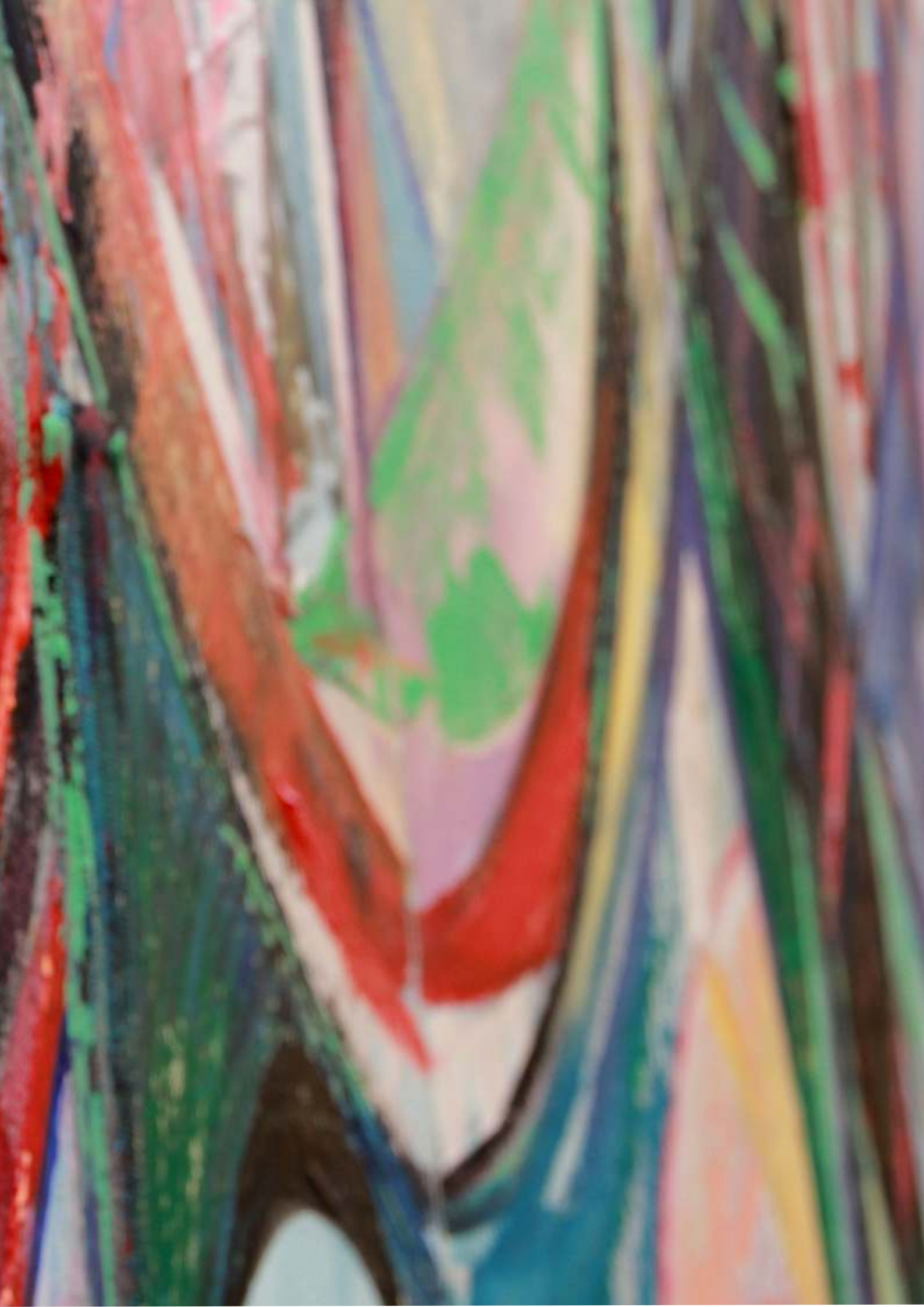
Spiritual upliftment, 2010-2013, 76x81cm, mixed media on canvas





Ukpon-Esan: Narrative on Esan fabric, 2015. 195x100cm (triptych) mixed media on canvas

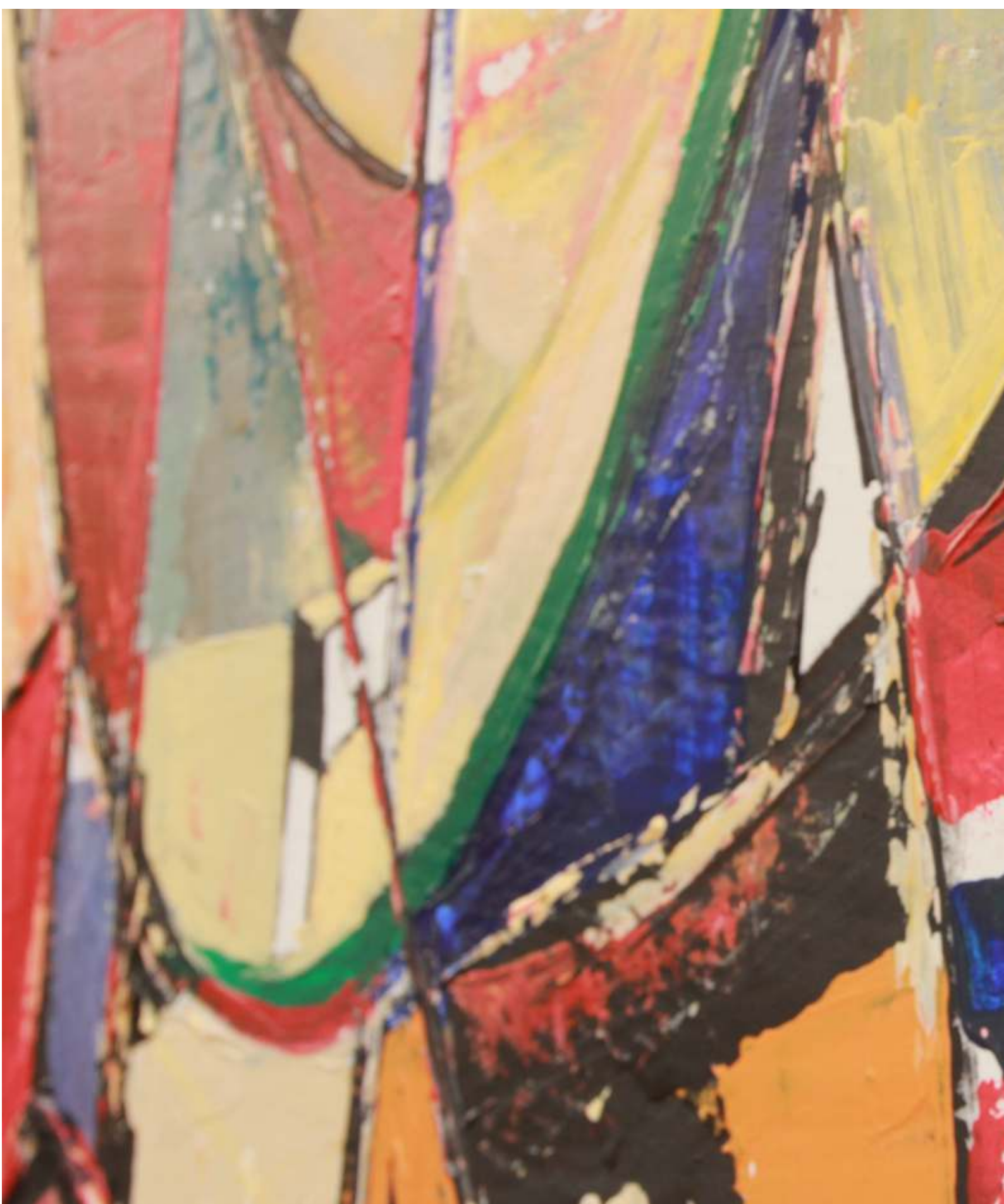






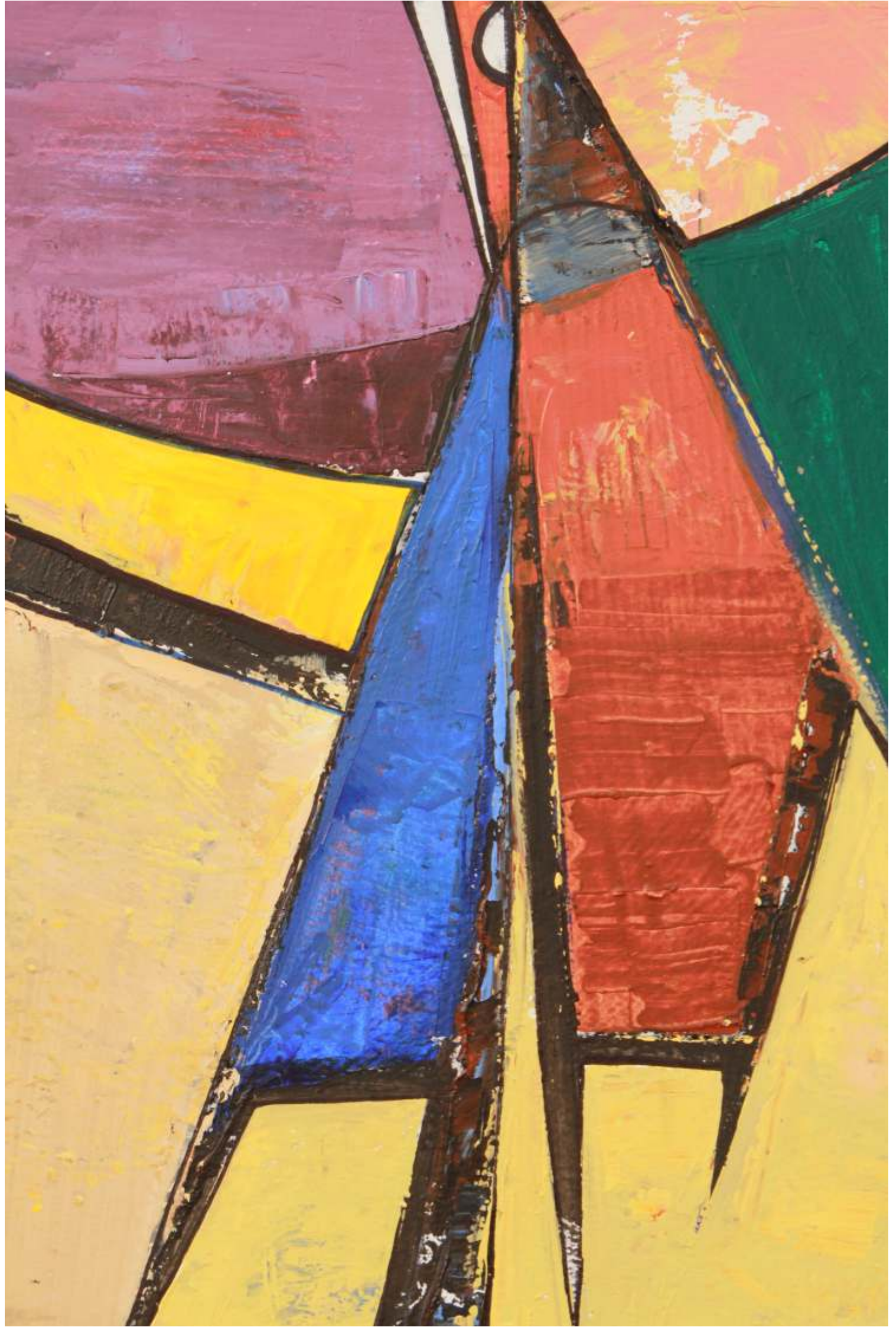
Ukpon-Esan-Okha-Eduido: Narrative of the weavers, 2015. 65x100cm, mixed media on canvas







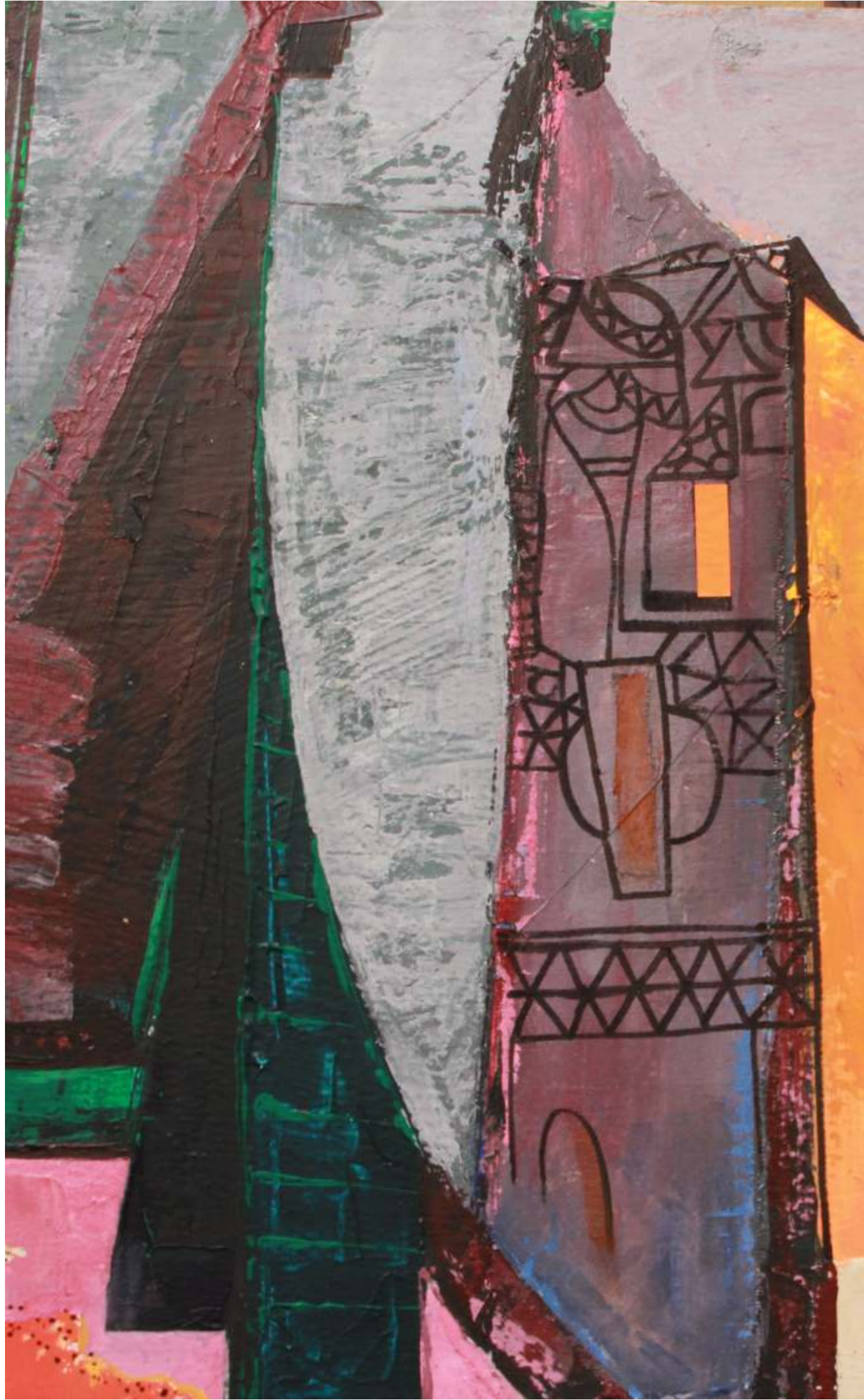






Tribute to *Enewanlen*: Tribute to "Wise men", 2014-2015, 65x100cm, mixed media on canvas, diptych





Equal Rights



Sun shiny days: *Eghonghon*, 2005-2012, 240x120cm, mixed media on canvas, (diptych)





Eko Osedo: Eko re: Narrative on Lagos, 2010-2012, 240x120cm, mixed media on canvas, diptych









Patches of history-reconstruction-Merciless rider, 2005-2012, 280 x 140cm, mixed media on canvas, (diptych)



In Conversation: Mike Omoighe with Amara Obiako

AO: Please tell us a little bit about your background. How did your artistic journey begin?

MO: My father was a sculptor, my uncle was a photographer and another uncle was the architect for our whole village. So right from childhood, art was all around me -- for me it was like that was the purpose of my creation.

AO: Who inspired you? Who were your mentors?

MO: I attended St Gregory's College and was taught by Bruce Onobrakpeya who was a great influence. When I graduated from secondary school I went to Yaba College of Technology and was inspired and mentored by Yusuf Grillo. But it is not only master artists who influenced me. My students are also great influences. I have come to realize that when you make up your mind to teach what you think you know, it is a great pleasure, because as you are teaching the students, they also influence you with their thoughts and their viewpoints. I have also been influenced by my family, and by the environment in which I grew up. Nigeria as a country and the changing landscapes are a great influence; over the years I am reminded of them in narratives, talks and engagements. So I would say the whole of life has influenced me.

AO: Wow, that was very poetic. How do you then prepare for a new piece? What is the artistic process you go through?

MO: It's actually while dreaming that an idea is conceived. The process of conception is in dreaming. A thought forms while thinking in images and the very idea you want to put across is conceived while dreaming. Normally you are involved in subjective thought forms, dialogue, and inter-personal communication. But I find that dreaming is deep. You are creating a world and at that moment that you are creating that world, it exists. And so when the time now comes and you want to sketch something, you might just write down an idea and you may have some images and as you are creating the images, you will find that some colours are popping out from the monochrome sketches that you are making. . . . So now you can prepare a canvas because the thought process as well as the shape and size of the paintings are already manifesting. And all this inner-dialogue is a starting point. If it is well thought through, written down and conceived, it can take less than one hour to do a very big painting because you have thought about it for a very long period.

AO: What does the title of this exhibition *Equal Rights: Unule Unile Ozese* really mean?

MO: A literal interpretation of the Esan meaning is "if one mouth is eating and another mouth is not eating and they live together, it will bring palaver". This proverb is told to someone who may be doing something without considering other people. It's a check before you go too far. If everything starts and ends with you and the other person has nothing, then there is danger and there will be a problem. That's the literal meaning which when translated equates to "the need for equal rights" in English. . . . So the theme of this exhibition is a metaphor inspired by Nigerian history: what is happening now and what has happened in our past. We should really ask ourselves "for the future, do we still want to continue in this way?"

AO: This is very interesting. Please could you explain how this political question intersects with your expose on the traditional culture of the masquerade? How do these two viewpoints meet?

MO: The word "igbaboneli" is the generic Esan name for all masquerades. People often only see them as fetish and having purely performative functions. But I have used the concept of the traditional masquerade as a visual motif to remind us of how problems within our ancient traditional culture were settled amicably. In the past, problems and conflicts were brought to the



Eki philosophy-reconstruction: Philosophy of the market as life, 2005-2012, 181x181cm, acrylic& translucent paper on canvas

traditional village council for settlement. If the parties appealed the decision of the council, then the most senior masquerade would have the authority to pronounce the final verdict on the matter. In effect, the masquerade culture provided a form of checks and balances within the community because on the day of final judgement at the end of the appeal process, the pronouncement was made by the largest masquerade – who was seen as fair and just, and who also represented the age old wisdom of the ancestors.

A lot of activists have played their part in our political history – but until we are able to respect the rights of the next person, based on our traditional philosophy of equal rights, we will not progress as a nation. We need to understand ourselves. The majority groups need to be able to work with the opposition and recognize other's strengths rather than seeing them as a threat.

So I am fascinated by how the masquerade ensured equality and justice within the village setting. But I am also trying to document and capture the power and beauty of the masquerade performance, such as in wrestling bouts, and how they mimic different happenings and members of the society such as animals, aeroplanes representing modernity, as well as the female form for example in amazing dances.

It is interesting to note that performance art is now widely seen as a “new expression” in visual art – but it has always been there traditionally, only we did not recognize it as an art form. I have also tried to use the weave, texture and color of different types of fabric on my canvases as symbols.

AO: How has teaching affected your artistic practice?

MO: I would say that teaching is one of the greatest things that anyone can do. When you share what you have with someone you have created room for something to grow. For every act of sharing that you do, teaching what you know, you will be inspired again with another thing to teach. I've seen people who learned a technique in art and they chose to hide it and it never developed because they kept it to themselves and never opened up for more to flow in. So when you are teaching you are actually sharing your ideas and knowledge and by doing that you will find that nature and life replenishes you with more things to teach. And that is being a channel for God's will to be done.

AO: You have been an artist for over three decades and you have been a teacher, and you have also been a student – in your point of view, how do you think the Nigerian artistic environment can be improved.

MO: I must tell you that the Nigerian artistic environment is not about improvement rather it is about people being able to read and understand and imbibe what they have learned. If they are able to recognize the greatness of what they have and embrace their culture and hold on to it and use it, then we will achieve more greatness than anywhere elsewhere in the world.

AO: On that hopeful note, what piece of advice would you give to young artists?

MO: The youth's attention span is getting shorter and shorter and there are too many distractions. I find that it is so difficult for youths to stay focused. My advice is that they must have a wholehearted commitment to their chosen career... I am saying this from the point of view of a teacher.



Patches of history-Eduido chronicle weavers, 2005-2012, 150x155cm, Acrylic on canvas



Ofuekenede in Blues: Golden heart, 2005-2008, 120x120cm, mixed media on canvas



Igbaboneli in parade- black conte drawing on paper, 2014, Massachusetts, 56 x 76cm

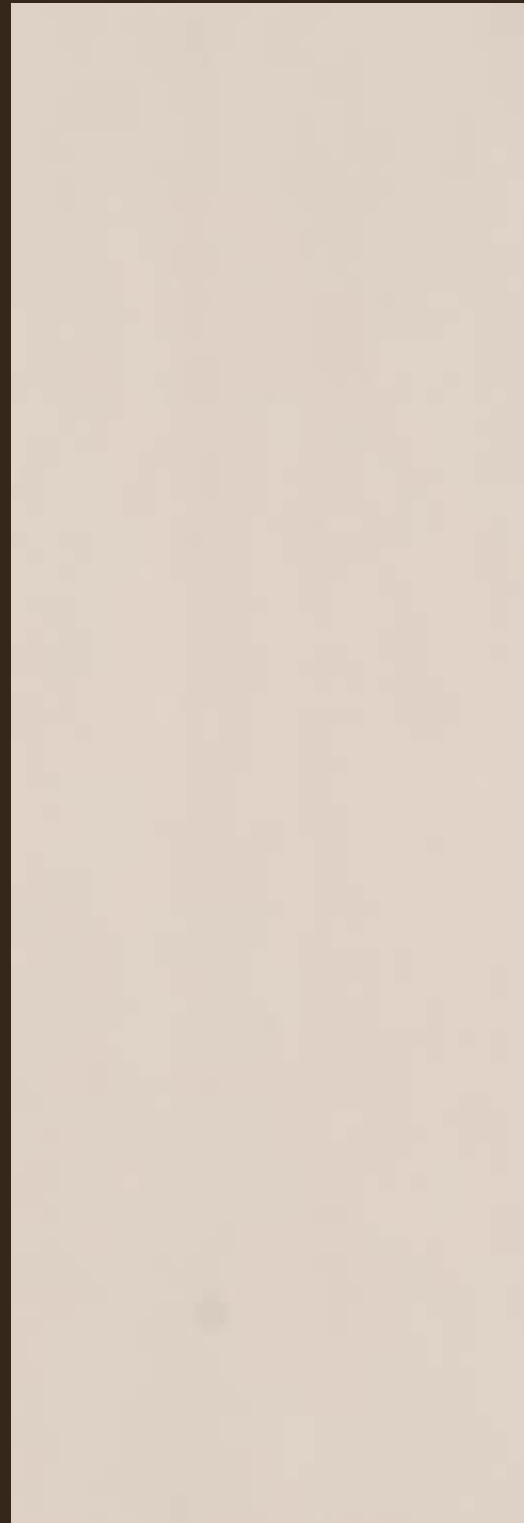




Foremost, Mike Omoighe is a painter and one can see the way **myth and realism** has been used as the story force controlling his **themes**. He thus bridges the huge gap between comprehension and unintelligibility of which modern artists have often been accused.

It is in my view wholly gratifying that this artist has produced these remarkable works which not only engage one's attention, but also testify to a considerable talent and it should not be long before we see his considerable talent in full blossom.

David H. Dale
Artist & Printmaker







Ilo masquerade one- black conte drawing on paper, 2014, Massachusetts, 56 x 76 cm







Imon-obhio: I am Blessed, 2013, black conte drawing on paper, 31 x 46cm



Igene Nedan i: Middle Age wrestlers, 2015, black conte drawing on paper, 31 x 46cm



Igene Nedan II: Middle Age wrestlers, 2015, black conte drawing on paper, 31 x 46cm

Bio

Michael Akhaine Osebhajimete Omoighe

Date of Birth 1958

Painter, Designer and Multi-Dimensional Artist, Curator, Researcher, Documenter, Art Critic/Editor.

Current Dean, Student Affairs, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria

President, International Association of Art Critics, Nigeria

Past Dean, School of Art Design and Printing, Yaba College of Technology

Member, Academic Board of Yaba College of Technology

Chief Lecturer, Department of Fine Art, School Of Art Design and Printing, Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria

Research consultant on Visual Art Literacy Development Project in Africa

Member, Nigerian National Committee on Arts and Culture, Directory (The Presidency)

Former Art Research Consultant to the Nigerian National Gallery of Art (up to 2006), Ovuomaroro Gallery (till date), and to the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Nigerian Branch (up to 1999); Modulator Group on Union Bank Headquarters Plaza, Marina, Lagos (up to 2000)

Has had 14 Solo exhibitions; several joint exhibitions and group shows within and outside Nigeria.

Most recent shows in Germany and the U.S.A. Has had several State and National public commissioned projects (stadia, public parks, buildings, etc) in Nigeria.

Listed in *Who is Who in Contemporary Nigerian Art* (pp 401 – 403) The Smithsonian, Museum of African Art Washington publication and NICOLE GUES I'art African Contemporain, Paris

EDUCATION:

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 1994 | - | Masters Degree in Arts Communication, University of Ibadan M.C.A. (Visual) |
| 1987 | - | Certificate in Polytechnic Management (CPM) NBTE) UNILAG |
| 1980 | - | Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi HND |
| 1978 | - | Yaba College of Technology -ND |
| 1971 -1975 | - | St. Gregory's College Lagos -WASC |
| 1965 -1970 | - | Ereko Methodist School, Araromi Lagos, First School Leaving Certificate |
| 1964 – 1965 | - | New Age Private School, Lewis Street, Lafaji, Lagos. |

Thank You

My profound gratitude and heart felt appreciation to Sandra Obiogo & the Wheatbaker Hotel management for the curatorial and hosting of this show, Equal Rights: Unule Unuile Ozese.

A special thanks to my professional fathers, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Yusuf Grillo, Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke and Jerome Elaiho.

Thank you to Olufemi Akinsanya, Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi, Omoba Yemisi Shyllon, Torch O. Taire, Uncle Sam Olagbaju, Chief and Chief Newson Jibunoh, Joe Obiogo, David Dale, Bojerenu Emmanuel, Prof. Jean Borgatti, Prof. Osa D. Egonwa, Prof. John Ogene, Dr. Kunle Filani and Moses Ohiomokhare for their support and encouragement.

A special mention of my teachers, A. Adejumo, K. Oshinowo, P. Igbanugo, Vivian Osemwegie, Isiaka Osunde for showing me the way to being a practicing artist.

I fondly remember the Omoighe family aka Omoighe clan worldwide.

Eckzee, Ejehi, Ecktale and Titilayo Omoighe: thank you for your constant love and support during this creative process.

Mike Omoighe

Sponsors



The Wheatbaker as part of the Legacy Hotel Group, has keenly supported Nigerian arts and culture since opening its doors in 2011. The hotel's commitment to celebrating the best of Nigerian creativity saw it dedicate its walls to showcasing exceptional traditional, modern and contemporary art. The Wheatbaker has hosted world class art exhibitions including *the Collectors' Series* showcasing Duke Asidere, Kelechi Amadi-Obi and Yetunde Ayeni Babaeko (2011), *Making History* showcasing ancient Nigerian art (2012), *Sequel 1a* showcasing works by Olu Amoda, *Recent sculptures* by Billy Omabegho (2012), the *WW Independence Series* featuring Tayo Ogunbiyi, Karo Akpokiore, Folarin Shasanya, Hakeem Salaa, Toyosi Faridah Kekere-Ekun (2012-13), *Flow* showcasing mixed media installations by Nenna Okore, *Here & There* showcasing paintings by Polly Alakija (2013), photography by Lakin Ogunbanwo, *Duality* showcasing paintings by Isaac Emokpae, *Unfurling*, showcasing photography & poetry by Sandra & Amara Obiagio (2014), *Eko Moves* showcasing photography by Yetunde Ayeni Babaeko (2014) and *AKALAKA* showcasing paintings by Tayo Adenaike and sculptures by Obiora Anidi, *The Contemporaries*, showcasing Nnenna Okore, Duke Asidere, Uchay Joel Chima, Gerald Chukwuma, Raoul Olawale da Silva, Anthea Epelle, Taiye Idahor, Chika Idu, Tony Nsofor, Onyeama Offeodu-Okeke, Tony Nsofor and Adeyinka Akingbade, and *Save Our Art! Save our Heritage!*, a charity exhibition supporting the restoration of the Osun Groves UNESCO World Heritage Site that featured 18 artists including Sangodare Ajala, Adebisi Akanji, Rabiun Abesu, Buraimoh Gbadmosi, Kikelomo, Ajibike Ogunyemi, Bisi Fabunmi, Jimoh Buraimoh, Muraina Oyelami, Prof. Bruce Onabrakpeya Chief Nike Okundaye & Chief Tola Wewe, Polly Alakija, Wura-Natasha Ogunji & photographer Adolphus Opara in 2015-2016



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Curator



Adolphos Opara

Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio 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.

Obiagio 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. Obiagio 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.





Curation & Art Direction: Sandra Mbanefo Obiako
Photography, Design & Layout: Adeyinka Akingbade
Project Assistants: Sophia Amara Obiako, Jemma Amachree-Broad

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