



Metal
Fusion



Man with Horse, 2012, Metal, 33"
by Fidelis Odogwu

Front cover :
Tree of life, 2013, media,
48" x 52" by Alex Nwokolo



METAL FUSION

Celebrating the sculptures of

Alex Nwokolo, Billy Omabegho,
Fidelis Odogwu & Uche Peters

September 14 - October 12, 2013
Lagos, Nigeria







Metallic Expressions

Its fall, a time of seasonal change. As we prepare for the last quarter of 2013, we are delighted to invite you to Metal Fusion, an exhibition of works in stainless steel, galvanized steel wires, aluminium, brass, mild steel and diverse metal sheets and grids carefully crafted into amazing art by four leading Nigerian artists.

Internationally, metal art is trending. At this year's 55th Venice Art Biennale, one of the world's most celebrated conceptual artists, Ai Wei Wei from China, presented an installation titled Sacred, in which he used 150 tons of steel rods collected from the rubble of school buildings hit by a massive earthquake in 2008 in Sichuan; the stacks of straightened rods remind us of over 5000 innocent school children who died in the quake.

Nigerian art also has historic links to the refined use of metals. Our celebrated Benin bronze sculptures and plaques, some dating as far back as the 13th century, are prized by museums around the world, and for many years were the most common image people had of Nigerian art.

Thus Metal Fusion is a body of work that creates linkages between our artistic roots and global movement. It is an exhibition that celebrates new expressions in Nigerian metal art, from the geometric stainless steel sculptures of Billy Omabegho, to the human and symbolic forms created by carefully twisted and crocheted galvanized steel wires by Uche Peters, to the hammered and welded abstract mild steel forms of Fidelis Odogwu, to the layered metal montages of Alex Nwokolo. What we have is a diversified selection of wall and free standing sculptures that touch on universal themes.

The four artists also present a rich diversity of artistic experience. From the classically trained Omabegho who graduated from Cornell and New York Universities and is known for his monumental modern sculptures, such as the zig zag form Zuma sculpture in front of the Nigerian Mission in New York City or the Lagos International Trade Fair symbol, to Nwokolo and Odogwu, both contemporaries and graduates of the Auchi Polytechnic art tradition, to self-taught financier turned artist, Uche Peters.

Metal Fusion encompasses an intriguing range of skill and expression including the forming, bending, cutting, joining, welding, twisting and layering wire mesh and metal scraps from beer and soft drink cans, printer plates and even electronic panels fusing into a carefully interwoven narrative.

As Nwokolo's Tree of Life touches on seasonal regeneration, we hope that Metal Fusion re-energizes and re-galvanizes your excitement about the best of Nigerian metal art!

Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio
Exhibition Curator



Billy Omabegho

Billy Omabegho, creator of the monumental sculpture, "Zuma," symbol of the Nigerian Mission to the United Nations in New York City, is probably the foremost modern sculptor of Nigeria.

Born in Nigeria in 1944, from an early age, Omabegho expressed himself in three dimensional forms. He later sought formal art training in the United States where contact with the latest technical resources was possible. He studied at Cornell University and New York University.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Omabegho was able to apply new media and technical information to the wealth of African symbols from his cultural heritage. The Nigerian government commissioned him to create a number of major works including the towering sculpture memorial to the Late Head of State, Murtala Ramat Muhammed in Benin City, and the Lagos International Trade Fair Symbol.

Omabegho is acknowledged as the first Nigerian sculptor to design and execute modern large scale monumental works for strategic public places in Nigeria. He was also commissioned to do the only sculpture in the garden of the State House, Marina, Lagos.

The artist has shown in London, Brazil, New York, and Washington D.C. as well as at the Nigerian Museum and the Wheatbaker in Lagos. Along with being represented in many international private collections, he was commissioned to do large scale environmental sculpture in the United States. His 21 foot Corten Steel sculpture is prominently placed in front of Council House, the International Conference Center of the S.C. Johnson Company, Racine, Wisconsin.

Two of his designs were featured in the Global Africa Project, a major exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York from Nov. 2010 to May 2011. He spends his time creating sculptures at his studio in the Hamptons, New York state.



Divergence - 2009, Polished Stainless Steel, 40" x 5" x 5"

Artist Statement

I have always been fascinated by the traditional symbols of natural phenomena so skillfully carved into the wooden stools of Bida and the Ifa trays of the Yoruba people of Nigeria: the zigzag lines, spirals, grids, radial patterns, slanted parallel lines and more. Translated into a modern idiom, they appear in my work, still symbolizing forces of nature, water, sun, life, death, rebirth and creation.

The importance of art goes beyond artists, critics, collectors, and investors. It is the impact on the society of all creativity and glorifies the emergence of the creative mind of mankind from earliest times.



Homage IV - 2011 Aluminium and Brass 14" diameter



Fi del i s Odogwu

Fidelis Odogwu is one of the most gifted sculptors in Nigeria today. He was born in Agbor, Delta State, and completed his Higher National Diploma (HND) in Sculpture from Auchi Polytechnic in 1991. He is a full time studio artist and was mentored by one of Nigeria's most renowned sculptors, Ben Osawe, with whom he worked from 1988-1989. Odogwu has participated in numerous local and international art auctions and group exhibitions the most recent being ' *Transcending Boundaries*, which took place at The Curator on Cork Street, London in 2013. He has had one solo exhibition and is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), The Guild of Professional Fine Artist Nigeria (GFA), and Universal Studios of Art (USA) in Lagos.

Artist Statement

I wish every man would only look within himself. Water, air, plants, earth, fire, and events happening around me are major tools and inspirations that shape my ideas. We should not forget that the world is a global village in which we all live; the things happening across the world are at everyone's finger tips as soon as they occur.



The Source, 2012, Metal - 54" x 72"



Positive Result, 2013, Metal - 55" x 26"



Uche Peters

Uche Peters was born in 1973 and grew up in Owerri, Imo State. Even though he would have loved to become an architect, he studied Finance and Banking at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka and graduated in 1999. Although he has been running a successful catering business in Lagos since graduation, his first love has always been art. The son of a University lecturer and a very artistically skilled mother, Uche started drawing in nursery school. Even though he never studied art, his inspiration came from a desire to create unusual art. One of his greatest inspirations is globally celebrated African artist, Professor El Anatsui. Uche finally started full time artistic practice in 2012, and has exhibited his works in local exhibitions including at the Pan African University and at Art House Contemporary Auctions.

Artist Statement

I love doing things which are out of the ordinary. Art is my first love and gives me joy. I believe it's a calling. I buy bundles of galvanized wires previously used for electrical work. After the plastic coating is removed, I use gloves and pliers to twist them into shapes and forms. It usually takes me two to three months to complete a piece.

In the sculpture "weigh before you act" I am saying, look before you leap. Look at the details. If you don't you will miss a lot of things. With maturity I have learnt that you need to take your time and look at details to avoid making mistakes. That is important on the personal as well as the macro level – our leaders need to look more at the details. In life we need to take our time and see beyond the obvious.



Rumple, 2013. Acrylic on galvanised metal, 46" x 47"



Weigh before you act, 2013. Height - 5.5ft. - Wire, Magnifying Glass and Beam Balance



Alex Nwoko

Alex Nwoko is one of the front-liners of the West African art scene. He was born in 1963, and grew up in Lagos, before completing a Higher National Diploma (HND) at the Auchi Polytechnic in 1991, followed by a Masters of Arts (MFA) at the University of Benin in 2000. Nwoko is a celebrated painter, known for his iconic figures, portraits, natural landscapes and rooftop cityscapes, as well as for his mixed media work. He has traveled and exhibited widely, and has had 8 solo exhibitions and taken part in over 55 group exhibitions at top galleries in the U.K., France, Holland, South Africa and Nigeria. His art is keenly sought after by international collectors, and his works can be found in many individual and corporate art collections.

In recognition of his artistic achievements, he was awarded the *American Ambassador's Prize* in 1991, the *Guinness Certificate of Merit* in 2004, and in 2010 he was honored by the Auchi Polytechnic School of Art & Design with the *Exceller's Award*. He is a member and a former Financial Secretary of the Guild of Professional Fine Artists of Nigeria and also the Society of Nigerian Artist.

Artist Statement

STILL

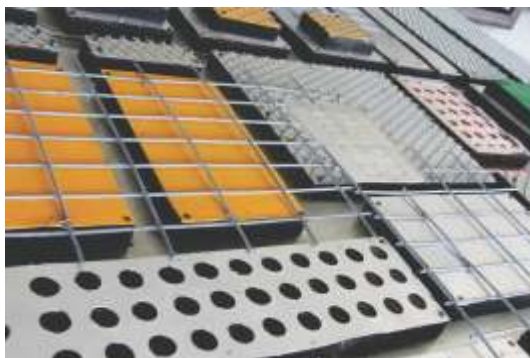
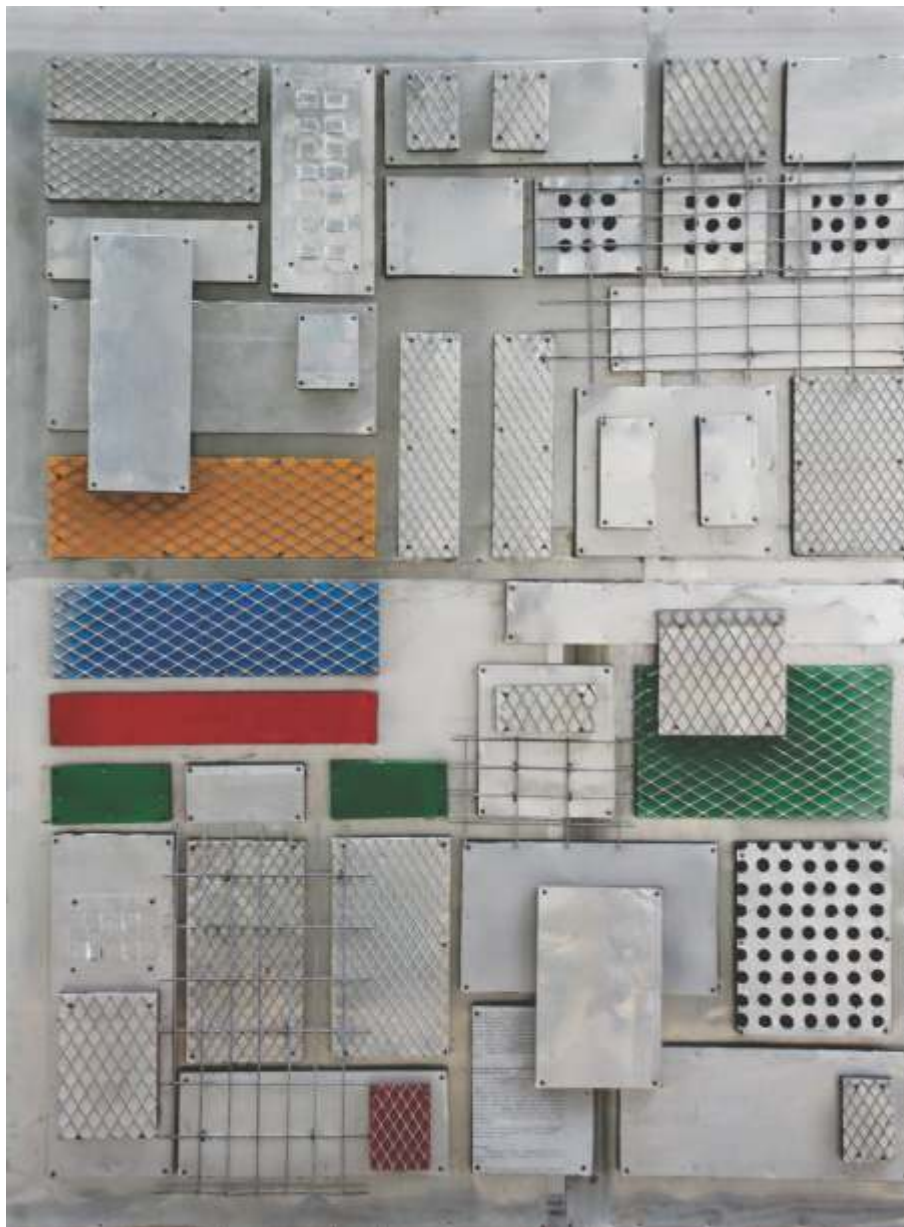
I am STILL unflinchingly committed to my desire for adventure. Still seeking and configuring media for the dramatic and dynamic surprises they bring to my surfaces. I am STILL thrilled by the dynamic effects created by accumulative patterns and fragmented forms. This helps to stabilize my art.



Scavengers - 2013, mixed media, 96" x 44"



Copse 3 - 2013, mixed media, 48" x 48"





Urban project, 2013, mixed media, 109" x 48" by Alex Nwokolo

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