

collectors too, might be interested in exploring the practices of other artists – like Kay Hassan, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Tracey Rose – whose photographic work diversely reference the painterly, often abstractly and conceptually, but without being literal. Another work that stood out for several reasons is Deji Ajoye's, *Transition*. Apart from being hung low in a precarious afterthought-like manner in a corner near the exhibition's entrance, this photographic triptych of glowing skull drawings made with light managed to make light painting seem cutting edge in a show dominated by straight documentary (genres aside) photographs.

While the exhibition at the Omenka gallery reveals faults in its curatorial logic, the photography exhibition at the African Artists Foundation, *Initial Patterns*, offers an analytic perspective on the conventions of photojournalism. The show is comprised of photographs by Andrew Esiebo, Babasola Bamiro, Folarin Shasanya, Adolphus Opara, Israel Ophori, Eremina Humbo, Toye Gbade, Tuoyo Omagba, Zemaye Okediji, and Godswill Ayemoba, who together represents a new still-in-development artist's collective/press agency. The exhibition functions as a visual culmination of the group's three-week photography workshop led by the Netherlands-based artist Lino Hellings, wherein the artists/journalists took to the streets of Lagos to capture *new* news – photographic documents of local happenings that are premised on offering a fresh perspective on representations of Nigeria in the media. And while such an endeavor is hardly innovative within the global context of contemporary art, the exhibition itself, with its thoughtful presentation and revealing photographs, signals an interesting departure from other recent photography exhibitions.

First off, the fluent and effortless installation of the work, on the Foundation's second floor, made the show's thesis quite legible. Large prints mounted on easels featured handwritten labels that offered mini-narratives as responses to the work's subject matter; these prints outlined the gallery's perimeter, and were accompanied by a large board whereon a multitude of smaller prints were pinned. While the board and the nearby flowcharts harkens back to art school critiques, they also serve as reminder of the exhibition's genesis as a visual laboratory for analyzing and manufacturing images. These devices essentially exposed the viewer to the blueprint underpinning the exhibition's construction, and in so doing highlighted the show's engaging work-in-progress, experimental nature. *Initial Patterns* did not promise any perspectives, rather it presented a variety of individual responses to the city of Lagos prompting one to reconsider what qualifies as news. The strength of this project rests not so much on the quality of the works exhibited, but on its thoughtful and seemingly thoroughly planned presentation. Here's to hoping that the collective remains focused and motivated enough to continue experimenting and exploring the potential of manufacturing reality as opposed to simply documenting it.

My first impressions of both photography exhibitions are steadfast: one's strength was the other's weakness. The exhibition, *A Perspective on Contemporary Nigerian Photography* missed the much-needed opportunity to analyze and elucidate the aesthetic and generational shifts between contemporary Nigerian photographers. Despite this, however, the remarkable quality of much of the work on display remains incontestable and relatively unparalleled. By comparison, *Initial Patterns*, with its clear logic and compelling presentation offers a thought-provoking occasion for engagement even if some of the photographs themselves signal room for improvement. In the end, if the goal is to validate the medium of photography within local contemporary art practices, then it never hurts when form supports content, and content supports form.

Antawan I. Byrd is a US Fulbright fellow and curatorial assistant at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos.