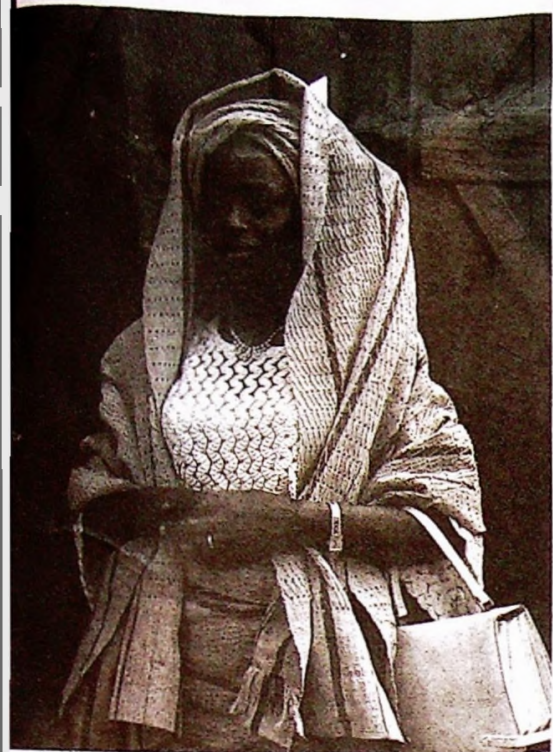


2



CCA Lagos/Tate Modern, London Curatorial Exchange Jude Anogwih and Kerry Greenberg

Tate Modern has recently established a series of curatorial exchanges as part of the Level 2 Gallery programme, the museum's dedicated space for exhibiting emerging international artists. From February–March 2011 Kerry Greenberg from Tate Modern and Jude Anogwih from CCA, Lagos will spend two weeks in each other's cities, meeting artists and undertaking research to gain a greater understanding of artistic practice and the cultural infrastructure in London and Lagos. This curatorial exchange will ultimately lead to a collaborative exhibition organised by both curators at their home institutions.

This curatorial exchange is supported by the World Collections Programme.



The Ruptured Landscape: On the Construction of Difference.

Mudi Yahaya

2nd April - 23rd April 2011

Mudi Yahaya's forthcoming solo exhibition *Challenging The Raptured Landscape: On The Constructions Of Difference* will present several new bodies of work that explore interpretations of African hybrid identities and their varied visual dialects, currencies and vocabularies.

Mudi Yahaya is a cultural activist whose photography has evolved from social documentary essays to critical conceptual photography. Mallam Mudi, works largely on long term, self-assigned projects, that focus on the aesthetic relationship between images and post-colonial deconstruction of the African identity in syncretic African spaces.

Educated as an electrical engineer, Mallam Mudi, began his photography career in 1995 at Dexter Lucian Studios. His work has been featured in several publications such as the book *Lagos: A City At Work*, 2005 as well as the London Times. He recently exhibited in *A Perspective of Contemporary Nigerian Photography* (2009) and *Reconstruction In Reverse* (2010) both at the Omenka Gallery, Lagos.



6



Temporary Permanence: Victor Ehikhamenor's Ethnographic Drawings Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos

30th April - 28th May 2011

This exhibition will feature recent drawing-based works by Victor Ehikhamenor, which explores the artist's re-discovery of the visual culture of his ancestral home. Of this new body of work, Ehikhamenor writes:

In December of 2010 I decided to go back to my village, my childhood, my upbringing, my "primary colors" and I was shocked at what I rediscovered about my heritage and ancestral home. Until then I did not really realize that over the decades I have been unconsciously feeding off of what was always there as part of my everyday life when I was growing up—the numerous shrine walls, the mud walls of my many grandmothers, my uncles' rooms, and other villagers' walls were all beaming with different kinds of art. I started documenting them all with my camera, because it was also obvious that many people no longer care about these arts'

7

Visual artist, photographer and writer, Victor Ehikhamenor was born in Uwessan Irrua, Edo State, Nigeria. He has BA degree in English and Literature, Msc in Technology Management and Masters of Fine Art (MFA) from University of Maryland, College Park, USA. Ehikhamenor has been prolific in producing abstract, symbolic and ethnographic works shown in Nigeria and United States

He has published numerous works of fiction and essays in world journals and magazines. His works have been used as book/journal/magazine covers by major authors and publishers. He is currently the Creative Director of NEXT Newspaper in Lagos and also maintains a studio in Maryland, USA.

1. Installation Views of J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere: Moments of Beauty. Photos: Finnish National Gallery/Central Art Archives. Courtesy Petri Virtanen

2. J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere. Untitled (WD 2093), 1960'S. Courtesy of the Artist and Foto Ojeikere.

3. Kristina Van Dyke. Photo credit: Paul Hester.

4. Yinka Shonibare. *The Confession*, 2007. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the Artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery.

5. Jude Anogwih and Kerry Greenberg. Photo: Amaize Ojeikere

6. Mudi Yahaya. *Nigerian Hootentot Venus 02*, 2010. Courtesy of the Artist.

7. Victor Ehikhamenor. *Temporary Permanence Series I*, 2010. Courtesy of the Artist.

8. Green Summary. Installation of work by Taiye Idahor. Photo: Jude Anogwih

Past Programmes

The Green Summary

December 20th 2010- 21st January 2011

The year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the independence of 17 African countries, as well as the 3rd year anniversary of the opening of the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos. To celebrate these milestones, CCA featured a dynamic range of programming which culminated with *The Green Summary* an exhibition that featured newly commissioned work

by nine contemporary Nigerian artists: Emeka Ogboh, Ndidi Dike, Jude Anogwih, Jelili Atiku, Taiye Idahor, Uchay Joel Chima, Victoria Udon-dian, Richardson Ovbiebo and Karo Akpoki-ere. In reflecting on their relationship with CCA as well as the history of Nigeria, the artists presented an array of individual and collaborative projects in a variety of media. Jointly

curated by Ronke Adeola, Jude Anogwih and Oyinda Fakeye, the curatorial structure of the exhibition mandated that each of the participating artists incorporate the colour green in their work as a way of embracing or critiquing notions of nationalism from a Nigerian perspective.



8

Professional Development

Curatorial Residency: Helsinki, Finland > Antawan I. Byrd
10th April 2011 - 25th May 2011

In April, Antawan I. Byrd—former Fulbright fellow at CCA, Lagos, and currently a Curatorial Assistant—will be pursuing a curatorial research residency in Helsinki, Finland supported by Finnish Fund for Art Exchange (FRAME) and the Helsinki International Artist-in-Residency (HIAP) Programme. During his five weeks in Helsinki, Byrd will spend his time interacting with artists and curators, as well as various art institutions with an eye toward developing future projects.

On his residency plans, Byrd writes, “My approach to studying contemporary art has always been about seeing as much as possible—as a way of developing a less abstract understanding of the field’s different shapes and structures. I think that my research on contemporary African art requires that I am

able to think comparatively about forms of production and methods of presentation in different parts of the world. Thus, I am excited about exploring the art scene in Helsinki, which seems quite vibrant. I am keen on interacting with the emerging generation of Finnish curators and art historians.” Byrd’s residency will coincide with the ARS11 exhibition at the Museum for Contemporary Art, Kiasma, which in its 50th year will focus on contemporary art in Africa.

Following his residency, Byrd will spend the summer in Lagos working on several publication projects at CCA, Lagos. In the fall he will begin his doctoral programme in the History of Art at Northwestern University, Chicago.

Reflections on an Internship > Moyo Oladunjoye

My interests in art developed during my time in secondary school when I had the opportunity to explore my creativity through drawing. Since then, I have always been interested in art and curious about what motivate artists. It is these interests that lead me to intern at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, where I was able to interact with artists, be a part of exhibitions and participate in the many different kinds of talks featuring artists and curators talking about their work.

These experiences helped me to better understand that every form of art has its own meaning and connection to the world we live in. It is through such works of art that artists are able to tell their own stories. I really enjoyed being able to hear artists from different backgrounds and different parts of the world talk about their work, and the motivation behind their interests in being artists. I also got to see artists work

ing together to develop ideas and make new work.

My experiences at CCA have really given me a better appreciation for art. It’s a great place to be. For those who have never been to CCA, I can only say, this is where art is at its finest.

Oladunjoye graduated from Covenant University in 2010 with a degree in Accounting.



Moyo Oladunjoye. Photo: CCA, Lagos

The Curatorial Intensive > Oyinda Fakeye

In October 2010, I had the opportunity to participate in Independent Curators International Curatorial Intensive programme in New York. The programme, structured as a course, offered a dynamic

mix of talks, presentations and on-site visits with seasoned contemporary art professionals with a focus on Public Art practices. As a requirement for the programme, all participants submitted a proposal for a project they were interested in developing during the course. My proposal outlined a plan to develop and install light-based sculptures in the city of Lagos.

The course included twelve local (New York) and international curators. Over the course of

the seven days we interacted with art professionals of different backgrounds who highlighted their individual methodologies vis-à-vis Public Art. Our first visit was to the Madison Square Park, an important New York landmark with an interesting variety of public art programmes. Of note was the vibrant light-based work by the San Francisco-based artist Jim Campbell. His installation featured thousands of LED lights that were strung from cables and timed to turn on and off. The beaming lights collectively gave the impression of scattered constellations. I was particularly interested in Campbell’s work especially the way in which the public interacted with Campbell’s installation.

I benefited immensely from the sessions with Anne Pasternak and Nato Thompson of Cre

ative Time, who both discussed their experiences with public art. Presentations with Mary Jane Jacob, Claire Bishop and a host of other professionals provided a great deal of insight on many issues related to the execution and consumption of Public Art. Considering that the course was aimed at assisting us in developing our projects, the presentations covered each step of developing a proposal—from the research stages to the development and execution. At the start of the course, I was assigned three mentors with whom I met with individually as I prepared to present my project on the final day.

The ICI team of Chelsea Haines, Renaud Proch and director Kate Fowle mentored the group throughout the week—reviewing sessions, dis-

cussing readings, and providing substantial feedback. As the course title implies, this was very much an intensive process, both emotionally and intellectually. Yet, I found it to be incredibly beneficial on many levels. The course provided an opportunity to network on an international scale with individuals from a variety of artistic and professional backgrounds. It was also a personal experience in that as we all grew throughout the course of the programme, many of the participants developed working relationships with the intention of developing future projects.

More details of my proposal and those of my colleagues can be found on the Independent Curators International website: www.ici-exhibitions.org

Work In Progress

In this section, we invite emerging writers, artists, curators and other cultural professionals to present work that they are currently developing as a way of engendering dialogue.

Alternative Realities: Imagined Communities and Contemporary Art in Africa > Loren Hansi Momodu

In an era in which our idea of community has become bound increasingly with the idea of the nation state, contemporary artists have been at work creating varied means with which to reflect, rebel against and re-create that idea. Taking the nation state of Nigeria as a starting point, my aim here is to highlight the prevalence of imagined communities in contemporary art practice, in Africa and beyond. The works explored here each offer a view of an alternative reality which questions the status quo, expounding new ways of seeing the world we live in, signifying collective aspiration for an enhanced way of life. Whether it is through the act of migration caused by a longing for a life elsewhere, or through the willingness to stay and fight for an alternative vision.

The selected projects interact with a sense of the collective consciousness and imagined community in different ways and we are able to examine the notion from the position of the State, the citizen and the architectural environment. The impetus for this investigation is an interrogation of how an artistic action—performed in Eastern Europe in the early 90s—has had a significant impact on the lives of Nigerians some twenty years later. *NSK State in Time* was able to connect with Nigerians in search of a better life, of an idealised and somewhat utopian vision (mis)placed in Europe. In 2010 a quarter of all citizens of the *NSK State in Time* are Nigerian; raising the question of why so many Nigerians

have sought this dual identity. Taking this as a starting point, I am interested in examining artistic projects that engage with our sense of collective identity in search of positive change. *NSK State in Time* offers a utopian escape, mimicking idealistic Christian ethics and the aesthetics of the nation state, it occupies the void after politics and religion have failed. It works on a conceptual level, requiring the imagination of not only fellow citizens, but also of the state itself—as it exists only in time, not in physical space.

The fore runners of the *NSK*, such as Kazimir Malevich, Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys may offer a distinctly Western art history, however the number of ordinary Nigerian citizens who have become a kind of counter audience of the *NSK State in Time* speaks of a significant connection to a sense of longing for an alternative existence. And this agency for positive change, is also evident in the work of a number of contemporary artists working on the continent, in medium ranging from performance, video, sculpture and installation. Nigerian multimedia artist Jelili Atiku’s practice deals directly with the political concerns of his country, conversing with the notion of imagined communities on a very practical level. In order to achieve a more ‘egalitarian’ reality his strikingly direct performance and sculptural works are statements aimed unmistakably at the ruling classes. The immediacy of his approach is typified in *Agbo Raga*, 2009; first

performed in the Ejigbo Ram Market, Lagos, Nigeria. At an unpronounced time Atiku, wrapped in cellophane and on all fours is dragged around the ram market on a leash. His audience is the unsuspecting patrons of the market. In this work, Atiku aims to portray a sense of ‘retrogression’ in environmental, political and social realms. The body of the artist becomes a beast confined to a leash, an object for sale, and a victim of excess of modern society—trapped in plastic wrapping. Situated somewhere in between, the concept of a state in time and the practicalities of direct action, South African artist Bernie Searle is creating video works that feature the body as the site of contention. The position of the body in the landscape, and identities projected in a community re-imagining itself in a post apartheid world. Her concern has been to locate the individual within issues of community, collectivity, memory and promise. Bodys Kingelez’s ‘Architectural Modelism’ proposes a fantastical, urban architectural Utopia. Brightly coloured model towns envisage a new possibility for contemporary African urbanisation. The commonality between each of these projects, from Slovenia to South Africa is that these artists are creating work in the midst and wake of political and social turmoil. At times when existing systems have failed, they are a contemplating Utopia, and in search for an alternative reality. Focus on the fantastical and the world of the imagination is to be grounded by a

concern with the significantly more tangible experience of attempting to actualise such utopian visions. As the work of art becomes ever more implicated in the political and personal, the ethical ramifications of such projects are brought into question. This tipping point between the selected works and other realms of existence, such as the political and private sphere also illuminates the ambivalence of politically imbued practice.

Loren Hansi Momodu is a MA candidate at the Royal College of Art, London. She is an Adjunct Curator at the CCA, Lagos, and Curatorial Assistant at the Turner Contemporary.



Jude Anogwih, Jelili Atiku, Inke Arns, Loren Hansi Momodu during the *Towards a Double Consciousness: NSK Passport* project at CCA, Lagos, 2010. Photo: Courtesy Loren Hansi Momodu

Deterritorialised Space

Over the last two decades, there has been an increase in non-representational theories of space, and particularly the Deleuzian notion of deterritorialised space, i.e. the spatial dimension which defies political or otherwise classical representations of space (geography, geometry, place etc.) and loosely named virtual space, striated space, fluid space, liminal space, dark space, any-space-whatsoever, etc.

Tolulope Onabolu

In Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, deterritorialization is an involution of representational systems, wherein a form which had persisted as authoritative gesture is suddenly or methodically violated by a minor or otherwise subversive form, and then reterritorialized. In architecture, this involution has taken on various forms, from the appropriation of itinerant journeymen into the guild of masons in the Middle Ages, to the Enlightenment's project of rationalising Renaissance poetics. In more recent times,

architecture has been deterritorialized under the rubric of town planning, housing, estates and speculative development, and building construction.

While these various forms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization have transformed the field and discourse of architecture, a significant subversion (or involution to be consistent) is the role of fiction in the transformation of architecture - from the proverbial rabbit hole in Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland*, to Plastic Beach and the windmill powered city

CCA Lagos, beginning its own excursion into this nebulous spatial realm, - approached three researchers - locally and from the Diaspora - about their thoughts on this spatial phenomenon, and its impact on their various practices.

These were their comments:

in the sky in *El Manana* by the Gorillaz. In my opinion deterritorialization is the return to the fictive and mythical basis of representational systems, wherein what is currently geared towards repetitive production and mindless profit, is differentiated and reinscribed into narrative form.

Tolulope Onabolu is a theoretical architect and independent researcher based in Lagos, Nigeria. He received his PhD in Architecture from Edinburgh College of Art in 2010

Yesomi Umolu

I'd like to consider deterritorialisation through the lens of recent political upheavals across the Arab region and the spaces that become synonymous with popular resistance. Of course, we can suggest that excising political agency through its specific placing - for example, in the aptly named Liberation Square, in an occupied building or across the digital networks that coalesce a community - is intrinsically part of the aesthetics of a contemporary revolution. But, my interest in this phenomenon is directed at the process that these places narrate, which I argue expresses itself as a deterritorialised space. The unfolding of recent events in Tunisia and Egypt necessarily involved the decoding of values, beliefs and practices attributed to any given place and a subsequent process of recoding, in order to construct anew. As we witnessed, the potency of these uprisings stems from their spontaneity and temporality, but these too engender precarious conditions and the threat of unsustainable action. Moreover, we must be aware that these micro-politics are practiced across both sides of the divide, as the institution concurrently de/re-codes the newly assumed spaces of resistance. As such, deterritorialisation in this context must be viewed as a condition of anticipatory tactics and imminent inhabitation, which in my view defies any symbolically, demarcated space.

Yesomi Umolu is a London-based curator, writer and researcher.



Paul Goodwin

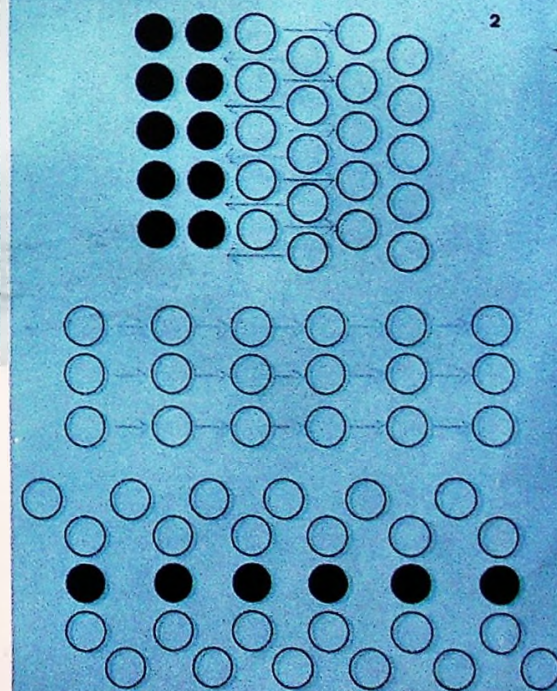
I've followed with interest the increasing spatialisation of the discourse of contemporary art. In my former life I was a 'critical geographer' and an avid disciple of critical spatial theorists such as David Harvey (with whom I studied in Oxford), Doreen Massey, Ed Soja, Rosalyn Deutsche and above all Henri Lefebvre. I was particularly enchanted with Lefebvre's theories around the production of space and its articulation of cultural difference within the context of the globalisation of the 'urban'. These ideas helped me to make sense of the proliferation of spatial metaphors in cultural theory in the 1990s and ideas about 'situated' practices, theoretical 'territories' and 'spaces' of knowledge production. Of course, Deleuze's notions of deterritorialisation (and

reterritorialisation) have been central to the migration and often problematic translation of spatial discourses from geography and other spatial disciplines into the art world. Deterritorialisation has helped me to conceptually think through complex issues of post-colonial art and curatorial practices that have decentred and destabilised dominant colonial and racist, Eurocentrist notions of art. Artists from Africa and the diaspora have been and are at the centre of such critical engagements in their diverse practices. Deterritorialisation has been at the heart of emerging global modernities in Africa and the Southern hemisphere and critical spatial thinking can be a powerful tool to help curators and theorists unpack and unleash the creative and multiple

potentialities of a truly decolonised art practice in the 21st century.

Paul Goodwin is a curator, urbanist and researcher based in London, UK. Currently Goodwin is Curator of Cross Cultural Programmes at Tate Britain, London.

1 The House of The Chinese Mantis explores the tragedy of the amorous scene. This scene consists of computer code, magic, an architectural object and a site of encounter; it is gnosticism meeting cybernetics - a deterritorialized space, in which architecture becomes the scene of a narrative. Image: Tolu Onabolu, House of The Chinese Mantis, In *Architecture and The Creation of Worlds, Book 1: The Actual* (unpublished PhD thesis), Edinburgh College of Art, July 2010.



2 Schematic diagrams from *How to Protest Intelligently: Important Information and Tactics*, 2011. Sourced Online. Courtesy of Yesomi Umolu

Collector's Focus: Sandra and Joe

This year, our Focus feature shifts from highlighting the practices of emerging and established artists to giving prominence to the practices of the rising number of collectors of Modern and Contemporary African art. In this edition, Bisi Silva interviews local collectors Sandra and Joe Obiagi about the history and highlights of their art collection.

Bisi Silva: When did you start collecting?

Sandra Obiagi: I've always had a love for art, and grew up in a home where my mother's love for collecting African art was fused with the amazing spaces my father, an architect designed. Our home was a perfect marriage of ancient African art presented within a very airy and light, tropical interior that had classical furniture of modern design such as Eames & Corbusier, Fakeye wood carvings, amazing terra cotta heads and Benin bronzes set against eclectic art pieces from all over the world.

My art collecting was inspired by working as a volunteer tour guide and teaching assistant at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in Manitoba, Canada, during my student years. I began to see art in museums as instrumental for teaching kids "aesthetic intelligence," general art appreciation, and providing a platform for their own cre-

ative expression which empowered kids to discover and unleash their own creativity. I think it was these influences in my life that got me seriously "hooked" on harnessing creativity in all its forms (film, music, visual art etc.) within my life and environment. When I met Joe, our mutual love for art and design was a natural and exciting aspect of our growing friendship – and so we were able to complement each other's passion for art.

Joe Obiagi: Art was always a part of my youth. Actually, my older sister, Jane Obiagi, is an artist who studied under Professor Yusuf Grillo and Mr. Kolade Oshinowo at Yaba College of Technology in the 1970's. I met these great artists as her teachers and used to enjoy visiting the art studios at Yaba Tech. My keen interest continued throughout secondary school, where I studied Fine Art.

As a young man heading to the United States in the summer of 1980 to start my university degree in economics, I stopped briefly in London to visit family. One of the highlights of the trip was the Tate Gallery where I bought my first piece of art, a Joan Miro poster for three pounds. During my college years, I continued collecting museum posters, dreaming of the day I would be able to invest in an original painting. On graduating from college and returning to Nigeria and working as a young banker at Citibank, I began spending time with my father's schoolmate, the renowned artist Professor Ben



Enwonwu. I remember sitting in his lush garden looking out over the Lagos lagoon at the back of his house at Ikoyi Crescent, being mesmerized by his quintessential "English Gentleman" manners, peppered by his temperamental outbursts, while contemplating social anthropol-

ogy and philosophy. Sometimes I visited Uncle Ben with my friend and curator, Afolabi Kofo Abayomi, who probably has the most significant collection of Ben Enwonwu's art to date. And that is really, how my passion for art and artists flourished.

BS: How did you start collecting?

SO: Joe is a more strategic, historically inspired, and very deliberate art collector. Early on, he knew who were the major artists we should be collecting and why their art was significant. I am definitely more of a passionate, "coup de foudre" (love at first sight), impulsive collector – and often need some convincing about why this or that artist is so amazing. Sometimes Joe acquires a piece, and after it hangs on our walls for a few weeks, I begin to see its depth and beauty. But before we invest in a major piece – Joe usually does a lot of research – and we "agree to agree" on what we buy. For example,

we were looking for a Grillo for many years. When we finally found two amazing pieces – we just looked at each other and knew that these were the pieces we had been looking for. I think in many ways, art collecting is also a spiritual journey in which you are led to certain pieces, and often, there is some spiritual connection between you and the piece, and often between you and the artist.

BS: Why did you start collecting art?

SO: I think collecting art has always come naturally to us. It is a passionate hobby which has become an important aspect of our lives. Over

the years we have been more strategic in building our collection. We try to fill gaps, analyse market trends, visit artists frequently, take part in local and international auctions, and increase the collection's geographic footprint.

JO: As a young Banker, I took great pride in my apartment and enjoyed decorating my "Bachelor Pad", with eclectic pieces I picked up during art exhibitions, on travels abroad, and from Mallams who used to sell me beautiful classical bronze pieces from across West Africa. By the time I met my wife Sandie, our mutual passion for art was ignited.

BS: What is the dominant trajectory of your collection? Is it structured primarily by theme or medium? Is it mainly older modern artists, or younger artists working in a modernist vernacular?

SO: Wow, that's a tough one. Joe is more drawn to modern art, while I seem to gravitate towards contemporary art – so our collection has some interesting contrasts and tensions – which make it rich and diverse. I think we tend to collect pieces that have strong, bold, and vibrant colors and in some way express hope and positive energy – rather than some works that represent the more disturbing, sometimes even violent, depressed, and dark side of human nature. We both like political and satirical art, and enjoy artists such as Duke Asidere, Victor Ehikhamenor, Gani Odutokun, even Demas Nwoko and Dele Jegede, whose works have deeply etched political under-tones. Contemporary artists such as Kainbei Osahenye, Fidelis Odogwu and Olu Amoda are taking the industry by a storm.

We also have many younger artists in our collection who we know and enjoy supporting such as Uchay Joel Chima, Ibe Anabanaba, Ola Balogun, Simeon Akhizebhu, Chidi Kubiri, Gerald Chukwuma, and Peju Alatise. However, collecting contemporary art is not always easy because of the scale of installations. The most impressive awe inspiring contemporary and new media art pieces are difficult to house in a private collection – unless one has large exhibition space. That notwithstanding, I have worked very closely with documentary and art photographers such as Uche James Iroha and TY Bello from Depth of Field, as well as artists exploring video art such as Uchay Chima Joel.

JO: Our Collection is balanced between Modern and Contemporary Art. While Sandie tends to

like Contemporary Art, I tend to focus on Modern Art and the works of a handful of Nigerian "Masters." Also, being a Banker, I strive to strike a balance between a keen sense of value and my personal joy in collecting works, which have aesthetic depth, artistic merit and economic value. In my opinion, balancing these three elements is actually what sets a collection and collectors apart. I also enjoy the excitement of the bargaining and negotiating process when I compete for a prized piece. There is an element of providence and destiny when you dream about acquiring a piece which is tugging at your emotions for days on end – and you begin to plan, scheme and pray about making it yours. (he laughs!) But as a general comment, we tend to be drawn to art that makes us happy and celebrates the African spirit and culture, and expresses our humanity and positive energy, which ultimately is God inspired.

Nigerian Visual Arts

From Aina Onabolu to Adagogo Green: Widening the Scope of Modernism in Nigerian Visual Arts Akin Onipede

Elder Tam Fiofori deserves commendation for expanding the frontiers of definition and appreciation of modernism in Nigerian visual arts in his recent submission during the public hearing of the bill for an act to repeal and re-enact the NGA Act, at the National Assembly in Abuja as reported in *The Guardian* of Tuesday, November 9, 2010. Fiofori's argument that Jonathan Adagogo Green, a photographer of Ijaw origin, whose photograph of the deposed Oba Ovonranwen of Benin in 1897, qualifies as a modern artistic expression and hence the beginning of modernism in Nigerian visual arts cannot be faulted.¹

Hitherto, modernism in Nigerian visual arts has mostly been attributed to the emergence and exploits of Aina Onabolu in the early 20th century. Professor Uche Okeke (Nig. Mag.) had looked back, beyond Onabolu to posit that modern art in Nigeria started in Benin in the 16th century. This view was parroted bykpakronyl (*Nigerian Women in the Evolution...*) who sees the influence of Portuguese icons on Benin art as the beginning of modern Nigerian visual arts. These views as tempting as they are anachronistic however overlooked the fact that there was no unit called Nigeria in the 16th century and as such, the developments in Benin art could not have been attributed to a nonexistent, yet to be configured Nigerian nation. Most scholars have therefore held on to Aina Onabolu as the father of modernism in Nigerian art until Fiofori's elucidation, which has no doubt removed the veil from our eyes.

Going through Prof Frank Ugiomoh's thesis on "The Modern and the Contemporary in Nigerian Art", as posted by Bisi Silva, one could not but marvel at how seemingly "small issues" receive clinical interrogations and analysis in the hands and laboratories of experts. Ugiomoh's expositions on the contentious nature of definitions, especially when tainted by layers of biases can only be advanced or discounted by pitching more authorities to complement or dismiss his argument.

Many scholars/authors have dwelled/quarrelled with the misapplication or swapping of the terms "Modern" and "Contemporary" in contextual application to the arts, not only in Nigeria but globally. Sidney Kasfir, (in *Contemporary African Art*, 2000) argues that in "Western art history... 'Contemporary' connotes the art of the present and the recent past... while the much broader and weighty term 'modern' encompasses an ideological break..." from conventions, the type that ushered in "Les Femmes d'Alger" a painting by Pablo Picasso in 1907, which marked an epochal shift from Euro-naturalism to African formalism in Western art. Assuming Kasfir's definitions were appropriated and localized in Africa/Nigeria on the merit of their surface meanings, modernism in the Western sense, attained by the borrowing of African/Oceania forms, would still not mean the same thing as modernism in African/Nigerian arts. And if Onabolu's espousal of naturalism was seen as Nigerian modernism, then due credit is not being given to the rich artistic culture that produced the naturalistic masterpieces of Ife art.

Professor Chike Aniakor's definition of contemporary Nigerian art aligns slightly with Kasfir's abovementioned definition. While positing that Contemporary Nigerian art describes works being produced as of now in Nigeria, he however points out that the term 'contemporary' is a big umbrella capable of bringing under its shade a variety of stylistic and conceptual assortment. (*Contemporary Nigerian Artists and Tradition*).

Okwul Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu contend (in *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*) that definitions can be disabling but submit that "contemporary African/(Nigerian?) Art denotes a field of complex artistic production, research, interpretation and a repository of rich intellectual discovery at the intersection of the shifting models of cultural, political, social, and epistemological analyses in which Africa/(Nigeria?) is meaningfully interpellated." For now, I must admit that I'm still chewing on the meat of the book and have not arrived at digesting it.



Ikwuemesi (in *Beyond the Pigeonholes...*) sees contemporary art, "from the point of view of African scholarship, as, an acquired paradigm, a by-product of colonisation and, a problematic term which according to him, does not stand up as a valid label for describing not only African art, but art in general." He agrees somewhat that there is a context in which contemporary can stand as substitute for modern.

Eddie Chambers (in *Contemporary Art or Contemporary African Art...*) asks: "In what sense can we refer to contemporary African art?" And he answers rhetorically; "certainly not on the basis of skin colour...country of birth... (or) geographical location." In some contexts, he says, "it becomes almost a nonsense to speak of contemporary African art as any sort of recognizable entity..."

As stated earlier, the object of this exercise is not to pontificate or proffer definitions but to draw on existing positions through which better insight to what constitute modernism and contemporary Nigerian art may be sifted. If it took these many years to be enlightened and shift from Onabolu to Adagogo Green, a closer look may still expand the frontiers further. Fiofori's

revelation has no doubt given the challenge to historians to wake up and dust off old assumptions and dig deeper into history to situate developments not only chronologically but also factually. If going by Kasfir's definition that modernism represents an ideological break, from past representations, then Adagogo Green's 1897 photograph of Oba Ovonranwen of Benin was epochal—materially, conceptually and technologically. This knowledge should inform the new position to be advanced for the purpose of the harmonized bill, and further intellectual engagements.

¹ The beauty of scholarship is in its flexibility, proclivity and inevitability to submit to superior argument(s). My attention has since been drawn—by Prof Frank Ugiomoh—to the fact that the same logic advanced by me as to the inappropriateness of attributing the beginning of modernism in Nigerian art to developments in Benin art in the 16th century, because of the non existence of the entity called Nigeria, can also be used to fault my acquiescence and defense of the thesis that Jonathan Adagogo Green, with his 1897 photograph of deposed Oba Ovonranwen was at the beginning of modernism in Nigerian Art. While it is not contestable that Adagogo Green's photograph qualifies as modern artistic expression, its labeling by me as the beginning of modernism in Nigerian art stands nullified. What Ugiomoh's clarification has done on the one hand is to reaffirm Aina Onabolu as the pioneer of modernism in the unit called Nigeria, so constituted in 1914, while on the other hand, it has opened the door for further elucidations and definitions of the appropriate classification for the exploits of the Benin artists of the 16th century and those of Adagogo Green—to be classified as Nigerian or not. The contention over the correctness or otherwise of the swapping of modernism with contemporary or vice-versa nevertheless continues.

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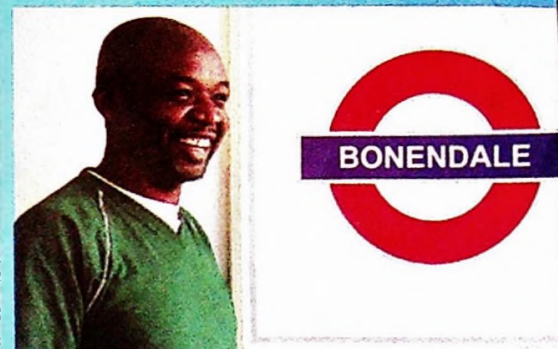
1 Okwul Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu. *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*. Damiani, 2010.

2 Sidney Littlefield Kasfir. *Contemporary African Art*. Thames & Hudson, 2000.

In Memoriam

Goddy Leye
(24 November 1965, Mbouda, Cameroon – 19 February 2011 Bonendale, Cameroon)

By Emeka Ogboh



Goddy Leye, 2009. Photo: Dorina Hecht

I first met Goddy Leye in February 2009 during the Linha Imaginaria Video art workshop at CCA Lagos, which he co-facilitated. Prior to meeting him, I had heard and read so much about him and his work. Consequently, I painted a larger-than-life picture of an ego-exuding artist. How wrong was I? My first impression after meeting Goddy Leye in person was that of an unassuming and quiet gentleman, who didn't let his fame go to his head.

Goddy was genuinely interested in the development of young African artists. I am a witness to that, having benefited directly from his advice and mentorship. He keenly followed the progress of each artist that participated in the CCA workshop, and was never too busy to lend a helping hand or advice any time he was called upon.

I had the opportunity to visit the Art Bakery, a modest art space he founded, in March 2009, when I was in Douala to attend a video art workshop organised by Doual'Art. It was truly an honour to see Goddy in his element, as an accomplished artist. Yet, he was still a gentleman to his protégées and contemporaries. I witnessed the impressive amount of energy and work concentrated in Art Bakery.

So, it came as a shock to hear about his death on his Facebook page, on that fateful day, (19 February 2011). He was such a promising artist who had given his all and still had a lot to give. Goddy was one of the inspirations behind the founding of the Video Art Network Lagos, for the promotion of new media art/video art in Nigeria, and farther afield. He was always there to advise and to offer positive criticisms whenever he was asked. Now there is a vacuum.

Adieu Goddy Leye, though you passed on young, you definitely left an indelible mark on the field of contemporary art in Africa. The trail you have blazed is clearly marked out for us to follow. You will forever be in our hearts.

Review

Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity.
The Walther Collection.
Akinbode Akinbiyi

The industrialist Artur Walther has for some time collected the work of Western photographers, and has gradually began exploring the practices of Asian and African photographers. Housed in nine galleries and across four specially conceived and partially renovated buildings **Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity** juxtaposes work from the Walther Collection of African photography alongside work by European photographers.

Okwui Enwezor's curatorial expertise and experience is evident in not only the range of photographers featured in the exhibition and publication, but also through the scope of the writers whose scholarly essays provide deeper insights into the strategies and intentions of the works presented. Chika Okeke-Agulu writes about the work of J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, whose hairstyle photographs are presented alongside the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, and thus enables us to read both practices in terms of their construction of typologies. Deborah Willis discusses the recent work of the Malian photographer Malick Sidibé. Her text succinctly examines the current phase in Sidibé's artistic trajectory, emphasising the social and sexual codes imbedded in the photographer's seemingly playful back-view portraits.

The Bechers work was the most serial of all the work presented; their black and white images of industrial buildings have become legend in their almost obsessive cataloging of the bare visual facts of the architectural objects depicted. They work with an insistence on photographic seriality, something that neither Ojeikere nor Sidibé fully embraced. The Bechers work out of a European/Western tradition of cataloging, of identifying and recording, of dictionaries, compendiums and encyclopedias.

Superficially there does appear to be similarities. Ojeikere recorded disappearing hairstyles in a very minimalist, bare bones documentary style. We rarely see the faces of the ladies bearing the woven hair. The photographic concentration is on the hairstyles themselves, typically shot from the side or behind. Similarly, the Bechers circumnavigated their architectural subjects shooting from as many angles as possible. People rarely appear in their images. The lighting is the ambient grey of cloud cover allowing for a shadow-less depiction. In the overall weight of their seriality, their intent of visual acuity is clearly revealed.

Perhaps though the bringing together of European and African practitioners is most questionable in the dialogue attempted between Seydou Keita and August Sander. Both are acknowledged masters of portraiture and both deserve the accolades showered upon them. But bringing them up so close in a kind of "face me I face you" confrontation, shows clearly the differences more than the perceived similarities.

Again the geographic and social backgrounds of both artists are so diverse and in complete contrast. Sander started out on his mammoth project to document all the classes and peoples of his native Germany in the years just before the First World War and continued until the Nazi occupation in the early thirties. These early decades were a time of rapid, volatile social change, the nineteenth century dissolving furiously into the innovations and experiments of the new century.

However, Keita started out in the middle of the twentieth century in a completely different social and geo-political situation. His portraits were expressions of a new self-awareness, a longing to go beyond the narrow confines of the stipulated colonial *weltbild*, or *world view*. His work was primarily customer-orientated. Unlike Sander he did not have an over-arching project in mind. He did though apply his visual talents as keenly as Sander, such that he has since become an artist after the deed. His works now circulate in international museums and exhibitions, printed in large black and white formats, something he never had in mind.

Examples of the small sepia toned prints he made during his lifetime are depicted in the book, a complete contrast to the present day large black and white prints and begging the question of authorship and original artistic intent. Keita is more comparable to studio

photographers, not unlike Mike Disfarmer of Heber Springs, Arkansas, who were working in many different parts of the world around the mid-century. Both oeuvres reveal similarities in the intent gaze of the photographer, which challenge the equally intent gaze of the sitters. Both gazes seem to reveal uncertainties about the immediate and long-term economic, social and political environment of the time.

Sander's gaze is literally of another age, more likened to the nineteenth century, although he was already shooting in the twentieth century. Both he and his sitters though were still enveloped and immersed in the more rigid social structures that preceded our present time of incessant speed.

During the exhibition, a slide projection shows work by the photographer Santu Mofokeng of South Africa. Going into township homes, he has collected a sizeable number of family portraits done between 1890 and 1950. We see images of Africans standing upright, conscious of their visual selves, desirous of an image with which to adorn the walls of their homes. Being able to look at these images on the printed page is a big plus. The slide show is fleeting, the image gone before you really begin to take it in. The opportunity to view Santu's work in print is, therefore, one of the real highlights of the exhibition's publication.

The images of Africans clad in the Victorian fashion also bear more of a semblance to Sander's work, a point brought out in the publication's interview between Artur Walther and the International Center of Photography (NYC) director, Willis E. Hartshorn.

The latter part of the publication is dedicated to current African photography. Here the emphasis is very much on the thematic overview of the exhibition and concerns portraiture and

social identity. The work of the late Rotimi Fani-Kayode is given prominence in this thematic run, and is framed by Kobena Mercer's insightful essay.

Thereafter we are given a plethora of images by artists from different parts of the continent and a few from the diaspora, but with a pre dominance of work from South Africa. The work selected manages to illuminate the theme, expand on it, and playfully bring out unexpected correlations. I was particularly drawn to the dark, blurry, off-kilter images of the South African artist Jo Ractliffe. Her work done with cheap plastic toy cameras showed the subversive potential inherent in the, in her case, very subjective take on the documentary mode, a mode that runs through the whole exhibition, despite the contrary claims of the exhibition's curator Okwui Enwezor that we are now in a post-documentary age.

This book is a must for any serious follower of photography and not just African photography. Very well printed and with an excellent layout, the publication is a large and heavy compendium (2,77 kg) of the first presentation of the Walther collection, presented in the home of the Walther village of Burlafingen—near the much larger city of Ulm in southern Germany. The exhibition is on view until April 2011.



Contemporary African Photography
from The Walther Collection
Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity
Edited by Okwui Enwezor

1. Installation View, The Walther Collection, 2010. Photo: Bisi Silva.
2. Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity. Contemporary African Photography from the Walther Collection, by Okwui Enwezor. Steidl & Partners, Göttingen, 2010.

2

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Otobong Nkanga "No Be Today Story O!"

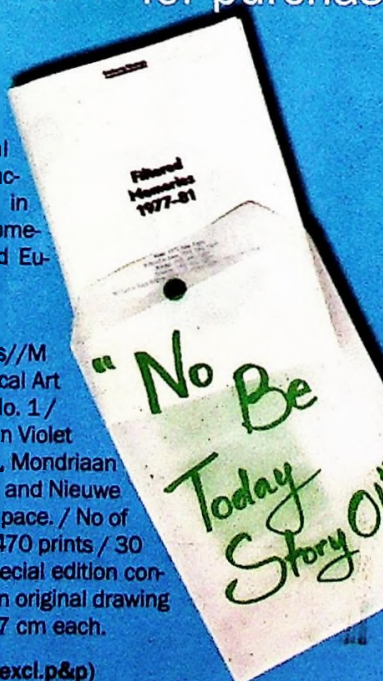
The Book "No be today story O!" is a 'Singer-stitched' brochure divided into 4 chapters. Each chapter contains 10 colour prints of drawings by Otobong Nkanga. This book is fitted in a silkscreen translucent white envelope.

"Filtered Memories" are a series of drawings based on selected memories of the artist. Nkanga filters and selects moments in her childhood and teenage years that had a certain impact on her life. These memories refer to the loss of innocence, home, security and of loved ones. The titles of the drawings are of important significance that help the reader to place each event in a specific place and time. Experiences and memory are frozen in time, giving a glimpse

into the artist's personal experiences, both in her homeland and Europe.

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Nigeria Behind the Lens

Nigeria Behind the Lens is a limited edition art photography book featuring the work of 9 Nigerian photographers. The book, with 194 pages and 122 high quality images, has a mandate to provide a channel for identifying and celebrating visionary contemporary photography from Nigeria. The accompanying website also provides a digital channel for showcasing upcoming photographers.

The book will be printed in a limited edition of 1000 signed and numbered copies, creating a collectible piece of printed matter. The launch of the book will feature a private exhibition of 9 large format photographs, one from each of the featured photographers in the book.

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The project is organised by the designer and brand consultant Ebi Atawodi of Inden Publishing.

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