

Collecting **NOW**

Perspectives Of
Contemporary Art
Collecting in Nigeria



YEMISI SHYLLON
MUSEUM OF ART
PAN-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY





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About the Exhibition

The Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA), as an art museum committed to serving and enriching the cultural landscape of Nigeria, presents a pioneering exhibition titled: “Collecting Now: Perspectives on Contemporary Nigerian Art”. At YSMA, we recognize collectors as key figures in the art ecosystem, shaping contemporary Nigerian art through their passion, discernment, dedication, and resources. The exhibition explores the world of art collecting in the country by bringing together works from six prominent Nigerian collectors, each with a distinct perspective and emphasis on contemporary expressions. Leading this group is Prince Yemisi Shyllon, whose role as the grand donor of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art and his significant contributions have been instrumental in shaping the museum and the national art scene. His collection, which includes many works donated to the museum, reflects a deep commitment to preserving and promoting Nigerian art. Accompanying him are Kola Aina, Gbenga & Aisha Oyeboode, Dotun Sulaiman, Niyi Adenubi, and Eyamba Dafinone, each highly influential, with their distinctive approach. Together, they offer a rich, multifaceted perspective on the evolution of contemporary Nigerian art.

“Collecting Now” is more than just a display of contemporary Nigerian art; it’s an exploration of how these collectors, as “gatekeepers” of artistic expression, contribute to defining the canon of modern African art from an African perspective. The exhibition explores WHAT, WHY and HOW these collectors collect. By facilitating a deeper understanding of their collecting practices, we aim to foster greater appreciation and dialogue within the art community, highlighting the vital role collectors play as cultural stewards and advocates for artistic expression. They shape narratives, elevate voices, and influence the trajectory of the country’s artistic evolution.

Through a carefully curated selection, the exhibition unfolds like a narrative, revealing the diversity of themes, mediums, and techniques employed by the artists. The collectors’ distinct tastes and curatorial visions reflect the multiplicity of voices within contemporary Nigerian art, underscoring its relevance on the global stage. In a country where tradition and modernity coalesce, collectors play a crucial role. Through their choices, they act as curators of an evolving cultural heritage, selecting artworks that reflect the pulse of the present while acknowledging the echoes of the past. “Collecting now” delves into the nuances of this curation, emphasizing the deliberate decisions that contribute to the formation of a contemporary artistic canon in Nigeria and Africa.

“Collecting now” will be on display at YSMA from October 26, 2024, to February 28, 2025, featuring between 80 and 100 works spanning diverse mediums, styles, and themes. The exhibition is curated by Charles Udeh, a member of the YSMA team. Without compromising on artistic quality, the selection of the works aims at displaying the diversity of artists, media, and conceptual concerns in Nigeria art today. Throughout the process, the curator has kept in mind that this exhibition is not about what the curator considers the most important or significant works collected recently in Nigeria, but about which works the collectors themselves consider important in their collections. Collectors intimately know their collections, including the history, significance, and context of each artwork. Their selections reflect their passion and the unique stories behind each piece, chosen der dispaty. Listening to the collectors during the selection of works for display results in a more diverse and eclectic exhibition that showcases different artistic styles, periods, or themes and different approaches to the practice of art collecting in Nigeria nowadays.

A catalogue with images of selected works will accompany the exhibition. The exhibition will be funded by individual donors and corporate sponsorships.



Ebenezer Akinola
City gal, 2024
Oil on Linen
110 x 142cm

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Perspectives on Contemporary Art Collecting in Nigeria

Welcome to the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA) and our latest exhibition, “Collecting Now: Perspectives on Contemporary Art Collecting in Nigeria”. I’m excited to share this unique project with you, one that sheds light on a crucial but often overlooked part of the art world—collectors. This exhibition not only showcases the remarkable creativity of contemporary African artists but also highlights the critical role collectors play in shaping our cultural and artistic landscape.

At YSMA, we are deeply committed to enriching Nigeria’s cultural landscape, and this exhibition highlights the growing role of our museum in connecting people with contemporary art. As a university museum, we are proud to be part of the Pan-Atlantic University community, which is making significant strides in reshaping Nigeria’s educational landscape. The university’s focus on academic excellence and its contribution to national development are integral to what we do at YSMA, making the museum a crucial bridge between education and the wider cultural world. YSMA is not only a place for art appreciation but also a learning



Dr. Jess Castellote

hub, where artists, collectors, and the public come together in meaningful ways.

“Collecting Now” isn’t just about displaying beautiful artworks; it’s about exploring the vision and passion of six remarkable collectors. At the forefront of this group is Prince Yemisi Shyllon, whose dedication and contributions have been monumental. As the grand donor of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, his role is central to both the museum’s mission and the broader art scene. Alongside him, Kola Aina, Aisha & Gbenga Oyeboode, Dotun Sulaiman, Niyi Adenubi, and Eyamba Dafinone are helping to shape the contemporary Nigerian art scene in ways that go beyond the gallery walls. These collectors have

been essential in fostering talent, preserving history, and elevating Nigerian art on the international stage. What I love about this exhibition is how it offers us a glimpse into the personal side of collecting. Each collection reflects something deeper—a connection to heritage, a desire to support emerging talent or an interest in exploring Nigeria’s social and political landscape through art. These collectors are not just buyers; they’re patrons and storytellers, playing a vital role in shaping what contemporary Nigerian art looks like today and how it will be remembered tomorrow. As you explore this exhibition, I encourage you to think about the deeper stories behind the works and the collectors who have brought them together. Their choices are shaping the art scene today and will influence how future generations understand Nigerian art. We are deeply grateful for their contributions, and we are proud to showcase their collections in a way that celebrates both individual passion and collective heritage.

A heartfelt thank you to the collectors for sharing their treasures with us and supporting this exhibition, to the curator, Charles Udeh, to Solomon Nkwagu, and to the entire YSMA team for their dedication. Special thanks to Pan-Atlantic University for making this exhibition possible, and as always, to Prince Yemisi Shyllon for his vision and generosity, without him, this museum would not exist. I hope that *Collecting Now* not only deepens your appreciation for Nigerian art but also sparks new conversations about the vital role that art and education play in shaping our shared future.

Jess Castellote, PhD
Director, Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art
Pan-Atlantic University.



El Anatsui
Untitled, 1996
Wood Panels
61 x 140cm

A Visual Survey of Art Collecting Culture in Nigeria's Biggest City.

Art collecting is itself a unique form of artistic expression, shaped by the choices, emotional attachments, and eclectic tastes of the collector. This practice, an essential component of the art community, holds as much significance as the creation of art. Just as artists have varied motivations for their work, collectors have diverse reasons for their pursuits, influencing the selection of artworks, the choice of artists, and the regions from which these works originate. The “Collecting Now” exhibition is presented within this context, offering the public a glimpse into the varied tastes and expressive depths of collecting, along with the stories behind these remarkable collections. While the exhibition has a curator, the focus is on the collectors themselves, whose selections effectively serve as curated presentations, reflecting their distinct artistic visions. The exhibition will be presenting curated works from six collections in Nigeria.

One key figure is Prince Yemisi Shyllon, whose extensive collection, managed by the Yemisi Shyllon Art Foundation, includes over 7,000 artworks spanning from precolonial to contemporary



Charles Udeh, Curator

periods. His collection features iconic Nigerian Modernist artists such as Aina Onabolu and Ben Enwonwu. The exhibition seeks to unravel the intent behind such a massive collection, examining the artists represented and the broader cultural implications of collecting. His works which form a large portion of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, will be displayed as cursors for this discourse.

The collection of Mr. Gbenga and Mrs. Aisha Oyeboode, curated by Rele Gallery, showcases vibrant and dynamic works that bridge historical and contemporary artistic expressions. Featuring pieces by masters like Ben

Enwonwu and contemporary talents such as Uthman Wahaab, this collection highlights the evolution of Nigerian art and its pulsating energy.

Dotun Sulaiman's collection offers a diverse journey through various artistic eras in Nigeria, anchored by significant works from artists like Ben Osawe and Alex Nwokolo. His commitment to emerging talents like Kingsley Obasi illustrates a dedication to encouraging contemporary Nigerian artists while engaging with historical patriarchs of art in Nigeria.

The Legacy collection of Mr. Adenubi Niyi resonates deeply with themes of identity and community. Having keen interest on female artists, his collection features works that address pivotal social and political moments, such as "Okada Rider" and "EndSARS Massacre," Niyi's collection through the expressions of artists, captures the essence of contemporary Nigerian experiences.

Kola Aina's collection embodies Pan-Africanism, extending beyond Nigeria to showcase the continent's diverse artistic expressions. His selection includes works that explore African identity and socio-political contexts, enhancing dialogues between artists across Africa and the diaspora, exemplified by the works of Abdulaye Konate and Yinka Shonibare's thought-provoking pieces.

Mrs. Eyamba Dafinone's eclectic collection bridges the ancient and modern art, featuring precolonial bronze works alongside contemporary pieces by artists like Gerald Chukwuma. In this exhibition however attention is placed on the contemporary pieces within her collection and how her taste for the contemporary can be viewed. Her personal taste of but the old and the new, highlights the continuity of artistic traditions and the relevance of historical forms in today's context.

Through these carefully curated collections, the "Collecting Now" exhibition offers a profound exploration of the diverse and dynamic world of Nigerian art collecting. Each collection not only reflects the personal vision and passion of its collector but also serves as a window into the broader cultural, historical, and social contexts that shape the Nigerian and African art landscapes. From the deeply resonant themes of identity and community in Mr. Adenubi Niyi's Legacy collection to the vibrant energy of the Oyebo collection, the Pan-African narratives championed by Kola Aina and Dotun Suleiman's selection, and the eclectic bridge between past and present in

Mrs. Eyamba Dafinone's collection. These presentations collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of art collecting as a form of cultural stewardship.

The exhibition not only celebrates the artworks themselves but also honours the collectors' roles as custodians of history, culture, and contemporary expression. It underscores the significance of their choices in shaping the narrative of Nigerian art, both within the country and on the global stage. "Collecting Now" ultimately invites the audience to appreciate the powerful impact of art collecting on cultural heritage, while also inspiring new dialogues about the future of art and collecting in Nigeria.



Peju Alatise
*The Nine Years Old
Bride*, 2010
Mixed Media
340 x 15cm

The Prince Yemisi Shyllon Collection



Shyllon
1970

Celebrating Impact and legacy: A Tribute to Nigerian Art Collectors

As a passionate art collector and Grand Donor to the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA), I am honored to be part of this groundbreaking exhibition, *Collecting Now: Perspectives on Contemporary Nigerian Art*. This exhibition represents a significant moment in the Nigerian art scene, as it brings to the forefront the crucial role collectors play in nurturing and sustaining the country's vibrant art industry.

Over the years, collectors have been instrumental in the promotion and preservation of Nigeria's modern, contemporary, and traditional art forms. By acquiring, showcasing, and supporting the work of Nigerian artists, we contribute to the ongoing narrative of our cultural heritage. Our efforts not only elevate the work of the artists themselves but also ensure that future generations can appreciate and engage with the richness of Nigeria's creative legacy.

What fascinates me most about *Collecting Now* is its ability to shine a spotlight on the importance of collectors in the art ecosystem. It is a rare opportunity to celebrate how collectors serve as custodians of



Prince Yemisi Shyllon

cultural expression, curating the works that will define the future of Nigerian and African art. This exhibition also holds the potential to inspire a broader appreciation for the vital contributions collectors make to the development and global recognition of Nigerian art.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the management, advisory board, and Museum Supervisory Council of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art for their tireless efforts in bringing this vision to life. Their commitment to showcasing Nigerian art in all its beauty and diversity has been unwavering. I also

wish to thank the Management Council of Pan-Atlantic University, as well as the museum's director, Dr. Jess Castellote, whose conceptualization of this museum has provided a remarkable platform for art in Nigeria—one that I was proud to support through sole funding.

In addition, my deepest gratitude goes to the entire team at YSMA for their hard work and dedication. Their efforts have not only sustained the museum's operations but also facilitated numerous impactful public programs, further enriching the Nigerian art landscape.

As we celebrate this exhibition and the collectors who have contributed so much to the preservation and promotion of Nigerian art, I look forward to continued success in our shared mission of advancing the country's cultural heritage.



Ben Osaghae
Miracle for sale, 2007
Oil on canvas
93cm x 93cm



Felix Idubor
Untitled, 1989
 Bronze
 38cm (H)



Uche Okeke
Untitled, 1983
 Gouache on paper
 137 x 79cm



Bisi Fakeye
The conversation (Three pieces), 1995
 Wood
 140cm(H)



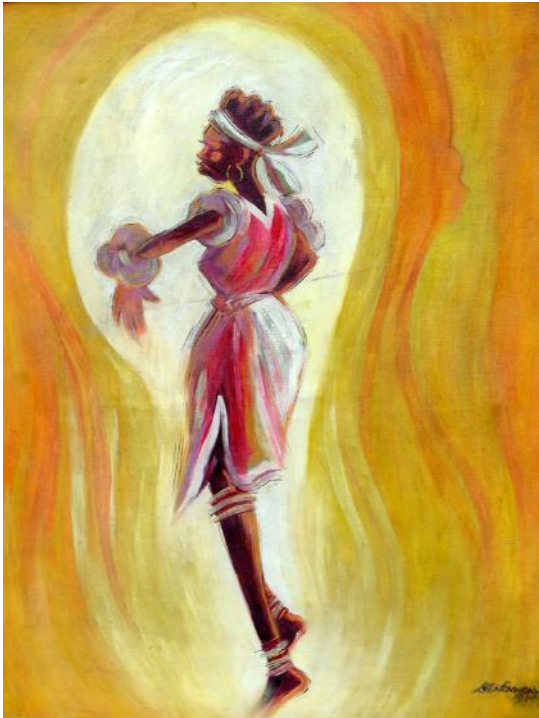
Uche Okeke
Paradise, 1966
 Ink on paper
 28 x 19cm



Lamidi Fakeye
Olumeye To Gbomo Kun, 2006
 wood
 61cm (H)



Peju Alatise
*The Nine Years Old
 Bride*, 2010
 Mixed Media
 340 x 15cm



Ben Enwonwu
Celebration, 1970
 Oil on canvas
 92 x 60cm



Ben Enwonwu
Ijo, 1957
 Oil on Paper
 39 x 29cm



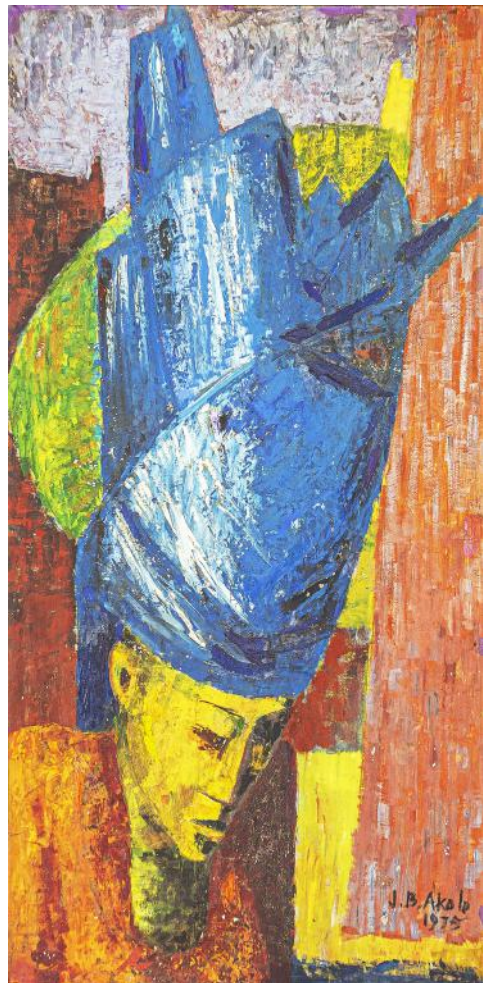
Ben Osaghae
Miracle for sale, 2007
 Oil on canvas
 93cm x 93cm



Ben Enwonwu
Untitled, 1982
 Bronze
 65 x 63 x 40cm



Rom Isichei
All Fingers Are Not Equal, 2006
 Oil On Canvas
 135cm x 107cm



Jimoh Akolo
Untitled, 1975
 Oil On Board
 130cm x 68cm

The Adeniyi Adenubi Collection



Exploring New Perspectives: Black Women Artists and Contemporary African Art

"I have prioritised collecting contemporary art by women artists for some time now, and while gender isn't the sole focus of my collection, I recognise that many more Nigerian and African diaspora women artists deserve far more recognition and representation for their influential work. It is of critical importance to celebrate women artists, through recognition and support to promote gender equality in art."

Niyi Adenubi, 2024.



Adeniyi Adenubi

For decades and across generations, Black women artists on the continent and in the diaspora have made profound and lasting contributions to creative expression that holds deep cultural and historical significance in their societies and globally. Their integral roles in shaping contemporary African and global art histories testify to their talent and unwavering dedication.

Financier and philanthropist, Niyi Adenubi underscores the vital contributions of a diverse group of Black women artists in his selection for the Collecting Now exhibition at Yemisi Shyllon Museum, Pan Africa University. The artists on view, including Ndidi Dike, Nengi Omuku, Sola Ololude,

Peju Alatise, Chidinma Nnoli, Emma Prempeh, Ndidi Emefiele, Okiki Akinfe, Bunmi Augusto, Amanda Offor, Deborah Segun, Sahara Longe, Yadichinma Ukoha Kalu, and Chigozie Obi, represent different generations, have had varied life experiences, and are at different career stages. Some of these artists work across different mediums to reimagine traditional art historical genres in painting, such as figuration, abstraction, and sculpture. The themes in their works, which range from personal to political, social to cultural, add a profound depth to the exhibition.

Highlights in Adenubi's selection include Ndidi Dike's earlier work,

Slavery Stamp, 2010, part of research that began in the late 1990s by the artist who at the time begun collecting different types of manilla and related objects from which she made her version of branded stamps reminiscent of those used to brand enslaved people as property or chattel. With this body of work, Dike is probing the absence of discourse or documentation on slavery in Nigeria. The artist trained as a painter but taught herself how to sculpt and has since gained international recognition over the past four decades as a sculptor, multidisciplinary artist and activist. Most recently, she was part of the Nigerian Pavilion 2024 at the 60th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. Working across various media, Dike researches the potency of materials and their subsequent material cultures. I have written of her recent body of work *Commodities of Consumption and Sites of Extraction in The Global South* (2020-ongoing) where she engages with the geopolitics of commodities and capitalist power's careful management of life, which, throughout history and into the present continues deploy death or near-death-like experiences to colonised people and those continually exploited by the global capitalist economy.¹

Ukoha-Kalu, a few generations apart from Dike, shares this innovative

teach-yourself ethos as she is self-taught and has learned many of her techniques herself. Her visual art practice explores lines, forms and boundaries rendered as otherworldly and expressed through various media, including painting, drawing, sculpture, and film. Ukoha-Kalu's abstract figurative drawing, 20/10/2020 (End SARS Massacre), 2022 is a direct response to the events of the 2020 End SARS massacre, where at about 6:50 p.m., members of the Nigerian Army opened fire on unarmed protesters at the Lekki toll gate (Admiralty Plaza). Twelve protesters were killed during the shooting according to independent reports. Anonymised orange figures without eyes and noticeable wide-open mouths are depicted next to what could be read as bullets approaching, signalling the collective shock and despair at the fatal results that ensued after peaceful protests by primarily young Nigerians. Perhaps one could read Chigozie Obi's tender water colour of a young lady with eyes shut 'Jide Obi Gi, O Ga-Adi Mma (Hold your heart, it will be okay), 2023, as a response to the rage and sadness of Ukoha-Kalu's fiery spray-painted motifs and the aftermath of ENDSARS events that has left a generation in despair. Bunmi Augusto uses painting, drawing, and printmaking to create otherworldly landscapes combined with geometric compositions inspired

by West African aesthetics. Her work is similar to Ukoha-Kalu's, as both artists are intrigued by otherworldly representations. Augusto's practice is inspired by a paracosm, an alternate reality with interconnected terrains that she has named 'Within'. This concept reflects the artist's inner thoughts and provides a space to explore psychology, cultural theory, and self-evolution through the lens of fantasy.

We see in this selection a radical reinterpretation of the figure, notably intimate scenes in Sola Ololude's *Look at the Moon and Stars*, 2023, the Nigerian-British artists blending natural dyeing, batik, wax, ink, pastel, oil bar, and impasto to develop textural canvases embodying the fluidities of identities she represents; At the same time, Deborah Segun in her sensual pop-informed painting *Slightly Older Sister*, 2022, the female silhouette is exaggerated yet also vibrant, codified, obscured, and protected. Ndidie Emefiele's signatory layered figurative compositions are a profound juxtaposition of colour, conjuring the complexity of contemporary experience and female identity as witnessed in *Liberated Minds*, 2016, with its overlaying of techniques and details celebrating the uniqueness of women. Nengi Umoku blurs the boundaries between figuration and abstraction in her *mis-en-scene* of faceless figures rendered in oil paint on strips of Sanyan, a pre-colonial Western Nigerian fabric. The three figures here are not anonymous as we are accustomed to but it is a commissioned family portrait of the Adenubi's. Emma Prempeh's *Warm Water*, 2024, and Sahara Longe's *Clouds*, 2023, are expressive, serene, and confessional in their own unique ways. Each artist offers a nuanced perspective on the Black form using varied painting techniques through their own gaze. Okiki Akinfe's is the sole work of abstraction here, with swathes of soft pastel colours taking over the viewer's visual field in *There Was Once a Bird There*, 2022. Finally, Amanda Offor's large-scale drawings and paintings, *Hummer and Okada*, 2021, reference motifs from everyday life in Nigeria to bridge the colonial past with a postcolonial and globalised present.

Collecting now, outside of showcasing an array of artworks from private collections in an institutional setting, producing this publication contributes to scholarship on Nigerian modern and contemporary art. This is particularly important as the scholarship on Black women artists, particularly African and diaspora artists, is somewhat limited. Still, in recent years, there has been a redress, including the recent publishing of symposium papers on the platform, *Reclaim: Narratives of African Women Artists* spearheaded Senegalese curator, editor, and cultural policies consultant, N'gone Fall (who was the General Commissioner of the Africa2020 Season), *Archives of Women Artists (AWARE)* and a specially convened research committee.²

These resources highlight the role women artists have played throughout the history of art. Additionally, Nigerian scholar Chukwuemeka Bosah's 2017 book, *The Art of Nigerian Women*, features seventy Nigerian women artists, including Nnenna Okore and Mama Nike Davies-Okundaye amongst others. Notably, last year, Ilwalea Books published the first-ever monograph on a Nigerian woman artist, Nnenna Okore, titled *Discomfort Zones*. Okore is British-born, lives in Lagos and works internationally. The book overviews the artist's work spanning several decades, from early paintings and wood sculptures to recent large-scale installations. It also shows her engagement with the Nsukka school aesthetics and most recent large-scale installations. It is of utmost and immediate importance to fully recognise the significance of the work by Black women artists on the continent and in the diaspora, past and present. Even though an artist's gender and identity should not overshadow or define their work, we cannot ignore the enduring pattern of gender inequality in the art world, especially when it comes to commercial success. This is a call to action for all of us to work towards a more equitable art industry.

By Dr Jareh Das

¹[See, Das, J, "On Extractivism" in Fink K., and Siegert N. (eds.), *Nnenna Okore: Discomfort Zones*, 2022, Ilwalea Books: Lagos, pp.109-13.]

²[This new publication follows the symposium *Reclaim: Narratives of African Women Artists*, organised by AWARE: Archives of Women Artists which took place between 13-16 April 2021 within the framework of the AFRICA2020 season and in partnership with The École du Louvre. https://awarewomenartists.com/en/nos_evenements/appele-a-communication-reclaim-recits-dartistes-femmes-africaines/]



Nengi Omuku
Family Portrait
Mixed Media
90 x 130cm



Amanda Offor
Okada, 2021
 Charcoal on Paper
 147 x 120cm



Peju Alatise
Untitled (Portrait of a Young Lady)
 Mixed Media
 122 x 122cm



Okiki Akinfe
There was once a bird here, 2022
 Oil on canvas
 84 x 74cm



Chidinma Nnoli
Pieces of my mind, 2023
 Oil on Canvas
 192 x 142cm



Deborah Segun
Dust Your Shoulders Off
 Acrylic on canvas
 82 x 89cm



Yadichinma Ukoha Kalu
End Sars Massacre, 2022
 Oil on paper
 54 X 74cm



Sahara Longe
Clouds, 2023
 Oil on Canvas
 40 x 50cm



Ndidi Emefiele
Untitled, 2015
 Oil on Canvas
 92 x 90cm



Chigozie Obi
Hold Your Heart, It Will be Okay, 2023
 Water Color on Paper
 29 x 39cm



Emma Prempeh
Warm Water, 2024
 Oil on canvas
 26 x 42cm



Bunmi Augusto
Collective Entry, 2021
 Pastel pencils, ink, acrylic on paper
 126 x 96cm



Ndidi Dike
Slavery Stamp, 2010
 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas
 92 x 92cm



Sola Ololude
Look at the moon and the stars, 2023
 Mixed Media
 122 x 102cm



Ndidi Dike
Masquerade Faces
 Mixed Media
 69 x 59cm

The Kola Aina Collection



Preserving Heritage, Expanding Horizons: A Collector's Reflection



Kola Aina

Art, for me, is more than an aesthetic pursuit—it is a means of preservation. My collection is driven by a desire to safeguard our past and present, to ensure that the rich tapestry of our stories, experiences, and expressions endures for future generations. I collect art as an extension of my personal mission to challenge the notion that we, as a people, lack a history of documentation. Through the works I collect, I aim to celebrate our experiences, languages, worldviews, and the diversity of our culture.

While my journey began with a focus

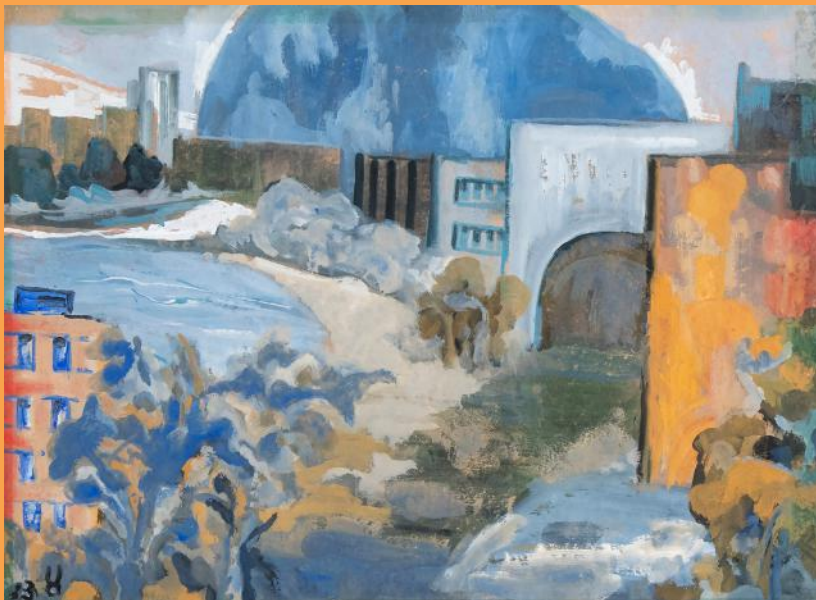
on pieces closely tied to my Yoruba heritage, it has evolved into a broader exploration of global black identity and beyond. As a Yoruba man, a Nigerian, and a global citizen, my collection reflects this spectrum—works that speak to my roots yet stretch across borders, forming a vivid mosaic of artistic expression from Nigeria to the broader world.

Art offers intellectual stimulation and joy. It is a meeting point for discussions and debates—where conversations on identity, heritage, and creativity flow freely. The local art market's growth excites me, especially the increasing involvement of young Nigerian collectors and the participation of local artists in international markets. However, challenges such as cataloging and managing my collection, which is spread across various locations, remain.

What makes collecting truly rewarding are the relationships my family and I have built with the artists. These deep connections have enriched our understanding of their visions, allowing us to support their work meaningfully.

While the art market holds financial potential, it is not my primary motivation. What I value most is how these works—investment-grade or not—continue to shape conversations and represent an ongoing legacy of Nigerian and African heritage in our home and beyond.

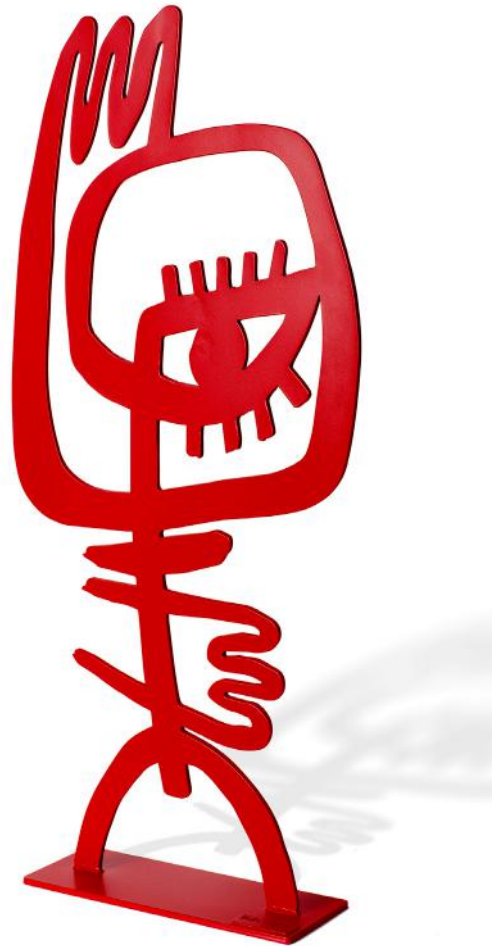
Looking ahead, I see a vibrant future for art in Nigeria, fueled by the creativity of our youth and the growing engagement of corporate entities. I hope to see more robust support from Nigerian businesses for our art scene. I am committed to contributing to this growth—through collecting, mentoring, and promoting African art globally. Every piece I collect has a story, a memory, and a piece of history being preserved. This is my contribution, ensuring that our artistic legacy thrives.



Uche Okeke
City of the Future, 1983
Acrylic on Paper
35 x 48cm



Niyi Olagunji
Baga Nimba Purple Chrome, 2020
 Chrome plated resin
 138 × 36 × 60cm



Victo Ekpuk
Dancer, 2018
 Powder Coated Steel
 94 x 49 x 0.6cm



Taye Idahor
KNIT- From the Havolution Series, 2015
 Newsprint Acrylic and paper collage on
 canvas
 121.92 x 121.92cm



Joseph Fidelis
Baki da Chiyawa, 2017
 Oil and auto paint
 122 x 122cm



Abdoulaye Konate
Couleur du Sahel aux cercles Touareg, 2020
 Textile
 177 x 155cm



Chidinma Nnoli
Perfect Places, 2020
 Oil and Acrylic on Canvas
 101 x 91cm



Alimi Adewale
Owambe, 2017
 Mixed Media
 155 x 162cm



Victor Ehikhamenor
King Ozolua, 2021
 Rosary beads, bronze
 statuette and thread on lace
 textile 35 x 48cm



Ablade Glover
Blue/Green Profile
 Oil on Cotton
 100 x 76cm



Ken Nwadiogbu
Just Like the Movies, 2021
 Charcoal and Acrylic on Canvas
 152cm



Cyrus Kabiru
Macho Nne Cathedral, Cathedral
 1. C-Type Print on Diasac Mount
 100 x 90cm

2. Mixed Media / Found Objects
 38 x 38 x 8cm

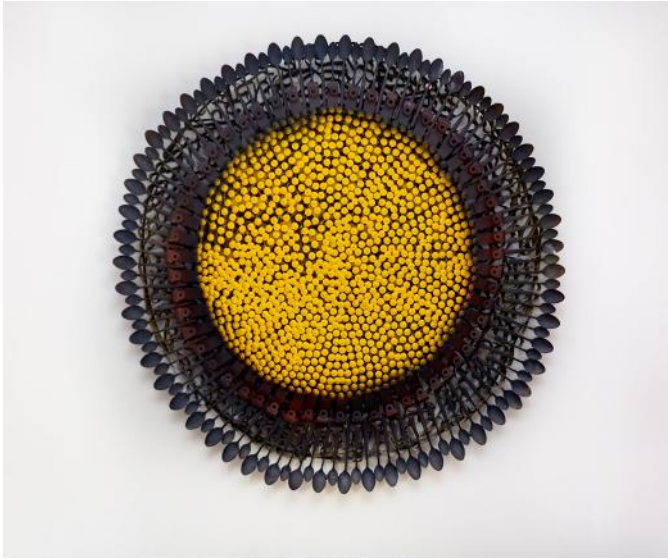




Modupeola Fadugba
Senegalese Boys, 2015
 Acrylic on Canvas
 60 x 60cm



Susane Wenger
Iwin, 1960
 Silkscreen
 49 x 58cm



Olu Amoda
Sunflower, 2014
 Metal
 76cm



Yinka Shonibare
Hybrid Mask IV (Kpeliye'e), 2022
 Acrylic paint on wood
 44 × 25 × 18cm

The Adedotun Sulaiman Collection



Drawn to Beauty: A Life in Art Collecting

For as long as I can remember, I've been captivated by the beauty and creativity that flows through art. Collecting has become a way for me to surround myself with objects that inspire, reflect my passions, and honor the incredible talent of artists. My journey as a collector has never been about chasing trends or acquiring 'name' artists—it's always been about that emotional tug, that spark within me that says, this piece is special. The artwork must stir something within me, something that goes beyond intellectual appreciation.

I collect what resonates with me, whether it's a work from an established artist or a promising young talent. For me, it's more about the gut feeling—a connection that goes beyond the surface. Each piece I bring into my collection is a reflection of my personal tastes and experiences, and together they define me as a collector. While the art world sees value in investment, for me, the joy comes from the beauty I get to live with every day. The financial potential, though real, is secondary.

Over the last four decades, I've witnessed the Nigerian art scene undergo remarkable transformations. When I started collecting in the early 1980s, the landscape was different—there were



Adedotun Sulaiman

fewer galleries, fewer auction houses, and fewer artists in the spotlight. Today, the scene has blossomed with a proliferation of spaces showcasing Nigerian and African art, and young collectors and enthusiasts are emerging, fueling a renewed interest in art across the country.

My collection predominantly features works from Nigeria and Africa, reflecting the cultural milieu in which I grew up and live. I believe art carries the weight of its environment, and so, many of the pieces in my collection are deeply tied to the Nigerian and African experience. Yet, it's the emotional pull, the connection to the work itself, that matters most to me. I've built

relationships with many of the artists I collect, and these friendships have deepened my appreciation of their work and vision.

Although I recognize the growing value of art as an asset, I've always approached my collection with passion rather than financial gain. The Nigerian art market, while expanding, still faces challenges—scientific pricing, better preservation techniques, and more robust art insurance frameworks, for example, are needed to support collectors and artists alike. But as our economy grows, I believe we'll see Nigerian art becoming more integrated into the global art scene, with greater opportunities for our artists to shine on international stages.

Beyond my personal collection, I am personally committed to supporting the Nigerian art community. Over the years, I've mentored artists, sponsored exhibitions, and helped facilitate art residencies abroad. These efforts, to me, are part of giving back to a creative community that has given me so much. The relationships I've built with artists have enriched my life beyond the art itself—they have shaped my understanding of what it means to support creativity and talent.

As I continue my journey as a collector, I look forward to the evolution of the Nigerian art market. With more disposable income in the hands of a growing middle class, and increased focus on our creative economy, the future is bright for Nigerian art. For me, it's not just about the pieces I collect but the stories they tell, the culture and heritage they preserve, and the legacy they build for future generations.



Alex Nwokolo
Suya spot, 1998
Oil on Canvas
86 x 97cm



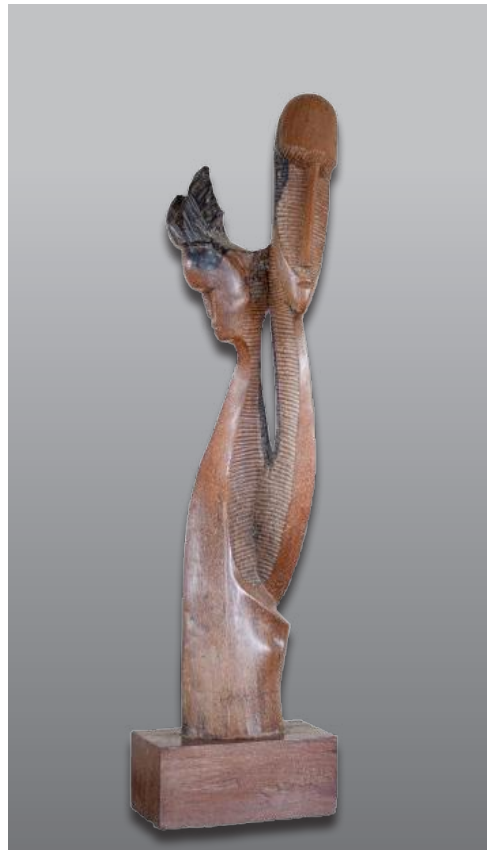
Polly Alakija
Dancing to distant music 2,
 2017
 Acrylic on canvas
 120 x 160cm



Muraina Oyelami
Amoye meta, 1993
 Acrylic on board
 90 x 121cm



Dominique Zinkpe
Untitled
 Wood
 205 x 40 x 30cm



Ben Osawe
Adam & Eve, 2005
 Wood
 133 x 35 x 18cm



Fatai Adewale
 Body and Soul, 2014
 Acrylic and Oil on Canvas
 237 x 166cm



Zino Orara
Let us pray, 2017
 Acrylic on canvas
 90 x 70cm



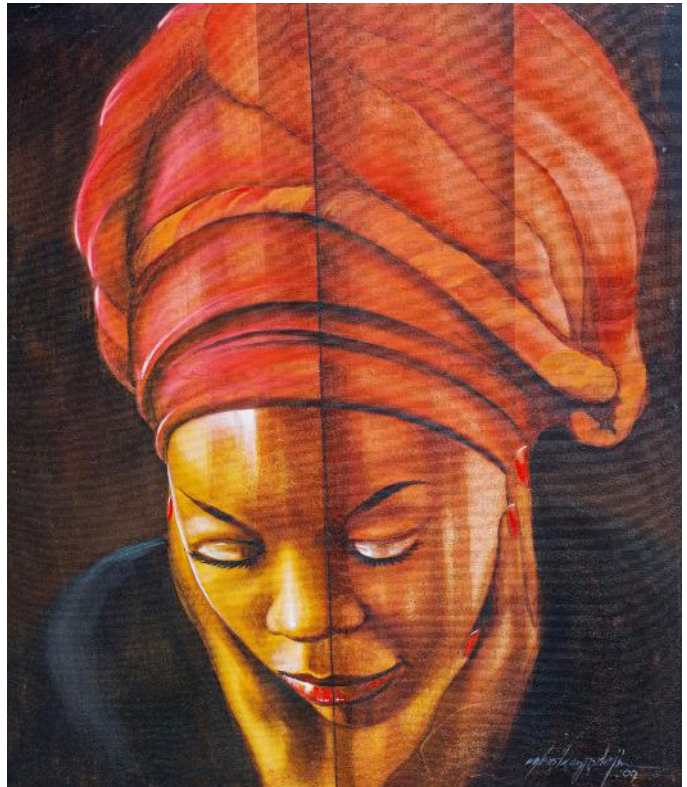
Dotun Popoola
Esin Oba, 2018
 Mixed media (metal)
 215 x 116cm



Kingsley Obasi
 Untitled
 2020
 Acrylic on canvas
 167.64 x 91.44cm



Obi Okigbo
Tutu, 2016
 Acrylic on Canvas
 92 x 92cm



Anthea Epeile
Untitled, 2009
 Oil on canvas
 106.68 x 127cm



Greg Agbonkonkon
Longing for a kiss
Wood
110 x 50 x 37cm



Reuben Ugbiné
Untitled, 2015
Wood
110 x 70cm

The Eyamba Dafinone Collection



Beyond the Canvas: A Collector's Odyssey

Art, for me, has always been a profound source of joy, a mirror reflecting the deeper rhythms of life, and a vessel of inspiration. Over the span of 35 years, my collection has transformed from more than a mere accumulation of works into a deeply personal odyssey, shaped by intuition, emotion, and the unmistakable pull of beauty and authentic creativity.

When selecting pieces, my guiding principle has always been the emotional resonance a work stirs within me. The connection must run deep, a spark that goes beyond mere aesthetics. I have often built personal relationships with artists, nurturing these connections for years before bringing their creations into my collection. At times, affordability has played a role, necessitating structured payments to bring significant pieces home. Yet, as I matured as a collector, I began to advise others who collect for investment to study trends carefully, as the art world has its own currents.

In the beginning, my approach was marked by spontaneity and instinct. I acquired pieces before many of the



Eyamba Dafinone

artists became widely recognised. Over time, I have been told that I possess "the eye," as nearly 80% of my early acquisitions, collected within the first decade, are now recognised as works by masters. I vividly remember purchasing my first Nigerian piece from David Dale in 1986 for just N50, a moment that still holds significance in my journey.

Artists like David Dale, Prof Ben Enwonwu, El Anatsui, Prof Glover, Oshinowo, and Ndidi Dike shaped the

early years of my collection journey in the late '80s. Yet, experience has taught me the vital importance of proper documentation and provenance, especially as the art market expands and the value of works grows exponentially. Authenticity has become critical, as some agents in the art world are less than forthright in their dealings.

My collection embraces a wide spectrum of cultures. One vivid memory is of a piece I once saw in a gallery in Ho Chi Minh City, 16 years ago. That artwork still haunts me—the image so vivid in my mind, yet the artist's name escapes me. It's as though the piece is still calling me, yearning to find its place in my collection.

The African art market has seen extraordinary growth, with global interest fueling new opportunities for artists. However, challenges remain, such as the need for greater investment in art education and conservation. While contemporary art appreciates rapidly, the reluctance of financial institutions to recognize art collections as financial assets hampers growth. Major banks, despite starting to build vast collections, still resist lending against art collections, a hurdle that must be addressed for the market to truly flourish.

My engagement with artists transcends transactions. I have formed deep friendships with many, and treasure the memories of studio visits with figures like Muraina Oyeleke, Prof Demas Nwoko, and others. Visits to my home or office by renowned artists such as Prof Ben Enwonwu, El Anatsui, and Ben Osaghae have enriched my life. These relationships, though dear, never sway my purchasing decisions. My commitment is to art that speaks to me, and I hold onto these pieces to allow their value to unfold with time.

With the rise of younger artists, the landscape is evolving. Many work online, navigating new platforms like Instagram to establish their presence. As we look to the future, Nigerian art is still in its formative stages, shaped by fresh voices and perspectives. Yet, the need for robust legal frameworks to protect artists' rights and tackle forgery remains pressing.

Throughout my journey, I have contributed to the art world by sponsoring exhibitions, loaning works to institutions, and participating in auctions. However, my

greatest impact has been in mentoring artists, offering them honest critiques and support, both financial and material. Helping artists refine their craft and navigate the complexities of the art world has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my life.

Recently, I have been compelled by the need to preserve our heritage. The idea of establishing a museum dedicated to safeguarding African art and history has grown in importance to me. Such a space would not only protect our heritage but serve as an educational platform, changing the narrative of who we are and showcasing the remarkable technical skill of our ancestors—a legacy that, for too long, has been shielded from the present generation.

In November 2024, I will once again immerse myself as a participant in the vibrant world of art at the Dakar Biennale, continuing the journey that began decades ago, still driven by the same passion that first ignited my love for collecting.



Soji Adesina
Coffee break, 2017
Oil on canvas
214 x 153cm



Aderinsoye Aladegbongbe
Bountiful Harvest, 2024
 Acrylic on canvas
 182.88 x 121.92cm



Muraina Oyelami
Untitled, 2018
 Oil on board
 128.27 x 66.04cm



Soji Adesina
Coffee break, 2017
 Oil on canvas
 214 x 153cm



Ebenezer Akinola
City gal, 2024
 Oil on linen
 142 x 110cm

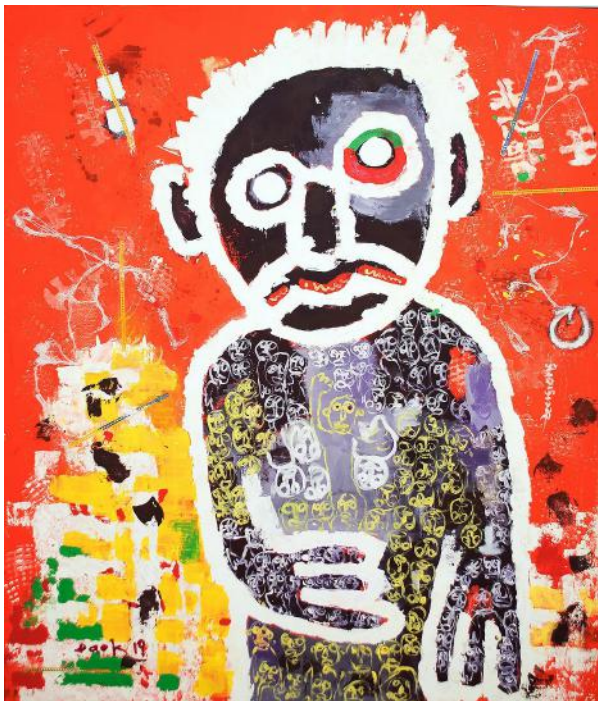


Joe Amenechi
Bible Stories, 2018
 Plaster Cast
 182 x 40cm



Gerald Chukwuma
Sultan, 2015
 Oil and Acrylic on Canvas
 180 x 152cm

Camara Gueye
Sitting Girl, 2018
Acrylic on Paper
72,39 x 86.36cm



Dami Daok Okhoya
Son of Man, It's Never too Late, 2019
Acrylic, Paper and thread on Canvas
195.58 x 157.48cm

Francis Agemo
Apewi, 2019
 Mixed media
 193.04 x 142.24cm



Gerald Chukwuma
Where we live, 2018
 Mixed media
 273.05 x 185.42cm





Ebenzer Akinola
Baba Ijebu, 2016
Oil on Linen
165.1 x 139.7cm



Cyril Oma
Lady with a Fan, 2019
Acrylic on Canvas
137.16 x 93.98cm

The Aisha &
Gbenga Oyebo
Collection

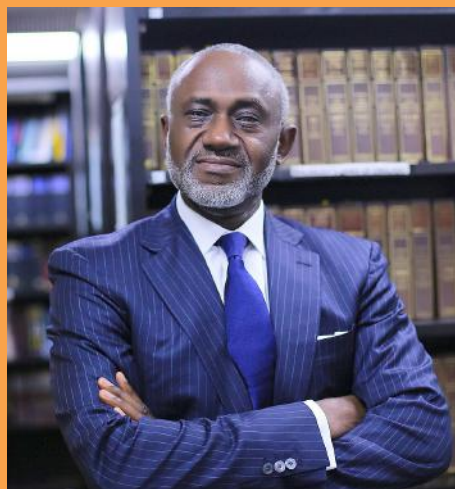


A Journey of Discovery: Three Decades of Collecting and still Counting...

Our journey into the world of art collecting began over three decades ago, driven by curiosity, passion, and a shared appreciation for the beauty of Nigerian and African art. Today, our collection, comprising over 500 works, represents not just a catalogue of artistic expressions but a tapestry of stories, cultures, and perspectives that span across Nigeria and the African continent.

In many ways, our collection can be likened to the Yoruba concept of *lẹ́nìlẹ̀*—the process of digging deep, sifting through layers, and uncovering treasures that speak to the core of human experience. Art has always been a medium through which society can reflect, question, and ultimately understand itself. In this sense, the works in our collection are more than visual objects; they are vessels of memory, mirrors of contemporary life, and windows into possible futures.

Our early days of collecting were shaped by an innate attraction to the works of iconic Nigerian artists like Bruce Onobrakpeya, whose studio was a mere five-minute walk from our home in Papa Ajao, Lagos. His



Gbenga Oyebo

profound connection to our heritage and his ability to encapsulate the spirit of Nigeria in his art resonated deeply with us. Alongside works by other foundational artists such as Emmanuel Ekpeni and Abiodun Olaku, our collection grew organically, driven by a love for the distinctiveness and symbolism of Nigerian art.

Initially, we focused on Nigerian art exclusively, but over time, our collection expanded to embrace works from across Africa, recognizing that the continent's diverse artistic voices contribute to a rich, shared cultural heritage. The decision to diversify our

collection stems from our belief that African art is a powerful narrative tool—one that speaks to local realities while transcending borders, revealing the interconnectedness of the African experience. The works we have acquired from other parts of Africa not only enhance our collection but also provide a broader context to Nigerian art, allowing for a fuller understanding of Africa's cultural renaissance.

One of the most exciting changes we've observed over the years is the growing global recognition of African contemporary art. What was once a relatively insular market is now celebrated on the world stage, with African artists and collectors alike playing pivotal roles in reshaping the global art narrative. This renewed interest in African art, we believe, is not only elevating the work of individual artists but also fostering a greater appreciation for the continent's cultural contributions.

As we continue to collect, one thing remains unchanged: we are not driven by investment potential, though we appreciate the intrinsic value that many of these pieces hold. Rather, we are drawn to the emotional, intellectual, and cultural resonance of each work. Whether it is Ben Enwonwu's historic *Anyanwu*, which till date remains one of the most recognisable works in our national consciousness



Aisha Oyebode

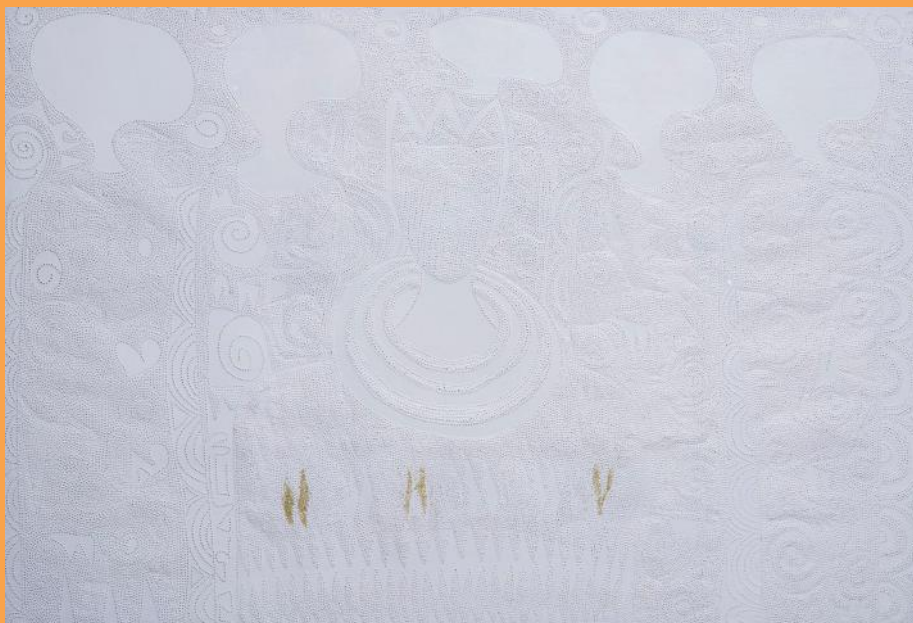
as a symbolic representation of an emergent continent and the yearnings and aspirations of her people, or Joe Amenechi's *Yoruba Women*, a masterpiece that embodies the feminine spirit and desire for self-expression and beauty with women elegantly dressed for an occasion, each piece holds a special place in our hearts. They are not just objects to be admired; they are touchstones of memory and conversation, and we are excited to have them shown in the *Collecting Now* exhibition.

Our collection is not confined to a single location; it spans three continents, reflecting our global experiences and the idea that art should not be static but should live, breathe, and evolve as we do. Rotating these works between our homes allows us to continually rediscover

their meaning and beauty, ensuring that they remain vibrant parts of our daily lives. Beyond the works themselves, we cherish the relationships we have built with the artists whose pieces grace our collection. Though we do not believe these relationships are essential, they often provide deeper insight into the artist's intent, adding another layer of meaning to the works we hold dear. As active collectors, we continue to seek out new works that resonate with us. Our passion for art remains as strong as ever, and we are excited by the future of collecting in Nigeria and across Africa.

Through our recent publication *Ìjìnlẹ̀*, we have opened a window into our collection, offering art lovers a chance to experience the beauty, brilliance, and depth of African art. We want to inspire new collectors, encourage the next generation of artists, and contribute to the growing global appreciation of African creativity.

As we look to the future, our aim is simple: to continue uncovering the gems that speak to us, and to ensure that the legacy of African art remains vibrant for generations to come.



Victor Ehikhamenor
The Palace Advisers, 2017
Perforation on paper
112 x 169cm



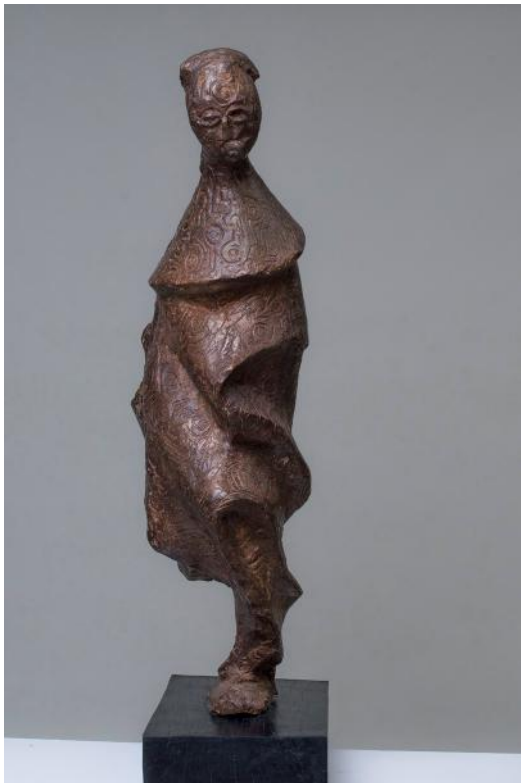
Alimi Adewale
Sisi Eko 2, 2018
 Wood
 46 x 28cm



Obiora Anidi
Monument to OdoMarble, 2000
 Concrete and Metal
 61cm



Uthman Wahaab
Victorian Lagos I, 2011
 Mixed Media
 137 x 122cm



Victor Ehikhamnor
The Palace Advisers, 2017
 Perforation on paper
 169 x 112cm



Constance Swaniker
Pretty Wings, 2013
 Mixed media sculpture
 122 x 86 x 112cm



Victor Ehikhamenor
The Palace Advisers, 2017
 Perforation on paper
 112 x 169cm



El Anatsui
Untitled, 1996
 Wood Panels
 61 x 140cm



Joe Amenechi
Yoruba Women, 1987
 Bead work, plastocast
 69 x 86cm



Ben Enwonwu
Anyanwu, Circa 1992
 Bronze
 84cm



Ben Enwonwu
Song of the City "Negro Spiritual", 1954
 Wood
 114 x 20cm



Reuben Ugbiné
Untitled, 2010
 Wood
 86 x 71cm

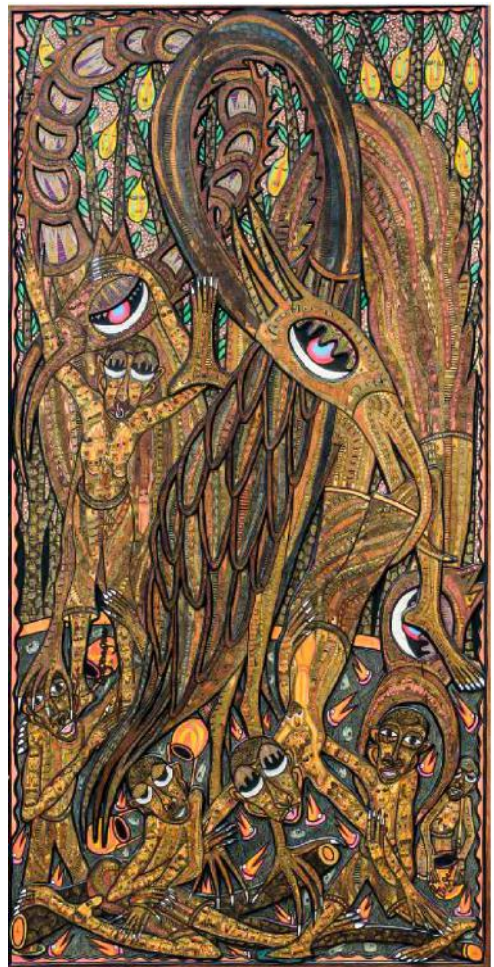


Alimi Adewale
Socialite Series, 2019
 Acrylic on dyed canvas
 140 x 340cm



Tayo Quaye
Sorrow, 1992
 Linocut
 86 x 74cm

Twin Seven Seven
An Encounter with Human Eater Birds, 1996
 Mixed media
 239 x 122cm



Navigating African Consciousness: Reflections on Art as a Mirror of Our Existence

Art has always been, to me, a lens for understanding the world, serving as a still image within the broader narrative of human experience. As a gallerist and curator of contemporary African art, I chose to begin my career in the arts upon realising that each piece was a catalyst for shifting perceptions, particularly within the African and Black context. This awakening fostered an awareness of self, our collective identity, and our place within history. It speaks to our tribal roots, regional outlooks, and shared humanity. Art holds the potential to inspire critical thinking and dialogue, allowing us to dissect our reality and challenge societal norms.

In my exploration of Kola Aina's collection, as a long-time art advisor of his, I find a microcosm of these broader themes. Kola, a tech investor in his early 40s, transcends the role of a mere collector; he embodies the spirit of a cultural steward, curating a dynamic array of modern and contemporary pieces that chronicle the evolution of African consciousness post-independence. His collection weaves together the voices of masters and emerging artists, forming a living archive that speaks to the richness and

complexity of African identity.

The notion of art as a living archive is crucial in the context of African consciousness. Each piece serves as a testament to the socio-political narratives that have shaped our identities over time. Take Ablade Glover's Blue/Green Profile, for instance, within the selected works on display in "Collecting Now" at Yemisi Shyllon Museum, we observe a poignant tribute to the enduring spirit of the West African woman, encapsulating the resilience and grace that define their existence. Glover, born in Accra, Ghana, in 1934, drew inspiration from his own mother, a Ghanaian trader who raised nine children. This personal connection imbues his work with a profound authenticity, transforming the canvas into a vibrant exploration of identity, strength, and cultural heritage. The Profile series is characterized by its dynamic interplay of colour and movement, skilfully capturing the quiet confidence and complexity of its subjects. Glover's use of a rich and vibrant palette evokes the energy and vitality of the African landscape, serving as a visual metaphor for the diverse experiences of African women. Each brushstroke resonates with the

spirit of the subjects, reflecting their inner strength and the myriad roles they play within their communities. Glover's artistic journey is as compelling as his subjects. After studying textile design at the Central School of Arts and Design in London and earning advanced degrees in art education from both Kent State University and Ohio State University, Glover returned to Ghana in 1974, where he joined the art department at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Glover's vibrant palette reveals the triumphs and tribulations of a people reclaiming their identity.

Similarly, as a pioneer of Nigerian modernism, Uche Okeke's 1983 *City of the Future* offers a forward-looking vision that captures the hopes and aspirations of a post-colonial Eastern or Federal Nigeria. Okeke, known for his role in the Zaria Art Society and his development of Uli, sought to reinterpret indigenous artistic expressions through a modern lens. His work represents a fusion of traditional Igbo motifs and modern techniques, emphasizing the importance of cultural continuity amid the rapid changes of modernization and independence.

City of the Future encapsulates this vision of a new Nigeria—one that is rooted in its cultural heritage while also aspiring toward progress and development. Okeke's use of geometric forms and dynamic compositions in the piece suggests a vibrant, interconnected urban space, symbolizing both the challenges and opportunities of nation-building. Through this work, he not only documents Nigeria's transition from colonialism to independence but also presents an idealized projection of the future, one that embraces both tradition and innovation.

Okeke's art, like that of many of his contemporaries, reflects a deep engagement with the socio-political landscape of his time, underscoring the role of artists as cultural historians and visionaries. In *City of the Future*, he invites viewers to imagine a Nigeria that is both deeply reflective of its past and ambitiously forward-looking.

The continuity between these modern masters and contemporary voices is where Kola Aina's collection offers guidance to the modern African art enthusiast. The interplay between past and present shapes our understanding of African consciousness, with the significance of archiving in art history providing a framework through which we analyze and appreciate the evolution of thought and identity. Abdoulaye Konaté's *Couleur du Sahel aux Cercles Rouges* (2020) serves as a poignant example of this continuum, addressing the socio-political turmoil affecting the Sahel region and emphasizing the intersection of art and activism. His work often reflects a deep engagement with the historical and contemporary issues facing Mali, particularly

in the context of identity, migration, the conflict with the nomadic Tuareg, and environmental degradation. In this piece, Konaté utilizes traditional Malian textiles and vibrant colours to create a visually striking narrative that resonates with both local and global audiences. The circular motifs in his work evoke themes of unity and continuity, suggesting a cyclical relationship between past struggles and present realities. By employing materials steeped in cultural significance, Konaté fosters a dialogue that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, a narrative continuum along the West African coast, offering a glimpse into the dialogue within the post-independence “francophone” African world.

This thread continues in Chidinma Nnoli’s *Perfect Places III* (2020), where the psychological landscapes of African womanhood emerge. Through these pieces, contemporary artists reclaim narratives, transforming personal experiences into broader socio-political discourses that resonate deeply with our collective journey. Chidinma Nnoli’s work serves as a contemporary lens through which the ongoing search for Nigerian voice is artfully documented, intertwining personal narrative within the broader echo. Drawing from her upbringing in what she perceived as a patriarchal, Catholic home, Nnoli channels her reflections into poignant portrayals of women navigating spaces that should embody safety yet often feel suffocating and toxic. Her ethereal compositions, rich in pastel hues and filled with domestic motifs, evoke both the beauty and constraints of traditional femininity, highlighting how these ideals have persisted and evolved within Nigerian culture. Nnoli critiques the legacy of these expectations while inviting viewers to engage with the complexities of identity in the modern era. Through her art, she not only sheds light on individual struggles but also positions herself within the broader narrative of Nigeria’s artistic evolution and discourse.

Art serves as a mirror reflecting both our conscious and subconscious selves, impacting how we shape narratives and expand critical thinking. As we engage with it, we can discern the deeper truths embedded within our cultural expressions. Kola’s thoughtful curation for his home reminds us that documenting history through art is essential for future generations. It allows us to engage with the visual language defining African identity today and positions artists as custodians of narratives that foster dialogue transcending time.

Consider Victor Ehikhamenor’s *Rosary Series*, where the enduring syncretism of indigenous and adopted African, Middle Eastern and European belief systems in Benin culture and Catholic tradition, is re-examined through striking figurative sculptures crafted from coral beads, reshaped into rosaries. Ehikhamenor invites

viewers to engage with the stories embedded within each piece, creating a dialogue that bridges his artistic practice and cultural heritage. His works serve as a re-telling of accumulated narratives, reflecting the complex interplay between memory, history, and identity. Influenced by his upbringing in a village rich in artistic traditions and his literary background, Ehikhamenor adopts a unique storytelling approach, demonstrating how art can transcend the limitations of canvas. Through his pieces, he challenges us to be "good descendants" by recalling and acknowledging our ancestors, emphasizing the importance of memory in shaping our identities. By working with inherited cultural fragments, he poses a thought-provoking challenge: to honour our past while forging a meaningful path forward.

Within his collection we find, Ken Nwadiogbu's *Just Like the Movies* (2021), which challenges mainstream portrayals of Black identity. Through his hyper-realistic approach, Nwadiogbu dissects the complex relationship between representation and identity, urging viewers to reconsider the narratives they consume and the implications of who has the authority to tell them. His meticulous attention to detail not only elevates the aesthetic quality of his work but also serves as a commentary on the commodification of Black identity in popular culture. By confronting stereotypes and reimagining the narratives surrounding Blackness, Nwadiogbu invites a critical examination of societal perceptions and encourages a deeper understanding of self-representation.

Taiye Idahor's *KNIT – From the Hairvolution Series* (2015) further delves into themes of femininity and identity, exploring constructs of gender within African contexts and examining the layers of personal and collective histories. This project began through a simple yet profound question Idahor has faced since childhood: "Is this your hair?" This question sparked a journey of self-discovery that led her to explore her family history and the identity of her paternal grandmother, Ayie, whose presence remains elusive yet significant in shaping her own understanding of self. Through her artistic practice, Idahor seeks to reintegrate Ayie into her family narrative, employing her hair as a symbol of connection and exploration. The fragility of memory is underscored in her use of delicate materials, echoing the impermanence of identity and the complexities of heritage. By confronting these themes, Idahor enriches the conversation about femininity, cultural identity, and the ongoing search for self within Nigerian history.

In this light, I offer that patronage is not just about art; it is about history. Collecting with intention as we see in Mr. Aina personal hobby as a collector, ensures that future generations can engage with the visual language that defines African identity

today. His collection positions him as a custodian of narratives, fostering a dialogue that transcends time. Delving deeper into the implications of archiving, we can trace how art history in Nigeria has evolved through significant periods—from the pre-colonial era, where art was deeply intertwined with spirituality and daily life, to the post-colonial context, where artists began to grapple with new identities shaped by colonial legacies. This evolution highlights the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity, between indigenous practices and global influences. The significance of this dialogue is crucial in understanding how we, as a collective, navigate our identities amidst shifting cultural landscapes.

Plato's theory of forms suggests that our material world is but a shadow of eternal truths. I find this equally compelling proposition in two of my favourite theologians' reflections, Thomas Aquinas and Søren Kierkegaard, both of whom offered me a language to understand this existentialist quest within the human spirit and subconscious. Questions and cries we find expressed within what we call culture today. In the realm of African and Black art, these truths manifest as lived experiences—freedom, identity, community—expressed through diverse mediums. Engaging with this art invites us to look beyond the surface and confront the

deeper truths resonating within our collective psyche. An innate desire to be known, seen and understood. Art becomes a means of expression that transcends mere aesthetics; it is a vehicle for storytelling, for shaping our understanding of history, culture, and ourselves.

Ultimately, this exploration of art reflects the evolving narrative of African consciousness. It reminds us that art is not static; it is fluid, moving through time and awakening us to our complexities. As a gallerist and curator, I find immense value in this storytelling aspect—the way art shapes our understanding of ourselves and our role in the world. In celebrating the vibrancy and diversity of African art, we contribute to a legacy that informs generations to come, allowing us to navigate our past while forging paths into the future.

Through Kola Aina's curated selection for "Collecting Now" and the broader landscape of African art, we are reminded of the importance of archiving our narratives, fostering critical thinking, and recognizing art as a powerful tool for awakening consciousness. This journey ultimately enriches our understanding of ourselves, our identities, and the interconnectedness of humanity.

Dolly Kola-Balogun (Founder of Retro Africa Gallery)

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