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Department of Fine Art,
Faculty of Environmental Design,
Ahmadu Bello University Zaria - Nigeria

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ART



The ART HISTORY NEWSLETTER

2026

FOREWORD



In the 2024/25 session Art History Newsletter, I acknowledged the privileged position I had, as Head of Department. This privileged position has made it possible for me to present forewords in the last two editions of the Newsletter. The 2025/26 edition is therefore, the third, that I will be forwarding as Head of Department and might be my last, in that capacity. I therefore, thank the Art History section for their supportive initiative to the Department under my leadership. I also congratulate them for their doggedness, through the concerted efforts of Prof Duniya G.G. in sustaining this initiative.

I must state that, the Newsletter has become the historical document of the Department. Every session, they carefully curate the major activities of the Department, which do not only inform others, but ensures that, we remember what took place during a particular session. For instance, I am told that this edition has reports of Prof Jaji's retirement, Professors Palmer and Mamza's retirement too and Prof Lamidi's 60th anniversary celebrations. This is in addition to highlighting some alumni that are doing us proud, around the world, among several very interesting packages.

I am therefore, not only honoured, but delighted to foreword the 2025/26 session Art History Newsletter, for the use and benefit of humanity and to the glory of God.

Prof Shehu Isma'il Chafe
Head of Department
Sept. 2026.



EDITOR'S DESK

In the previous edition, I stated how my dual role as Head of Section and Editor made certain things easier. My status since then has remain unchanged, in the course of packaging this edition. I must therefore, thank my editorial team for doing a wonderful job.

I also appealed for adverts, from private organisations, to enable us sustain the publication of the Newsletter. In this regard, we have gotten one or two, but still hopeful that more small and medium enterprises will come and partner with us. We therefore, appreciate the few that patronised us in this edition.

This edition has in it, the usual segments that provide some basic level of education. This is made possible, as a result of the several perspectives presented by our contributing writers, who are deliberately, mostly from the Art History section. We have also open the segments for highlighting our graduates, to embracing all graduates of the Zaria Art School, that are representing us "well". Consequently, we have herein four persons that have been highlighted and one person as the major spotlight in this edition.

To ensure that we keep documenting the Department's activities, we have also packaged herein, most of the events that took place in the Department, during the course of the session. There are other interesting packages, that we hope will satisfy diverse interest.
It is therefore, our believe that, this edition, like previous ones, will not onlyeducate and excite you, but will remain a vital historical document of reference for you. Thank you for your understanding participation and patronage.

Duniya G. Gambo Ph.D
Prof of Art History and Criticism
Head of Section/ Editor in Chief
Sept 2026.

THE MASKED CRITIC



A City In The North II By Lasisi Lamidi



A City In The North, is a line drawing by Lasisi Lamidi. It encompasses a variety of verticallines that are deliberately broken with horizontal lines, some line motifs of different shapes and forms, that are symbolic of Northern Nigeria. The lines that create the various shapes and forms are shaded at specific intervals in order to accentuate the forms that gives it a Northern architectural feel and also create both negative and positive spaces. The motifs and shaded areas are applied in a manner that create variety in the textures. The negative spaces help in creating a dual sense of depth for the line drawings and a perspectival distance for the buildings.

For instance, the top part of the drawing, formulates a structured form that appears like a conceptualised crown. Slanted and sometimes straight, thick, tin as well as mannered lines, all running toward the foreground of the drawing, dominates the picture plane. Imbued in between them, at strategic places are the unmistakable patterns/symbols that are synonymous with Northern Nigerian architecture. These patterns/symbols can be found in the work, at the left side majorly, while moving towards the middle region of the drawing and finally to the foreground by the right part of the drawing. These patterns/symbols are made as squares, circles, semicircles, triangles and semi triangles, among several other shapes and forms. Selected parts, right from the left side of the drawing, to the right, are shaded to give solidity, texture and forms, to the clustered local houses, as composed.

The drawing is a conceptual articulation of a typical Northern traditional set up. In that sense, Lamidi utilises the dynamics of lines and the effects of shading, to create a sense of community landscape.

Motifs, vertical lines and both positive, as well as negative spaces, are used to condense the composition into the communal feel that the Artist desired, with success. Curves lines of different sizes are stylistically used to indicate windows, home entrances and community entrances, that are typical of Northern Nigerian traditional communities. Indeed, a City In The North, could have been any city in Kano, Katsina, Zamfara or Zaria, where Lamidi is domiciled. Thus, the Artist is deliberate in presenting identifiable features of Northern Nigerian traditional architecture, yet, conceptual in presenting it's clustered and complex arrangement, which is an idaelised reflection of it's real/physical nature.

The Masked Criric | 2026

Artist Spotlight

GABI GEORGE GAGA

FROM THE ZARIA ART SCHOOL TO UK ROADS: THE STORY OF GABI GEORGE GAGA



Compiled By
Faida Samuel, Ph.D.

Artist's Profile

Gabi George Gaga was born on 11 April 1982 in Akwanga, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, into the family of the late Mr Usman Wunu Gaga, a seasoned accountant. He is a Nigerian-trained artist and Art Historian, with a Class 1 HGV driving licence, and he is based in London, United Kingdom.

Gabi studied Fine Art at the Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria otherwise known as the Zaria art school, where he specialised in Art History. His education at the Zaria Art School gave him a strong foundation in art history, drawing and painting. Although Art History was his area of specialisation, he continued to develop his artistic practice and has produced several paintings, drawings and commissioned works.

Gabi has done commissions; some of his notable projects include; a large-scale mural work at Lafayette Luxury Estate, Gaduwa 3 . Abuja, and a mixed-media artwork that is currently displayed in the office of the Rector Nigerian College of Aviation Technology, Zaria. He navigates between abstract composition of landscape and analytical composition of shapes as well as forms in his commissioned paintings. His artistic portfolio also includes pastel and charcoal drawings, which show his interest in detail, observation and different forms of visual expression.

His commission at the Nigerian College of Aviation Zaria is a mixed media painting that also shows his versatility in that genre.

After completing his undergraduate studies, Gabi moved into the academia. He taught Art History at the Federal University of Lafia for two years before relocating to the United Kingdom. His experience as an Art History lecturer, allowed him to share his knowledge of art and his own understanding of the discipline. In the United Kingdom, Gabi trained as a professional driver and began a new career in the logistics industry. He currently works as a Class 1 HGV driver in London and has spent more than two years working with different multinational logistics companies. His profession requires concentration, discipline, good judgement, responsibility and the ability to work independently.

At first glance, Art History and HGV driving may appear to belong to completely different worlds. However, Gabi's journey shows that the qualities developed through one profession can remain useful in another. His training in art taught him patience, observation, attention to detail and discipline. These qualities continue to support him in his present career. His transition to professional driving has not ended his relationship with art. Gabi continues to paint and draw, keeping his creative identity alive, alongside his professional driving career. His story shows that an artist can take different paths, without losing the foundation built through art education.

For Gabi, the change has been more about expanding his experience than abandoning his past. He has moved from the art studio and lecture room to the roads of the United Kingdom, but his creativity, discipline and determination remain part of who he is. His journey is also a reminder to students and graduates that career paths do not always follow a straight line. Sometimes, life requires us to take a different road, learn new skills and begin again in a new environment. A university degree can provide a foundation, but it does not have to determine the only direction a person can take.

From studying Fine Art at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to teaching Art History at the Federal University of Lafia, producing commissioned artworks, and building a career as a Class 1 HGV driver in the United Kingdom, Gabi George Gaga continues to demonstrate courage, adaptability and determination. His story is ultimately a story of reinvention, without losing identity. He remains an artist, an Art Historian and a creative person, while also building a successful career in a completely different professional environment. His journey reminds us that sometimes the road may change, but the knowledge, discipline and experience we gain along the way continue to travel with us. Gaga, as he is fondly remembered, is a proud ambassador of the Art History section and the Zaria Art School as a whole



One of the work in the Brave Series 2011



Gaga with his work at the Office of the Rector,
Nigerian College of Aviation Technology, Zaria 2013



Mural Work at Lafayette
Luxury Estate, Gaduwa 3 .
Abuja.



Gaga with Volvo Truck at Midlands of England at the Pallet Hubs.
2025

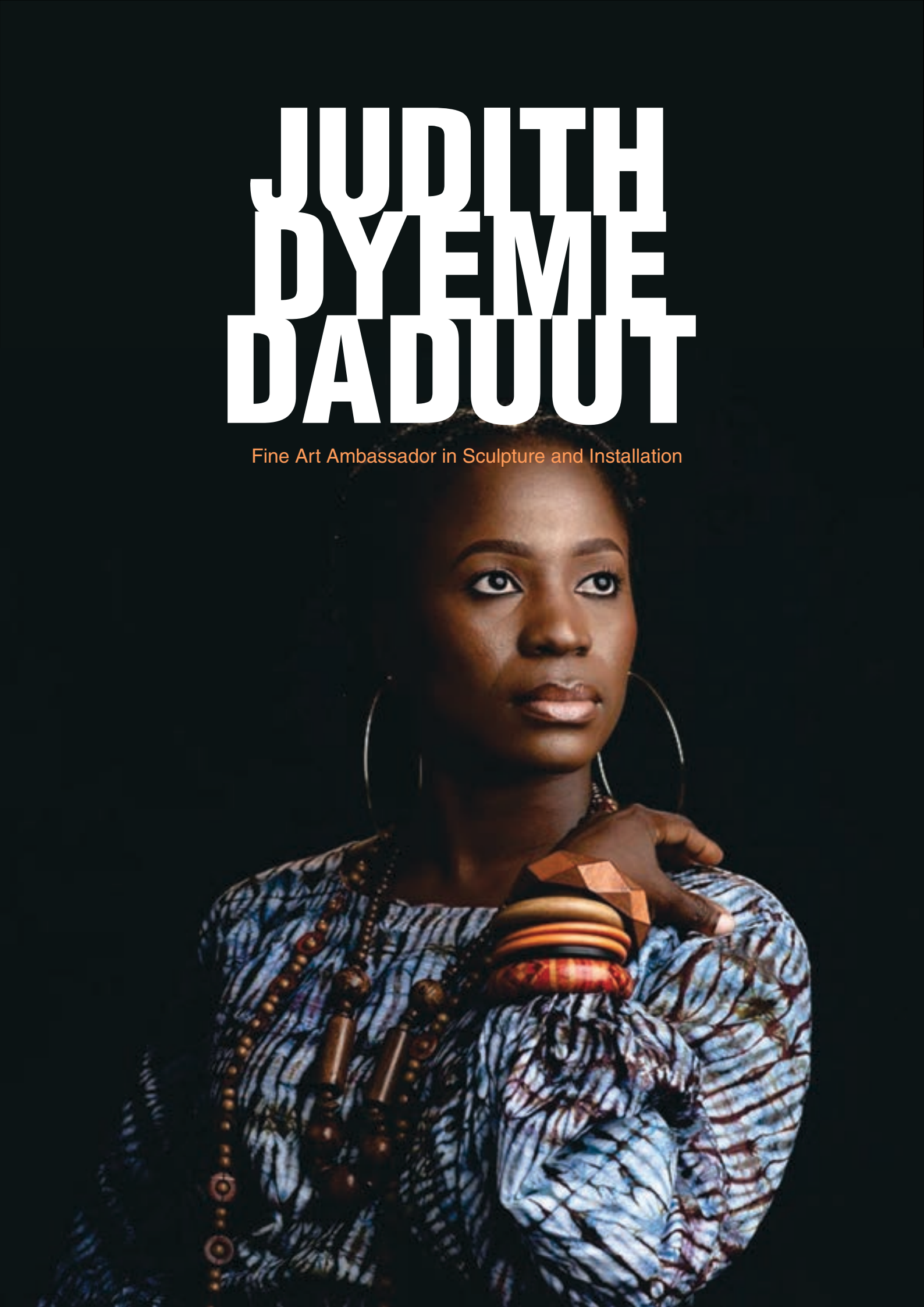
MILESTONES & FOOTPRINTS

Tracing the Journeys of Fine Art Alumni



JUDITH DYEME DADUUT

Fine Art Ambassador in Sculpture and Installation



Judith Dyeme Daduut is a contemporary Nigerian artist, sculptor, photographer, researcher and educator whose artistic practice is distinguished by its engagement with mental health, memory, identity and social realities. Born and raised in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, Daduut holds a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and a Master's degree in Art and Design from Birmingham City University, United Kingdom. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Sculpture at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, while also serving as a lecturer at Sculpture in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Jos.

As a multidisciplinary artist, Daduut works across sculpture, photography, installation, and participatory art practices. Her work is inclined toward the psychological and emotional realities that shape human existence. Through her artistic explorations, she addresses issues relating to mental health, emotional well-being, trauma, and the complexities of human thought processes. Her evolving body of work investigates subjects such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, isolation, and suicide, creating visual experiences that encourage reflection, empathy, and dialogue. At the core of Daduut's artistic philosophy is the belief that art can serve as a powerful medium for understanding and communicating the often invisible dimensions of human experience. She views creative practice, as a bridge between personal narratives and broader societal concerns, using art to foster conversations around mental health, while challenging the stigma that often surrounds psychological struggles in contemporary society.

As a practicing artist, Daduut has participated in numerous exhibitions, residencies, workshops, and fellowships, within and outside Nigeria. Some notable exhibitions include DOORS and ASA Open Studios at Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, Germany (2024); Arewa Me Too, an Apex Art Open Call Exhibition at the Yasmin El-Rufai Foundation, Kaduna (2022); Upcycling Redefined at Transcorp Hilton, Abuja (2021); and the prestigious Rele Young Contemporaries exhibitions organized by Rele Art Gallery, Lagos (2020). These exhibitions reflect the growing recognition of her work within both national and international contemporary art circles. One of the most compelling aspects of Daduut's practice is her engagement with installation art. Through immersive spatial arrangements, she creates environments that allow viewers to encounter and reflect upon emotional and psychological states. Her installations move beyond conventional sculptural forms, transforming physical spaces into sites of contemplation, vulnerability, and engagement. A notable example is her installation titled Room 214, a work that explores the lived realities of mental illness. The installation communicates feelings of discomfort, confinement, and emotional isolation, through a stark industrial aesthetic. The mesh-wrapped bed at the centre of the work evokes a sense of vulnerability and restriction, while the cold metallic materials, create an atmosphere of unease. The black fabric draped across the structure suggests both concealment and protection, symbolizing the complex ways individuals navigate emotional pain. Accompanied by a bedside lamp and journals. The installation references introspection, memory, and personal expression, inviting viewers into an intimate psychological space. Through Room 214, Daduut successfully transforms ordinary objects into potent metaphors for mental struggle, resilience and the search for healing

Beyond her studio practice, Daduut's work demonstrates a strong commitment to community engagement and socially responsive art. In 2024, she was selected as a Goethe-Institut Connecting the Dots Research Fellow, at the Slave History Museum in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. During the fellowship, she explored the intersection of art therapy, museum education, and historical memory. As such, one of the outcomes of this fellowship was Reflections, a clay-based project that embodies her interest in memory, participation and emotional engagement. The work highlights the transformative potential of art, as a tool for connecting individuals with both personal and collective histories. (see Reflections). We are presenting Judith Daduut as raising ambassador of the Zaria Art School.



Room 214, Judith Dyeme Daduut, Installation, 2024



Reflections,
Judith Dyeme Daduut,
Sculpture,
2024

ONAH ANTHONY OSITA FCIML

Fine Art Ambassador in Sculpture, Farming,
Fabrication and Agribusiness



Onah Anthony Osita is a trained sculptor and multidisciplinary artist whose, creative practice extends across sculpture, installation, fabrication, painting, metalwork, modelling, casting, and wood carving. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from the Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, also known as the Zaria Art School, one of Nigeria's foremost art schools. His foundation in sculpture continues to shape his approach to materials, construction and fabrication. He is the founder and CEO of the Metal Care Foundation based in Ogun and Lagos States, Nigeria.

As a sculptor, Osita is particularly interested in the possibilities of materials and the process of transforming ideas into physical forms. His training in sculpture has given him practical knowledge of metalwork and fabrication. These skills have also influenced his professional activities beyond the studio, where he applies his knowledge of materials, construction and design, to agricultural technology and infrastructure. Osita's artistic journey began within the Zaria art environment, where he developed his understanding of sculpture and other forms of creative practice. During his undergraduate studies, he served as President of the Association of Fine Art Students (AFAS). During his tenure, he initiated and introduced the ALGO Festival, creating an avenue for students to engage with art, creativity, and cultural activities. His leadership experience during this period further strengthened his interest in using creativity as a means of connecting people and creating opportunities. Over the years, Osita has participated in exhibitions, workshops, and other art-related activities. His exhibitions include the WINFEST Art Exhibition, in which he participated in 2024 and 2025. Through his artistic and professional activities, he remains passionate about promoting African art, creativity and cultural heritage on the international stage.

Beyond his studio practice, Osita has developed a strong interest in agriculture and technology. His background as a sculptor has played an important role in this transition. Sculpture requires an understanding of materials, structures, measurements, tools, construction and fabrication. Osita has transferred these skills into the agricultural sector, where he combines his artistic and technical knowledge with entrepreneurship to develop practical solutions for modern farming.

Osita's experience in fabrication has enabled him to design and supervise the construction of more than 550 greenhouses across Nigeria. His expertise covers greenhouse design, fabrication, installation, irrigation systems and farmer capacity development. This achievement demonstrates how his training as a sculptor, has extended beyond conventional studio practice, into a field where creativity, material knowledge, technical skills and innovation, are applied to practical social and economic challenges.

His work also extends to social development. Osita is the Founder and CEO of the Metal Care Foundation, a nonprofit organisation that empowers vulnerable communities through agriculture, entrepreneurship, skills development and social innovation. Through the Foundation, he uses his knowledge and experience as a sculptor, to create opportunities for people who face social and economic challenges.Through Bloom Behind Bars Initiative, which uses climate-smart agriculture, as a tool for rehabilitation, employment, and social inclusion within Nigeria's Correctional Service facilities. Osita has trained hundreds of inmates in climate-smart agriculture and provided them with practical agricultural, technical and entrepreneurial skills. The programme seeks to equip participants with skills that can help them become productive and self-reliant, after incarceration.

Osita's journey shows how the knowledge acquired through sculpture, can transfer to other areas of life and professional practice. His understanding of materials, fabrication, and construction has become useful in his agricultural technology work and social development. Thus, by combining his knowledge of sculpture with fabrication, technology, agriculture and entrepreneurship, he demonstrates how artistic training can contribute to innovation and social development. Today, Onah Anthony Osita stands at an interesting intersection between art, technology, agriculture, entrepreneurship and social impact. His journey from sculpture to agricultural technology, does not represent a departure from art, but an expansion of what artistic knowledge can achieve. We present to you, yet another creative innovator from the Zaria Art School to world.



Osita's fabrication for green farm



Osita handling machine



Fine Art Ambassador in Culinary Services

RAKIYA SUM GAMBO

Rakiya Sum Gambo is an indigene of Bauchi State, Nigeria, born on 21st September 1992. She studied Fine Art at the Zaria Art School, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where she specialised in Sculpture and obtained her Bachelor's degree in 2014. Driven by her passion for learning and the arts, she later returned to the same institution and obtained a Master's degree in Art History in 2023.

After completing her undergraduate studies, Rakiya took a different professional path and pursued her long-standing passion for the culinary arts. Her interest in cooking grew from her early exposure to food, through her mother, whose love and talent for cooking influenced her appreciation of food and encouraged her to develop her own culinary skills and business. Today, Rakiya is a full-time culinary professional and the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Sum's Sweet Infusion, a catering company based in Abuja that provides catering services within and outside Nigeria. She specialises in a wide range of culinary services, including savoury meals, pastries and beautifully designed cakes for different occasions.

Her training in Fine Art, particularly her knowledge of sculpture, continues to influence her culinary practice. The connection between sculpture and cake design is visible in the way she shapes, structures and develops her cakes. Her understanding of principles and element of arts and three-dimensional composition, helps her transform cakes from ordinary food item into carefully constructed artistic objects. In many of her cake designs, one can see the influence of her sculptural training in the attention she gives to shape, detail, balance and finishing.

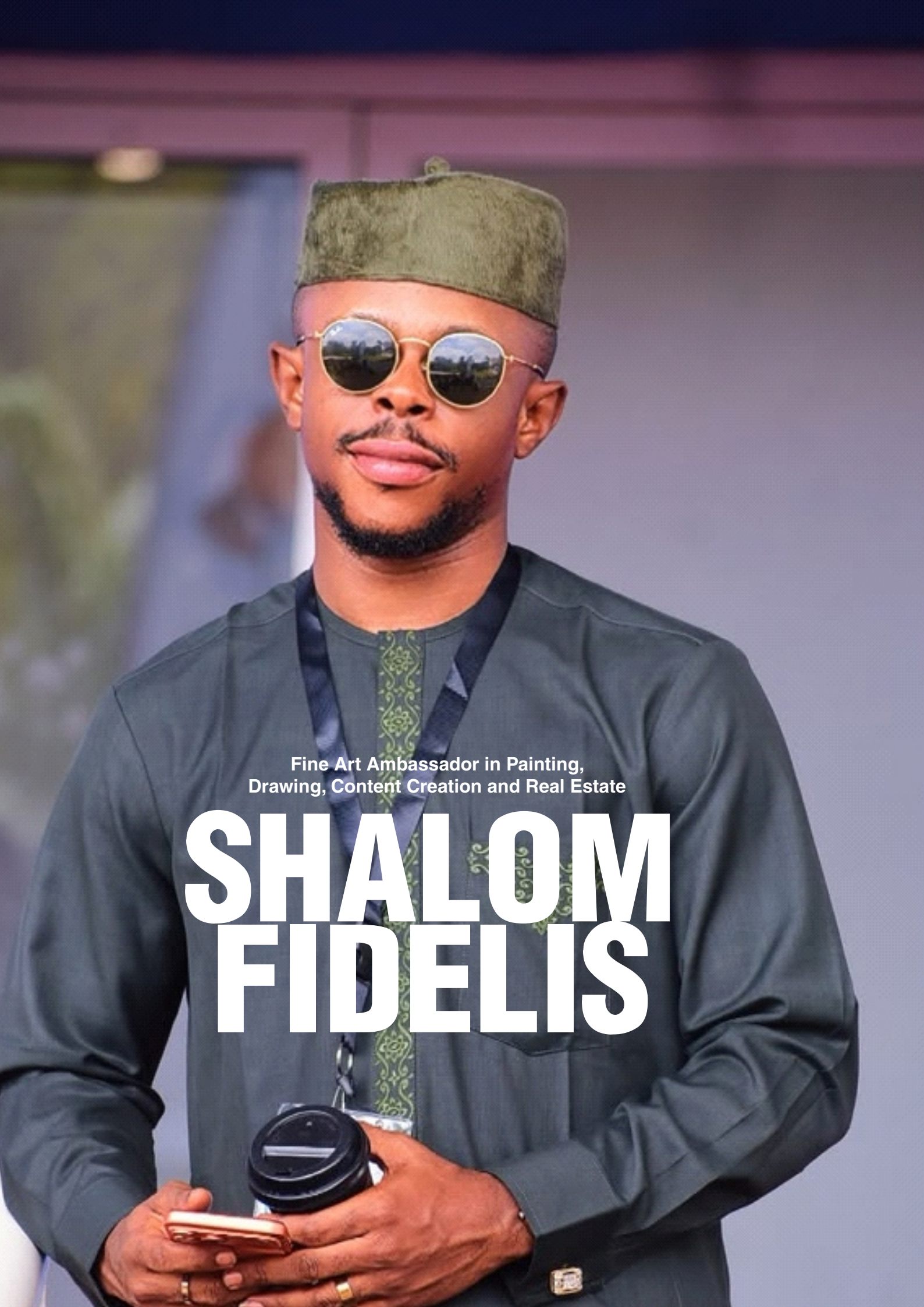
For Rakiya, culinary practice and business has therefore, become another space for artistic expression. She combines her knowledge of art, with her passion for food, to create cakes and pastries that are not only enjoyable, but also visually appealing. Her journey shows that artistic training can extend beyond the studio and find meaningful expression in other creative fields. Through Sum's Sweet Infusion, she continues to build a career that brings together art, creativity and culinary excellence. Her story is a reflection of how the skills acquired at the Zaria Art School can continue to influence graduates even when they pursue careers outside the conventional art profession.



Sum's food ready for delivery



Sum setting up a cake at an event



Fine Art Ambassador in Painting,
Drawing, Content Creation and Real Estate

SHALOM FIDELIS

Shalom Fidelis is a Nigerian artist, content creator, creative entrepreneur and real estate professional, based in Abuja. He studied Fine Art, specialising in Painting, at the Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. During his time at the Zaria Art School, he developed a strong interest in painting and drawing, particularly in realist and hyper-realistic pencil and charcoal portraiture. As a realist painter and portrait artist, Shalom pays close attention to detail, form, proportion, light, texture and human expression. His artworks explore people, emotions, identity and the human experience. These artistic skills continue to influence his creative and professional activities beyond the studio.

Today, Shalom works mainly in real estate marketing, property consultancy, investment and content creation, with a particular interest in Abuja's growing property market. He combines his understanding of visual art with real estate to create content that presents properties in an engaging and attractive way. His Fine Art background gives him a strong understanding of composition, perspective, space, visual balance, lighting and storytelling. These skills are useful in the way he photographs, films and presents properties. Rather than simply showing a building, he pays attention to how the space looks, feels and connects with its potential users. His artistic eye helps him identify important visual details that can make a property more appealing to its target audience.

His knowledge of art also influences his approach to content creation. He understands that good visual content requires more than information; it needs composition, creativity, a clear message and a story. He uses these principles to create content that communicates ideas in a simple and engaging manner. His experience in drawing and painting has also strengthened his ability to observe details and translate what he sees into compelling visual narratives.

For Shalom, real estate is not only about buying, selling or investing in property. It is also about people, spaces and the stories that develop around them. His approach to real estate marketing therefore focuses on communicating the lifestyle, possibilities and long-term value associated with each property. Looking into the future, Shalom hopes to bring his two worlds art and real estate closer together. He envisions creating artworks, installations and creative projects that explore architecture, land, cities, property and the relationship between people and the spaces they inhabit. His long-term ambition is to develop a body of work, in which real estate becomes not only something to sell or invest in, but also something that can be experienced, interpreted and expressed through art.



Shalom Fidelis, Everyone Sees,
Pencil on Paper, 49x51 inches, 2021



Shalom Fidelis, Picture From an Optimist's,
Pencil and Charcoal on Paper, 89 x 34 cm, 2023



ANYORIKYO NGUNAN ABIGAIL

Fine Art Ambassador in Beekeeping and Agrotech

Anyorikyo Ngunan Abigail is a graduate of Fine Art (Art History), Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. She is currently an agrobusiness entrepreneur and a certified Modern Beekeeping farmer and Trainer from Benue, Nigeria. She holds a Mini MBA (IFC-world Bank) 2022, a 2025 Green Fellow with the Green Institute and a Business Development Manager, at Metalé-Care Foundation. She is a resilient advocate and an Ambassador for the Beyond a Curved Spine NGO, leveraging her lived experience with scoliosis, to drive awareness and social inclusion through Art and Advocacy.

Abigail is dedicated to fostering environmental conservation and sustainable economic growth across Africa's agricultural landscape. She is the Founder/CEO of NAN Organik House and BeeKompanion Digital Solutions Ltd, where she champions sustainable apiculture and biodiversity conservation, through her flagship project, "SAVE BEES, BEE A KEEPER," which empowers rural women and youth, with technical beekeeping skills to enhance food security.

The Save Bees, Bee a Keeper project is an Agricultural project in rural communities, while NAN Organik House initiative is committed to impacting Internally Displaced Persons within Benue state with skills on beekeeping, through training and supply of beekeeping equipment to increase productivity in order to access large markets. Through partnership and sponsorship from organisations like Leap Africa, DoW, and World Connect, she has been able to create impact in vulnerable communities like Jato-Aka Kwande, Naka and Gwer West, all in Benue State, training 40 displaced persons and creating inclusion for women in beekeeping from 2025 till date. In July 2026, through the Songhai Mastercard Foundation programs in Mgbahiri, Owerri Imo state, she also offers beekeeping training, to 20 women, as a way of giving back to the community for having benefited from the Agrobusiness training support; 15 internally displaced traditional beekeepers (Men) and 45 women, have successfully been trained and empowered with modern beekeeping skills to complement their indigenous knowledge, thereby improving hive productivity and management through the programme.

Beyond beekeeping Abigail ventures into Agrotech, after making some discovery on key problems affecting beekeepers in their practice across the globe. This led to her new Startup, BeeKompanion Digital Solutions Ltd, using smart technology to protect pollinators, strengthen food security and build climate resilience. This technology helps beekeepers and farmers manage and monitor beehives to prevent colony losses. This is aimed at protecting pollinators, improving crop yield and strengthening biodiversity.

Abigail has made significant strides and achievements in the Agrospace, through her solutions. To ensure that she also leverages on her professional training as an art historian In 2024 she curated the farm Art Exhibition for the ArtLive Lagos festival in Lagos, Nigeria which, was an exposition aimed to promote arts and agriculture. In 2025, she won the BeGreen Fund for her amazing tech solution (BeeKompanion). In 2026, she emerged as the winner for the Benue State- JICA Agro Startup enhancement program and the National ClimateLunchpad competition and will represent Nigeria at the Regionals in Singapore. We are proud to present Abigail to you.







Women Artists:

Voices That Remain Determined to Speak

Prof. Ladi Agada | Department of Fine Art | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

I. The Beginning
She picks up a brush, not simply to paint, but to speak.
She lifts a pencil, not merely to draw, but to remember.
She touches clay, not only to shape it, but to give form to dreams waiting to be seen.
She sings, and the world pauses to listen.
She dances, and silence comes alive through movement.
She writes, and her words become windows through which generations can see themselves.

She is the woman artist.
A creator.
A dreamer.
A storyteller.
A keeper of memories.

For centuries, women have created art, sometimes celebrated and sometimes working quietly in the background. They have imagined, painted, sculpted, written, sung, danced, and photographed. Through it all, they continued, because art was more than something they did; it was a language through which their hearts could speak when ordinary words were not enough.

II. The Woman Behind the Art
Look closely at her work. Beyond the beauty, balance, harmony, colour, form, texture, and composition lies a deeper narrative. There is history, emotion, and the story of a woman preserving what she has seen, experienced, and felt. Through her creative expression, she explores themes of motherhood, childhood, family, culture, identity, struggle, resilience, and hope. Sometimes, it speaks of herself, not as society imagines her, but as she knows herself to be.

Through her work, she declares: *I was here. I saw. I felt. I created.* Through art, women also discover that they are not alone. The artist becomes a storyteller, creating connections across generations and reminding others: *My story matters. My voice matters.*

One woman's painting can become another woman's inspiration.
One woman's song can become another woman's strength.
One woman's story can become another woman's courage.

III. The Struggle
The journey of women artists has not always been easy. Many have faced expectations about who they should become and what they should do. Some were told that art was not a suitable career or that other responsibilities should come first. Yet, they continued. They entered studios, theatres, galleries, classrooms, and other creative spaces. Some received recognition during their lifetimes, while others were appreciated only years after their work had been created.

Slowly, museums, universities, and audiences began to recognise their contributions. History began to reveal that w*omen had always been creating; the world was simply learning to see them.* Their persistence became part of their art. Every brushstroke, every word, every movement, and every note carried not only creativity but also determination. The determination to be heard, remembered, and recognised.

IV. The Legacy
Let us celebrate the woman with the brush, the pen, the camera, the stage, the clay, and the voice. Let us celebrate both the famous and the unknown, the celebrated and the emerging. Every woman who creates opens a door for another generation.

A young girl may see a woman painting and think, *Perhaps I can paint too.*
Another may hear a woman's song and discover her own voice.
Another may read a woman's poem and find the courage to write her own story.
And so, the legacy continues.

Women artists are not simply participants in the history of art; they are part of its heartbeat. They have painted what might otherwise have remained unseen, sung when silence was expected, danced when stillness was demanded, and written when their stories had gone unnoticed.

Their work reminds us that art is not only about creating beauty. It is also about leaving something behind; a memory, a feeling, a question, a story, or a part of oneself that can live on in another heart. Every woman who dares to create adds another colour to the vast picture of humanity, making the world richer, more beautiful, and more complete.

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE @FULafia

MUHAMMAD, Aliyu, Ph.D

Introduction

This report is on my second academic engagements at Federal University of Lafia Nasarawa State, for a one-year sabbatical leave. The Federal University of Lafia was established in 2012 which means it is fourteen (14) year old this, year. Initially, the bulk of the academic activities were carried out at the take-off (temporary) site at Akunza along Awe Road, however, after the compilation of the administrative block and the movement of the management staff, greater activities are now taking place at the permanent site, with new structures still under construction. The university's name was officially changed from Federal University Lafia, to Federal University of Lafia, in June, 2019, as stated in the Gazette of the University.

The Faculty of Environmental Design, in which Fine Art was approved to commence operation as a full-fledged faculty in August, 2019. Among the department apart from Fine Art are; Industrial Design, Architecture, Building, Glass and Silicate Technology, Geography, including the unbundled Visual and Creative Arts Department for now.

I therefore, had the previlage of working in the Fine Arts Department under the Art History section. The only art history staff in the University's Fine Art Department before I joined them as a sabbatical staff was, Dr. Kunde Mathew Tekura who died in September 2024. His death created a wide gap, as far as the teaching of art history in the department is concerned. My efforts since Dr. Kunde died has led to the approval of Art History as a specialization, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate (Masters and Ph.D.) levels.

The Art History section graduated its pioneer undergraduate students in September, 2025 (see Fig I).



Fig I: Pioneer undergraduate students

I happened to singlehandedly supervised successfully the five of them. They include; OSAJIE Osewie (2020/EV/FAT/0014) "A Study of The Outdoor Sculpture, Faculty of Environmental Design, Federal University, of Lafia Nasarawa State". JOHN Jummai (2021/EV/FAR/0470) "A Developmental History of Art History Section, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State", DANLAMI, Solomon Akwashiki. (2022/EV/FAR/0010) "The Contribution of Roadside Artists in Lafia Nasarawa State to the Development of Contemporary Nigerian Art", LAMIDI, Adeleke Daniel (2020/EV/FAT/0019) "The Significance of Hair-do in Federal University of Lafia", and AGADA, Theresa (2020/EV/FAT/0001) "The Role of Museum in Art Development in Nigeria". Furthermore, the Department graduated her pioneer Ph.D. student GARBA, Idris (931419002) on the second of October, 2025, with thesis titled "A Study of Design and Aesthetics of Wall Decorations in Jigawa State Area Councils" (see Fig II)



Fig I: On the left is Prof Aliyu Muhammad with Idris Garba (1^{st} Ph.d graduate of Art History at FULafia) on his right

During my academic engagements while on sabbatical, at FULafia, I conducted some of my lecture, particularly with the undergraduate students, outdoor, under the mango tree due to shortage of facilities and consequently clashes in lecture venue, (see Fig III)

Still, I supervised postgraduate students at both Masters and Ph.D. levels at FULafia and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria: These made my work scheduled tedious. Indeed, I



Fig III: Outdoor lecture with undergraduate students under the mango tree

had to travel sometimes to Zaria, in order to attend to my students, there. These efforts helped them to continue to make steady progress, with their research works. Similarly, as part of my academic engagements at Federal University of Lafia, I had a joint paper with one of my postgraduate students: AYAKA Bala Akwashiki titled " Perspective on Blaise Gundu Gbaden's Circular Paintings" it appeared in resonance, journal of contemporary arts scholarship; A Publication of Department of Fine Arts, Federal University of Lafia ISSN NO: 2630-7162 issue 4 Vol. 4, pp 27-40

As one of the third, if not fourth generation of emerging universities in Nigeria. It would be worthwhile to state here that, the Department of Fine Arts, Federal University of, Lafia has successfully received full NUC accreditation to start postgraduate degree programmes at Masters and Ph.D. levels. The administration of the university is therefore, advised to provide the Department with more manpower, especially at the senior cadre level. Part of what I observed and learnt was that, the academic staff are given the liberty to come to work three times in a week depending on how one arranged with his/her students. This gesture by the university management was as a result of the untold hardship and economic situation experienced in the country. This report will not be complete without unequivocally stating here that, the rigor of academic work and by implication standard, particularly that of postgraduate studies of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is by far more than that of Federal University, Lafia.



Serenity (Back to the Root), Jacob Enemona Onoja, Acrylic on Canvas. 40 x 55 cm 2019. Source: The Artist

A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SERENITY (BACK TO THE ROOT)

FAIDA SAMUEL, Ph.D.

"Serenity (Back to the Root)" depicts a rural setting typical of a village community. The skyline is rendered with touches of blue, white and purple, creating the impression of an evening atmosphere that enhances the calmness and serenity of the composition. At the center of the composition, three thatched huts stand in a vertical arrangement, executed in varying shades of brown, with the roofs in triangular form. Behind the huts, green vegetation composed of different types of trees, is rendered in various tones of green and yellow. Further in the background, mountains painted in shades of purple, appear to fade and blend seamlessly into the skyline.

On the right-hand side of Serenity (Back to the Root), a rock formation is portrayed in different sizes and shapes. Interestingly, some rocks are arranged in somewhat seat form and by its left, a large tree grows amidst some rocks. A tree growing among rocks undoubtedly faces challenges, symbolizing resilience and perseverance. Similarly, on the right side of the composition, two large stones are painted, with one resting at the top. The rocks, stones, and lush vegetation serve as natural guides leading toward the huts. A vast expanse of land stretches across the composition, with a straight pathway painted in earthy brown, yellow and orange tones. Patches of green along the sides suggest the presence of grass, indicating that the land is fertile and full of life.

Onoja's Serenity (Back to the Root) serves as an allegorical statement for the resilience and restoration of the Jos Plateau community following years of turmoil due to religious, tribal and herders-farmers conflicts. The landscape, depicted in a tranquil state with minimal human presence, is more than just a scenic portrayal, it is a symbolic call for displaced individuals to return home and reclaim their lives. As of 2019 when the artist produced the work, many communities in Jos have been desolated. Thus, no longer do people feel safe going to their farms or even relating with their neighbours, for fear of being attacked. However, Back to the Roots is a silent reminder that regardless of past experiences, lost relationships can be restored and communities can flourish again. The stillness of the village suggests both the scars of past violence and the hopeful promise of renewal. The absence of bustling activity may reflect the lingering effects of fear and displacement, yet the serene environment conveys a deeper message: peace has taken root once more. Through this painting, the artist extends an invitation for the people of Jos to embrace reconciliation, rebuild their communities and restore the vibrancy that once defined their homeland.

ORIGINALITY OR AUTHENTICITY?
Rethinking the Goal of Artistic Practice

Harrison Idahosa | Department of Fine Art | University of Maiduguri

Every art student has heard the instruction at some point: be original. Find a style that is your own. Do not look like another artist. On the surface, this sounds like good advice. Artists are expected to bring something of themselves to the world, not simply repeat what already exists. However, a question worth asking is whether this demand actually helps young artists grow, or whether it sometimes stops them from working altogether. This question matters a great deal in a place like Nigeria, where art students are surrounded by a wide range of cultural histories, materials and lived experience. Perhaps, what most of them need is not pressure to be original from day one, but room to become authentic. And if we look closely at how these two ideas have been treated in art theory, authenticity is the more honest and more achievable goal.

Originality and authenticity are often used as if they mean the same thing. They do not. In art theory, originality is generally tied to newness: a work, idea or technique that has not existed before, or that breaks clearly from what came before it. Dutton (2003) separated authenticity into two kinds. The first, nominal authenticity, concerns correct attribution and how closely a work matches a known tradition or the maker's stated intention. The second, expressive authenticity, concerns how much sincerity and personal conviction the artist has actually put into the work, rather than how new the work looks. Benjamin (1935/1968) approached the idea from another angle. In his well-known essay on mechanical reproduction, he argued that a work's authenticity lies in its presence in a particular time and place, and in the unique history attached to it. A copy, however exact, cannot carry that same presence. Taken together, these positions point to something important: authenticity is about honesty of expression, while originality is mainly about novelty. An artist can be deeply authentic while working from a tradition that is centuries old. An artist can also produce something technically new while saying very little that is true to their own experience.

Strictly speaking, pure originality is almost impossible to achieve. Every artist starts somewhere, and that starting point is usually another artist, a tradition, an image or a memory. Historians of the idea of originality often trace its modern form to the Romantic period, when the artist began to be seen as a solitary genius producing work out of nothing (Kivy, 2001). That image is attractive, but it does not match how art actually gets made. Even the artists we now call original were shaped by teachers, predecessors and the visual culture around them. This does not weaken the case for creativity. It simply means that the boundary between derivative work and work that is merely inspired by another has never been a clean one, and treating originality as a starting requirement sets up young artists to chase something that barely exists in practice.

Consider how a child learns to speak. No child invents language before using it. The child listens, repeats, makes mistakes, and slowly develops a way of speaking that becomes their own. Artistic development can follow a similar path. A student may see a painting and become interested in how the artist uses colour. Another may study how a particular figure is constructed and try to reproduce it. This is not a weakness. It is part of learning. The difficulty appears only when a student stops at copying and presents the copied work as their own. Between imitation as learning and imitation as deception, there is a real difference, and art education needs to keep that difference clear rather than treating all imitation as failure.

When a student studies a borrowed technique, changes the subject matter, introduces their own experience, and places the idea within a different context, the work starts to shift. The borrowed idea begins to change hands. This is where authentic practice starts to take shape, often quietly and without being announced.

One danger of insisting on originality from the outset is that students become afraid to work at all. A student has an idea, discovers that something similar already exists, and abandons it. Another wants to try a technique but worries it belongs to someone else, so looks for something completely different instead. A student may spend a year searching for a unique style rather than spending that year in the studio. The result is often the opposite of what was intended. In trying hard to be original, the student produces less work, and a visual language cannot be discovered by thinking about it alone. It has to be built through repeated practice, failure and correction. Nigerian art students work within a wide field of cultural images, histories and everyday experience. Rather than asking whether something has been done before, it may be more useful to ask what can be done with it, from where the artist stands. A visual idea developed for a Lagos audience may carry a different meaning when addressed to life in Maiduguri. A technique learned from another artist can produce something different once it is applied to a Nigerian subject, because the artist's environment, memory and questions enter the work along the way.

This is what authenticity offers that originality does not: a way of working honestly with influence rather than pretending influence does not exist. Style, in this sense, is less something a student chooses on day one and more something that emerges after sustained work, once certain colours, subjects and marks keep returning without being forced.

The instruction to be original places a demand at the start of artistic training that more properly belongs near its end, if it belongs anywhere at all. A more honest sequence runs differently: looking, imitation, practice, experimentation, personal experience, and then, sometimes, transformation. Originality, where it appears, tends to arrive as a by-product of this process rather than as its starting condition.

For the Nigerian art student, and arguably for any artist trying to build a visual language, the more useful pursuit is authenticity: working honestly with what has shaped you, and allowing your own context, memory and questions to change it along the way. Originality may follow. It should not be required to come first.

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Reading the Direction of Postgraduate Art Research at ABU Zaria in 2026

From landscape and studio experimentation to art education, social intervention and artificial intelligence

By Rowland Yohanna Goyit

The postgraduate seminar is one of the most revealing intellectual spaces within an art school. It captures research at a moment when ideas are still being tested, methods are being scrutinised and propositions remain open to challenge. Unlike the completed thesis, exhibition or published article, the seminar exposes the process of knowledge formation itself. It shows not only what a researcher has chosen to study, but also the kinds of questions that are beginning to matter within a department, the disciplinary boundaries being crossed and the intellectual pressures shaping contemporary art scholarship. The postgraduate presentations recorded in the Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 2026 offer such a window. Nineteen presentations, comprising postgraduate external or oral defences and departmental seminars, span Art History, Painting, Sculpture and Art Education. They range from studies of Nigerian painters, landscape and sculptural form to research on trauma, disability, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship systems and artificial intelligence.

Taken together, these presentations do more than document individual academic exercises. They provide a useful indication of how postgraduate Fine Art research at ABU Zaria is negotiating the relationship between established disciplinary traditions and emerging contemporary concerns. The picture that emerges is of a department still strongly grounded in studio practice and Nigerian cultural experience, but increasingly attentive to interdisciplinarity, social relevance, theory and technological transformation.

It is important, however, to establish the limits of such a reading. The available material consists of seminar and defence notices rather than the complete theses, seminar papers or examination reports. The discussion that follows therefore evaluates the intellectual directions suggested by the titles, disciplinary affiliations and stated areas of inquiry. It does not presume to assess the quality, methodology or final findings of the individual studies.

Art History, Interpretation and the Contemporary Nigerian Art World

The Art History presentations reveal an encouraging engagement with contemporary and recent Nigerian artistic practice. Faida Samuel's *A Contextual Interrogation of Jacob Enemona Onoja's Landscape Paintings* places the work of an individual painter within a contextual and interpretive framework. Duyil Titus Haruna's research adopts a comparative approach to two painters, while Joy Mbatomon Iorvihi's *An Appraisal of Art X Lagos, 2016–2024* turns attention towards one of the most visible institutions within Nigeria's contemporary art ecosystem. Harrison Idahosa's *A Semiotic Examination of Chike Obeagu's Paintings* adds an explicitly theoretical dimension through the use of semiotic analysis.

Collectively, these studies suggest that Art History at postgraduate level is not confined to established historical periods or canonical figures. There is a noticeable concern with living artists, contemporary institutions and interpretive methodologies. This is important because Nigerian contemporary art frequently develops faster than the scholarship surrounding it. Exhibitions, galleries, fairs and artists may achieve visibility long before sustained academic interpretation follows. Postgraduate research can therefore perform an essential archival and historiographical function by producing the documentation and critical analysis from which future histories of Nigerian art will eventually be written.

The study of Art X Lagos is particularly significant within this cluster because it potentially shifts attention away from the artwork as an isolated object and towards the institutional systems through which art is exhibited, circulated and valued. Such a move expands the field of art-historical research into questions of exhibition culture, curatorial practice, markets, collecting and institutional visibility. It suggests a possible future direction in which Nigerian Art History increasingly studies not only artists and artworks but the infrastructures that determine how art enters public consciousness.

Idahosa's semiotic examination of Chike Obeagu's paintings similarly points towards a growing interest in theoretically organised interpretation. Semiotics offers the researcher a framework for examining how visual signs, symbols and pictorial structures generate meaning. The importance of this direction lies in the movement away from descriptive appreciation towards more rigorous analytical reading.

At the same time, the 2026 Art History presentations reveal considerable room for expansion. Areas such as museum studies, curatorial history, archives, restitution, provenance, digital heritage, collecting, public art, copyright and the political economy of Nigerian art remain fertile territories for future postgraduate inquiry. The contemporary art world is increasingly shaped by institutions and technologies as much as by individual artistic production, and Art History will need to follow those transformations.

Landscape and the Continuing Studio of Painting

Painting remains one of the most visible areas of postgraduate research represented in the 2026 presentations. Sekuk Zumnan Moses investigates cracks as a visual metaphor for conceptualising segregation. Abui Niger Zion considers rhythms derived from Kabyek Tityong Waterfalls. Gabriel Kyot Yabak explores reflected flora and water as the basis for conceptual painting, while Saleh Daniel Jatau investigates selected Samaru landscapes through the use of line. Basheera Ohuni Abdulsalam's research turns towards cultural change among Fulani women through colour and line.

These projects demonstrate the continuing importance of the environment as a source of visual investigation. Landscape here is not simply a genre of representation. Waterfalls, reflections, natural formations and the Samaru environment become starting points from which researchers attempt to derive rhythm, movement, line, abstraction and conceptual structure.

This orientation reflects an enduring strength of studio

research: the ability to transform observation into visual inquiry. Yet it also raises an important methodological question. At postgraduate level, the transformation of a visible subject into an artwork must ideally generate more than stylistic variation. The deeper research question concerns what the process of transformation enables us to understand that was not previously evident.

To translate the rhythms of a waterfall into painting, for instance, is an artistic exercise. To establish how such translation produces new insights into rhythm, perception, movement or pictorial organisation is a research contribution. Similarly, transforming reflections on water into conceptual painting becomes intellectually stronger when the work can explain what that transformation reveals about perception, temporality, instability or the visual experience of landscape.

The continued prominence of landscape therefore represents both continuity and challenge. It connects current research to long-standing traditions of observation and environmental engagement, but it also requires each generation of researchers to ask different questions of familiar subjects.

Basheera Abdulsalam's study of cultural change among Fulani women indicates another direction. Rather than beginning primarily with physical landscape, the project situates formal elements such as colour and line within social and cultural transformation. The significance of such research lies in the possibility that visual form may become a means of thinking through cultural change rather than merely illustrating it. This distinction is crucial. When colour and line begin to operate as conceptual languages for negotiating continuity, change and identity, studio research moves beyond representation towards interpretation.

Sculpture, Embodiment and the Transformation of Form

A related but distinct research tendency is visible in Sculpture. Josiah Philip's *An Exploration of the Bull Form in Mixed Media Sculpture* investigates animal form through material experimentation. Jimoh Taiye Anthony examines the aesthetic transformation of the human thumbprint into sculpture. Keswet Samuel explores the graceful movement of the antelope form, while Bello Mudi's project investigates human foetal development through sculptural exploration.

A common concern running through these projects is embodiment. The bull and antelope introduce questions of anatomy, movement, rhythm, mass and balance. The thumbprint begins with an intimate bodily trace and translates it into three-dimensional form. Foetal development introduces temporality, biological change and the process through which the human body itself takes shape.

These studies show that sculptural research remains deeply invested in form, material and transformation. Yet they also suggest a gradual expansion into conceptual territory. The thumbprint, for example, carries associations with individuality, evidence, identity and uniqueness. Its translation into sculpture therefore has the potential to generate meanings that extend beyond formal enlargement. Foetal development similarly offers possibilities for thinking about growth, formation, transition and temporality rather than merely anatomical representation.

For postgraduate studio research, this distinction between representing a subject and thinking through a subject is increasingly important. The strongest sculptural investigations are likely to be those in which material and form do not simply reproduce the selected source but become instruments of inquiry.

Art Education and the Expanding Social Function of Art

Perhaps the most socially expansive cluster of the 2026 presentations appears in Art Education. James Chimezie Ohambele investigates the efficacy of art as therapy for children with orthopaedic impairment. Goshi Mandung Shedrach examines visual arts programmes as a means of empowering graduate youths in Plateau and Nasarawa States. Barnabas Ekyouh Yakubu studies an apprenticeship system within Tigun culture in Taraba State. Abubakar Yerima Nuhu investigates visual-art activities in relation to trauma among internally displaced children in Adamawa State. Binta Garba considers the integration of entrepreneurship into the visual-arts curriculum of senior secondary schools in Kano State.

This body of research reveals a conception of Art Education that extends considerably beyond classroom instruction. Here art intersects with disability, trauma, displacement, unemployment, entrepreneurship, indigenous knowledge and youth development.

Such research reflects an important shift. Art is increasingly being studied not only for its aesthetic or cultural significance but for what it might do within society. The visual arts become part of conversations about psychological wellbeing, rehabilitation, economic participation and social development.

This direction has particular relevance in Nigeria, where cultural and educational institutions are continually required to demonstrate their relationship to broader developmental challenges. The postgraduate projects suggest that researchers are responding to this context by locating art within lived social problems.

Yet this social orientation also demands methodological discipline. A claim that art alleviates trauma, empowers young people or produces therapeutic benefit requires more than good intention. Such claims must be supported by methods capable of identifying and evaluating actual outcomes. The challenge for Art Education is therefore to maintain the particularity of artistic experience while drawing responsibly upon research methods from education, psychology, sociology and development studies.

The apprenticeship study introduces another dimension of considerable importance. Indigenous and community-based systems of knowledge transmission are frequently overshadowed by formal educational models. Research into apprenticeship therefore contributes to a larger conversation about where artistic knowledge resides and how it is passed from one generation to another. It can help challenge the assumption that legitimate art education occurs only within formal classrooms, colleges or universities.

Binta Garba's project on entrepreneurship similarly responds to an increasingly urgent concern. Contemporary artists operate within creative economies that demand knowledge of professional practice, markets, intellectual property, digital platforms and self-management. Integrating entrepreneurship into art education may consequently help address the gap between artistic training and professional sustainability. The challenge is to ensure that entrepreneurship strengthens artistic independence rather than reducing art education to commercial productivity.

Artificial Intelligence and the Beginning of a New Research Frontier

Among the nineteen presentations, Animoku Abdulrasheed's *An Exploration of the Effect of Artificial*

Intelligence on Artistic Practices Within Nigerian Art Space introduces perhaps the clearest sign of a new technological research direction.

Its importance lies partly in the fact that it appears as a relatively singular subject within the 2026 group. Artificial intelligence has rapidly entered global debates about image production, authorship, originality, labour, copyright and creative agency. Its appearance within postgraduate research at ABU indicates that the Department is beginning to encounter these shifts academically.

The implications extend well beyond digital image generation. AI raises questions for virtually every area represented in the 2026 presentations. For studio practice, it challenges conventional assumptions about authorship and artistic labour. For Art History, it raises questions about visual interpretation, archives and computational analysis. For Art Education, it demands new approaches to curriculum and creative pedagogy. For Nigerian and African cultural scholarship more broadly, it introduces difficult questions concerning cultural representation, access to technology, dataset bias and the circulation of cultural imagery through global computational systems.

That only one presentation explicitly addresses AI is itself revealing. The technological turn appears to be emerging rather than fully established. This presents an opportunity rather than a deficiency. Future postgraduate research could expand into digital art history, virtual exhibitions, computational archives, digital conservation, cultural data, intellectual property and the relationship between African visual knowledge and machine learning.

Locality as a Research Strength

Another important feature of the nineteen presentations is their strong geographical and cultural grounding. Samaru, Kano, Adamawa, Plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba feature alongside Fulani cultural experience, Nigerian artists, Art X Lagos and the wider Nigerian art space.

This local specificity should be regarded as an intellectual strength when carefully developed. Research does not become globally relevant by abandoning local subjects. On the contrary, some of the most consequential scholarship emerges when a precisely situated case is used to illuminate larger theoretical or cultural questions.

The challenge is therefore one of scale. A study may begin with a specific waterfall, artist, community, school curriculum or cultural practice, but the research becomes stronger when it demonstrates why that case matters beyond itself. Local evidence should not be reduced to illustration; it should become a basis for producing concepts, testing theories and contributing to broader debates.

This is particularly important for African art scholarship, where intellectual frameworks have often travelled from elsewhere towards African subjects rather than emerging from African research contexts themselves. The postgraduate work at ABU has the potential to reverse that movement by allowing Nigerian cases to generate questions and theoretical propositions rather than merely receiving them.

From Interesting Subjects to Strong Research Problems

The nineteen presentations reveal remarkable breadth, but breadth alone does not guarantee depth. A recurring feature of the titles is the language of *exploration*, *assessment*, *appraisal*, *evaluation*, *interpretation*, *effect* and *conceptualisation*. These are legitimate research terms, but they also point towards a central challenge for postgraduate scholarship.

The distinction between an interesting subject and a strong research problem must remain clear.

A compelling subject identifies something worth investigating. A strong research problem demonstrates what is not yet understood about that subject, why existing knowledge is insufficient and how the proposed research can alter that condition. This distinction matters across all four disciplinary areas.

For studio researchers, it means explaining not only what has been produced but what the artistic process has discovered. For Art Historians, it means moving beyond documentation towards interpretation, historiographical intervention and theoretical argument. For Art Education researchers, it means establishing credible relationships between artistic activity and claimed educational, psychological or socioeconomic outcomes. For emerging technological research, it means moving beyond the novelty of new tools towards the cultural, ethical, historical and political conditions they create.

The future strength of postgraduate research at ABU will therefore depend increasingly upon the alignment of research problem, theory, methodology, evidence and contribution to knowledge.

Towards an Expanded Identity for Postgraduate Fine Art Research

Viewed together, the 2026 presentations suggest that postgraduate research within the Department of Fine Art is operating across three overlapping traditions.

The first is the studio tradition of making, material experimentation and observation. It remains strongly visible in the investigations of landscape, animal form, biological form, line, colour and mixed media.

The second is the scholarly tradition of interpretation, documentation and historical inquiry, represented most clearly by the Art History projects and the use of theoretical approaches such as semiotics.

The third is an expanding contemporary orientation in which art research is expected to engage with social conditions, education, trauma, entrepreneurship, technology and changing cultural realities.

These traditions need not compete. Their interaction may become one of the Department's greatest strengths.

A studio researcher may benefit from deeper theoretical engagement. An Art Historian may learn from material and practice-based modes of inquiry. An Art Education researcher may draw upon cultural history and artistic practice. Research into artificial intelligence may require all three perspectives at once.

The emerging picture is therefore not one of disciplinary fragmentation but of increasing intellectual permeability.

A Department Negotiating its Future

Perhaps the most striking way to understand the 2026 postgraduate presentations is to consider their range. At one end is a researcher investigating the visual rhythms of a waterfall through painting. At another is a researcher examining artificial intelligence within Nigerian artistic practice.

Between these two points lie landscapes and painters, animal forms and human development, cultural change and

semiotics, art fairs and apprenticeship systems, disability and trauma, entrepreneurship and youth empowerment. Such diversity says something important about the changing meaning of Fine Art research.

The field is no longer defined solely by the production of objects or the historical classification of artworks. It increasingly encompasses systems, communities, technologies, institutions and social conditions. Artistic practice itself is becoming a way of asking questions, while art-historical and educational research is expanding towards the infrastructures through which culture is produced and transmitted.

For a department situated within Ahmadu Bello University, whose Fine Art tradition occupies an important place in the development of modern Nigerian art, this raises a particularly significant question. The task ahead is not simply to preserve a celebrated historical inheritance. It is to determine how that inheritance can remain intellectually productive under radically changing conditions.

The 2026 postgraduate presentations suggest that this process is already underway.

The most important story they tell is therefore not contained in any single defence or seminar. It lies in the movement between them: from landscape to social intervention, from formal experimentation to theory, from apprenticeship to entrepreneurship, from the study of painters to the study of institutions, and from established studio practices to artificial intelligence.

These presentations reveal a postgraduate research culture gradually broadening its understanding of what Fine Art can investigate and what kinds of knowledge art can produce, and may well be the defining direction of postgraduate research at ABU Zaria in 2026: a movement from art as subject towards art as method, social instrument, cultural archive and critical means of understanding a rapidly changing world.

A. Postgraduate External/Oral Defences

No.	Candidate	Research / Presentation Title	Degree / Area	External Examiner
1	**Faida Samuel**	*A Contextual Interrogation of Jacob Enemona Onoja's Landscape Paintings*	PhD Art History	Prof. G. A. Gyegwe
2	**Duyil Titus Haruna**	*A Comparative Analysis of Dingba Suzan Anthony and Adiwu Talatu Onkala's Paintings*	PhD Art History	Prof. G. A. Gyegwe
3	**Joy Mbatomon Iorvihi**	*An Appraisal of Art X Lagos, 2016 –2024*	MA Art History	Prof. A. G. Gyegwe
4	**Sekuk, Zumnan Moses**	*Cracks as Visual Metaphor for Conceptualising Segregation in Painting*	PhD Painting	Dr. Chike Obeagu
5	**Abui Niger Zion**	*Interpreting Rhythms from Kabyek Tityong Waterfalls in Painting*	MFA	Dr. Chike C. Obeagu
6	**Gabriel Kyot Yabak**	*Transforming Reflected-Flora Landscape on Water to Conceptual Painting*	PhD Painting	Dr. Chike C. Obeagu
7	**Saleh Daniel Jatau**	*Conceptual Interpretation of Selected Samaru Landscape in Painting Using Lines*	PhD Painting	Dr. Chike C. Obeagu
8	**Josiah Philip**	*An Exploration of the Bull Form in Mixed Media Sculpture*	MFA Sculpture	Prof. Nelson Edewor
9	**Jimoh Taiye Anthony**	*Aesthetic Expression of Human Thumbprint into Sculpture*	PhD Sculpture	Prof. Nelson Edewor
10	**James Chimezie Ohambele**	*An Investigation on the Efficacy of Art as Therapy for Children with Orthopaedic Impairment: A Case Study of Zaria, Kaduna State*	PhD Art Education	Prof. Amsami U. Bello
11	**Goshi Mandung Shedrach**	*Evaluation of Visual Arts Programme as a Means for the Empowerm ent of Graduate Youths in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria*	PhD Art Education	Prof. Amsami U. Bello
12	**Barnabas Ekyouh Yakubu**	*An Assessment of the Ahthehn jweh Apprenticeship System in Tigun Culture of Kurmi Local Government Area, Taraba State*	MA Art Education	Prof. Amsami U. Bello
13	**Abubakar Yerima Nuhu**	*Effects of Visual Art Activities on Alleviation of Trauma among IDP Children in Adamawa State*	PhD Art Education	Prof. Amsami U. Bello

B. Departmental Postgraduate Seminars

No.	Presenter	Seminar Title	Section / Stage	Other Details
14	**Basheera Ohuni Abdulsalam**	*A Conceptual Exploration of Cultural Change Among Fulani Women Using Colour and Lines*	Painting; **Second Seminar**	Chairman: **Prof. Kevin Damden**
15	**Keswet Samuel**	*Exploring the Graceful Movement of Antelope Form in Mixed-Media Sculpture*	Sculpture; **Second Seminar**	
16	**Binta Garba**	*Integrating Entrepreneurship as a Module in the Visual Arts Curriculum of Senior Secondary School in Kano State*	Fine Art; **First/Proposal Seminar**	
17	**Harrison Idahosa**	*A Semiotic Examination of Chike Obeagu's Paintings*	**Art History; First Seminar**	
18	**Bello Mudi**	*A Conceptual Exploration of Human Foetus Development in Sculpture*	**Sculpture; First Seminar**	
19	**Animoku Abdulrasheed**	*An Exploration of the Effect of Artificial Intelligence on Artistic Practices Within Nigerian Art Space*	**Art Education; Third Seminar**	

How Art History Can Attain Relevance In A Post Recession Economy

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It is no news that Nigeria went into recession several years before 2020. Experts say that Nigeria came out of recession in the third quarter of the year 2020 and went back into recession almost immediately. Claessens and Kose (2009), affirm that, recession broadly refers to an extended "period of decline in economic activity." Taking reference from the situations in the United States, the authors enumerate increased rate of unemployment, profit decline in the private sector, tumbling financial markets and collapsed housing sector, as indicators of recession.

The implication of economic recession is structural adjustments in the social, political, economic, educational sectors of the society, among others. The importance of the educational sector to a society however, cannot be overemphasized. In spite of this, the educational sector in Nigeria apparently suffers from a diminished valuation, mostly in terms of prioritizing its monetary allocations. Much less regard is accorded the arts, as Oloidi (2009) and Jari (2014) note. In fact, it appears that, the 'nuisance value' of art has progressively increased in academia, as there are reports of attempts to "shut down" a department of art, in one university for being "irrelevant", while in other universities, art receives relatively far less monetary allocation, than other disciplines.

Art Historians are laden with the noble responsibility of writing about art. They are the recognized authority on art documentation and art appreciation. They have the power to shape the opinion of the public about art in Nigeria and art in general. The question therefore is, have they contributed to the apathy of Nigerians towards art by failing to fill the gaps of value that exist, due to low estimation of art in Nigeria? Regarding apathy to art and low estimation of art in Nigeria, there is a lot to be done for these attitudes to change. This is due to the fact that, the problem at hand is generational. How can apathy that has existed from the early generations of modern art be mitigated? There is also the question of, who reads the thousands of art reviews that are written and published on a daily basis? How is the information on art passed across, to a discriminating and (yet) information-gulping public? In these fast paced, technologically evolving times, judgement is made and passed immediately information is encountered. Thus, if information does not immediately communicate value in the first few seconds of peoples' encounter with it, it is quickly discarded. This means that, mode of communication is, as important as the information that is being communicated.

The problem of inadequate value appropriation to art does not happen in Nigeria only, but in other countries as well. There is a publication that reveals, it is a problem that the United Kingdom grapples with as well, (although not in similar proportions or magnitude as the situation in Nigeria). In an attempt to mitigate this problem, the Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) published a literature titled, "Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture", authored by Crossick and Kasynka (2016), to communicate the value of art to the public. In the foreword of the book, Thompson, a chief Executive of AHRC, reveals that, the book is a report of a cultural value project, which was at that time, "one of the most in-depth attempts yet, made to understand the value of the arts and culture-the difference they made to individuals and society." In his foreword, Thompson began by emphasising the importance of political recognition and monetary appropriations to art. He makes a case for the 'concretisation' of value in art. Artists and art historians have treated this discussion with resolute avoidance and have stuck with the paradigm that art is a subjective discipline, without borders and must therefore, be regarded in non-formulaic and non-substantial ways. While this is a valid perspective on art, nonetheless, it has its demerits, as it exposes the disciplines to some debilitating prejudices and misconceptions. It also opens up the discipline, to the operation of pseudo-artist, pseudo-practitioners and pseudo-art managers, who do not have basic appreciation or understanding of the discipline (even when they think they do) and consequently misrepresent the discipline in forums that matter.

In Nigeria, pseudo-art managers have represented the interest of the discipline, in the art market. For instance, the art market is saturated with "art experts" who became redundant in their disciplines and found a porous space (without borders) to occupy and explore in art. On one hand, their incompetence, in providing viable information and skills in practice, is justified in the flimsy reasoning that "art is subjective". On the other hand, there are no structures in place, to ensure that those who were trained and who have acquired the appropriate competencies, to function as art managers are so-engaged. Furthermore, where those who have the appropriate competencies are complacent in the face of imminent redundancy, usurpers would actively take up the available positions and interpret the discipline as they please. The solution lies in the acceptance that times have changed and art must either set the trend, for changing times or at least, not be left behind in this "post modern age". Other disciplines stay relevant by evolving with the times and providing solutions to the problems presented by the fast paced technological advancements. Artists in Nigeria appear to be stuck in the dismal view that art is misunderstood and unappreciated by the unapprised; an almost arrogant unwillingness to concretise the appreciation of art for the so-called apprised. The views of Thompson in Crossick and Kasynka (2016) regarding the concretisation of the discipline go thus: "we need rigorous ways of understanding and measuring that elusive thing we call 'cultural value'. In an 'age of austerity,' making convincing arguments for public investments becomes all the more challenging." This is a valid point, which is too vital to the growth and development of art, to be trivialised or overlooked. Where artists in Nigeria are not inclined towards developing the competencies that will enable them to progressively represent the arts in more relatable ways, for the sake of value appropriation, it may be necessary to create cross disciplinary fields that would take care of that gap. Relatable art or relatable knowledge of art, could bridge the generational apathy gap and enhance deeper and wider appreciation.



Orisu Art Gallery, Abuja

Relatable art and relatable information about art does not necessarily amount to watered down, compromised versions of what artist deem to be true, to their perspective. It is rather a deliberate and conscientious attempt to utilise palpable tools, to demonstrate the ingenuity of art in a technologically advanced world. This addresses the question of who reads the reviews written by art historians and how those reviews are disseminated. For example, art galleries and museums in the United Kingdom resorted to hosting virtual (online) displays in the year 2020, due to the lockdown that resulted from the covid-19 pandemic. The larger museums began to make 3-dimensional video recordings of each of their collections, which is an arduous task. Furthermore, museums and art galleries in developed countries invested a lot more in energising their online presence. Rather than slow down the pace of art, the pandemic seemed to stir interest in art, due to the fact that, at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic in the year 2020, lockdown in many countries made it impossible for people to move around; Therefore, most people were constantly surfing the internet, where there were sponsored advertisements for exhibitions and art programs, which could be easily accessed online. It is interesting to note that, the major art galleries and museums in Nigeria failed to take advantage of this opportunity, to showcase their skills to the world. The government-owned modern art galleries were practically inaccessible online. Visibility and technical competence are the hallmarks of advancement and relevance in any economy. Art in Nigeria can only begin its journey to better value appropriation, when the key players in the discipline are willing to review the age-old perspectives on art and work progressively with other disciplines, or to work rightly and progressively ahead of other disciplines, in order to assert their significance. Attracting tourists has been a way that museums in developed countries have achieved relevance and some value appropriation. Finally, Thompson in Crossick and Kasynka (2016) reveals that, "the cultural and creative industries are growing fast in the UK, outpacing much of the rest of the economy." In spite of this stride, the author states that, the strategy of the AHRC for achieving greater appropriation is, adopting interdisciplinary methodologies, which validate the ideas of individual artist, and bring to bear, their benefits to society, communities, democracy, public health and well being. Every society seeks benefits or values, art in Nigeria can attain greater relevance and consequently, greater value appropriation by conscientiously working outwards, to benefit Nigerians, not necessarily in the manner that AHRC seeks its benefits, but in ways that are relatable to Nigerians.

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A STUDY OF NURA GARBA'S MIXED-MEDIA PAINTINGS

KARTYO Charity Terumbur

Painting has remained one of the oldest forms of expression in art, beginning with its earliest use in the Paleolithic through the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome to the church arts of the medieval, renaissance, baroque and Rococo periods and the contemporary times. Through all the periods, artists have continually explored forms, materials and sometimes themes within their environment that result to distinctive or group styles. Style generally is the recognizable visible attributes in an artist's artworks or Style can be referred to the approach or technique used by an artist or group of artists, in producing artworks. Lazzzari and Schlesier (2008) define style as the distinguishing characteristics of artists' works; the authors also agree that artists overtime develop unique personal styles. In contemporary Nigerian art, artists have developed unique styles in their painting expressions; although, these styles deliberately or unconsciously change over time due to certain factors, some of which include; cost or availability of materials, changes in thought patterns or emotion, psychological responses to political, social or religious events among others. Some Nigerian artistic styles include; Sani Muazu's Splashes and foot print paintings, the liquidized paintings of Jerry Buhari, Jacob Jari's bullet holes, cornstalk and capsules, as well as Nura Garba's Mixed-media paintings which this paper seeks to study. The paper will study the Garba's paintings through observation and formal description of the visible elements his painting; one only mixed-media paintings will be discussed and conclusion will be drawn thereafter.

An Overview of Nura Garba and His Painting Style.

Garba was born on the 13th of April 1978. He hails from Funtua Local government area of Katsina State. He had his primary education at Bisije Primary School, he obtained his senior Secondary School Certificate in 1996 at Government Day Secondary School and a Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) in 2003 from College of Education, Katsina. He proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he obtained a Bachelor of Art Degree in Fine Art and a Master of Fine Art Degree in Painting in 2017 and 2024 respectively. He is a lecturer and currently a Ph.D. student in the same Department.

Nura Garba is an explorative painter, whose paintings are rendered in varied media and techniques, which results to his unique styles. His paintings are influenced by his Northern Nigerian environment, especially in his techniques, as well as, choice and use of materials; his oeuvre can be categorized into three based on the materials and style used. They include; Raffia paintings '*Sakar Kaba',* calabash paintings and the mixed-media paintings, which this paper aims to study. Recently, most of Garba's mixed-media paintings are all rendered on thick ropes made from twisted fabric off-cuts and other materials like hair extensions, which are fastened vertically on wooden frames using tinier raffia ropes, to form the background of the paintings. The artist goes further to glue boards in the shapes of his figures, while filling gaps with saw dust mixed with glue; this boards usually forms the heads of the figures which are painted using colours, given them a smooth texture. The figures garments are rendered using fabrics or jute bags folded to create draperies and glued to the rope backgrounds. Some of the figures regalia like hats are designed through technical arrangement of raffia ropes glued to the surface; some parts of the garments like the necks are also designed using tiny raffia ropes to form the embroideries of the garments. Garba technique of gluing materials to his surface as a base before painting over them creates depth, making his painting a high relief effect and three-dimensional in nature; Although, some of his rope backgrounds are left in the original colours. "*Hardo*" in plate I is an example of Garba's mixed media painting.

"*Hardo*" is a mixed media painting depicting an older male figure claded in traditional Fulani attire, occupying most parts of the pictorial space. The artists arranges multiple vertical strands of raffia ropes fastened to the wooden frame using tinier ropes, forming the surface on which he paints, as well as the background of the painting. the figure is depicted wearing a yellow ochre hat with a red strip at the top, that shades most parts of his face; the hat is made of raffia ropes arranged in curved and circular lines. The figure is seen to be wearing a graceful smile resulting to wringles on the forehead, under eyes and chin. The figure is adorned in a baban riga, which the artist captures using fabric glued to the background, the folding on of the fabric form draperies, Garba also arranges tiny raffia ropes around the neck of the dress to depict embroidery. The varied tones of blue, as well as the figure's smile gives it the painting a calm effect.

Conclusion

The study reveals that Garba's mixed-media paintings extend beyond the conventional boundaries of painting by incorporating materials and techniques associated with Northern local craft practices into contemporary painting expression, which distinguishes his painting style. His style of painting is therefore significant not only for the uniqueness of his visual language but also for the manner in which he negotiates the relationship between painting, materiality and cultural identity. His mixed-media paintings represent a further development of this experimental tendency as Garba combines fabric off-cuts, hair extensions, raffia ropes, boards, sawdust, glue and fabrics to construct surfaces and foundations for figures before applying colour. This process challenges the conventional understanding of painting as an essentially two-dimensional medium through his arrangement and gluing of materials, producing physical depth and a high-relief effect. Consequently, Garba's mixed-media paintings may be understood as a synthesis of conventional painting processes and material practices derived from his cultural environment, an artistic philosophy associated with the Zaria Art School for decades. This study therefore, concludes that Garba's mixed media paintings are textural inclined, as he achieves tactile textures, bridging the gap between two and three-dimensions in his painting style.

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Plate: I: “Hardo” | Garba Nura | Oil on Canvas,134 x 154 cm, 2026, Artist's Collection.

MY KANO FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCE

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There are some educational experiences that remain with a student long after the classroom discussion has ended. My field trip to Kano on Wednesday, 20 May 2026 was one of such experiences. What-appeared to be a one-day academic excursion became an opportunity to encounter history, traditional art, architecture, craft production and cultural heritage in ways that theory reflected in books and classroom lectures alone could not provide. The excursion was organized as part of our academic engagement at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, under the supervision of Prof. G. G. Duniya and supported by Prof. Aliyu Muhammud. The trip brought together undergraduate, master's, and PhD students, creating an atmosphere in which students at different levels could interact and learn from one another while engaging directly with cultural sites and practitioners.

We departed early in the morning, and our first major stop was Gidan Dan Hausa (GDH) meaning 'The House of the Hausa man', a historic building established in 1906 and now managed by the History and Culture Bureau of Kano. The Director of Research and Documentation, Mr. Kabiru Bichi, welcomed us to the place and explained the site's historical importance. He noted that the building was reconstructed in 1907 and renovated in 2014 as part of efforts to preserve Kano's heritage. According to Bichi (2026), the GDH was one of the early centres of formal education in Northern Nigeria and was closely associated with Hans Vischer, popularly known as "Dan Hausa." The site contains historical artefacts, a library, and archival materials. The visit not only helped us appreciate Gidan Dan Hausa as a historic building, but also as a place that preserves important aspects of Kano's educational, cultural, and architectural history.

What this author found most important was seeing architecture as more than just a physical structure. The building showed how architecture can preserve the history, memories, values, and way of life of a people. As an art student, the experience reminded me that studying architecture also means understanding the people, technologies, lifestyles, and historical circumstances behind it.

From Gidan Dan Hausa, we proceeded to Gidan Makama Museum, another important heritage site in Kano. The museum is a significant historical monument associated with the development of the Kano Emirate and is believed to date back to the fourteenth century. The curator, Mr. Hussein, took us around the museum and explained its history and cultural importance. Our visit provided an opportunity to see the traditional architecture and historical objects preserved

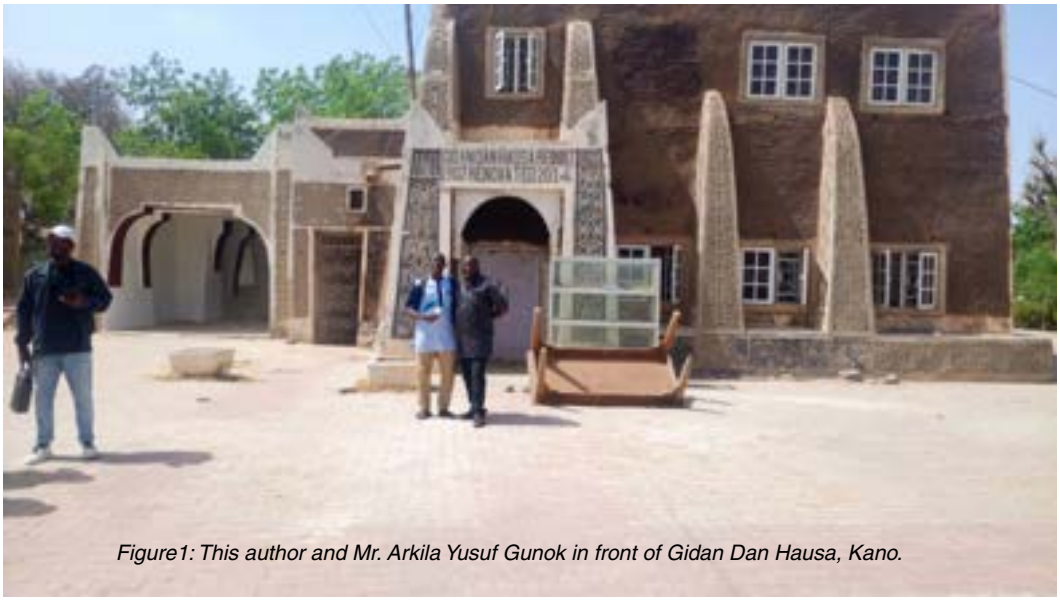


Figure1: This author and Mr. Arkila Yusuf Gunok in front of Gidan Dan Hausa, Kano.

within the museum. It also helped us understand how Gidan Makama represents an important part of Kano's cultural and architectural heritage. Walking through the museum was different from studying photographs in a textbook. The physical presence of the building created a stronger sense of connection with the past. Details of the structure, the arrangement of spaces and the objects associated with Kano's history encouraged us to think about how cultural knowledge is preserved and communicated from one generation to another.

Similarly, the visit also raised an important question: What happens when the physical environments that carry cultural memory are not properly maintained? This question became increasingly relevant as we observed some of the difficulties associated with heritage conservation. Historic buildings require continuous maintenance, appropriate conservation methods, adequate funding and informed management. (UNESCO, 2013; Historic England, 2008; National Lottery Heritage Fund, 2021; ICOMOS, 1964) Without these, important aspects of the cultural landscape can gradually disappear. Indeed, one of the most significant lessons from Gidan Makama was that preservation is not simply about keeping old buildings standing. It is about maintaining the cultural meanings, knowledge and memories associated with them. A heritage building can lose much of its value when its physical structure is preserved without understanding the community, traditions and histories that give it meaning.

For this author, the field experience became even more engaging when we visited the Kofar Mata Dye Pits, one of Kano's best-known traditional craft centres. The dye pits provided perhaps the clearest example of the relationship between art, technology, economy and cultural heritage. At Kofar Mata, traditional indigo dyeing was not simply something we read about in history. We were able to see the dye pits and observe the environment in which the practice has been maintained. This experience helped us appreciate the skill, patience, labour, and traditional knowledge required to sustain indigo dyeing. The dye pits also represent an important form of indigenous technology, developed and preserved through generations of experience.

The experience made one reflect on the meaning of traditional art in contemporary society. Traditional art is sometimes discussed as if it belongs exclusively to the past. Kofar Mata challenges this assumption. The dye pits demonstrate that traditional artistic knowledge can remain relevant, provided that the people who possess the knowledge have the economic and institutional support necessary to continue practicing it. But the visit also made clear the challenges facing traditional craft production. Traditional industries must compete with modern manufactured textiles, changing consumer preferences and wider economic pressures. The survival of such practices therefore depends not only on cultural appreciation but also on whether artisans can make a sustainable living from their knowledge and skills. The field trip also helped this author to appreciate the connection between traditional art and architecture. At first, these may appear to be separate areas of study. However, our experience in Kano demonstrated that they are interconnected. The architectural environment provides spaces within which artistic practices occur, whilst artistic practices contribute to the identity and character of architectural spaces. Decorative forms, materials, craftsmanship and spatial organization can communicate cultural values just as effectively as paintings, sculptures or textiles.

Another important lesson was the value of direct observation. In the classroom, it is possible to discuss traditional architecture in terms of materials, forms, functions and symbolism. However, standing before an actual historic structure changes the nature of that understanding. One begins to notice scale, texture, material quality, weathering, spatial relationships and the relationship between buildings and their surroundings. These observations encourage questions that may not emerge from theoretical reading alone.

Further, the experience also reminded the author that, fieldwork is an important component of art historical research. Art history is not restricted to museums, books and archival documents. It also involves looking closely, asking questions, recording observations and engaging with people who possess practical knowledge. The artisan, museum worker, cultural officer and local community member can all contribute forms of knowledge that enrich academic understanding.

The field trip also encouraged reflection on the responsibilities of institutions such as Universities. The ABU has a long history of engagement with Fine Art and wider environmental design disciplines. The University's Faculty of Environmental Design includes Fine Arts, Architecture and other related disciplines, making interdisciplinary field

engagement particularly relevant to the academic development of its students. The excursion demonstrated the importance of taking academic learning beyond the classroom environment. Field trips create opportunities for students to encounter cultural resources directly, develop observational skills, document heritage and appreciate the relationship between theory and practice. They also encourage students to understand that cultural heritage is not an abstract academic subject but something that exists within communities and requires active care.

The experience deepened my appreciation of the challenges facing Nigeria's cultural heritage. Historic buildings are vulnerable to deterioration, while traditional crafts and indigenous knowledge risk decline when younger generations lose interest and practitioners receive inadequate support. Addressing these challenges requires sustained research, documentation, conservation and community engagement rather than occasional recognition.

Looking back, the Kano field trip was more than a visit to historical sites; it was an encounter with living cultural knowledge. Gidan Dan Hausa revealed the significance of historical architecture and institutional memory, Gidan Makama Museum demonstrated the role of museums in preserving and interpreting history, while Kofar Mata Dye Pits provided insight into the skills, labour and economic realities associated with traditional craft production. The experience reinforced the need to understand, document and preserve Nigeria's cultural heritage for future generations.



F*igure 2: Kofar Mata Dye Pits, Kano*



Figure 3: Group photograph of *Undergraduate, master's, Curators and PhD students with Prof. G. G. Duniya and Prof. Aliyu Muhammud during the Kano academic field excursion.*

EXPLORING YORUBA AESTHETICS AND SYMBOLISM IN SCULPTURE USING OWAYEMI TAIWO SOLA'S WORK THE PRICE

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Introduction

Public sculpture serves as an important medium through which artists communicate cultural values, historical narratives and philosophical ideas within shared spaces (Egonwa, 2011; Visona et al., 2008). Beyond its aesthetic function, sculpture contributes to public discourse, by preserving cultural identity and stimulating intellectual engagement among diverse audiences. Contemporary Nigerian sculptors frequently draw inspiration from indigenous traditions, adapting traditional symbols and forms to address present social realities. The Price produced in 2015, created by Owoyemi Taiwo Sola, which is installed at the Ekenwan Campus, of the University of Benin, is approximately fifteen feet high; It exemplifies the dialogue between tradition and contemporary artistic expression. Executed in wrought mild steel, the larger-than-life abstract sculpture, depicts two human figures, whose visual elements are rooted in Yoruba cultural symbolism. This review examines the aesthetic qualities, symbolism and cultural references.

The Aesthetic Qualities, Symbolism and Cultural References

The Price is a monumental abstract sculpture executed with wrought mild steel. The composition consists of two stylized human figures: an elderly male holding a fly-whisk and a young female carrying a calabash. The figures are adorned with stylized scarification patterns associated with Yoruba cultural identity, while the geometric forms and textured surfaces shows the artist's mastery of assemblage and metal fabrication. According to Drewal et al. (1989), Yoruba visual traditions employ body adornment and symbolic objects to communicate identity, authority, morality, and communal values. Thus, the visual language adopted by Owoyemi extends beyond aesthetics, to convey deeper cultural narratives.

The fly-whisk has long symbolized leadership, wisdom and legitimate authority within Yoruba society, while the calabash, usually represents sacrifice, responsibility and spiritual offering (Oyelola, 2009). In *The Price*, these symbols collectively suggest that success is achieved through discipline, mentorship and personal sacrifice. The relationship between the two figures, reflects the traditional African view, in which elders transmit wisdom and moral guidance to younger generations. This interpretation is consistent with the artist's explanation of the work.

The material used, further reinforces the conceptual strength of the sculpture. Iron occupies a central place in Yoruba civilization, because of its economic, technological and spiritual relevance. The Yoruba diety Ogun, is widely regarded as the patron of iron, craftsmanship, warfare and technological innovation (Owoyemi, 2026). The artist's decision to employ wrought iron and mild steel therefore, establishes both a material and symbolic connection, between contemporary sculpture and indigenous artistic traditions. Visona, et al. (2008), rightly observes that, African artists, often select materials not only for their physical properties, but also for their cultural and spiritual meanings.

The sculpture therefore, demonstrates an effective use of contrast, repetition, balance, texture, and geometric abstraction. The interplay between flat metal planes and linear iron elements, produces visual rhythm, while the scarification motifs, provide emphasis and strengthen cultural identity. These formal qualities, illustrate the artist's technical competence and understanding of contemporary sculptural aesthetics. Such characteristics resonate with Feldman's (1994) principles of formal art criticism, which emphasizes the importance of visual organization in communicating artistic ideas.

However, the public sculpture also raises important questions concerning visual communication. Although, the artist intends the work to symbolize mentorship and guidance, the composition may not readily communicate this narrative to an uninformed audience. The side-by-side placement of the figures can easily be interpreted as representing marriage or companionship, rather than the intended purpose, which is mentorship. From the perspective of art criticism, stronger directional movement or a more hierarchical spatial arrangement, could have clarified the intended message. Despite this limitation, the work succeeds in stimulating multiple interpretations, a quality often regarded as strength in contemporary public art. Beyond the artistic merits, *The Price* contributes significantly to discussions on cultural preservation in Nigeria. At a time when globalization increasingly influences artistic production, sculptures such as this, reaffirm indigenous knowledge systems and encourage younger generations to appreciate African values, through visual culture (Egonwa, 2011). The work thus, depicts how contemporary artists can reinterpret traditional symbols, without sacrificing cultural authenticity.

Conclusion

The Price exemplifies the continuing vitality of Nigerian public sculpture tradition. Through its combination of Yoruba symbolism, modern fabrication techniques and philosophical depth, the sculpture communicates enduring lessons about sacrifice, leadership, perseverance, and cultural identity. Its artistic and cultural relevance remains unquestionable despite its short comings. It stands as a compelling reminder that genuine achievement often demands commitment, guidance and the willingness to pay the "price" for success.



Artist: Owoyemi Taiwo Sola, Title: The Price, Material: Metal Size: 15 Feet Year: 2015, Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.
Photo: Mabel Jimoh

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Beyond the Canvas: Why Fine Art Still Matters

Adedokun Felix Oluwatosin | 400 Level Art History Student

What happens to a society that forgets how to see?

In a world increasingly dominated by technology, speed and endless streams of information, this may seem like an unusual question. Yet, perhaps now more than ever, we need art, not simply to decorate our walls, but to help us understand the world we are living in.

Fine Art is often reduced to paintings, sculptures, drawings and other beautiful objects. While these are important expressions of the discipline, art is much more than what meets the eye. Art records experiences, preserves memories, questions established ideas and gives form to emotions and stories that words sometimes struggle to express.

This is particularly significant in Nigeria, a country with a remarkably rich artistic heritage. From the terracotta traditions of Nok to the celebrated bronze works of Ife and Benin, and from indigenous forms of visual expression to contemporary Nigerian art, our artistic history provides a window into the values, beliefs and experiences of generations before us. These works are not merely objects from the past; they are evidence of who we have been.

This is one reason Art History matters.

To study Art History is to learn how to look critically beyond the surface. A work of art can reveal something about religion, politics, identity, gender, power, social change or everyday life. Through art, we can encounter the past in ways that written records alone may not allow. We begin to understand that every image has a context, every creative decision has a story, and every generation leaves something behind through its artistic expressions.

As students of Fine Art, therefore, we occupy a rather important position. We are not simply students learning how to draw, paint, sculpt or analyze artworks. We are participants in an ongoing cultural conversation. The studio, the classroom and the gallery can all become spaces where ideas are born, traditions are questioned and new possibilities are imagined.

Our Fine Art Departments should consequently be more than places where students acquire certificates. They should be environments where creativity is nurtured, cultural heritage is protected, critical thinking is encouraged and young artists are given the confidence to contribute meaningfully to society.

There is also a responsibility on us as students. We must learn to value our own artistic heritage while remaining open to new ideas. We should not be afraid to experiment, but neither should we become so fascinated by what is foreign that we lose sight of what is ours. The future of Nigerian art will not be built by simply reproducing the past or abandoning it. It will be built by understanding the past well enough to create something meaningful for the present and the future.

The world is changing, and Fine Art is changing with it. Digital technology, photography, artificial intelligence, social media and new media have expanded the possibilities of artistic expression. Yet, beneath all these changes, one thing remains constant: the human need to create, communicate and be remembered.

Perhaps this is why Fine Art still matters.

An artwork may outlive its creator. A sculpture may survive a generation. A painting may tell a story long after the people in it are gone. A photograph may preserve a moment that history would otherwise forget.

Art does not merely show us what a society looks like; it can reveal what that society believes, remembers, fears and hopes to become.

And perhaps, as students of Fine Art, our greatest responsibility is not simply to create art, but to ensure that there will always be something worth seeing, questioning and remembering.

The Harvest of a Hungry Artist

Mustapha Enesi Moshood | 400 level Art History Student

How does an artist feed
when the eye willing to see
and the hands ready to receive
close eye and cross arms?
I beg, appreciate in gold
for the time, meaning and marvel.
It's God's given-blessing
and we don't have to pay for the air
and rain.
The Artist;
a magician that grands wish.
When taken for granted,
even the hungry farmer loses a large
harvest.

BEYOND THE ARTWORK:
THE ROLE OF ART CRITICISM, CURATING AND ART HISTORY IN PROMOTING CONTEMPORARY ART

Henry Yusuf Masari | 300 level student of Art History

The value and success of an artwork do not depend only on its production. Ideas, research, presentation, documentation, criticism and promotion also play important roles in how artworks are understood and valued. Artists need proper platforms through which their works can reach audiences, while artworks require informed interpretation and documentation. In this regard, art critics, curators and art historians play important roles in the development and promotion of the art world. Art criticism involves the description, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of artworks. A critic examines both the formal qualities and the context of an artwork to help audiences understand its meaning and significance. Through informed criticism, artworks can be placed within wider artistic, social, cultural and historical discussions. Criticism therefore provides a useful link between the artwork, the artist and the audience.

The role of the curator is also important. Curators organise exhibitions and make decisions about the selection, arrangement and presentation of artworks. However, their work goes beyond simply placing artworks in an exhibition space. A good curator needs to understand the ideas, materials, history and context of the works being presented. This understanding helps the curator create meaningful relationships between artworks and communicate the main ideas of an exhibition to its audience. Art historians contribute to the art world through research, documentation and interpretation. They study artworks, artists, movements and historical events and help preserve knowledge about artistic practices. Their research provides important records for understanding the development of art over time. Through interviews, archival research, publications and other forms of documentation, art historians help preserve the histories and experiences of artists for future generations.

These areas of art practice are particularly important in contemporary African art. African artists work within different cultural, social and historical contexts, and their works often address issues of identity, culture, politics, religion, migration, memory and society. Understanding such works requires attention to their specific contexts rather than relying only on general approaches to art interpretation. African traditional and contemporary art practices also continue to expand the ways in which art can be understood and discussed.

The growth of contemporary art has also increased the need for proper documentation and professional criticism. Many artists produce important works but may not receive adequate documentation, critical attention or exposure. Without proper records, some of these artistic contributions may become difficult to trace in the future. Critical writing, artist profiles, exhibition reviews, interviews and scholarly research can therefore contribute to the preservation of artistic history.

The relationship between criticism, curating and art history can also influence the visibility and reception of artworks. While these professionals do not determine the value of an artwork alone, their research, interpretation and presentation can help audiences understand the significance of artistic practices. Collectors, galleries, museums and other art institutions can also use such information when engaging with artists and their works. In this context, platforms such as Kontemporary Art and Diskuss (KAD) can contribute to the development of contemporary art discourse. KAD provides a platform for art criticism, exhibition reviews, artist profiles, interviews and other forms of writing about contemporary art and artists. Through these activities, the platform contributes to conversations around artistic practice, documentation and the visibility of artists. The contemporary art world needs committed professionals who can approach artworks with knowledge, care and critical attention. Artists need spaces to create and exhibit their works, while audiences need informed ways to understand them. Critics, curators and art historians each contribute to this process in different but connected ways. Art does not exist only in the studio. It continues through exhibition, criticism, research, documentation and public discussion. For this reason, strengthening these areas is important for the development of a more informed and sustainable art environment, particularly within the African contemporary art space.

TEACHING STAFF

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ART
Art History Section

ART HISTORY SECTION



Prof. Gambo Giles Duniya
Contemporary Art History,
Criticism and Curatorial



Prof. Muhammad Aliyu
Art History and
Islamic Art



Prof. Caleb Samuel
African Art History and
Art Criticism



Prof. Ladi Agada
Art History and
Museum Studies



Dr. Faida Samuel
Contemporary Art History,
Curatorial Studies



Dr. Abu Ohai
Affiliate Art History Staff
From NAERLS

CLASS PROFILE
ART HISTORY 2026
GRADUATING STUDENTS



NAME: Kish Kisabo Katuka
D.O.B: 5th November
STATE: Kaduna
HOBBIES: Music, Painting and Exploring
CONTACT ADDRESS: New Township Stadium, Kafanchan.
DESCRIBE YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS IN SCHOOL: The Happy and Sad days
FAVOURITE COURSE: Islamic art
FAVOURITE QUOTE: You learn to swim by getting into the water not by studying the water.
CONTACT: 08168794478, 07016144258



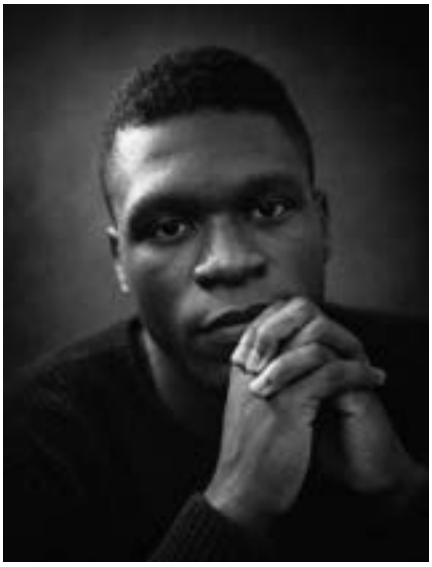
Name: Augustine Emmanuel
DOB: Oct 19th
State: Benue
Contact Address: Zango shanu Gidan tanko, zaria kaduna
Hobbies: playing guitar
Describe your best moment in school: ABU Cultural Day
Favourite Course: Curatorial studies and Art entrepreneurship
Favourite Quote: we wash plates so we can eat with it later
Contact: 09018928017



Name: MUSTAPHA, Moshood Enesi
DOB: October (10), 10
State: Kogi state
Contact Address: block c3, Odogbo barrack, Ibadan, Oyo state.
Hobbies: drawing, writing, learning and chess
Describe your best moment in school: the first time I went to a stationary store in school; a candy or toy shop to an artist.
Favourite Course: all 5 BASIC DESIGN courses I offered
Favourite Quote: what doesn't kill you makes you stronger
Contact: 09037591254, moshoodmustapha8@gmail.com



Name: Zakka Alfred
DOB: Sept 02
State: kaduna
Contact Address: Saminaka Gure Lere LGA Kaduna
Hobbies: Football
Describe your best moment in school: Afas week
Favourite Course: Art philosophy
Favourite Quote: in all things, Give thanks
Contact: 09024731996



Name: Simon John Bwehrut
DOB:16th may
State: Plateau
Contact Address: Jos plateau state
Hobbies: nill
Describe your best moment in school: every counting hour
Favourite Course: Philosophy of African art
Favourite Quote: Don't forget to pray
Contact: 07047343423



NAME: Joseph John Kadanga
D.O.B: 2, October
STATE: Kaduna
HOBBIES: listening to music, sketching, play games
CONTACT ADDRESS: Anguwan Fulani, Palladan Zaria.
DESCRIBE YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS IN SCHOOL: every moment spent throughout my stay in school
FAVOURITE COURSE: Islamic Art
FAVOURITE QUOTE : No sign of weakness
CONTACT: 08103946881



NAME: Adedokun Felix Oluwatosin
D.O.B: 10th September
STATE: Oyo
HOBBIES: Music, driving and knowing new things
CONTACT ADDRESS: Sango Area, Ibadan
DESCRIBE YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS IN SCHOOL: The first day of resumption
FAVOURITE COURSE: Field Trip in Art History
FAVOURITE QUOTE: All that we are is the result of what we have thought
CONTACT: 08167718156

Art History
Ph.D. Course Work Class of 2025/2026 Session



Name: Anyadiegwu Chioma Peace
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Name: Kartyo Charity Terumbur
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Art History
M.A. Course Work Class of 2025/2026 Session



From left is Halima Abubakar, Clara Okhide and Eunice Juwai Ibrahim.













Art History Field Trip to Kano May 2026













AFAS WEEK 2026





Prof Palmer F. and Prof Mamza P.
Celebration of retirement at 70, April 2026







Prof Jaji's celebration of retirement at 70, Oct. 2025.













LASISI LAMIDI @60 Sept. 2026













LASISI
LAMIDI












Kontemporary Art and Diskuss (KAD) is an independent platform for contemporary art and critical discourse. Our goal is to promote meaningful conversations about contemporary art in Nigeria, Africa and beyond. We publish and do the following

- Art &Artist Reviews
- Curatorial Reflections
- Exhibition Reviews
- Art Historical Perspectives
- Artist Spotlight
- Artist of the Month
- Interviews
- Studio Visits
- Portfolio Features

For more information about us, you can visit our website;

www.kartdiskuss.com

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