

AFIKARIS

PRESS KIT

OZIOMA ONUZULIKE
WHEN HEARTS BEAT WITH LOFTY DREAMS

9 November – 9 December, 2023



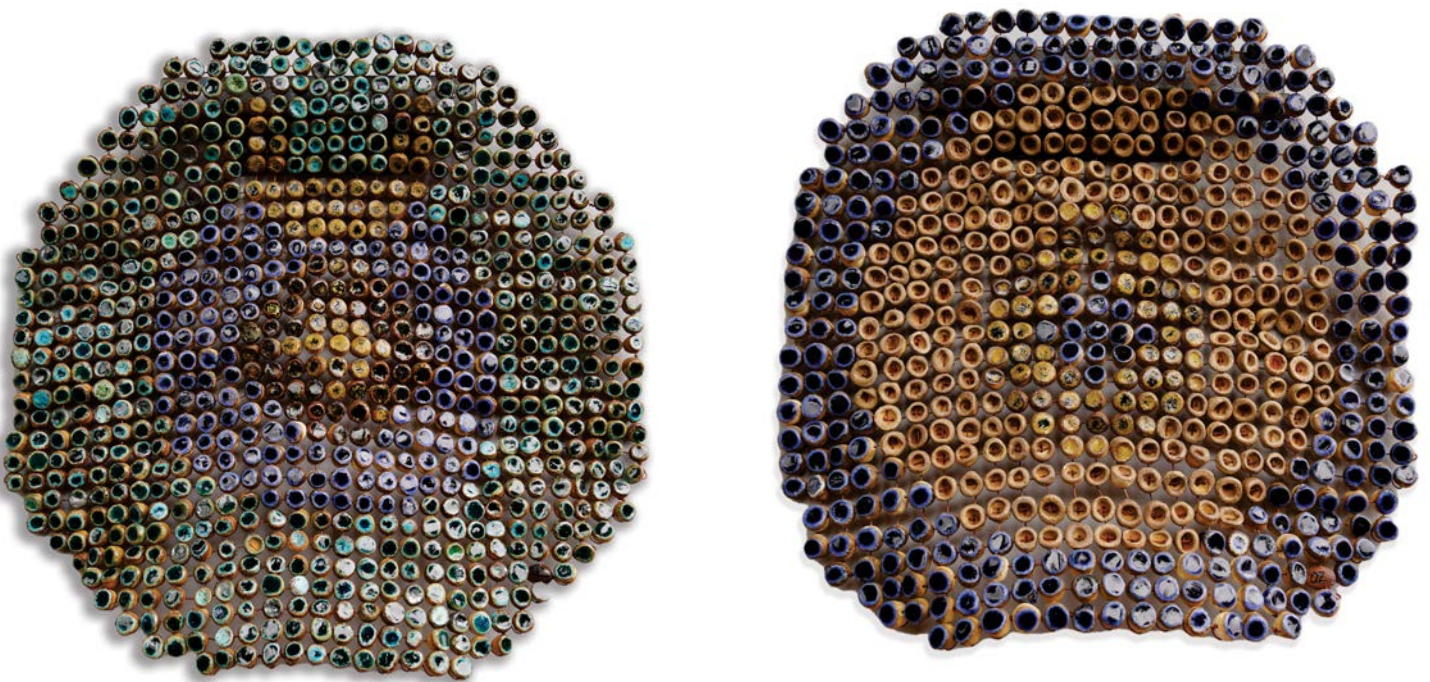
OZIOMA ONUZULIKE

WHEN HEARTS BEAT WITH LOFTY DREAMS

EXHIBITION FROM 9 NOVEMBER TO 9 DECEMBER

7 RUE NOTRE-DAME-DE-NAZARETH

AFIKARIS Gallery is delighted to announce the first solo exhibition in France of the Nigerian teacher, poet and ceramist Ozioma Onuzulike. Under the title *When Hearts Beat with Lofty Dreams*, taken from a poem the artist wrote in 1997, this major presentation focuses on two emblematic series: *Palm Kernel Shell Beads Project* and *Seed Yams of our Land*. Ceramic tapestries, site-specific installations and clay sculptures take over the 180m² space at 7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth, examining the mechanisms of social ascension through the presentation of objects of pomp and prestige.



Left. Ozioma Onuzulike. *Imperial Mat with Venetian Glass Beads III*, 2023. 68x70x5 cm / 26x27x2 in.
Right. Ozioma Onuzulike. *Imperial Mat with Venetian Glass Beads IV*, 2023. 59x60x5 cm / 23x23.5x2 in.
Earthenware and stoneware clays, ash glaze, recycled glass and copper wire.
Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery and the Artist.

When Hearts Beat with Lofty Dreams, the solo exhibition of Nigerian professor, artist and poet Ozioma Onuzulike explores the notion of social elevation and weaves the hope of a more egalitarian world. Shaped in clay, the traditional artefacts adorning the space reveal a desire to change an entrenched hierarchy.

In a first move, Onuzulike draws inspiration from prestigious garments and fabrics, which he materialises through a series of ceramic wall works and site-specific installations from the *Palm Kernel Shell Beads Project* series. *Tendrils I* and *Tendrils II* cascade from the ceiling. Both headdresses and tangled roots, they reinforce the idea of changing the established order.

Clothing is a symbol of belonging and a social marker. In the words of Emanuele Coccia, 'a barrier between our skin and the world', it acts as protection, the vessel for the image one wishes to reflect. (Emanuele Coccia, *La vie sensible*, 2010). Ritual, hierarchical or traditional, clothes can bear witness to a social group or practice. Onuzulike's wall tapestries arise in the shape of the universal motif of clothing. Created from the fusion of ceramic and glass beads, assembled with copper wire, Onuzulike's imperial blouses, babariga and royal shirts, lace and alligator skins present a ceremonial and ornamental function. The weight and size of these items make them unwearable adornments. Any utilitarian notions disappear,

providing them with the status of objects of power. Like precious relics preserved in a museum, protected from time, use and damage, they become the privileged witnesses of an era in the throes of mutation.

In the next room, the artist welcomes the visitors in a field of yams - *Seed Yams of our Land*. These



Au-dessus. Ozioma Onuzulike. *Station of the Cross I*, 2019.
Faïence partiellement glaçurée. 80x31x29 cm.
Courtesy de la galerie AFIKARIS et de l'artiste.

ceramic tubers are arranged in rows, sorted and ordered as they would be in a barn. On the other hand, presented together, they become precious bodies, as many objects of covetousness as allegories of domination. Onuzulike plays with their appearance, varying the forms and states of degradation. He sees them as a metaphor for human exploitation and violence. The Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria considers the yam a sacred and prestigious plant, a 'place of origin and nourishment'. Previously the main economic resource, yam plants represented the hope of a better future for every family. Over time, however, the conditions for growing yams on the African continent have deteriorated. By quoting the loss of a traditional symbol of hope and economic success, Onuzulike wants to draw attention to the need for transformation.

Although rooted in Nigerian and African society in general - from which he draws his references

and observations - Onuzulike's reflection also resonates on a global scale. How does the way one presents themselves to others speak about them as individuals? How can one escape the inevitability of their social condition? What are the possibilities for change in the world?

9 November — 9 December 2023
Ozioma Onuzulike, *When Hearts Beat with Lofty Dreams*
Project Room | Omar Mahfoudi, *Dans la maison*

PREVIEW: Thursday, 9 November, 3 — 6 PM
PUBLIC OPENING: Thursday, 9 November, 6 — 9 PM

ABOUT OZIOMA ONUZULIKE

b. February 1972 in Achi, Enugu State, Nigeria

Lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria

EDUCATION

2010 - Post-Doctoral Research, Centre of African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK

2008 - Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, USA

2007 - Ph.D. (Art History), University of Nigeria, Nsukka

2001 - M.F.A. (Ceramic Art), University of Nigeria, Nsukka

1996 - B.A. (1st Class Honours), Fine and Applied Arts (Ceramics Major), University of Nigeria, Nsukka

SOLO SHOWS (SELECTED)

2023

When Hearts Beat with Lofty Dreams, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

Ozioma Onuzulike, Marc Strauss Gallery, New York, USA

2022

Strings the length of our palm's seal, CHERTLÜDDE Gallery, Berlin, Germany

2021

The Way We Are, KO Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

2019

Seed Yams of Our Land, Contemporary Art Centre, Lagos, Nigeria

2018

Beyond Pots and Plates, Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2008

Céramique et fresques, grange à fresques/cour à sculptures, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, USA

2003

Excavation de Civitella, Centre Civitella Ranieri, Umbertide, Italy
Victimes, Maison de France, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

2000

De la terre à l'art : Céramique et sculptures en techniques mixtes, Musée national, Enugu, Nigeria

1996

Saison sèche : Plaques en faïence et en grès, ANA Gallery, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

GROUP SHOWS (SELECTED)

2023

Yinka Shonibare CBE RA: Free The Wind, The Spirit, and The Sun, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK

Textile Welten, Design Museum, Munich, Germany

Ce que nous donne la terre, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

ArtBrussels, Brussels, Belgium

ZonaMaco, Mexico City, Mexico

Artgenève, Geneva, Switzerland

2022

Armory Show, New-York, USA

1-54 London, London, UK

Entanglements: Colonial Collections in Decolonial Times, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, UK

2021

Reflections and Reactions: COVID-19 Pandemic in Perspectives, Obiora Udechukwu Gallery, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2015

Anya FuluUgo: Exhibition in Honour of El Anatsui and

Obiora Udechukwu, Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2008

World One Minute, Contemporary Art Museum of Beijing, Beijing, China

Experimental Frontiers: Society through the Eyes of South African and Nigerian Artists, Cape African Platform, Cape Town, South Africa



2007

Clay Without Borders (Nigeria/Norway/Sweden), National Museum, Onikan, Lagos, Nigeria

2005

The Rediscovery of Tradition: Uli and the Politics of Culture, Alliance Francaise, Enugu State, Nigeria

Visual Orchestra 2005, Centre culturel français, Abuja, Nigeria

2004

Visual Orchestra 2004, Alliance Francaise, Enugu, Nigeria

2002

GRAFINNOVA 2002: 8th International Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, Ostrobothnian Museum, Vaasa, Finland

Earthworks 2002 : 6th CPAN Annual National Exhibition of

Ceramics, National Museum, Lagos

7th International Group show of the Global Culture Centre, National

Museum, Enugu, Nigeria

Changing Attitudes: Afrika Heritage 2002: 4th PACA Biennial,

Nimbus Art Centre/Pendulum Gallery/ Viv's Gallery/National

Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

2001

Echoes, Cities and Artists in Nigeria, Institute of African Studies Museum, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

New Energies (Curated by El Anatsui), Mydrim Gallery/Nimbus Art

Centre, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

2000

Crossroads: Africa in the Twilight: 3rd PACA Biennial, National Museum, Enugu, Nigeria; Didi Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

1999

Textures of a Cosmos, National Museum, Enugu, Nigeria

Visual Orchestra '99, British Council, Enugu, Nigeria

1997

Afrika Heritage '97: 2nd PACA Biennial, Didi Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

1996

Dance of the Lyrical Lines '96, National Museum, Enugu, Nigeria

1995

Afrika Heritage: 1st PACA Biennial, Didi Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

Yemisi Shyllon Art Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK

Museum of Princeton University, Princeton, USA

Design Museum, Munich, Germany

Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art, Peekskill, USA

Anne-Céline and Pierre Donnersberg's Collection, France

Thalie Foundation, Belgium

ACTUELLEMENT À LA GALERIE



Jean David Nkot. [www// ballot fashion//.fr.org](http://www.ballotfashion.fr.org), 2023.
Acrylic and silkscreen printing on canvas. 200x250 cm. 78x98 in.
Photo Credit: Studio Vansay. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery and the artist.

LES DOMPTEURS DE NUAGES

Jean David Nkot
Until 4 November

Jean David Nkot's solo show – *Les dompteurs de nuages* – while unveiling through different mediums – narrates a facet of humanity's history. Nkot recalls the past through the use of archival photographs and questions its impact on current times by confronting the images with scenes of the present day.

FORTHCOMING — IN PARALLEL IN THE MAIN SPACE



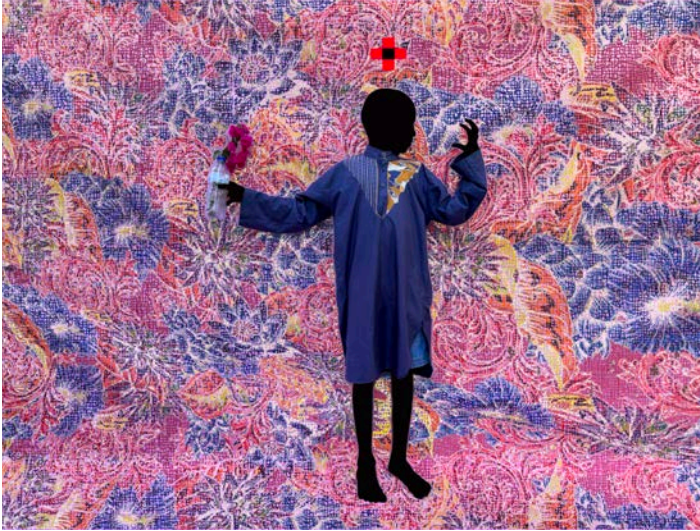
Omar Mahfoudi. *Blue Flower Boy*, 2023.
Acrylique liquide sur toile. 80x80 cm
Courtesy de la galerie AFIKARIS et de l'artiste.

DANS LA MAISON

Omar Mahfoudi
9 November – 9 December

For the first Project in the gallery's history, Omar Mahfoudi transposes his living room and studio into the space. Omar Mahfoudi plunges the viewer into a domestic setting, interweaving memories and fantasies. The whole piece pokes fun at the impression of *déjà vu* and challenges our reference points by questioning the very notions of what is real and what is fake.

À VENIR



Saïdou Dicko. *You Can Take It*, 2023
Painted Photography. Unique piece. 90x120 cm / 35x47 in.
Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery and the artist.

MOONRISE KINGDOM (TITLE TBC)

Saïdou Dicko

14 December – 3 February

Saïdou Dicko's solo exhibition of previously unseen watercolours and painted photographs will plunge the audience into the sweetness and innocence of childhood.

ART FAIRS

Untitled Miami | Miami | USA

Ousmane Niang

6 – 10 December, 2023

artgenève | Geneva | Switzerland

Solo Show – Salifou Lindou

Group Show – Saïdou Dicko, Mouhcine Rahaoui, Ozioma Onuzulike, Hervé Yamguen

25 – 28 January, 2024

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Founded in 2018 by Florian Azzopardi, to promote emerging and established artists from Africa and its diaspora, AFIKARIS Gallery opened a dedicated Paris-based gallery space in 2021. Engaged in promoting cross-cultural and disciplinary exchange, AFIKARIS acts as a platform for artists to engage with the wider public. A mirror onto and space for reflection on the contemporary African art scene, it provides artists with a space to address the topical local and international issues at the heart of their art.

The AFIKARIS programme includes group and solo exhibitions, art fairs, publications and institutional partnerships. In 2023, the gallery opened its artist residency on the outskirts of Paris. The residency is a place dedicated to creation, at the disposal of the artists working with the gallery or who wish to develop a project for a future presentation with the gallery.



Above. View of AFIKARIS Gallery located at 7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth.
Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.
Photo Credit: Studio Vanssay.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

AFIKARIS Gallery
7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth
75003 Paris, France

Tuesday – Saturday
11 AM — 7 PM

PRESS CONTACT

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