

# EVA OBODO

PORTFOLIO



# BIOGRAPHY

EVA OBODO WAS BORN IN NIGERIA IN 1963. HE IS A VISUAL ARTIST WHO WORKS IN PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND MIXED MEDIA PRACTISES. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN NSUKKA, NIGERIA.

He focuses on fibre and charcoal as conceptual mediums, creating relief paintings and free standing sculptures that are created from processes of wrapping, tying and bundling. Incorporating discarded materials such as charcoal and jute fibre, Obodo creates visual narratives that evoke the complex socio-political and economic structures that frame contemporary culture.

Obodo's charcoal works reference issues of natural resources and development in Nigeria, while his fibre works utilise nylon threads that are tied, rolled and wrapped to create colorful visual metaphors. Together, they speak to the connections between individuals and their social relations woven against economic and political backgrounds, connected by community, nation and the global economy through the trade of goods and ideas.

Eva Obodo holds an MFA and a PhD from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and presently teaches sculpture and art education at the same university. He was formerly a lecturer at Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo, where he taught art history, sculpture and drawing for several years before joining the University of Nigeria.

# EVA OBODO

b. 1963, Nigeria

Lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria

Eva Obodo is a visual artist who focuses on charcoal and fibre as conceptual mediums with which he creates relief paintings and sculptures.



## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021

*Eva Obodo: Recent Works (The New Nsukka Series)*, kó Art-space, Lagos, Nigeria

2019

*Ngwugwu (Packages)*, Arthouse-The Space, Lagos, Nigeria

2015

*Line.by.Line*, Arthouse-The Space, Lagos, Nigeria

2004

*The Journey So Far*, Goethe Institute, Lagos, Nigeria

2000

*Visual Symphony*, Alliance Française, Lagos, Nigeria

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024

Untitled Art, AFIKARIS Gallery, Miami, USA

1-54 New York, AFIKARIS Gallery, New York City, USA

1-54 Marrakech, kó Art-space, Marrakech, Morocco

Salon Exhibition, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

*Transformations: Nsukka Artists on Africa's Political and Economic History*, Institute of African Studies, University of Nsukka, Nsukka, Nigeria

2023

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

World Art Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

2019

*Igwebuike* (Exhibition in honour of El Anatsui at 75 years), National Gallery of Arts, Enugu, Nigeria

2017

*Nkoli Ka: Nsukka School after 50 years*, Jubilee Exhibition of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts,

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2011

*Artstaff*, Nnamdi Azikiwe Library Complex, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

*International Art Expo*, Treasure House Fine Art, Lagos, Nigeria

2009

1st Festival on Igbo Civilization Exhibition, Ofu Obi African Centre, Enugu, Nigeria

2008

*African Regional Summit and Exhibition on Visual Arts*. An invitational exhibition organized by the National Gallery of Art, Abuja, Nigeria

*Art in Governance in Africa*, Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2002

Biennale DAK'ART, Dakar, Senegal

2001

Triennale, Osaka, Japan

## AWARDS / PRIZES

2013

Recipient of the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship Award



*CROSSES TOO MANY TO CARRY, 2017*  
Charcoal, copper/aluminium wire scraps  
97x213x8 cm / 84x38x3 in

In his charcoal creations, Eva Obodo skillfully incorporates natural mineral resources like copper and aluminium, weaving them into visual tales that speak volumes about the socio-political and economic landscapes of Africa. His pieces are imbued with layers of meaning, exploring themes of exploitation and resource management, rooted in his personal history and observations of the world around him. Through techniques like rolling, weaving, and sewing, he transforms these materials into vibrant canvases, each thread and motif a reflection of human experiences and societal constructs. Together, Obodo's charcoal and fibre works form a harmonious symphony of form and content, drawing viewers into a universe where art transcends mere aesthetics to become a powerful commentary on the human condition.





EXHIBITION VIEW

*Ce que nous donne la terre (What the Earth Gives US)*, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France  
July 2023

Photo credit : Studio Vanssay

My studio exploration adopts the use of a multiplicity of individual elements in making inquiry into the notion of totality, reflecting how human society functions. Each composition consists of numerous parts treated individually along a common process before being worked together into a pixelated visual metaphor readable from different perspectives.

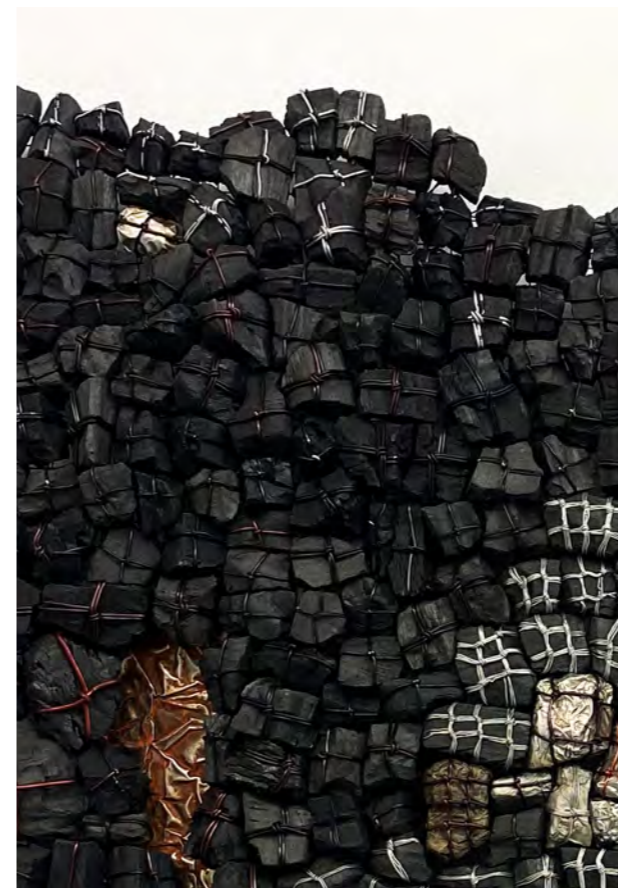


*GOOSE AND GOLDEN EGG II, 2021*  
Charcoal, copper and aluminium wire, acrylic, wood  
117x264x7 cm / 46x104x3 in



*PARCELS, 2024*  
Charcoal, copper and aluminium wire, acrylic, tempera  
94x83x7 cm / 37x33x3 in





*SERIOUS BUSINESS*, 2020  
Charcoal, copper and aluminium wire, used printing plate  
91x90x5 cm / 36x35x2 in

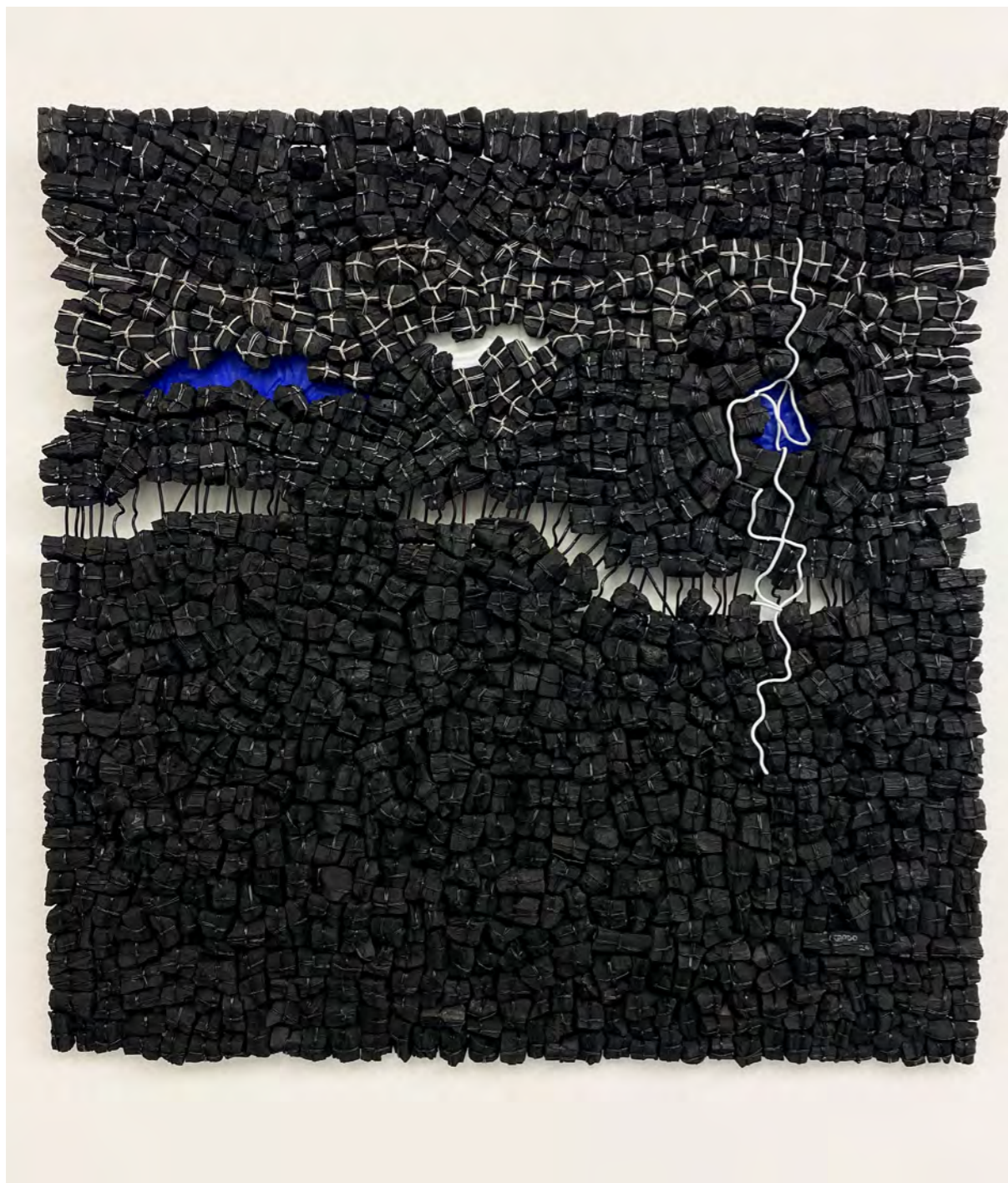




*PATCH AND TEAR, 2024*  
Charcoal, enamelled copper and aluminium, printing plate  
148x96x4 cm / 58x38x2 inxxx



*WE DEY PATCH, E DEY LEAK, 2024*  
Charcoal, enamelled copper and aluminium, printing plate  
148x94x4 cm / 58x37x2 in



*AND WE HIRED A CARPENTER TO PATCH THE CLOTH, 2024*  
Charcoal, acrylic, copper and aluminium wire  
80x80x4 cm / 31x31x2 in





*MEMORY*, 2022  
Charcoal, copper/aluminium wire scraps  
200x99x4 cm / 79x39x2 in



*AS YOU MAKE YOUR BED II, 2023*  
Jute, cloth, thread  
170x144x9 cm / 67x57x4 in

My fabric sculptures are very colourful: I embellish them by dyeing and sometimes I give a form of freedom to certain pieces, those where the fibres are not tightly bound in hessian, because in life there are happy moments, celebrations, events during which people forget their worries and rejoice. These colourful shapes, which create a flowery universe, are an image of these happy moments, of positive events. I don't just want to be a prophet of doom.



*WRAPPER (HOUSE OF REPS), 2024*  
Jute clothes and thread  
120x210x9 cm / 47x83x4 in



*SPILLOVER 2021*  
Cloth  
185x270x8 cm / 73x106x3 in

In his unique fibre sculptures, the artist ingeniously repurposes hessian and assorted fabrics, often gleaned from worn clothes or collected scraps sourced from tailors. Hessian, once emblematic of cocoa or manioc exports, now symbolizes the historical exploitation of resources. Embracing the ethos of recycling, she salvages used canvas and market bags, typically employed for local produce, cleansing them for her creative endeavors. With meticulous care, the artist intertwines twine or nylon thread, mirroring a process akin to charcoal manipulation - wrapping, binding, and sewing. This deliberate technique carries a profound message: by tethering materials, he metaphorically underscores the deprivation of freedom. Just as tightly bound fabric loses its liberty, so too does the constriction of individuals curtail their ability to exist and act autonomously. Through his artistry, he articulates the poignant narrative of absence and the profound implications of constrained freedom.



*REGRET*, 2020  
Cloth  
190x268x10 cm / 75x106x4 in



*LAST ELECTION RESULT, 2023*  
Jute, cloth, thread  
144x120x18 cm / 57x47x7 in



*SCRIPT, 2022*  
Charcoal, copper/aluminium wire scraps  
83x146x5 cm / 32x57x2 in



# PRESS REVIEW

### **5 expositions gratuites à visiter absolument en juillet**

Au mois de juillet, tout est possible ! Les galeries parisiennes sont encore ouvertes au public, on peut s'échapper le temps d'un week-end à Rouen découvrir une série de sculptures monumentales dans une forêt, ou en Bourgogne, approcher de près le travail de peinture tout en finesse d'un artiste chinois.

Déjà en vacances ? Dans le Vaucluse, c'est bien sûr à la fondation Villa Datrius que l'on se rend, comme chaque année, l'institution de L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue proposant toujours des expositions de qualité. Bref, à Paris, dans l'ouest, dans le centre ou dans le sud, l'agenda estival ne manque pas d'expos gratuites !

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### **À la galerie Afikaris à Paris, 14 artistes « habitent le monde »**

Habiter le monde, c'est se concevoir comme appartenant à un espace plus large que son groupe ethnique, sa nation... C'est pleinement habiter les histoires et les richesses des cultures plurielles de l'humanité. » Pour son exposition collective d'été, la galerie Afikaris réunit 14 artistes venus d'Iran (Fariba Boroufar), du Sénégal (Ousmane Niang) ou encore du Nigeria (Ozioma Onuzulike) pour répondre à l'essai Habiter le monde (2017) de Felwine Sarr. Avec quelques très belles œuvres, comme la photographie d'un homme couvert de fleurs de tournesols signée du Ghanéen Nana Yaw Oduro, une sculpture tissée en nuances de bleu et de vert par Fariba Boroufar, un tableau quasi monochrome en morceaux de charbon de bois du Nigérian Eva Obodo ou encore la vision humide d'un homme sortant de l'eau, peinte avec grâce par le Marocain Omar Mahfoudi.

## Obodo explores the charcoal option



Professor Eva Obodo is a mixed media artist, academic and sculptor. He teaches Sculpture and Art Education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). In this piece Edozie Udeze takes a look at his next solo exhibition in Lagos titled The New Nsukka School, a series to explore the use of charcoals and jute fibre to dissect culture and set a new global agenda.

EVA Obodo works in mixed media-painting and sculptures. This is the medium he has been noted for all his professional career. All over the art world, his art takes a form that is unique to him, a signature that speaks volumes and which always defines who he is. It is a signature that keeps his art world apart from his peers.

According to Oliver Enwonwu online newsletter release detailing Obodo's artistic exploits, the artist will be doing a solo exhibition in Lagos as from the 25th of this month. The show which will last till 11th March, is titled the New Nsukka School. It is a series Obodo and others have embarked upon to sensitise the art world on the paramount nature of the type of art being explored, exhibited and taught at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). The series purposely dwells on the pieces that reexamine the total concepts and materials practices that surround, characterize and define Fine Arts at the UNN.

For Obodo, he focuses essentially on fibre and charcoal to bring out the inner contours of fine arts. With this concept as his medium, he creates relief paintings and free standing sculptures. These emanate from processes of wrapping, tying and bundling concepts. The uniqueness these combinations produce gives Obodo his special place in contemporary art world.

He once said: "my work talks about global community, where you have individuals, you have families. Then you have nations, before you begin to talk of the global community. Each piece of charcoal is tied independent of the other. And as they are independent, they also collectively form a whole".

In his own, he incorporates discarded materials like charcoals and jute fibre. Together, he fuses these pieces that dwell on different cultures of the world. Part of the narratives he thus creates hover on the exploits of man, his cultures and what he stands to gain therefrom.

Born in 1963 in Enugu, he reconnects the past with the present. In the end he succeeds in bridging the gap between the old and the new. Therefore his Lagos outing next week will further explore these sentiments and probably set new targets for cultural renaissance across the globe, across historical divide.

**A TOAST TO EL ANATSUI, THE TITAN AT 75**

The local visual arts community's celebration of El Anatsui's 75th birthday has rightly morphed into an art festival, writes Okechukwu Uwaezuoke

Arts  
10 fév. 2019

An "Odogwu" they called him. That is an Igbo word for a hero. At 75, El Anatsui's profile shimmers before his teeming deweyed acolytes. A coterie of sculpture lecturers from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka's Department of Fine and Applied Arts held an exhibition, which opened on Saturday, February 2, at the National Gallery of Art, Enugu, to commemorate his birthday.

The exhibition, titled Igwebuiké (Igbo for "Strength in Unity"), featured the works of Chijioke Onuora, Eva Obodo, Chike Akabike, Ekene Anikpe, Sabastine Ugwoke, Amuche Ngwu-Nnabueze, Livinus Ngwu, Uche Onyishi and Sunday Odoh.

A few days later at the same venue, the fourth session of the National Gallery of Art's Art Appreciation Workshop, anchored by Professor Ozoma Onuzulike, was organised in honour of the septuagenarian artist. About the same time in Lagos, a solo exhibition, titled Icing on Burnt Cake – A Tribute to El Anatsui at 75, opened at the Thought Pyramid Art Centre in Ikoyi, Lagos.

Indeed, there are good reasons for the local art community to coo over the trailblazing artist, who had been teaching art at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka since 1975. Not only have the former AKA Circle of Artists member influenced and inspired many artists, he has also invested in the development of art in Nigeria. As a patron of the annual Life in My City Art Festival in Enugu, he had sponsored its four top winners to the Dakar Biennale (called

Dak'Art) in 2017 and pledged to sponsor additional six of the festival's top winners to the next edition of the same event.

In addition, the artist has built a gallery at the university as a gift to a community, where he had experienced his phenomenal artistic growth. Born as the youngest of his father's 32 children in the small Ghanaian town of Anyako in 1944 during British rule, he was later raised in a Presbyterian Mission House by his uncle, a Presbyterian Minister. Sensing as a boy that he "had a kind of calling" to be an artist, he enrolled at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi to study fine art, which was then an "unimaginable" thing to do.

Anatsui's break from the British-style curriculum, on which he was weaned, came after a Eureka moment at national cultural centre in Kumasi, where he discovered the "adinkra" motifs.

Fast-forward to many years later, he had not only "indigenised" his art, he had also begun to interpret the word "sculpture" in new fascinating ways.

The US-based Nigeria-born art historian and critic once described his art as challenging "normal order of pictorial balance". This is because Anatsui himself sees sculpture as something that explores the dynamics of a subject, a puzzle that assumes different forms. For instance, one of his works, "Intermittent Signals",

looked different when it was displayed in 2011 from how it looked in 2007.

It was at a 2012 Bonhams Modern & Contemporary African Art Sale in London that El Anatsui's already glittering international profile was burnished. At the auction, one of his installations, a 350 X 500cm work titled "New World Map", had sold for a record \$850,000. The record-breaking Ghanaian Kente-inspired work, described by the Bonhams Contemporary African Art director Giles Peplatt as "a massive hauntingly beautiful contemporary statement", was a shimmering wall hanging, delicately woven with thousands of flat-topped bottle tops.

This record sale followed on the heels of the sale of another of the artist's tapestry-like work for over \$720,000 at a Bonhams charity auction in New York two weeks earlier.

There are indeed other similar rippling, shimmering installations by the artist, who marked his 75th birthday on Monday. It is to these and others that he owes his dizzying ascent up the ladders of fame. Anatsui once explained that the colourful bottle tops are cryptic reminders that African slaves were exchanged for European liquor during the transatlantic slave trade. As for the wall hangings' apparent fluidity, they allude to the ever-shifting relationship between Europe, Africa and America.

Clawing his way up from out of the drudgery of an ivory tower ex-

istence at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, he has risen to become one of the continent's most phenomenal artists. That his works are currently housed in some of the world's most prestigious museums – like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum and the Smithsonian – is a credit to his renown. At the 2007 Venice Biennale, one of his rippling metal tapestries draped over the façade of a museum caused a stir among the aficionados. In 2012, his 37-foot-high sculpture made of recycled pressed tin and mirrors woven together with copper wire, titled "Broken Bridge II", was displayed at New York's High Line, an elevated park built on an old freight rail line in Manhattan.

Still on his notable exhibitions worldwide, he has been featured at the October Gallery, London (UK) in 2016 and in Hayward Gallery, London (UK) as well as in such reputable spaces across the US as Brooklyn Museum, New York in 2013, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts in 2011, Rice University Art Gallery, Houston in 2010, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York from 2008 to 2009, the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C. in 2008 and the Fowler Museum at UCLA in 2007. He has also been exhibited at Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Spain) in 2001, among other places, at the Palazzo Grassi, Venice in 2011, Nationalgalerie, Berlin (Germany) in 2010, Institut Valencia D'Art Modern, Valencia, Spain, in 2009 and Centre Pompidou, Paris (France), among other venues.

Besides featuring in Venice Biennale in 2007 and earlier in 1990, he has been at the Liverpool Biennale in 2002, Moscow Biennale in 2009, the 8th Osaka Sculpture Triennale in 1995, the first Johannesburg Biennale in 1995,

5th Havana Biennale in 1994 and the 5th Gwangju Biennale in 2004, among others.

After he was awarded the Venice Biennale Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement – a prize that "acknowledges not just his recent successes internationally, but also his artistic influence amongst two generations of artists working in West Africa" – he had gone on to bag an honorary doctorate degree from the US-based Harvard University on May 26, 2016 and the Praemium Imperiale award, as the first Ghanaian to win the international art prize, in 2017. Previously, he was awarded the Visionaries Artist Award from the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City and the 2009 Prince Claus Award.

Back on local art scene, his works have consistently been featured among the top five bestselling lots at the Arthouse Contemporary Limited auctions, held biannually in Lagos. He has also twice been featured at the Terra Kulture-Mydrim Gallery Living Masters' exhibition.

That his 75th birthday morphed into a festival of sorts should, therefore, surprise no keen adept of the visual arts scene.

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