

OZIOMA ONUZULIKE

PORTFOLIO



OZIOMA ONUZULIKE

OZIOMA ONUZULIKE WAS BORN IN 1972 IN ACHI, ENUGU STATE IN NIGERIA WHERE HE STILL LIVES AND WORKS.

The artist graduated first class from the department of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he is currently a professor of ceramic art and African art and design history. The artist is also a fellow of the Civitella Ranieri Centre, Umbertide, Perugia, Italy, where he undertook a residency under the UNESCO-ASCHBERG Bursary for artists, and is an alumni of the prestigious Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, USA.

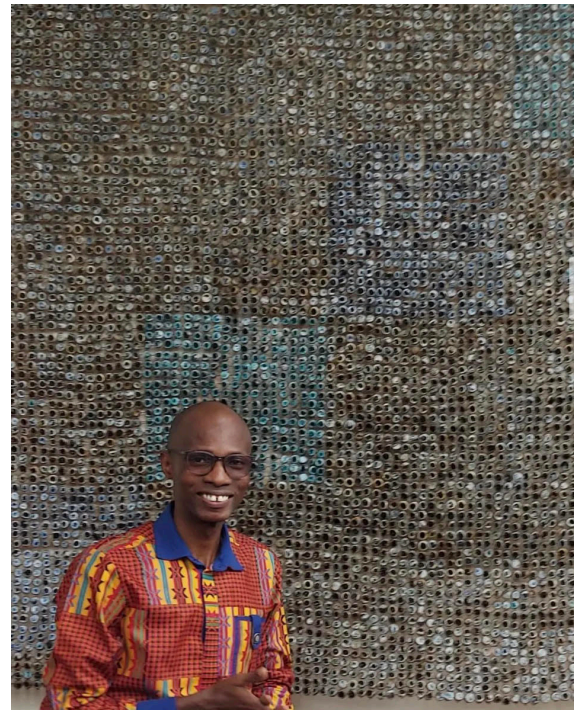
A ceramics artist and poet, his work largely focuses on the historical and sociological roots of the political and socio-economic turmoil in Africa and their debilitating effects on daily living on the continent. He often explores the aesthetic, symbolic and metaphorical nature of clay (his basic material) and the clay-working processes – pounding, crushing, hammering, wedging, grinding, cutting, pinching, punching, perforating, burning, firing – in his making of the multiple units that characterise his mixed-media projects.

Ozioma Onuzulike encompasses African natural resources in his artworks. Onuzulike's current project: The Palm Kernel Shell Beads series explores the aesthetic qualities and historical significance of the palm kernel. Recognising the cultural and economic value the palm kernel held in West Africa during and after the slave trade, Onuzulike translates the palm kernel as a historically charged site within his artwork. He weaves mixed media ceramic structures that resemble Africa's prestige cloths – such as the Nigerian Akwete and Aso Oke or imported ones such as the lace fabrics that are also highly regarded in Africa as markers of social status. His work engages in conversations around the issues of social change that have remained in flux.

OZIOMA ONUZULIKE

b. 1972, Achi, Nigeria
Lives and works Nsukka, Nigeria

A ceramist artist, poet and teacher, his artworks largely focus on the historical and sociological roots of the political and socio-economic turmoil in Africa and their debilitating effects on daily life on the continent.



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

TEACHING

1997-98 - Industrial Design Department, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria (Taught Drawing, Photography and Ceramic Design under the National Youth Service Corps scheme).
2003 - Now - Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

PRIZES AND AWARDS (SELECTED)

2011 - African Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship Award of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)
2010 - Leventis Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Centre of African Studies, SOAS, University of London
2008 - Skowhegan Scholarship, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, USA
2006 - Highly Commended Prize, Interpreting Ceramics 'Speak for Yourself' Competition
2005 - Distinguished Alumnus Award, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
2003 - Civitella Ranieri Fellow (Visual Art)
2001 - UNESCO-ASCHBERG Bursary (Visual Art)
1996 - ARTGRADS-UNN Prize (For Best Project Report by a Graduating Student of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria)

COLLECTIONS

Yemisi Shyllon Museum of art, Lagos, Nigeria
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
Princeton University Museum, Princeton, New Jersey, USA
The Design Museum, Munich, Germany
Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art, Peekskill, New York, USA

Anne-Celine & Pierre Donnersberg Collection, France

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

2022

Strings the lenght 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, Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, Nigeria

2018

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

2008

Ceramics and Frescoes, Fresco Barn/Sculpture Yard, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, USA

2003

Excavating Civitella, Civitella Ranieri Center, Umbertide, Italy Casualties, Maison de France, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

2000

Earth to Art: Ceramics and Mixed Media Sculptures, National Museum, Enugu, Nigeria

1996

Dry Season: Earthenware and Stoneware Plaques, ANA Gallery, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2023

ZonaMaco, Mexico City, Mexico
Artgenève, Geneva, Switzerland

2022

Armory Show, New-York, United-States of America
1-54 London, London, United Kingdom
Entanglements: Colonial Collections in Decolonial Times, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge.

2021

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

2015

Anyu FuluUgo: Exhibition in Honourof El Anatsui and ObioraUdechukwu, Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

2008

World One Minute, Beijing Today Art Museum, 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

2005

The Rediscovery of Tradition: Uli and the Politics of Culture, Alliance Francaise, Enugu; Pendulum Gallery, Lagos; Jean Welz Gallery, Worcester, South Africa. Visual Orchestra 2005, French Cultural Centre, Abuja, Nigeria

2004

Visual Orchestra 2004, Alliance Francaise, Enugu, Nigeria

2002

GRAFINNOVA 2002: 8th International Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, Ostrobothian 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 Biennale, 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, Nigeria

New Energies (Curated by El Anatsui), Mydrim Gallery/Nimbus Art Centre, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria

2000

Crossroads: Africa in the Twilight: 3rd PACA Biennale, 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 Biennale, Didi Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

1996

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

1995

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

PUBLICATIONS (Select)

ARTICLES & CHAPTERS IN BOOKS/EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Onuzulike, O. (2017). "Michael Cardew and the Making of a New Ceramic Art and Design Modernism in Nigeria in the 1950s and 60s." In Titi Ogufere (ed.) *This is Africa: Traditional Design, Modern and Contemporary* (Lagos: Interior Designers Association of Nigeria/Essential Media Group), pp.10-13

Onuzulike, O. (2013). "My Hands in Clay and Other Media: The 'Casualties' Project". In JoDahn and Jeffery Jones (eds.) *Interpreting Ceramics: Selected Essays*. (Bath, U.K.: Wunderkammer Press in association with Interpreting Ceramics Research Collaboration), pp.132-137.

Nkala, N.O. & Onuzulike, O. (2012). "The Writings of Demas Nwoko". In Obiora Udechukwu and Chika Okeke-Agulu (eds.), *Ezumezu: Essays on Nigerian Art and Architecture: A Festschrift in Honour of Demas Nwoko*. (New Jersey: Goldline & Jacobs Publishing), pp.185-199.

Onuzulike, O. (2011). "Pictorial Scripture and Colourful Lines: The Art of Onyema Offoedu-Okeke". In Okey Anueyiagu (ed.), *Contemporary African Art: My Private Collection of Onyema Offoedu-Okeke*. (Atlanta and Lagos: Brown Brommel), pp.26-34.

JOURNAL ARTICLES (Select)

Onuzulike, O. (2019) "'Traditional' Paradigm as Dividing Wall: Formal Analysis in the Study of African Ceramic Art Modernism", *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, 13:2-3, 158-179.

Onuzulike, O. (2016). "The Making of National Ceramics Exhibitions of the Craft Potters Association of Nigeria (CPAN): An Historical and Critical Perspective", *Interpreting Ceramics International E-Journal of Ceramics*, Issue17.
<http://www.interpretingceramics.com/issue017/articles/05.htm>

Onuzulike, O. (2015). "Art Auctions in Nigeria: A Commentary", *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, 9:1, 3-21
DOI: 10.1080/19301944.2015.1012901

Onuzulike, O. (2015). "The Apotoyowa (Grinding Bowl) of Ghana". *Ceramics Technical*, No.41, pp.34-39

Onuzulike, O. (2015). "Pottery Painting in West Africa". *Ceramics Technical*, No.41, pp.72-77.

Onuzulike, O. (2014). "Kofi Setordji: Retrospective, 1997-2012" (Review Article). *African Arts*, Vol.47, No.1, Spring, pp.85-87.

Onuzulike, O. (2013). «Emergence of Modern Ceramics in Nigeria: The Kenneth Murray Decade, 1929-1939». *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol.6, No.3., pp.293-314 DOI: 10.2752/174967813X13806265666735

THE PALM KERNEL SHELL BEAD PROJECT

In his series *The Palm Kernel Shell Bead Project*, Onuzulike shapes clay to design pieces that look like palm kernels. After the slave trade era, trade in palm oil, palm kernel and other natural resources of the African continent intensified. Nsukka, the region where the artist lives, was particularly noted for palm oil and palm kernel production in servicing the lopsided trade/power relations with the Western world.

Onuzulike considers the palm kernel for its key historical value. If it naturally looks like a bead, the artist emphasizes this trait by turning it into a glass bead. Glass beads used to be a trading currency - also called Slave Beads.

«With I, he weave mixed media ceramic structures that resemble Africa's prestige cloths (such as the Nigerian Akwete and Aso Oke) or imported ones (such as the lace fabric) that are also highly regarded in Africa as markers of social status.»

In contemporary African societies, beads have become items of prestige and social status based on the gesture of accumulation.

Usually considered for their commercial value, Onuzulike combines these elements and weaves them together to produce prestigious fabrics.

As a consequence, the titles of his works always refer to pieces of clothing.

Thus, Onuzulike creates precious objects, symbols of power and protection. He participates in the ongoing conversation around the issue of social change and our relationship with the environment.

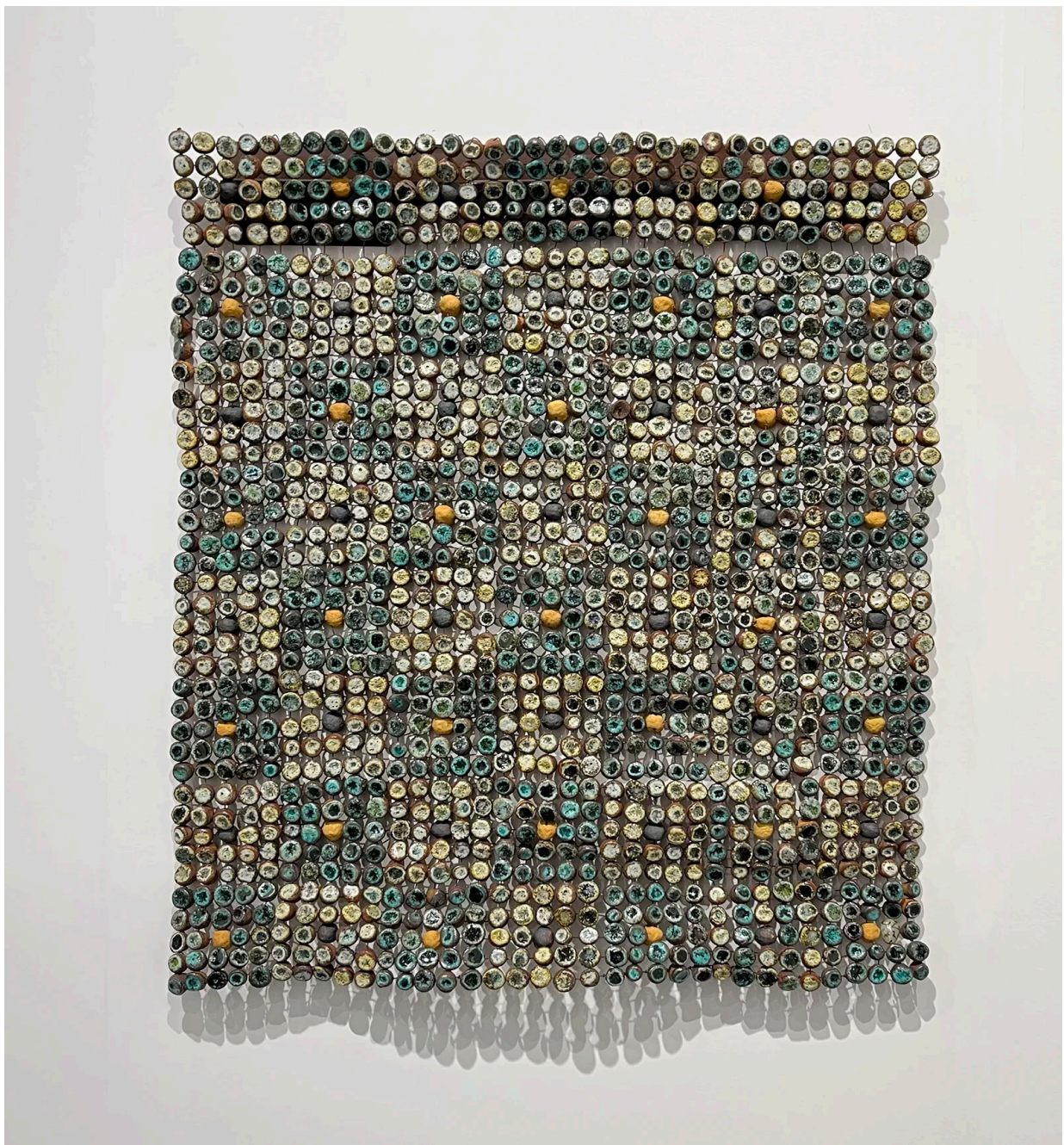


DEEP COLOURED LACE FOR THE CHIEF'S LITTLE DAUGHTER, 2022

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glass and copper wire

100x96x11 cm

39.3x37.8x4.3 in



BRIGHT COLOURED LACE FOR THE CHIEF'S LITTLE DAUGHTER, 2022

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glass and copper wire

100x96x11 cm

39x37x4 in



LEFT

LACE WITH ADA'S DANGLING WEAVE-ON, 2023

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glasses and copper wire

137x105x10 cm

54x41x4 in



RIGHT

LACE WITH CROWN MOTIF, 2022

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glass and copper wire

142x139x11 cm

56x55x4 in



MAMA OBI'S BEADED BLOUSE, 2023

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glasses and copper wire

126x120x8 cm

50x47x3 in

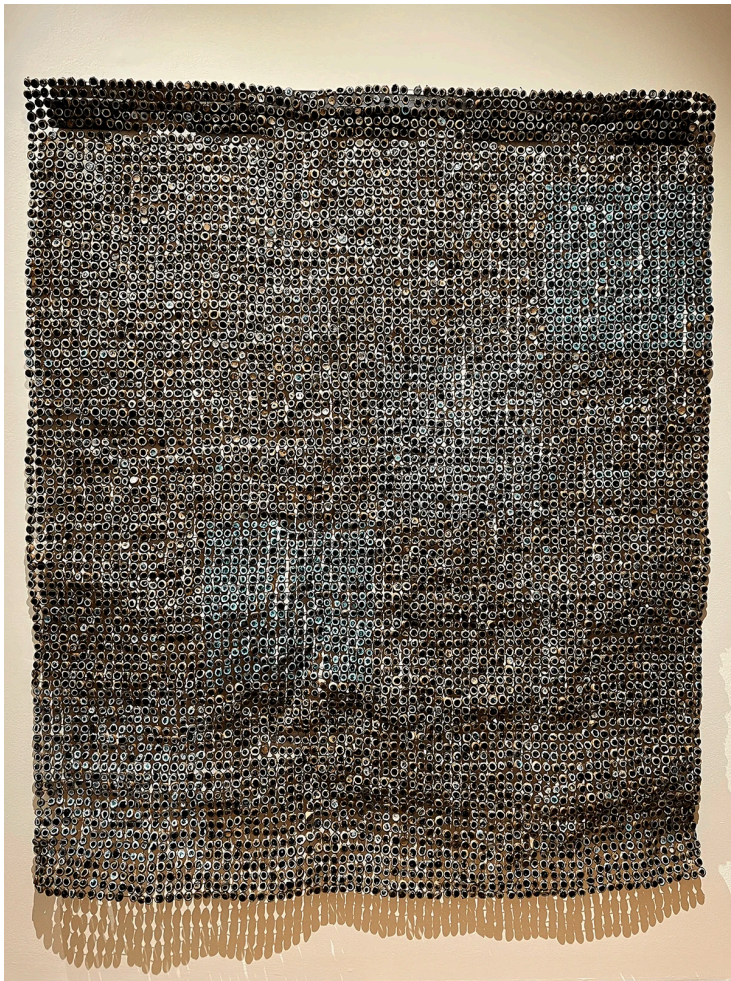


CHEQUERED JUMPER WITH V-SHAPED EMBROIDERY, 2022

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, iron oxide engobe, recycled glass and copper wire

255x240x20 cm

100.4x94.5x7.9 in



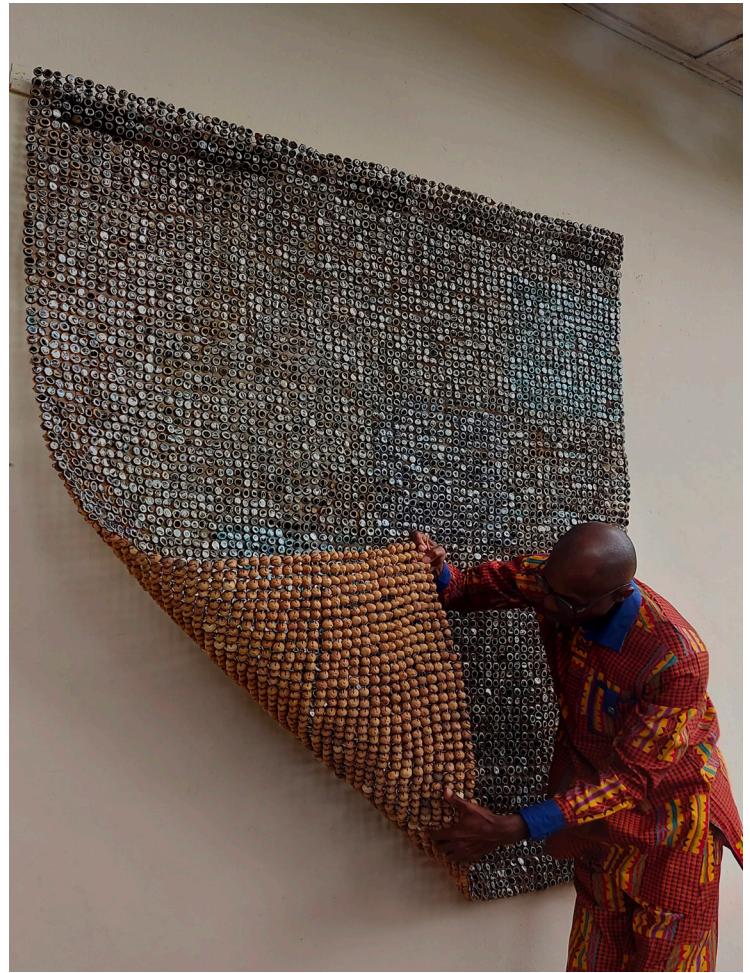
LEFT

SOCIETY LADY'S GOLDEN LACE WITH STEPPED DESIGN, 2022

Stoneware Clay, Ash Glazes, Recycled glass and repurposed copper wires

193x173x10 cm

76x68x4 in



RIGHT

Ozioma with the artwork



STARCHED BABARIGA FOR MR PETER OBI, 2022-3

Stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glasses and copper wire

285x200x25 cm

112x79x10 in



ROYAL BABARIGA ,2022

Stoneware claybodies, recycled glasses and copper wire

315×305×20cm

124x120x8 in



ROYAL SKIRT, 2022,
Stoneware clay bodies, palm kernel shells, recycled glasses and copper wire,
179×169×15cm
70x66x6 in



KONKOSA ARMOUR FOR THE OBA, 2021

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glasses, ash glaze and copper wire
240x270x15cm
94x106x6 in



WOMEN'S WEAVE No.6, 2021

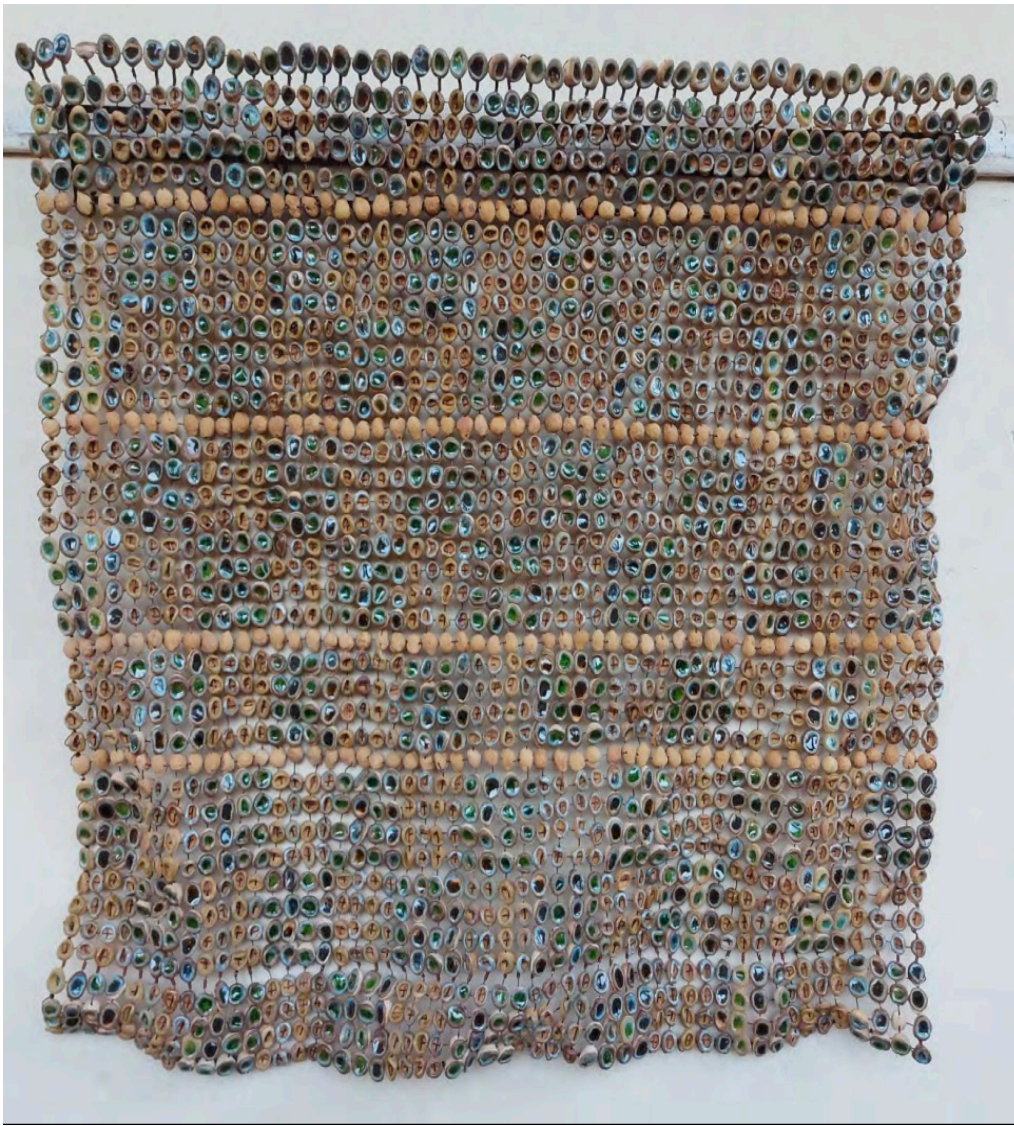
Earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glasses and copper-coated aluminum wire
109x131x8cm.

43x52x3 in



LEFT
WOMEN'S WEAVE No.7, 2021
 Earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glasses and copper-coated aluminum wire
 107x117x8cm
 42x46x3 in

RIGHT
 Close up picture



LEFT
LACE No. 10, 2021
Earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glasses, glazes and copper-coated aluminum wire
114x117x8cm
45x46x3 in

RIGHT
Close up picture



WOMEN'S WEAVE No.10, 2021

Terracotta and copper-coated aluminum wire

138x130x7cm

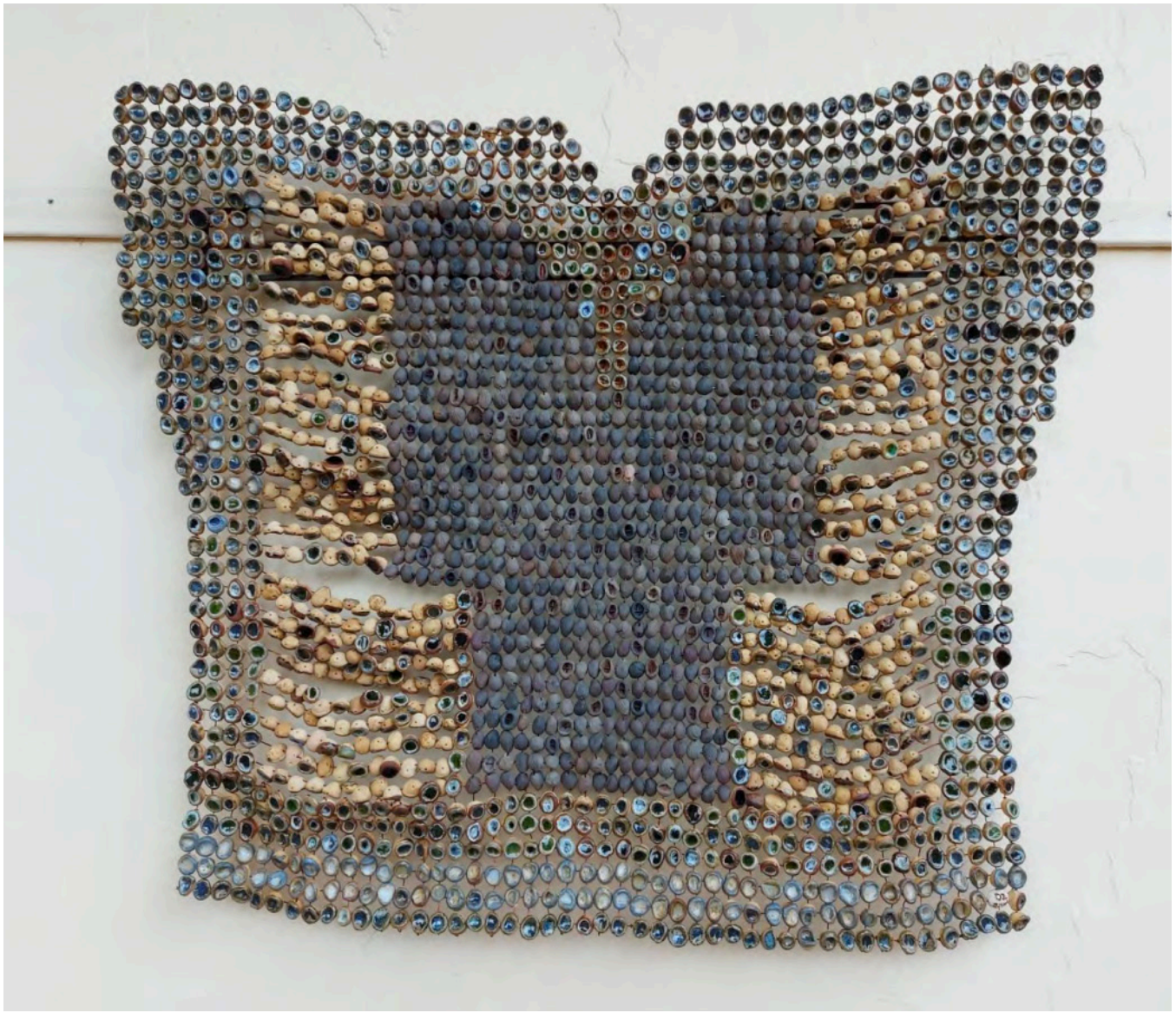
54x51x3 in



WOMEN'S WEAVE No.9, 2021
Terracotta and copper-coated aluminum wire
120x135x8cm.
47x53x3 in



LACE #12, 2021
Earthenware and stoneware clays, glass and copper wire
109x92x10cm
43x36x3 in



JUMPER II, 2021

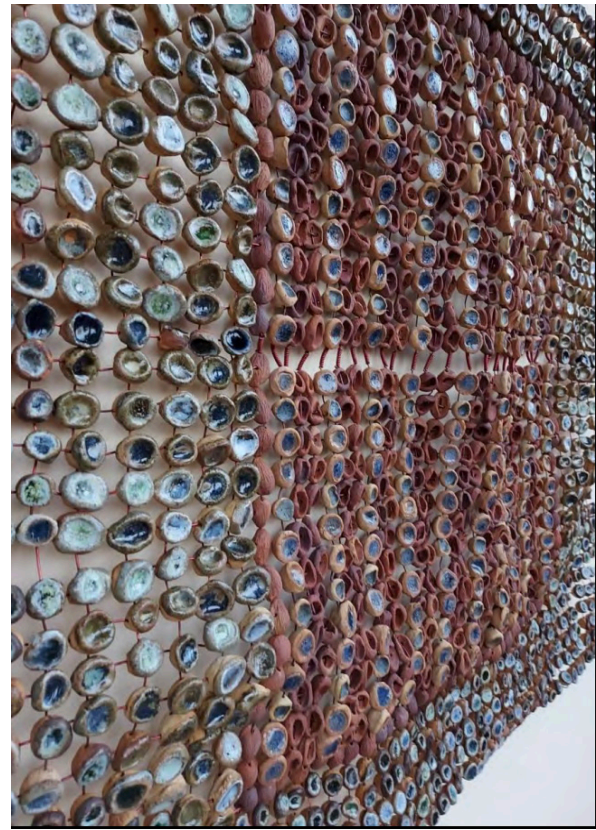
Earthenware and stoneware clays, glass and copper wire

130x106x7cm

51x41x3 in



LEFT
BUBA, 2021
Earthenware and stoneware clays, glass and copper wire
105x100x8cm
41x39x3 in



RIGHT
Close up picture



APRON WITH MULTIPLE POCKETS FOR THE FIRST LADY , 2022

Natural palm kernel shells, high-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glasses,
ash glaze and copper wire

150x120x10 cm

59x47x4 in



WOMEN'S WEAVE NO.12, 2021

high-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, glaze, recycled glass and copper-coated aluminum wire

109x103x8 cm

43x41x3 in



NCHOLOKOTO GAME, 2022

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glass, ash glaze and copper wire

121x108x8 cm

48x43x3 in

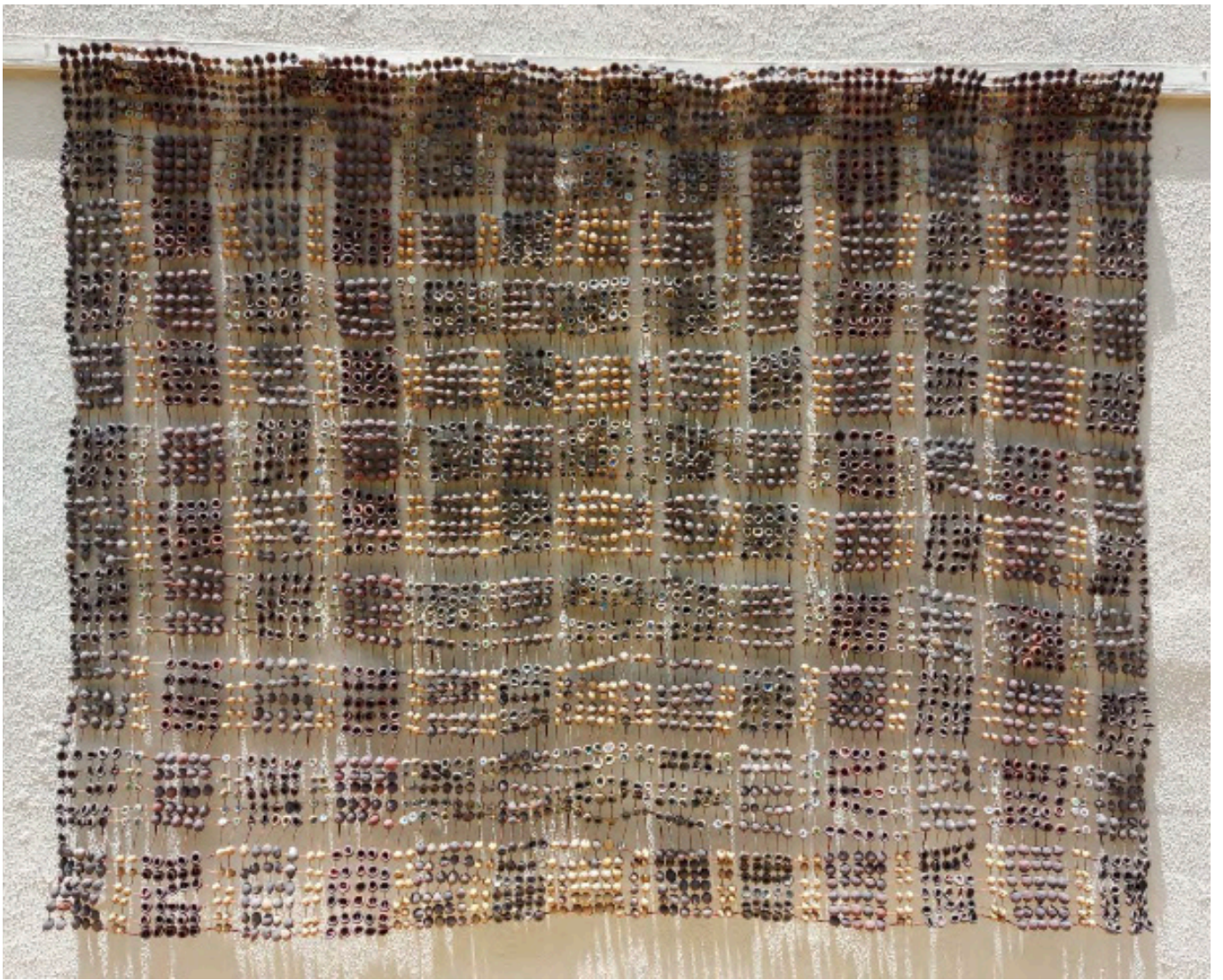


AGBADA, 2022

Natural palm kernel shells, high-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, iron oxide, ash glazes, recycled glass and copper wire

320x333x12 cm

126x131x5 in



LACE WEAVE I, 2022

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glass and copper wire,
186x236x6 cm
73x93x2 in

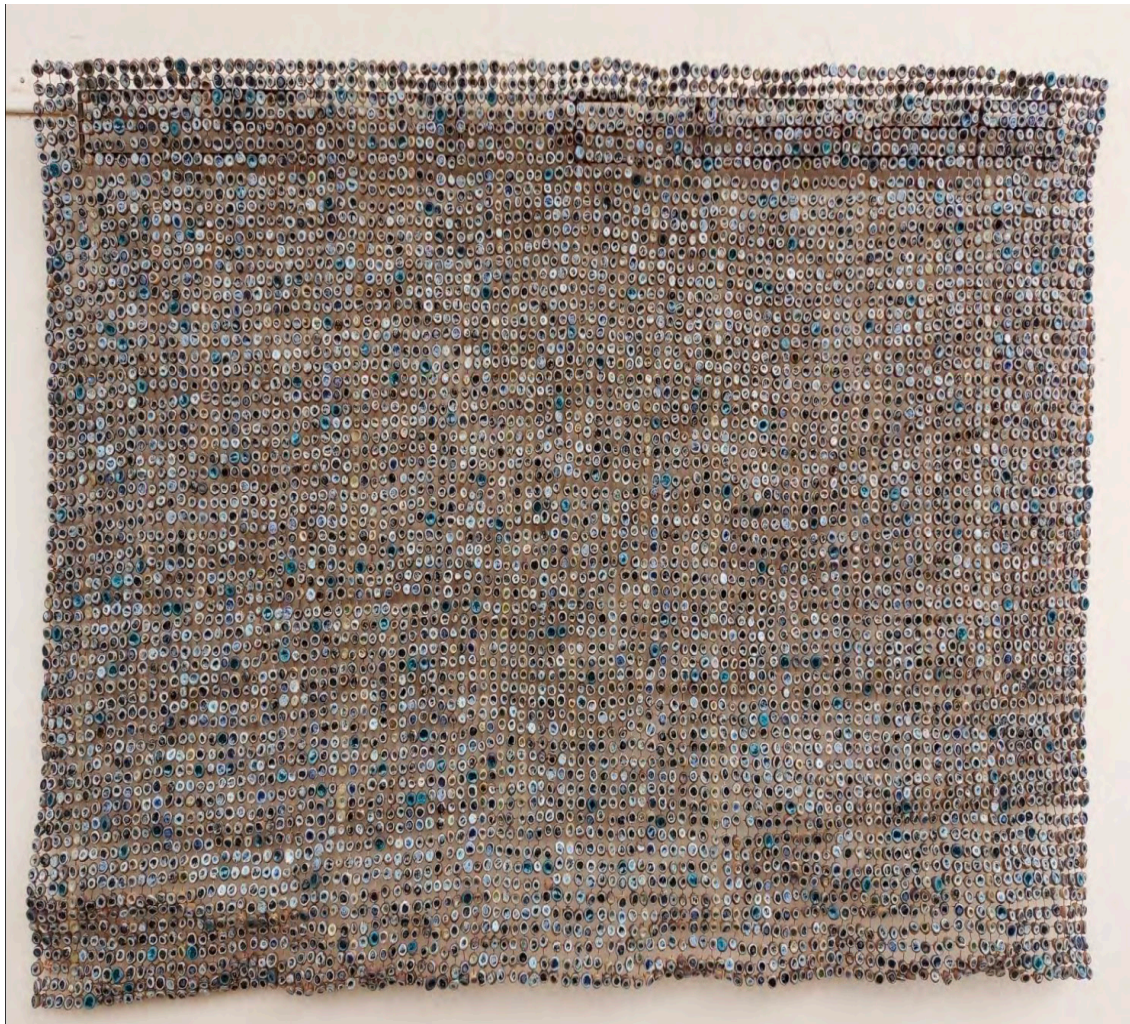


EXTRA-LARGE-SIZED JUMPER, 2022

Natural palm kernel shells, high-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, ash glazes, recycled glass and copper wire

330x360x10 cm

130x142x4 in

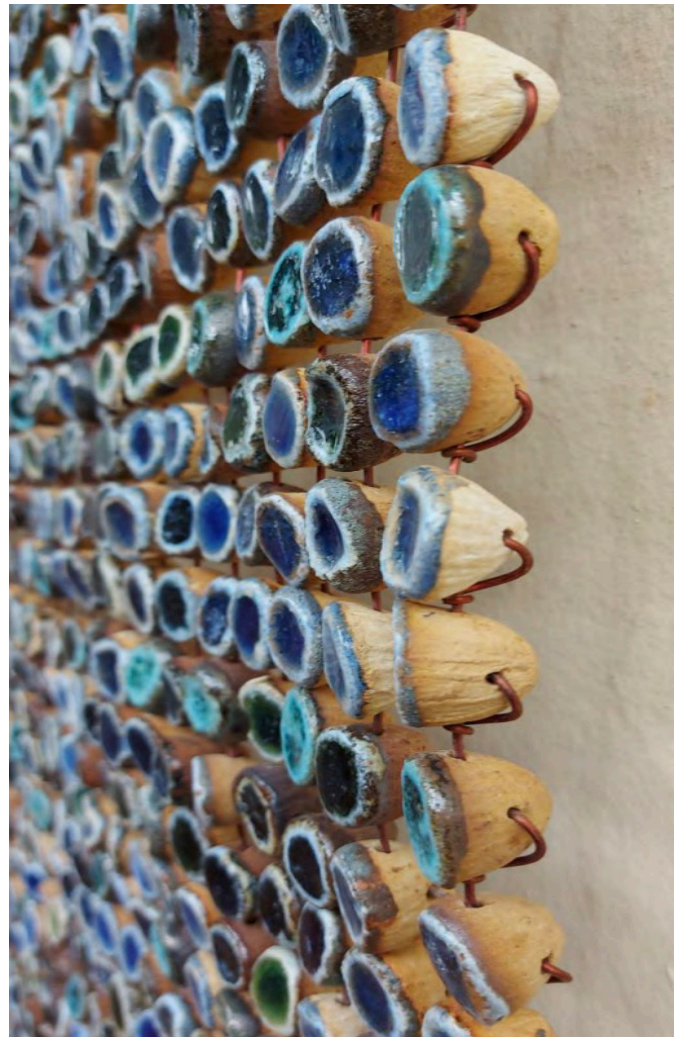


LEFT

TWO-PIECE LACE FOR 'WIFE MATERIAL', 2022

Earthenware and stoneware clays, ash glaze, recycled glasses and copper wire,
220x140x12 cm.

87x55x5 in



Detail

TWO-PIECE LACE FOR 'WIFE MATERIAL' II, 2022

Earthenware and stoneware clays, ash glaze, recycled glasses and copper wire

215x143x14 cm

85x56x6 in

THE YAM PROJECT

The yam is a sacred and prestigious crop among the Igbo of Nigeria, Onozulike describes it as «place of origin and nurture ».

In the past, the yam crop was the main socio-economic stay for men and their families. The yam seedlings, therefore, were held sacrosanct as the future hope of every family for economic and socio-political sustenance.

When planted in a harsh, barren or impoverished environment, the yams become stunted, ravaged, devastated or totally destroyed. When they lie individually, the forms of the yam tubers can look like motionless human bodies encased in body bags. When sorted and tied together (like in a typical African yam barn), they are also a reminder of the African slaves whom were in the past crammed in slave ships like mere commodities, but also how they are today tightly packed in trucks and boats hazarding the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea with the hope of going to “grow” better in a more conducive environment. Even when many have been lost in transit.

The debilitating conditions that have made the African continent a very hostile environment to grow her “seed yams” remain with us today, and are rather worsening by the day.

They push the plastician to explore the seed yam metaphor in my quest to draw critical attention to the devastating effects of these conditions on the continent’s youth population -the metaphorical yam seedlings.



BURNT BARN I, 2018,
Carbonised terracotta, wood, glass, mild steel and aluminium wire



DRY SEASON I, 2019

Iron-saturated stoneware clay body, mild steel, copper wire and wood

103x164x17cm

41x65x7 in



MIGRATION SERIES: STATIONS OF THE CROSS II, 2019

Partially glazed earthenware

102x38x32cm

40x15x13 in



YAM FIELD, 2019

Iron-saturated stoneware body, X-ray films, wood and light

Large boxes measure:

48x41x15cm - 19x16x6 in

48x25.5x15cm- 19x10x6 in

45.2x25.2x13.7cm-18x10x6 in

Light Boxes 48x41x15cm (each)- 19x16x6 in



MIGRATION SERIES: STATIONS OF THE CROSS I, 2019

Partially glazed earthenware

80x31x29 cm

31x12x11 in



LEFT

Yam Vessels VI, 2019

28x28x34 cm

11x11x13 in

Yam Vessels,

30x30x20 cm

12x12x8 in

RIGHT

Yam Vessels VIII, 2019

34x34x20 cm

13x13x8 in



STATIONS OF THE CROSS II, 2019
Partially glazed earthenware
131x92x35 cm
52x36x14 in



LEFT
 YAM VESSELS V, 2019,
 glazed stoneware (Six-piece ensemble)
 Biggest piece measures:
 36x12x10 cm
 14x5x4 in
 Smallest piece measures:
 24x10x4 cm
 9x4x2 in

RIGHT
 YAM VESSEL I, 2019
 glazed Stoneware
 Individual Dimensions:
 34x17x8 cm
 13x7x3 in





YAM BODY, 2019
Iron-saturated stoneware clay
35x12x9 cm
14x5x4 in



Seed Yam of Our Land III, 2019

Iron-saturated stoneware clay body and mild steel

300x39x246 cm

118x15x97 in



YAM VESSELS V, 2019,
Glazed stoneware (Six-piece ensemble)
Biggest piece measures: 36cx12x10 cm
14x5x4 in
Smallest piece measures: 24x10x4 cm
9x4x2 in



WE ARE LIKE YAM SEEDLINGS IN A BURNT BARN, 2019-2021

Carbonized terracotta, burnt wood and mild steel

155x230x12 cm

61x91x5 in

BURNT YAM BARN, 2022,

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, ironoxide, ash glaze, recycled glass, burnt wood and copper wire

135x195x13cm

53x77x5 in

THE CHAINMAIL PROJECT

This serie is made of thousands of terracotta and copper rings crafted like chainmail. While the copper rings come in a single colour, the terracotta rings are made in different earth colours, which are a combination of natural clay colour at different firing temperatures along with those patinated with iron oxides and also fired at different kiln temperatures. Both the making and firing processes are as complex as the process of crocheting fabrics. The results are chainmail-like structures that look like crocheted shawls. The copper wires used for the most recent pieces are upcycled from burnt electric transformers.

The clays are sourced from the immediate Nsukka environment. Transforming the clays through several firing circles is a metaphor for socio-environmental turmoil.

Making items of personal adornment and protection from the process symbolizes the idea of personal and environmental securities as lying primarily with our individual actions and environmental securities as lying primarily with our individual actions and choices.



AGEING PLAID SKIRT WITH WAIST GATHER, 2022

Stoneware clay, Ash glaze, Engobe and aluminium wires and Ceramic Chainmail

178x163x9 cm

70x64x4 in



JERRY COIL, 2021

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glass, glaze and copper wire

126x89x8 cm

50x35x3 in



ARMOUR FOR THE QUEEN MOTHER (TERRACOTTA AND COPPER CHAINMAIL), 2021
High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, recycled glass, ash glaze and copper wire
240x270x13 cm
94x10x65 in



CROCHETED SHAWL, 2021

Stoneware clay bodies and upcycled copper wires

254x153x10 cm

100x60x4 in

THE HONEYCOMB PROJECT

The honeycomb project was first conceived during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 as a tribute to all frontline workers - the heroes and heroines of the struggle who needed to wear protective gears and hazard very harmful territories like bee farmers.

The project took another turn according to the plastician at the end of the quarantine.

The honeycomb is a reminder that Africa's natural resources have been at the base of its woes (what has been described as "Resource Curse"). Historically, perhaps beginning from the highly skewed trade relations with the Western world (including the obnoxious slave trade), the continent's natural resources have been the honey pot pulling the ravenous appetite and interests of the imperial nations of the world.

And, traditionally, to freely and deeply harvest the honey (the resources), the "bees" needed to be subdued, tamed, conquered, forcefully driven away or even killed by all means, including naked flames !



HONEYCOMBS, 2022

Stoneware clay body with recycled glasses on burnt wood

218x145 cm

86x57 in

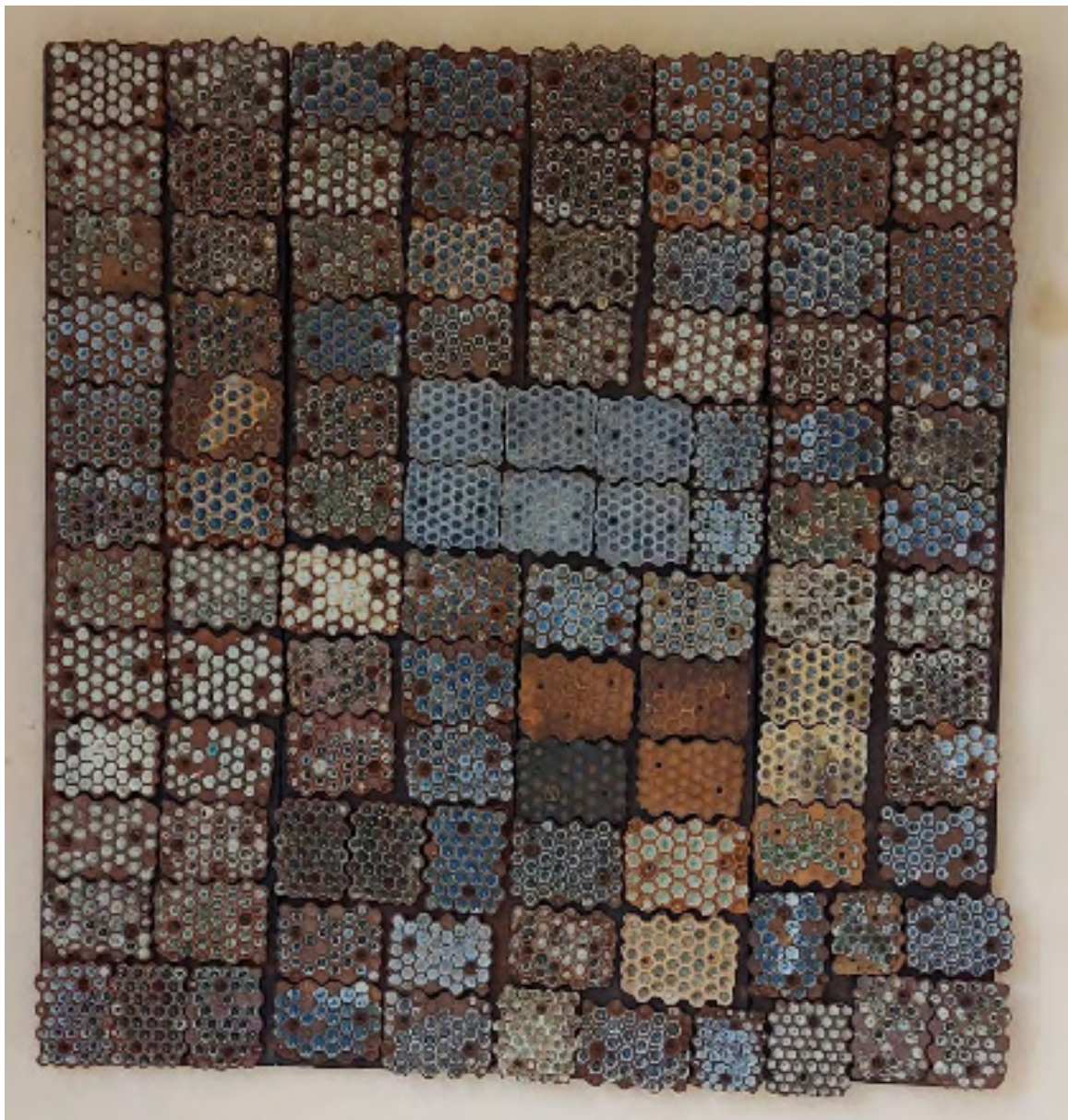


HONEYCOMBS (OR TEXTURED BISCUITS), 2022

Stoneware clay body with recycled glasses on burnt wood

215x145 cm

85x57 in

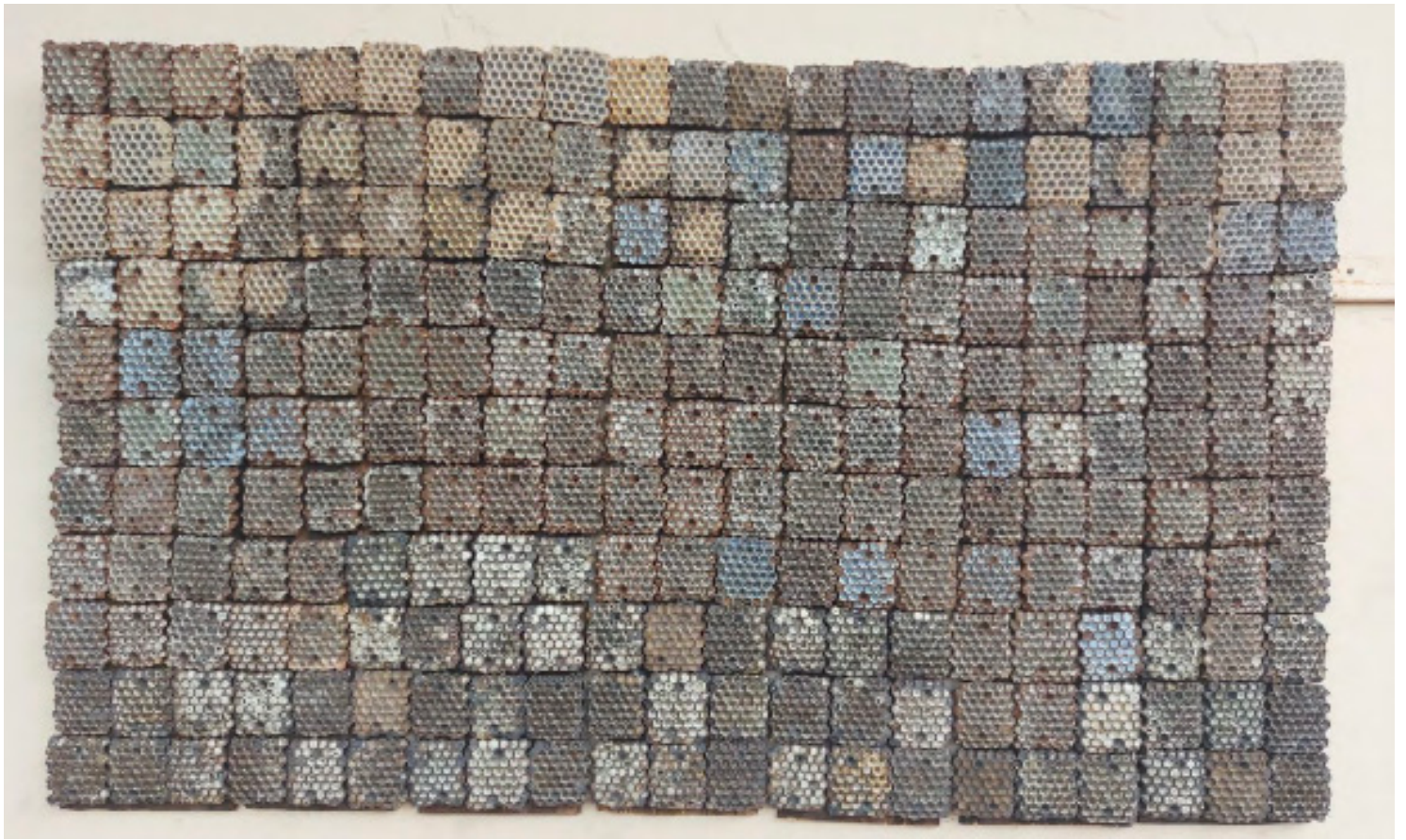


HONEYCOMBS (OR MULTICOLOURED, TEXTURED BISCUITS), 2022

Stoneware clay body with recycled glasses on burnt wood

122x305 cm

48x120 in



HONEY COMB, 2022

High-fired earthenware and stoneware clays, iron oxide, recycled glass, ash glazes and burnt wood

114x180x6 cm

45x71x2 in