



# Artwork Information Sheet **34**

## GEORGE EDOZIE'S DIMKPA



George Edozie, *Dimkpa*, Mixed Media, 235cm (H), Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, Pan-Atlantic University.

## INTRODUCTION

Every artist goes on a journey to discover his or her path. George Edozie initially desired to become an Armed Forces personnel, but he eventually became an Artist. Art may sometimes begin from scribbles on paper and surfaces until these surfaces evolve and become the canvas for creating masterpieces. From this process, many artists discover their signature material or medium with which they create Artworks. George Edozie started out with paint, but along the line, he discovered he could also use fabrics to create beautiful sculptures. His work “Dimkpa” is an example of this experimentation and takes us on his journey to discovering this material and its new use.

## THE ARTIST

George Edozie had a natural flare for the Arts; he scribbled on his notebooks and drew cartoon characters on walls. His initial desire to be a soldier distinguished him from other artists. He was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1972 in Enugu State but hails from Onitsha in Anambra State. He is the last of six children, and he spent his early childhood in Nsukka, where he explored his natural artistic abilities.

His father, Francis Ernest Obidinma was a government worker, while his mother, Francisca Enumah Edozie, was a headmistress. George Edozie had his primary education at University Primary School, Nsukka where he designed a comic book that included all his favourite characters. He had his secondary education at Washington Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha, Anambra State. He went on to study Fine and Applied Arts at University of Benin, where he specialized in painting and graduated in 1996.

George’s parents were not happy about his decision to become an artist, but he went on to pursue his desire with the support of his elder brother. Unfortunately, he lost both of his parents while in University, and interestingly, this loss influenced his style of Art. Visiting home after his parent’s demise,

he saw one of his mother’s wrappers, which held a strong cultural significance because it was used in performing a particular dance for young, married women from Onitsha. Having witnessed this dance as a child, seeing the wrapper brought back fond memories of his culture and his mother. Therefore, George decided to take the wrapper back to Lagos with him to create a piece in her memory.

He initially wanted to do a portrait of his mother but he ended up doing a painting, which a friend greatly appreciated and decided to put in Omenka Gallery. While in the Gallery, a collector showed interest in buying the work, but Edozie refused to sell it because of its significance and his attachment to the piece. Edozie returned the painting to his home and kept it there. With the encouragement of this friend, he produced other paintings in that line. He began creating fabric paintings by putting fabrics on a canvas and painting them. He initially used oil but found out that acrylic was better because it was more transparent. He later ventured into installation art, using fabrics as his medium of choice. He successfully designed the logo of the Lagos Business School (LBS), which encouraged him to produce more fabric sculptures. Dimkpa was one of his most recent fabric pieces.

George Edozie has participated in over 115 exhibitions within and outside Nigeria. He is also the co-author of the book *101 Contemporary Artist, A celebration of Modern Nigerian Art*, which documents Nigerian Contemporary Art and was published in 2010. The highlight of his career was when he was invited to participate in Art Basel, a leading global Art fair connecting collectors, galleries, and artists. At the fair, he exhibited four fabric sculptures and later had a whole museum show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. George became the first Nigerian to exhibit in Art Basel and have a full museum show.

## DIMKPA



Fig 1.1 George Edozie, *Dimkpa*, Mixed Media, 235cm (H), ©Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art.

George Edozie's *Dimkpa*, as shown in figure 1, is a tall giant sculpture of a man with layers of fabric that join at different points to form its giant-sized figure. The fabrics are brightly coloured and form the base on which the sculpture stands tall with arms akimbo.

The sculpture's chest and head are raised high, showing poise and elegance, with some dance beads tied around its ankles, resembling some traditional masquerades in Nigeria. The artist created this piece using iron support in the form of a man, on which he tied the fabrics in bits and pieces to look like layers

of rags. Having worked on many fabric sculptures, the artists used this piece as a figurative representation of African leaders and showed it for the first time at the National Museum, Lagos.



Fig 1.1 George Edozie, *Dimkpa (Close up)*, Mixed Media, 235cm (H), ©Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art.

“They don't listen to anybody or whatever they listen to is not right. That figure stands very proudly; he raises his head up as though listening to no one. It shows the power the African leader possesses, they can do anything”.

George Edozie describes “*Dimkpa*” with the Igbo proverb “*Dimkpa Eze agwa nam*” which means “a strong man that a King cannot even talk to”. The king, represented by this sculpture, is stubborn and incorrigible.

## CONCLUSION

Although Edozie majored in painting, his experience following the tragic loss of his parents drew him to create stunning fabric sculptures. His fabric sculpture shows that the use of fabrics goes beyond fashion and body adornment to creating beautiful pieces of Art. The tragic event that led to his discovery of fabric sculpting also shows that Art can be used as a tool for channelling thoughts and emotions while addressing social issues.

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