



An exhibition of works by Nigerian women in Art

THE INVINCIBLE HANDS



August 2021 - January 2022 | Curated by Olufisayo Bakare

WELCOME TO *THE INVINCIBLE HANDS*

Dear Friends,

Since the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art opened its doors in 2019, it has successfully hosted two exhibitions. The first: 'Making Matter' and the second: 'Mirroring Man'. Now on the 28th of August, 2021, the YSMA will be hosting its third exhibition: 'The Invincible Hands'. This exhibition focuses on putting the spotlight back on the contributions of female Nigerian artists to the country's art history. This exhibition ties strongly into the YSMA's mission of engaging diverse audiences to advance knowledge about Nigerian art and history through use of artworks within our collection and works on loan. This exhibition is an opportunity for the world to appreciate the efforts of women in the art field and for their voices to be amplified using the YSMA as their platform.

As the exhibition is focused on the achievements of female artists, we have collaborated with Guest Curator, Olufisayo Bakare to curate an impressive catalogue of works from a diverse range of female artists within the country and across different continents to those in diaspora, spanning different eras of art from post-colonial to contemporary. It aims at drawing attention to the unmistakable impact women have had in the history of art. It will include art works of different mediums featuring paintings, photography, tapestry and textiles, sculpture, leather, and costumery that testify to the dexterity and skill of women in art.

Since its inception it has been the museum's objective to use its collection to educate its various audiences and this exhibition presents a perfect opportunity for the YSMA to gain more visibility and accessibility, provide more relevant resources on Nigerian art history and collaborate with artists to engage with the public. 'The Invincible Hands' is perfectly in line with our objectives to propagate art education within and outside Nigeria.

We are thrilled to unveil this exhibition to everyone who has visited or will be visiting for the first time. The flexibility of our museum space has allowed the Curator to re-imagine how an exhibition can be orchestrated to bring the story of 'The Invincible Hands' to life. We cannot wait for you to experience it!

Jess Castellote, PhD
Director, Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art
Pan-Atlantic University





Ndiri DIKE
1960

Staff of Office, 1996
Wood

THE INVINCIBLE HANDS

The intersection of art and culture has become the breeding ground for conversations that shape our culture. In an age when information lies at our fingertips, it is now easier to access the contributions of women in society, but the ratio of male to female established artists in Nigeria continues being strongly imbalanced in favour of men. Nigerian Art history shows a considerable disparity between the number, impact, and recognition of male and female artists in the country. The awareness of this disparity in visibility has increased, but women artists continue being underrepresented in the Nigerian Artworld, despite their continuous and valuable contributions to its growth and development. We can ask ourselves, “in an era where the Zaria Rebels were making their mark, where were their female colleagues? And where are they now?”

The Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA), of the Pan-Atlantic University, wants to address this disproportion through an extensive art exhibition at the museum. Titled “Invincible hands”, this new exhibition, curated by Olufisayo Bakare, focuses on the contributions of over 30 contemporary Nigerian women artists whose works cover different periods, and artistic media. Over 80 artworks are on display at the exhibition. They were selected from the permanent collection of the YSMA and from temporary loans by artists and collectors.

Though their works are not shown in the exhibition, “The Invincible Hands” pays homage to the Founding Mothers of Nigerian contemporary art: Clara Etso Ugbodaga-Ngu, Ladi Kwali, Suzanne Wenger, Colette Omogbai, Elisabeth Olowu, Afi Ekong, Theresa Luck-Akinwale and lesser known, but important, contributors like Eunice Okeji, Felicia Adepoju, Abigail Bakare and many others. Each of these women, and the work of their invincible hands, have passed the baton of artistic expression to the fast-growing generation of women. The exhibition of contemporary female artists is set against the backdrop of the notable contributions of Nigerian women artists during country’s formative years.

In presenting these works to a wide audience, the exhibition highlights artistic achievements that transcend stereotyped and reductive achievements of Nigerian women in art. This is the first of its kind at the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, where a woman, designer-cum-curator Olufisayo Bakare, is tackling the issue of underrepresentation of female artists, giving credence to their individuality, voices and creativity. The exhibition aims at being an active agent in giving these artists higher visibility. The goal of “Invincible hands” is to celebrate the contribution of underrepresented Nigerian women artists in post-colonial and contemporary eras, to amplify their work and bridge inequality gaps in the art sector and to place The Invincible Hands of women artists back into our art education and art history. The exhibition is on view at the museum from August 28, 2021 through January 25, 2022.



ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION

Fati ABUBAKAR • Anne ADAMS • Tosin AKINGBA • Peju ALATISE

Lucy AZUBUIKE • Olawunmi BANJO • Nike DAVIES-OKUNDAYE

Ndidi DIKE • Nathalie DJAKOU KASSI • Nmadinachi EGWIM

Yagazie EMEZI • Anthea EPELLE • Juliet EZENWA MAJA-PEARCE

Modupeola FADUGBA • Taiye IDAHOR • Ayobola KEKERE-EKUN

Peju LAYIWOLA • Amuche NNABUEZE • Abigail NNAJI

Anthonia NNEJI • Chidinma NNOLI • Chigozie OBI

Wura-Natasha OGUNJI • Bolaji OGUNROSOYE • Jenny OJEH

Amarachi OKAFOR • May OKAFOR • Nnenna OKORIE

Nngozi OMEJE • Nengi OMUKU • Veronica OTIGBO-EKPEI

Tiwa SAGOE • Damilola TEJUOSO • RitaDoris UBAH

Omoligho UDETA • Yadichinma UKOHA-KALU • Winifred UKPONG

Susanne WENGER



Tiwa SAGOE
1997

Hidden Treasures, Buries Truths (02), 2013
Medium

WORDS FROM THE CURATOR

Throughout the cross section of creative expression in Nigeria, women have placed themselves at the forefront of movements by indomitably championing the preservation of culture as pioneers of artistic advancement. Although the development of Nigerian art is still in an equivocal stage of maturation, it is imperative that the influence of women in Nigeria's history and more contemporary eras are given due recognition. This visual dialogue serves to fill the erroneous void between primogenitors and their identifiable successors by balancing perspectives within a visual historiography of modern art.

Women have often been acceptably recognized as muses for the sake of art, but this archetype pales in comparison to the unapologetic Femme Fatale women who dwell in uncharted territories of creative expression. As a symbolic passing of the baton, the exploration of works by upper echelon female Nigerian artists forges a cross-cultural exchange of visual ideas, paying homage to the handiwork of matriarchs who have shifted culture through technique, and shaped history by inspiring creativity.

In an era where the 'Zaria Rebels' were making their mark, by denouncing Western techniques in their creative expressions, the likes of Clara Etso Ugbodaga-Ngu (1921-1996) established the Nigerian Modernism movement, by helping to guard, protect, and influence the interests of Nigerian artists. By 1955, she became the only Nigerian teacher in the Fine Art Department of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria. Her international training awarded her the right to be an art educator, teaching the members of the Art Society popularly known as the 'Zaria Rebels,' consisting of art students who pioneered post-colonial modernism in Nigeria, namely: Jimo Akolo, M. A. Ajayi, Afi Ekong, Erhabor Emokpae, T. A. Fasuyi, Yusuf Grillo, Festus Idehen, Felix Idubor, J. Nkobi, Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke, Aina Onabolu, and Bruce Onobrakpeya. Her contributions to the arts helped build bridges across the Black race. This exhibition helps to put the histories of astounding contributors like Clara Etso in a chronological order, forever.

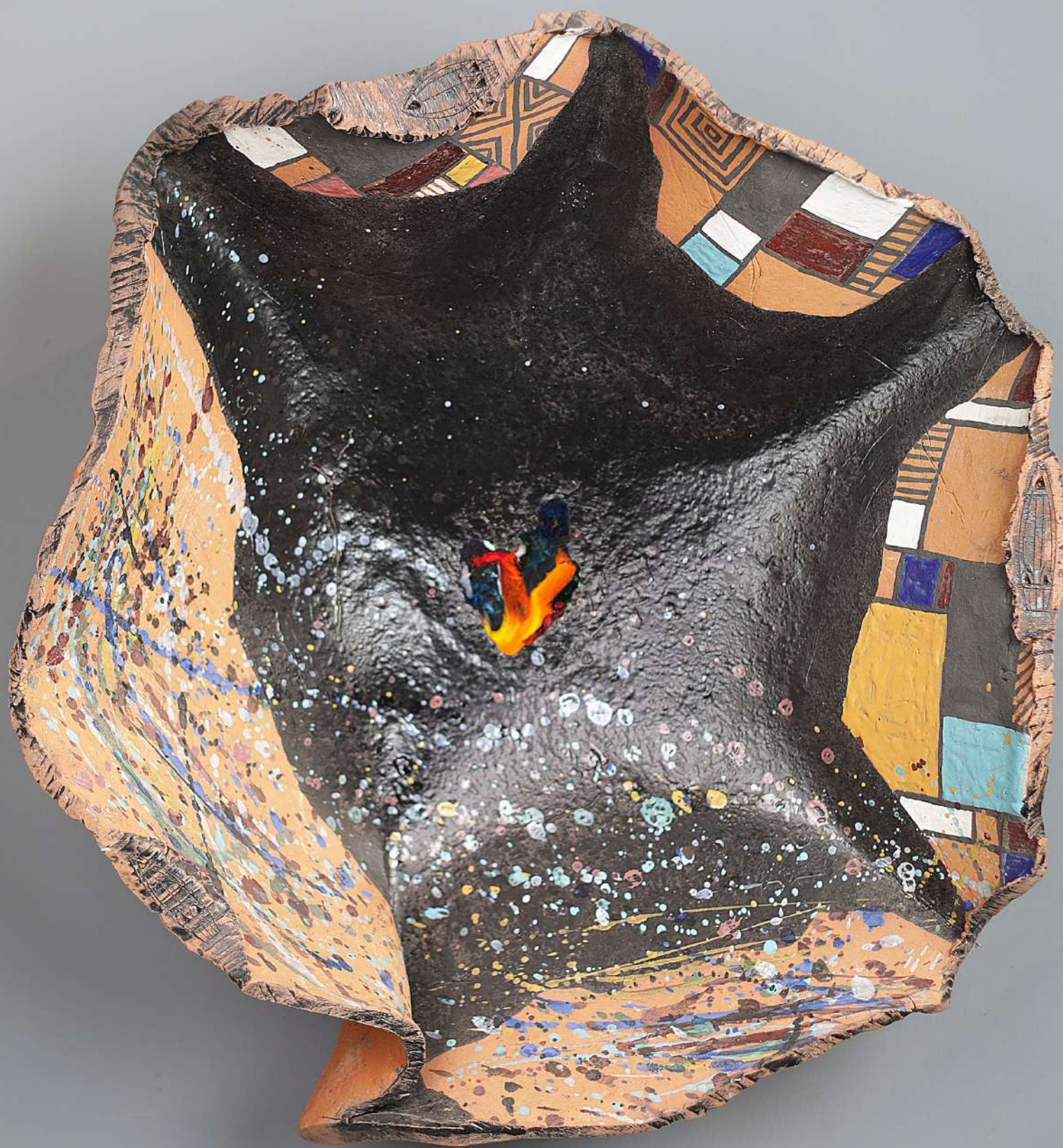


CURATOR'S PROFILE

With a background in Interior Design, Olufisayo Bakare has trained her eye to find rare balance between simplicity and African artistry in her work. Her keen interest in 'carving the phenomenal out of the familiar' has inspired her curatorial practice by establishing her as an ally in the preservation, documentation, and representation of African culture through various art forms. The designer-cum-curator pays close attention to the works of indigenous and Pan-African artists and maker communities by establishing unique platforms for accessibility. Positioned as a cultural gatekeeper of Black histories, she recognizes that educating the masses through artistic and cultural ecosystems are at the bedrock of society. By connecting varied dialogues through an exchange of ideas, Bakare celebrates histories and their underpinned symbology. Having dedicated over a decade of her career to supporting the arts, Bakare has stepped into the limelight by partnering with The Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art to enforce their mandate by assisting with their mission of educating through the arts.

She is an integral part of the 'Precolonial Societies of Nigeria' program, formulating the teaching manual for the Ile-Ife precolonial society. Buttressing this, Bakare is an active member of the ongoing 'Museums of the Future' program facilitated by the Goethe Institut. Bakare's passion for travel, anthropology, and culture have aided her several platforms of expression with businesses such as Interior Living, and The Yellow of Lagos. She is joining forces with institutions like the YSMA to curate exhibitions and construct site-specific installations within the creative sector and art world.





Nathalie DJAKOU-KASSIE
1975

Emerging Truth, 2018
Medium-Glazed Clay



ABOUT THE YSMA

The Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA), Pan-Atlantic University is an educational museum at the service of the university and the whole community. At the center of YSMA's mission is a desire to help audiences learn about art through art and educational programs. YSMA believes that fine art, besides allowing viewers to experience multiple forms of beauty, meaning, and skill, can be an excellent educational resource to help persons of all ages engage, discover and learn about the history and culture of Nigeria. YSMA along with PAU offer transformative educational experiences and have the integral formation of the individual and the advancement of responsible citizenship as the core mission. YSMA is committed to contributing to the achievement of this goal by offering PAU students, faculty, staff and visitors a valuable resource to develop a deep appreciation for the visual arts.



Olawunmi BANJO
1985

Comforter, 2013
Oil And Acrylic On Canvas



Bolaji OGUNRONSOYE
1975

Paper Collage 027, 2020
Mixed Media, Collage on archival paper

The exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support given by Kayode Adegbola, Tola Adesanmi, Demi Adewumi and Lakunle Runsewe, collectively known as Art Friends.



Nhenna OKORE
1975

Unearthed, 2018
Polyurethane and acrylic

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