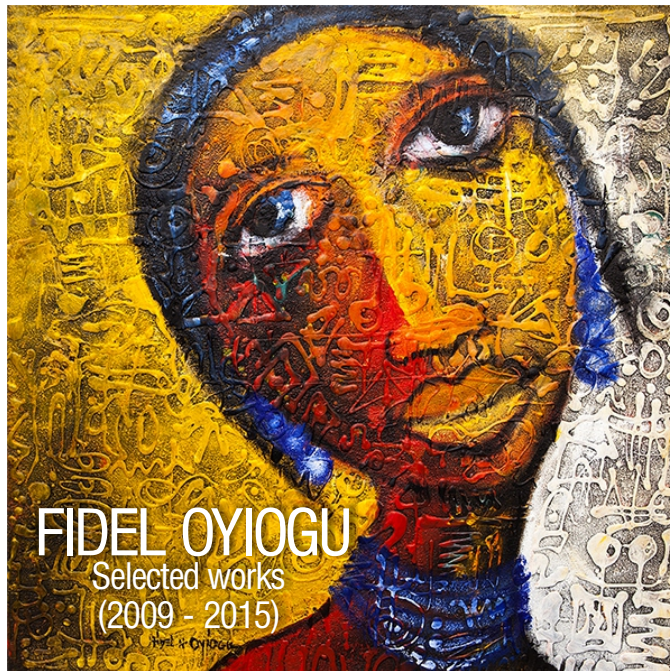


EXUBERANCE, FORMS and the NOTION of SELF



23 Jan -13 Feb 2016
166 Plymouth Grove Road,
Ardwick, M13 0AF

CHUCK
GALLERY
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and hypnotic femininity, is an ideal choice to usher in this wonderful new venture in Manchester.

It is vital that the African renaissance is sustained and a 'boom' and 'bust' scenario is avoided. This can and will be achieved through high quality art, knowledgeably curated and supported by a passionate and discerning audience who are increasingly keen to patronize African artists from the continent and its diaspora. The Chuck gallery and its founder are well positioned to play their part in this exciting journey of discovery.

Oba Nsugbe QC, SAN is a practising lawyer and part-time judge. He is a Visiting Professor of Law at City University, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Trustee of the Africa Centre and a member of the Tate African Arts Acquisition Committee.

Gallery Owner Statement

The objective of the team at Chuck Gallery is to continue the time honoured tradition of promoting access, and facilitating engagement with creative endeavours. This comes from the realisation that art enriches both the individual and the community at large; and so, as administrators and curators of art, the responsibility for sustaining art appreciation rests on us.

The gallery's aim is to be the leading destination for contemporary African art in Manchester and beyond and as such, focuses on providing a varied

collection of high quality original artwork, as well as providing exceptional service. Our collection comprises of an eclectic mix; ranging from realism to abstract impressionism, ensuring all tastes are catered to. Although our clients are free to browse the collection as they please, our helpful staff are on hand to provide impartial, expert advice; guaranteeing a pleasant, hassle-free buying experience.

Chuck Gallery is proud to continue identifying, sourcing and representing outstanding work from both established and emerging

artists, and bringing that work to clients' attention through regular exhibitions and artist attendances. In light of this, the gallery has put together a selection of Fidel Oyiogu's paintings, as a visual representation of his artistic competence and character. Although requirements for being regarded as a master painter are subjective, Fidel in our opinion, is in company with respectable Nigerian painters such as: Kola Oshinowo, Tola Wewe, Duke Asidere, Mavua Lessor, Rom Isichei, Nike Davies (Okundaye), Ben Osaghae, Muraina Oyelami, Emeka Udemba, et al.

By presenting Fidel's works, the intention is to construct a pathway to cultural consciousnesses and illumination. It is also to allow images and symbols from his collection evoke nostalgic associations, rekindling reminiscences of long gone events and happenings.

In the exhibition collection aptly titled, "*Exuberance, Forms and the Notion of Self: Selected Works from 2009-2015*", a pertinent theme, subtly explored is the question of 'the female sense of self'. This pertains to the role of women in socio-cultural

relations, and the need to understand place and standing in a patriarchal society. It would seem that the artist ponders on the female experience in traditional-modern society with questions such as: What underlies and characterises her experience and sensibilities? Can the quest to know and assert self be revealed and manifest in exuberant coquetry? In essence, the artist utilises visual narratives of female experiences within traditional-modern context, to engage with present-day gender debates.

So, welcome folks! Our priority is

that your encounter with our collection is experiential, so we urge you to interact and engage with the collection. Please enjoy the paintings and indulge in the Chuck Gallery atmosphere. It is an absolute pleasure having you with us today.

Chukwudi Onwudiwe
Director, Chuck Gallery.

Curator's Note

CHANCE

The tale of how Fidel Oyiogu's works came to be adopted for the Chuck Gallery inaugural exhibition is a fascinating one indeed. It began in early October 2015, at a breakfast meeting with gallery director Chukwudi Onwudiwe, where Oyiogu was expected to show his recent work. Although there was little doubt as to Oyiogu's pedigree as one of the leading Nigerian artists in the last decade, the director and I were unexpectedly endeared to the pieces presented at the meeting.

Three works stood out to me and upon closer inspection, I was enamoured by their sipping liquidity and drips of washes; so much so, that they become ephemeral forms typical of dissolving apparition. These paintings - catalysts that literally break the wheel of fortune into open-ended musing - were produced in quick succession, over a 5 year period. *Iru Mgbede Day* (2010), *A Drift in the Dream* (2014) and *Dance Rehearsal* (2015), in my opinion, represent a staggering disruption in the works of Oyiogu since the harmattan of 1993 when he announced his presence on Lagos art

scene with eudemonic female dancers noteworthy for their largely elongated forms and bright monochrome which transforms their canvases' textures. It was this trio of undulating forms, realised in spontaneous wash mounted alongside other paintings before us that opened the doors to this project.

Other paintings on display that day, which will go on to comprise the collection for *Exuberance, Forms and the Notion of Self* echoed familiar styles, but with reinforced weight. They critically negotiate between discourses associated with post-

colonial Nigeria nostalgia, georhetoric sentimentalism and figuration alluding to intimate scrutinies bordering on self and identity, as well as documenting South Eastern realism which has over the past 20 years, taken centre stage and assumes different spines in Oyiogu's temperance.

The collection came to me or rather, was given to us, 'fully made' or 'complete' with its narrative already fashioned. Hence there was no need for mapping the collection into context, formulating a theorizing strategy for grounding them along

boundaries of historical speculation or forcing them into bipolar cultural fields as is standard practice of curators. All that was needed was to reappraise its compositional dynamics without any attempt to amend the 'gospel'.

I'm not going to assume the role of a mediator in this circumstance – between Oyiogu's works and the public but would rather let the artist and his works speak for themselves. I doubt that Oyiogu realised the conversational possibilities engendered in the collection of old and recent works, randomly put

together from his studio and set up for our viewing that day. Whatever the case was, I believe he will be interested in seeking answers if he is not persuaded as I am, to attribute the entire affair to chance.

Ekiko Ita Inyang
Curator, Chuck Gallery.



Amina (2009). Acrylic and glue on canvas. 92cm x 92cm



Glamorous Dance (2014). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 120cm x 90cm



Ada Ugo. Acrylic, cretonne, glue and wood on canvas. 91cm x 91cm



Iru-Mgbede Day (2010). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 60cm x 106cm



Who Are Mine (2015). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 66cm x 90cm



Exchange Point (2014). Acrylic glue and cretonne on canvas. 130cm x 98cm



My Roses Beside Me (2009). Acrylic and Cretonne on canvas. 92cm x 110cm



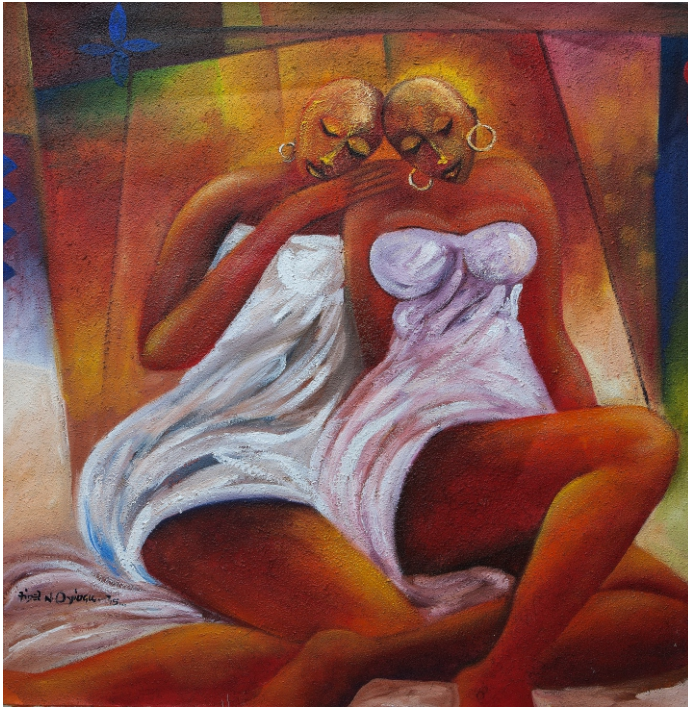
Sage Musings (2011). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 61cm x 91cm



Ugo Nma and the Little Elephant (2015). Acrylic on Canvas. 92cm x 92cm



Admiration II (2014). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 122cm x 85cm



Twins (2015). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas.
92cm x 92cm



Dance Rehearsal (2015).
Acrylic on Canvas.
122cm x 62cm



State of Mind (2013). Acrylic and cretonne on canvas. 31.2cm x 31.2cm



Admiration III. Acrylic and cretonne on canvas.
92cm x 92cm



A Drift in the Dream (2014). Acrylic
and cretonne on canvas. 122cm x 80cm

Artist Biography

Fidel Nnamdi Oyiogu, (born 1957, Nigeria) studied at the famous Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) in Enugu, Nigeria between 1980 and 1985, obtaining both an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND). From 1987 to 1992, his early career involved roles as a senior cartoonist for 'The Mail' and then, as the pioneer executive cartoonist for Champion Newspaper; after which he went into full time studio practice.

During his time as an illustrator, he featured in four group exhibitions,

including one at the Aragon Art Gallery in Germany and the Goethe Institute in Lagos. It was here, he drew public attention to his arresting feminine forms, embellished with rare monochromes that retain a lofty density of aquamarine, red and yellow hues on a rich and an encrusted canvas surface—partly referencing the Igbo Uli mural painting of South-Eastern Nigeria.

Oyiogu, whose works are said to be heavily inspired by the works of both British sculptor Henry Moore (1898 – 1986), for whom Oyiogu has a strong admiration and Nigerian sculptor

and wood carver Olowe Ise (1875 – 1938), describes his works as a reflection of “*our value, the way we are, our social life, religion, and cultural heritage*”. The almost transformative sinuous movements of his figuration however, elicit a critical appreciation of his early career as a cartoonist, as the expressive quality and rich colours make his works an easy composition to love.

After almost a decade of Oyiogu's approach and visual politicization of the Igbo aesthetic system, giving way to novel stylized female forms, a

critic, Ekiko Ita Inyang, had this to say about his exhibition ***Woman Forms & Desires***:

“If what was required to fan the dying embers of postcolonial African art, into a fresh discourse of artistic contemplation and public reception were only a pair of 'time bombs' planted in the early 1980s, the first explosion foreclosed the debate on the primitivism of African art; and at the same time brought down the ideological brick wall of racial prejudice in the art public of Western Europe and America, towards its formal appraisal in Africa. This feat has been achieved by the likes of

Ibrahim El Salahi of Sudan through his experiment with Islamic calligraphy; Uche Okeke and Obiora Udechuckwu with Uli mural painting of South-Eastern Nigeria; Zahirun Yetmetega and Korsof, extensively drawing from the reservoir of Ethiopian religious text, derived from several liturgical scrolls; and the Ghanaian master El Anatsui in relation to both the element of Adikran and Nsibidi in Nigeria. The second however, only exploded three decades after, detonated by notable contributions of Oyiogu's growing body of work.¹⁷

REFERENCE:

1. Fidel N. Oyiogu, Woman Forms & Desires: Fidel N. Oyiogu, (Lagos, 2012).

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