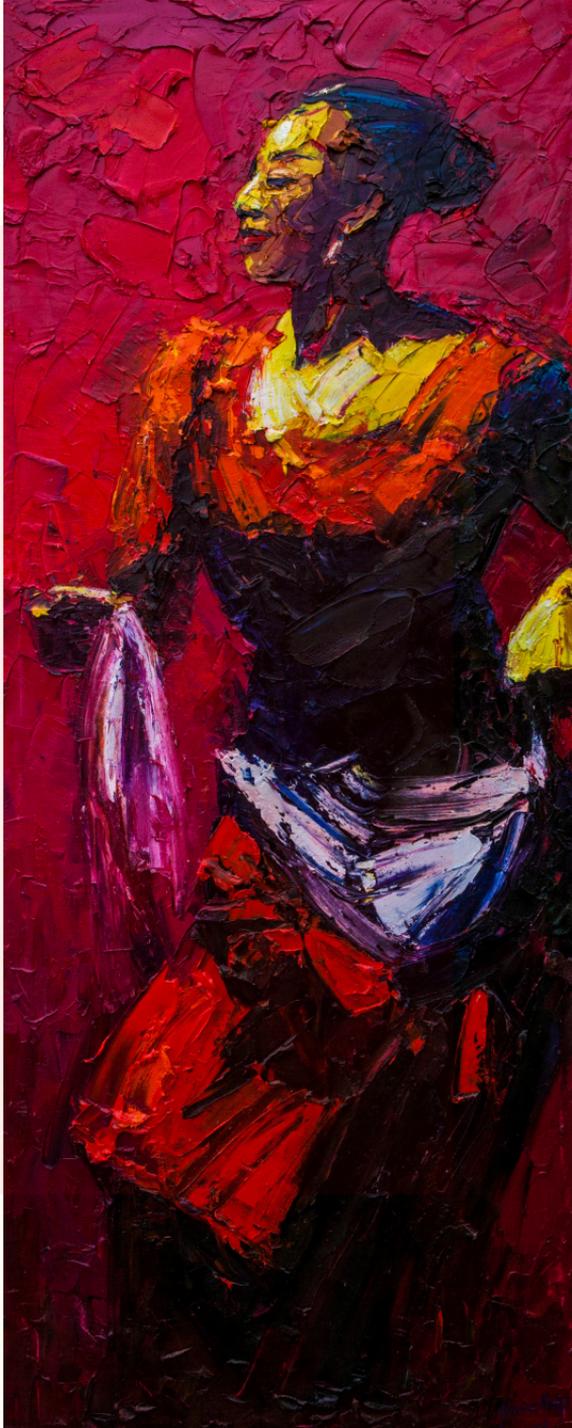


## **Rhapsody** (2017)

This work spotlights one of the dancer from a performance troupe at Henry Akwara's father's funeral in Amaeghuato Nkpa, Umuahia, arousing the interest of Ogunwo. The bodily movement of the dancer is submerged in contrasting transition as it both recalls kinetics of fine repose and sinuous stride at levitation. The body, especially set in motion, delights Ogunwo to paint — from figures on horses to dancers in ceremonies often depicted in moments of glamour and elegance. There's even conscious effort on the part of Ogunwo to ensure titles exploring this theme mirrors the subject to a large extent. This emphasis is carried onto the work here.

**"Rhapsody" 2017**

Oil on Canvas  
69 x 29.5 inches





**"Lighter Mood" 2017**  
Acrylic on Canvas  
71 x 59 inches ( 3 Panels)



### **Lighter Mood** (2017)

This triptych recalls distinct costuming practice by performance artist Yusuf Durodola. Ogunwo seamlessly elevated imageries from one of his performance into an hybrid of bodily decoration and portraiture. Important moments in the performance were variously recalled on the panels — showing the subjects in reflective and amusing moods. The outcome of Ogunwo's bright colours interpreted in beautiful blue monochrome dominating the subjects' form enliven the work.



**"Above and Beyond" 2017**

Oil on Canvas  
22 x 71 inches

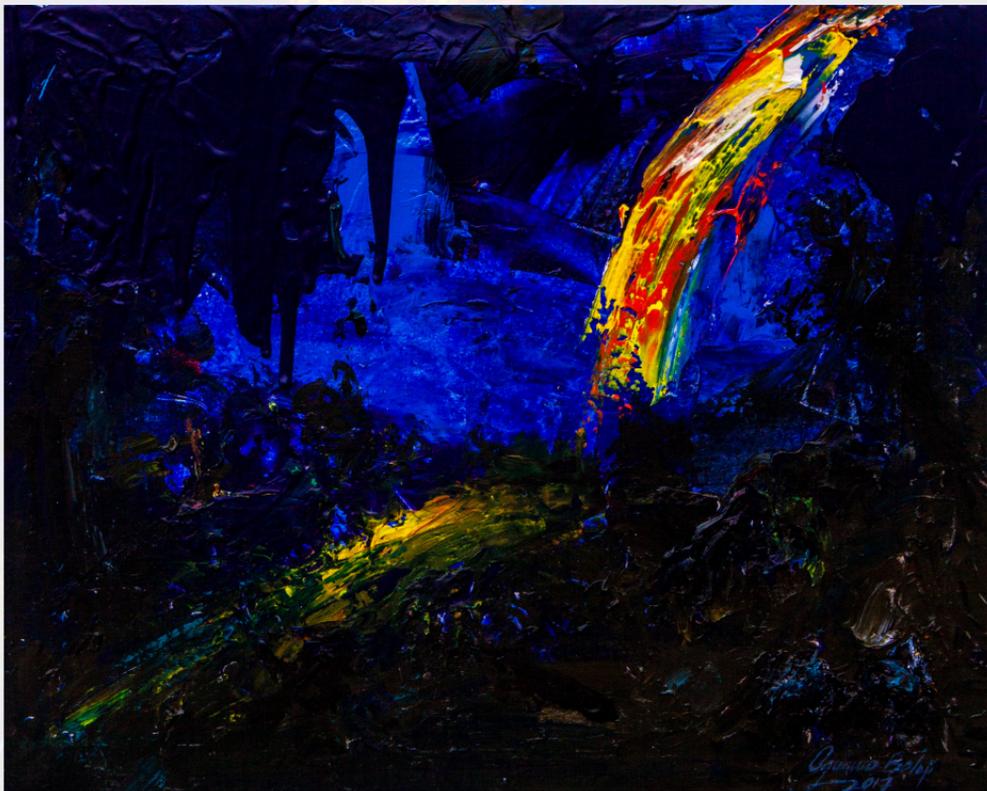
Over a period of three years Ogunwo have produced series of magnificent water-lily paintings punctuated with dense atmospheric lights sweeping through its vast, dazzling pond. The work is based on previous studies and was painted from memory by the artist. The cluster of purple, violet blue, aquamarine — displaying exotic array within the asparagaceae species of Hyacinth that stretches onto the depth of the canvas beautifully reveals Ogunwo's keen interest in botany and nature.

### **"Aquatic" 2017**

Oil on Canvas  
22 x 71 inches

Ogunwo was driving through Adekunle ascending the Third Mainland Bridge when a view of stilts, bamboo rafts, floating on the lagoon, opened up before him revealing breathtaking scenery of Makoko. He pulled over beside the bridge and smartly took few shoots with his camera, evading harassment from "area boys." Makoko is a coastal slum neighbourhood on the Mainland with population close to 150,000. Earlier settlers arrived there as far back as 18th century for the purpose of fishing. In 2012 Makoko was demolished by the Nigerian Government leaving over 3,500 people homeless. You'll notice houses in the painting are primarily made with wood as there're lumber mills in the place and ironically, building material market, yet sprawling tin can shacks with rustic zinc sheetings adorns the riverine community. The coarse and heavy layering of impasto onto the surface of the work reinforces its scatology, gloomy imagery, and feeling of abandonment.

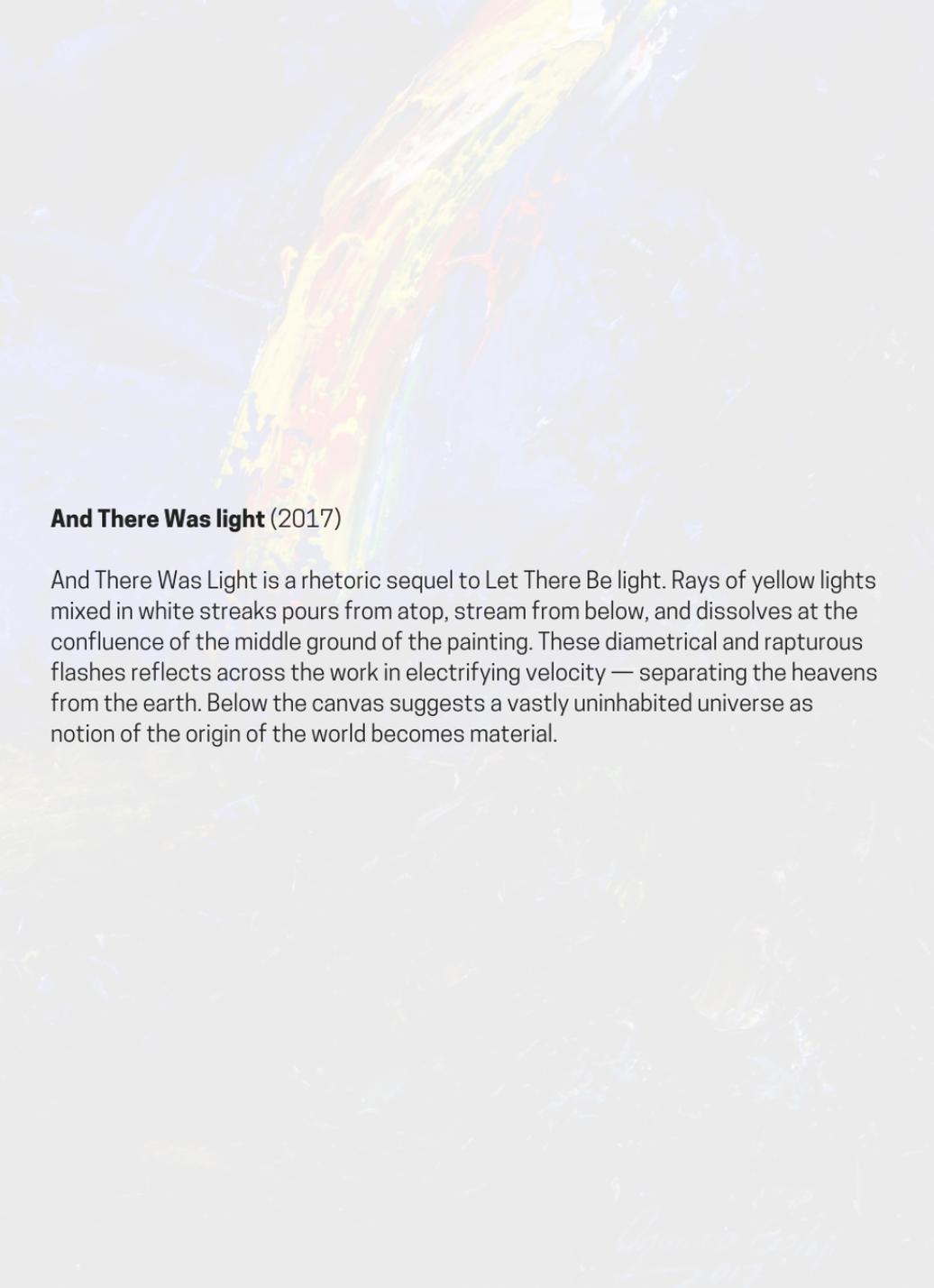




**"And there was Light" 2017**

Acrylic on Canvas

24 x 29.5 inches



**And There Was light** (2017)

And There Was Light is a rhetoric sequel to Let There Be light. Rays of yellow lights mixed in white streaks pours from atop, stream from below, and dissolves at the confluence of the middle ground of the painting. These diametrical and rapturous flashes reflects across the work in electrifying velocity — separating the heavens from the earth. Below the canvas suggests a vastly uninhabited universe as notion of the origin of the world becomes material.



**"Riverside" 2017**

Acrylic on Canvas  
24 x 29.5 inches

## Riverside (2017)

The subject of slum settlement is revisited in this work with reference to houses stretching endlessly into the canvas. Their proximity to each other convey a sordid feeling of disorder and urban congestion typical with canal slums found in Lagos. The waterways highlighted in yellow directs the viewer into the work and open it further so that a vanishing point convey a sense of spatial depth. In some works by Ogunwo engaging similar subject in the past, hints of traders on wooden canoes, dwellers seen around occupied by different activities are introduced to broaden the narrative of the work, but deliberately ignore by the artist so that eminence is placed on the architecture of slum.



**Masters (2017)**

Oil on canvas,  
24 x 71 inches

Though based on several preliminary studies of golfers as pictured in major tournaments, this work in two panels was originally inspired by the golfing tradition of Ringway Golf Club, Hale. The golfer in the painting assumes the position of classical contrapposto as he swings both hands with his club to strike the ball into a hole across the course. The shadow of the golfer was composed by Ogunwo on the other panel so that it's a conceptual extension of the first panel.



## Conversation between the curator, Ekiko Inyang and Bolaji Ogunwo

E: In 2013 you did a solo in Terra Kulture Lagos, how have your works evolved since then, cumulating into what are on display in Chuck Gallery today?

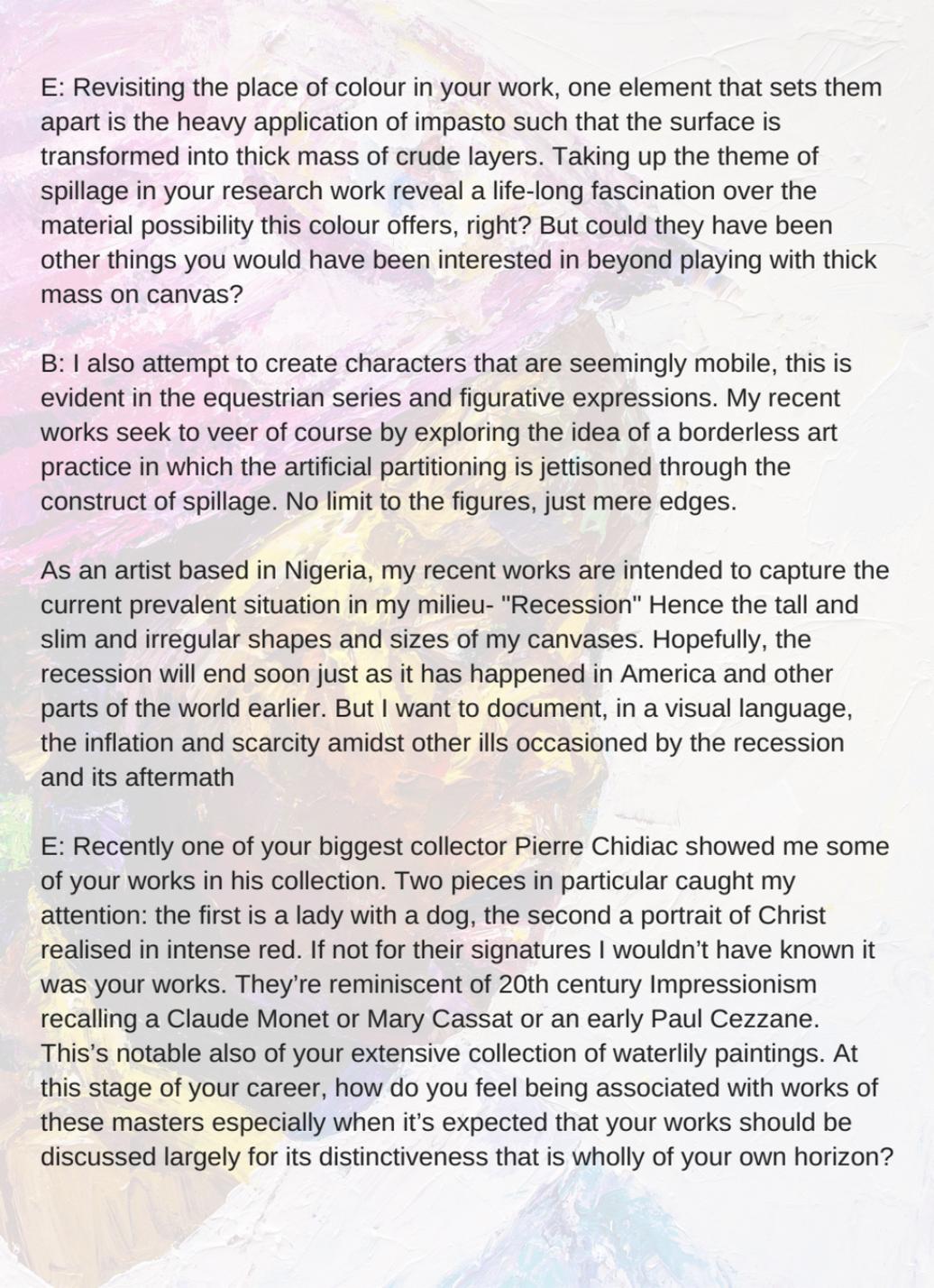
B: Since the solo Exhibition; Visual Cocktail at Terra kulture four years ago, I have churned out several works in a bid to define my art practice in Nigeria and the global visual art space. My oeuvre is largely characterised by "impasto," however recently I have decided to rupture the canonical boundaries that defines chromatic expressions by allowing my subjects to spill beyond the edges of the canvases.

E: You're currently studying for your PhD, does this departure from canonical practice as you try to show in your recent works form part of the discourse in your research work?

B: Yes. My research is intended to explore the concept of "Spillage". This has opened vista's of understanding in my recent thematic possibilities. It has invariably informed the manner at which I approach my frenzied canvases. My research is experimenting Polyol and Methylene Diphenyl Diisocyanate (MDI) to create thicker layer of impasto and overflowing effects of colours.

E: Being a full time art lecturer in the Department of Creative Art, University of Lagos, how do you manage to combine this with active studio practice?

B: Academics is demanding but my passion for my art has been the motivation. My studio is situated in my residence, I wake up early to paint daily before going for my classes coupled with myriads of administrative work in the university. I love colours hence the academic workload can't hamper the passion for my art. I practically practice what I teach and I believe that should be the modus operandi.

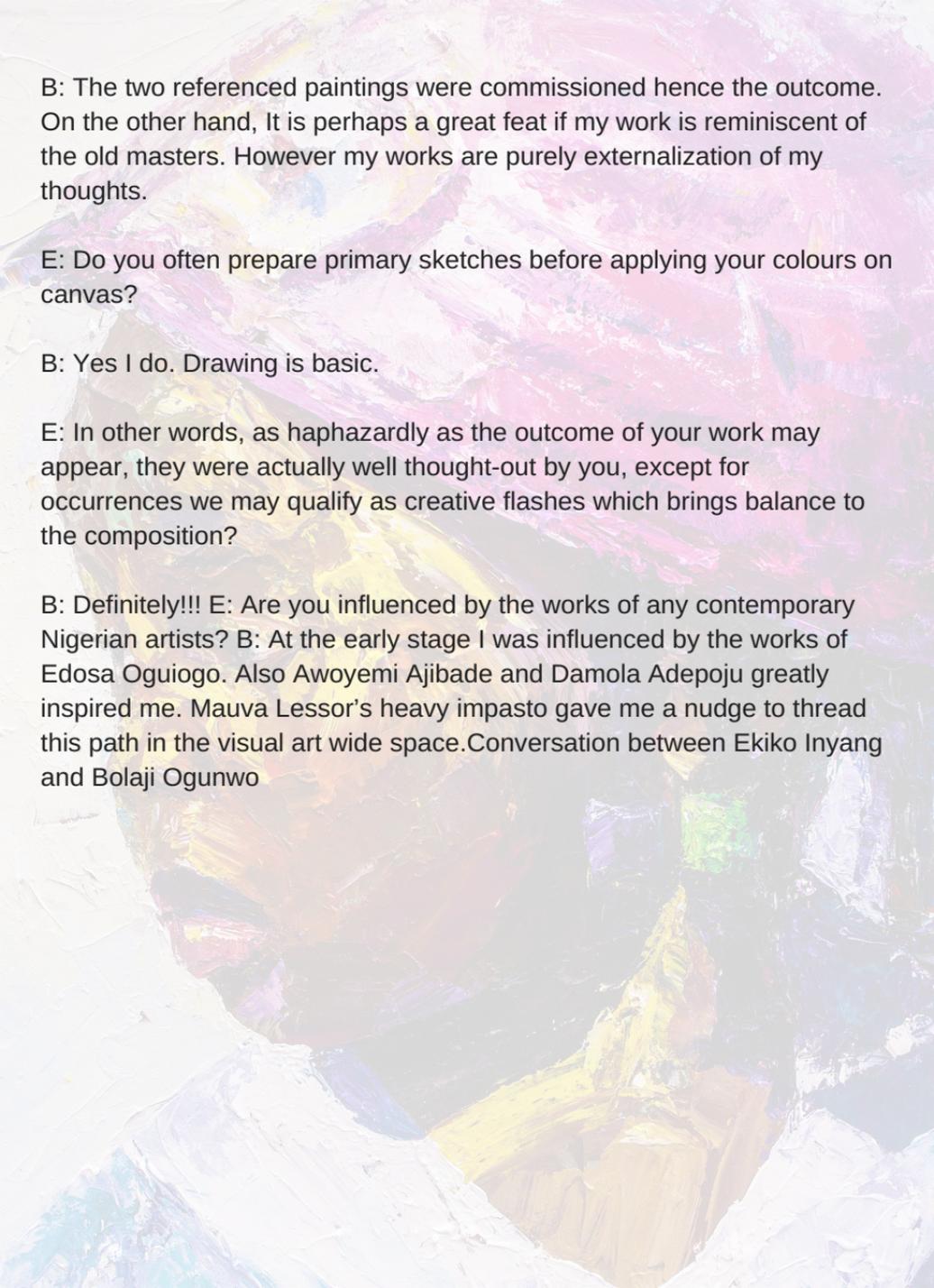


E: Revisiting the place of colour in your work, one element that sets them apart is the heavy application of impasto such that the surface is transformed into thick mass of crude layers. Taking up the theme of spillage in your research work reveal a life-long fascination over the material possibility this colour offers, right? But could they have been other things you would have been interested in beyond playing with thick mass on canvas?

B: I also attempt to create characters that are seemingly mobile, this is evident in the equestrian series and figurative expressions. My recent works seek to veer of course by exploring the idea of a borderless art practice in which the artificial partitioning is jettisoned through the construct of spillage. No limit to the figures, just mere edges.

As an artist based in Nigeria, my recent works are intended to capture the current prevalent situation in my milieu- "Recession" Hence the tall and slim and irregular shapes and sizes of my canvases. Hopefully, the recession will end soon just as it has happened in America and other parts of the world earlier. But I want to document, in a visual language, the inflation and scarcity amidst other ills occasioned by the recession and its aftermath

E: Recently one of your biggest collector Pierre Chidiac showed me some of your works in his collection. Two pieces in particular caught my attention: the first is a lady with a dog, the second a portrait of Christ realised in intense red. If not for their signatures I wouldn't have known it was your works. They're reminiscent of 20th century Impressionism recalling a Claude Monet or Mary Cassat or an early Paul Cezanne. This's notable also of your extensive collection of waterlily paintings. At this stage of your career, how do you feel being associated with works of these masters especially when it's expected that your works should be discussed largely for its distinctiveness that is wholly of your own horizon?



B: The two referenced paintings were commissioned hence the outcome. On the other hand, It is perhaps a great feat if my work is reminiscent of the old masters. However my works are purely externalization of my thoughts.

E: Do you often prepare primary sketches before applying your colours on canvas?

B: Yes I do. Drawing is basic.

E: In other words, as haphazardly as the outcome of your work may appear, they were actually well thought-out by you, except for occurrences we may qualify as creative flashes which brings balance to the composition?

B: Definitely!!! E: Are you influenced by the works of any contemporary Nigerian artists? B: At the early stage I was influenced by the works of Edosa Oguiogo. Also Awoyemi Ajibade and Damola Adepoju greatly inspired me. Mauva Lessor's heavy impasto gave me a nudge to thread this path in the visual art wide space. Conversation between Ekiko Inyang and Bolaji Ogunwo

Bolaji Ogunwo was trained in the university of Benin, he was one of the pioneering set of the Postgraduate programme in the Department of Creative arts, University of Lagos, Akoka in 2006. His works can be found in notable places around the globe.

A Prolific portraitist; Bolaji has participated in 42 local and international art shows and 2 solo exhibition to his credit. He is a staunch member of The society of Nigerian artist, Lagos Chapter. The artist is currently a PhD research scholar in Delta state University Abraka, Delta state and a painting Lecturer in the Department of Creative arts, University of Lagos, Nigeria.



#### **Artist's Statement.**

My art is informed by the people and events that permeate my milieu. In the course of my artistic career spanning over a decade, I have resolved not to be led primarily by the trending thematic and stylistic culture in the art practice, but to see and represent ideas the way I feel and not just the way they are, hence my art is cathartic; a purgation of my emotions on frenzied canvases.

I ventilate loudly via rich texture through my palette aimed at addressing the socio-political and economic subjects.



166 PLYMOUTH GROVE  
M13 0AF  
MANCHESTER  
CHUCKGALLERY.COM  
01612228688, +44741744518