



PRESS RELEASE

Lagos, Nigeria

Nigeria's kó Gallery debuts at Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Manarat Al Saadiyat, presenting artists Bruce Onobrakpeya and Ngozi-Omeje Ezema.

kó is pleased to announce its participation in the *Special Projects* Section of Abu Dhabi Art Fair, November 16–20, 2022: a curated section for galleries dedicated to solo and dual artist presentations.

Bruce Onobrakpeya (b. 1932, Nigeria) has been integral in developing the modern tradition of Nigerian art through a reinvigoration of indigenous iconographies. Throughout his career spanning over fifty years, Onobrakpeya has cemented himself as one of Nigeria's most celebrated contemporary artists. As a member of the Zaria Arts Society at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology in the 1960s, popularly known as the "Zaria Rebels," Onobrakpeya combined his training in the Western-representational style with a focus on Nigeria's artistic traditions. Experimenting with diverse mediums including printmaking, painting, sculpture, and installation, his works reference history, myths, cosmology, and pattern. His unconventional processes have sparked new art techniques in printmaking and relief sculpture, notably in his work with additive plastography. This presentation includes limited edition prints of murals Onobrakpeya composed for the Arts and Crafts Pavilion at the Nigerian Independence Trade Fair in 1960. These works demonstrate Onobrakpeya's unflagging attention to the ways in which narrative, symbols and allegory activate the social, spiritual, and political life of a people. They also act as historic documents that capture the living repositories of beliefs and practices that comprise the archive of lost and increasingly endangered indigenous knowledge.

Ngozi-Omeje Ezema (b. 1979, Nigeria) is a ceramic artist who creates immersive installations with suspended fragments of terracotta. Her work often forms the shape of animals and objects that take on metaphorical connotations and symbolic meanings. The form of the vessel and the leaf are prominent motifs in her sculptures, bringing into focus environments, concepts, and materials in transition, altered continually by ecological processes as well as human action. Ezema uses transparent nylon thread to hang ceramic pieces that collectively hang together as a whole. As suspended installations, they suggest the interplay between stillness and movement, fragmentation and collectivity. Taking her personal experiences as a point of departure, her work addresses issues relating to identity, family and the female body.

kó is an art gallery based in Lagos, Nigeria, that is dedicated to promoting modern and contemporary art. kó has a dual focus in championing Nigeria's leading artists from the modern period and celebrating emerging and established contemporary artists across Africa and the Diaspora.



ABOUT BRUCE ONOBRAKEPEYA

Born in Agbarha-Otor in Delta State, Nigeria in 1932, Bruce Onobrakpeya's career began during his studies at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology in Zaria in the 1960s as a member of the Zaria Arts Society alongside other pioneering figures like Yusuf Grillo, Demas Nwoko, and Uche Okeke. He has participated in artist residencies and professorships both in Nigeria and abroad and has exhibited in major international arts institutions, including the Tate Modern (UK), the National Museum of African Art of the Smithsonian Institution (USA), and the Malmö Konsthall in Malmö (Sweden). His honors include the British Council Award (1969), Pope Paul VI Gold Medal (1977), Fulbright-Hays Award (1979), Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Ibadan (1989), the Bendel Merit Award (1990), the Delta State Merit Award for excellence in Arts (1995), the 5th Triennial India Silver Medal (1982); the Asele Institute Certificate of Honour (1985); the Solidra Circle Award (1985), and Member of the Federal Republic, MFR, (2002).

ABOUT NGOZI-OMEJE EZEMA

Ngozi-Omeje Ezema received her BA in Fine and Applied Arts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and an MFA in ceramics from the same institution. She currently serves as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where she teaches ceramics. Her first solo exhibition, *Connecting Deep*, was held at Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Lagos in 2018. She also participated in the First International Biennale in Central China and *Le Pinceau De L'Integration* in Senegal during the Dakar Biennale in 2016. She was commissioned for a special project installation at Art X Lagos in 2016. In 2019, she won the High Excellence Award at the Cheongju International Craft Biennale in South Korea. Her work has also been a part of exhibitions at the Dakar Biennial, the Biennale of Sculpture Ouagadougou, the Korea International Ceramics Biennale, and the 60th Contemporary Ceramic Biennale – Premio Faenza, Italy. Ezema has participated in artist residencies with the Centre for Contemporary Art/Triangle Art Trust, Lagos; Goethe-Institut Nigeria, Nsukka; Sevshoon Art Centre (Seattle); Goethe Institute Ghana, Kumasi, and the Triangle Art Trust, Jos. Her solo exhibition, *Boundless Vases*, was held at KÓ in Lagos in 2021.