



Art SG

January 22-25, 2026

Diana Ejaita

Modupeola Fadugba

Obiora Udechukwu

Marina Bay Sands, Singapore | Booth **FC15**

kó, the art gallery in Lagos, Nigeria, dedicated to modern and contemporary art in Africa and the Diaspora, is pleased to participate at Art SG 2026. This presentation engages a cross-generational dialogue of artistic practices in Nigeria, featuring modernist Obiora Udechukwu alongside contemporary artists Modupeola Fadugba and Diana Ejaita. Spanning several decades, between the 1960s and the present, this group presentation explores how these artists reflect on themes of memory, ritual, and form, from Udechukwu's early expressions of conflict and cultural recovery, to Fadugba's re-imagining of community and celebration, to Ejaita's quiet rituals of selfhood and desire.

Obiora Udechukwu (b. 1946, Onitsha, Nigeria) emerged early in his career as a key figure in Nigerian modernism and was a founding member of the AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artists, a group founded in the 1980s alongside El Anatsui. As a pioneer of Nigeria's Nsukka School, he developed a distinctive style that merged traditional Igbo design systems, particularly Uli and Nsibidi, with figurative composition to explore social and political realities. Udechukwu became a leading artist of the Nsukka School, which was known for its experimental embrace of artistic practices and academic approach in reinvigorating contemporary art in Nigeria. Today, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is known as one of the leading university art programs in the country.

Udechukwu's early works respond directly to the trauma of the Nigerian Civil War, reflecting on the devastating impact of the flight over Biafra. Included in this presentation is Udechukwu's iconic painting oil painting, **Blue Figures (Refugees)** from 1968. Depicting two figures, their bodies emaciated due to the starvation crisis that accompanied the war, Udechukwu captures a moment of uncertainty and strife. The elongated figures, captured in a vivid blue tone, are juxtaposed with a vibrant red background, suggesting the landscape ablaze in fire. It was the Nigerian Civil War that spawned the international humanitarian organization, Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières), due to the shocking photographs of famine that proliferated the international media. This period had a profound impact on Udechukwu's practice, and he would revisit the memory of the war throughout his later years.

Reflecting on this painting, Udechukwu explains: "At the time I painted this work in 1968, I was myself a refugee in Biafra, having previously fled from two towns. The sight of naked, starving people, especially children, affected me so deeply that I was compelled to record what I witnessed and its impact on me. I wanted to create the right combination of location, atmosphere, forms, and color that would convey both."

In more recent works created with graphite on paper, Udechukwu explores the tradition of Uli art, known for its rhythmic lines, symbolic gestures, and abstract forms, to explore broader philosophical and spiritual concerns. Uli art is a traditional Igbo form of art making from



Southeastern Nigeria, featuring curvilinear designs that were traditionally created for body art and house murals, mostly made by women. In the 1980s, Udechukwu and his peers at the Nsukka School decontextualized this traditional practice in a modern framework, adopting the visual language into contemporary art practice. In this series, Udechukwu continues his exploration of masks, a theme that he has explored throughout his career though his captivation by the masquerade: the music, dance, art and drama that come together to create the spectacle. African masquerades are vibrant, traditional performances involving masked dancers embodying spirits, ancestors, or natural forces, serving vital religious, social, and cultural roles in festivals, rituals, and rites of passage, using elaborate costumes and symbolic movements to connect the physical and spiritual worlds. Udechukwu explains: "The most important for me is the mask, the "face" of each particular ancestral spirit that comes into the world of humans on a given occasion. In the *Mask* series of drawings, I explore the use of the anthropomorphic and abstract forms and marks to capture the distinctiveness and otherworldliness of each mask."

In dialogue with Udechukwu's practice are two contemporary artists, Modupeola Fadugba and Diana Ejaita.

Modupeola Fadugba (b. 1986, Lome, Togo) is a Nigerian artist whose recent series reflects the cultural significance of the Ojude Oba Festival, a celebration of Yoruba heritage that reflects deep communal ties and pride. The festival honors the powerful bond between the Monarch and his people in Ijebuland, symbolizing identity, unity, and collective purpose. Her recent works focus on the everyday labor and intimate acts of preparation that underlie the festival, foregrounding the skilled hands and local craft traditions behind its pageantry. Trained in chemical engineering, Fadugba brings a unique technical precision to her process, rendered in layered surfaces of beads, graphite, ink, gold leaf, acrylic, and delicately burned paper. Inspired by the refinement of Japanese surimono prints, she incorporates visible pencil lines and unfinished elements to emphasize process and the richness of detail.

In Modupeola Fadugba's *Coke and Singer* (2025), a seamstress leans over her Singer machine; beside her, a Coca-Cola bottle glints in the same light. Floral fabrics and striped aso-oke fold Western consumer signifiers into a distinctly local scene, showing how relaxation and industry cross cultures. The scorched surface reads as residue of making: not damage, but evidence of process. The beaded fringe is a quiet applause for the hands that stitch and rest, for people who find joy inside discipline.

Modupeola Fadugba's *Lone Stallion* (2025) depicts a solitary horse rendered through meticulous beadwork on a scorched canvas. The figure serves as a symbol of solo determination and self-focus, strength sustained through inward resolve rather than outward motion. The work extends the ideas explored in Fadugba's poem addressed to a young artist, which reflects on trusting one's inner compass and committing to a personal path despite solitude. Here, those reflections shift terrain, moving from language into material form. Each bead becomes an act of attention and persistence, while the burned canvas suggests endurance and transformation. *Lone Stallion* frames solitude not as isolation, but as agency, an affirmation of independence shaped by discipline and self-belief.

Modupeola Fadugba's *In The King's Seat II* (2025), a beaded saddle, rich with embellishment, rests on a scorched, confetti canvas, a contrast of ornamentation and erosion. The saddle, a symbol of power and procession, speaks to equestrian culture and the unseen labor behind pageantry. Each bead is an archive, each stitch a story, echoing the artist's lifelong relationship with craft. More than an artifact, *The King's Seat II* is a meditation on presence and



transformation. The burned canvas beneath suggests both destruction and renewal, just as culture is continuously reshaped yet endures. Fadugba approaches tradition as a living manuscript “authored by many hands.”

Diana Ejaita (b. 1985. Cremona Italy) is a Nigerian-Italian artist who explores cultural identity through the condition of migration, shaped by movement between histories, geographies, and inherited forms. Working across painting, drawing, sculpture, and print-based installation, her work draws from West African literature, oral storytelling, and textile traditions, translating these sources into a refined visual language of distilled figures, symbolic objects, and expansive negative space. Central to her practice is the idea of the nature morte (still life) or “visual prayers”, which she reimagines as an active assemblage of cultural symbols, motifs, and natural forms in densely layered compositions. Recurring elements such as cow horns, plants, shells, the body, circles, crowns, and natural fibers serve as metaphors for strength and interconnectedness.

Alongside her fine art practice, Diana Ejaita is internationally recognized for her illustration work. She has created ten covers for *The New Yorker*, received the New York Times/New York Public Library Best Illustrated Children’s Book Award in 2025, and has been commissioned by leading fashion brands including *Comme des Garçons* and *H&M*, reflecting a practice that moves fluidly between contemporary art, publishing, and design.

About the Artists

Obiora Udechukwu (b. 1946, Onitsha, Nigeria)

Obiora Udechukwu began his art studies at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, before transferring to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, at the onset of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967. He completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Fine Arts at Nsukka, where he later became a professor of painting, mentoring generations of artists. In 1997, Udechukwu joined St. Lawrence University in New York as a Professor of Fine Arts, where he served until his retirement in 2018. As a founding member of the AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artists in the 1980s, Udechukwu played a pivotal role in shaping modern Nigerian art. Udechukwu's work is housed in prestigious collections worldwide, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art; the National Gallery of Modern Art in Lagos; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt; and Iwalewa-Haus at the University of Bayreuth in Germany.

Modupeola Fadugba (b. 1985, Lomé, Togo)

Modupeola was born in Togo and grew up in England and the United States as a child of Nigerian diplomats. A self-taught artist, She holds a Bachelors Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Delaware, a Masters in Economics from the University of Delaware, and a Masters in Education from Harvard University. Recent exhibitions include *Of Materials, Movements, and Methods* at Gallery 1957 in London (2025), and *Strategic Interplay: African Art and Imagery in Black and White* at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (2024). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including the *Royal Academy Summer Exhibition* in London, 2025, 2020 & 2017; *A Ballad for Harlem* at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, 2019, and *Afriques Capitales* in Lille, France, 2017. Her work was selected for the 2016 Dakar Biennale, where she was awarded a Grand Prize from the Senegal Minister of Communication. Her project *The People's Algorithm* included research as a Fellow at the Smithsonian, 2019-2020, and collaborative learning studies through a Museum Education Practicum with The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2021. The documentary following her series, *Dreams from the Deep End*, won an Emmy Award in 2022. Her work is included in the



collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Minneapolis Museum of Art, the University of Delaware, Chicago Booth School of Business, the Sindika Dokolo Foundation and the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In 2025, Fadugba was awarded the Grand Prize Winner of the Norval Sovereign African Art Prize.

Diana Ejaita (b. 1985, Cremona, Italy)

Diana Ejaita is a Nigerian-Italian artist based between Berlin and Lagos. She studied fine art in France and Germany before working as an illustrator and designer. Ejaita's illustrations have been featured on ten covers of *The New Yorker*. Her work has been featured in numerous international publications, including The New York Times, The New York Times Magazine, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, The Economist, Vogue, Financial Times and Monopol. Ejaita was a fellow of Villa Romana Prize in 2023 and has published 8 children books (2021-2024) age 3-12. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Exercises in Liberation*, was held at kó in Lagos, following her artist residency with the gallery in August 2025, and her work was featured at kó's presentation at Art X Lagos in November 2025. Her solo exhibition, *Onajite, l'Attesa*, was held at Galerie Wedding in Berlin in 2024. Other recent exhibitions include *Afro Futures: Fashion – Hair – Design* at Berlin's Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum of Decorative Arts); the Zurich Design Biennale; *Concrete Limbo* at Haus der Statistik (Berlin); the third edition of Miic (International Exhibition of Contemporary Illustration) in Galicia, Spain; and exhibitions at the University of Bielefeld (Germany), Kunst Gewerbe Museum (Berlin), and Appear (Hamburg). Her work has been commissioned by corporate bodies such as Google, Apple, Comme des Garcons, H&M, and Coca Cola Nigeria.

About kó

kó is an art space 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.