

PRESS RELEASE

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Chike Obeagu, *Reconciliation Table*, 2021, Mixed media collage, 201 x 293 cm.

kó is pleased to present a solo exhibition of **Chike Obeagu**, titled *Cogitations*, taking place **October 30-November 13, 2021**.

Cogitations features the artist's newest mixed-media collages formed through scraps of magazines, newspapers and waste fabrics. These large-scale canvases depict commonplace scenes which serve as metaphors for diverse issues in contemporary life.

Chike Obeagu is a visual artist, curator and writer whose work explores the dualism of human nature and its social manifestations. Over the last twenty years, Obeagu has become best known for his expressive mixed-media paintings, which incorporate elements of collage. Obeagu combines colorful compositions and bold patterns, using torn pages from magazines and commercial advertisements. He explores the experiences of the everyday through narratives of music, politics, religion, family and kinship.

Obeagu's collages often depict symbiotic pairs, such as couples or mirror reflections, which comment on the inherent dualities of life. These figures incorporate exaggerated facial features such as bulging eyes and enlarged lips. In *Reconciliation Table* (2021), Obeagu creates a new perspective of the iconic *The Last Supper* scene, the Jesus figure wearing a black suit and tie while

flanked with group of men in white traditional wear. Scattered around the table are bottles of expensive champagne and Ciroc vodka, symbols of conspicuous consumption. In ***Monologue*** (2021), a man and woman sit across the table from one another. While the woman holds a white flag suggesting peace, the man conceals a pistole underneath the table, cocked as if ready to shoot. *Monologue* is an analogy for the current political situation in Nigeria, suggestive of the “EndSars” movement, where leadership is intolerable of progressive dialogue or dissent.

Other works in the exhibition depict communal groups, such as a choir ensemble and a family self-portrait, which become metaphors for unity. In ***Private Viewing III*** (2021), a group of visitors view artworks inside an art gallery. In fact, these artworks happen to be his own prior works, a self-reflexive examination of his artistic practice and relationship with his audience. Other artworks incorporate fabric-wrapped and folded-paper balls, a new experimentation that veers into installation and three-dimensional space.

Chike Obeagu states: **“Life for me is inherently dualistic and consists of two fundamental principles that complement, contradict and elucidate. My work explores ideas embedded in dualism using social, political and cultural narratives that are laced with metaphors. My current practice is focused on the use of photo-collage for its suppleness that helps me deconstruct and reconstruct notions that mirror the realities of life.”**

The exhibition's catalogue includes essays by **Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi**, curator of painting and sculpture at Museum of Modern Art, New York; **Prof. Jerry Buhari**, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; and **Blaise Gundu Gbaden**, Phd, Associated Professor of Painting and Drawing, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa, Nigeria.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1975 in Enugu, Nigeria, Chike Obeagu earned a Bachelor of Art and Master of Fine Art degrees in 1998 and 2003 at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, graduating with magna and summa cum laude respectively. He received a Ph.D. in painting from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. He has won several awards including First Prize at the 2011 National Arts Competition in Nigeria, the UNODC Award for Partnership in Combating TIP (Trafficking in Persons) and SOM (Smuggling of Migrants), and the W.K Kellogg Foundation/ Ford Foundation Awards, Prince Clause Fund for Culture and Development, among others.

In 2014, Obeagu was one of the 62 artists selected to show his work in the Dakar Biennale's International Exhibition of African and African Diaspora. He has participated extensively in exhibitions, biennials, residencies, and workshops in Nigeria and internationally, including the Hood Museum of Art (USA), Richard Taittinger Gallery (New York), Art Expo (New York), and Art X Lagos. In 2015, he was included in the *Imago Mundi* project in conjunction with the Venice Biennale's 56th International Art Exhibition at Fondazione Giorgio Cini.