



PRESS RELEASE

MATTERS OF ESSENCE

MAY 7- 21, 2022



Samuel Nnorom, *Contemplation*, 2021, Ankara fabric, 80 x 49 x 5 in.

kó is pleased to present *Matters of Essence*- a forthcoming salon show exploring materiality and the significance of artistic practice in addressing societal issues through the works of Nigerian artists including **Bunmi Babatunde**, **Gerald Chukwuma**, and **Ngozi Omeje**, **Obiora Anidi**, **Reuben Ugbine**, **Samuel Nnorom**, **Sabastine Ugwuoke**, **Victoria Udondian**, and **Wole Lagunju**.

In recent years, artists are beginning to approach shared global challenges from culturally diverse viewpoints to positively alter human behaviours and transform societies. As such, the exhibition examines how Nigerian artists are responding to their society and the happenings inherent. Through the presented works, many realities which confront us individually and collectively, including identity, culture, socio-political, environmental degradation, and consumerism are depicted. *Matters of Essence* explores the intricate potential of the presented materials, as it informs the spatial, in interrogating essential questions about human conditions. The relevance of the themes explored in this exhibition has been heightened by current world events.

The artists which are unified under the umbrella of their exploration of materiality, and other mediums, were carefully selected to investigate ways in which materiality traverses and is

engaged within time and space. More importantly, the exhibition examines the artists' engagement with their materials, and the relationship between their choice of materials, and their environment. *Matter of Essence* allows the viewer to savour them as primary materials before layers of complexities are revealed.

Drawing inspiration from personal and collective experiences, Ngozi-Omeje Ezema's large scale ceramic installation addresses issues relating to identity, and the female body. Through the use of suspended terracotta leaves installed with strings, Ngozi's constructed vase conveys the notion of womanhood in relation to subjugation, oppression, togetherness, and motherhood. This exploration of identity is at the core of Bunmi Babatunde's presented work which reflects and questions the generally accepted ideas of possibilities of the human body. Through exaggerated and elongated forms, Bunmi examines notions of social and human conditions including identity, adaptation, and strength.

The incorporation of everyday materials to interrogate Africa's socio- political landscape is evident in presented works by Samuel Nnorom, and Sebastine Ugwuoke. While both artists use distinctive media, their use of discarded materials including fabric, and aluminium wire draws attention to the issue of environmental degradation while also highlighting the socio-political misconducts in the nation. Creating ring-like and bubble forms, they represent the daily hustle and the uncertainties that are wrapped around human conditions.

Obiora Anidi's presented work which is informed by philosophical and social commentary explores fundamental struggles of life and freedom and the idea of unity and strength in diversity. In the same vein, Gerald Chukwuma's wooden sculpture is an interpretation of his immediate environment. While drawing inspiration from the Uli art traditions, Obiora and Gerald respectively explore materials including marble, wire, wood, and found objects amongst others. Their sculptural work combines diverse references ranging from environmental concerns to resistance.

Reuben Ugbine's theme focuses on social realism- human figures who seem to disclose the existence of various aspects of the Nigerian way of life. His wooden sculptures characterise historical and contemporary manifestations of experiences within his community. Wole Olagunjunji on the other hand, captures the dynamism, richness, and relevance of the Yoruba culture and broadly African traditional practices which are threatened both by religious fundamentalisms and by the fallout of globalisation.

Driven by her interest in textiles, and the potential of clothing in shaping identity, Victoria Udondian presented work that questions notions of cultural identity and post-colonial positions in her country. By employing repurposed materials, she investigates how changes in fabrics and objects over time can affect one's perception of his or her identity, and ultimately a nation's psyche.

Matters of Essence opens on Saturday 7th May 2022, at kó Gallery, 36 Cameron Road, Ikoyi, Lagos NIGERIA.