

Eva Obodo: Dry Season

March 4-April 5, 2025

Curated by Ugonna Ibekwe

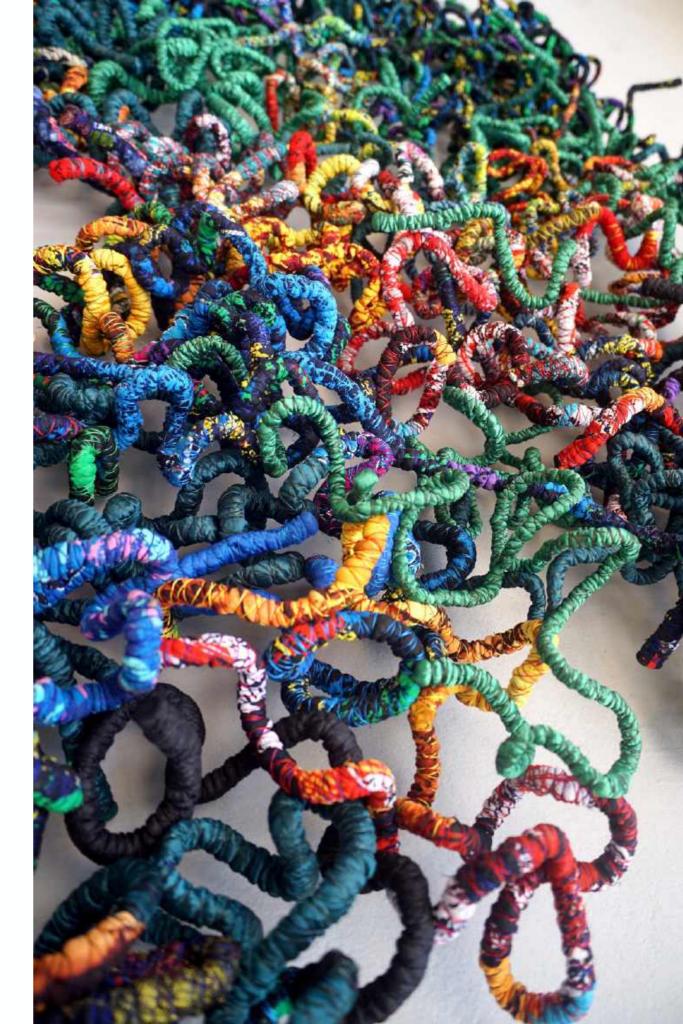


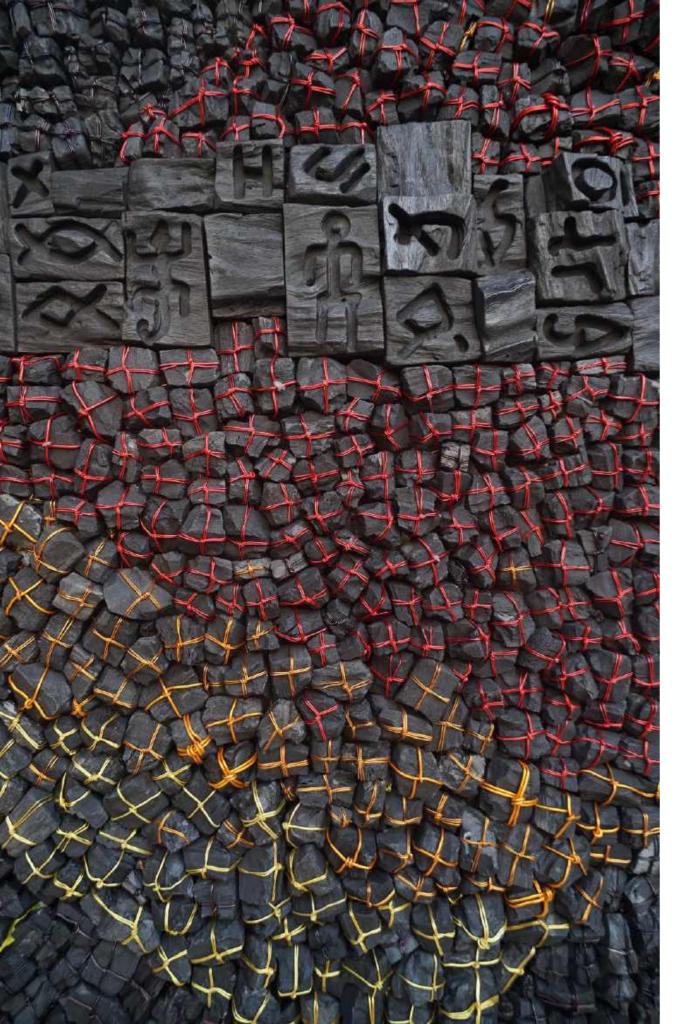
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kó is pleased to present *Dry Season*, a solo exhibition featuring **recent charcoal and fibre artworks of Eva Obodo.** This exhibition explores the artist's fascination with the intricate terrains of human experience, presenting a powerful narrative of contemporary social and political landscapes.

Eva Obodo is a professor of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, specialising in sculpture. Over the past two decades, Obodo's artistic practice has evolved significantly. Initially focused on exploring dry wood through techniques of tying, binding, and polishing, his recent work incorporates wood in its charcoal state—a transformative phase following burning that is often deemed aesthetically depleted. Similarly, his approach to fibre art has shifted from creating soft sculptures using jute bags to crafting cylindrical forms and bold, thread-like wave lines, highlighting the artist's experimental process with materials.

The exhibition's title refers to the harsh ecological period when resources are scarce and survival of natural vegetation becomes a delicate negotiation—a metaphor that resonates through the individual artwork titles. This theme reflects the tensions and limitations present in the social, political, and personal ecosystems of Nigeria, Africa, and the world. Several series within the exhibition offer critiques of political institutional dysfunction, while others explore interpersonal dynamics and social proximities. Obodo's work also engages with themes carrying deep religious implications across various faiths and addresses contemporary economic challenges.





Although Obodo has transitioned from using wood and jute bags as primary elements in his work in favour of charcoal and thread, he continues to employ the tying and binding techniques that have become the hallmark of artists from the Nsukka School. The careful assembly of small loops of charcoal and strands of thread into expansive compositions points to the contemporary "Igwebuike" idiom of the Nsukka School that expresses the belief in the strength of a multitude. Here, individual fragments that might have been discarded as negligible are reimagined.

Dry Season stands as a meditation on adaptation and the persistent hope of survival that emerges even in seemingly barren contexts. It mirrors our collective and individual struggles within harsh, inequitable systems and pays homage to the resilient, sustainable experimental spirit of the Nsukka School.

- Ugonna Ibekwe, Curator

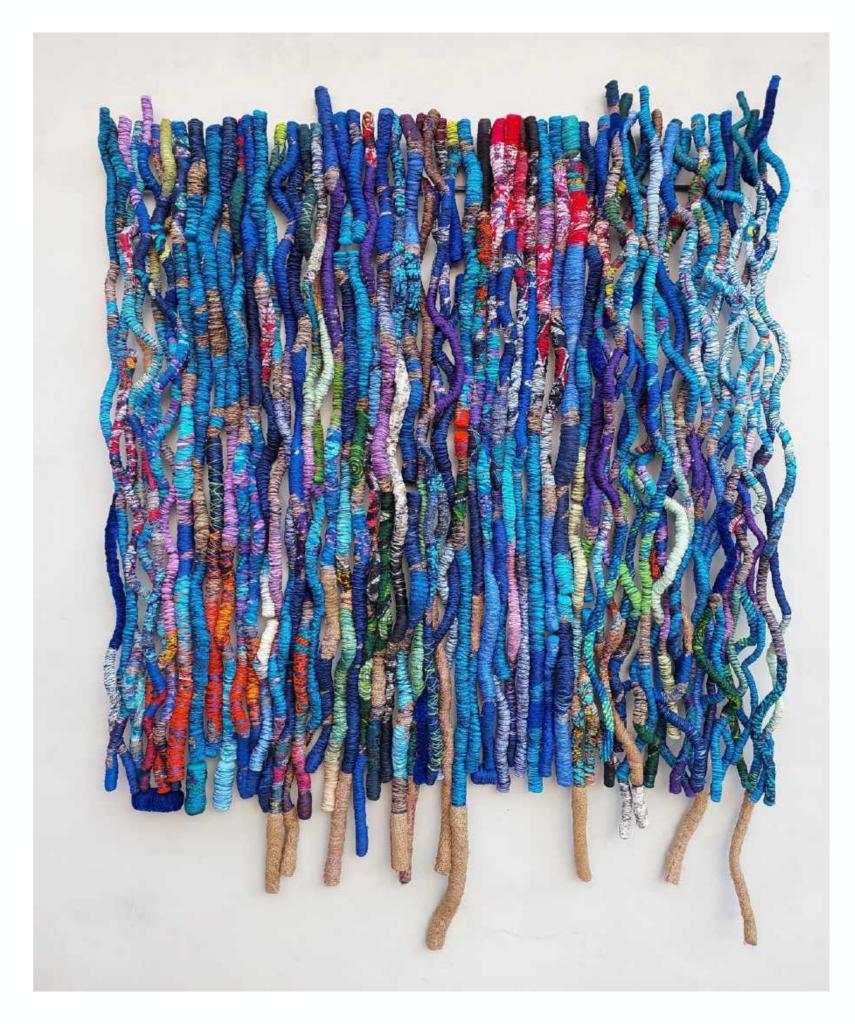


Blues I 2022 Jute, cloth, thread 142 x 191 x 10 cm 55.9 x 75.2 x 3.9 in.

The *Blues* series, rendered in a range of blue camouflage shades, reflects the recurring theme of melancholy present in the exhibition. The interplay of vertical, bold blue strands of thread and concealed materials become intertwined and inseparable.



Blues II 2022 Jute, cloth, thread 194 x 191 x 10 cm 76.4 x 75.2 x 3.9 in.





Yellow Sisi II (Wrapper series) 2024 Jute, cloth, thread $115 \times 150 \times 10 \text{ cm}$ $45.2 \times 59 \times 3.9 \text{ in.}$

This work is dominated by striking yellow wavelengths, created through a selective choice of cloth that predominantly forms the linked fabric cylindrical structures. The title cleverly refers to the nature and personality of those locally called 'yellow sisi'—a cultural nod to flamboyant individuals and identity.





Mind Game I 2023 Cloth 100 x 120 x 4 cm 39.4 x 47.2 x 1.6 in.

This pair of artworks features an exploration of vibrant yellow Ankara fabrics at the center of the piece. The compositions are thoughtfully constructed so that each piece can stand independently while also functioning harmoniously as a diptych. This dual nature is achieved through the deliberate pool of yellow color that creates visual continuity between the two works. There is an intentional arrangement of the horizontal fabric sticks with particular subtle emphasis on where the curves rise and fall and the gaps in between.



Mind Game II 2023 Cloth 100 x 120 x 4 cm 39.4 x 47.2 x 1.6 in.



As You Make Your Bed II 2023 Jute, cloth, thread 144 x 170 x 9 cm 56.7 x 66.9 x 3.5 in.

The metaphorical title *As You Make Your Bed II* references the common proverb about the consequences of our actions, particularly in how we build and maintain relationships. This artwork's structure takes the form of a traditional bamboo bed. A delicate fragment of torn red lace is carefully suspended at the top right corner, introducing an element of untidiness. The strategic placement of yellow clusters at the top left and a subtler repetition at the bottom right edge evokes the imagery of a rising sun.





Damask I 2024 Cloth and thread 214 x 97 x 10 cm 84.3 x 38.1 x 3.9 in.

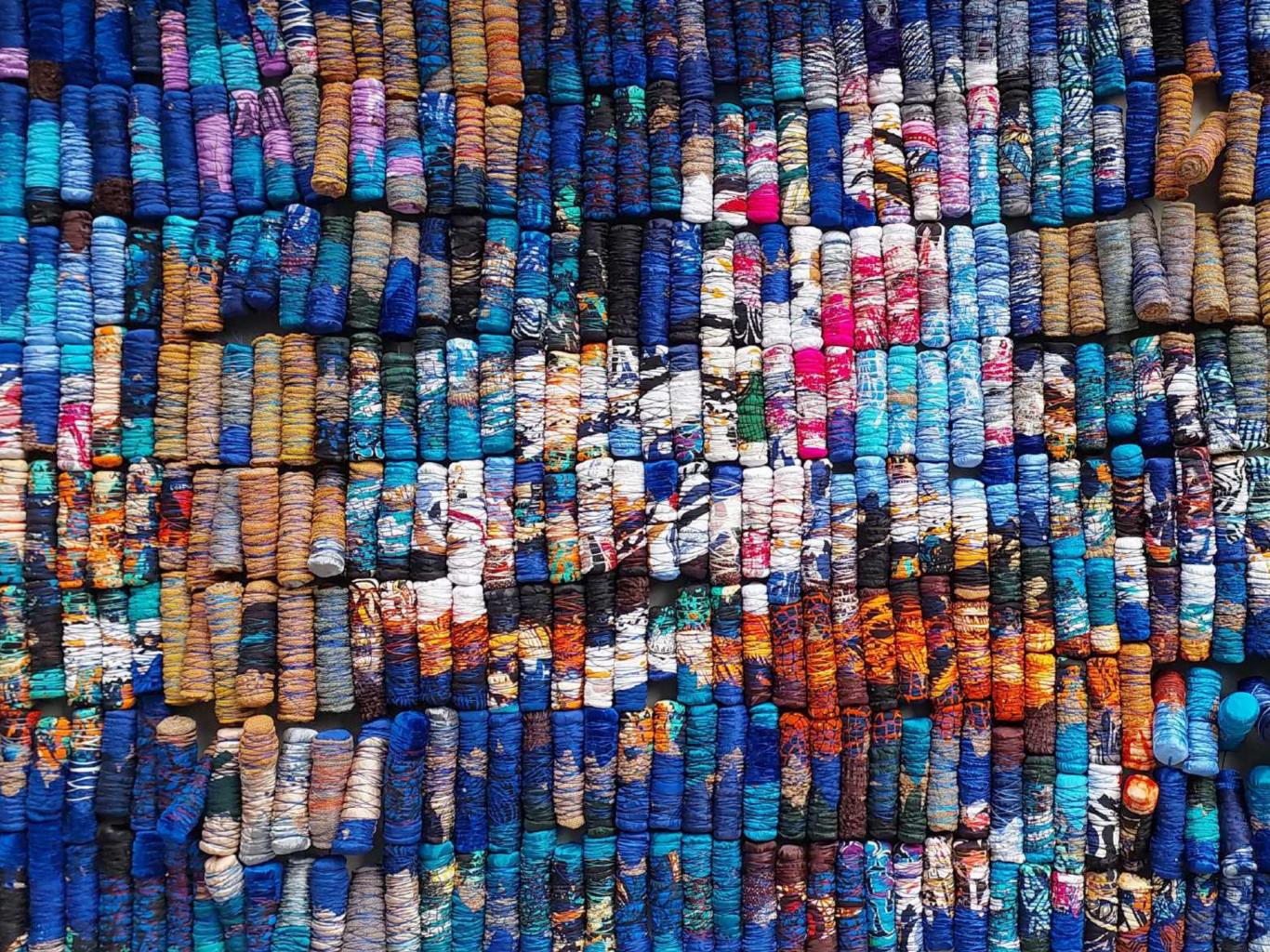
Vertical sticks of tightly bound fabrics are joined together. These sticks, with their subtle flow, create little elevations and depressions across the work. The title 'Damask' refers to a woven, reversible patterned fabric, echoing the textural complexity and rhythmic patterns found in this sculptural piece.





Wrapper (House of Reps) 2024 Jute, cloth, thread 210 x 120 x 9 cm 82.7 x 47.2 x 3.5 in.

In this work, fabric cylinders made from Ankara and jute cloths are linked together by thread, creating a predominantly blue camouflage.



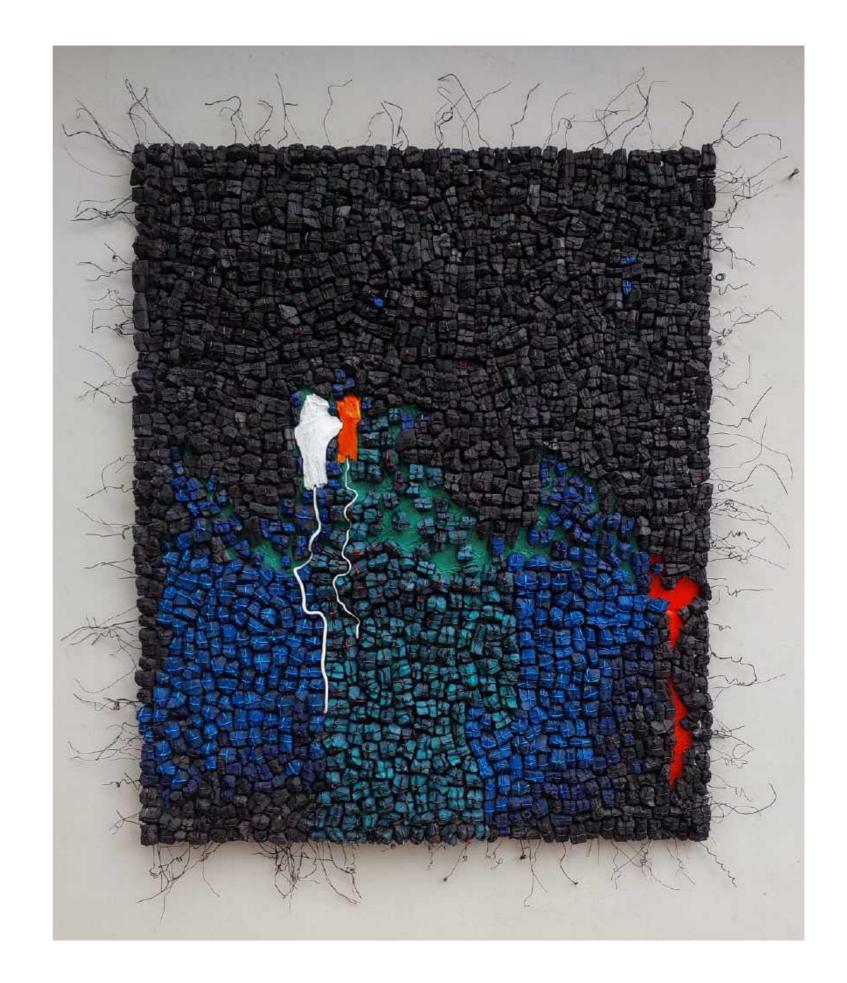
We Hired a Carpenter to Patch the Cloth 2024 Charcoal, acrylic, copper and aluminum wire 80 x 80 x 4 cm 31.5 x 31.5 x 1.6 in.

Obodo's works confront the machinery of political power and institutional dysfunction in contemporary Nigeria-and, by extension, similar governance structures worldwide. In We Hired a Carpenter to Patch the Cloth (2024), Obodo suggests a metaphor that encapsulates the troubling practice of appointing individuals who are ill-equipped-often lacking both the requisite education and experience-to manage critical state functions. As one of a three-part series, this work features a single white trail of wire painted with acrylic paint. The gaps between the charcoal lumps reveal a blue metal plate underneath and create empty spaces that allow shadows to form on the wall as light hits the work.



Next Door Neighbors 2024 Charcoal, wood, acrylic, tempera, copper and aluminum wire 130 x 150 x 6 cm 51.1 x 59 x 2.4 in.

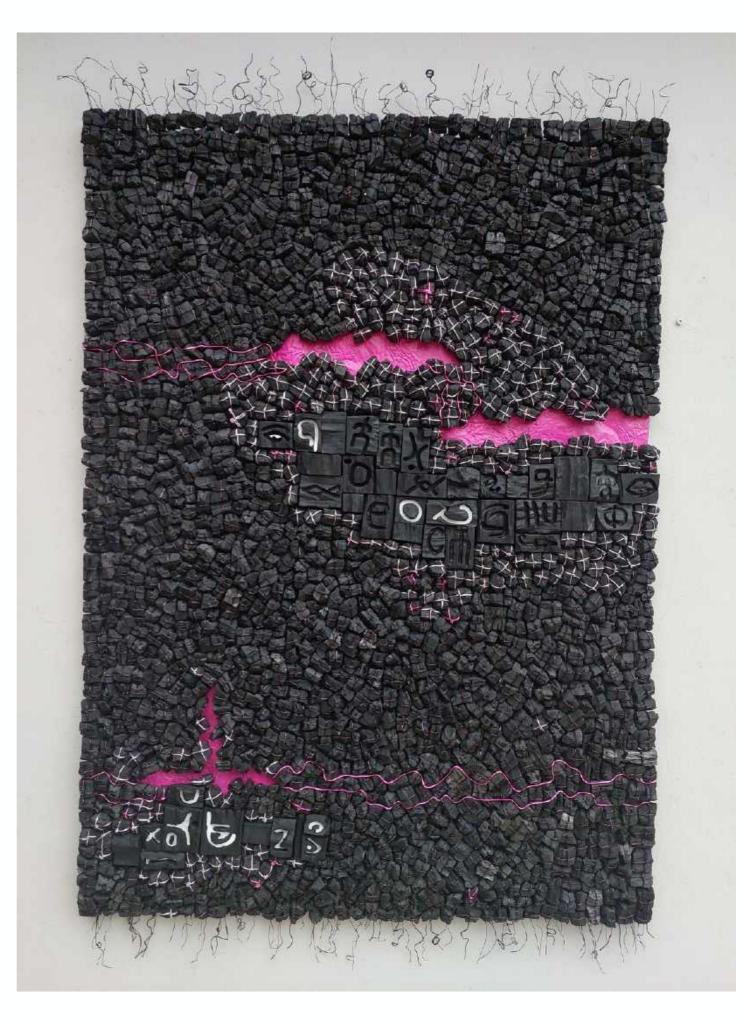
Designed with binding wires protruding from all edges, creating unintended yet dynamic forms, this work features tinted charcoal lumps arranged in the lower section to form bluegreen and blue hues, evoking a flag. Emphasis is drawn to the striking white and orange elements near the center, from which a flowing trail of white wire extends into the colored charcoal, evoking the sensation of a river's movement. At the bottom right edge, a precisely crafted opening reveals a red sheet, adding a layer of depth and intrigue.





It is Written II 2024 Charcoal, wood, acrylic, copper and aluminum wire 99 x 158 x 4 cm 39 x 62.2 x 1.6 in.

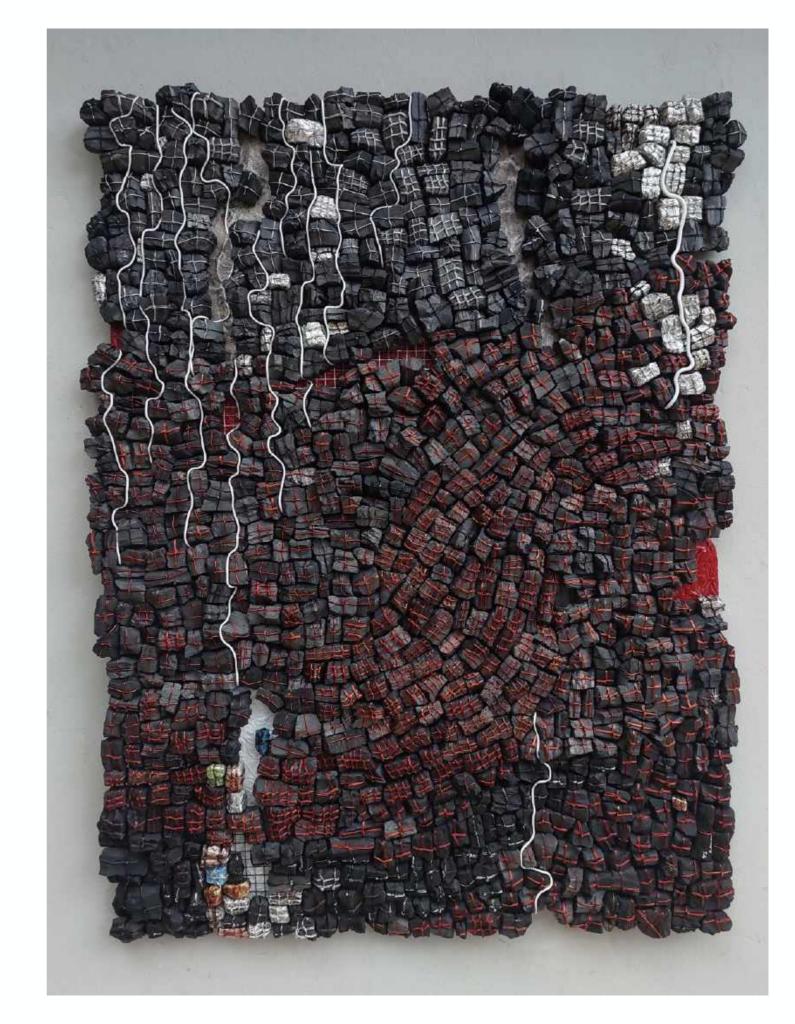
The erosions within this wall of charcoal are embellished with pink-colored copper plates and a flowing trail of pink wire. The artist draws viewers in with intricate engravings on selected slabs of burnt wood. These engravings feature diverse cultural symbols including stylized human figures, Nsibidi and Adinkra signs, and Uli motifs. Visual emphasis is strategically created through the wire colors used at certain portions of the piece. The binding wires extend beyond the top and bottom edges of the work, creating spontaneous-appearing forms.





Meltdown 2024 Charcoal, acrylic, copper and aluminum wire 90 x 117 x 6 cm 35.4 x 46 x 2.4 in.

In this work, charcoal elements are deliberately arranged to create a sense of movement and flow. This dynamic effect is further emphasized by several flowing white wires, particularly concentrated at the top left edge, where they appear to cascade downward into the composition. These lines guide the viewer's eye toward an opening at the bottom left edge, revealing lumps which are different in colored from the lumps that generally make up the composition.



Word of God Turned Upside Down 2023 Charcoal, wood, acrylic, copper and aluminum wire 125 x 165 x 5 cm 49.2 x 65 x 2 in.

This work features an abstracted form created through a camouflage of black, gray, white, red, and copper tones, achieved by the careful use of colored wires and tinted charcoal lumps. Delicate openings punctuate the composition, revealing empty spaces as well as glimpses of white and red sheets, adding depth and contrast to the piece. Obodo harnesses a rich religious lexicon to launch a pointed critique of religious institutions and faith practices. Obodo considers the ways in which sacred texts and teachings are routinely manipulated and misinterpreted, often to serve ulterior agendas rather than their original intent.





Closet 2023 Charcoal, wood, acrylic, copper and aluminum wire 102 x 145 x 4 cm 40.2 x 57 x 1.6 in.

This charcoal wall titled *Closet* is accentuated by the use of red and gold wire, along with a deliberately crafted gap at the top right, subtly highlighted by the addition of colored wire. Within the main wire enclosure, the artist intentionally places engraved slabs featuring a stick figure, three Uli lizard motifs, a pair of watchful eyes, a lip, three umbrella signs, and two Nsibidi symbols representing love and unity, among other markings. Additionally, a purposeful slit within the enclosure reveals a red sheet, adding a striking visual contrast.



Tension 2024 Charcoal, acrylic, copper and craft wire 128 x 210 x 10 cm 50.4 x 82.7 x 3.9 in.

In this work, the artist draws a line between segmented blocks of color by creating grooves that reveal a lemon-colored sheet beneath. Symbols are carved into a straight lineup of slabs at the top and lower edges of the work. The yellow line, which becomes the predominant element in the work, creates the effect of a drawn battle line, alluding to the title of the work.





Treasure Chest 2024 Charcoal, acrylic, copper and craft wire 153 x 225 x 6 cm 60.2 x 88.6 x 2.4 in.

Obodo examines wealth distribution and resource management, delving into the systemic challenges that define contemporary economic systems. His meticulously chosen titles underscore the struggles of the majority in their pursuit of prosperity while simultaneously exposing the resource hoarding by a privileged few. Treasure Chest (2024) hints at the secretive accumulation of wealth, alluding to hidden reserves of power that remain inaccessible to most. Charcoal lumps banded with gold wire are arranged to evoke the shape of a location pin symbol. Within this enclosure are signs and symbols from various cross-cultural languages. Gaps within the lower part of the work reveal red and yellow metal-colored sheets, adding strong wavelengths of color to contrast with the massive black charcoal wall.





Confidential Report 2021 Charcoal, acrylic, tempera, copper and aluminum wire, used printing plate 146 x 97 x 5 cm 57.4 x 38.2 x 2 in. In these works, abstract imagery emerges from the artist's manipulation of used printing plates. The original lettering from the printing press remains visible, creating a palimpsest of industrial history and artistic intervention. *Confidential Report* suggests hidden knowledge revealed through material transformation.



Last Chapter 2022 Charcoal, acrylic, copper and aluminum plate 97 x 160 x 4 cm 38.2 x 63 x 1.6 in.

In *Last Chapter* (2023), Obodo evokes notions of finality and spiritual transcendence, while.





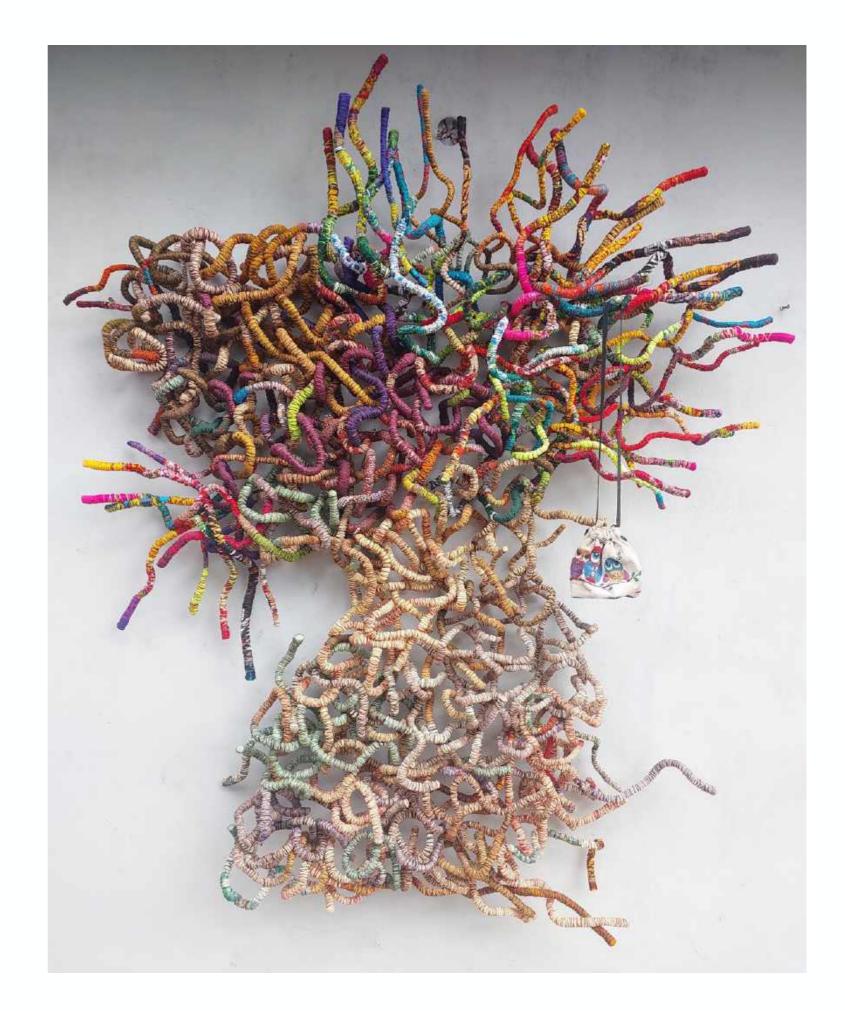


Power Play 2021 Charcoal, acrylic, tempera, copper and aluminum wire, used printing plate 180 x 135 x 5 cm 70.9 x 53.1 x 2 in. The visual map within the work is created by the different colors of wire used to tie the charcoal lumps. The scattered silver elements are pieces of charcoal wrapped in aluminum plate. At the top right edge, an aluminum plate is revealed, displaying randomly created drips of black flowing across its surface. Long, river-like bold wires within the composition are polished with white acrylic paint, while selected gaps throughout the work reveal red and white metal sheets beneath.



Ego Di n'Ogwu 2024 Jute, cloth, thread 166 x 202 x 25 cm 65.3 x 79.5 x 9.8 in.

Crafted from jute, cloth, and thread, this work evokes the silhouette of a mushroom-like tree in full bloom. Visually, it divides into two striking segments: the upper portion bursts with vibrant colors and features a small money pouch delicately suspended from one of its many strands. Below, a complex network of root-like structures unfurls in more muted tones. This dual composition highlights the interplay between the lively canopy above and the earthy foundation below



Bird with oversized gizzard 2025 Fabrics, thread 235 x 165 x 20 cm 92.5 x 65 x 7.9 in.

In this work, Obodo employs a metaphor for excessive consumption and unchecked greed, evoking the image of an entity that devours beyond necessity. A vibrant network of twisted forms evokes the colorful silhouette of a bird. The title suggests that the prominent, box-like element near the neck symbolizes a gizzard. By drawing attention to an organ that would ordinarily remain hidden, Obodo considers how vital, internal elements become exposed to the outside world.





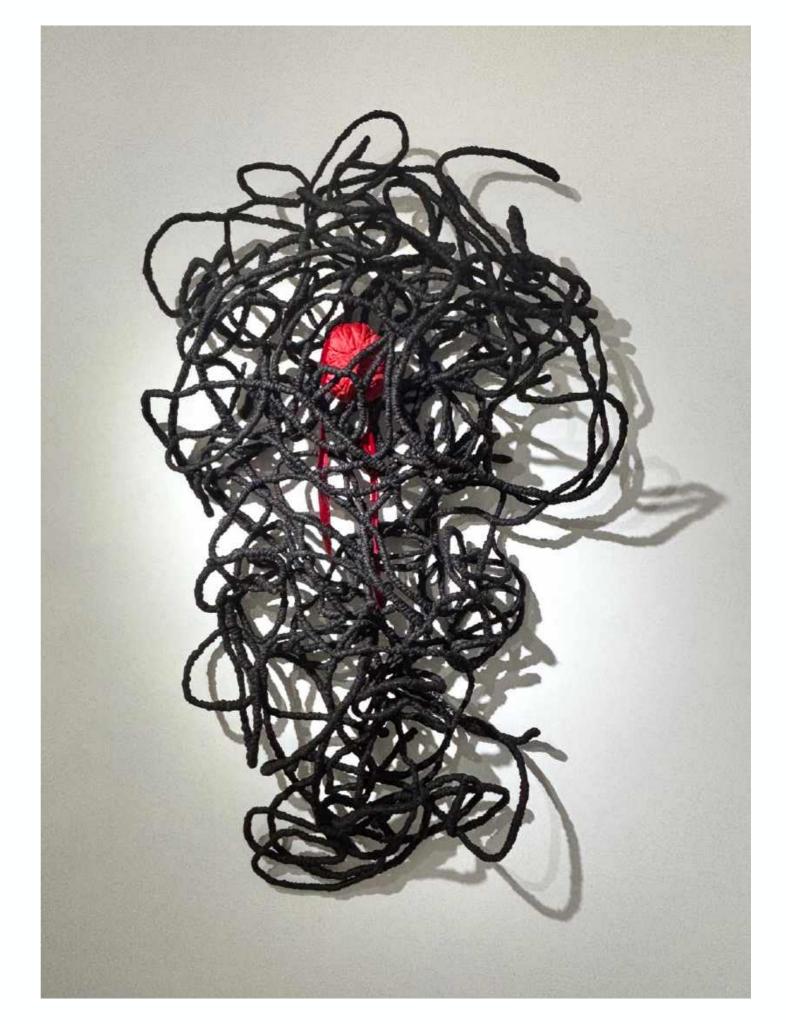
Corrupt Minds at Work 2024 Cloth 250 x 220 x 33 cm 98.4 x 86.6 x 13 in.

This installation features a cluster of three bunches of jagged black twigs. The artist's intentionality is evident in the strategic positioning of white-accented portions of the twigs, which draw the eye with their bold curves. Fragments of torn red and black cloth integrated in the piece create a visual flow that evokes unsettling associations with ritualistic practices, inviting viewers to contemplate darker aspects of human belief systems and practices.



Corrupt Minds at Work II 2024 Cloth 86 x 150 x 35 cm 33.9 x 59 x 13.8 in.

This installation features a cluster of three bunches of jagged black twigs. The artist's intentionality is evident in the strategic positioning of white-accented portions of the twigs, which draw the eye with their bold curves. Fragments of torn red and black cloth integrated in the piece create a visual flow that evokes unsettling associations with ritualistic practices, inviting viewers to contemplate darker aspects of human belief systems and practices.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Eva Obodo is a professor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he previously earned both his MFA and PhD in Fine and Applied Arts and has also served as Head of the department. His academic career includes a former position as a lecturer at Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo.

His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions internationally, including the Osaka Triennale (2001, Japan) and the DAK'ART Biennale (2002, Senegal). He has held three solo exhibitions with kó and Arthouse Contemporary in Lagos, including *Recent Works* (2021), *Ngwugwu (Packages)* (2019), and *Line.by.Line* (2015). His work has been exhibited at Art Dubai, 1:54 New York, 1:54 Marrakech, Untitled Miami, and Investec Cape Town Art Fair. In 2025, Obodo was selected as finalist for the Norval Foundation Sovereign African Art Prize.

Beyond his artistic practice, Obodo has made significant contributions to the art community. He served as an adjudicator for the *Life in My City* Art Festival Grand Finale (2012) in Enugu, Nigeria, participated in the inaugural African Regional Summit and Exhibition on Visual Arts (ARESUVA) in Abuja (2008), and was an invited observer and resource person at ART X Lagos (2017). In 2013, he received a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship Award.



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Ugonna Ibekwe is an art historian trained at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria. His curatorial interests primarily focus on the representation of contemporary artists. During his academic journey, Ugonna served an internship in art history at the Anvil Studio extension. There, he benefited from the mentorship of Professor Ozioma Onuzulike, acquiring comprehensive knowledge in African and contemporary art.

This experience has shaped his professional trajectory, leading to his current roles as supervisor for Anvil's art history section and guest curator at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He is one of the pioneering members of the "10 for 10 Art Society," an organization dedicated to promoting a closed circle of young artists. Additionally, his diverse interests are reflected in his membership with the "World Organization of the Scout Movement," demonstrating his engagement with broader social and cultural initiatives.





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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.

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