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Twins Seven-Seven

b. 1944, Ogidi, Nigeria

d. 2011, Ibadan, Nigeria

Frieze Masters: *Spotlight*

The Regent's Park, London

October 15-19, 2025

Booth **S16**



36 Cameron Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria | www.ko-artspace.com



Chief Twins 77: An unusual man with an equally unusual histor

By Teresa Hoffman

FORT WORTH—Caravan of Dreams presented one of its more unique shows March 28-30 with the appearance of Chief Twins 77. Twins has a most unusual personal history. His mother bore seven sets of twins during a period of time in Nigeria when having twins was punishable by death. She managed to escape, and keep having twins, and when Twins was four-years-old he was given his present name. When the British took over

end of this barbaric practice. Now twins receive preferential treatment when born into his tribe, and he carries a huge walking stick that bears the resemblances of slain family members.

His music is "an abstract Afro-Jazz" style, and Twins tries to avoid using instruments that are at a saturation point in mainstream pop and rock music, like synthesizers and guitars. Percussion instruments and vocals are dominant, and Twins likes to employ the use of the seven-string guitar.

kingdoms of Africa.

He first came to the United States on an invitation from a Madison Avenue art gallery. He has since returned to the states on many occasions. Twins has lectured and taught in California and has paintings in galleries in New York and Houston. He has traveled extensively on grants and with the help of many universities, and invites artists and musicians from around the world to come over to visit his home in Nigeria for cultural exchange purposes.

Twins is also mindful of the

diences and with the American people in general. He does not see drugs or alcohol abuse as an answer to any problem, nor does he see it as necessary to enjoy his music. He sees his job as being a "musical ambassador" of his country, and takes that responsibility very seriously.

The stage at Caravan was decorated with a collage of his paintings. They are brightly colored, highly detailed depictions of tribal life, and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and Walter Mondale's wife Joan are among the people

has also appeared in several exchange films for the Nigerian government, as well as composing music for other. Twins has had several books published in Europe and the U.S. has been the subject of at least one biography, and has released about 18 albums on different labels. He is currently working on an album to be released on the new Caravan of Dreams label.

About the only thing he has done that he expressed an interest in was acting, and he enjoyed it. He has worked on for government programs. He hopes to do a film in the future that will feature his work and band, and he stays with this the way he has with his other projects. American audiences should be seeing more of Chief Twins 77.

LAGOS WEEKEND 20 kobo

Friday May 25, 1984

Chief Seven-Seven: The musical 'dynamite'

OUT of sight, they may make the heart grow fonder, as out of sight, is not in anyway out of the mind.

So, to say with Chief Twins Seven-Seven, an Oshogbo based popular artist.

Chief Seven-Seven has just concluded arrangements for the launching of his latest LP an eight track 20 minutes long play, for the listening pleasure of his fans.

The LP recorded at Sound Dimensional Studio New York and Africa's first underground recording studio, Recordisc, where the mixing and the final processing was done.

And at the special launching slated for this weekend at the Museum Kitchen, will have Chief M.K.O. Abiola, members of the diplomatic corps, Sir Mobolaji Bank Anthony members of the German Cultural Centre in attendance.

Apart from this, the occasion will serve as a forum for another artists' show-case, as other PMAN members are also being expected to grace the occasion.

Chief Seven-Seven

who claimed to be a traditionalist to the core mainly worships SANGO and other deities also believes in the existence of God.

He further confirmed that this LP will be released abroad to at least project the image of grassroots African traditional music in diaspora.

The album titled ENO SUPER 184 (Slang in rance) is all about the road accident, he had of recent. On his modes of dressing Chief Seven-Seven said that he would want to appear like a piece of an art work.



* Chief Twins Seven-Seven



Neue Kunst in Afrika I. Sonderheft 1967 Verlag Heinz F. von Dammke S. Jahrgang: 1967 S. 50

tendenzen

TWINS SEVEN-SEVEN RECEIVES PRIZE

NIGERIAN painter and musician Chief Twins Seven-Seven paid a

special visit to Bush House, home of the BBC African Service, to collect

his prize in the art competition run by BBC External Services to mark their

50th anniversary as worldwide broadcasters.



Twins Seven-Seven receives the book from the Head of the BBC's African Service, George Bennett.

Twins Seven-Seven



Chief Twins Seven-Seven heard of his success when the results of the competition were announced at the end of 1982 - BBC External Services' Golden Jubilee Year.

But he was unable to make the journey to London then because he was recovering from a car accident.

Chief Twins Seven-Seven, of Oshogbo, was one of the Nigerians to win art books in the competition. The other winner was Abdulahi Ali Yu from Sokoto.

After being presented with his prize by the Head of the BBC African Service, George Bennett, Chief Twins Seven-Seven was guest of Hilton Fyfe in the BBC weekday magazine programme 'Network Africa'.

Oshogbo exists as a... The list... art on Ghana... a deficiency... made in the... more of the...

PANEL OF JURISTS. FOR SELECTION OF ZIMBABWE ARTISTS 1985. COURTESY: ZIMBABWE NATIONAL GALLERY



PANEL OF JURISTS.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
Prince Twins Seven-Seven
Professor Melvin Edwards
Helen Kodjoley
Henry Tayali
David Annesley
Elimo Njau
Cynthia Zukas
Tom Phillips



MORNING POST REVIEW

Twins' art on show - fifth - with - man - show

AN Exhibition of the paintings of Twins Seven-Seven was declared open by Professor Fabunmi at UNIS Auditorium Lagos last Tuesday.

Picture above shows Mr. Fabunmi (left) with Mrs. True Heart and Professor Fabunmi.



On the left is brought up in Kibina, now in Kwara State, and had an early career as a travelling dancer and musician performing throughout Nigeria and in Togo and Ghana. As a painter, he has developed a distinctive style strongly influenced by the supernatural and tradition of his early environment.

His works have been presented in exhibitions throughout Nigeria as well as in Holland, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Togo, the United States, and most recently in a brilliantly successful art wealth exhibition at the Art Centre in London. This exhibit is his first one-man show since re-

Monahan, three in his dressing room. He has also acquired some education that is necessary to him.

Works of Twins 7-7 on show

Once, again, the works of that out-and-out artist, Twins Seven-Seven, are brought out for public view and appreciation or perhaps criticism.

Featuring various aspects of art work in which this artist has perhaps excelled himself, the works bring out something of a genius in Twins Seven-Seven.

His works derive basically from Yoruba mythology, trades, religious beliefs and social forms.

Prominent among those on display is the casting of the almighty SANGO, the ancient overlord of the old Oyo Kingdom who held sway over the people might and will by his sheer strength and

supreme human powers. Twins Seven-Seven here portrays the last minutes of the now deified leader and saviour, when he was about to commit suicide by hanging.

It was no doubt a painful thing, according to the artist, for Sango had to cast off all those powers that have carried him to the pinnacle of fame and glory before he could die like ordinary human.

The Golden Fish is Twins Seven-Seven's version of the popular Oshun Oshogbo Festival, an annual event in Oshogbo during which the people are led in procession by their king to offer sacrifices to the goddess of Oshun.

'Shapes in the Sky' represents the impressions of an air-borne traveller, with nature's beauty over a wide expanse of the earth's surface quite aglow.

On evening (collaging on paper), some of his work is a collage of multi-colour which is easily mistaken for painting to sculpture, from bronze casting to cloth design, from illustrations to statues, bas-reliefs and stage compositions, and he even teaches the techniques and secrets of plastic — figurative art and also forms — both traditional and contemporary — of African

Twins Seven-Seven lives talks and describes a convinced artist; his rather queer name, as he himself explains derives from Yoruba belief in reincarnation.

His mother had seven sets of twins and all died in infancy. However, he believes that those twins have been reincarnated through him — hence the name Twins Seven-Seven.

The one-week exhibition opened last Saturday under the auspices of the Italian Cultural Institute in Lagos.

Also at the same venue, the "Black Ghosts International", a musical group under the direction of Twins Seven-Seven, will be performing and dancing folkore next



NEUE KUNST IN AFRIKA



22. Juli - 28. August 1980 in Bayreuth

Nigerian Prince is MC Artist-in-Residence

Circles of students enquired him. Jewelry of silver, bronze and gold adorned fingers, wrists and chest. Facial markings highlighted cheek and forehead — all made up the experience of Nigerian artist Twins Seven-Seven, guest lecturer at Merced College.

The 28-year-old Nigerian is one of Africa's most popular and successful artists. During the month of November, 1972, Twins gave a series of lecture demonstrations in Nigerian dance, art and customs at the college and to area high schools and grammar schools. He was the first foreign artist-in-residence in the history of Merced College.

In Oshogbo, Nigeria, the artist has the "Arts Mens' Gallery," a library, gallery and workshop where he trains young Africans in arts, crafts and in traditional and contemporary music forms of Africa. His musical group, "Black Ghosts," have traveled extensively and record in Africa.

"My name comes from the Yoruba belief in reincarnation. My mother has seven sets of twins and all die."

"My parents believe that my brothers are reincarnated through me. My name comes from that: Twins Seven-Seven," he explained.

He also accepts the idea of reincarnation. "The body is like a shell," he said, "it dies but the spirit does not. It can come back as many things — even a tree."

A prince of the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, long noted for their high artistic achievements, the artist depicts sensitivity to tradition as well as to the forms, shadows and mystery of the jungle. His art has developed from pen and ink to etching, bronze castings, carvings and illustrations. Heavy in all his art forms in the Yoruban belief in myths, reincarnation and the influence of Twins' own dreams.

Twins' trip to Merced was made possible after Ms. Edyna Sischo-Nowinski, an art instructor at Merced College, visited his studio in Oshogbo this summer. She was so impressed with his work that she returned to Merced and convinced the college to sponsor his residence here. During his stay at MC, he received an offer from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art requesting that he present a showing of his art works at the museum. The College Association of Public Events and Services (CAPES) has signed Twins up for a return visit to California



TWINS SEVEN-SEVEN

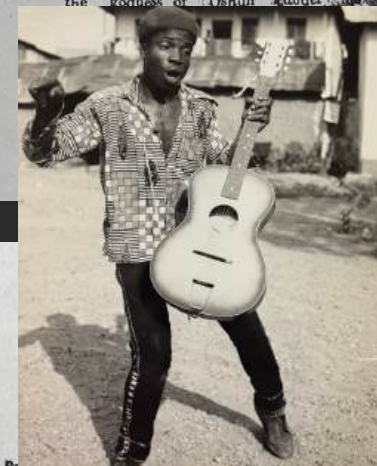
students' response. He was always flanked by three or more. He is deeply concerned with young people. He has in the past provided art supplies for the young people in Oshogbo, supported three orphans, and sponsored musically talented young man.

In his demonstrations, Twins encourages students to try his style. "I like to see them trying my style. They are young and creative and maybe someday they, too, will become artists," he said.

Rocco DePietro of the Ford Foundation has written of Twins, "He will by far hold the premier place in the short history of modern art in Nigeria. He is foremost an innovator. Many of his paintings are graphic representations of his own interpretation of African myths and legends. The African spirit world with its shifting definitions of the real and imaginary lends itself to infinite variations of form."

Twins' work is a blend of the traditional and the modern, the spiritual and the physical. It is a testament to the power of art to transcend time and space.

Twins is a man of many talents. He is a dancer, a musician, a writer, and a visual artist. He is a true representative of the African spirit.



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ncord

SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1984 RAMADAN 3, 1404 A.H. 20 KOBO NATIONAL CO

THE record is not bad at all, said a listener on hearing the master tape a week before the launching of Twins 77's record. Titled SLANG IN TRANCE (with a Yoruba sub-title of "Eno Super 1, '84") this latest record of Twins 77 is an improvement on his Pambo series of the 70's.

A typical Afro beat record SLANG IN TRANCE has the first side dedicated to God for sparing the musician's life during a ghastly motor accident that left his pelvic girdle dislocated. In a pulsating Afro beat Twins 77 adapts a folksong "Eyo Aborize" to recount his experience during the automobile accident and how God bestowed his mercy on him by saving his life.

Eyo Aborize is a modern improvement on the Pambo beat of the 70's. Here Twins Seven-Seven as usual takes the lead while the chorus (shandooko) is rendered by teenage singers most of whom are Twins 77's children.

SLANG IN TRANCE Twins Seven-Seven lives to sing again

They include Maggie and Bola. Apart from the dancing rhythm, a good listener has a story to hear in Eyo Aborize.

The flip side titled "People of the World Sing With Me" is dedicated to Twins 77's friends and admirers all over the world. Among them are musical colleagues like Michael Jackson, Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey and Ayinla Kollington. In a pre-launching interview, Twins Seven-Seven (real name Taiye Oguni Olaniyi) expressed his optimism on the success of the record. "Man, this is the time I've been waiting for."

SLANG IN TRANCE is the thing that is going to really launch me commercially into the music world. I have put everything — talent, time, energy, money and organisation — into the production of this record.

By FIDEL BAM There is no problem about hitting the jack-pot with this record. "Man, this is the time I've been waiting for."

home-work well and that he knew where he was heading to. Then as if to mesmerise his listener he landed the knock-out blow. "Whoever listens to this record on radio or in any music shop is bound to buy it," he boasted hitting his chest with his palm.

Well, the record was slated for launching at the Museum Kitchen last Thursday under the auspices of the National Council for Museums and Monuments. By now the whole town must be agog with Twins Seven-Seven's latest sound especially in the disco halls.



Twins seven-seven

"I want to hit a jackpot"



The Arts

Twins Seven Seven belongs to the school of bohemian artists of Osogbo, Oyo State. Below is a record of his interview with PAUL CRISPIN — MFOM after one of his exhibitions.

Return of Twins Seven Seven



Twins Seven Seven explaining a point.

THEIR life is an artistic renaissance underway in Nigeria. One of its leading figures recently held his tenth Nigeria-one-man show at the Goethe Institute in Victoria Island, Lagos. He is thirty-nine year old Chief Twins Seven Seven, artist, musician, dancer and actor. Not long before his departure for Obogbo, I spent a week with him in Lagos. His wife, Nike Olaniyi, another Nigeria's foremost batik artist had just come back from the United States after a successful exhibition, to assist him, and she told me the remarkable story of how he had acquired his strange name.

The first time his mother bore three sons: when

quite six years on a diet of water, herbs, and mother's milk. When he was two and his father gave him a toy, he would immediately take it apart and put it together again. When he was five, he used to collect little children together and ask them to sit down in a group. They would dance, and he would dance. At six he went to school, but often ran away to the bush. Sometimes he'd bring back a frog or a snake, and the people would shout at him and send their children away. But when the examinations came, he would always be first.

A child of his own devices and a born leader, Twins used any money he got hold of to buy food for the other

The Black Ghosts International Band. His voice is pulsate with electric energy and he plays any instrument that comes to hand.

It was Seven Seven's dancing that first brought him to Obogbo and quickly made him a popular figure. An impromptu dance at Mr. Mbuwa attracted the attention of Ulli Bies, who persuaded him to join the summer workshop then organized by his wife Georgia.

The idea of making paintings to hang on the wall is not an African concept. Although Seven Seven quickly demonstrated a special talent for painting, he says, "At first I didn't believe really in what I was doing. I just felt like working. When I was able to buy things on my own and provide myself with materials to do my work then I knew I was an artist. And in 1967 when I returned from Europe after my work had been internationally acclaimed, then I knew I was doing some-"

His first

one decade, this video and mixed representations of his work emerged as a method of expression. To Georgia would say was given minimal at produced series of the work. writer, Turolo, whose art readily accepted. Seven Seven's own style painting drawings and the and then

Group". He first started working in the Obogbo Arts School, organized by Georgia Bies in 1966. His international fame began to spread in 1967 with his invitation to the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Ever since, Twins has had numerous exhibitions the world over, including Prague, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Munich, London, Toronto and New York.

He has also lectured in many schools and Universities in the U.S. Many of his paintings are graphic representations of his own interpretations of African myths and legends. Twins is a gifted musician and has founded the Black Ghosts International Band. He has also featured in many films here in Nigeria and abroad.

Twins Seven Seven reflects on how he started his sculpture paintings. "I started with an electric jigsaw under a huge mango tree at the back of the gallery."



CHIEF TWINS SEVEN-SEVENS ART
(THE AMULUDUN OF ILOBU)
ART MANS GALLERY
KEKE ELEMU CULTURAL CENTRE
BOX 68, TEL. 2389 EDE ROAD, OSOGBO.
INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN MODERN ART & MUSIC

Remember Twin Seven Seven?

REMEMBER Twin Seven Seven? He is back in a big way after some useful stay in America. And he has something to show for it.

A man of many parts, he is about to release a new

elpee this week, to coincide with his 33rd birthday. This time on his own label. The new elpee Disco recorded on Toss Records features on the first side such numbers like the Disco 'Inagination' with

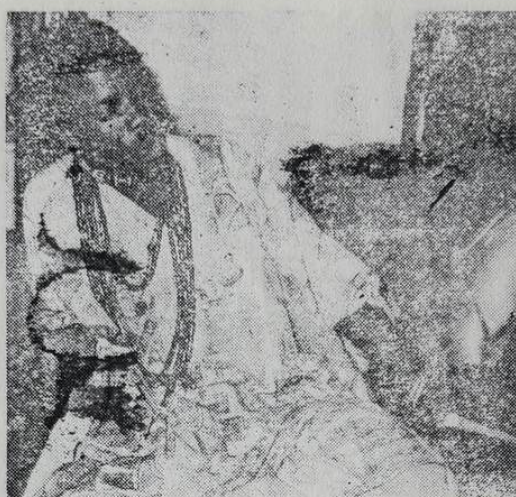
heavy instrumental work that would send any music hater doing a jig as well as Ese mo dupe, vote of thanks.

On a more sober mood on the flip side is Enyin Omode E gbo, a warning to youths to be of good behaviour and also a call to African leaders to speed up the liberation of Africa generally.

★ ★ ★
Twin Seven Seven has come a long way from the time you last heard of him. This new elpee is not only something worth celebrating a 33rd birthday with but also something that will feature in most places where there is fun, music and dance for sometime to come

Tony still hopeful

By Jimmy Aderinokun



TWIN SEVEN SEVEN

Twins Seven-Seven was a pioneering Nigerian artist who gained prominence in the 1960s through the Mbari Mbayo workshops in Osogbo, Nigeria. A central figure of the Osogbo Art School, he developed a unique modernist style rooted in Yoruba mythology and symbolism during Nigeria's post-independence era.

The Osogbo Art School, as it came to be known, emerged in the early 1960s from experimental art workshops at a time when Osogbo, in southwestern Nigeria, was becoming a vibrant cultural center. Unlike academic training in the universities, these workshops welcomed participants without prior experience, encouraging them to create personal styles grounded in Yoruba cultural forms while engaging with modern realities. Initiated by expatriates Ulli and Georgina Beier and playwright Duro Ladipo, the workshops provided a group of young artists space, mentorship, and materials to explore their individual visions. From this setting arose a generation of artists, including Twins Seven-Seven, Jimoh Buraimoh, Muraina Oyelami, Rufus Ogundele, Adebisi Fabunmi, Jacob Afolabi, and Nike Davies-Okundaye, who developed distinct artistic styles while retaining a cohesive visual language.

From the outset of his career, Twins Seven-Seven attracted international acclaim. Beginning in the mid-1960s, his work was shown in exhibitions across the United States, England, Scotland, Germany, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, India, and the Netherlands, establishing him early on as one of Nigeria's most visible artists abroad. Over the years, his work was included in seminal international exhibitions of contemporary African art. His global presence reflected the cosmopolitan spirit of the Osogbo Art School, a hub of cultural exchange where expatriates and local artists mingled socially, philosophically, and artistically in opposition to rigidity of the colonial university system. Twins Seven-Seven embodied an eclectic personality: known for his flamboyant fashion, he was a dancer and celebrated musician with songs that topped the radio charts, he had fourteen wives over his lifetime, and he often welcomed celebrities and foreign dignitaries to Osogbo.

Twins Seven-Seven worked across a wide range of media, including pen and ink drawings, etchings, painting, and wood panels. His surfaces are densely patterned, with intricate lines and repeated motifs. He portrays human figures, animals, spirits, and hybrid beings drawn from Yoruba cosmology and his imagination. Symbols such as serpents, birds, masquerades, and ghostly presences are layered into complex, narrative-like structures. He described his practice as "contemporary Yoruba traditional art", focusing on the interplay of the material and spiritual worlds and the balance between tradition and modern life.



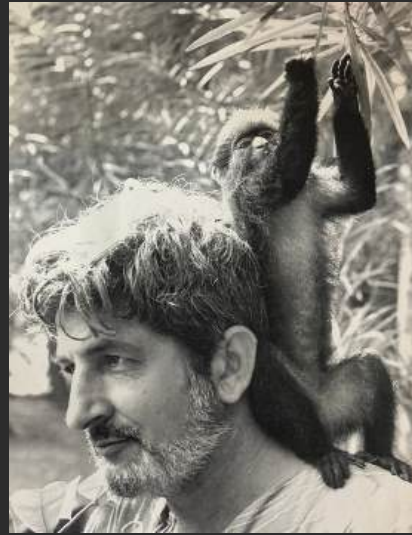


(L) Twins Seven-Seven, Osogbo, Nigeria, 1964.

(R) Twins Seven-Seven performs in front of a crowd, undated.

Born Taiwo Olaniyi Oyewale-Toyeje Oyelale Osuntoki in 1944 in Ogidi, Nigeria, he was the only surviving child of seven sets of twins, all of whom died in infancy. Among the Yoruba, who have the highest rate of twin births in the world, twins are considered to bring wealth and luck to their families. Yet infant mortality among twins is high, and his survival marked him as an *abiku* child—a child “born to die,” believed to be one of a tribe of spirit children. It was said that Twins Seven-Seven had been born seven times to his mother before he could finally “be persuaded to stay.” To protect him, herbalists and oracle priests prepared medicines to counteract the spirits, and he was made to wear chains to weigh him down in the physical world. His unusual lineage gave rise to the name “Twins Seven-Seven,” or “Ibeji Meje-Meje” in Yoruba, which he adopted both as a personal identity and as his artistic name.

His father, Aatoyeje Oyekale, was a Muslim from Ibadan, descended from the royal line of Baale Osuntoki, Olubadan of Ibadan between 1895-1897. His mother, Mary Ifatunke, was a Christian from Ogidi and a prosperous cloth merchant whose family had strong associations with the Imole cult, a Yoruba spiritual society. His early exposure with his family’s blended religious traditions and label as an *abiku* child had major influences on his later artistic explorations. As a teenager, Twins briefly attended a teacher-training college but dropped out in 1962. He chose a life on the road, first joining a travelling theatre troupe and then dancing with a medicine show that toured villages selling a so-called “Superman Tonic” of river water, spices, and caramelised sugar. Twins drew in crowds on the street with his mesmerising dancing as a way to attract potential customers. It was while travelling with this group that he first arrived in Osogbo in 1962.



(L) Georgina Betts (Beier) on the veranda of her house in Osogbo, 1965. Photo by Ulli Beier.
(R) Ulli Beier, Nigeria, c. 1960s.

By the early 1960s, Osogbo was alive with the energy of a newly independent Nigeria. Agricultural prosperity from cocoa, palm oil, and other crops had created a sense of optimism, fueling a rising middle class of traders and entrepreneurs who built “upstairs” homes and invested in town life. On weekends, bars and dancehalls pulsed with highlife music, beer, and crowds.

Twins Seven-Seven first encountered Ulli and Georgina Beier in 1963 when he gatecrashed a party at the Mbari Mbayo Club in Osogbo. Ulli Beier, a German professor and writer who taught at the University of Ibadan’s Department of Extramural Studies, and Georgina (then Georgina Betts), a British artist, were instrumental in creating Mbari Mbayo as an experimental cultural space. The club was modeled on the earlier Mbari Club in Ibadan, which brought Ulli together with future literary and artistic figures such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Amos Tutuola, Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, and J. P. Clark. Ulli Beier founded *Black Orpheus* in 1957 after visiting the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris, which became a landmark literary journal that introduced modern African and African-diaspora writing to international audiences. Seeking to broaden his experience beyond the university community in Ibadan, Beier relocated to Osogbo in 1958, a town about fifty miles away.

In Osogbo, the focus broadened to Yoruba theatre and the visual arts. Mbari Mbayo, coined from a Yoruba phrase that means “when we see it, we shall be happy”, revolved around Duro Ladipo’s *Popular Bar*, with its activities held in the compound of Ladipo’s father. Duro Ladipo was a Nigerian playwright and theatre director whose works drew on Yoruba history and mythology to create modern stage dramas. At Mbari Mbayo, Ladipo staged productions with his theatre troupe, while the Beiers encouraged artistic talent. Most of the artists who later defined the Osogbo Art School were members of Ladipo’s theatre troupe. Susanne Wenger,



Twins Seven-Seven performing, undated.

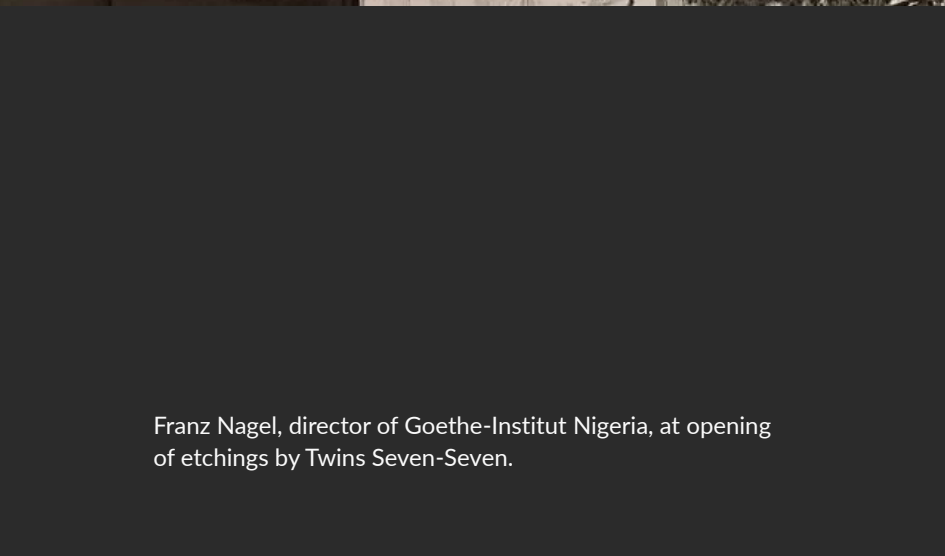
an Austrian artist and Ulli's first wife, was by then also settled in Osogbo, where she had become a priestess of Osun dedicated to restoring the sculptures of the sacred grove.

At the party, Twins Seven-Seven made an immediate impression with his flamboyant dress, and he startled the crowd with an imaginative dance that soon left him alone on the floor, the center of attention. So struck was Ulli Beier by his charisma that he offered to top the wages Twins Seven-Seven had been earning on the road, assuring him that a place could be found for his talents in Osogbo.

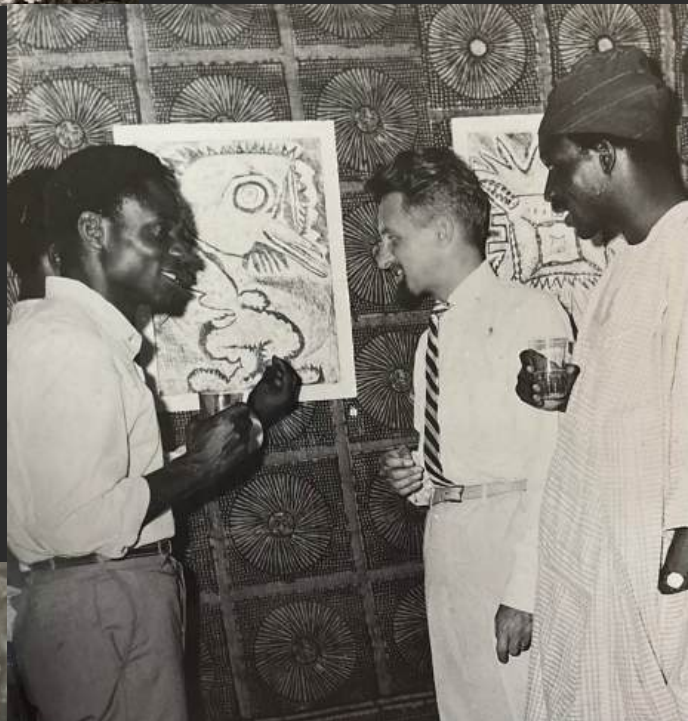
In 1962 and 1963, Ulli Beier had already begun experimenting with short art programs in Nigeria. The model came from the Mbari Club in Ibadan, where a summer school had been run by the architects Julian Beinart and Pancho Guedes, working mainly with art teachers and graduates of Ahmadu Bello University. But in Osogbo the circumstances were different. As Beier later explained, there were no art teachers or trained artists in the town; the potential student was *"the odd young man who would drift into the art school because he had nothing better to do—or because he hoped that the thing might turn out to be entertaining, or even profit making in the end."*



Mr. and Mrs. Duro Ladipo with
Count Posadowski, German
Ambassador to Nigeria.



Franz Nagel, director of Goethe-Institut Nigeria, at opening
of etchings by Twins Seven-Seven.



Jean Welford (Kennedy) with daughter at
Mbari Mbari opening with Duro Ladipo.



Austrian artist **Susanne Wenger** with guests in **Osogbo, Nigeria**, undated, from **Ulli Beier's** archive. After her separation from Ulli Beier in the early 1960s, Susanne Wenger remained in Osogbo until her death in 2009, spending decades collaborating with local artists to create monumental sculptures and shrines in the Osun Sacred Grove, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005.



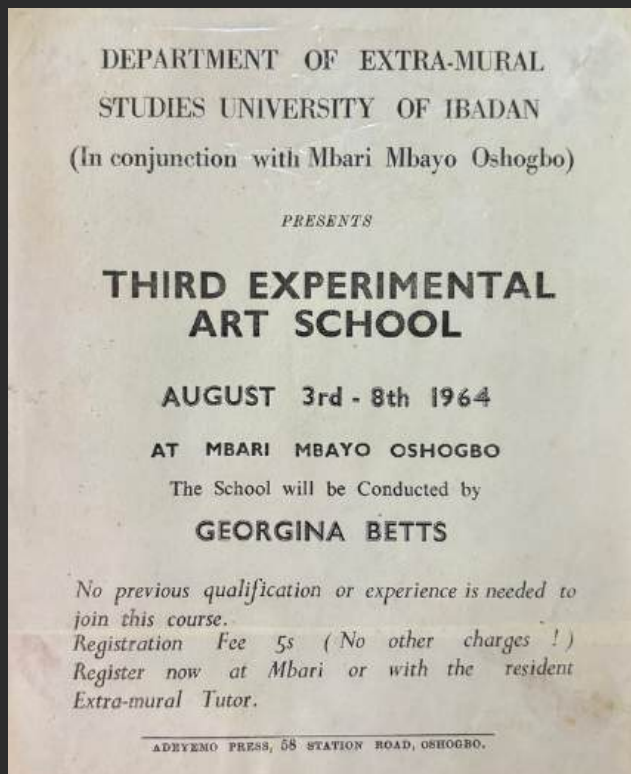
The ATAOJA of Osogbo (Adenele) with Duro Ladipo (left) and Jacob Lawrence (right) at the second art workshop in Osogbo in 1963.

The first Osogbo art workshop, held in 1962 and conducted by Guyanese artist Denis Williams, pursued a different aim. The students had never seen much art, and thus had no conventions to follow. The goal was simply to give them paper and materials and allow their imaginations to emerge. A second workshop followed in 1963 with Denis Williams and the African-American painter Jacob Lawrence, which revealed strong abilities but lacked continuity, since Williams could not remain in Osogbo to guide them further due to his teaching commitments at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University).

It was at this stage that Georgina Betts, newly arrived from Zaria, began to take on a role. Born in 1938 in a working-class suburb of London, Georgina dropped out of Kingston Art School, frustrated by its lack of encouragement of originality. In 1958 she discovered books by Nigerian author Amos Tutuola while casually browsing in a small London library. Amos Tutuola's books, blending Yoruba folklore, oral storytelling, and fantastical journeys, captivated Georgina with their imaginative vision of African culture. The following year, at twenty-one years old, she set out for Nigeria. After a short period in Zaria, she travelled to Osogbo in search of Ulli Beier, who she had been told could recommend Nigerian literature. She arrived in Osogbo in 1963 at age twenty-four and soon developed a relationship with Beier, whom she later married.

The responsibility of supporting the budding artists gradually shifted to Georgina. This came in August 1964, when the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Ibadan, in conjunction with Mbari Mbayo Osogbo, organised the Third Experimental Art School. Conducted by Georgina Betts, the workshop ran from August 3–8, 1964. It was advertised in the local press, required no prior qualifications or experience, and asked only a nominal registration fee of five shillings. Anyone curious to try art could join, and the open invitation drew in many of the young people who would become the pioneers of the Osogbo Art Movement.

Twins Seven-Seven, twenty years old and without any prior artistic training, wandered into the workshop with little else to do. The Beier's had earlier connected him with the Duro Ladipo Theatre Troupe, but his independent personality clashed. In the workshop, the others were painting with poster colours and thick brushes on brown wrapping paper, but Twins called for pen and ink. Starting at one corner, he filled the sheet with a fantastical image he titled *The Devil's Dog*. Ulli Beier noted that even this very first drawing already carried the distinctive mark of Twins' style, densely detailed and teeming with figures.



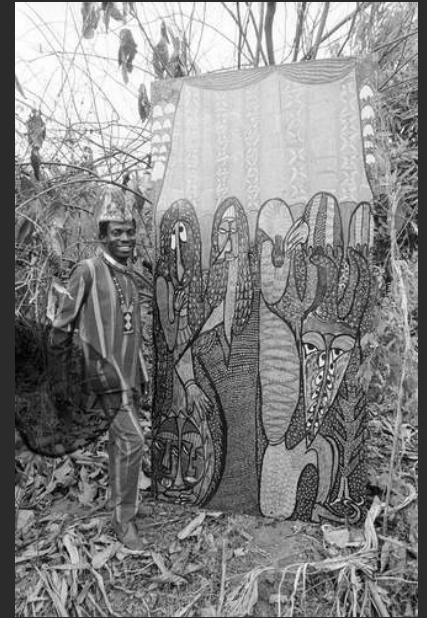
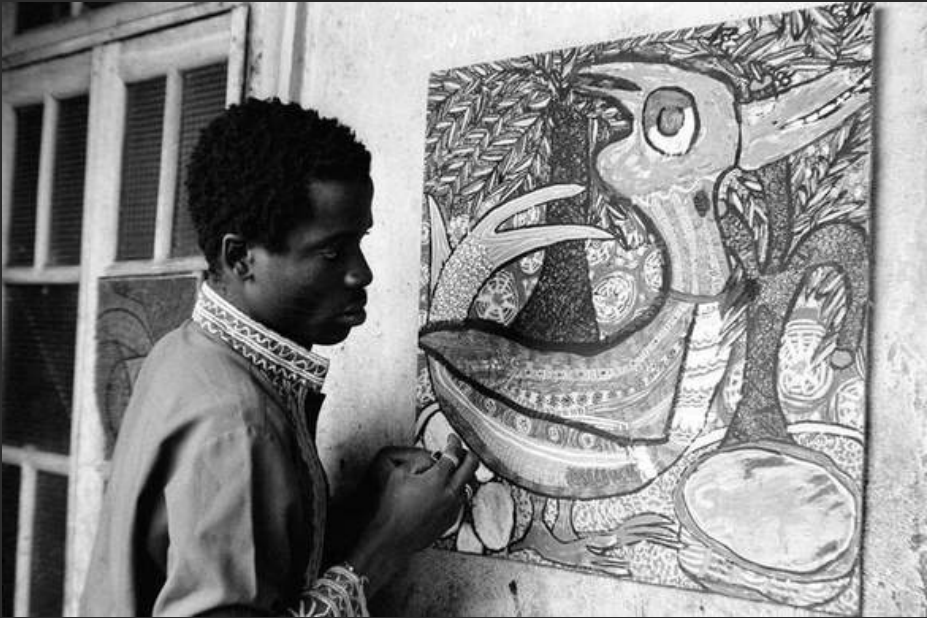
(L) Advertisement for Third Experimental Art School, conducted by Georgina Betts, August 3-8, 1964.
(R) Georgina Betts (Beier) with artist Adebisi Fabunmi, cooperating on a mural in the palace of the king of Otan Ayebaju, 1966.



Twins Seven-Seven's first drawing created during Georgina Beier's Workshop in August 1964. Twins Seven-Seven, *Devil's Dog*, 1964, Pen Drawing in Indian ink with water colours on brown wrapping paper, Collection Iwalewa Haus, University of Bayreuth.



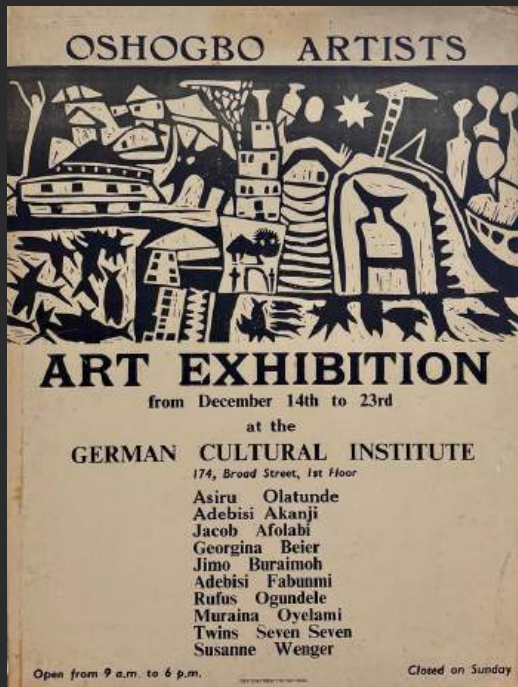
The Oba of Otar Aiyegbaju opens an exhibition at Mbari Mbayo, Seated left Lazarus Ukeje, photographer of Nigeria Magazine, Ulli Beier, and Gerald Moore.



(L-R): Twins Seven-Seven at work in Osogbo, Nigeria, undated.

During the workshop, Ulli Beier singled out one participant as the most remarkable: Twins Seven-Seven, a twenty-year-old dancer whose “*bizarre and playful imagination*” he compared to Amos Tutuola. “*Seven-Seven doodles along in pen and ink and later applies very delicate, transparent colour. His pictures are highly ornate—but never confused or disorganized.*” Twins later recalled that Ulli Beier originally gave him a copy of Amos Tutuola’s *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), a novel in which a young boy wanders into the spirit world and encounters a succession of fantastical beings. Tutuola’s writings would continue to influence Twins’ titles and imagery, just as it had earlier inspired Georgina to move to Nigeria.

After the five-day workshop, Georgina selected a small group of participants to continue working together as full-time studio artists. Supported with small stipends, materials, and daily mentoring, they developed their own styles and techniques over the next two years, from 1964 until December 1966, when the Beiers left Nigeria. During this time, the artists worked in studios at the Osogbo Museum and at the Beiers’ residence, creating an environment that fostered experimentation and collaboration. As she explained, “*The problem was to make them aware of what they had achieved, without producing the self-consciousness that could kill their freshness.*” Ulli Beier later described this early phase as a unique moment when the Osogbo artists could devote their full energy and imagination to artistic work without the constant struggle for daily survival. Their shared efforts reached early success in Nigeria with the *Osogbo* exhibition at the Goethe Institute in Lagos, which opened on December 14, 1966.



(L) Exhibition poster for Osogbo exhibition at Goethe Institute, Lagos, December 1966.



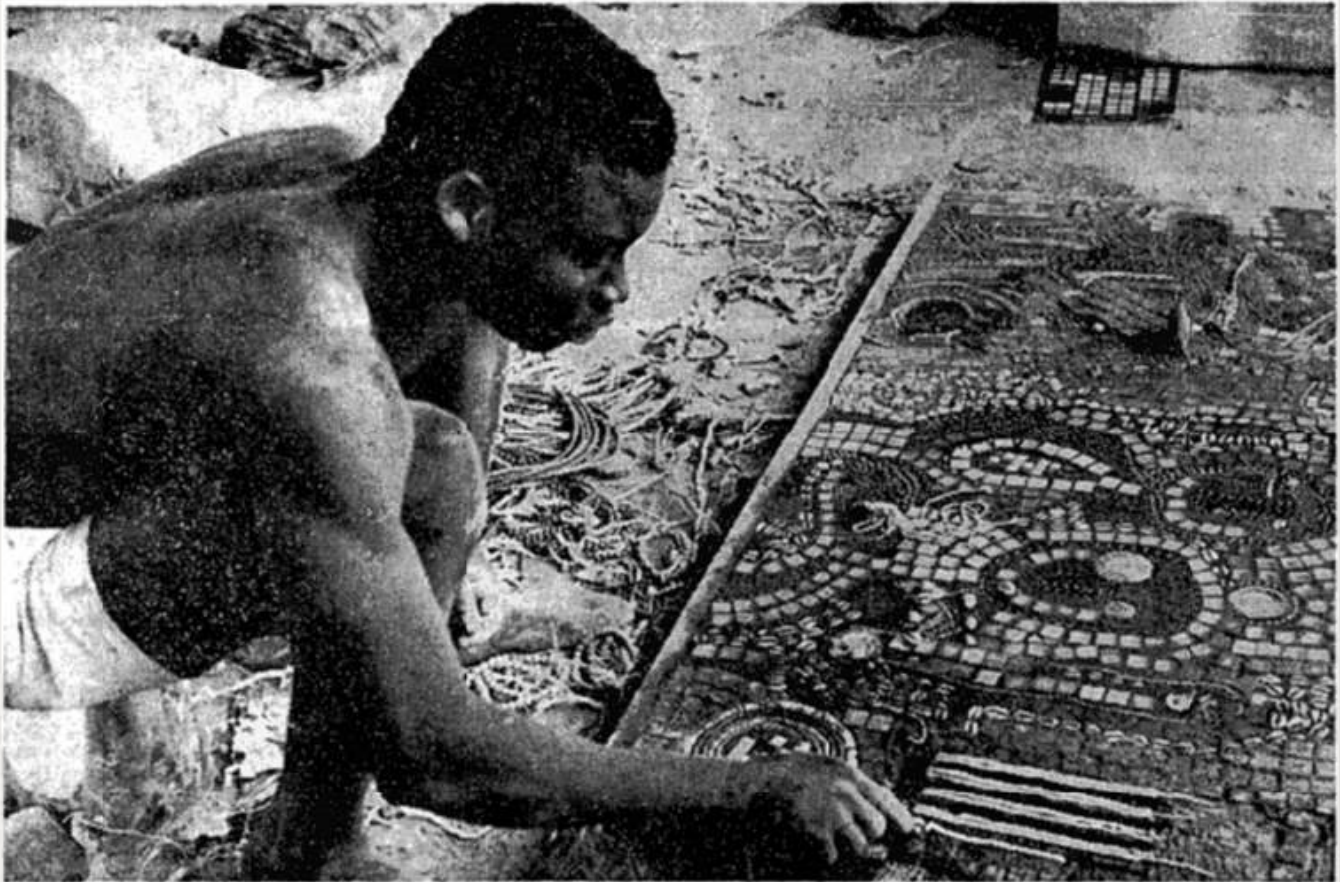
(R): Exhibition poster for Fourth Anniversary of Mbari Mbayo Osogbo, March 1966.

Twins Seven-Seven quickly established himself as a distinctive figure of the Osogbo circle. His imagination produced densely detailed images populated with ghosts and hybrid forms, resonant with Yoruba folklore but with a wholly contemporary, psychedelic tone. By the late 1960s, he had expanded into paintings, large canvases, wood panels, and etching. He developed a technique he referred to as “sculpture painting”, in which he raised the foreground of a painting to create a low relief, giving his images a three-dimensional presence.

His first exhibition was held in March 1965 at Mbari Mbayo in Osogbo, on the occasion of the third anniversary of Mbari Mbayo. Soon after, his work began to circulate internationally. He exhibited at the Neue Münchener Galerie, Munich (1965); National Museum of Ethnography (NAPRSTEK), Prague (1965), Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1967, with Ibrahim El-Salahi, Malangatana, Asiru Olatunde, and Jimo Akolo); University of Sussex (1967); Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles (1969); Camden Arts Centre, London (1969), and the Commonwealth Institute (1970). By 1970, critical recognition followed in the United States. Writing in *The New York Times*, art critic John Canaday observed:

“The most versatile artist in the show and the one who manages to be most African while working at a high technical level by the standards of European studios, calls himself Twins Seven-Seven... In his etchings he may suggest Paul Klee, until you remember that any similarities are as likely to be the result of common sources in primitive ritual art as to be evidence of the African’s emulation of a European idol. In two large tapestry-like panels, Twins Seven-Seven shows himself a master simultaneously of decorative style and the phantasmagoria of black magic.”

Nigerians' Art Rewards a Pilgrimage



Richard F. Wolford

Jimo Buraimon, who works with beads, is represented in the exhibition of art from the city of Oshogbo, Nigeria

By JOHN CANADAY

The Studio Museum in Harlem, at 2033 Fifth Avenue near 125th Street, has come up with an exhibition for which the most succinct recommendation may be that it is worth the safari to this cultural outpost. About 80 paintings, sculptures, graphics, and works in such arts and crafts media as beads and hand-dyed fabric, all from artists working in the city of Oshogbo, Nigeria, have been assembled under the title "Mbari Mbayo," the name of a club of writers and artists in that city who in 1962, 1963, and 1964 sponsored workshops for the encouragement of local talent.

"Mbari" is the Ibo word for creation, and "Mbayo" in Yoruba means "When we see it, we shall be happy." It sounds pretty bad, and on the face of it we should expect the usual product of well-meaning endeavors of this kind, from Mozambique to Dubuque, where the idle, the underprivileged, and the misfits of a community are

solaced and bolstered by classes where they express themselves at the expense of legitimate art standards.

Not so in this case. The talents of the 14 Nigerians in the show are very real and must have been well-directed in the workshops of which the artists are alumni. The prints by the two white European women (Susan Wenger and Georgina Beier) who are also included as, presumably, organizers of the workshop, are excellent examples of the standard neo-African European style, but they look only slick and obvious in comparison with the work of their African protégés and colleagues.

There is no nonsensical pretense that tribal art can be revived or sustained in its purity, this purity having vanished during the colonial rapes of the 19th and early 20th centuries. But the hybridization of European and African models has been most tactfully effected. These twain have met, and harmoniously, sometimes giving more favor to European sophisti-

cations than to African vigor, but always in legitimate union.

Some of the artists have exhibited in Europe, and at least one of them, Asiru Olatunde, made a small, isolated, but definite hit in New York a couple of years ago when examples of his aluminum low relief sculptures were exhibited at a United Nations benefit show. Olatunde, or Asiru—it is always difficult to know which is the surname—is a true folk artist whose subjects range from Adam and Eve into African legend and on to genre scenes of African village life.

The most versatile artist in the show, and the one who manages to be most African while working at a high technical level by the standards of European studios, calls himself Twins Seven Seven because, he says, he is the last surviving member of seven sets of twins. In his etchings he may suggest Paul Klee, until you remember that any similarities are as likely to be the result of common sources in primitive rit-

ual art as to be evidence of the African's emulation of a European idol. In two large tapestry-like panels, Twins Seven Seven shows himself a master simultaneously of decorative style and the phantasmagoria of black magic.

It is, of course, impossible for a non-African critic (by which I do not mean a white critic, but any critic without intimate experience of modern Africa) to judge the degree to which the work of an African artist is inspired by his innate African-ness. But to this non-African, the work of the artists already mentioned and that of the sculptor Jinadu Olacepo and the bead worker Jimo Buraimon had a traditional but still vital African character to a degree that is quite unexpected in the nineteen-seventies.

Admission to the Studio Museum in Harlem is free. It is open Monday and Wednesday from 10 A.M. to 9 P.M., Thursday and Friday from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M., and Saturday and Sunday from 1 P.M. to 6 P.M. It is closed Tuesdays.



Twins Seven-Seven in London, 1967. Photo by Ulli Beier.

From the 1970s onward, Twins Seven-Seven's work was steadily presented by leading museums across the world, marking him as one of the most widely exhibited Nigerian artist of his generation. He exhibited in major European institutions such as the Musée de l'Homme, Paris (1970), the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna (1971), and the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Berlin (1979), as well as at the Second Indian Triennial in New Delhi (1971). During this period he also established a strong presence in the United States, exhibiting at the Studio Museum in Harlem (1970), Union Carbide Gallery, New York (1972), the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (1974), the National Gallery of African Art, Washington, D.C. (1974), the Crocker Art Gallery, Sacramento (1974), the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh (1976), and Howard University (1977). He participated in artist residencies in the United States including Merced College in California (1972) and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine (1974).

Over the following decades, his work appeared in major international exhibitions, including *Magiciens de la Terre* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1989), often cited as the first large-scale exhibition in Europe to give significant visibility to contemporary African artists, and *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994* (Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, 2001), curated by Okwui Enwezor. He also participated in exhibitions at the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (1980), Spelman College, Atlanta (1988), the Indianapolis Museum of Art (2000), the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2001), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2004), and the Fowler Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2008).



Twins Seven-Seven with his Seven wives

Twins Seven-Seven photographed with his seven wives, undated.



Twins Seven-Seven at Merton Simpson Gallery, New York, NY, in 1972.

In addition to his visual art, Twins pursued music, dance, and performance. He founded several musical groups, including the *Young Stars Rock Band* in the 1960s and later the *Artistic Adventurers*. His exuberant personality extended into his personal life. By the 1970s, he was married to seven wives simultaneously, among them the artist Nike Davies-Okundaye, who built her own celebrated career. Over the course of his life he married a total of fourteen wives. Twins' popularity as a musician and his constant travelling also brought him into contact with figures in the Black Nationalism and Black Consciousness movements. He became a close friend of Barbara Ann Teer, founder of the National Black Theatre in New York, and in 1973 he joined her theatre. Twins' home in Osogbo became what he called a "cultural embassy," a compound that served as both residence and gallery, welcoming visitors from Nigeria and abroad. Among those he hosted were American political figures Andrew Young, a former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and Walter Mondale, later Vice President of the United States. He ventured into local politics, serving as the City Councillor of Osogbo from 1976-1979.

In 1982 Twins Seven-Seven was seriously injured in a car accident that confined him to bed for over a year. Despite these challenges, he remained an important public figure, receiving several honorary titles, including Olobu of Ilobu (1974), Ekerin Basorun and Atunluto of Ibadan (1996), and Obatolu of Ogidi. From 2000 to 2008 he lived in Philadelphia, continuing his practice before returning to Nigeria, where he spent his final years. In 2005, UNESCO named him both a "Living Human Treasure" and an Artist for Peace. He died in Ibadan, his father's ancestral hometown, in 2011.

Today, Twins Seven-Seven is remembered as one of the most original figures of modern African art, a self-taught visionary whose vivid imagination and energy carried Yoruba traditions into a modern global context. His work continues to circulate internationally today, with recent presentations at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia (2022), the 60th International Art Exhibition, v, and in the traveling exhibition *Black Orpheus: Jacob Lawrence and the Mbari Club* at the Chrysler Museum of Art, New Orleans Museum of Art, and Toledo Museum of Art in 2024. Opening in October 2025, Twins Seven-Seven is featured in the exhibition *Nigerian Modernism* at the Tate Modern, London.



Twins Seven-Seven

The lost ghost, 1970

Pen and ink on paper

18.5 x 11 in. | 47 x 28 cm

Signed and dated lower right "Twin Seven-Seven 1970";

titled middle right "The lost ghost".



Twin Seven-Seven

The lost farmer, 1970

Pen and ink on paper

17.5 x 9.5 in. | 44.5 x 24.1 cm

Signed and dated lower right "Twin Seven-Seven 1970";
titled lower right "The lost farmer".



Twins Seven-Seven

The Drummer, 1970

Pen and ink on paper

16.5 x 10.5 in | 41.9 x 26.7 cm

Signed and dated lower right "Twin Seven-Seven 1970";

titled middle left "The Drummer".



Twins Seven-Seven

The Palm Wine Drinker, 1974-75

Pen and ink on fabric

29.5 x 22.5 in. | 74.9 x 57.2 cm

Signed and dated lower-middle left "Twin Seven-Seven 1974";
signed lower-middle right "Twin Seven-Seven 1975".



Twins Seven-Seven

Your peace, 1973

Pen and ink on fabric

13 x 31 in. | 33 x 79 cm

Signed and dated lower right "Twin Seven-Seven 1973".

Inscribed by artist on verso: "Just like the eagle that soar higher in the cloud. Your thoughts create peace, your eyes light peace, your ears receives peace. Your hand give peace. Indeed your life tell a tale of peace to all generation."



Twins Seven-Seven

Obataala (big god), 1971

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed on lower right frame "Twin Seven-Seven" ; signed on artwork on lower right "Twin-Seven-Seven"; titled on artwork lower left "OBATAALA (Big God)"; titled on lower right frame "OBATAALA (Big god)"

Inscribed by artist on verso:

OBÀTÁÁLÁ (big god)

He's one of the powerful god in Yorubaland in his full garment and staff. In this part of his life show on this piece of artwork is about a twins mother that was blessed by obatala (big god). She is now receiving fresh order to make a statue in the image of her twins. The statue will be making sacrifice to every year in respect to the sprit of the twins.



Twins Seven-Seven

Àpáàrá, 1972

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed lower left frame "ÀPÁÀRÁ"; titled lower right frame "TWIN SEVEN SEVEN".

Inscribed by artist on verso:

ÀPÁÀRÁ

Apaara was a powerful and wicked man, all he knows was to do bad, but as god hate bad people, in one of his attempt to harm one of the noble man in town, he turned out to harm himself by turning/changing his only son and wife into birds. What you does is what you'll got.



Twins Seven-Seven

My vision of Olokun, 1972

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed lower left frame "TWIN SEVEN-SEVEN"; titled lower right frame "MY VISION OF OLOKUN"; titled lower right artwork "MY VISION OF OLOKUN"

Inscribed by artist on verso:

*MY VISION OF OLÓKUN (sea goddess)
(lady of wealthy)*

OLOKUN is a rich lady, with a lot of wealth, the cowries around her shows some of her riches, and a lot of properties to her credit featured, but upon all her riches, OLOKUN is barren compared with OLÓSA who's fruitful but poor.



Twins Seven-Seven

Ebo, 1971

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed lower right frame "Twin Seven-Seven"; Signed lower right artwork "Twin Seven-Seven"; titled "EBO" on lower left frame.

Inscribed by artist on verso:

*EBO (Sacrifice)
(OROGIDIGBI)*

This artwork shows a woman making sacrifice in an attempt to have a child of her own. The god later answered, granting her prayer/sacrifice by given to her one of the great man of their generation named ORÒGIDIGBÌ, a warlord who later become a god/hero in my village. Normally, sacrifice apply to many people in many ways.



Twins Seven-Seven

Irin Ajo Orunmila, 1971

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed lower right frame "Twin SevenSeven"; Signed top left artwork "Twin Seven Seven"; titled "IRIN AJO ORUNMILA" on lower left frame, titled "IRIN AJO ORUNMILA" on top left artwork.

Inscribed by artist on verso:

IRIN AJO ORUNMILA
JOURNEY OF ORUNMILA

This work shows the moveemnt of ORUNMILA (father of Ifa) to his final settlement which is "Ile Ife". After passed, lived in some towns like USI in Ekiti (the first town he stayed in the world). He later moved to Usi in Ado Ekiti. The he moved to Ijesha-Obokun (Ilesha), later left for Ife where he made his home. A settlement that favoured him and brought him respect and success in all his endeavor. As you hang this work, believe it, your journey will bring you sucess and your effort witll never be in sabotage, people will be saying good things about you. Says Orunmila in Ejoigbe:

*Esinsih lo nfoju se ide
opa l'o gejo latana,
o wa se idi wereke
o wa se idi wereke*



Twins Seven-Seven

Èéwo, 1972

Pen and ink on board

24 x 12 in | 61 cm x 30.5 cm

Signed lower right frame "Twin Seven Seven"; titled "ÈÈWÒ" on lower left frame/

Inscribed by artist on verso:

ÈÈWÒ (ABOMINATION)

In Yorubaland there are certain laws that guides certain things especially dying (inidgo) of cloth in Yorubaland, which/ it is believe that a young lady/girl that can still get pregnant should not get near Indigo pot talkless of making dye. Because if she does the dye will never ferment to become black (Indigo). That is the reason It's only y old women seen doign the job. The landy in this Artwork has been making her dye for a long time/period but it didn't turn black, cause it? Alas! this lady was pregnant, that's simply the reason, she had comitted abomination (EEWO). The old woman behind her (her mother) is now telling her why.



Twins Seven-Seven

Evan & Juliet Highet in a Collective Mood, c. 1972-74

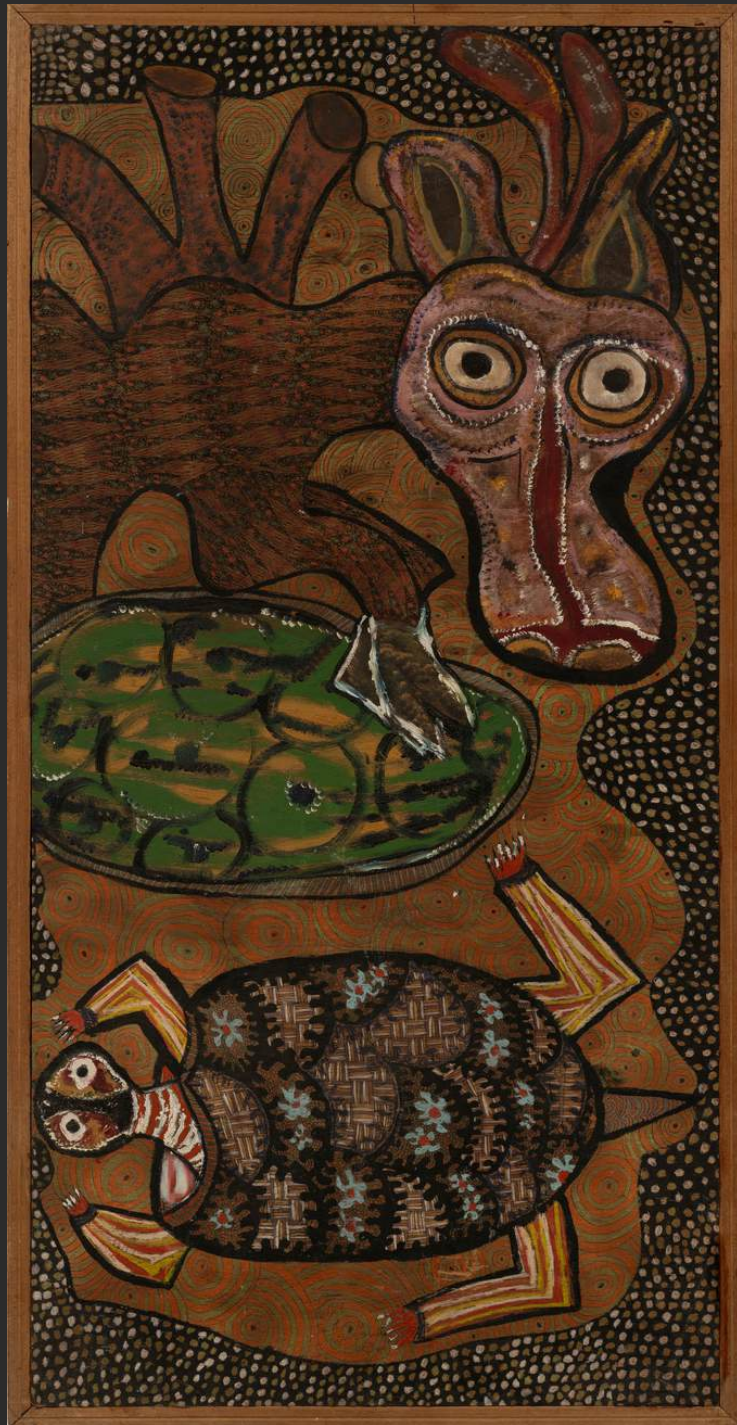
Pen, ink, crayon and acrylic on wood

23 x 35 in. | 58 x 89 cm

*titled and signed 'SET OF COULOURS/ OF/ EVAN & JULIET/ IN OSHOgbo/ by Twins
Sevensseven/ BOX 60 OSHOGB0' (centre right); Note: This work is inscribed "Box 68"
which refers to Twins' address "PO Box 68, Oshogbo".*

This work portrays Evan and Juliet Highet, an expatriate couple who were close to the Beiers and to many of the Osogbo artists in the 1960s. Expatriates played an important role in the Osogbo art community, providing support, patronage, and cultural exchange that helped to connect local artists with wider international audiences. Many of Twins' early international exhibitions were organised by Nigerian expatriates in their home countries. By painting his friends and patrons, Twins Seven-Seven captured not only their likeness but also their place within the social circle that surrounded the Osogbo workshops. The Osogbo Art School differentiated itself from the social hierarchies of the university system in Nigeria at the time, which in the early 1960s still often kept Western professors and Nigerian students at a distance.

In the composition, the figures are adorned in richly textured clothing, their faces exaggerated with large eyes and dramatic features, while the surrounding surface is animated with geometric designs and symbols. By combining portraiture with his signature style of dense ornament, Twins transforms a personal relationship into part of the broader story of life in Osogbo.



Twins Seven-Seven

African Buffalo & Tortoise Race, c. 1972-74

Pen, ink, crayon and acrylic on wood

47 x 23 in. | 119 x 58.4 cm

titled and signed 'Race/ Painting by/ Twins Seven/ Box08/ Oshogbo' (lower centre);

Note: This work is inscribed "Box 68" which refers to Twins' address "PO Box 68, Oshogbo".

African Buffalo & Tortoise Race (c. 1972-74) depicts the well-known Yoruba folktale of the tortoise who challenges the more powerful buffalo to a race, winning through trickery and persistence. Like many stories in Yoruba oral tradition, the tale conveys moral lessons about intelligence, patience, and the triumph of wit over brute strength. By translating this narrative in his paintings, Twins Seven-Seven extended the reach of oral storytelling, making it part of his distinctive modern pictorial language. In the composition, the wide-eyed buffalo dominates the upper section while the patterned tortoise appears below, set against a surface alive with swirling dots. Executed in pen, ink, crayon, and acrylic on wood, the work combines meticulous drawing with vibrant color.



Twins Seven-Seven

The Devil's Dog in the Contorted City, c. 1972-74

Pen, ink, crayon and acrylic on wood

23 x 47 in | 58 x 119 cm

titled and signed 'The Devils/ DOG in/ The Contorted City/ Twin/ SevenSeven/ BDC68/ OSHOGBO' (lower right); Note: This work is inscribed "Box 68" which refers to Twins' address "PO Box 68, Oshogbo".

The image of the *Devil's Dog* was the first subject Twins Seven-Seven created in Georgina Beier's Osogbo workshop in 1964, and it remained a recurring theme throughout his career. This version, *The Devil's Dog in the Contorted City*, painted with pen, ink, crayon and acrylic on wood, shows how he developed the idea into a large and complex composition. The monumental creature stretches across the panel, its body divided into patterned sections filled with repeating lines, spirals, and color blocks. Its wide eyes, open mouth, and exaggerated features give it a commanding presence, at once animal-like and fantastical.

The work reflects Twins Seven-Seven's growing technical skill and his interest in combining bold color with intricate pattern. Human figures and structures appear within and around the form of the animal, linking the supernatural image to everyday surroundings. The *Devil's Dog* theme connects to his wider interest in Yoruba cosmology and the world of spirits, where hybrid beings embody both protective and destructive powers.



Twins Seven-Seven

King of the Rainbow goddess, 1978

Acrylic, pen and ink on board

48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Signed and dated lower left "TwinSevenSeven '78"; signed lower right artwork "TwinSevenSeven"; titled lower left "King of the Rainbow goddess".



Twins Seven-Seven

SANGO (god of thunder), 1976

Acrylic, pen and ink on board

48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Signed lower right "TwinsSevenSeven"; signed lower right above "TwinsSevenSeven"; signed and dated lower left "TwinsSevenSeven '76"; titled lower left "SANGO (god of thunder)".



Twins Seven-Seven

Dream of a tired hunter in the bush of ghost, 1978

Acrylic, pen and ink on board

48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Signed bottom right "TwinSevenSeven '78"; signed lower right "TwinsSevenSeven"; titled bottom left "Dream of a tired hunter in the bush of the ghost".



Twins Seven-Seven

Abiku Protector, 1968

Pen and ink on board with carved frame

Unframed: 48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Framed: 53 x 28.5 in | 134.6 x 72.4 cm

Signed bottom middle "Twins Seven Seven 1968"; titled bottom left "ABIKU PROTECTOR".

Abiku Protector (1968) reflects Twins Seven-Seven's connection to the Yoruba concept of the abiku, the "born-to-die" child believed to move between the human and spirit worlds. As the sole survivor of seven sets of twins, he was himself identified as abiku, and his survival carried powerful symbolic meaning. In this work, the central spirit-animal figure looms large, surrounded by human and hybrid presences, evoking the protective forces invoked to keep abiku children tethered to life.

The work is rendered in dense pen-and-ink linework on wood, and its carved frame adds sculptural depth and connects to Yoruba traditions of woodcarving. This integration of painting and relief aligns with Twins Seven-Seven's development of "sculpture painting," where the pictorial field is raised into low relief. This work combines personal narrative and spiritual symbolism, illustrating how the artist fused Yoruba cosmology with new modern forms.



Twins Seven-Seven

Laro, founder of Osogbo, c. 1970

Pen, ink and crayon on plywood

48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Titled on verso "LARO" "THE FOUNDER OF OSOGBO".

This work depicts Laro, the legendary hunter credited with founding the town of Osogbo in the sixteenth century. According to Yoruba tradition, Laro discovered the Osun River while on a hunting expedition and encountered the goddess Osun herself, who instructed him to settle in the area. The shrine that grew from this encounter became one of the most important centers of Yoruba spirituality, and the Osun Sacred Grove at Osogbo remains a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Here, *Twins Seven-Seven* represents the hunter seated beneath a towering spirit-beast, his axe in hand, surrounded by dense linear patterns that animate the surface. Rendered in pen, ink, and crayon on plywood, the composition combines narrative subject matter with the artist's signature layering of line and color. The plywood support links the work to Yoruba carving traditions, while the intricate patterns emphasize the sacred connection between human, animal, and spiritual forces. By invoking the foundational story of Osogbo, Twins aligned his art with the town's cultural and religious significance.



Prince Twins Seven-Seven

Arugba (the osun calabash carrier), 1978

Acrylic, pen and ink on board

48 x 24 in | 121.9 x 61 cm

Signed and dated bottom right "Twins Seven Seven 1978"; titled on verso

Arugba (The Osun Calabash Carrier) is a vivid example of the artist's signature "sculpture painting" technique, where densely patterned lines and textured forms create a sense of sculptural relief on a flat surface. At the center, the *Arugba* kneels with folded legs, balancing the ritual calabash above her head, a reference to the young virgin who carries offerings during the annual Osun festival. This act is central to honoring the Osun goddess, whose sacred grove in Osogbo remains a site of immense cultural and spiritual importance. Her body is alive with intricate motifs—on her chest, a pair of twins are shown nursing, underscoring the sacred symbolism of fertility and continuity in Yoruba culture. Behind her, a crowd of stylized faces presses forward, framed by the outlines of traditional huts that root the scene in Osogbo's communal and ritual life. The stark whites of the cowrie shells and the wide, gleaming whites of her eyes punctuate the earth-toned palette, amplifying the spiritual charge of the composition.



Twins Seven-Seven

The mist of mankind in the spiritual realm, 1989

Pen and ink on board

96 x 48 in | 243.8 x 121.9 cm

Signed and dated bottom right, "TWINS SEVEN SEVEN 1989", titled bottom left "THE MIST OF MANKIND IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM"

***The Mist of Mankind in the Spiritual Realm* (1989) demonstrates his ability to translate the intimacy of pen-and-ink drawing into monumental scale.**

Measuring eight feet in height, the composition fills the board with a swirling network of human figures, animals, and spirit beings interwoven in layered rhythms. Elongated limbs, mask-like faces, and serpentine forms overlap across the surface, creating a visual density that suggests the coexistence of earthly and spiritual dimensions. Produced in 1989, this work belongs to the period when he increasingly turned to large-format panels. Here, Twins explores the Yoruba belief that life is inseparable from the unseen forces of the spirit world, presenting humanity as enveloped in a continuum of divine and ancestral presences.

Twins Seven-Seven

BIO

Taiwo Olaniyi Oyewale-Toyeje Oyelale Osuntoki

b. May 3, 1944, Ogidi, Nigeria.

d. 2011, Ibadan, Nigeria.

EXHIBITIONS

- 1965** *Third Anniversary Celebration of Mbari Mbayo*, Oshogbo, Nigeria (March 13-14)
Moderne Kunst aus Oshogbo, Neue Münch Gallery, Munich, Germany
National Museum of Ethnography (NAPRSTEK), Prague, Czechoslovakia
- 1966** *Oshogbo Artists*, German Cultural Institute, Lagos, Nigeria (December 4-23)
with Asiru Olatunde, Adebisi Akanji, Jacob Afolabi, Georgina Beier Jimo Buraimoh, Adebisi Fabunmi, Rufus Ogundele, Muraina Oyelami, Twins Seven Seven, Susanne Wenger
- 1967** *Contemporary African Art*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, March 17- April 18
with Ibrahim El Salahi, Malangatana, Asiru, and Jimo Akolo
University of Sussex, Institute of African Studies, UK
Moderne Kunst aus Oshogbo, Traverse Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland
Mbari Mbayo Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria (Organized by Tayo Aiyegbusi)
Wesleyan University, Connecticut (Organized by American expatriate Mr. Ronald Springwater)
All Osogbo exhibition, Mbari Mbayo, Osogbo, Nigeria
Mbari Club, Ibadan, Nigeria
Goethe Institute, Lagos, December 13-22 (group)
- 1968** *Contemporary Nigerian Art: Exhibition for Ori-Olokun Opening*, Ori-Olokun Cultural Centre, Ile-Ife, June
Contemporary African Art, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, California, March 13-May 4
[traveled in the USA from 1969-1973 to: Studio Museum in Harlem and New York University, New York; University of Missouri, Columbia; Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland; West Virginia State College, Institute; North East Missouri State College, Kirskville; Rio Hondo College, Whittier, California; Compton Community College, Compton, California; Citrus College, Azusa, California; Mira Costa College, Oceanside, California, and Civic Arts Gallery, Walnut Creek, California].

- 1969** *Oshogbo Artists*, Goethe Institute, Lagos, March 19-26
Camden Arts Centre, London, August-September 1969
- 1970** Commonwealth Institute, London, UK
Oeuvres Africaines Nouvelles, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France, February 13- April 13
African Painting at the BBC, Bush House, London, UK
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, Goethe Institute, Lagos, Nigeria (May 13-22)
The Paintings of Twins Seven-Seven, USIS, Ibadan, Nigeria
Studio Museum in Harlem. New York, NY, USA
- 1971** *Moderne Malerei in Afrika*, Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, Austria, December 1970-February 1971.
Second Indian Triennial, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, India
Ten Artists from Nigeria, Arts Club of Washington, DC, March 21-April 9
Oshogbo Artists, Goethe Institute, Lagos, January 13-23
Eighteenth Festival of the Arts, Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia, USA, April 18-24
Contemporary Tapestries, Brass Castings, and Graphics from Nigeria, The Egg and the Eye, Los Angeles, California, USA
- 1972** *Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven*, Merton Simpson Gallery, New York, NY
New African Art in Czechoslovakia, Náprstek Museum, Prague, Czechoslovakia, January-April
Contemporary Nigerian Art, Montgomery College, Rockville, Maryland, USA, May
Africa Creates '72, Union Carbide Gallery, Union Carbide Building, New York, October 1972-April 1973
Oshogbo Artists, Goethe Institute, Lagos, November 12-18
- 1973** *Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven*, Goethe Institute, Lagos, February 21-March 3
African Art, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA
Modern African Art, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, USA
Contemporary Nigerian Graphics and Textiles, National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Solo exhibition, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria

- 1974** *Art in Africa Today*, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Contemporary African Art, National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC, USA
Contemporary Nigerian Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, Goethe Institute, Lagos, Nigeria, March 20-29
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria
Tradition and Change in Yoruba Art, E.B. Crocker Art Gallery, Sacramento, California, USA
Graphics from Five Countries, Southern University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
African Art Today: Four Major Artists, African-American Institute, New York, NY, USA
African Prints: An Exhibition of Contemporary African Art, Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA
Studio Museum in Harlem. New York, NY, USA
- 1975** *The Faces of Africa*, Union Gallery, San Jose State University, San Jose, California, USA
Modern Graphics by Ten Nigerian Artists, gallery rg, Curacao, Lesser Antilles
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, Goethe Institute, Lagos, Nigeria, March 14-23
Visions of Africa, Afro-American Cultural Center, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA
Art-Craft from Africa, Maryland Commission on Afro-American and Indian History and Culture, Annapolis, Maryland, USA
- 1976** *Two African Artists: I.M. Nour and Twins Seven-Seven*, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
- 1977** *African Contemporary Art*, Gallery of Art, Howard University, Washington DC, USA
- 1978** *Modern Kunst aus Afrika*, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Berlin, Germany
- 1979** *National Art Exhibition*, National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria
- 1980** *Modern Kunst aus Afrika*, Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Twenty Years of Osogbo Art, Goethe-Institut, Lagos, Nigeria
Contemporary Nigerian Artists: The Artists of the Oshogbo Workshops, New World Center Campus Art Gallery and Library, Miami, Florida, USA
Neue Kunst in Afrika, Mittelrheinischen Landesmuseum, Mainz, Germany; Universitat Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany
National Art Exhibition, National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria

- 1982** *De Goden Zijn Niet Dood*, Provinciehuis, Zwolle, The Netherlands
Nigerianische Kunst-Ausstellung, Nigerian Cultural Center, Bonn, Germany
- 1983** *Oshogbo Arts*, Elf House, Lagos, Nigeria
- 1984** *Contemporary African Art*, National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Evolution in Nigerian Art, Society of Nigerian Artists, National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria
- 1985** *Oshogbo Art*, Commonwealth Art Institute London, UK, and, Edinburg, Scotland
Senegal bis Sambia: Neue Kunst aus Afrika, Bayreuth, Germany
Iwalewa, Stadische Galerie, Regensburg, Germany
Silver Jubilee Celebration, National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria
Myth and Image: An Exhibition of Works by 14 Nigerian Artists, Denton, Texas, USA
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, Merton Simpson Gallery, New York, NY
- 1986** *Pace Gallery*, New York
- 1988** *Art from the African Diaspora: Becoming Visible*, Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, New Jersey, USA
Uhuru: African and American Art Against Apartheid, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark, New Jersey, USA
Art by Metamorphosis: Selections of African Art from the Spelman Collection Collection, Department of Art, Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, USA
- 1989** *Magiciens de la Terre*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Tercera Bienal de la Habana, Centro Wilfredo Lam, Havana, Cuba
Influences: Contemporary African and African American Art, Hodson Gallery, Tatum Arts Center, Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, USA
Paintings and Drawings, Italian Cultural Institute, Lagos, Nigeria
Images of the Nigerian Nation, National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria
- 1990** *Songs of Power, Songs of Praise: Modern Visions from Haiti, Nigeria, and Papua New Guinea*, San Jose State University Gallery, San Jose, California, USA
West Africa: Powerful Patterns, Kauffman Museum, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, USA

- 1991** *Africa Hoy*, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven, Taidemus, Hameenlinna, Finland
- 1994** *Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven*, Mucha Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 1996** *Er bestaat geen kunst in Afrika*, Stadsgalerij Heerlen, Heerlen, the Netherlands
- 1997** *Youruba Dispora I: Metamorphosis*, October Gallery, London, UK
- 1998** *Paintings by Twins Seven-Seven*, Zak Gallery, Furth, Germany
- 1999** *New Colours from Old Worlds: Contemporary Art from West Africa*, October Gallery, London, UK
- 2000** *A Concrete Vision: Oshogbo Artists in the 1960s*, National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC, USA
Contemporary African Art: Five Artists, Diverse Trends, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
Contemporary Art from Nigeria, October Gallery, London, UK
- 2001** *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, Germany (travelled to Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago)
African Art: A New Perspective, African Art Museum of Maryland, Columbia, Maryland, USA
Encounters with African Art, National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC, USA
- 2002** *Prince Twins Seven-Seven: The Global/Living Myth Artist*, Porter College Faculty Gallery, University of California, Santa Cruz, California, USA
- 2003** *The Global Living Myth of Africa: Past and Recent Works by Twins Seven-Seven*, The Allens Lane Art Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Twins Seven-Seven, James F. Lewis Museum of Art, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA
- 2004** *African Art, African Voices: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
New Acquisitions Display, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

- 2006** *New Acquisitions Display*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 2007** *Twins Seven-Seven*, Galerie in der Promenade, Furth, Germany
Contemporary African Art from the Collection of William Jones, Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, New Jersey, USA
- 2008** Fowler Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles, California
- 2011** *Twins Seven-Seven: Legacy of the Oshogbo Master*, Indigo Art Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 2022** *Multiple: Twins Seven-Seven*, Musuem of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia
- 2024** *Foreigners Everywhere*, Venice Biennale: 60th International Art Exhibition, Venice, Italy
Black Orpheus: Jacob Lawrence and the Mbari Club, Chrysler Museum of Art the New Orleans Museum of Art, and Toledo Museum of Art, USA
- 2025** *Nigerian Modernism*, Tate Modern, London, UK (opening October 2025)

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

- 1972** Merced College, California
- 1974** Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Maine
- 1975** Visiting Lecturer, York University, Canada

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 1970** Second Prize, West African Art Exhibition, London, UK
- 1972** Chieftaincy Title by the Olobu of Ilobu
- 1976-79** City Councillor of Oshogbo
- 1982** Second Prize, BBC International Art Exhibition, London, UK
- 1996** Chieftaincy Title by the Ekerin Basorun and Atunluto of Ibadan, Obatolu of Ogidi
- 2005** UNESCO Artist for Peace

COLLECTIONS

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C

Iwalewahaus, University of Bayreuth, Germany

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

Hood Museum of Art, University of Dartmouth, New Hampshire

Fowler Art Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles, California

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY

Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia

Museum of Man, Ottawa, Canada

Volkerkunde Museum, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Germany

Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin

Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia

Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CAAC: Jean Pigozzi African Art Collection

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), UK

Goethe-Institut, Lagos, Nigeria

Senate House, University of London, UK

National Museum of Art, Lagos, Nigeria

Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding (CBCIU), Osogbo, Nigeria

University of Ibadan, Nigeria



Former Mbari Mbayo building, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025. Duro Ladipo opened his *Popular Bar* in the compound of his father, which became a gathering place and venue for the Mbari Mbayo Club. Georgina's 1964 summer workshop was held here, as well as several exhibitions and plays of his theatre troupe.



Interior of Mbari Mbayo building, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025. Duro Ladipo, who died in 1978, is buried with a tombstone in the interior of this building.



Inner courtyard of Mbari Mbayo building, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025. It was here that many of the plays of the Duro Ladipo Theatre Troupe were performed, as well as a working space during the art workshops. The inner courtyard connects the Mbari Mbayo building with the rest of his father's former compound.



The Susanne Wenger House in Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025. Located at 41 Ikobun Road, this was the residence of Ulli Beier and his first wife, Susanne Wenger, from the late 1950s. The front cement gate was designed by Osogbo artist Adebisi Akanji, depicting characters from traditional Yoruba festivals and masquerades. Ulli and Georgina Beier lived in the house from 1964-1966 during the years that the Osogbo art workshops were active. The Osogbo artists often worked from the residence, where Georgina set up a printer. Wenger lived in the house from 1958 until her death in 2009.



Twins Seven-Seven's compound, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025.



Twins Seven-Seven's compound, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025.



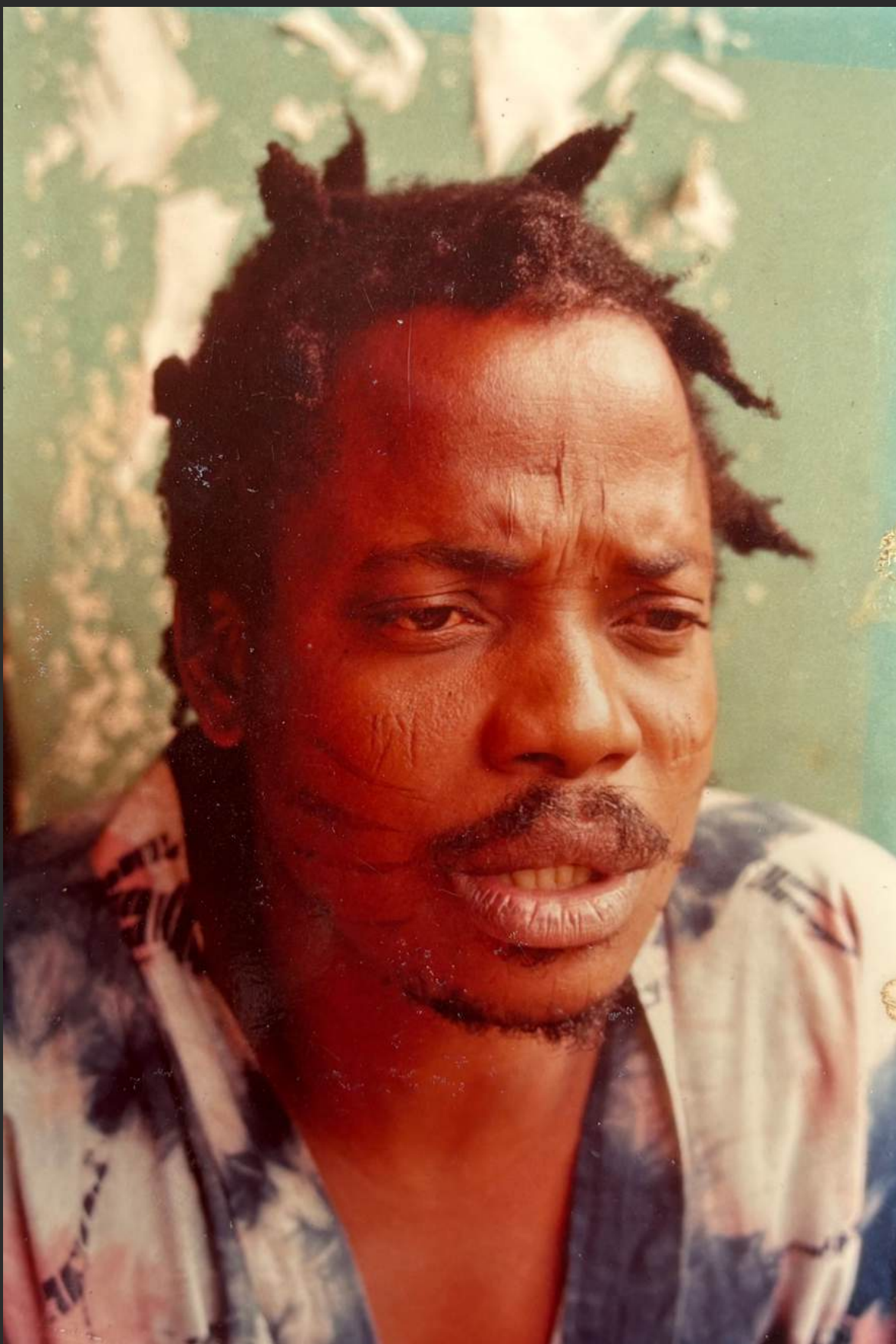
Twins Seven-Seven's compound, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025. Twins-Seven Seven is buried in the courtyard.



Twins Seven-Seven's compound, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025.



Twins Seven-Seven's compound, Osogbo, Nigeria, 2025.



Twins Seven-Seven, November 25, 1982, Osogbo, Nigeria.

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Artwork images courtesy of kó.

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