

Landscapes of the Soul  
Jerry Buhari

kó

# **Landscapes of the Soul**

The Black & White Series

Earth Works

Landscapes of the Soul

Mixed Media

**Jerry Buhari**

September 20 - October 11, 2022

## **Landscapes of the Soul**

Copyright © 2022 kó, Jerry Buhari and essay authors.  
First Published in 2022 by kó Lagos, Nigeria.

**kó**

36 Cameron Road, Ikoyi Lagos.

ISBN: 978-978-791-832-6.

### **Exhibition Project Team**

Founder: Kavita Chellaram.

Curator: Favour Ritiro.

Finance & Operations: Sumbo Biobaku-Baderin.

Logistics, Technical and Public Relations: Chilaka Emmanuel & Anjola Oluwole.

Catalogue Concept: Jerry Buhari & Favour Ritiro.

Graphics (Design and Layout): Jerry Buhari, Manasseh Markus & Rishita Chandra, Mumbai, India.

Typesetting: Jerry Buhari, Favour Ritiro & Manasseh Markus.

Photography: David Timibra & Raymond Njoku.

Editorial: Favour Ritiro, Joseph Gergel & Jerry Buhari.

Sponsor:



FRONT COVER: The landscapes of the soul, 2005 Watercolour on paper. 6.4 x 9 inches.

BACK COVER: Princess with many ribbons II: fantasy, 2022. Mixed media. 22.4 x 15 inches.

## Preface

I have had a long and close relationship with Jerry Buhari, and he is an important figure both to me personally and to society at large. As a proponent of contemporary Nigerian art, Jerry Buhari's retrospective is a significant moment for Nigeria's art community. I am particularly honoured to present Jerry Buhari's long-deserved exhibition at kó, as he has played a crucial role in the development of Arthouse Contemporary and our gallery. It brings me great pleasure to present this exhibition, *Landscapes of the Soul*, after years of conversation and fascination with his work.

I have always appreciated Jerry's strong political statements that have informed his body of work. He is an esteemed professor at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and he has had a distinguished career as an artist who speaks about the state of affairs in Nigeria. He dissects the political landscape and considers the need for solutions, through a poetic and artistic lens and a nuanced perspective. This exhibition surveys the breadth of images, ideas and concepts that he has explored in his long and dedicated career.

We celebrate Jerry Buhari's commitment to the advancement of society through education and the arts, and this exhibition is a testament to his unfailing dedication to creating dialogue and advancing the status quo in Nigeria. The works in this exhibition are a literal and figurative investigation into his unique perspective on the social landscape of the country. Even outside of the canvas, Jerry has been a crucial player in advancing modern and contemporary art in Nigeria, and we at Arthouse and kó would not have accomplished our myriad of important projects without his advice and mentorship. Jerry Buhari is a treasure for Nigerian art, and we are lucky to work so closely with him.

Kavita Chellaram  
Founder, kó.

## Curatorial Statement

The title of this exhibition brings to mind the very words of the Belgian artist, Karel Mus: “In every soul, there are landscapes to be found.” This is true of the award-winning artist, curator, and professor of Fine Art at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, **Jerry Buhari**, whose artistic journey is a constant projection of his inner world, the deepest area of his soul. *Landscapes of the Soul* is a retrospective exhibition of works by Buhari that span over two decades and follows a loose chronological order from 1993 to the present. The artworks were carefully selected to represent key periods and concerns in the artist's oeuvre, thereby creating an opportunity to highlight not only his publicly known works but also exhibit his newly created artworks that have never been exhibited. The exhibition is conceived as a unified body of work under the same title but comprises four distinctive series, each echoing the subject matter explored in autonomous categories. This retrospective includes over seventy paintings characterising his engagement with abstract, symbolic, and political themes, and more importantly, his heartbeat for Nigeria. Drawing from his experiences, as well as the social and political issues in his society and humanity in general, Buhari continues to examine how man relates to the earth and the consequences of this relationship on the environment.

Over the years, we have been through a series of events and experiences that calls for self-reflection and a re-evaluation of our political structures and societal norms as a nation. More so, the momentous times that we are in require an all-pervasive understanding of how we have contributed to the issues that we face. *Landscapes of the Soul* is an invitation to such a heart-to-heart dialogue. The presented body of works in this exhibition was created for such a time like this. Spanning almost three decades, the works take a critical look at the political history of Nigeria, thereby addressing some issues of our national struggles, the relationship between man and the earth, and the

current heated political atmosphere of the country.

*Landscapes of the Soul* explores the multifaceted nature of colour: black and white, earth and line as media for exploring the essence of life. Buhari's artistic presentation continues to evolve into an exploration of the medium, size, and visual puzzle. He has maintained a singular focus of style, characterised by a conceptual approach to addressing topical issues in our world. He invites us into a “trip down memory lane” revealing both literal and metaphorical representations of time and space where our natural environment, experiences, and the Nigerian political terrain are interspersed.

Encompassing four categories with a different thematic focus, this body of work was developed under the exhibition title and has expanded into series including *Landscapes of the Soul*, *Earth Works*, *Mixed Media* series, and *Black & White* series. According to Buhari, these four categories address matters of the heart, and by extension, the soul. The works bring together a range of media including a mixture of clay, earth, acrylic, charcoal, pencil, water colour, and coffee.

In *Landscapes of the Soul*, Buhari presents work that reflects the intimate workings of his mind, revealing fantastical landscapes that emerge from the intersection of inner reality and the specificity occurring in the country. In this meditative body of work, Buhari further explores the visualisation of a higher state of consciousness, thereby creating a safe space. As he explains, “I was able to recreate and reconstruct a world that I could relate to and manage.” Through the works, Buhari takes a critical look at the political history of Nigeria in the early nineties and the perennial events as informed by the Babangida regime, in which there was a tightly controlled political transition program from military to civilian. This period which chronicles the plunge from the promise of reform to a political and economic depression affected a vast number of

people, artists included. As the social climate became tougher and artists could no longer afford consistent art materials, an exploration of artistic media and expressions became the order of the day. Being affected as well, Buhari began experimenting with watercolours. This intimate exercise of creating miniature landscapes soon reawakened his inner journey. Rendered in a grid format, the landscapes began to shrink in size, ranging from 7 x 19 cm to 2 x 2 cm, alluding to the artist's introspective qualities. A closer look at the works reveals a surreal fusion of mountains and rivers, people and plants, and colour blocks which portray a delicately balanced ecosystem.

In the *Earth* series, Buhari explores the dialectical relationship between humans and the natural environment, as well as the impact of man's actions on nature in our ever-changing world. Mythical and dreamlike in appearance, the artist captures different kinds of people, animals, and mystical images of the ancient city of Zaria. Through this body of work, Buhari weaves together stories of displacement, the refugee crisis, and the effect of war on the environment. Rendered in strokes and dots, the works pursue experimentation with lines and monochromatic colours which echo the loss of the city as well as the passing of time. Sequel to that, some of the works reveal migration patterns that show how human settlement has long been driven by environmental conditions. In *Mystical Images of Ancient Zaria City*, Buhari reflects on the loss of Zaria: its incredible Hausa vernacular architecture, the elegant Rimi trees, and landscapes that are now destroyed due to modernization. While addressing these environmental adversities, he presents the earth as humanity's final judgement, which should not be subject to contamination and degradation, as well as the exploitation of its resources.

Emerging from a monoprint workshop held in 2016, the *Mixed Media* series is a projection of Jerry's deepest concerns about issues of our national struggle. These works, characterised by dark visions, raw prints, mythological scenes,

and bizarre fantasies, are heartfelt journeys that mirror a diverse mode of articulating solidarity, vulnerability, and resistance. He created the works in the realm of memory that emerges from waves of colours, which function as a mechanism to engage the viewer's imagination and concentration on the image that is in constant flux. Each work was deliberately made to be constellations of visual puzzles, requiring quality time of contemplation to engage with. Ironically, the works construct an abstract world of concepts that enables us to make sense of absurdity and present reality in new ways. Familiar and unfamiliar, embedded in each painting are people's hidden shrubs, flowers, houses, or dark alleys, presenting imaginary solutions to the questions posed within the worlds he built and a means of directing the fate and actions of the characters.

In addition to works on paper, the exhibition also includes Buhari's most recent work on canvas, *The black and White* series, which responds to socio-political issues, especially the current heated political atmosphere in the country. He draws upon historical legacies and present-day realities as an investigation of provocative matters and observation of underlying motives that orchestrate events including protests, social movements, political parties, and agendas. From a vantage point, Buhari recalls the challenges faced in recent times and brings visibility to how the people have been historically, and currently, rendered invisible by those who govern them. The way each canvas plays with free and uncontrolled lines alludes to the artist's concern for the state of politics in the country, especially as 2023 makes it three decades of starting this political probation and as the country prepares for the upcoming political election. By employing black and white paint, he metaphorically explores notions of transparency, nakedness, exposure, and judgement. He draws the viewers into close interaction with the artworks, and by extension, the issues addressed. Ultimately, the works aim to generate a reaction and convey an explicit message to viewers: a message of hope and consolation. It

exemplifies ways of recollecting and understanding the past, the present-day realities, and future potentialities.

Accompanying the exhibition are reflections and scholarly essays by Ayo Akinwade, an interdisciplinary artist, Charlie Gore, a researcher fellow with SOAS, and Sabo Kpade, a writer and journalist.

Jerry Buhari is an award-winning artist, curator, and professor of Fine Art at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He has held over twelve solo exhibitions and sixty group exhibitions throughout his distinguished career within the country and abroad. He has received several awards and honours from the Commonwealth Foundation, the Japan Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, amongst others. Buhari has also served as a guest lecturer at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia, United States; Kansas Wesleyan University, United States; visiting professor, Princeton University; the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and the University of Jos, Nigeria. Buhari serves as an advisor for Arthouse Contemporary.

Favour Ritari

# **The Black & White Series**



**Landscape of mystical wonder.**  
2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
72.4 x 72.4 inches.



**Soft masquerades pretending to be iroko trees.**  
2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
36.2 x 60.2 inches.



**Landscape of angels and devourer.**  
2020-2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
35.8 x 58.3 inches.



**The Emperor and the people.**  
2020-2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
72 x 72 inches.



**Women pray for country.**  
2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
46.4 x 80.7 inches.



**First Ladies' conference.**  
2022. Acrylic on canvas.  
21.7 x 48.5 inches.

## Artist's Statement

*Landscapes of the Soul* are a collection of works of hearty journeys into the self, which started in 1993. The title of the exhibition was derived from this body of works that has become a series. I have expanded the works to include mono-prints developed into mixed media over a period of twenty-four years. These are called the *Mixed Media series*. Then there are works created from a mixture of clay, earth, acrylic, charcoal, pencil, water colour and coffee, which are called *Earth Works*; and very recent works in black and white, which I call *Black and White series*. So, there are four categories of works in this exhibition under the title, *Landscapes of the Soul*. In a sense, I see these four categories addressing matters of the heart and by extension, the soul.

We recall that the military had become very comfortable with politics and was covertly supported by foreign powers, (Most African countries have that dubious unpatriotic relationship.) to allow the plundering of human and natural resources to continue in the country. Yet, at the same time, the same, so-called superpowers were putting pressure on African countries to become democratic and abandon autocratic governance. Nigeria's political history has been dominated by military rulership delivered by relays of coup d'etats. At a point we even recorded a military president who introduced one of IMF's obnoxious monetary policies called, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Under the military we witnessed seasons of inhuman decrees, fuel scarcity, electricity blackout, stupendous stealing of public funds, and the institutionalisation of corruption, (which I defined as the inability or the refusal of a person or people to make a distinction between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad). Public institutions and structures were deliberately abandoned or used to siphon the common national wealth by a very small group of people whose alliances are as mystical and dubious as their projects.

Imagine that in 1955, Akinola Lasekan saw the dysfunctional path Nigeria was already taking and created the intellectual cartoon titled, "THE ENEMY WE MUST GUARD AGAINST". The cartoon lays out a landscape with a sunset. (It has the setting of a geographical map.) At the bottom left-hand corner is an island with the controversial MacPherson's constitution that is accused of setting in place a country that will perpetuate the colonial legacy of "divide and rule". A politician, captioned "MINISTER", stands on it and looks ahead to another island captioned, "POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT". Between these two islands are molehills that look like landmines. They are five in number, with these captions, "CORRUPTION", "PARTY FANATICISM", "SELF-CONCEST", and "INSURGENCY". The other landmine is captioned, "UNCLE-TONISM", which I suspect refers to our present-day god-fatherism. Just imagine that at the inception of Nigeria these vices have already taken shape. So, the nineties saw not only the advancement of selfish political interests but also the climax of what would contaminate the land and bring the country to its current state of anomie.

The early nineties also saw university dons selling the spare tires of their cars over ten years old, as well as their car radios in order to feed their families. The nineties were the seal to the end of education, and indeed the seal to the functioning of public institutions and utilities. It was also the period where university funding was at its lowest; or so we thought, until today. It was the season when First Ladies would "buy" doctoral degrees with a few millions of naira at convocation ceremonies and university professors who have lost the Ivory Tower dignity will jump and fall in mirthful ecstasy when such donations were made.

The nineties also was the period where artists and art materials suddenly went out of the art stores at Ojuelegba and environs, the most popular places in the nineteen eighties and the nineties. Artists were forced to look inward and many

began to create works from materials sourced from their immediate environments, including dustbins, anything from anywhere. This gave birth to refreshing artistic expressions such as heavy and relief collages, mixed media, and found scrap objects.

It was a period of depression for many ordinary people including artists like myself. In order to keep my sanity, I went back to the small pieces of water colour paper that were once discarded and saw that they had become treasures. Cutting these papers into smaller pieces, and unable to leave the dining table after whatever meal I was able to muster miniature water colours began to be born. The sizes of these water colours and the intense concentration needed to produce each work took me into the inner chambers of my being. There, I was able to recreate and reconstruct a world that I could relate to and manage. It became a survival technique that sustained not only my sanity but also my young family.

After over a decade of creating these miniature water colours in the summer of 2005, I secured a residency fellowship at the Vermont Studio Centre. There, thousands of kilometers recovering from depression away from home; a refreshing desire to revisit my inward journey was reawakened. So, from miniatures of 7x19cm water colours, and encounters with some miniatures artists in Pakistan, like Rhoohi Ahmed, I ventured into creating 2x2cm water colours and sometimes even less. Interestingly, Pakistan shares similar political unrest with Nigeria. When I showed some of these 2x2cm water colours at Triangle Arts Trust Association Brooklyn, New York in October 2005, some of the art critics noted that they had never seen such miniature works before. It was while these works continued to shrink in size and through time that I was able to understand how they resonate with my heart and my soul that the title *Landscapes of the Soul* emerged. This is the first category of works in this exhibition.

The second category is titled *Earth Landscapes*: these are works that connect me to mother earth as I probe the relationship between man as dust; and man dependent and at the mercy of the land and the soil. Earth seems to me to represent humanity's final judgment and our leveler. Yet, its spiritual significance is lost in the way we soak it with spilled blood, spilled oil, spilled greed, and spilled power.

In this show, I also have works in the category of *Mixed Media*, as the third category. The works emerged from an interesting monoprints workshop in 2016 that I led under the sponsorship of Yemaja Gallery in Suru-Lere, Lagos. After looking at these prints after a year I began to subject each one of them to a phantasmagoric contemplation where the works assumed very organic quality addressing some of my deepest concerns about some issues of our national struggle. They are journeys of the heart that employed methodologies of contemplation, memory recall, imagination, and dreams. Each work was deliberately made to be constellations of visual puzzles requiring time of patient contemplation to engage with.

Then there are my most recent canvases, the *Black and White series*, (the fourth category of works) which are also an attempt to respond to the current heated political atmosphere of the country. I see the display, exploitation, and unrestrained and primitive use of power and privileges and try to respond to them. The idea of service, servant, and servanthood appear to have lost their meaning in our national discourse. The state of Nigerian politics is bizarre, nightmarish, and a twisted tragicomedy. My use of black and white, therefore, is an attempt to be direct, remove pretense and respond to my state of mind to mirror my interpretation of the state of the nation, if perhaps in this process I may find understanding, meaning, and consolation. So, black and white represent transparency, nakedness, truth exposure, and judgment.

*Landscapes of the Soul* in their grid formats, *Mixed Media* with their subtle Odilon Redon's format, and *Earth Landscapes*, inspired after the spirit of Aborigines and the black and white canvases are both a reference and exploration of my[our] human experiences. In these works, I view life as a landscape of diverse landscapes large and small, simple and complex that we all go through voluntarily, consciously, or as the kidnappers would make us realise, by force. Some are bright with the sun giving us clear vision, while others are dull and dark with the moon, lightning, lanterns, or flashlights hinting us the way, to where? Our bodies, our minds, hearts, and our souls are constantly traversing typologies and topologies of landscapes. We, individually and collectively, choose to make some landscapes static and some moving. *Landscapes of the Soul* invites us to heart-to-heart dialogue. The landscapes are not static, they move, change, transform, and woo you to travel in/on/with.

The works put together in this exhibition seek to engage the viewer in a personal and intimate way. The forms and images are intricately woven to frustrate, and at the same time, create attention and curiosity in the viewer. Each work, especially in the *Mixed Media* series, *Landscapes of the Soul*, and Black and white series is overlaid carefully with lines, organic images, patterns, and symbols that tease and flirt with the viewers' imagination, and frame of reference - seriously.

So, this exhibition, *Landscapes of the Soul* is my current autobiography and my heartbeat in a troubled land.

**EARTH WORKS**



**Dressed.**  
2015. Sand, coffee and pen on paper.  
10 x 15 inches.



**Smugglers' Notch.**  
2005. Clay on paper.  
9 x 12 inches.



**Farmer's daughter.**  
2020. Sand and coffee on paper.  
15 x 20 inches.

**Mystical images of ancient Zaria city.**  
2016. Sand, coffee and pen on paper.  
10 x 15 inches.



**Politician's daughter with many jewelries.**  
2021-2022. Sand, coffee and pen on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**The couple.**  
2016. Coffee, Sand and charcoal on paper.  
10.2 x 15 inches.





**Refugee family and their dog.**  
2021. Clay, coloured pencil and charcoal on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**Stranded family.**  
2021. Clay and charcoal on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**Two women harvesting corn.**  
2005. Clay on paper.  
9 x 12 inches.



**Refugee mother prepares a meal.**  
2021. Clay, coloured pencil and charcoal on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.

## INTRODUCTION

### Proverbs of ashes, defenses of clay

Ayò Akínwándé

A thousand souls blush beneath the layers of paint in Jerry Buhari's canvasses. He glazes the inner tranquility in his personal life onto the chaos of Nigerian society. With works across acrylic, watercolour, pastel, and oil, he fuses light and dark tones into a mixed media of realities.

Nigeria is a country soaked in paint of irony, albeit one dyed in the colours - green, white, and green - and splashed across the walls of the six geo-political zones of the country. The duality within which the Nigerian state is framed - a country of nations, north and south, Christianity and Islam, corruption and integrity, poverty and mineral resources, civilian and military - is itself also dyed in irony. Nigeria is not only a resource-rich country, it is unsurprisingly a crisis-laden one. As a matter of fact, the only thing produced in more abundance than crude-oil is conflicts.

The first time I visited Jerry Buhari's studio in Zaria was in early 2017. This was at the start of my photographic documentation of the crisis in Southern Kaduna. His residence in Zaria became a home for me; a place of soul searching, and reflection, away from the horrors I saw while visiting sites of killings and massacres in villages, interacting with witnesses, interviewing survivals and making acquaintances with the people across different communities and Chiefdoms in Southern Kaduna.

My trips to Zaria became sorts of “studio visits” where I got immersed in Jerry Buhari's practice. He combines his job as a Professor of Fine Art at the Ahmadu Bello University with his personal practice of over four decades. I was fascinated with his earliest drawings from the 1970s, and his consistent

devotion to working serially on subjects pertaining to the environment, corruption, and daily life across Nigeria. Jerry Buhari's entire oeuvre are properly archived, and as you delve into this archive, you begin to encounter his installations, interactive and performance pieces. Then a bigger picture begins to emerge, one of a versatile, experimental, and prolific artist.

However, as a man, a different picture is formed - a humble, reserved, generous, and above all, a man guided by his strong Christian faith. While the canon of art history is filled with the question of separating the art from the artist, with Jerry Buhari, the canvas is an extension of who he is, and with his brush strokes, he resolves any conflict between himself and his environment.

The works presented in the exhibition are personal. *Landscapes of the Soul* is a personal recreation of his own world, and an intimate portrait of the peace on the inside, one that's devoid of the chaos on the outside.

In *408 Journals of Nepa* (2022), he speaks to the dysfunctionality of the electricity system. The grid composition represents the country's electricity grid system that has also become a puzzle. He traveled across the country, taking photographs of power lines and collecting objects. Each little box in this piece becomes a journal that represents his experiences with the intriguing story of electricity supply in the country.

In the series *High Risk Street* (1993-2022), the artist becomes a keen observer of the chaos that designs the architecture of life in a city like Lagos, where one is constantly living on the edge, geographically and mentally. The figures in this piece are like participants in a colourful protest, and their elongated forms align with the electricity poles in a beautiful ascension. In *Lure of the City II* (1993), the bird's-eye view of the urban centre is presented in vibrant colours and in multiple layers. In the foreground are the lights of the city

in circular forms, while the rectangular shapes in the background speak to the architecture of the city - a modern one built towards ascension, an architectural protest, one devoid of human participation, yet a landscape of promise and hope to those who are drawn to it.

Jerry Buhari takes a slow and meditative approach to create his paintings. In *Landscapes of the Soul* (2005), he goes on an inward journey from his studio space. Working in watercolour, each box represents cities and moments from his travels, and the colours are washed over each other to convey his emotions on the support. In his mixed media works, he starts with creating monoprints and then uses watercolour, acrylic, and pen in creating depth. The final product is a visual puzzle with multi-layered imagery. This style is inspired by the French artist Odilon Redon whose works he first came across in the 1970s. While Redon's canvasses painted a world of dreams and imagination, Jerry Buhari paints a world of mixed realities - a fusion of his imagination and reality. This can be seen in *Landscape in Search for Peace* (2022), where a dream-like ecosystem is inhabited by angels, demons, and humans. In *I Wonder You* (2016-17), the two figures under the arch appear like frescoes of saints from medieval paintings.

Borrowing from the words of the artist Paul Klee, it can be said that Jerry Buhari and colour are one. For example, his mastery of colour to draw in the viewer is very visible in *Dawn at Ebute-meta Vegetable Market* (2016-17). At first glance, one sees a sleeveless outfit, then the shapes of the umbrellas become visible, while parts of the support appear slightly damped by rain, and the people become draped in droplets of colour. What strikes me in both this piece and in *Wise men at the Gate* (2016-17) is Jerry Buhari's use of black, much like Redon's monochromatic compositions called *noirs*, which relied on the expressive and suggestive possibilities of black. In this painting, three wise men are visible under the arch, while black becomes not only the most vibrant

motif but a sort of negative space for contemplation of the multiplicities of the message the work is conveying.

The political messages in this exhibition are more visible in the black and white paintings. In *Soft Masquerades Pretending to be Iroko Trees* (2022), Jerry Buhari responds to the scary political situation in Nigeria. The canvass is populated with human forms, which represent leaders who are ready to sacrifice the future of the country for their electoral seats. In *The Emperor and The people* (2020-22), the head is a central figure in the painting. More appropriately, this is the “Head of States.” But this head seems to be decapitated. It is supported by a fragile body, which represents the people. These people are like fragments, they look skeletal and are like worms. Then, a closer look reveals images of bandits, names of famous villages that have suffered the attacks of terrorists, the famous AK-47 in schematic representation, the helicopter appears at the top right corner of the canvass and several other motifs across the picture plane. Could it be that the emperor's mind is in foreign lands? Or rather could it allude to the situation in Southern Kaduna where the villagers observe bandits and herdsmen being dropped into communities to create chaos via helicopters?

In the *Earth* series, Jerry Buhari began to experiment with clay, coffee, sand, and charcoal, in representing the dialogue of life. The works in this series speak to his current age and the fragility that comes with it. For him, this is a period of contemplation and engaging with the deeper meanings of life. The earth represents the origin and even the “end” of man. It also represents human activities and the cycle of life - planting, and harvesting. These works demand a certain level of meditation from the viewer while engaging with them. They are personal, yet public. The experiences he has conveyed on these supports are unique, yet common. The issues are political, yet the root cause is spiritual. The process is meditative, yet the results are also

contemplative. The pieces are colourful, yet the stories are colourless.

In writing this piece, I began to think of a befitting title, one that embodies Jerry Buhari, the man and the artist, and I stumbled on the words: *“Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes (valueless); your defenses are defenses of clay (and will crumble)” (Job 13:12 AB)*. Looking at the political nature of Jerry Buhari's works, I came to interpret “memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes,” to mean the empty promises of political leaders, and “your defenses are defenses of clay,” to mean the insecurity crises that have engulfed Nigeria. Jerry Buhari has invited us to examine this fragility that holds our collective realities as humans, and more importantly, citizens of a country in a perpetual state of irony. Maybe by gazing into these seemingly abstract paintings, we will find figurative answers, or we end up creating more layers of ironies with our paints or pains.

***“The landscape is a canvas or a support  
that is taken into the creative recess of  
an artist and rebirthed”.***

2020.

# Landscapes of the Soul



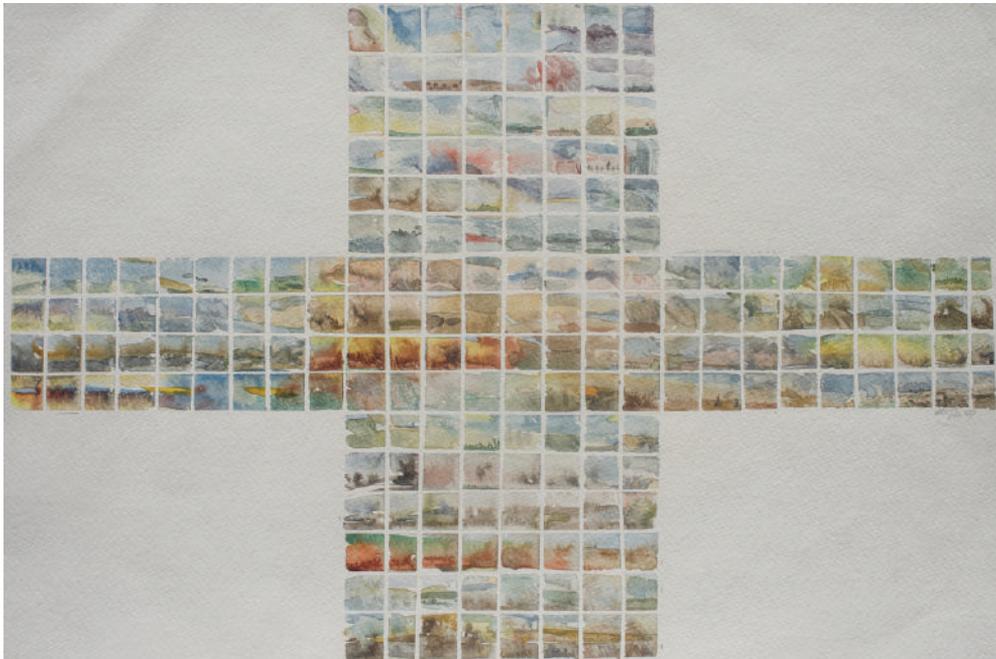
**132 Landscapes of hope.**  
2022. Watercolour & coffee on paper.  
22 x 30 inches.



**182 Landscapes of a country.**  
2022. Watercolour on paper.  
22 x 30 inches.



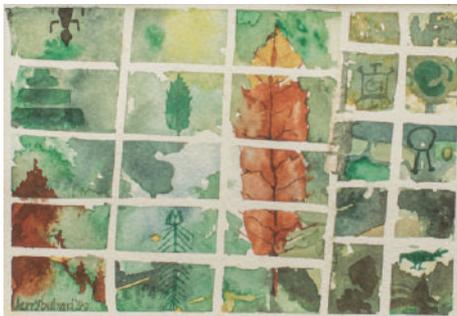
**408 Journals of NEPA.**  
2022. Mixed media on paper.  
30 x 22 inches.



**Absorbing Kansascape: 292 Miniature landscape.**  
2007. Watercolour on paper.  
21 x 14 inches.



**Anthills of Nsukka.**  
2008-2009. Watercolour on paper.  
9 x 13 inches.



**Dry leaf in green.**  
1999. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 5.5 inches.



**Erosion in the City - This is Zaria.**  
1995. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 7 inches.



**High risk street.**  
1993-2022. Watercolour on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**Farmer's world.**  
1994. Watercolour on paper.  
6.9 x 8.9 inches.



**Journal of an old city.**  
2013. Watercolour on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**Mature fall: 16 Miniature Landscapes.**  
2007. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 11 inches.



**Open field with a line.**  
1999. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 5.5 inches.



**Organic landscape.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
6 x 9 inches.



**Lure of the city II.**  
1993. Watercolour on paper.  
16 x 23 inches.



**Mountain dance: Harvest.**  
2007. Acrylic on paper.  
11 x 15 inches.



**Organic Dark'art experience.**  
2008. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 11 inches.



**Remembering "Gate of no Return" and Goree Island.**  
2008. Watercolour on paper.  
7.5 x 11 inches.



**The glow of fall.**  
2007. Watercolour on paper.  
8 x 7.5 inches.



**The vermont experience.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
9 x 12.2 inches.



**Princess with many ribbons.**  
2022. Mixed media.  
22.4 x 15 inches.



**Princess with many ribbons II: fantasy.**  
2022. Mixed media.  
22.4 x 15 inches.



**Soft landscape with two soft elements.**

2007. Acrylic on paper.  
15 x 22 inches.



**The landscapes of the soul.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
6.4 x 9 inches.



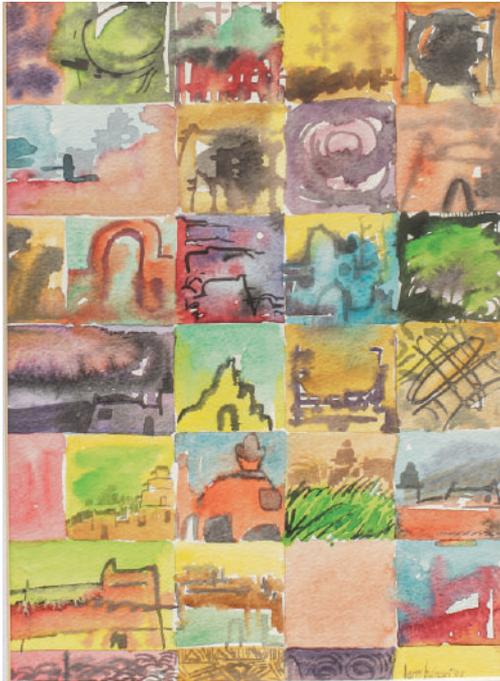
**Thoughts in solitude - city life.**  
1994. Watercolour on paper.  
11 x 15 inches.



**Windows of fall.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
6 x 9 inches.



**Vermont fall season.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
15 x 22.4 inches.



**Study of a city III.**  
1993. Watercolour on paper.  
11.2 x 15 inches.



**Landscapes, images and symbols.**  
2005. Watercolour on paper.  
8.4 x 11.7 inches.

## **A Richness of Means: the Art and Mark Making of Jerry Buhari**

Charles Gore

Jerry Buhari has been a stalwart of Ahmadu Bello University since the 1980s and has given it distinguished service both as an exceptional art educator, passing on his expertise and knowledge of art to many generations of students, as well as an administrator, having contributed to the smooth running of the art department. However, it is his art and its making that underpins all of his professional activities since he himself graduated from Ahmadu Bello university in the early 1980s. As an artist and educator, he has had to weather the many economic vicissitudes that have taken place in Nigeria as he himself has noted, including the massive economic downturn in the late 1980s/early 1990s when the structural adjustment programme was imposed alongside harsh rule of military junta (something I can personally attest to having been in Nigeria during this period). It was a time of uncertainty and hit the universities hard with pitiful salaries and a lack of resources that persuaded many art lecturers to migrate to the USA and elsewhere. Yet these difficulties have been sources of inspiration and challenge for his artmaking. They are expressed through the themes he has developed in his work, often elaborated as sequential series of artworks produced organically over several years. Moreover such challenges have enabled him to periodically rethink the visual means by which he achieves his artistic goals.

This exhibition *Landscapes of the Soul* is a retrospective of a sort and highlights the diversity of approaches to art making, which he has instigated since the early 1990s. This diversity and willingness to experiment is perhaps not surprising when one considers historically the environment of the Ahmadu Bello art department. It was the birthplace of the renowned Zaria Art Society (sometimes called the Zaria rebels) with its manifesto of Natural Synthesis. Its artist members, using modernist techniques, drew on Nigeria's local visual traditions as cultural resources to decolonise a colonial art world and create a new innovative

contemporary art for Nigerian audiences at the time of independence of Nigeria in 1960. One notes briefly that Jerry Buhari recently curated *Zaria Art Society: A Celebration of its Legacies* with Arthouse Contemporary in 2019, bringing together most of its luminaries to reflect on their creative contributions to contemporary Nigerian art. It highlights his sensitivities and understanding of the need for the radical in making contemporary art as took place with the Zaria Rebels. However, a key influence on Jerry Buhari that perhaps consolidated his radical approach was his art tutor Gani Odutokun during his time as a student (1977-1981) at Ahmadu Bello University.

Odutokun also became his colleague and mentor when Jerry Buhari joined the teaching staff at Ahmadu Bello University as an art lecturer in 1982. Odutokun is renowned for his Accident and Design philosophy, in which the making of art emphasised the processes of its realisation, rejecting a pre-determined visual formulation in favour of an exploration of the mediums utilised during the processes of making, including the accidental mark or touch that would be incorporated into the design as part of the process. In this way, the artist is inspired and incorporates in the artwork unplanned elements of the process to further develop the visual dynamics of the composition, hence the description that Odutokun utilised “Accident and Design.” Jerry Buhari has followed his own artistic pathways throughout his career, but he has always been open to collaboration and responsive to other artists and their approaches to artmaking. Odutokun's teaching and emphasis on process highlighted the wider possibilities inherent in artmaking and perhaps liberated Jerry Buhari to move away from the constraints of a single means of artmaking but rather explore its diversities. Other colleagues whose art had an impact on Jerry Buhari were teaching colleagues, such as the Filipino artist Domingo Alconoba, particularly his use of watercolour and the luminosity of colour which led him on to consider the work of Odilon Redon and Paul Klee. Their use of imaginative form through the distillation of colour encouraged Jerry Buhari to develop and incorporate his own unique conceptions

of imaginative and “phantasmogoric” form and to thereby re-articulate surface and space in dynamic and innovative ways to captivate the viewer. Tony Sharp, a British printmaker from Bradford, United Kingdom, drew his attention to the potential offered by printmaking in terms of form and composition, which encouraged his practice of printmaking and mixed media.

The difficulties of the 1990s and military rule had a profound impact on Jerry Buhari's work in terms of engaging with the political issues it raised and highlighting in his work social and environmental concerns but also as a response to a time of great scarcity. The then lack of art materials made those that were obtained particularly precious. Encouraged by the works of Redon and Klee as well as Indian miniatures, scale became a key component of his practice whereby he explored the relational complexities of form to space, often creating relatively small scale works imbued with a density of patterning and colour that surpasses many of the fashionable large scale ambitions of global artists today. As such these works echo the material scarcities that Nigeria underwent in the 1990s. In these spaces, he has continued to explore the ambiguities of representation and non-figuration, balancing a playful sense of form on the cusp between the abstract and figurative. The viewer is drawn into the spaces he creates to be seduced by the abstract play of form and brilliant colour, while simultaneously inferring the figurative implications that are also presented to the viewer's gaze. Buhari artfully weaves this array of possibilities, while leaving it open to the visual and perceptual skills of the viewer as to how to see it. In this way Buhari reflects profoundly upon different ways of seeing within the same artwork.

In his series *Landscapes of the Soul*, he presents an array of self-contained yet interrelated figurative small images, such as electricity sub power stations, documenting the ways in which Nigerians live in and negotiate with their social and natural environments where “NEPA takes light” (failure of the electricity power supply) is a periodic hazard. These are placed within a grid system that offers a

patterned interaction between the variations in its elements and their colours to offer a wider visual meditations of composition, form and colour of which Buhari demonstrates his total mastery. His *Earth Media* series again addresses the environment using a range of media from sand and clay to coffee stains and acrylic to draw out memories and dreams that are phantasmic figurations. However, his gestural mark making in this series and its array of mediums, extracted from the natural environment, deconstruct its artifice and challenge the viewer to think deeply about the role of memory and dreams in shaping our perceptions of the world. His *Black and White* series focuses on mark making which references both Nigeria's history of contemporary and modernist art while reflecting on its often-sombre political history and its consequences for the individual. Finally, his mixed media works developed from a monoprint workshop offers an exuberant exploration of colour that reflects playfully Buhari's concerns with the environment and society. Colour is made to harmonise in complex ways with an immediacy that monoprinting as a medium can offer to such a skilled practitioner.

The viewer has the opportunity at this important retrospective show by Jerry Buhari to view the range of his approaches to art, unconfined to a single trajectory. The exhibition offers a cornucopia of riches, some immediate in their impact on the eye, others subtle in their ruminations on art and visibility; and how it is shaped within Nigerian environments and concerns. In its breadth of artworks and the depth of the themes it has developed, this exhibition highlights that Jerry Buhari is one of Nigeria's foremost contemporary artists. In short, this exhibition offers the viewer a space to engage with the richness of creativities expressed in the artistry, vision and mark making of Jerry Buhari.

# Mixed Media



**Cold flames of the heart.**  
1998-2020. Monoprint, watercolour,  
pencil and pen on paper.  
8.5 x 13.4 inches.



**Couple at the gate.**  
2016. Mixed media.  
13 x 19.2 inches.



**Resurrection morning.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
16.5 x 10 inches.



**Evening market at Ebute Meta.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
17 x 12 inches.



**Face of a friend.**  
2016. Mixed media on paper.  
12 x 18 inches.



**Friendly gate.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
11.4 x 17.7 inches.



**Dark melting planet.**  
2016. Mixed media on paper.  
Diameter - 14 x 14.6 inches.



**Garden with a pond.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
17 x 13 inches.



**Great expectation: Embryo of a prince.**  
2016. Mixed media on paper.  
17 x 24 inches.



**Princess in a garden 2.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
11 x 16.5 inches.



**Holiday landscape 2.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
20 x 14 inches.



**Landscape in search for peace.**  
2022. Acrylic and watercolour pencil on paper.  
42 x 34.3 inches.

**Faith in Painting:  
Jerry Buhari in Conversation with Sabo Kpade**

**SK: Why the title *Landscapes of the Soul*?**

JB: In the past twenty years, my interest has grown into a closer focus on the environment as a subject as well as a motif. I see myself going back to Akwaya (Kaduna State), my birthplace - a serene, innocent hamlet surrounded by freshwater rivers and hills. It is like "Paradise Lost". Interestingly, *Landscapes of the Soul* was triggered by depression and grief from the protracted military rule in the country since the 1966 military coup, and its interference in civilian governance that climaxed in the early nineties, when the military decided to play poker with Nigeria's intelligence and sensibility. They did this by setting up a transition to civilian rule that we soon discovered was a charade. Depressed, traumatised and reduced, Nigerians lost their national humanity. This is evidenced by the disappearance or scarcity of basic living amenities. As an artist, I had to devise a survival technique similar to a person thrown into a jungle, and part of it involved creating my own country within myself.

**SK: What is a fair general description of the landscapes in Zaria?**

JB: I can only describe the old Zaria city landscape, which was and has been my main area of artistic interest. The settlements like Sabon Gari, the University village of Samaru, etc., did not attract much artistic interest. Interestingly, Zaria city is very far away from the university village of Samaru where I live and work. Zaria, as its inhabitants would prefer to call it, is the old historical settlement of what is said to represent the rich legacies of indigenous Gbayis, that are said to have been moved out to give way to traders and Islamic scholars settlers. Interestingly the history of Zaria is being rewritten by dubious scholarship where some of its fascinating legacies are being questioned and reduced to mere folktales. But the ancient city of Zaria, now fast-vanishing, has a fascinating, mud architecture that offered me a distant

reference to Akwaya in an aesthetic sense. Its enchanting traditional, mud architecture with very narrow streets and complex compounds composed of the connecting chamber - rooms around courtyards with a single entrance, called “zaure”, offer me a perpetual childlike curiosity and wonder, which Akwaya triggered in my childhood.

**SK: How has the landscape of Zaria changed over the years: physically and in your paintings?**

JB: Zaria city continues to bow down to very ugly, so-called modern, concrete cement structures. They are so badly built as if to distance themselves from their historical heritage and identity. The mud buildings are continually being replaced every day with these cement buildings obliterating Zaria's distinctive cultural heritage, sadly, under the watch of governments that have no respect or regard for history, culture and beauty or the need to preserve this rich cultural heritage.

**SK: What are the technical and philosophical triumphs of *Landscape of the Soul*?**

JB: I don't know what you mean, but your question seems to suggest that I evaluate myself and my work along the path of what I may have contributed to the development of the history of contemporary modern art in Nigeria. If this is so, then I would say that this is an engagement I find inappropriate. I would rather that you pose this question to an art critic or art historian. All I can say is that my technical approach to art making has developed from conventional to eclectic and experimental expression. I have no patience for the technical finish. For the thematic approach, I find that my eclectic attitude and experimentation help me assist or guide my students in focusing on the specific subject matter. So, as a pedagogy, it has not only also rubbed off on my professional practice but has defined my creative process as well.

**SK: How much of your watercolours depend on the quality of the paper?**

JB: In the late seventies and eighties, the choice of quality of paper was wider; you had a rich variety of handmade paper, cartridge paper and a wide variety of watercolour papers by the big names of art materials companies like Cotman, Rowney, etc. But after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the variety of papers and indeed other, professional quality art materials disappeared. Today, in the popular art shops in major cities in Nigeria, the most common papers are watercolour papers in different grammes; and the supply is not consistent. You cannot even decide on working with any specific gramme of paper because the market keeps changing. Today, apart from very few artists who can afford to import their materials, we use what we find available. This has offered its advantages in innovation.

**SK: You rarely make large-size, single compositions of watercolours. Why so?**

JB: My response here would be simple: Where is the paper? First, like I said they are not easily available in art shops. If they are, I cannot afford them. I hardly sell my works. So, I depend mostly on my monthly stipend, which is called “salary” to feed my professional practice. The other issue about large size works: where will you keep them after they have been made? I hate to see my works destroyed as a result of poor storage. But I have done a few large works that are commissioned. For these types of works, I know that I will not bother about where to keep them because the owner will come for them. By way of extending this conversation, I think that one of the greatest challenges facing the sustainability of artworks in Nigeria is the inadequacy or serious concern for storage, preservation and restoration facilities. This is further complicated by the absence of museums.

**SK: What roles do size, grids and compaction play in your watercolours?**

JB: My miniature watercolours started in 1993 as a way of managing my sanity in a traumatised political environment brought about by the militarisation of the country. It was also a dare situation when I could not afford to replenish the supply of art materials due to the harsh economic conditions of the time. So, I returned to the small pieces of paper that I considered scraps in a time of plenty. They suddenly became so valuable. It was in returning to these scrap pieces of paper to create watercolours that I began to experience inner peace and tranquillity. I found security and the ability to live through the day into the next. You may wish to recall that it was the period when a military ruler called himself “president” and decided to take the country into a transition from military rule to civilian governance – a political circus. They subjected the country into an expensive and an unending series of political shenanigan that denied its reality, which exposed itself in the famous annulment of the “June 12” election. The rest is known to all. You may also wish to recall that it was the period when the IMF came into the country to establish an economic programme that was to become the SAP for the military junta to kill the middle class and intelligentsia. External forces have always colluded with unpatriotic Nigerians, whether military or civilian to scuttle national development. It could be said that this ensured the perpetuation of a military regime that saw to the establishment of structural corruption advanced by covert ethnicity, religious bigotry and elevation of mediocrity soaked in the oil of nepotism. In my humble and earnest submission, the legacies of military rule are what the country is ripping today where armed bandits compete and challenge the existing government and security officers making billions of naira and displaying it openly.

**SK: Each small, gridded composition invites close, private inspection.**

**Why is this important?**

JB: First, it was a personal way of dealing with depression and the deplorable slide of the country into anarchy that I was witnessing. Secondly, it was an aesthetic strategy that sought to engage a casual viewer with a more intimate experience of my work. If you observe, the modern man is constantly in a hurry. Life today is about how much, not how well. But the grid format is also my personal visual motif that engages other issues such as division, complexity, order/disorder, opaqueness and the way we Africans often subject many issues to voodoo.

**SK: No two compositions are the same. What did you want to gain by avoiding repetition?**

JB: The idea was first to create as many worlds as possible in such a small space. So you could travel to so many cities and explore many jungles, without moving from your comfort zone. Restricted by the scarcity of fuel and a crippling decline in purchasing power, the early nineties were a prison of a sort – a social prison, political prison, economic prison, emotional prison, and so on. I found that the safest way to be safe, to be mobile and to travel is to travel into the self. So the grid composition provided me with that landscape and that organised orderly environment. The grid format is both an aesthetic, philosophical and political way to address the state of my mind and experience as a political animal of the nineties. The grid also represents systems, law and order, cities and the geo-political ecosystems of nations.

**SK: Do you discard “unsuccessful” works or make corrections to get it “right”?**

JB: In my artistic creations, the issue of what does not work or what is not right does not exist. My creative process is organic. I see possibilities in every process, and what hits my heart as inappropriate creates more fascinating

**Masquerade dance in the city.**  
1998-2020. Monoprint, pencil and pen on paper.  
8.5 x 13.4 inches.



**Masquerade dance in the city II.**  
1998-2020. Monoprint and pen on paper.  
8.5 x 13.4 inches.



**Rimaye and spirits.**  
1998-2020. Monoprint, charcoal and pen on paper.  
8.5 x 13.4 inches.





**Silent mothers and children.**

1998-2020. Monoprint, watercolour pencil and pen on paper.  
8.5 x 13.4 inches.



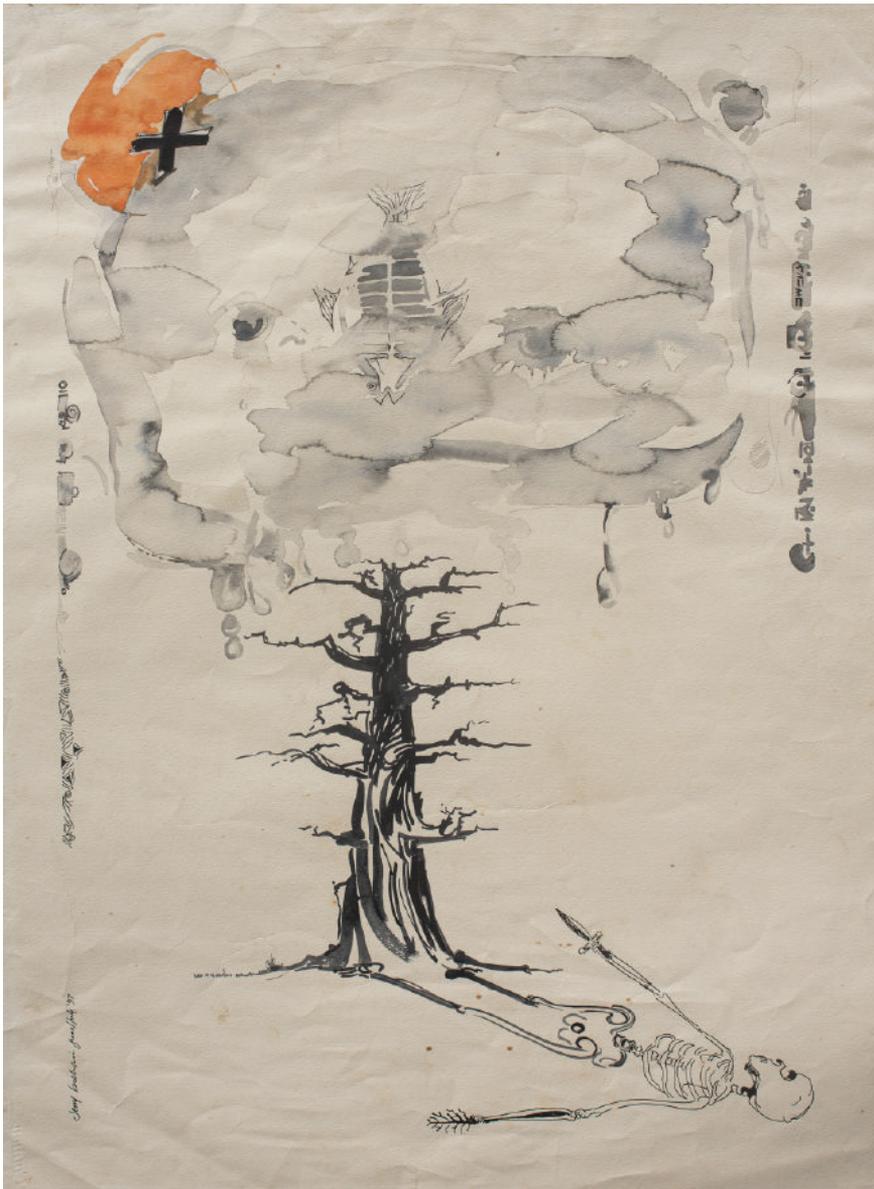
**Women in blue hyjab.**

2016. Mixed media on paper.  
9.3 x 15 inches.



**The Passage.**

1998. Monoprint.  
8 x 12 inches.



**Man and environment.**  
1997. Mixed media on paper.  
22 x 30 inches.



**Princess, Prince and younger.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
16 x 23 inches.



**The bold and the strong: Women in hyjab.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
12 x 20 inches.



**Great expectation 2.**  
2016. Mixed media on paper.  
17 x 25 inches.



**Warm spillage.**  
2016. Mixed media on paper.  
11 x 18 inches.

possibilities. You see, my creative process works very little with my brain. My work comes from the heart, employing intuition and spontaneity. So, nothing is discarded. All works continue to remain as prepositions, “finished” or “unfinished” as long as they are in my studio. Each work that remains within my reach is subject to a fresh engagement. For me, the process is more important than the product.

**SK: Do you ever repeat successful compositions? If not, why?**

JB: No, I don't. Why? I consider this practice unethical, unprofessional and fraudulent!! Even when I make prints, I would pick each print and work on it to create a distinct piece that is different from the other. I may repeat a subject but the work would always be different, fundamentally.

**SK: How do you decide how many grids or what colour combinations to have in a composition?**

JB: The intensity of the subject is a major factor. Another factor is the store of memory that I may have for the subject. Sometimes I simply want to strengthen and test my sense of concentration. I am always trying to make a bigger grid composition. The grid technique is very intense and takes a lot of my energy. I am looking forward to a day when I will be able to create a grid with a million two-centimetre squares on paper and on canvas.

**SK: Did you always carry your colours when making these paintings?**

JB: Yes. Most often I carry my watercolour box and paper with me when I travel, waiting for the opportunity to create a work. Most recently, not as often as I used to years ago. In my 2022 visit to the UK for the art exhibition and symposium titled, *In a Pot of Hot Soup*, at Brunei Gallery (SOAS University of London), I found time to create a watercolour despite my busy itinerary. My travels fertilised the creation of landscapes of the soul. When I travel, I am able to take shots of places and moments with the lenses of my heart and store

them. When slowing down from my journey I am able to recall these frames of places, moments and experiences on paper.

**SK: Who are the watercolourists you most admire and why?**

JB: Honestly, I don't place names on the watercolour I like. I just gloss over them and take note of nuances and expressions, and enjoy them by connecting them to their maker.

**SK: Please give a brief history of watercolour painting in Nigeria highlighting the important developments in themes and material use.**

JB: Though watercolour painting is taught in art schools in Nigeria, I am not aware if any art school places special focus on it as a core subject. In Zaria, it is taught under a course titled *Colouring Techniques*. Watercolour paintings can be seen in artists' studios and exhibitions but it could be said that it is not very common in contemporary Nigerian art as you may find in other climes. But a number of painters have done watercolours here and there in the course of their careers. We may say that it does not appear to be a medium that has enjoyed concentrated attention, in our practice as painters and among art collectors or dealers. For example, I am not aware that there are artists who specialise in watercolour painting. But for me, there are some artists that stand out, for example, Tayo Adenaike, Sam Ovraili and younger artists like Christopher Ankeli. I have come to admire the way they play with the technique and achieve fascinating results.

**SK: What was the motivation behind *Princess With Many Ribbons (2022)* and *Princess With Many Ribbons II (2022)*?**

JB: In these two works, I seek to make reference to the death of the middle class in Nigeria, and its replacement with a small privileged class that is emerging from families of politicians. You also have their private sector collaborators who are obsessed with materialism, their obscene display of

wealth, and how they initiate their children into that lifestyle, without the children experiencing the dignity of labour in service. This little work speaks volumes of the widening social division that attends to insecurity, rancour, acrimony and disunity in the country.

**SK: You rarely paint portraits with watercolours. Why did you decide on watercolours for *Princess With Many Ribbons* (2022) and *Princess With Many Ribbons II* (2022)?**

JB: I am not interested in realism or representational art. Watercolour as a medium has a certain character and quality that produces ideas over and above formal representation. Figurative themes are static to me. Other artists do very well with figures in watercolour and other media and I love them, but for me, I am yet to give it concentrated attention.

**SK: These two works are some of the most recent selections in this exhibition. Have you been making a lot of work in the last few years?**

JB: Yes. I find myself anxious and nervous to create work. Maybe it is because I have been hampered by teaching, university administration and other concerns since 1997. Now, I seem to have this urge to redeem the time.

**SK: Both *Lure of the City II* (1993) and *Thought of the City* (1994) are characterised by dense, crosshatched lines and thickly contoured circles of equally intense colours. Are they linked in ways other than the “city” of their titles?**

JB: Yes. In the early nineties, I took a rare leave and travelled to Lagos and spent two weeks on Broad Street and Marina in Lagos creating watercolours. It was during that period that I found time to marvel and enjoy the magical night colours of Lagos high-rises. Perhaps a Lagosian used to this atmosphere may not appreciate what the night colours of Lagos do to him or her. But for me coming from a rural-urban city like Zaria, Lagos will continue to fascinate me

visually. I seek in the grid compositions to capture the city as a puzzle and an enigma.

**SK: What is the philosophy behind the *Earth Work* series?**

JB: *Earth Works* are symbolic of my age and pilgrimage on earth. The works remind me of my origin, my dependence or our dependence on the soil. It also points to me where I am from and where I am transiting into “dust to dust”.

**SK: Were they *Earth Works* intended as finished works or preparatory sketches?**

JB: They are finished works. But like I observed elsewhere, no work of mine is finished as long as it is with me. Every work is a work on the perpetual journey of a story unfinished. Yet, when it leaves my studio it assumes a life of its own. Most of these works were created in workshops and residencies. They are a spontaneous response to events and happenings that trigger anxiety and concern in me and they often represent a threat to my life.

**SK: Are they gestural drawings or faithful renderings?**

JB: What is the difference between gestural and faithful? I do not see the difference. A gesture could be considered to be a natural response, while faithful would be a search for the essence. I hope that I got your question right.

**SK: What type of sand or clay, coffee and pens are used?**

JB: Now, here I deliberately select clay from the sculpture or ceramic studio around me. But recently with construction works going on on campus and in Zaria, I have found the turning of soil and sand as a stimulus to respond to. The soil, earth or clay become like a disturbance of the peace, death, life, revival of dead systems and a reminder of our mortality. I, therefore, collect different hues or tones of these soils and sieve them into fine powder to create work. I would always add white glue to give the pigment a certain quality of

cohesiveness. Charcoal is also important in this series because it is closely related to earth. Together with clay it carries all the symbolism I explained about this medium.

**SK: What is the significance of each material used? Is it its ease of use, or perhaps its availability?**

JB: I am very comfortable with acrylic because it responds directly to my restless temperament. I have allergy problems with oils, and especially when used in poorly ventilated spaces. Watercolour responds to my playful and experimental approach to media and the flood of ideas that take control of me. The earth, in a sense, is a reference to my origin, the consciousness of my temporality and my pilgrimage on earth. Yes, with each medium, the way it is used, the time it is used and the subject it engages with are both symbolic and represent direct responses to my consciousness of the medium. These are struggles with deeply emotional experiences, desire to communicate, inhale or exhale.

**SK: On average, how long did it take to make each drawing?**

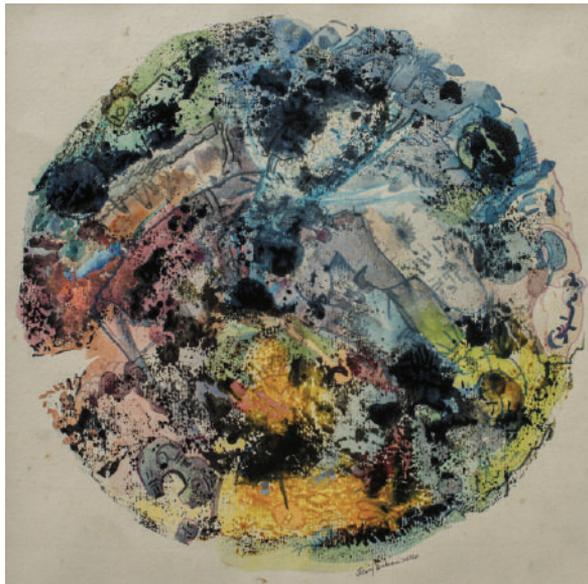
JB: As you can see the date of the works of these exhibits it all varies. Sometimes it takes me five to ten minutes. Sometimes hours and days and weeks. For some works it takes years. The most important thing is to be faithful to the sense of creative urgency to put down what is within my heart. I hope to communicate and share with the viewer this intense sense of urgency. It may be likened to a woman going through the pangs of childbirth – with all due respect.

**SK: What type of brush or application tool was used and why?**

JB: I use a large Japanese sable brush and Rowney's sable brush number 10. I would then begin to trace details with a pen or point 1 sable brush or pencil. I could add watercolour pencils. In all this process or processes I am driven by



**Global village.**  
1997. Mixed media (watercolour and ink).  
Diameter - 22 x 22 inches.



**Happy planet.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
Diameter - 14 x 13 inches.



**I wound you.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
16 x 23 inches.



**Dreams of a Queen II.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
16 x 23 inches.



**The outing of a prince.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
19 x 25 inches.



**Friends at the city gate.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
17 x 24 inches.



**Princess of jewelry.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
11 x 15.7 inches.



**Dawn at Ebute Meta vegetable market.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
12 x 17 inches.



**The princess' world.**  
2016-2017. Mixed media on paper.  
17.2 x 25 inches.

the desire to find a feeling of satisfaction by using the sensations that come from my heart. This is the creative path I search for motifs, figures, images and patterns, they all define my process. The process is my obsession. I am never really bothered about the end result. I am the creator.

**SK: In at least seven works in the *Earth Work* series, the sun is depicted as a black circle with lines drawn across it. Please explain why.**

JB: I have used this symbol of a dead sun to represent the death of conscience, an attempt to kill truth or cover justice. The symbol is also used when creating works related to the environment. In such a situation, I am making reference to greed, recklessness and the advancement of the moment or the now over tomorrow or the future.

**SK: Is there a specific reason why the figures are looking away from the sun?**

JB: The sun represents life and all that this stands for. I think that this is a universal truth. For humankind to perpetuate evil, there must be a distance from the sun (the truth) or light. Darkness rules here. The sun represents transparency, accountability, responsibility, sustainability, continuity and all the ties that make for human civilisation.

**SK: In works like the *Smugglers Notch* (2005) and *The Couple* (2016), the sun is a brown circle whereas, in the works *Stranded Family* (2021), *Refugee Family and their Dog* (2021) and *Refugee Mother Prepares a Meal* (2021), the sun is a black circle divided into four quadrants. Please explain the rationale.**

JB: I was told by my guide in 2005 that *Smuggler's North* years back was a famous passage in Vermont used for the smuggling of illicit liquor from Canada to the United States. The intimidating grey rugged mountain had a powerful visual effect on me. I saw man's power located in the heart and will.

*Stranded Family* is a reference to the many families around the world today crushed by bad governance, modern slavery and neglect of the weak and vulnerable; and Nigeria is the closest example to this picture. Of course, the *Refugee Series* also focuses on how poor governance generates displacement, migration and breakdown of families, physically and emotionally. It is my humble submission that evil works against family to justify our distorted reading of what family is or should be.

**SK: The edges of the black circle are shaded and faded into the white of the paper used. Is there a stylistic reason why?**

JB: This is essentially an aesthetic strategy. But it may also be seen to represent the subtlety with which evil is introduced to humanity to challenge, contaminate or colour good.

**SK: Are the figures gendered, real or mystical?**

JB: They are mystical since the modern man is always trying to question reality. They symbolise fragility and vulnerability.

**SK: In both *Farmers Daughter* (2022) and *Mystical Images of Ancient Zaria* (2016), you deploy expert use of negative space to create foreground and background. Formalistic concerns aside, what other significance does this have?**

JB: This is a deliberate artistic way of referencing the vulnerability and fragility of society. The human being in Nigeria is as expendable as dry grass. In our conversation around insecurity, we hear of such provocative and flowery words as “ungoverned spaces” as if they have just been discovered to be new creations. But we know these terms are dubiously used to engage us in a conversation that justifies failure in responsible governance.

**SK: What is achieved technically when parts of the figure's silhouette are emphasised and others are not?**

JB: Once again, I am probing our fragility, our vulnerability and the reality of our transient existence as mortals. This to me is very important as it is a strategy to seek the path of humility as an essential human virtue to living in the modern world where technology, with all its obvious benefits, has made us presumptuous, proud and individualistic.

**SK: You chose Ebute Metta in Lagos as the subject of many of your mixed media works. Were they painted from life or an imagined experience?**

JB: This was a real experience in the month of June 2012. I woke up in a hotel near the market at about 5 am, while it was still dark. I was awakened by noise beneath the hotel. My room was on the third floor. I looked out and what I saw was the most breath-taking variety of subtle blurred colours defined by dreamy coloured umbrellas. That was the end of my sleep. It was one of the most enchanting experiences of my life then. Till date when I close my eyes and recall that experience I still could see and hear the sounds of this market- very vividly.

**SK: An umbrella motif dominates in five works namely: *The Princess's World* (2016-2017), *The Outing of the Prince* (2016-2017), *Princes, Prince and Younger (Two at the Gate)* (2016-2017), *Princes in a Garden* (2016-2017), *Dreams of a Queen II* (2016-2017). What is the physical and philosophical importance of this motif in this series of paintings?**

JB: I had explained earlier how I discovered the umbrellas at the Ebute Metta vegetable market. Since then the umbrella has taken a wider and significant visual motif in the mixed media works that I created between 2016 and 2017. The umbrella has become a fascinating motif also that for me continues to offer a diversity of meaning and reading. Among these are hope, protection,

confidentiality, beauty and ephemerality.

**SK: What determined your colour choices?**

JB: My mood. It was more of an attempt to capture the mood than a realistic representation of the experience. I must say that it has enriched my visual vocabulary and provided a new language of artistic expression.

**SK: Six of your monoprints are included in *Landscapes of the Soul*. What are the qualities of monoprints that you prize over others?**

JB: I can say that my satisfaction comes from the process rather than from the result. What the average viewer sees and values are the result. But the patient and initiated viewer are captivated by the ability to appreciate the process of creating the work. Because, you see, a work that emphasises process lives in perpetual creation. It also gives the viewer the privilege to participate in the creative process of the artist. Together they take on a journey with the work making it a living work or process.

**SK: Owing to the aforementioned titles and their subject matter, is it fair to say that you have a fascination with royalty? Please explain why.**

JB: As a minority living in Nigeria, I am still trying to process the place of royals and royalty in our modern society, especially when one considers the institution's repressive and exploitative historical antecedents. Apart from our ability to see royalty as signposts of cultural heritages, symbols of governance and celebration of what a people hold dear, I see royalty even today as a tool often used by the political elite in modern times to exploit, manipulate and suppress the freedom of the common man. Royal (traditional) institutions conspire with dubious governments to exploit the weak and poor. However, if royalty could remain a symbol of cultural identity, cohesion and excellence and a representation of human civilisation, I would always prefer to celebrate its flamboyance, magnificence and a transporter of the best of human

aspirations.

**SK: A gate motif is consistent in at least five works namely: “Princes, Prince and Younger (Two at the Gate) (2016-2017), Friends at the City Gate (2016-2017), Couple at the Gate (2016), Friendly Gate (2016) and Wise Men at the Gate (2016). What is its significance?**

JB: You are indeed very observant. The gate comes from my experience of the many gates that take you in and out of Zaria city. On the Samaru campus of Ahmadu Bello University where I live, there are also many gates. The role that gates play in our lives is both benign and often dubious. Essentially gates regulate exits and entrances. So, enemies are kept outside the gate and friends are welcomed at the gate. But today we know that gates have come to represent a dubious and controversial structure of exclusion and imprisonment. And, these gates can be physical or emotional, social, economic, psychological, etc. Today we know that gates could also be virtual. While in ancient societies gates simply served the purpose of keeping away enemies, today gates are used dubiously to regulate relationships between races and classes and other divisions. In my gates I use them as symbols and motifs of welcome, they are entrances where visitors are welcomed and points where harmonious relationships are built and established.

**SK: Please explain your ecological concerns in direct relation to each of the works in this series.**

JB: Artists have often been accused of painting gloomy futures. *Dark Melting Planet* (2022) and *Happy Planet* (2016-2017) are works in dialogue with gloom and hope. *Dark Melting Planet* (2022), *Man and Environment* (1997), *Happy Planet* (2016-2017) and *Warm Spillage* (2016) speak to environmental issues. *Global Village* (1997) speaks to cultural diffusion, attendant hybridisation and the implications that go with it. *Landscape in search of peace* is my current response to how our forests and bushes that were once safe and

innocent fields, playgrounds for youthful adventure for hunters, gardens of wild fruits and herbal plants and reserves for future farmlands have become hideouts of criminals.

**SK: Is there merit to the argument that so-called developing countries are too concerned with daily sustenance to concern themselves with the lofty issues of global warming?**

JB: Yes! You cannot say you are going to concentrate on providing food for today and worry about tomorrow later. That would be suicidal. And we must be careful not to be deceived by a short-term sense of self-preservation. It is like delaying the evil day. So, at this point of our development as a country, if we do not take to heart the challenges of the so-called developed world, along with the challenges of development as a holistic project—considering the way our population is growing faster than our ability to manage resources—and provide food for it, we would end up being so weak and fall once again into new forms of colonialism again by the Global North, and by the greedy and economically small, strong group within our own society that we witness today.

**SK: What is the best compromise possible between, say, deforestation for wood and land, and concerns for ecology?**

JB: Sensitivity, Responsibility and Accountability (SRA). These to me are the three signposts that should be the moral compass to guide policy formulation and implementation strategies in developing a sustainable environment such as ours.

***“The environment is the richest offering of the Maker  
to humanity to enjoy and to engage...  
alas! Look at what we have done with it or on it”.***

2018.

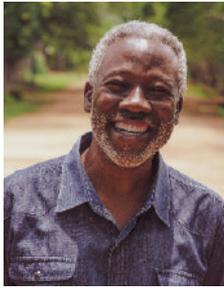


Photo by Niger Abui

## **SELECTED BIODATA (1982 - 2022)**

**Birth Date & Place:** 11<sup>th</sup> July 1959. Akwaya, Kachia Local Government Area, Kaduna State, NIGERIA.

**Awards(A)/Honours(H):** Kaduna State Scholarship(A). Ahmadu Bello University, (A.B.U.) (A). Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U.) Zaria (H). Fellow, Pan-African Circle of Artists (H). The Commonwealth Foundation(A). The Japan Foundation(A/H). Ford Foundation/Triangle Trust/Vermont Studio Centre (A/H). Who is who in Nigeria(H). New Millennial Who is who in Nigeria (H). The American Biographical Institute (H). Fellow, Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) (H). Ahmadu Bello University Golden Jubilee Vice-Chancellor's Merit Award. Award of Creative Excellence in Visual Arts. Anambra Book and Creativity Network Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Member, Eminent Anglicans, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

**Membership of Professional Bodies:** Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA). Nigerian Society of Education through Art (NSEA). The Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA). Aftershave International Artists Workshop. The Pan-African Circle of Artists (PACA). Bridgethearts.com

**Work Experience: Lecturer/Professor** in Painting, Drawing, Design, Theory/History of Art and Painting, Department of Fine Art, A.B.U. Zaria at Degree, Masters and PhD

levels.

**Visiting Lecturer/Artist:** Kansas Wesleyan University (KWU), Salina Kansas, U.S.A. (Oct.1- Nov. 18, 2007), Visiting Lecturer/Artist Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Savannah, Georgia, U.S.A. (Nov. 1-6, 2007). Visiting Senior lecturer on sabbatical, University of Nigeria Nsukka (Jan. 2008-Dec.2008). Visiting Professor Princeton University, Princeton, U.S.A. (2013). Visiting Professor, University of Jos June 2018 - June 2019.

**Administrative Experience in the University:**

**Head,** Painting Section, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 2021-date.

**Representative of the Dean School of Postgraduate School** at the PhD Examination, (Hauwa Isa), of the department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. School of Postgraduate Studies. 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

**Representative of the Dean School of Postgraduate School** at the PhD Examination, (Ndahi Paul Ajiya), of the department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. School of Postgraduate Studies. 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

**Member,** Standing Committee to Resolve Unethical Conduct and Dispute Resolution in Ahmadu Bello University in Faculties, Centres and Units. 2015.

**Chairman, Organizing Committee and Jury.** Integrated Design Team Competition for the Proposed Demonstration Secondary School, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria Phase II. 2015.

**Coordinator,** Department of Fine Arts/Nigeria Film Corporation Film Animation Project, 2014 – date.

**Chairman,** Task Force to establish the Faculty of Environmental Design first Journal-ENVIRON, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 2011.

**Chairman,** Teaching and Examination Evaluation Committee. Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 2010 – 2012.

**Chairman,** Facilities sub-committee, 29<sup>th</sup> Convocation of Ahmadu Bello University

Zaria, 2002.

**Manager**, First Internet Café, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2001 – 2004.

**Dean**, Faculty of Environmental Design, A.B.U. Zaria, 1999 – 2001.

**Chairman**, Complex “H” Subcommittee of A.B.U. Central Appointments and Promotions Committee, 1999 – 2001.

**Head**, Department of Fine Arts, A.B.U. Zaria, 1997 – 2001.

**Postgraduate Coordinator**, Department of Fine Arts, A.B.U. Zaria, 1995 – 1997.

**Head of Painting Section**, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria 1988 – 1994.

### **Membership of University Committees:**

**Member**, Faculty of Environmental Design, Standing Committee, 2015 to date.

**Member**, Deanery Management Team. Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 2015.

**Member, Senate Standing Committee.** Ahmadu Bello University Zaria 2015 - 2018.

**Member**, Teaching and Examination Evaluation Committee. Directorate of Academic Planning and Monitoring, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 2010 – 2012.

**Member**, Museology and Cultural Network Committee, Institute for Development Research (IDR) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2003 – 2008.

**Member**, Faculty of Environmental Postgraduate Committee, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 2008 to date.

**Member**, A.B.U. ICT Taskforce, 2001 – 2003.

**Member**, University Loans Committee, A.B.U. Zaria, 1999 – 2002.

**Member**, Appointments and Promotions Committee, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 1997 to date.

**Member**, Ahmadu Bello University Silver Jubilee anniversary Celebration, 1986 – 1988.

**Member**, Departmental Postgraduate Committee, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 1986 to date.

**Conferences and Academic Publications:** Has attended 8 international conferences in Germany, Ghana, U.S.A., Pakistan, Japan, Senegal the UK, and over 50 academic conferences in Nigeria. Have over 100 publications in Exhibition catalogues, Books, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Newsletters, Electronic media.

**Public presentation:** Have featured in talks and presentations in art and culture in major television programmes in Nigeria, Germany, Japan, Pakistan, Senegal and U.S.A.

**Academic Supervision:** Has supervised and successfully graduated over 50 undergraduate projects and 50 MFAs in Painting from 1986 to date.

**External Examiner:** University of Lafia, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nsukka, Nigeria. University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria. Institute of Management Technology (IMT), Enugu, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. Kano State Polytechnic, Kano, Nigeria. College of Education Katsina, Katsina, Nigeria. College of Education Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria, Interim Joint Matriculation Board(IJMB).

**External Assessor for Professorial Promotion in Tertiary Institutions:** University of Maiduguri, Federal University Lafia, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Kumasi, University of Benin, University of Lagos, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Enugu, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Anambra State Nigeria, University of Nigeria (UNN) Nsukka.

**National/Professional Assignment:**

**Member,** Organising Committee Kaduna State Tourism Committee to the Nigerian International Tourism Expo '87-1987.

**Member,** Adjudication Panel, 10<sup>th</sup> National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST '92), 1992.

**Member,** Research Team, Nigeria Copyright Council, Compilation of Compendium on

Contemporary Nigerian arts and artists, 1993.

**Member**, Accreditation Team to Environmental Design Programmes, Federal Universities in Western Nigeria. National Universities Commission, 1993.

**Member**, Advisory Committee, The Nigerian Magazine, Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001 to date.

**Member**, National Gallery of Art, Committee to establish a Nigerian Visual Art Biennial/Triennial, 2002.

**Member**, UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List Advisory Committee, Federal Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2005-2011.

**Consultant**, Establishment of Currency Notes Museum, Central Bank of Nigeria, 2009.

**Member and Co-Curator**, Nigeria at 50 Exhibition Committee, at the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Celebrations of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria, 2010.

**Consultant**, Arthouse Contemporary Limited and Foundation. 2011 to date.

**Consultant and Float Designer**, Kaduna State Participation at the Abuja National Carnival of Reconciliation, Abuja, November 2011.

**Chairman Adjudication Committee**, Visual Arts National Arts Festival (NAFEST), 2012.

**Chairman Jury Committee**, Life In My City (LIMCAF) Grand Finale Festival/Awards, 2012.

**Chairman**, National Universities Commission (NUC) Accreditation Team to Visual Arts Programmes: University of Port Harcourt, University of Uyo, 2014.

**Special Assistant**, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Kaduna State, 2015 to 2017.

**Member**, National Universities Commission (NUC) Ad-Hoc Accreditation Panel to Environmental Science, University of Benin, 2016.

**Founding Chairman**, Chimedie Museum Prize for Creative Excellence in the Visual Arts in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 2017.

**Member**, National Universities Commission (NUC) Resource Verification Panel to the Fine and Applied Arts programme. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt. Nov. 1-3, 2017.

**Chairman**, National Universities Accreditation Team to Abia State University Uturu, Imo State University Owerri. 2021.

**Consultant**, Arthouse Contemporary Limited, Lagos.

**Member**, Arthouse Foundation, Lagos.

**Member**, Editorial Committee, *The Studio: a journal of Art Practice and Theory*. Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. 2021 – date.

**Chairman**, Life In My City Arts Festival (LIMCAF) Competition 2022.

### **Curatorial Work/Experience**

1. **Curator**, *The Essential Jimo Akolo: A Retrospective of Drawings and Paintings*. kó 36 Cameron Road, Ikoyi Lagos, NIGERIA. 12 February – 12 March 2022.
2. **Curator**, *Zaria Art Society: Celebration of Legacies*. Kia Showroom. 308 Adeola Odeku Victoria Island Lagos, Nigeria. 26 Oct. – 15 Nov. 2019.
3. **Curator**, *Vangi*. A Solo Exhibition of the Photographs of Hanan Buhari. Thought Pyramid. 18 Libreville Street, Off Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse II Abuja 25-28 August 2017.
4. **Curator**, *Visions of Hope*. Kabafest Kaduna State Books and Arts Festival, Gusau Institute. Kaduna. 5-8 July 2017.
5. **Chairman** Curatorial Team, Implementation Committee, Society of Nigerian Artists. (SNA). Nigeria at 50. Sept.- Oct. 2010.
6. **Member**, Curatorial Team, Exhibition Sub-Committee, Nigeria at 50. National Independence Anniversary Exhibition. “National Cultural & Historical Exhibition: The Journey of our Independence”. The Velodrum, National Stadium, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.
7. **Curator**, *Uniting Nigeria through Art*. Castina Gallery, Flat 5 “Limi Clinic” Hostel and Block of Flats. Samaru, Zaria. 1999.
8. **Co-curator**, *The Zaria art society – A new Consciousness*. Organized and sponsored by the National Gallery of Art. November 1998.

Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

**9. Curator**, *The sailing of An Artist. The works of Nkeru F. Okorie*, Department of Fine Arts Gallery, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 1998.

**10. Curator**, *Fine and Applique '88*, Plateau State Art Council, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. 1998.

**11. Co-curator**, *The Zaria Art Society – A New Consciousness*, National Touring Exhibition – Enugu, Lagos, National Gallery of Art. Lagos Nov. 1998 to 1999.

**12. Co-curator**, *Vision 2010 – Nigeria Art Exhibition*. Vision 2010 Committee, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abuja. 1997. (Sept. 26-Oct.)

**13. Curator**, *Living Vision*. A Memorial Art Exhibition, Avant-Garde Gallery, Kaduna, Nigeria. 9 – 17 February 1996.

**14. Curator**, *Society of Nigerian Artists (S.N.A.) Kaduna State Chapter Art Exhibition*. At the occasion of the Society of Nigerian Artists National Conference held in Zaria, Nigeria. 1990.

**15. Curator**, *Artstaff 87*, Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. 1987.

**16. Curator**, *Paintstaff*, Exhibition, Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Nigeria. 1986.

### **Art Exhibitions (Selected):**

#### **Solo/One-Man:**

**Gwari forms**. Kashim Ibrahim Library, A.B.U. Zaria, Nigeria, 1984

**Floral Notes**. Italian Cultural Institute, Lagos, Nigerian, 1989

**The Wasted**. Arts and Object Gallery, Lagos, Nigerian, 1996

**Conversation with Mother Earth**. Alliance Française Kaduna, Nigeria, 1999

**The Endangered Image** (A retrospective of exhibition). Kashim Ibrahim Library A.B.U. Zaria, 2007

**Residency Exhibition**. The Red Barn Studio. Lindsborg, Kansas U. S. A. - 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. – 5-16, 2007

**Dialogue with KansaScape.** Sams Hall, Fine Arts, Kansas Wesleyan University, Salina KS U. S. A. - Nov. 5 - 16, 2007

**African Motifs Visit KansaScape.** Red Barn Studio. Lindsborg, Kansas U.S.A., Nov. 2008

**Man and Earth.** Goethe Institut, Victoria Island, Lagos Nigeria, Nov- Dec. 2009

**Encounters & Dialogues.** Artspring Gallery, Salina Kansas. U.S.A., March 5-15, 2008

**Jerry Buhari in Retrospection: 33Years +.** On the occasion of his Inaugural lecture. Kashim Ibrahim Library and Department of Fine Arts Gallery, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. 9-29 September 2015

**Framed Images of Time and Memories.** Thought Pyramid Art Centre Wuse, Abuja. 2017

**International Group Exhibitions (Selected):**

**3rd Biennial International Exhibition,** Havana Cuba, 1989

**Contemporary African Art,** (Touring exhibition) London, Bradford, Liverpool, England, 1990

**Begegnug Mit den Enderen (To Encounter Others),** Kassel, Hann-Munden, Germany, 1992

**Development of Contemporary Art, International Seminar and Exhibition of Non-Aligned Countries.** Jakarta, Indonesia, 1995

**Contemporary Nigerian Art,** World Intellectual Property Organization Geneva, Switzerland,

**Seven Stories about Modern African Art (Africa95),** Touring Exhibition. London, England, Malmo, Sweden, New York, U.S.A., 1995

**Exhibition of African Art,** The National Museum of China, Beijing, China, 1999

**Residency portfolio.** Red Mill Gallery, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont U.S.A., 2005

**The 8,** Triangle Arts Association, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., 2005

**Trends: Six Artists Single Platform,** An Exhibition of Works of Six Nigerian Artists

10<sup>th</sup> Biennial of African Contemporary Art Dakar, Senegal, 2010

**Environment and Object in Recent African Art.** Touring Exhibition: a, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College New York, 2011-2012. b, Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond Virginia, U.S.A. Sept. 9- Dec. 11, 2011. c, Museum of Art, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont. Jan. April 2012

**Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa,** (Touring Exhibition): National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute Washington DC, USA, 2013-2015. The Fowler Museum University of California, Los Angeles, CA (2013-2014) U. S. A. 2013 – 2014

**Living on the Edge.** Lagos Biennial. Railway Compound, Railway Corporation, Lagos. 14 October – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

**IN A POT OF HOT SOUP.** Russell Square, London. Brunei Gallery London, UK. 6<sup>th</sup> April – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 2022

\* **National Group Exhibitions:** Over 80 group exhibitions in Nigerian from 1981 to date.

#### **International Artists Residencies:**

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual VSC/Triangle Arts International Residency Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center (VSC), Johnson Vermont, U.S.A. - Aug.- Oct. 2005

The Red Barn Studio, Lindsborg, Kansas State, U.S.A. - 16<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2007

Kansas Wesleyan University (KWU), Salina, Kansas State, U.S.A. - 1<sup>st</sup> Oct.-18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2007

The Red Barn Studio, Lindsborg, Kansas State, U.S.A. - Oct. 12 - Nov. 12, 2008.

#### **Artists Workshops:**

**Aftershave International Artists Workshop,** (Maiden workshop) Jos, Nigeria (The First International Artists Workshop in Nigeria), 1999

**VASL,** International Artists Workshop, Gadani, Pakistan, 2001

**Aftershave International Artists Workshop,** Maraban Jos, Nigeria, 2003

**Print Making Workshop** (Initiated the Workshop). Yemaja Gallery Suru Lere, Lagos, Nigeria. 2016

**Special accomplishments projects (Selected):**

- Facilitated and coordinated the rehabilitation/renovation of Faculty Lounge to house the first Internet café in A.B.U. April 2001
- Set the model for the landscaping and beautification of A.B.U. with the Faculty of Environmental model in 2000, as Dean. 200-2001
- Sought and brought international scholars to A.B.U to give lectures on new directions in visual arts discipline. 2001
- Wrote the proposal for the setting up of Ahmadu Bello University Multi-Media Center for teaching, learning and research, which secured N10m from Aminu Dantata. 2001
- Donated several books, journals and materials for academic work in the Department of Fine Arts
- Sponsored the mounting of new course and review of same to meet the changing trends in the visual arts discipline, including such courses as Professional practice (which is similar to entrepreneurship), Development of Individual Vision
- Participated in the design and mounting of PhD programme in the Studio disciplines of Painting and Sculpture
- Proposed and made the murals in the Kontagora Convocation Square and the Gymnasium and Faculty of Environmental Design Internet cafe
- Instituted departmental lecture series in Fine Arts Department 1997
- Coordinated and secured funds for the establishment of the first Journal in the Faculty of Environmental Design, 1999

**\*His art works are in the collection of several individuals, government and private institutions around the world.**

**\*He has been reviewed, cited by & in several newspapers, magazines and books His works are subject of scholarly and postgraduate (Masters and Doctoral degrees) work across the globe**

**\*Listed in numerous websites.**

**Current Occupation/Rank:** Lecturing/Professor of Fine Art, Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria

**Current Address:** Department of Fine Art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria

**Residential address:** Area E65, Abdu Gusau Street, Ahmadu Bello University Senior Staff Quarters, Samaru, Zaria.

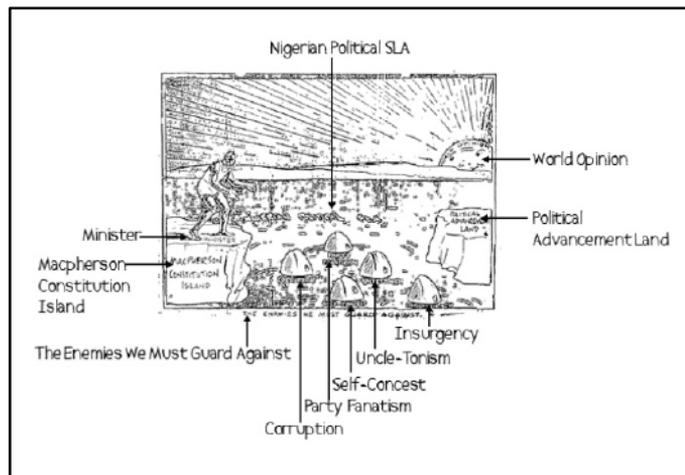
**Emails:** eniningbj@gmail.com, jbuhari@abu.edu.ng

**Websites:** www.jerrybuhari.com, www.bridgethearts.com/about\_Buhari.html

**Social media:** Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook

www.aftershaveworkshop.org, www.panafricanartists.org

**Telephone: Mobile:** 234 803 440 7878, 234 8017 985 0665,  
234 915 360 1650.



Artist: Akinola Lasekan. The enemies we must guard against. 1955. Cartoon.  
Source: Wikipedia. Accessed: June, 2022.

## **Brief on Essayists**

### **Ayò Akínwándé**

Ayò Akínwándé is an interdisciplinary artist, architect, curator, thinker, and writer, based between the U.K and Nigeria. Working across lens-based media, installation, sound, and performance, his practice deals with topics that intersect with the notion of people, politics, and power.

In 2019, he presented solo exhibitions in Nigeria, Scotland, and Cuba for the 13<sup>th</sup> Bienal de La Habana. And in 2021, he presented solo exhibitions in Switzerland and Germany.

Akínwándé co-curated the 2017 inaugural Lagos Biennial. He is a recipient of the 2021 Prince Claus Seed Awards, and the 2020 Edith-Russ-Haus Media Art award.

### **Dr. Charles Gore**

Artist, curator and researcher on visual Nigerian arts. Senior lecturer on history of African Art (2005- 2019) and Associate Dean (2014-2017), SOAS. Lived in Benin City for two years. Published extensively on modern and contemporary arts of Africa, including its histories of photography; the arts of the Benin kingdom including a book Art, Performance and Ritual in Benin City (Edinburgh University Press: International African Library), masquerade in Anambra state, textiles and other art forms in southern Nigeria, as well as a particular focus on contemporary arts in Nigeria.

### **Sabo Kpade**

Sabo Kpade graduated from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) where he studied Global Arts and Cultures. He is also a member of AICA-USA, the United States arm of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art. Currently, he writes for Contemporary & and Apple Music. Previously he wrote for Okay Africa, Media Diversified and Guardian Newspapers Nigeria.

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone who played significant roles in the realization of this exhibition. This exhibition and catalogue would not have been initiated and realized without the unwavering support of Mrs. Kavita Chellaram and her interest in the artist's works. Since its inception, kó gallery has been passionate about championing Nigeria's leading artists from the modern period and celebrating established artists across Africa. Of course, we are especially grateful to the artist, Jerry Buhari who graciously allowed us to present this retrospective to the world. His warm reception and hospitality towards the kó team when we visited his home and studio space in Zaria were memorable. We would also like to thank Mrs. Buhari, the artist's wife for her kindness and support. We are touched by her pleasant welcome into their harmonious house.

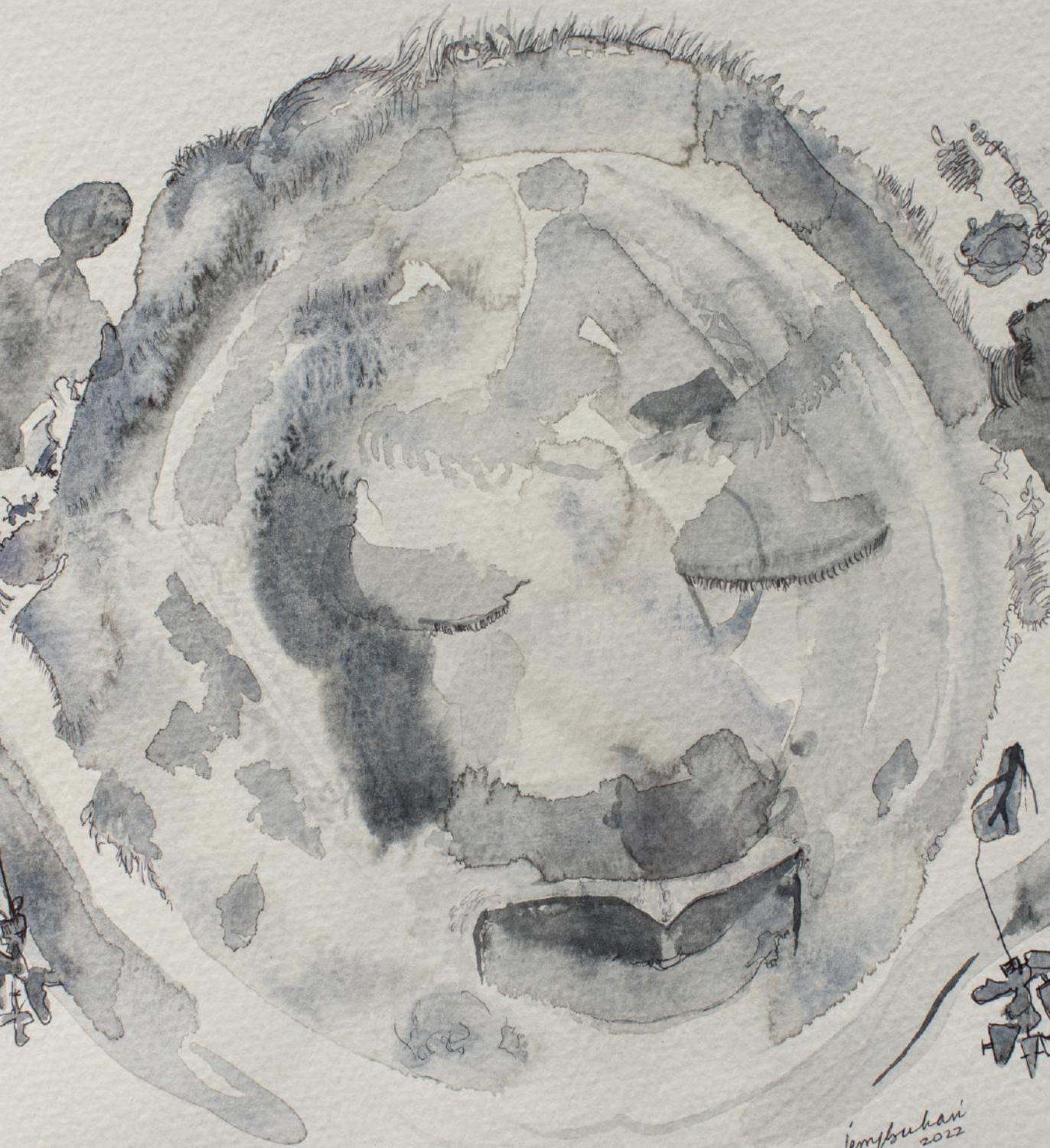
We reserve special gratitude to our sponsor, Le Connaisseur for their support of this exhibition. Special thanks to our essay contributors including Sabo Kpade, Ayò Akínwándé, Charles Gore who have contributed to this exhibition by writing about the works. We thank the kó team members including the founder, Mrs. Kavita Chellaram, the director, Joseph Gergel, Sumbo Biobaku-Baderin, Otsholeng Poo, Favour Ritara, Emmanuel Chilaka, Hannah Okoja, who worked tirelessly, as usual, to make this exhibition a success.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of people who worked behind the scene, the photographers, the catalogue designers, the exhibition installer, the painter, the printing agency, the gallery's staff, and the framers amongst many others.

### **About kó**

kó is an art space based in Lagos, Nigeria that is dedicated to promoting modern and contemporary art. kó has a dual focus in championing Nigeria's leading artists from the modern period and celebrating emerging and established contemporary artists across Africa and the Diaspora. Through exhibitions, publications, public programming, and participation in art fairs, kó aims to expand conversations about contemporary art in Africa to a local and global audience.

[www.ko/artspace.com](http://www.ko/artspace.com)



kó

jempuhani  
2022

# **Landscapes of the Soul**

Jerry Buhari

**kó**