

EXODUS

An Exhibition of Drawings, Paintings, Mixed Media & Installations By

NYEMIKE ONWUKA

GEMINI ARTS

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Saturday 12th November, 2016

Exhibition opens for 2:00pm and closes 7:00pm

Signature Gallery, 107 Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Exhibition runs till Friday 18th November, 2016

R.S.V.P 09097002666

Organized by

GEMINI ARTS

Kontessa

Signature - Beyond Limited

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ARTIRT'S STATEMENT

Combining the need to evolve as an artist with the need to express my feelings has brought about the body of works which I call Exodus, in this collection I have opted to explore a more colorful approach to painting, combined with my use of latex and figurative representation of the subjects Exodus has proven to be a different experience altogether in creation and in viewing.

The need to further strengthen my message prompted extensive research which led to the use of bold texts i.e, alphabets, numbers and shape patterns.

Alphabets, numbers, shapes and colours are key elements in the composition of mankind's daily experiences; vital in the description of life's situations e.g, date, time, objects, events, etc.

I hope with exodus I have been able to entertain you and also pleasantly sensitize you on the subject of 21 st century slavery survivors.

Have a pleasant viewing.

Thank you.

NYEMIKE ONWUKA

RESTOREGRAMS

Visual art practice in nigeria had always been looked at as cultural collage of experience. A documentation of its peoples and cultures. A stylistic bazaar; cacophony of voices and visions: intercultural dialogue true African: fresh: personal: forceful colourful. Inspired from deep imagination influenced by education, political situation: religion: environment and climate.

Art just like energy is not linked to any particular place but rather is part of the invisible fabric of globalization.

My first encounter with Nyemike Onwuka's Art was at Africa NOW Bonhams auction in New York 2010. Two of his paintings were catalogued. One was “Troupe III” A 2009 mixed media piece of female figures in celebrative mood rendered in almost Monochromatic colour language. The other art piece was “Weekenders V” A Polychromatic rendition of a crowded beach. The former piece “Troupe III” was to become the dominant colour and visual language of most Nyemike's art pieces that I came across. Different shades of browns set off by strong red. My recent encounter with his experiment in exodus is overwhelming. He has engaged his signature visual language with a fascinating cocktail he dubs Neo Cubism.

This repertoire is replete with varied nuances and oeuvres. Dexteriously maneuvered to bridge the pseudo transition in his body of works. A merger between 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional. Child abuse,sex slavery, unemployment are some of the disturbing aspects that characterise the subject matter here.

He uses figures and techniques to comment albeit with contemporary social and political implications.

What many people who spend
A lot of time looking at art
Do agree on is what separates
A successful work of art from
One that may be merely interesting
Or typical. Mastery of the medium,
Clarity of execution, and authority
Of expression are vital criteria
Applicable to all works of art
Regardless of style or subject. 1

Through his newest portfolio his works have moved his inner vision of the world around him into a reality: To make invisible visible. To reveal what is hidden to manifest. Like Shawn Walker a cultural Anthropologist and photographer. Nyemike sees regeneration in decayed walls.

Here the walls, sidewalks, streets
And human beings are the subject matter.
As they reveal the spirits within.
The spirits that called to our ancestors
Create the traditional rituals.
I see myself not as religious but
As a spiritualist.
I am trying to connect the
Spiritual with the concrete
Looking at the concealed
Universes around us. 2

This unfolds as a parody in “Oath Takers” and even the “Hidden Brand”.

The figures of the subjects in the portfolio are treated almost with a Photographic precision and allure which allows the photographer to give voice to his alchemist self. Using light to give rise to the painter within the photographer. Pulling through multi-layering within the existing reality to reveal the significance within common place. The viewers must interact with these shapes and colours to find their own interpretation of what exists.

“OATH KEEPERS” overlaps its strong colour language and questions the contradictions of the victims claim of ignorance while taking oath of allegiance to go into slavery. Sex slavery for that matter.

This leads to a discourse in the cultures and thoughts of diverse ethnic groups of Nigeria. There is strong belief in the head as a potent image that plays a central role in how a person is seen by others. As essence of life. It is regarded as a seat of power and determinant of personal destiny among the Kalabaris the head is revered especially the forehead which is taken as the locus of the spirit Teme. Teme is believed to be in control of Behavior and indirectly destiny apart from the physical head. The inner head (Ori-Inu) among the Yorubas is a focus of many important rituals and altars are dedicated to inner heads in the past. Due to the role that heads play in destiny sculptures and figures are used to project it in the artists world.

This mystery is projected in the Aura Orbiting the 4 piece monochrome “speak not see not hear not” but in defiance and break from one destination to another the figures say “we speak, we hear, we conquer, we say”.
The portfolio titled Exodus is fused with nuances of symbolisms. Layers contradictions, implications, questions, sympathies and empathies are laced in symbolisms. The artist strives to unfold them with onerous vision of hope for the Protagonists. The title of the pieces are very apt “UNBROKEN” “LIGHT AT THE EXIT” BLURRED FANTASIES” “CONCIOUSNESS” “THE AWAKENING” “CALL TO MIND” “COLD FEET” “WATCHFUL EYES”.

The artist favours fragmentations and geometrical forms. He has reduced his presentation to cubes and geometrical forms thus heightening his discourse. Because colours have forms and sub-forms this swirling energy is even juxtaposed with his more popular oeuvres.

His visual language is embedded with sympathy and empathy that inspires construction of communities through humanity using painting and installation. Human personality as subject.
He delivers a powerful message while looking for solutions and creating solutions as if in agreement that in every challenge so lies the seeds of solution.

Tangible and intangible symbols fused together manifests in objects; colours; ideas that bellows his narrative further for a critical mass that he so desires to access the hope he intends for his subjects in Exodus.

The use of installation can be of any kind. But the concern here is visual art. In this fold Simon Wilson and Jessica lack defined:

Installation as the term used
To describe mixed media
Construction or assemblage
Usually designed for a specific
Place and for a temporary
Period of time.
They stated that installations
Are works that often occupy
The entire room of gallery.
That the spectator invariably
Has to walk through in order
To engage fully with the work of art.
Some installations however
designed simply to be walked around. 3

The genre incorporates a very broad range of everyday and natural materials which are chosen for evocative qualities. As well as new media such as Video, Sound Performance, Immersive Virtual Reality and Internet.

Art in Africa of old in form and content and in their rightful abodes confirm that this form of art (installation) that is being embraced as new today. (Post Modern Art) outside the continent of Africa has always been there. And is being generally developed too in Africa as in other continents. Just like painting sculpture and other forms of visual art. That have a tradition. Installation art also has its unique
Tradition in Africa. In most traditional Africa societies and environments particularly in the shrines there abound creative installations in one form or another. In shrines where traditional art works form a major part of the entire display are usually installations and wall hangings.



Bruce Onobrakpeya claims
that installation symbolizes
striving towards a higher
and richer life. It is an
assemblage of art works
both linear and sculptural
of different shapes colours
designs and materials which
together reflect grandeur
and beauty often associated
with traditional religious shrines
and architectural decoration of palace 4

Through a skillful interface/combination of neo cubistic sensibilities, traditional painting technique and new media technologies Onwuka views his subjects and context. He uses installation to capture and represent their milieu and malaise as a screen so the viewers can explore the images and also access the path in which the artist has chosen. Through installation he has delivered the victims of his story.
Using De constructivist and constructivist juxtapositions. He releases them from the bondage of the Cartesian grid and rectilinear formation. Here the artist makes another allusion to photography whereby the rectilinear lens enlarges the image at the ends. Symbolizing the enlarged hopes he intends for the victims.
He creates a stew of 3 dimensional installation and 2 dimensional paintings to heighten both his visual and colour language.
Resulting in an intense and powerful message. He goes further to engage in resultant end he hopes for the message to achieve.
He introduces letters mysteriously with accompanying aura as accoutrement to arrive at denouement. A finality he wants by any means necessary.

Painting is not just a matter of
adding one thing after another in
some sequence of calculated or
spontaneous gestures. One must
take aim, and the painting should
be determined in the first stroke.
All subsequent manoeuvres
are an interrogation of the initial
purpose. This does not mean a pre
meditated painting, but it does
mean a process that is reflexive
that tends toward reconciling
itself with the “damage done” so to speak. 5

Exodus presents works that are pleasurable to look at as figurative as urban realism yet symbolizing struggles. The material and process of labour amounts to a kind of index of hope using letters scattered over the canvasses almost insignificantly as a shorthand to achieve deep rooted aspirations of hope.

Nyemike does not abide by the constraints of assumption of neo cubism instead he engages his overlapping ambition and intention codifed in the layers of his oeuvres.
A draftsman committed to meaning but also enhancing style and process. He makes compositions that are readily assimilative yet rooted in deep content. By using every day/banal figures to explore evocative and provocative vernacular of urban realism. The narrative is based on familiar pictures but take on challenging parts of contemporary hassles. He designs the narrative to touch nerves.

Here is an excellent application of a post-modern technique in arguing contemporary issues. This congruency has a spilled out of constrained virtues of neo cubism by engaging things not seen as in the context of the hidden agenda of the “Hidden Brand”

BURNS EFFIOM
Curator
2016

Footnotes
1.MICHAEL FINDLAY.
ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES INC.
NOV. 2012. NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
THE VALUE OF ART: MONEY, POWER BEAUTY.

2. BLACK RENAISSANCE NOIRE
VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1
SPRING/SUMMER 2014

3. SIMON WILSON AND JESSICA LACK (2008)
THE TATE GUIDE TO MODERN ART TERMS
TATE PUBLISHING, A DIVISION OF TATE ENTERPRISE LTD.
MILLBANK, LONDON.

4. BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA
INTERNATIONAL ART EXPO. LAGOS
EXHIBITION CATALOGUE. DEC. 17 – 26. 2012

5. DAVID RICH
PAINTINGS
ETHAN PETITT CONTEMPORARY
BROOKLYN NY 11217
COPYRIGHT 2013

6. BONHAMS AFRICA NOW
AFRICAN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART OPTION
AUCTION WED 10 MARCH, 2010
NEW YORK.



‘Exodus’

73 x 48 Inches,
Iron Road, Galvanized Square Pipes,
Multicolour Scraps, Padlocks and found Objects
2016

THE LEEWAY

Nyemike Onwuka has always leaned in the direction of the figurative. Often splaying a coat of many colours on tha anatomy of the female form. It is the complexities; the intricate narratives that this form affords that have led to his many metaphors on canvas. One would think these women once lived on the pages of the book of songs of Solomon - as dutiful mothers, loving wives and pampered children.

As a loud memorial for the role of women. In contemporary society, Nyemike's new offerings in this exhibition calls for a conversation on the rights and value of true freedom in such a way that it celebrates the women and child survivors.

Records of 21st century slavery often trace to the abuse of the rights of women and children in contemporary societies. The primitive mental box of these uneducated children is often the target of pedophiles; even older relatives who disguise themselves as help meets or guardians. Here, many of us are guilty when we employ underage children as house helps for whatever reason under the sun.

See trafficking as a form of modern slavery thrives under a form of secrecy and a loss of human conscience and morality where the woman becomes a commodity, a property the that yields returns to her owners in a systematic form of annuity. These owners who have commoditized these women often put a brand of ownership on them. These brands are hidden in the form of tattoos and fashionable markings, which might often be a source of embarrassment to the woman.

Nyemike in this exhibition unearths this contemporary slavery narrative expressed in parts by his application of different techniques to distinguish the thought processes. This would be the artists first time applying bold texts to his canvas. Here, they appear in the series called Oath takers.

The Oath takers is an argument on consent and pretense. He argues that no one seeks to help you financially and asks you to swear an Oath, which is a kind of rite of passage activity for most of the sea traffickers in Africa. He further submits that there is more unsaid by the victims than we know. Testimonies abound of victims who have lost their lives when they break the Oath in rebellion.

Another series in this exhibition that triggers ample suggestive emotions is the -WE SEE, WE SPEAK, WE HEAR, WE CONQUER. The melancholic vibe of this series gives it away from a distance. The dark paints grated on Nyemike's usual grungy canvas finish with close up figures of Children expressive poses.

Nyemike's positive brush is painted on the canvas of gloom and supposed anguish. His perspectives on life and beauty even after life has taken it s toll is evident in the titles.

This also throws a dart at the current global talks on child security. The Chibok girl readily comes to mind with these works. The release of the first 21 girls and the hesitation of the other children to return home to their parents and loved ones because they have been scarred by forced marriage, pregnancy and abuse raises a concern for the future of the girl child in developing societies.

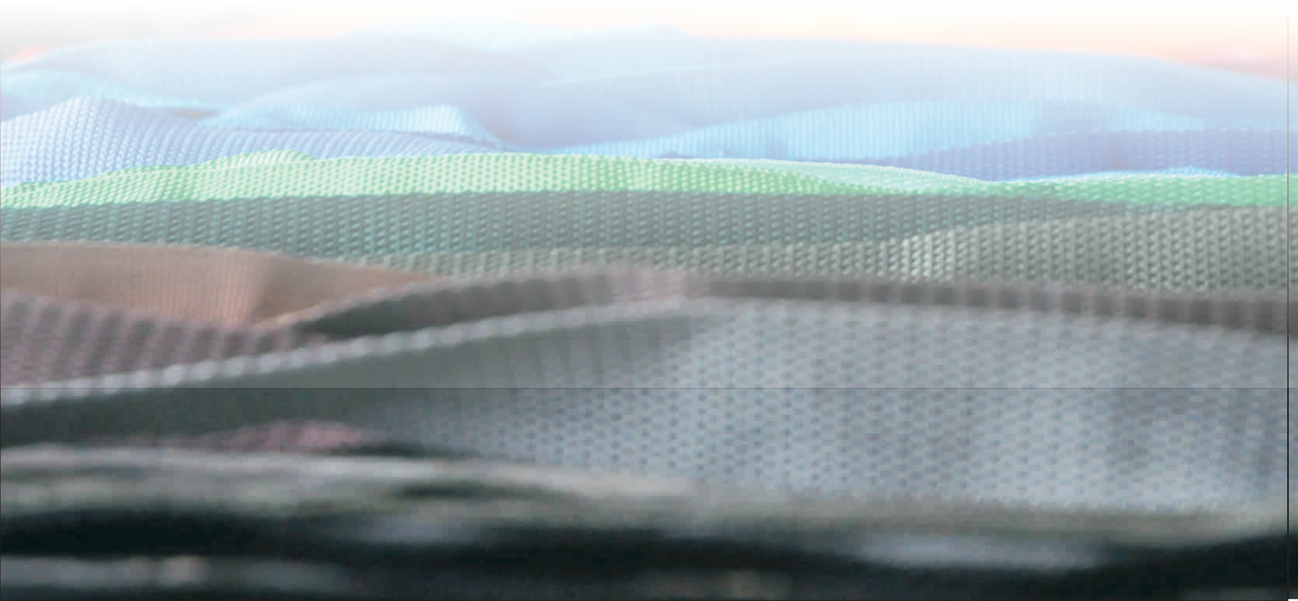
Another jolting expression, which would come as a surprise to art followers who are already familiar with Nyemike's work, is his experiment with neo figurative/neo cubism style. This is quite a refreshing distance from his works till date. With this new experiment, Nyemike introduces the hidden brands used by sex traffickers in sophisticated societies. His research on the subject has also informed the subtle placement of these hidden brands as signs and embellishments with coats of happy colours.

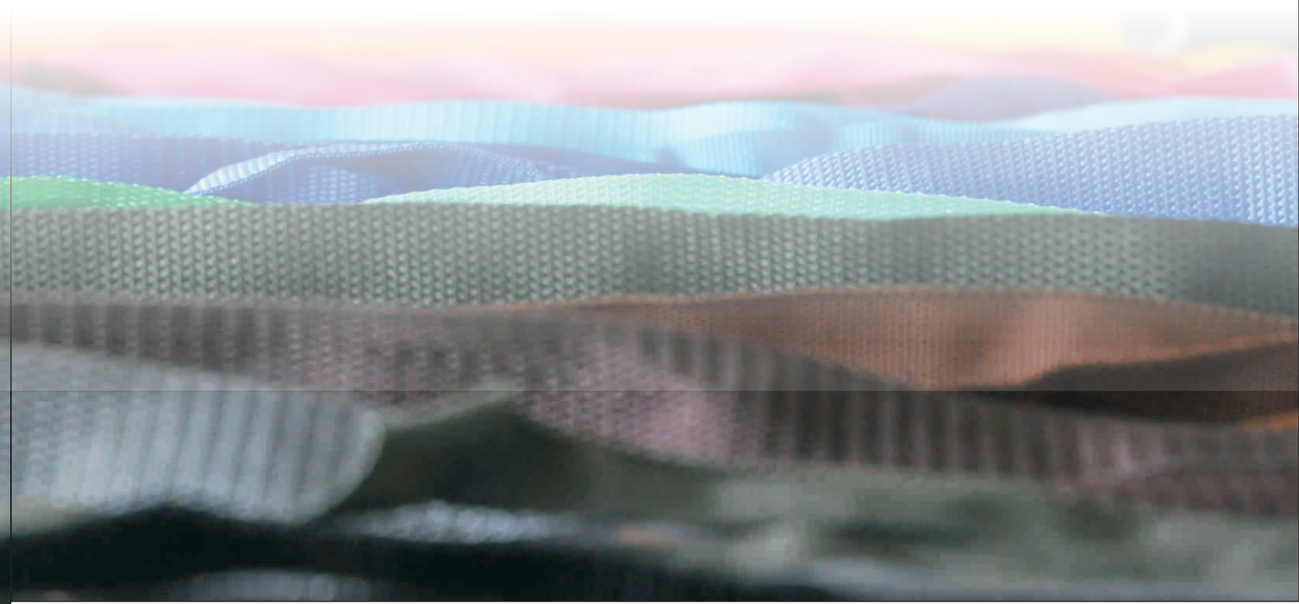
The story of emancipation and metamorphosis flourishes with his exhibition, First, a black cage as an installation piece welcomes the viewer. This cage houses a number of found items such as school bags, children's school sandals and shoes, strips different colours hanging from the roof of the cage, articles of female clothing to symbolise feminism. This exposes a metaphorical trap of cognitive freedom, infringed civil rights, political dis enfranchisement, girl child endangerment, denial of girl child education and so many possible innuendos.

From this heavy-laden cage full of found objects and oddities, fossilised footprints pasted on the floor from the cage lead the viewer to the artworks hung in display on the walls, which now represents the emancipated women and children once bound by grief and burden of slavery.

In this exhibition, Nyemike takes on the narrative of emancipation with a rather contemporary approach, lending new techniques to his already famous gritty patches on canvas. in this body of work, more than previously seen Nyemike Onwuka exhibits traits synonymous with the Auchi Colorist school. His decorative sensibility and his penchant for beauty in the form of grunge fine art is masterful here.
The Exhibition comes off as a new statement, a paradigm shift in the dictates of gender equality dialogues, Nyemike has spoken; I hope we listen.

Godson Ukaegbu
30/10/2016







'We Speak'
36 x 24 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'We See'
36 x 24 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'We Hear'
36 x 24 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'We Conqour'
36 x 24 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



‘We Speak, We See, We Hear, We Conqour’

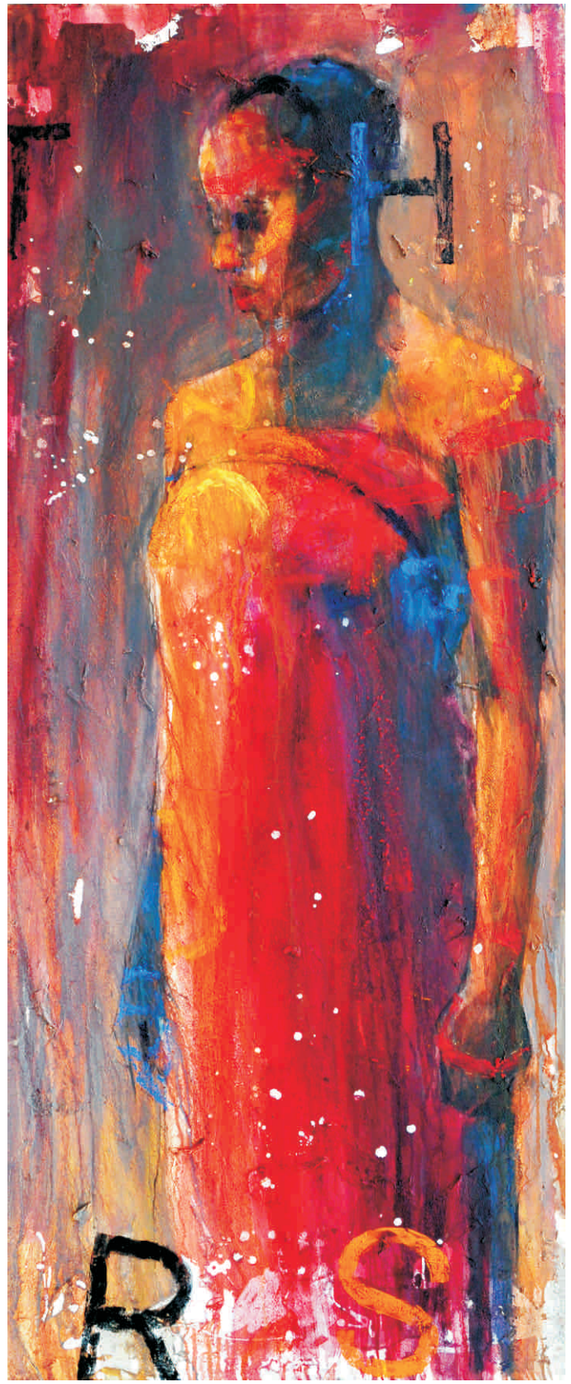




'Oath Keepers I'
72 x 30 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Oath Keepers II'
72 x 30 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Oath Keepers III'
72 x 30 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Oath Keepers'
72 x 30 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Watchful Eyes'
72 x 48 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Call to Mind'
54.2 x 54 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Ponder'
36 x 36 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2015



'Wonder'
36 x 36 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2015



‘Ponder, Wonder’





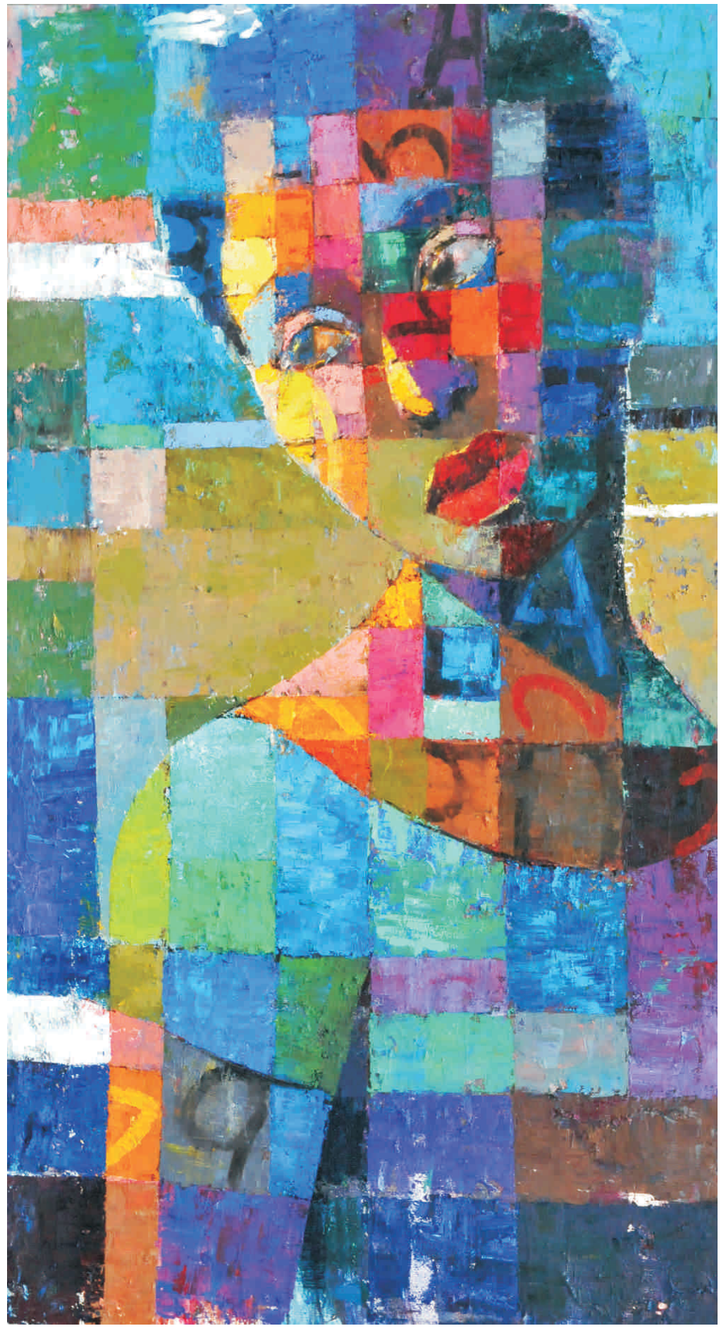
'Made To Play'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas*, 2016



'State of Oblivion'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas*, 2016



'Cold Feet'
72 x 29.8 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Hidden Brands (Kept Within)'
66 x 26 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Now You See Me'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas,* 2016



'Hidden Brands (Light at the Exit)'
60 x 60 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



'Marked But Free'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas*, 2016



'Awakening'
60 x 36 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Henceforth I Return'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas,* 2016



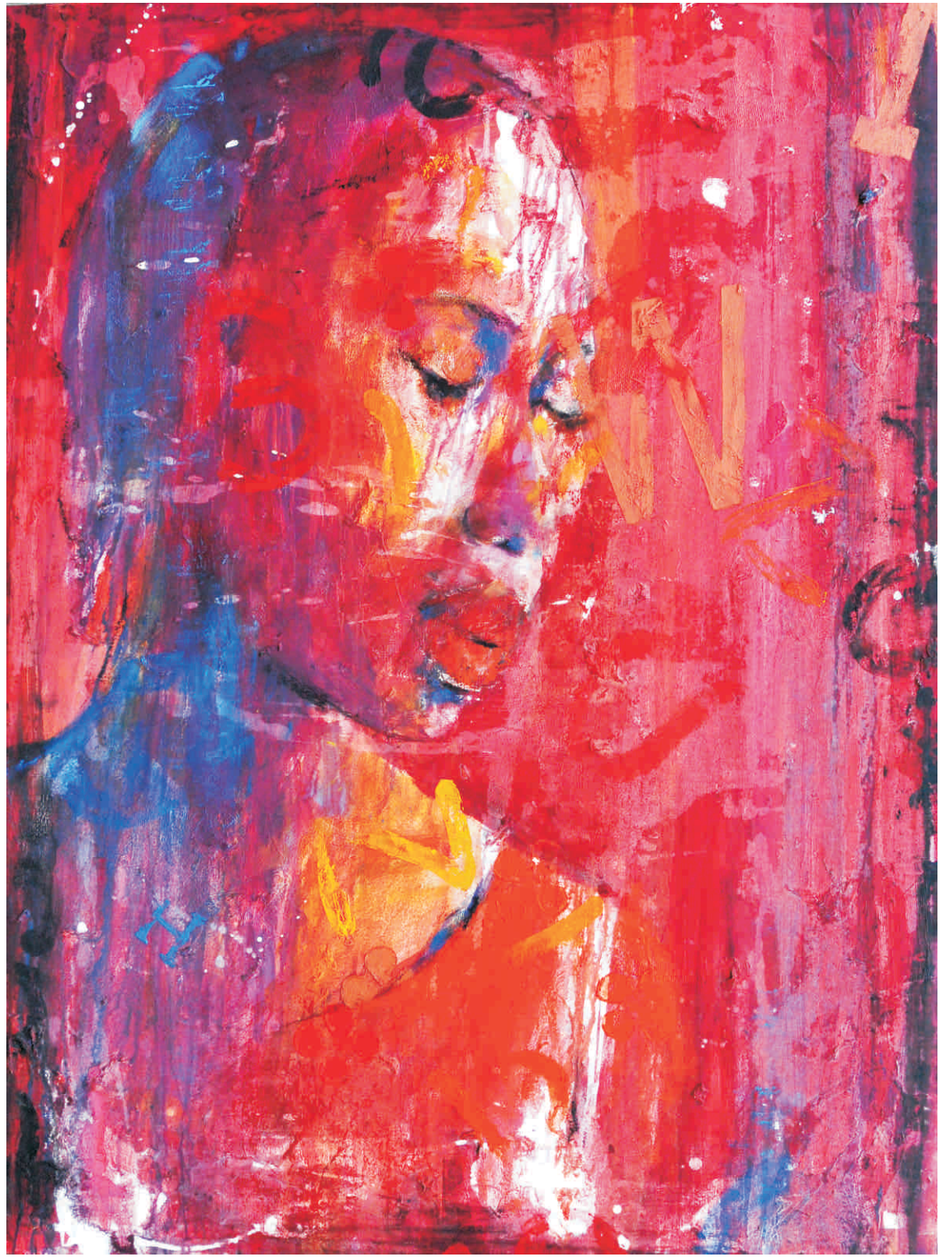
'Hidden Brands (Unbroken)'
60 x 60 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas,* 2016



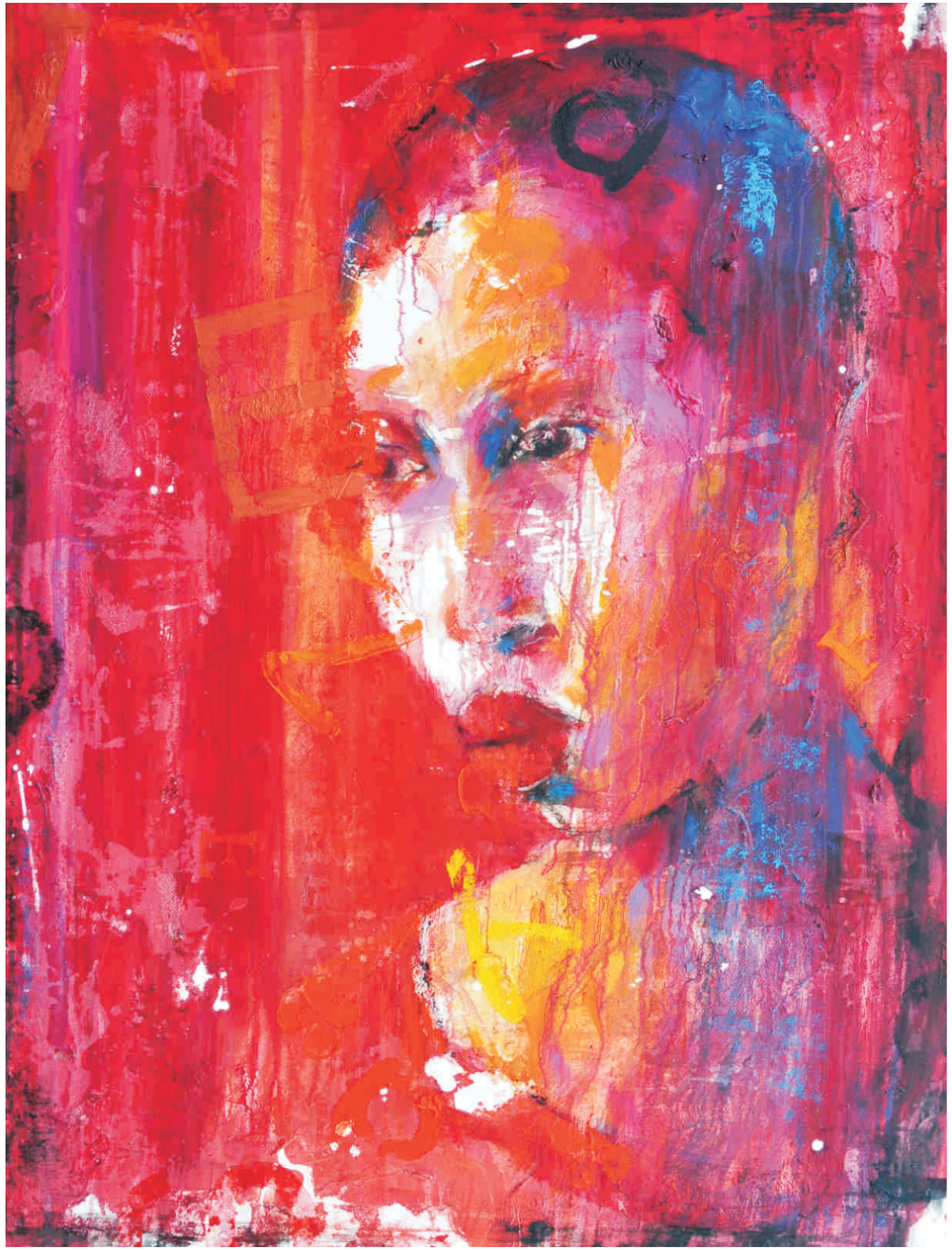
'Re-Integration'
36 x 24 Inches, *Oil Pencil, Lip Liner, Oil Bar on Textured Canvas*, 2016



'Hidden Brands (Blurred Fantasies)'
60 x 60 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Wine Vane I'
48 x 36 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Wine Vane II'
48 x 36 Inches, *Latex, Oil, Oil Bar, Stencil on Canvas*, 2016



'Wine Vane'



NYEMIKE ONWUKA

B. 1972, Lagos, Nigeria.

Nyemike who lives and work in Lagos, Nigeria had his OND and HND in the Federal Polytechnic Auchi, where he majored in Painting. He graduated in 2002, after which went to South Africa in 2007 and studied Character Animation in the Witwatersrand University Johannesburg.

He explores the dynamism of eye pencils, liquid latex and oil bars in creating works with extraordinary aesthetic components and depth. In his new body of work, Nyemike has introduced the use of stencil in depicting patterns, words and symbols to tackle the social decadency affecting women and children around the world today.

Nyemike's works have featured in Bonhams Africa Now auction from 2010 till date. His works are also featured regularly in the following auction houses: Art House Contemporary, Sogal and TKMG. Recently, his works featured in Conan auction, Lyon, France. He has participated in several group and solo exhibitions and his works are in private and public collections in Nigeria, and across Europe, America, Asia and the Middle East.

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