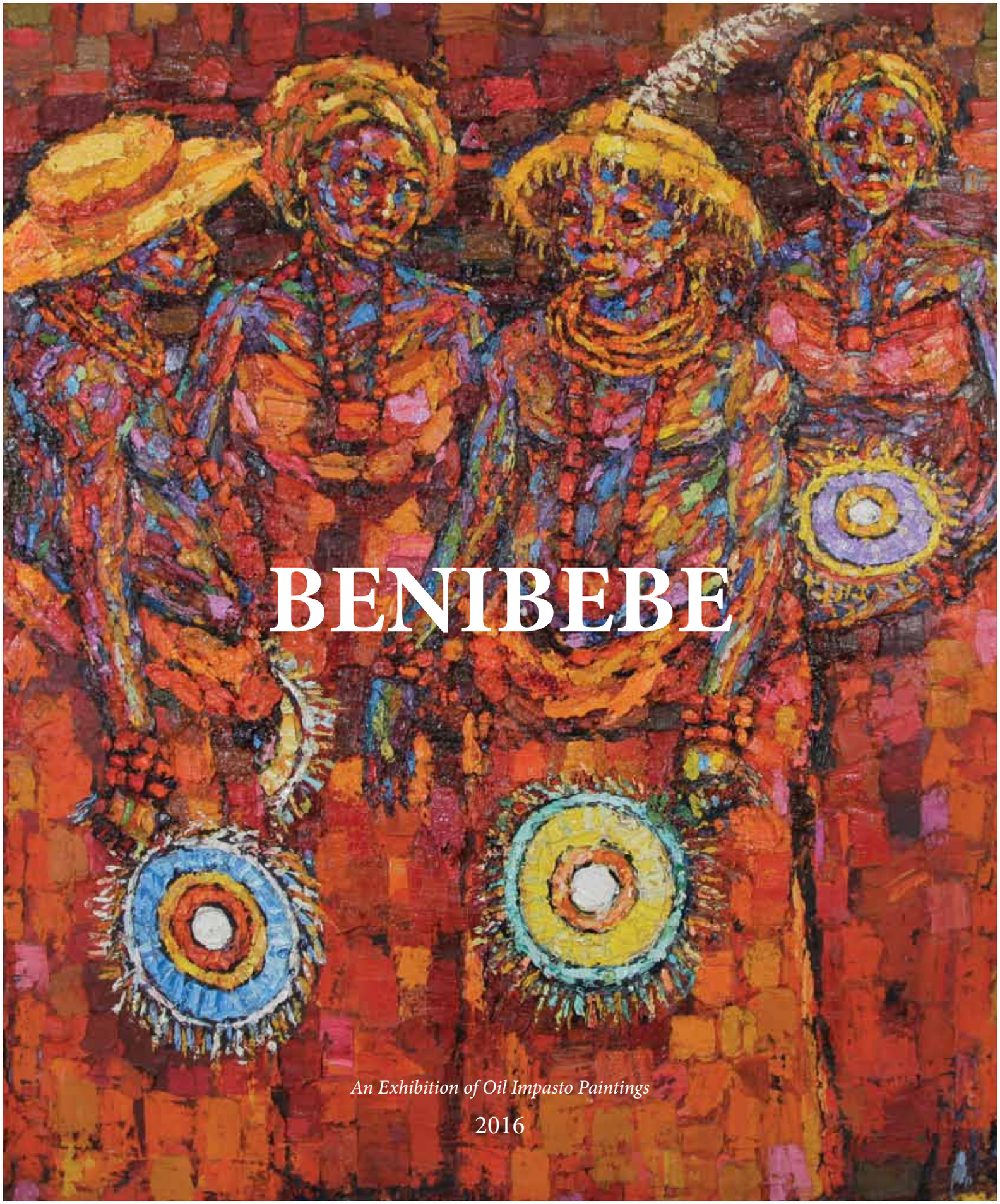


BENIBEBE

An Exhibition of Oil Impasto Paintings

2016

Signature - beyond

Presents

An Exhibition of Oil Impasto Paintings

by

BEN IBEBE

.....

OPENING
Saturday 7th May, 2016
5pm - 8pm

VIEWING
Sat 7th May - Sat 14th May
10.00am - 6pm





ARTIST

My artistic evolution has taken me far and wide; I have partaken in several group shows and solos here in Africa, UK, Asia and North America. Along the way many individuals made this journey enjoyable and my career so fulfilling; I managed to get a few individuals to lend their voices here by describing their encounter with ‘Benibebe’.

This is my first Show in Lagos. The paintings showcased are inspired by the effect of religious, cultural, socio-political and economic factors on life.

I paint with palette knife in an impasto manner. The creative process behind my work and my personal experience is spontaneous and so varied that I find it difficult and restrictive to label my work under a working title. As a result I have coined the phrase ‘Benibebe new works’ for all my shows.

Happy viewing.

Ben Ibebe



PRESENT STATUS
Full time studio Artist, Kaduna, Nigeria
No. 15b Challawa crescent, off, Danbo Int. Sch. kaduna south

ARTIST'S STATEMENT
Am inspired by the impact of social-political, economic,religion on life and living in my 'envinronment'.The generated ideas, spectacles from the daily quest to surmount these challenges form the basis of my art.

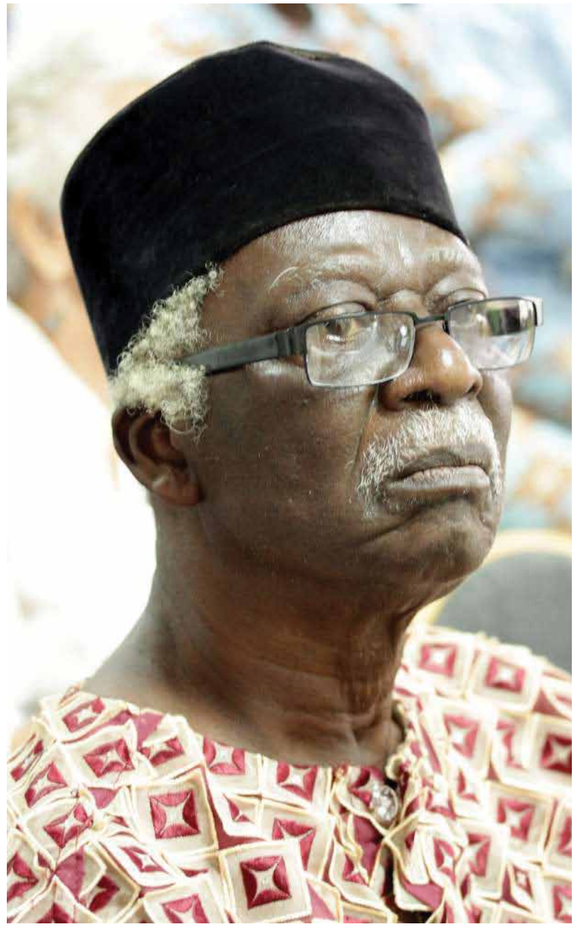
LOCATION
Kaduna, Nigeria

EDUCATION:
1978 L.A. primary school Ughelli, Delta State
1986 First School Leavng Certificate, Ogbavweni Grammar School, Usiefron Delta State
1994 B.A. Visual Arts, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State
1995 National Youth Service Corp in studio International Artist, Mr Tayo Quaye

EXHIBITIONS
1994 Group Graduating Final Exhibition
1999 Mindscapes: a 4-man group exhibition, Alliance Francaise Kaduna
2001 Offering from the knife I/II. Solo exhibition Zaki Club. Sponsored by Mr & Mrs Wintenberger, PAN Nig. Ltd.
2001 New note new strokes: Solo exhibition Uniport 18th Convocation
2002 My collection: Solo exhibition NAF Club to mark Easter Celebration
2003 Evolution Alliance Francaise, Kaduna.
2004 April: From the palette knife", Shell Trustees' Estate, Abuja, sponsored by Vincent Del Buono & Jennifer Pothier
2004 October: 52 women, Shell Trustees Estate, Abuja, sponsored by Vincent Del Buono & Jennifer Pothier
2005 Organised confusion 10-man group exhibition Alliance Francaise Kaduna
2006 September, "Freedom", Shell Trustees Estate, Abuja, sponsored by Vincent Del Buono & Jennifer Pothier
2007 Group Show Crocodile CLUB kaduna
2008 2nd Group Show Crocodile Club
2009 Represented Nigeria at the international leadership forum USA to promote Tolerance in a multi- racial society using the ARTS
2009 Group Show Columbus Art centre Toronto sponsored by the Univ. of Toronto Health centre and the Nigerian Embassy in Canada
2010 1st Solo Pump House Show Niagara on the Lake, Canada
2011 Solo Exhibition of my NEW WORKS to mark Italian National Day at the Italian Ambassador's residence, sponsored by the Italian Embassy, Nigeria
2012 Solo Exhibition at the Ashanti Gallery Abuja, hosted by Christine Gerlach
2012 2nd Solo Pump House Show, Niagara on the Lake, Canada Sept.23rd to nov. 25th
2013 Solo exhibition, 'one out of many; life in growing Africa', Gallery 99 Mount street London. Mar. 12th-16th
2013 Group exhibition Kenya Independence Day Celebration. Nairobi Oct 12th
2015 Group Aabrau Arts Transcending Boundaries london UK. March 17th
2015 Solo Abidjan Public Library sponsored by the Nigerian Embassy Cote di Ivoire May 10th
2015 Solo Soul of Africa Gallery Yeunhui- dong Korea May 30th
2015 Solo Kalahari Gallery Brooklyn Newyork Oct. 16th
2015 Solo Davis-Linden Building Dayton Ohio Nov. 21st
2015 Short Residency University of Dayton Ohio Nov. 13th

COLLECTIONS
Paintings and commissioned portraits (eg. Chief Justice of Nigeria, the Governor General of Canada) both with public institutions and private individuals in Nigeria, South Korea, France, Holland, Austria, Germany, USA, Canada, South Africa and England

PROFESSIONAL BODY
- Member Professional Artist Guild, Nigeria



It gives me joy whenever I am honoured with the opportunity to make a few remarks about the artistic progress of interns who gained some inspiration during their interaction with me. Ben Ibebe while a student at the University of Port Harcourt in 1990, did part of his industrial training (IT) in my outfit, the Ovuomaroro Studio and Gallery in Lagos. Watching him grow over the years as an artist has given me tremendous delight because at that time he already showed promises of being a serious artist.

After graduating from the Art School, he went north to Kaduna where he worked assiduously against many odds to gain self-confidence and win both local and foreign clienteles. As Ben embarks on another solo show at the Signature Gallery South West Ikoyi beginning April 9th 2016, I am glad to introduce him as a Nigeria artist to watch. His art residencies in universities and exhibitions in Canada and the United State of America, coupled with big demand for his works via the internet have seemingly secured him a place in the international art arena. However, for continuous growth towards being a permanent, national and global icon, he must stick with the lessons he already learnt; experimentation, resilience, relevance and integrity. Besides, he should learn from the Russian artist Sergei Konenkov:

"The most difficult thing in art is the ability to be a contemporary and not temporary."

For accelerated growth, Ben like other artists in Nigeria need huge investments to enable the beauty and gains of art touch everyone. Here the government and committed individuals have roles to play in enactment of policies, development of infrastructures and patronage. Our industries should now and again commission artists to produce new designs for our consumption rather than reliance on imported ones. Also the universities and higher institution should create residency programmes for our artists. Right now they are underutilized.

It is my prayer that Ben Ibebe will continue to experiment and grow in his art and act and that this April outing will be a great success.

Bruce Onobrakpeya
Papa Ajao
March 2016



AMBASSADOR

EMBASSY OF NIGERIA
35, Bd de la République
01 BP 1906 Abidjan 01
Côte d'Ivoire

15 Feb. 2016

BEN IBEBE, FINE ARTIST

I first met Mr. Ben Ibebe in 2009 when he came to Toronto to exhibit his artworks. I was then Deputy to High Commissioner Prof. Iyorwuese Hagher. Ben was introduced to us by late Vincent Del Buono of blessed memory, a Canadian who had consulted for DFID in Abuja. Vincent and Jennifer's house in St Catherines, on the shores of Lake Ontario was a museum of Ibebe's works. In the dining room alone, when we sat down to dinner I counted eight! In the hallway, in the sitting room, basement, bedrooms, everywhere, a Ben Ibebe painting beamed at you !

The story is told of how Del Buouo had gone to Ibebe's studio in Kaduna and had bitten more than he could chew. He had fallen in love with Ben's works and chose a lot to buy. He found himself short of funds. Undaunted, he bartered his SUV for them. So is Ben's art likeable to the Kingdom of God for which a man sells all he has to acquire?

Ben's art is an extension of God's creation. Ben captures creation that is in a state of constant motion. His eyes glimpse them and record them for posterity. The marketplace, the itinerant tailor, drummer boys, orange seller, corn seller. Ben sees and documents all these states in a burst of multiple colours. His art is a delight. It is the art of one who has studied humans, and understands physiology, law of motion and of course human anatomy.

In 2011, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs moved to Tafawa Balewa House, its permanent Headquarters, the then Permanent Secretary, Amb. Dr. Martin Uhomoibhi, chose Ben's works to adorn the walls and offices of the Ministry's principal officers. Many visitors have continued to admire the works which in themselves add colour to the Foreign Office.

I have also used Ben's artworks on the cover of my novels: Merchants of Flesh, and African Romance. This is integrated art. Artists are all alike in my view. It is the media that differ. We do not work in a void or vacuum. Writers chronicle societal happenings and artists record them pictorially. It is easy to understand that collaboration between novelists and artists is really complementarity.

Thanks, Ben, for matching passion to portfolio. We are lucky that you live your God-given passion; that you are not a square peg in a round hole but one who earns his living from his vocation, his passion, his hobby, his gift. It is a happy coincidence which has enriched humanity.

I thank you for making out the time to come to Abidjan and exhibit in 2015. That project was part of my Mission's efforts to integrate the arts in the ECOWAS subregion. We integrate our economies and markets. We should also share our ideas and talents in the arts as well. Thanks, Ben.

Long may you live! And may your tribe increase!

Mrs. Ifeoma Akabogu-Chinwuba, mni
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to
The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire,
Abidjan.

Courriel : ichinwuba@hotmail.com • **Tél** : (+225) 44 04 17 17 • **Fax** : (+225) 20 21 30 83

OF CELEBRATORY FRAMES AND BEN IBEBE'S ALLEGORICAL EXPLOITS



In this exhibition encounter Ben Ibebe in some of his rousing compositions regarding their subject matter/theme, mode of execution and a unique spatial configuration that sets his style apart. His many years of practice since he engaged professional art practice has elicited many public shows. This exhibition furthers Ibebe's passion for continuing to midwife different cultural identities that inebriate.

Ben Ibebe is a 1994 graduate of Painting from the Department of Creative Arts, Visual Arts programme now Department of Fine Art and Design, University of Port Harcourt. Since his graduation, he has worked as a professional studio artist. Fate had it that he did his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) assignment in Kaduna and found an abode there. A depth of commitment to the practice of art accounts for in the sheer prodigy that now defines him as an artist. Sojourning in Northern Nigeria, he stands counted among talented cultural producers that provide alternative visual narratives that complement the story of contemporary Nigerian art. His exhibitions have taken place mainly in Northern Nigeria and overseas. He has indeed remained a toast of great collectors outside Lagos, at least providing an alternative to non-Lagos art aficionados.

In this exhibition, Ibebe unpacks his recent work focused the merry and congratulatory dimensions of life. The cultural contexts they address cut across Nigeria's geopolitical space. The works celebrate festivities of diverse categorisations. This focus can be deciphered not only in the themes they witness to but also in the agitated resonations that bound the figures and the grounds that project them. Agitated; in the sense of graceful figures sinuous lines and embedded figures and shapes bathed in hues that underlie their overt expressions.

Asoebi Celebrant Friends quickly stands for a trend in style analysis as well as skilful colour employment in figural and space definition. This composition consists of five young ladies of even height. They are all set on the near plane. Symbolic of the Asoebi culture is the similarity in their appearances. An exciting design strategy in the composition is the variation unique to each figure regarding posture. While some of the numbers are frontal orientation while others, take the asymmetric profile position. The composition of many of Ben Ibebe's work present patterned appearance. The women are adorned with wrappers segmented vertically like straits. The blouse and anatomical features are in long fractal relationships to the ground and against curvilinear head ties. Ben Ibebe varies this approach which combines thick impasto technique that accords his compositions their uniqueness. His impasto approach invariably bequeaths to his coloured ground that consistent but hasty dubs of the postimpressionist painter. This technique gives his colours and their laboured fractal segmentations unique visual energies.

In spite of the particular variation in Ben Ibebe's work the above visual charm alluded to his work constitutes his style. The optical power they foster remains intense. Hence, apart from the dominance of celebratory contexts core this exhibition other ancillary themes, as minor equally come to be seen in the guise of celebration. On the Militant Trail, Urban Drift, Urban drift and Almajiri have become transformed to evoke celebration. Themes core to the celebration is Durber Gate, Jumat, Back from Islamiya, Bliss, Happy People and Rhythm.

The imprint that characterises Ben Ibebe's work here recalls early influences in his quest towards professional practice. Bruce Onobrakpeya and Tayo Quae, (who happens to belong to Onobrakpeya's mentorship lineage) in various ways have contributed to Ben Ibebe's artistic persona. I ascribe the noticed visual cramming in Ben Ibebe's work to what the two artists are known. Visual congestion often encourages the viewer to engage fecund evaluation. The value of an honest evaluation for an artist's audience results in a feast whereby the context that frames a theme is open to beyond-attraction of surface effects. In other words, Ben Ibebe remains an engaging painter. The objective of the artist as a hermeneutist remains the value of his address to his audience. Engaging Ben Ibebe in this exhibition is a call to beauty that endures. For he presents to us a perception of who and what we are in the various themes he has presented as visual stories.

Frank A O Ugiomoh,
B.A (sculpture) Ph. D (Philosophy) FSNA; FPACA, Professor of History of Art and Theory, Prince Yemisi Shyllon Professor of Fine Art and Design and Director, Jonathan Adagogo Green School of Photography, University of Port Harcourt
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
February 2016

A PANORAMIC VIEW - SOLO EXHIBITION BY BEN IBEBE



Ben Ibebe is that rare breed of artist: Prolific, consistent and enormously talented.

Ibebe has over the decades created an impressive body of work. There is an effortless conflation of his role as chronicler with his artistry which is the result of of years of mastery, honing his craft. He was fortunate to find his path early: a path through which he expresses indelible truths and skill. He has kept both his practice and inspiration integrated through genuine self belief. Ben has an inimitable style which has helped him to carve out an indisputable niche for himself while simultaneously creating a style which is immediately recognisable as 'Ibebe'.

Ben is based in Kaduna, a City with a complicated past and ongoing tensions. It is Northern therefore historically Muslim, Hausa/Fulani but also has a sizeable Christian population, Southerners of Igbo and Yoruba origins. The city is thus a cauldron of many cultures reflecting in micro the diversity of bigger Southern cities, somewhat missing in other Northern metropolises.
It is close enough to Abuja, the official capital of Nigeria for interested patrons, mostly ex-patriates, to seek Ibebe out but far enough from the artistic movements of The Capital, to allow Ben an enviable independence and separate identity.

It is important to understand this background in order to put into some perspective the vast breadth of this exhibition. Thematically it is diverse, multifaceted, with myriad concerns, a reflection of the society in which Ibebe lives. It is almost retrospective in nature, capturing a variety of subjects and styles that Ben has become known for. He clearly sees himself as a sociologist. He attempts to be aloof, an observer, yet the tensions evident in his work reveal his true position; that this society is inequitable and full of inherent contradictions.

Ben works portray overall visual effects instead of details. They are impressions of scenes, created to provoke debate on the human condition. His canvas is phenomenon of colour; but it is disciplined, marshalled and corralled! Carefully blended shades of colours become blocks of distinct colour which in turn create an extraordinary spectrum. Seemingly effortlessly Ben creates shimmering palates, evokes a sunrise, a sunset or micmic the joy of life, the despondence of the humdrum with these studied strokes left deliberately visible. Even shadows are made up of blocks of colour. He layers paint, building until he accomplishes depth and movement. His, is not the work that attempts to blend in nor copy nature.

Ben's subjects are stylised but articulate depictions of the human condition. He captures life as it is for them. Each major ethnic group evident in Kaduna, is clearly delineated. He celebrates and recognises that diversity, going to the heart of the matter and drawing our senses in. Ben's treatment of social malaise, greed and corruption which are endemic and commonplace in Nigeria is done with enviable ease. In the Mai Mai series and Busted Pipes we see people compelled to fetch possibly to bathe, to eat, to drink a commentary on a recurring nightmare for many Nigerians because of a lack of investment in basic infrastructure. In another, people queue with jerry cans for petrol. In an oil producing country! There is restrained outrage in his brush strokes as he applies layers of short strokes onto the canvas. In his cityscapes the areas are overcrowded as people jostle between modernity and old ways, and where towns little more than shanties with waterways weaving haphazardly through them.

Nigerian artists have a predilection for painting women: Ben paints both men and women in equal measure. That itself is interesting but in this exhibition I am would like to explore Ibebe's treatment of women.

Nigerians are obsessed with Dress and Dress acts as a clear indicator of financial and cultural identity. Ibebe in his turn, is intrigued by surrendered individuality, clearly fascinated by the cultural phenomenon of Uniform Dressing called, 'Otu Diefe' in Igbo, 'Aso-Ebi' in Yoruba, and 'Anko in Hausa. This is done for myriad celebrations including weddings, funerals, naming-ceremonies Chieftaincy celebrations etc. Although in many of the paintings on show in this exhibition the women are painted on their own, they are are clearly formally dressed on their way out. I would posit that their dress is part of a 'uniform'. The use of Yoruba, Aso-Eko' locally woven cloth, has also become ubiquitous and can be seen on the different women. Interestingly there is a generic nature to the models. Women wittingly relinquish their individuality in order to be part of a stronger identifiable group whether it is by social, economic standing or most evidently culturally. In extreme, but far from rare cases, women have been known to get in serious debt in order to keep up with the pressures of Uniform Dressing.

As if that is not enough, Ben's helps them further renders them emblematic. The women are symbolic, rather than individual eroding any sense of portraiture in his work except perhaps that his women may be modelled on a particular person; this is not a negative but a reaffirmation of the need to belong. Ben's women are uniformly strong big breasted Amazons, with extended arms and almost identical, stoical, expressions at odds with their physicality. Often they are depicted as taller or at the very least, the same height as men. Even when he paints women, bare breasted like in 'RItes', this is no sexual objectification; instead he is addressing some of the difficult and perhaps distressing rituals women are made to go through especially if they are newly widowed. His women, when they are not dressed to the nines, are just as capable as men. They haul water, lifting load with equal strength. On the whole his women are strong: the exception lies when he paints women in hijab who appear to be more diminutive and closer to physical stereotypes of repressed womanhood.

This exhibition is eclectic. The cohesion lies in giving us a glimpse into the artist and thus is a fitting introduction for the Lagos art scene to the works of Ben Ibebe. It is also a timely reminder to collectors that Nigerian art is more than just Lagos-centred.

Tosin Onile-Ere-Rotimi
Curator & Director of Iroko Arts Consultants
February 2016

ART IS COMMUNICATION AND BEN IBEBE CLEARLY HAS MUCH TO SAY



On opening the shipping boxes, the colors caused me to catch my breath, and when I exhaled I could see that his work was not merely joyful parties on canvasses. As I spent time organizing and hanging his paintings, colorful essays revealed themselves. This work, while beautiful to see, took on deeper meaning as I visited with it.

A beautiful piece, if only appreciated for its decorative qualities, actually became dark and heavy as it revealed a tragedy of poverty. Others remind us of a cathedral's stained glass in the sun and still remained gloriously hopeful, even after we discovered it shows day-laborers hoping for work.

Here there are stories of work, discrimination, worry, poverty, joy, the spiritual, in other word humanity and community, but with a distinct expression that comes from one person's life in a diverse Nigerian city. More importantly, these are paintings by a gifted artist who applies his oils fearlessly and allows us to share his inner world.

In all of this, however, Ibebe's work retains his absolute joy of his materials. Watching him mix just the right color, he lays thick spatulas of oil paint onto the canvases, corrects a placement or a shape, and repeats until, like magic, another story revealed itself.

So much time has been wasted in an effort to find a common language that would enable everyone in the world to communicate. Art is that language that has always existed, and Ibebe's paintings are powerful examples of how a single painting can convey powerful messages that no one has trouble understanding.

Teri Schoch
400 Linden Ave.
Box 14
Dayton, OH 45403
United States
February 2016

WITH MASTERFUL CLARITY, IBEBE IS ABLE TO TRANSLATE IMAGES…



I had the privilege of observing Ben Ibebe while he painted in a studio during his visit to Dayton, Ohio (U.S.A.), in 2015. I already knew his work was magical — the dozens of paintings on display in the gallery outside the studio showed me that. In fact, seeing those paintings was the reason I came to the painting studio. I wanted to meet the artist who created such masterful pieces and watch his process when he painted.

Being a painter myself, I immediately recognized his intense, unbreakable focus as he translated a clear vision that came not only from his head, but more important, his heart and soul. Through his experienced and talented hands, I watched Ibebe use a combination of intuition and fluid, empathic dialogue to engage with his creation. During his process, he and the painting danced as one. With masterful clarity, Ibebe is able to translate images that go beyond their obviously skilled technique, strong compositions, complex (almost mosaic-like at times) subject matter, and a beautiful understanding of creating light with color. But these things are all surface elements compared to the life he breathes into each painting. It is precisely that heart and soul that makes Ibebe's work rise above many other talented artists to its stellar level.

MB Hopkins
Dayton, Ohio
United States
February 2016

BEN'S PAINTINGS ARE ALL SPARKLING AND ALIVE

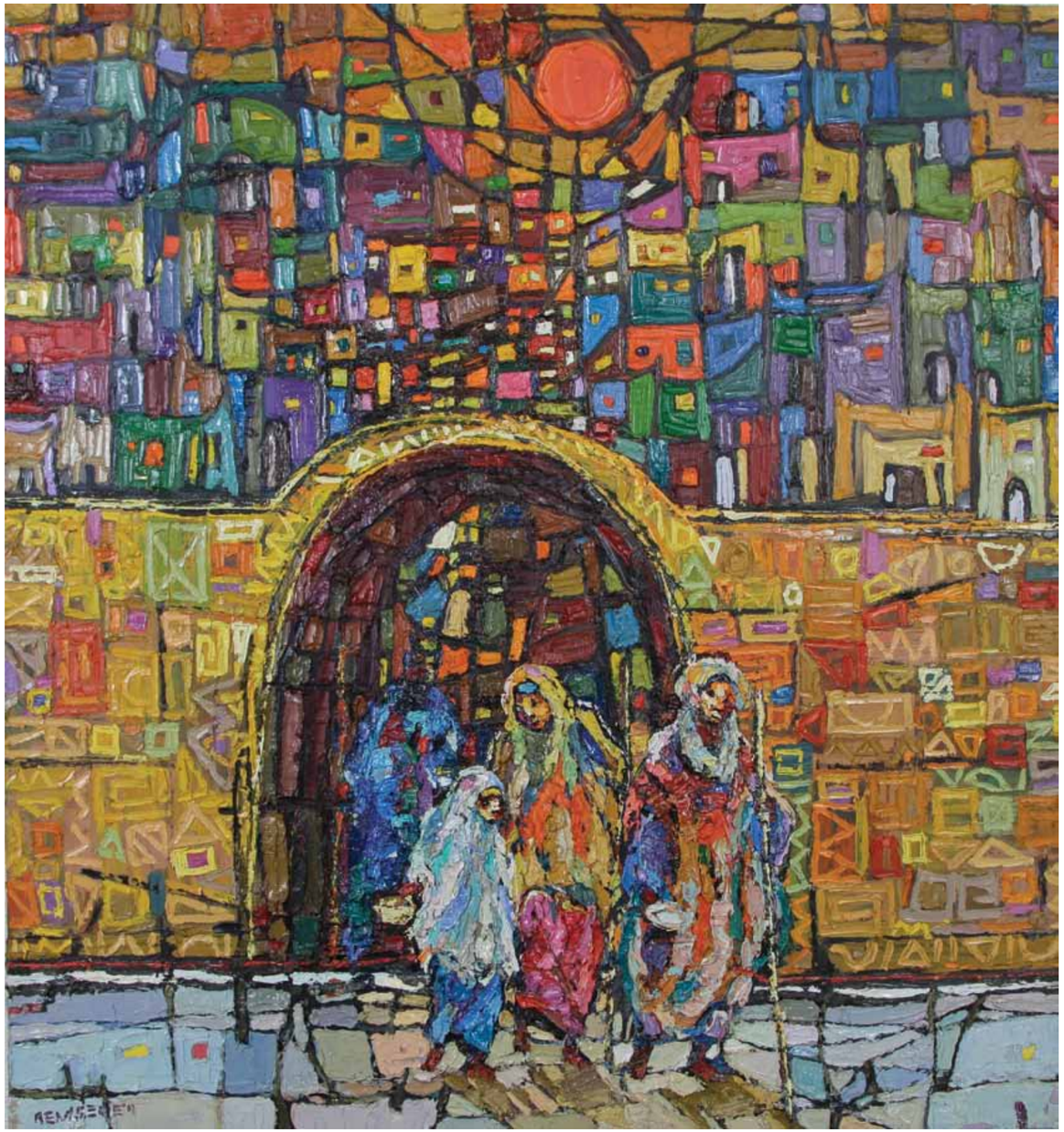


The paintings of Ben Ibebe I would recognize from thousands. The colours, the technique, the vibe, the combination of all of this is beautiful and unique for Ben.

Whether he depicts a casual street scene in the northern part of Nigeria, an abstract composition about quasi-democracy or a protest statement about oil spills in the Niger Delta, his paintings are all sparkling and alive, and reveal new aspects over and over again, even after years.

After having left Nigeria 6 year ago, I unfortunately have not had the pleasure to see recent works in person, as I know that especially when you stand with them eye in eye, they impact you fully. I am looking forward getting that experience again and encourage you to experience this for yourselves.

Wim de Boer
Guangzhou, China
February 2016



From the city wall II - W100cm x H95cm



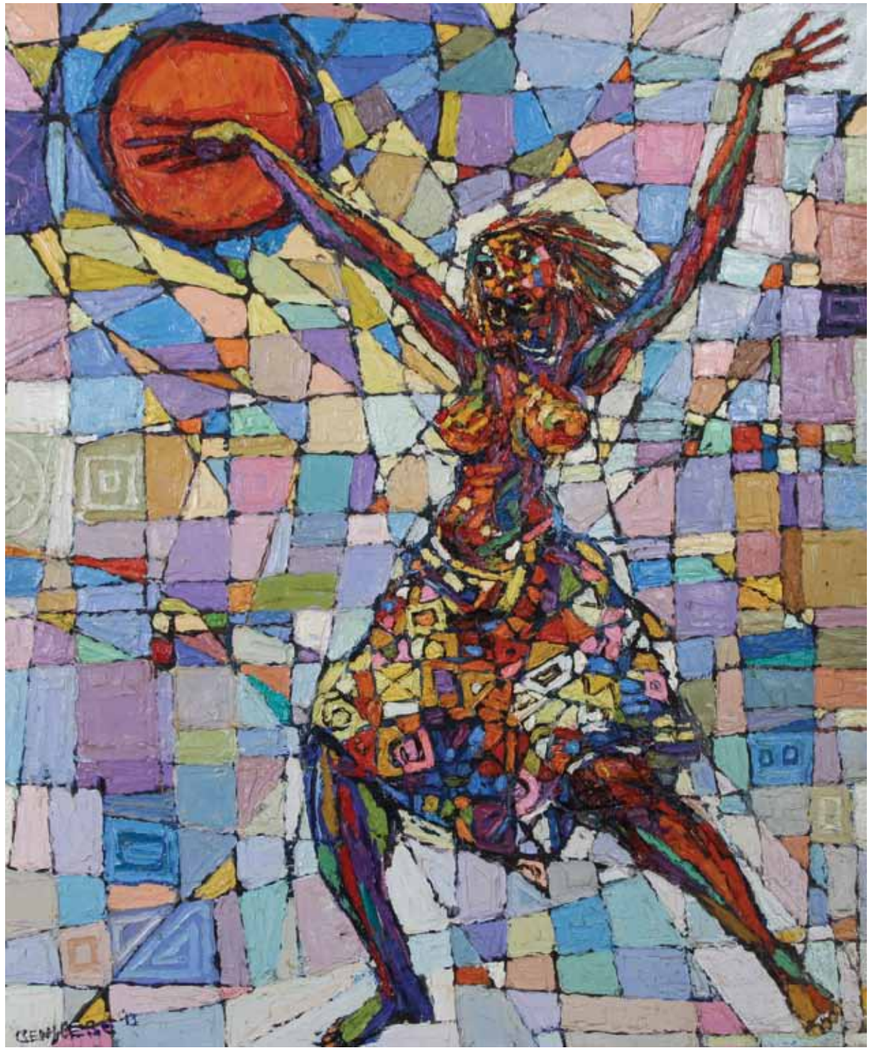
Durbar gate procession - W102cm x H92cm



Herdsmen - W122cm x H128cm



Mai Mai - W99cm x H104cm



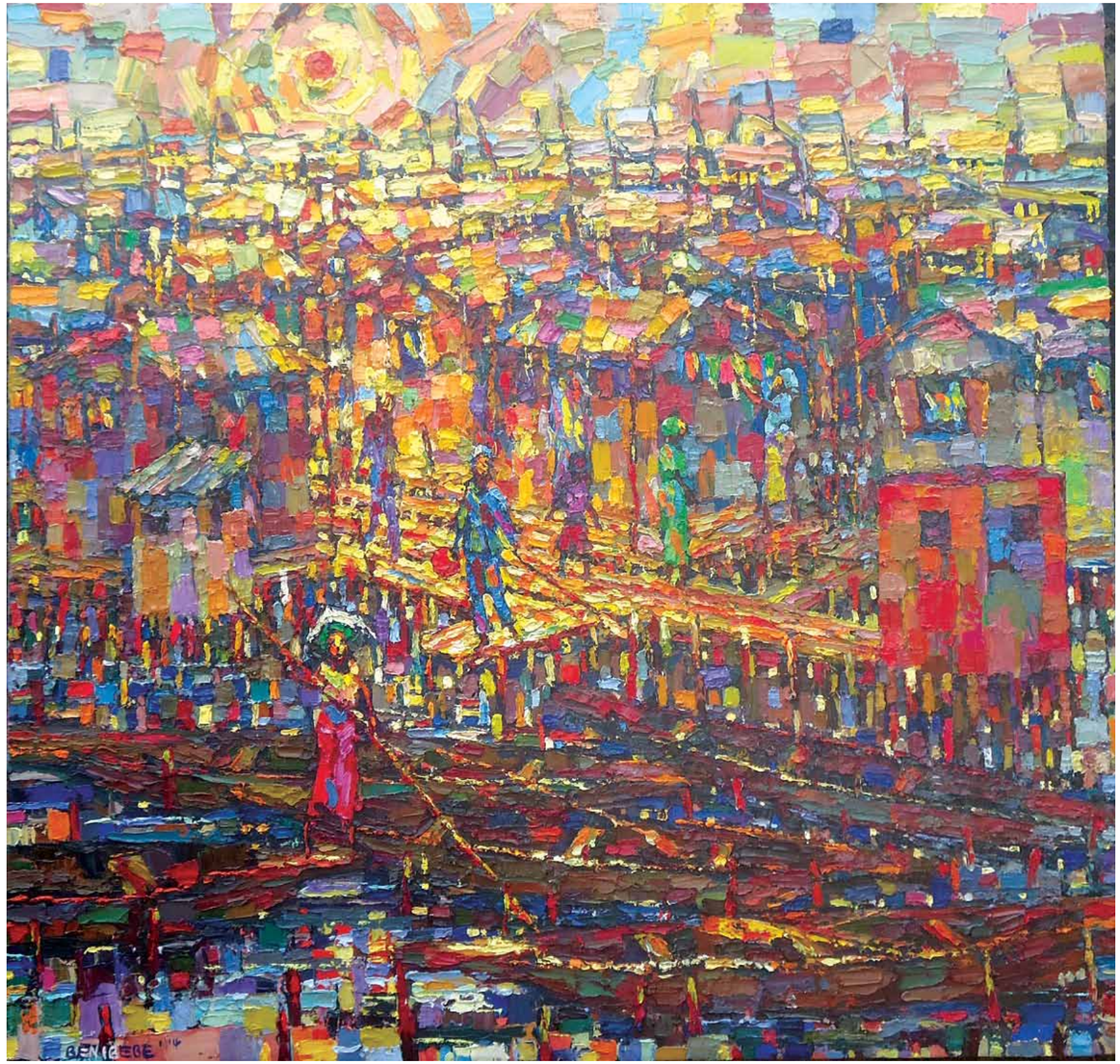
Freedom Rhythm (Female) - W91cm x H77cm



Freedom Rhythm (Male) - W91cm x H77cm



Fish Seller - W115cm x H100cm



Urban Slum - W123cm x H128cm



Aso-Ebi Singles I- W66cm x H117cm



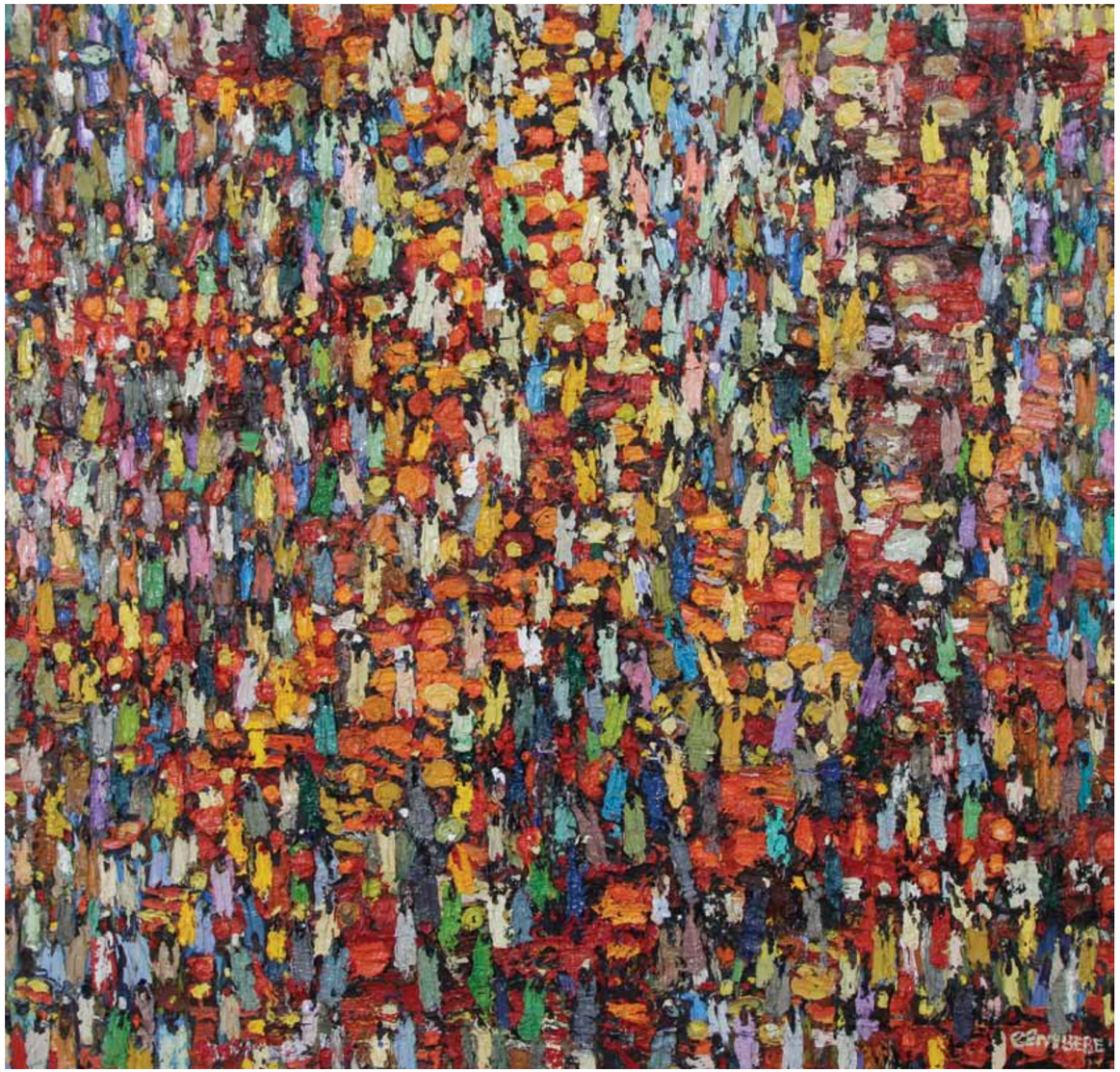
Aso-Ebi Singles II - W66cm x H117cm



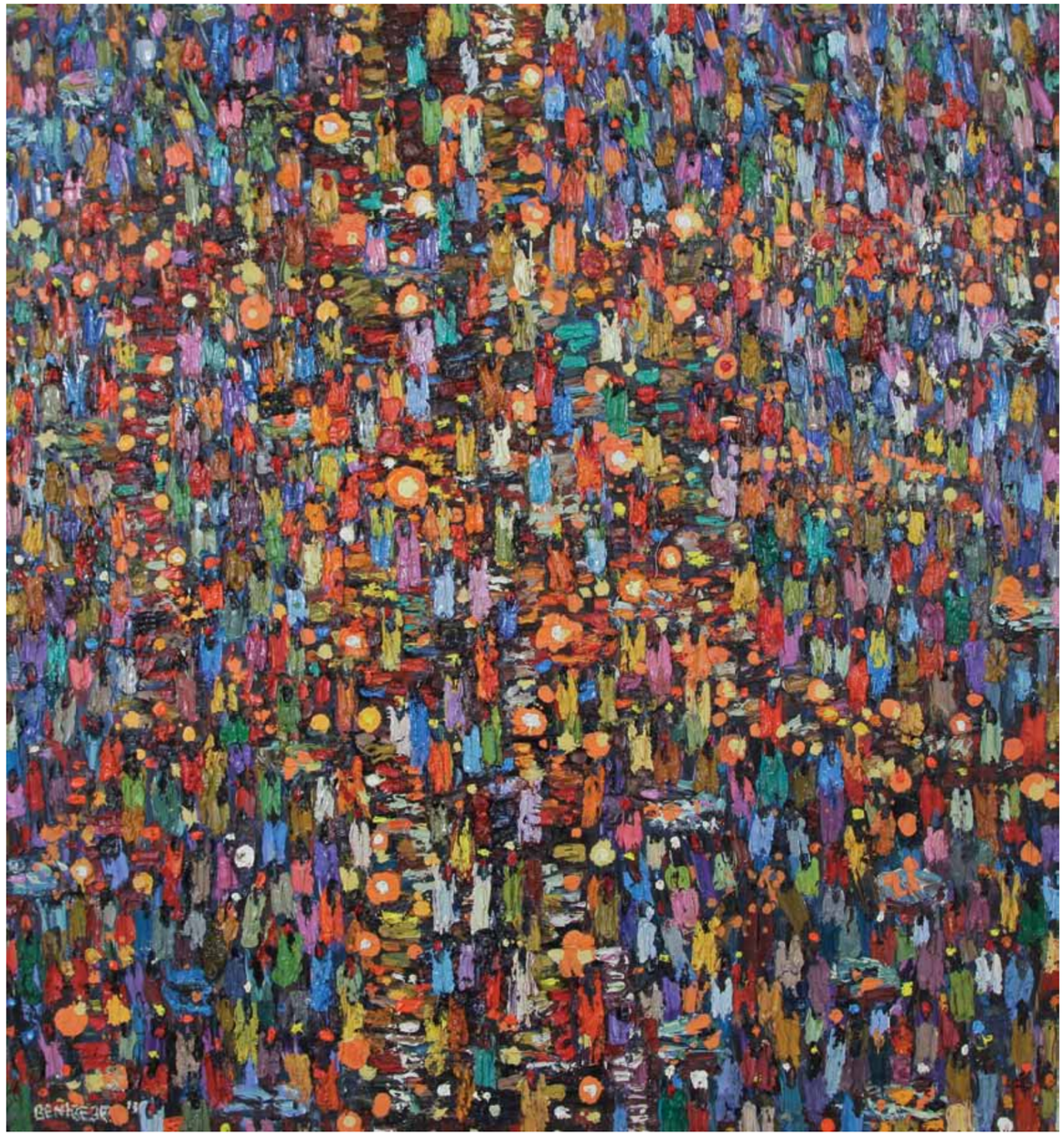
Aso-Ebi Singles III - W66cm x H117cm



Aso-Ebi Singles IV - W66cm x H117cm



Open Market (small) - W102cm x H95cm



Night Market - W95cm x H102cm



Cultural Dancers (Before the Event I) - W112cm x H107cm



Cultural Dancers (Before the Event II) - W112cm x H107cm



Mai Kose - W110cm x H102cm



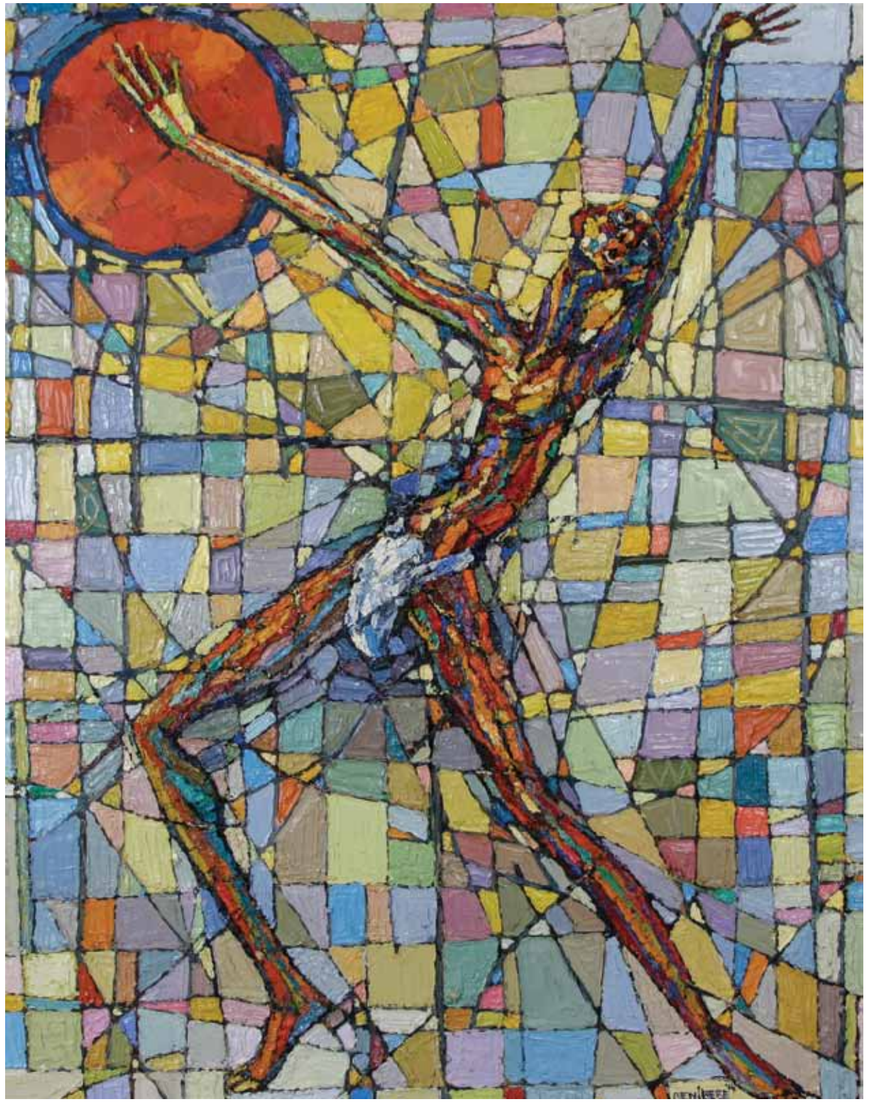
Rites - W84cm x H92cm



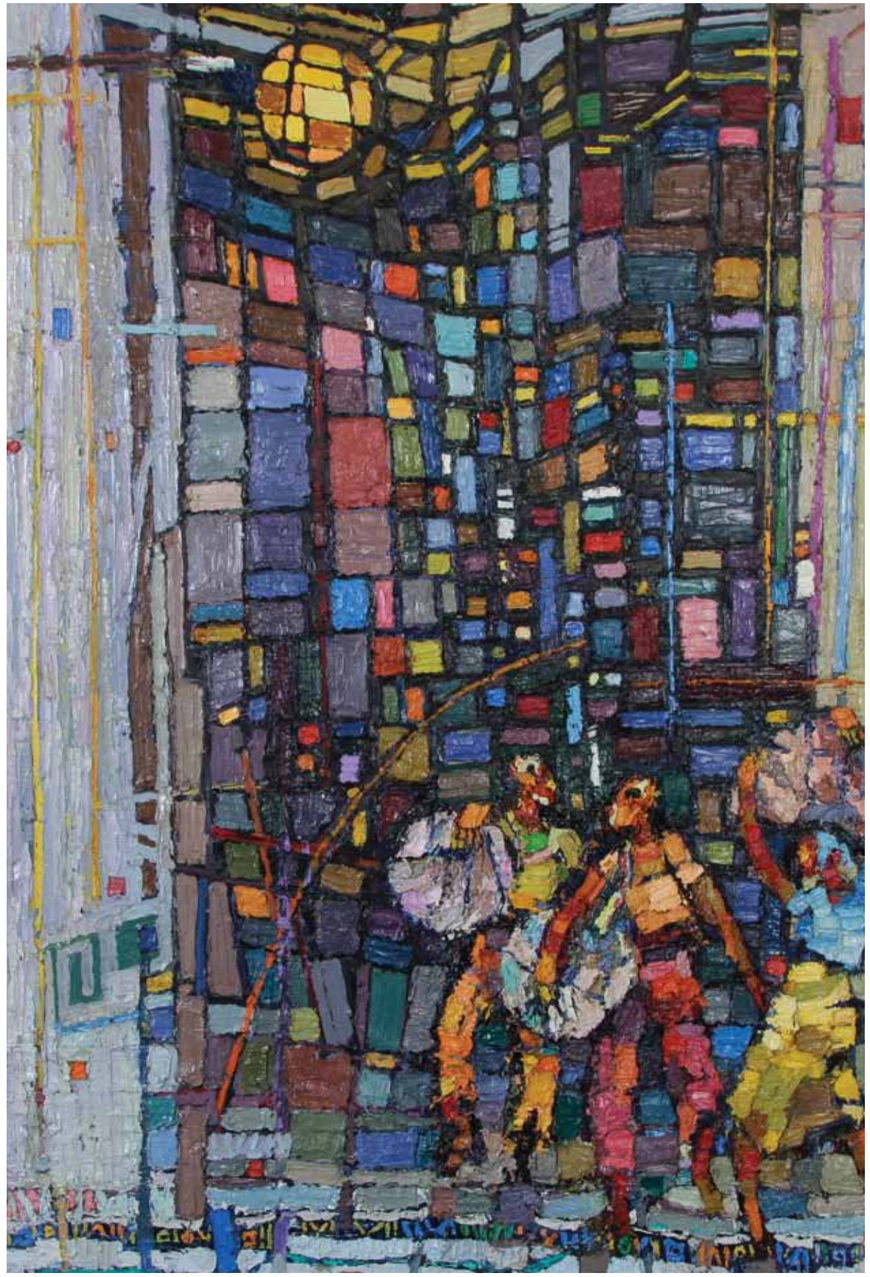
Keke Napep (Park) - W111cm x H91cm



Market (Second Hand) - W107cm x H105cm



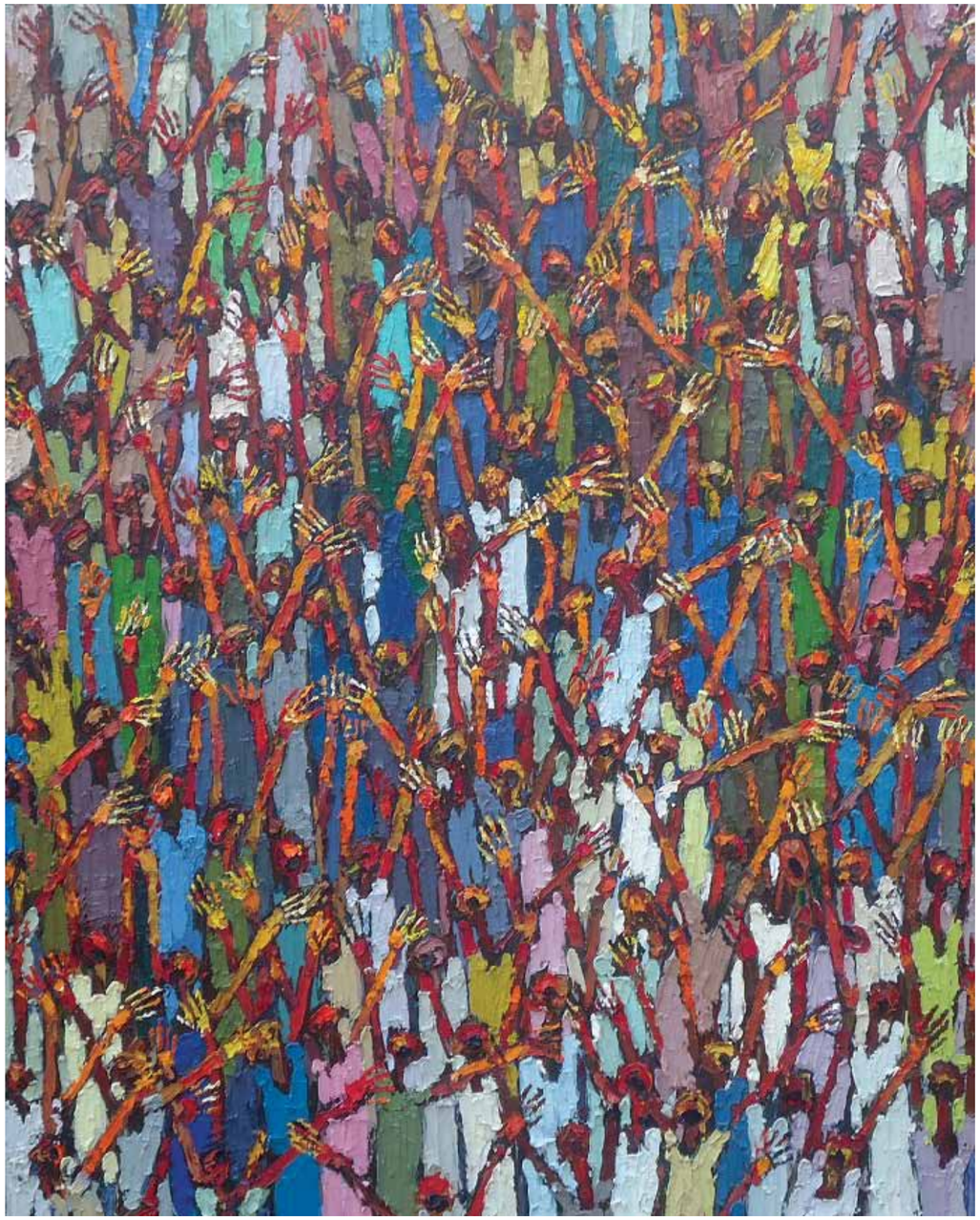
Freedom Rhythm - W128cm x H100cm



Urban Drift- W128cm x H100cm



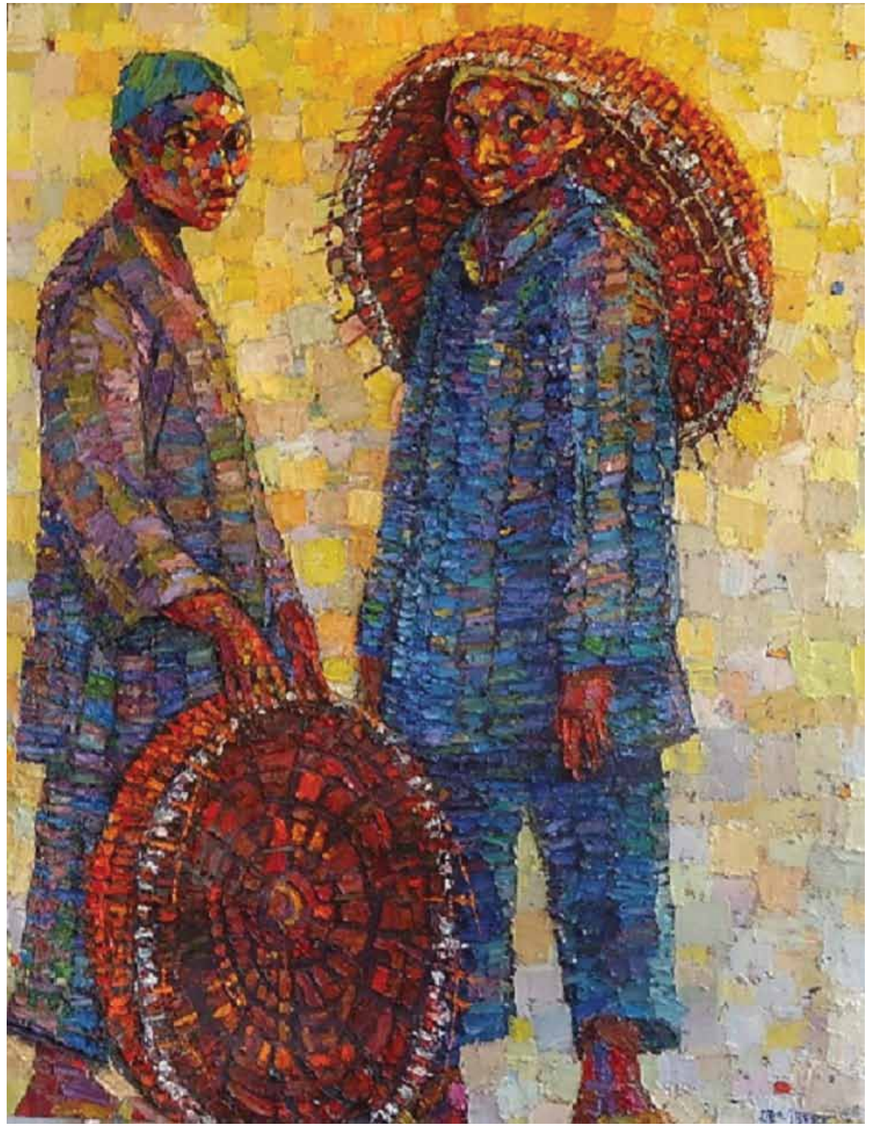
Happy People II - W92cm x H107cm



Happy People - W128cm x H100cm



Mai Mai - W128cm x H100cm



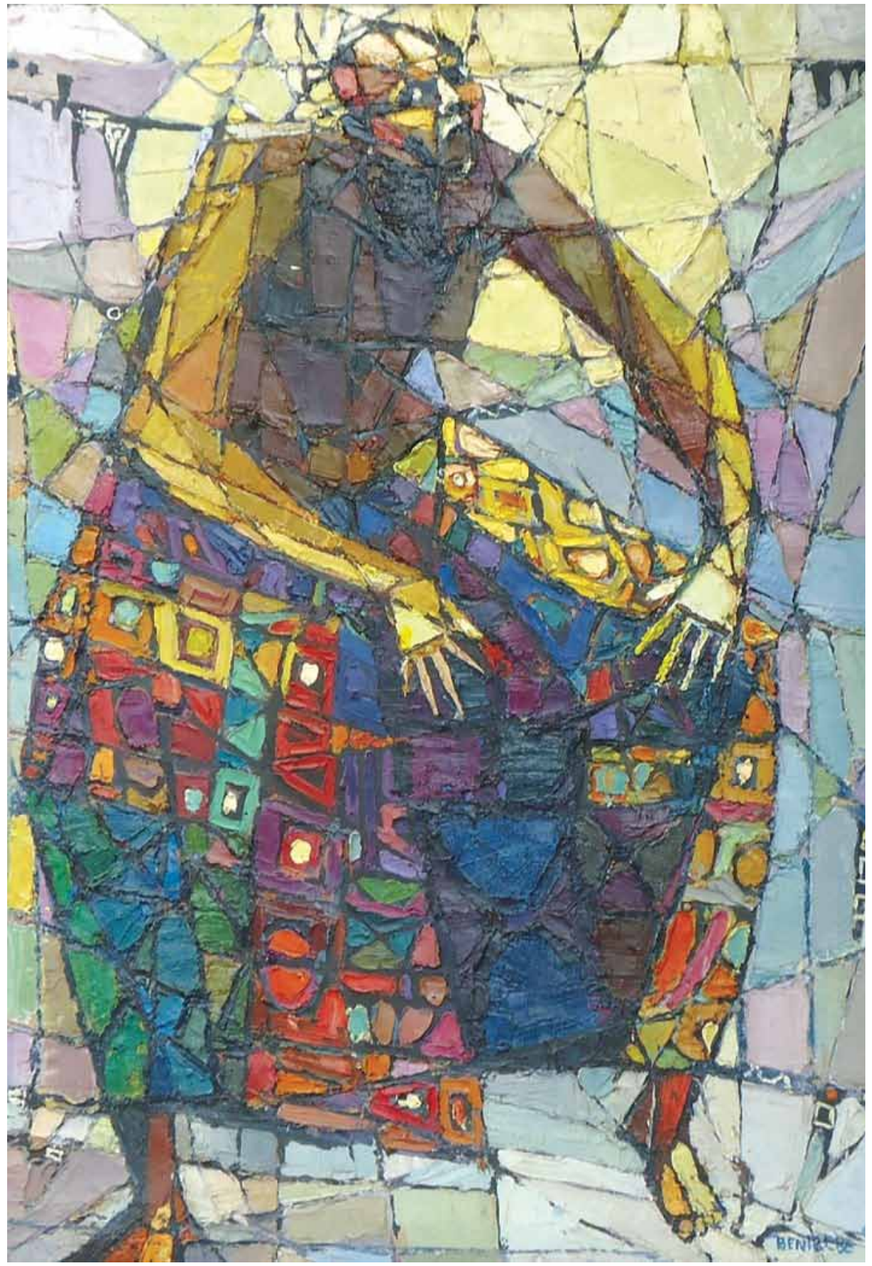
Mai Kwando - W118cm x H92cm



On the militant trail - W77cm x H117cm



Orange point - W107cm x H104cm



Male Dancer (Hands down) - W69cm x H102cm



Freedom Rythm (3 figures) - W114cm x H104cm



Almajiri - W102cm x H92cm



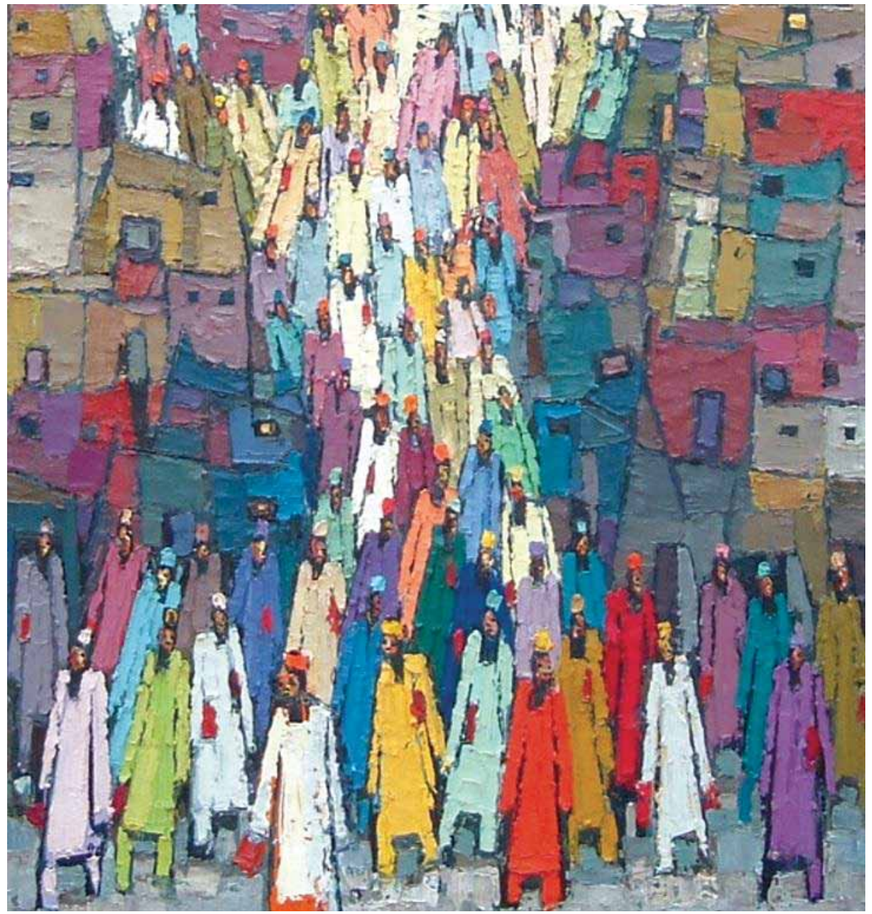
Dye Pit - W103cm x H97cm



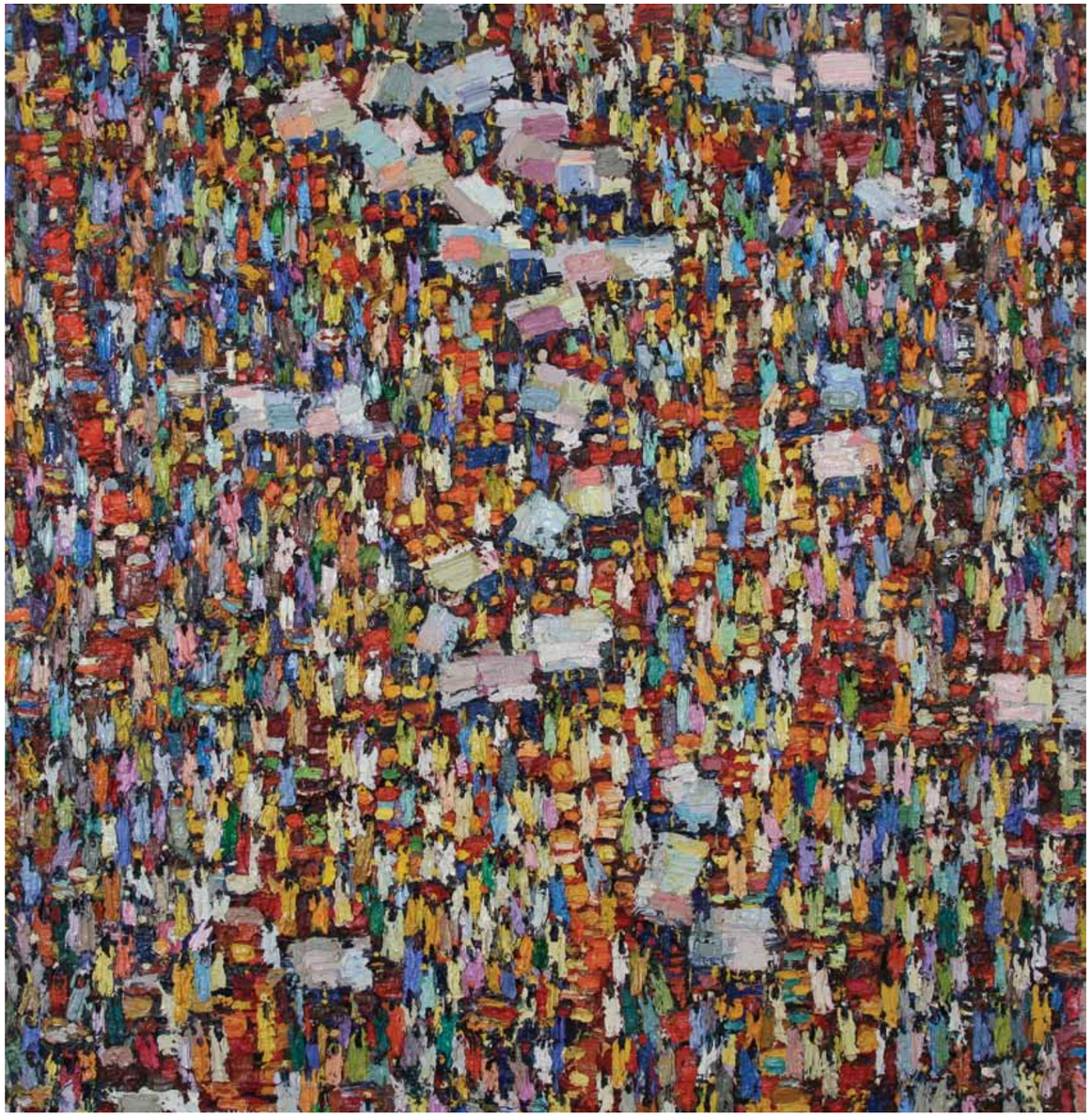
Asoebi Celebrant Friends - W122cm x H128cm



Back from Ismaiya - W102cm x H92cm



Jumat - W94cm x H109cm



Open Market (large) - W122cm x H128cm



Strife Images (Returnee) - W77cm x H107cm



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