



AJÓRIN

DANCE **METAL** PHOR



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AN EXHIBITION OF NIGERIA'S BEST METAL ARTISTS

THOUGHT PYRAMID ART CENTRE, LAGOS

28TH NOV. - 20TH DEC., 2020

www.ajorindancemetalphor.com | www.thoughtpyramidart.com

This catalogue was published on the occasion of the exhibition
AJORIN DANCEMETALPHOR at the Thought Pyramid Art Centre

November 28th - December 20th, 2020

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THOUGHT PYRAMID ART CENTRE

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Print:
Phephe Planet Productions
Lagos, Nigeria.

ISBN: 978-8096-88-3

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NIGERIA MACHINE
TOOLS



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*Anyone can be a mentor and any
mentor can become a tormentor.”*

- Oludotun Popoola



ELEGANTE GALLERY AND AUCTION HOUSE

AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor



In the ancient history of various Nigerian monarchies, the artists and blacksmiths were always an integral and special part of the king's court. These groups were responsible for craftily documenting history and creating objects for the graceful use in and outside the palace courts.

Iron smelting and forging is an art that has existed in Africa as far back as the 6th century with blacksmiths smelting iron to create weapons for war and hunting. During those times, blacksmithing was a family tradition passed down to generations in specific families and these families took immense pride in their craft. A few examples are the bronze casting families of Igun, Benin-city and the Alagbedes of Yoruba land.

In Yoruba mythology, Ogun is known as the god of iron, war, hunting and iron sculpting. The Yoruba god, Ogun, is a primordial god; he is said to have opened the path for the other Orishas (gods) to enter Earth, using a metal axe.

Subsequently, blacksmiths were the major worshippers and followers of Ogun and hence were seen as Demi-gods considering they had to have found favour in the sight of Ogun to be capable of manipulating metal.

In the present day, bringing all this into context, contemporary metal sculptors have continued to break barriers when it comes to creativity and invention, they have continually pushed and broken the boundaries of metal sculpting.

In the Nigerian contemporary art scene, we have seen a rise in metal sculpting with a plethora of metal materials being used, leaving viewers and enthusiasts without a choice but to notice and acknowledge the creative genius and talents in these bunch.

This has birthed "Ajórin"

AJÓRIN is an ode to great Nigerian metal sculptors, an exhalation of beauty born out of ceaseless beating and welding of metals, an orchestra of iron. As Thought Pyramid continues to find new ways to promote African artists irrespective of medium and technique, we decided to create something for the ever growing metal sculptures who have been breaking bounds. As we have done with our

NEXT OF KIN & NARRATIVE programs, Ajorin is a program for the metal sculptors that we intend to run bi-annually in order to bring more attention to metal sculpting and the kings behind the works.

In this inaugural exhibition, we have brought together the biggest names in the Nigeria contemporary metal sculpting sphere. It is a feat to bring together these exceptional artists, five in number all under one roof.

AJÓRIN is a project I am extremely excited about and I am sure the viewers of this exhibition will be as excited too.

Hence, as we all view Ajorin, one thing is certain, the metals are talking loud enough, all we have to do is listen.

Obarisi Jeff Ajueshi

Thought Pyramid Art Centre
Abuja | Lagos, Nigeria



Detail from Steve Ekpensisi's material at the Universal Studio of Art, Iganmu, Lagos.

Unearthing welded metal art link between Ajorin, pre-modernity



In the established art appreciation prejudice against welded metal sculpture, the two medium of painting and casting have been the beneficiaries. As a genre-specific gathering of five artists, Ajorin group art exhibition is not just about encouraging appreciation of sculpture, the show extends its focus on welded metal art.

The Ajorin exhibition distils incendiary energy from an imbalance decades of Nigeria's art history, and builds a crucial spot in the country's 21st century visual culture space. Also, the exhibiting artists Adeola Balogun, Fidelis Eze Odogwu, Steve Ekpenisi, Abinoro Akporode Collins and Dotun Popoola would be recorded by posterity for their intumescing of welded metal art in Nigeria's creative industry.

How welded metal art evolved from Ancient Age, but orphaned in modern Nigeria

As a source from which the world's artistic and technological advancement emerged, metal was hardly missing among African craftsmen of ancient ages. Being the parent source that covers silver, bronze, brass, tin, gold, lead and iron, metal has been used across ages in Africa. In modern and contemporary context, metal art is sub-divided into welded and cast medium, based on the above listed derivatives. However, works and practice in cast metal, particularly bronze, has dwarfed that of the welded genre in modern and contemporary Nigerian art environment. While casting and smithing, in Africa, have history rooted in ancient periods, the former has been more resilient despite the latter's advantage in welding technology.

Apart from mentioning the Nubian civilization, quite a number of historical accounts, for example, on the Iron Age (1200-600 B.C.), has been recorded without specific reference to include Sub-Saharan Africa in that period. But as the Iron Age appeared like an advancement in tools on the Stone and Bronze periods Africa was not exactly left behind in that progressions, so suggest archaeological findings in cultural objects such as the Nok (sixth century B.C), Ife heads (circa 1000 A.D) and Benin bronzes (circa 1300 A.D).

Either as a tool in fabrication or a finished object, it's been known that metal, over the Ages, connected diverse fields such as architecture, art and engineering. Facts abound that Africans, specifically, some tribes that formed the Nigeria nation of

today were not left out in applying metal as tools and products of fabrication. For example, the Yoruba people of ancient period, in the city of Ilorin (now in present day Kwara State) were among Africans to have widely used metal as essential aspects of productivity.

Pronounced 'Eelorin', documented historical sources explained that the city of Ilorin was so named being a centre of attraction for artisans and technicians who had their tools fabricated for various needs.² Simplified English meaning of 'Ilorin' is grinding iron. Over the centuries, the name of the city has been slightly corrupted as Ilorin. As a city, Ilorin was possibly so designated as a centre of crafts in iron, being the residence of the Kakanfo, the Generalissimo of the Oyo Empire, across generations during that eras. Ilorin was an extension of the Alafin of Oyo's monarchial power, from where the army commanders coordinated their eso (troops).

As all Yoruba towns of ancient periods derived their names from either environment or event inference origin, Ilorin, most likely, had been so named before it became a vassal town of the then Oyo Empire. Examples of clearly expressive names of Yoruba towns are Eba-odan (near the outskirt of town), but now corrupted as Ibadan; Abeokuta (under the rock), traces history to hiding place for the early settlers during wars; and Ogbomoso, so named after the battle that led to beheading of a famous warrior, Elemoso by Ogunlola, among other ancient cities. It is therefore not in doubt that Ilorin derived its name from being an ancient city of technological hub, most likely pre-Oyo Empire era.

The trajectory of metal being applied in creating industrial and cultural objects, in what is today known as Nigeria, perhaps, predated even the Ilorin town of the old Oyo Empire. Working with metal in Yoruba language is expressed as agbede (smithing) while the artisan is known as alagbede (blacksmith).

Armaments of the ancient Yoruba such as ida (sword), ofa (bow and arrow) as well as ada (cutlass), among others, were produced by the alagbede of that era. Also included in the works of the alagbede were farm tools such as oko (hoe), pape (trap), among others for domestic utilities. Till date, the remnants of the alagbede, being a hereditary profession exists among some people who still retain Agbede as their family name. In Yourubaland, it's customary then for family to be recognised and named by their profession, cultural or religious status.

Before the entry of Nigerian modern art period, dated from Aina Onabolu (1882-1963), creating metal into objects as art of the past, were done by undocumented artists. During the practice pattern of the alagbede of many centuries ago, which continued through the colonial Nigeria era, there were several generations of undocumented metal artists. And with the entry of Nigerian modernity, from the early 20th century till the eve of the country's independence, quite some interest were shown by artists in the cast metal genre. One of such sculptures came from Ben Enwonwu (1917-1994), whose Queen Elizabeth II statue in bronze, dated 1957 attracted international focus. The full size sculpture of the British monarch by Enwonwu, most likely, was the first major documented cast metal done by a Nigerian modernist.

On the contrary, lack of interest in welded metal art, among Nigerian artists, persisted during the colonial era. Art of welded metal, during colonial period was seen, largely, as work for street artisans popularly known as 'welders.' The formally trained artists from few art schools in existence then seemed not interested in welded metal works. In fact, there were no traces to suggest that formally trained artists had background in welded metal training during Nigeria's colonial period. The lack of interest in welded metal art has been confirmed by the fact that no pioneer, among Nigerian modernists had a single welded metal work.

Generally, sculptors were less documented in pre-independence Nigeria, and the tilted history towards painting continued, even till date. But cast metal art such as bronze has escaped from the net of appreciation prejudice, at least, from Nigeria's post-independence period. However, its sister genre, welded metal, has not been so free from the confine of prejudice, until the past 30 years, of which the Ajorin exhibiting artists, individually, connected directly or indirectly, in the resurgence.

In writing this review for Ajorin, I actually struggled to locate welded metal artists of colonial or modern era Nigeria. No artists of welded metal surfaced from all the sources of research I went through.

How the two pioneer art schools of the pre-independence era such as Nigeria College of Art, Science and Technology, Zaria (now Ahmadu Bello University) and Yaba Higher College, Lagos (changed to Yaba College of Technology, Yabatech), did not produce artists in welded metal art is still a topic that requires more research. However, some undocumented works of welded metal, said to have been seen, in 1980s, at Yabatech, indicated that there were attempt to train artists

in the sub-medium. The works, a source said, were either produced by students or brought into the college from the street welders' shops. Yes, records have it that artists were trained in welded metal sculpture, specifically at diploma levels in some of the schools of art in Nigeria, during the 1970s, but there seemed to be lack of energy to drive the post-training into mainstream practice, during the 1980s.

Contemporary resurgence of welded metal

While the mainstream art environment of Nigeria was still keeping welded metal sculptors at a prejudiced distance as "artisan welders," a gradual shift emerged in the 1980s from artist, Fred Archibong (1959-2009). Archibong, a self-taught artist whose works of painting, mixed media and sculpture were produced, mostly in commercial appreciation, was also patronised by government. Archibong was among the first set of artists who blurred the line between street welders and professional artists by producing many iron gates of artistic contents, busts and full size statues, in welded metal, for both residential and corporate facilities. Between mid-1980s to late 1990s, Archibong, whose studio was in Surulere and later moved to Victoria Island, had successful career in welded metal by creating sculptures for private and public spaces. It was speculated then that about seven out of every ten public space art works, mostly of welded metal, across Nigeria, were produced from the studio of Archibong. Most of his works of public sculptures, in welded metal though widely critiqued as poorly produced seemed to have generated sudden energy for formally trained artists to take control of the professionalism narratives of that period.

From the reluctant professional of the 1980s, to gaining gradual energy in the 1990s, the Nigerian artist of welded metal has come of age in the 21st century. Most renowned in the Nigerian space of the 21st century welded metal art is Olu Amoda. His art has inspired a new generation of welded metal artists. In 1986, artist and Head of Department, Fine Arts, at Yabatech, Kolade Oshinowo contributed to the new beginning when he got Amoda to join Yabatech as a lecturer.

From the seeds sowed then by Oshinowo, which germinated through the mentorship of Amoda, there emerged one of Ajorin artists, Adeola Balogun (b.1966). He was among Amoda's students at Yabatech, where he graduated in 1993, specialising in Sculpture.

Still on connecting with the resurgence of welded metal art in Nigeria's 21st century is another Ajorin artist, Fidelis Odogwu (b.1970). He graduated from Auchi Polytechnic, Edo State, in 1991, benefiting from one of the very early schools that started teaching welded metal art.

Swelling the new generation of welded metal artists is Steven Ekpenisi (b.1978). He graduated in Sculpture from Federal Polytechnic Auchi in the 2007/2008 academic session.

Asserting the new vigour in Nigeria's welded metal art space is Collins Akporode. Also trained in Auchi Polytechnic, Akporode (b.1978) graduated with a Higher Diploma (HND) in sculpture (2012).

Dotun Popoola is arguably creating a fresh direction in welded metal art, home and abroad. Popoola, (b.1981) graduated in sculpture and painting in 2008, from Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Osun State.

As a group exhibition of rare gathering, Ajorin is creating a bold path through the journey of welded metal art appreciation in Nigeria.


Notes and references:

Early Africa Knowing World History by Derek Wilson, publisher Evans Brothers Nigeria Limited (1978), Pg 28.

The History of the Yorubas by The Rev Samuel Johnson, CSS Bookshops Limited. (Published 1921, page 142.

Tajudeen Sowole

Lagos-based writer and Art Advisor



“ Success (in Nigeria) has to do with you reprogramming your mind that you can achieve it (greatness) in between all the hardships.” ”

- Adeola Balogun

The Concept of AJORIN Dancemetalphor



AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor exhibition is the first of its kind established for the major purpose of changing destructive narratives created, accepted, and shared concerning metal and scrap art in Nigeria.

AJÓRIN is a yoruba word meaning welder but used in this context to describe the metal artist as one who welds creatively in a mind boggling way that the regular welders without divine artistic insight can't possibly do.

Thus, AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor is a word picture inviting the art universe to come, feel, and dance to the metal works created from the sounds produced by the different kinds of metals and welding processes the metal artists have employed.

The metal works on display are made from found and discarded metals. Also on display are metal works made in collaboration with electronic panels and cutleries. The works are both life-like and life-sized. The collection are guaranteed to be heavenly and hypnotizing while being therapeutic at the same time.

Therefore, you can't imagine the metalworks on display. There is a reason these artists are the weird in the metal art sector of Nigeria art.

This exhibition intended to motivate the upcoming generation of (metal) artists. Additionally, we hope this event will stir more attention and respect towards metal art in Nigeria which is the only way through which metal artists can begin to get rewarded for their passion at home at the level they actually deserve.

Inclusively, it will be my greatest desire that stakeholders, critics, art journalists, galleries, curators, and art fanatics will be inspired by this exhibition to commit and act collectively to purge metal art from tarnishing lies.

Most especially, I hope seeing how wastes have been turned to cornerstones; you will appreciate how much metal artists have done for our domestic environment.

Hence, my proposal is that we all join hands in duly rewarding, regarding, and

properly celebrating every metal artist who continues to create and represent Nigeria proudly.

AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor is a group exhibition showcasing only the works of the best metal artists in Nigeria.

Our plan is to create a bi-annual metal art fair out of AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor

However, this launch will be exhibiting 4 metal works each from 5 of the best and seasoned Metal Sculptors in Nigeria.

These Metal Sculptors include:

Abinoro Collins
Adeola Balogun
Dotun Popoola
Fidelis Odogwu
Steve Ekpenisi

The array of metal artists gives a foresight into the diversity of metalworks to be exhibited at this historical art event.

On this note, I welcome your majestic presence to AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor.

Cheers!.

Ovie Omatsola
Curator, Thought Pyramid Art Centre

Metaphoric Dance of Minds and Metals



Ká rìn ká pò, yíyè ní yeni (walking together brings glamour) says a Yoruba adage which is obviously manifesting in this art exhibition titled AJÓRIN-DANCEMETALPHOR, a first of its kinds in the history of contemporary Nigerian art. The selected artists because of their consistency and adroitness in metal art as individual could be referred to as *gbajúmò* (popular) which corroborate the adage in Yoruba that goes thus; *òdú nì wòn, won kíl sà ìmò olóko* - they are well known to all and sundry in Nigerian art circle. Little wonder the Gallery brings forth the five metal masters in this symbolic visual show for peoples' delight as well as achieving a new trend in the history of contemporary Nigerian art.

As varied as the artists and their exhibits, so is the possible derivable meanings from the lead word, Ajorin in the exhibition theme when viewed from the perspective of Yoruba verbal expression. A - we, jo weld, i/rin- metal/iron which when used as a word is equal to ajorin (welders). Also, à -we, jorìn (àjorìn) walking-together / a – we, jorìn (we moved or walking together). While the third possible understanding of the word a -we, jó dance, rìn - move (ajórin) we (are) dance/ing and walking). As possible as the word connotes variants interpretations, so are the coded metaphoric expressive content, form and style of these metal works by the five masters on display.

The metal sculptures in this exhibition show the evidence of change and continuity which is vivid on how the artists have succeeded in imbuing creative metal works with global trends in taste as vibrant forms emanate from their images with high levels of aesthetic finesse. The works which are superfluously enriched with high skill are solidly embedded in deep philosophical foundations which instill deeper insights into the viewer's mind. This aspect of the works is considered an integral and most cherished essence of African visual art from the ancient era till date. These creative artists have borrowed this coded communicative style from their traditional artists to enrich their present metal sculptures. Function being the back bone of African art is the reason why Lawal (2012:217) and Drewal (1988: 73) asserts that African art is more than just visuals as the works are often depicted in stylized and encoded (metaphoric) forms. Corroborating this, Willett (1971) posits that African art is not art for art sake, which negates the idea of western art.

Being able to use art metaphorically as a weapon of social criticism and communicate the artists' critical views and opinions of his social environment without offending sensibilities is expressed in the coded Yoruba wise saying; ì fèsò

ké bò sí, nì ìfèsò jo - patience in beckoning on people to avert an impending danger, attract positive response but when one is impatience, reverse is the case. The purposively selected contemporary Nigerian metal masters and their works on display in this coveted historic show fits in perfectly into the above Yoruba wise saying. This is because, they have succeeded in using their creative ingenuity to raise alarm on many unpleasant instances facing the citizens without carrying placard or going on the street to protest which in most cases is hijacked by hoodlums who dashed their original good intentions. And neither do they speak directly their mind on the ill activities particularly on the part of government which could land them in troubled waters as in the case of the renowned progenitor of cartooning in Nigerian art, late Chief Akinola Lasekan (1916-1972) as revealed by Jegede (2020:33). Hence, through their metaphoric expressive content, wón fi ogbón tá yé se (they are contributing in their own little and sensible way to making their environment a better place without being in conflict with anyone).

The Expressive Metaphoric Dance

In a peaceful manner, the exhibits are expressions of the artists' mind in a coded manner pertaining to the decadence in their socio-cultural environment (Nigeria). Hence, it becomes germane in bringing to fore their metaphoric minds for better comprehension, and the intention of the artists' creative ingenuity in ensuring a sound society. The essence embedded in the works on display however is like that of a talking drum – ìlù gárgan (double membrane talking drum). One side of their metal sculptures gives aesthetics pleasure while the second side is loaded with enriching information's that is woven on what pertains to the poor socio-economic, moral and political situations especially from the side of government.

In *"Triumphant Shout"* by Fidelis (see plate 1), the piece expresses joyous and victorious mood as a result of sound team work between the horse and human. Women such as Funmilayo Ransom-Kuti, Madam Tinubu and Queen Amina among others in Nigeria come to the mind when issues pertaining to bravery from women is concerned. This piece is bringing us to the reality of the synergy between human and animals and could be likened to the government - worker/citizens relationship and the way government shows their sense of appreciation after about 35 years of meritorious service delivery from the workers to their fatherland. On retirement occasions, the retirees were often expressed their emotion with tears triggered by their past experiences during their active working years particularly when having flash back on those periods considered

much challenging that may have even posed threat to their life - only to be given a hand shake (huge) as appreciation for all these is very incongruous. While considering what the horse and the woman have passed through, the artist explores the butterfly motif which has cultural symbolism (as opined by Edward, date not cited) and interpretations such as endurance, hope, and life struggle as well as representing human celebration of their successful life journeys.

In *"Gymnast series"*, Odogwu (see plate 2) reflect a sense dedication, perseverance, self-denial and focus without which little or nothing could be realized in a man's dreams. The artist's craving for his cultural background brings out the hairdo in a simple style synonymous with the Delta culture. Balogun in *"Supreme Mechanism"* (bull) (see plate 9) incorporates electronic panel and Naira coins in the execution of the charging bull. The piece is pointing us to the current move by the government to eradicate / reduce physical cash transactions which if well managed will reduce the risk of armed robbery. However, the unfortunate aspect of it is the exorbitant bank charges and exposure to internet fraud. Preventing these from happening therefore requires vigilance especially as in the case in Nigeria where banks are fond of deducting money without any transaction. Putting an end to this requires that people stand in unity to protest and protect themselves from extortions and exploitations by Nigerian banks.

Again, Balogun in *"Electrifying Dance"*, (see plate 10) explored electronic gadget in depicting the free flowing sketch of the female dancer in away suggesting the state of her being at fortissimo level. The electronic gadget was used to represent the role of electronics in aiding people to get connected with the global world particularly via social media. Without opening an electronic item, the interior compositions is hidden from the eyes, so is how getting exposed to social media today has opened peoples mind and thought to more crime unlike before its advent in Nigeria.

The use of mixed media was successfully experimented by Collins in the execution of *Nonconformist, my hair, my root is non-conformist* the title also?. In my humble opinion, this perhaps could be likened to Lord Lugard's amalgamation of the protectorates to form the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1914. The portrait reflects that of a lady at her prime age who by all implications should be under the tutelage of her parents learning all the tricks of facing feature challenges but rather jettisons grooming as she prefers to concentrates on her physical beauty. Nigeria as a country from inception of her independence has been led by self-centered leaders who are fond of buttering their ethnic interests as against the



“ The truth about art is: it is one thing to be gifted, it is another thing to manifest the gift. ”

- Collins Abinoro

general interest of the populace (other regions). This poor attitude has been a stumbling block to the progress and unity expected in the country over the years. This (I think non-conformist as used here is not in the right meaning) approach to sensitive issues has therefore made people to be agitating and calling for restructuring /self-governance. Ever since this interest has been accumulating, those in power considered it as a joke by consistently making it a laughing matter as shown in another portrait that seems to be of an elderly man titled The Joker. Today, what seems like a joking matter is gathering momentum and becoming bigger on daily basis like a snowball. The poor economy, security, corruption, etc have made the whole world to be looking at Nigeria with a baffled mind because there is no need for people to be in want in a country endowed with natural and human resources. Not until (as Nigerian) we answer to Collins' call that we will seize to present ourselves as a (the) "joker" to the whole world.

It's a pity that many do not bear it in mind that their moral decadence is an expensive joke until Covid-19 pandemic made us to understand that its effect does not exempt the rich, particularly all those charged with the responsibility of making things better for the general populace. A mystery of life too weighty to understand for those who have mismanaged and embezzled allocations for the health sector is that everyone is locked down no matter the status. Their greed has resulted into a suicide act as they too, have no escaping root. Ekpenisi in *"Decadence of the Society"* (see plate 6) use the dangling image in the globular shape as a symbolism of the loneliness, suffering and state of mind of such people as they stand aloof hanging in between their stolen wealth and death with no one to rescue them despite having starved their loot in many countries. With this, Ekpenisi is calling for a stop to all sorts of debauchery otherwise, it will surely hit back mysteriously in an unexpected time. Considering the current mass protests in the country induced by the poor behaviour of the SARS officers has eventually become what government cannot easily understand. The unity among the youths seems unexplainable and has put government at all levels in a dilemma. This case is gradually becoming heavy pain in the neck that is eating them up as it continues bleeding to no stop. The confusing state of mind of those in authority is represented by the clumsy interwoven rods on the head of the image as depicted in Enigma.

In *"Eja nla"* (see plate 16), Dotun explores his mind on how everyone wishes to stand out among others in an environment. However, the manner through which this is achieved matters a lot particularly in a corrupt political situation like in Nigeria. It's very awful when government intentionally comes with policy that

place premium on someone business activities at the expense of others. Such obviously gives the one with government backing to strife and become (a big fish) highly successful by stampeding and devouring other competitors. In executing the the body of the big fish, over two thousand pieces of smaller fish motifs were used in bringing out the beautiful scales. This was used in my humble opinion to represent other business owners and the consumers the big fish fattened on. Such is the current situation in Nigeria where the land borders was only accessible to one man at the expense of thousands other entrepreneurs as well as living the consumers to face price hike due to absence of competitors. Again, Dotun in the relief woman portrait titled *"The Wiring of Woman's Brain"* (see plate 18) executed the woman with a gorgeous hairdo to depict the invisible challenges been experienced by women in their mind. Such, which often caused them an unprecedented attitude that makes people around them to wonder why such is coming from a beautiful soul. Once again, when likening this with the beautiful nature of Nigeria landscape, people and abundant resources available in Nigeria, it surely makes one to wonder why the disarray. The symbolism of the butterfly motifs in this wonderful relief work is synonymous with that of Odogwu's *"Triumphant Shout"* (see plate 1). While the flowers represent the beautiful nature of woman's mind and love.

The Metal Master's Stylistic rendition.

One of the strong points of this exhibition is the stylistic dimensions discernible from their creative expressions in metal. Failure by the early scholars on African art to identify works with individual artists is the reason why the then traditional art works were slammed with anonymity. This was because of their impatience in picking out the differences displayed in the physical form on the works particularly when signing is considered by the then traditional artist as unnecessary. In this aspect, scholars like Rudy (1972), Adrian (1973) and Bascom (1973) should be credited for their painstaking efforts in using style to identify and classify works by traditional African artists.

The selected five master metal artists in this show have over the years been propagating metal art in different forms, techniques and styles. Their experience and consistency in their studio experiments have resulted into various personal forms and styles which has made them to stand out and become household names in the contemporary Nigerian art scene. The works on display are the results of experiments that have culminated in their current style (without diminishing their previous styles) and can be considered as their contributions to

the practice of metal art in Nigeria. Odogwu expresses form in his works using rods linearly to achieve negative and positive space without losing the anatomical renditions in his images as shown in the *"Gymnast series"* (see plate 2). His bias for his traditional root is depicted in the simplistic hairdo synonymous with the people of the Niger Delta and the Yoruba suku hairdo while he rested in his painstaking effort in the cutting and beating of metal sheet from the reverse to bring out forms in naturalistic manner, as in the case of the heroine warlord embracing her partner (horse) at the battle field (see plate 1). Using this approach, Odogwu depicted form in his sculpture in a subtle way.

Collins' main dominant materials since his emergence in contemporary Nigerian art scene have been the use of assorted cutleries, bird motifs and fine finishing.. His uncommon choice of materials did not diminish his high sense of anatomical rendition (see the *"Warrior Queen"*, plate13). Through consistency, he has been able to inject nonmagnetic medium into his usual cutleries in some of his works as in the case of *Nonconformist my hair, my root* that was executed using marble stone dust, cutleries and newspaper.

Gazing at Ekpenisi's figures reminds one of the of the ancient cortege art (basket weaving) practice. His experimentation in adapting the weaving technique into executing his metal works has earned his sculpture more appreciation from clients and patrons most especially for his dexterity in manipulating the metal strips as if using clay. This linear approach afforded his metal works a rhythmic and balanced use of negative and positive spaces in his standing sculptures. In the relief types, the form induces the viewers' eyes to blend the flowing metal strips into the background.

Both Balogun and Popoola make use of junk in executing their metal sculptures that often incorporated cast non-ferrous alloy, but their works distinctively stands apart in style. Popoola cast alloy is with emphasis on molten metal while that of Balogun rested on welding copper brazed together with the aid of stand by negative mold in achieving his desired taste as in the case of *"Supreme Mechanism"* (see plate 9). The duo, like their counterparts in this historic exhibition show excellence in the mastering of their medium of expression when considering the depiction of naturalistic forms in their metal works. Their use of color is distinct



“If they Give to you, you have to give to other people.”

- Fidelis Odogwu

and unique in ways that enhance the appearances and embedded messages enshrined in their sculptures.

Considering the peculiarities associated with the art of these five metal masters, without the letters of their name on the works, one can easily identify each of the sculptors without error. This distinctive form comes as a result of the artists' consistency in their studio exploits. Distinctiveness forms the basic justification for the choices of Thought Pyramid in the selection of artists for AJORIN DANCEMETALPHOR with the aim of giving art lovers, clients, artists and art historians a wonderful visual delight which now becomes an indelible statement in the history of contemporary Nigerian art.

CONCLUSION

On the part of the artists, their voices could be heard loudly regarding their agitations on the poor situations around them without making a noise (statement). This they all achieved by using their art as vital weapon in bringing about sanity in a generation perverse with poverty, corruption, favoritism among others, The works explored by these selected contemporary master metal sculptors are produced in vibrant variant forms with the view to advocating and communicating for order in the Nigerian Society. Understanding this aspect alongside the aesthetic sensibilities displayed on the works in this historic show, AJORIN DANCEMETALPHOR by the Thought Pyramid, one will appreciate better the efforts of the five selected artists and that of the organizers and long for such in feature. This historic art exhibition brings to mind the Yoruba adage; owó kan, kò gbé rù dórí (we must join hands together for us to achieve positively) and so, let us join the artists in ensuring collective solution to our challenges. Happy viewing!.

Sobowale Tolulope (B.A., MFA, M.Phil)
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Faculty of Environmental Studies,
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Like V bank, Ajorin is an idea whose time has come



Early March this year when we launched V Bank – Nigeria's truly virtual bank – Nigeria had only confirmed her index case of coronavirus eleven days before. By nightfall of the same day, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) announced a second case. Yet, we had no inkling of the many months of lockdown ahead, nor how life was about to change for a lot of Nigerians (and us) by virtue of the pandemic; and how this product we had newly launched was going to become a ray of hope in the new normal that would set in the following weeks. But we had one thing: a vision – to be Nigeria's foremost financial services provider. And we would devote our daily goal to finding, investing, acquiring and building solutions that helped that vision shine brighter while upholding the highest ethics and professionalism.

Nine months later, we have successfully built, from the ground up, a product that has found a home all over the country and are currently upgrading the system to increase its capacity and essentially, to do more for our customers.

The story of V Bank would not exist without our microfinance bank. VFD Microfinance Bank was licensed in 2015 as a subsidiary of VFD Group with a mandate to become an industry standard and a household name in the provision of end-to-end digital banking, creating a lifestyle banking experience for banking customers. V Bank is a demonstration of the end-to-end digital banking whereby banking is provided via app – V by VFD (available in both Play and iOS stores), Chat banking – where you can set up an account and transact in Whatsapp, USSD – *5037# for transactions, and a referral programme that allows you earn up to two million naira monthly! A reward sum unrivalled by all standards.

For a lot of young individuals and small businesses banking with V, in addition to the availability of alternative channels for instant and seamless transacting, perhaps the unique endearing point remains that you never lose money with V. Rather, V offers a zero charge flat rate for transfers, account or card maintenance, and sms notifications; and even provides loans to businesses. In other words, we have delivered to the market what the market wants.

In so many ways, the story of how V has come to become the choice of more than 200,000 people and businesses all around Nigeria, cruising through a pandemic, is the same way metal artistry is coming of age.

In addition to being a lover of arts and owner of a few pieces myself, when I was first told of this exhibition, I had no doubts that this was a right cause to commit to. Yes, everyone loves the underdog, but I was especially concerned to hear of such great talents and the undervaluing their craftsmanship was (I say 'was' because I believe this is about to change) subjected to. Empathy 360 is one of our five pillars at VFD hence so it was only natural to commit to Ovie on this Ajorin Dancemetalphor Exhibition hosted by Thoughts Pyramid Art Centre in Lagos.

Like V bank riding the waves of the pandemic, I hope that this exhibition will provide the needed catapult for metal artistry and artists, established and upcoming. And like an idea whose time has come, I do hope that you find this atmosphere truly inspiring and more importantly, buy a piece or two to boost the morale of the artists and to support the industry. For the love of the arts!

Nonso Okpala,
GMD/CEO VFD Group



Detail view from "A Triumphant Shout", Odogwu Fidelis, 2020

Convoluted Images from the Fiery Spark of the Alloy Luminaries



It is quite thoughtful of the Thought Pyramid gallery to satisfy the visual appetite of the art community in the ease of lockdown by playing host to an intentional show tagged "*Ajorin Dancemetalphor*". "*Ajorin*" is the Yoruba nomenclature for welder of metal worker. Featuring the best of the metal artists emanating from the Nigerian visual art space, this offering is perhaps a new normal mode of exhibiting works of artists whose practice and materiality share affinity.

Metal Sculpture is an enduring practice in Nigeria owing to the resilient efforts of the fore-runners which include Ellis Erimona, Mathew Ehizele, Mayor Gbinije and Olu Amoda to mention but a few. This genre of sculpture in metal has witnessed diverse redefinition over the years. Kalilu (2013) affirms that recent stylistic tendencies found in most of the metal sculpture in contemporary times evidence global artistic influence, based on freedom of artistic expression in all ramification. Metal sculpture has become an exploration ground for those sculptors with zeal and zest for the wild and weird. This aptly describes these groups of radical sculptors with unquenchable thirst and burning desires to break new grounds and rupture the existing boundaries through the spark emanating from their metal exploration.

Dotun Popoola (b.1981) has demonstrated a remarkable alertness through his intricate forms churned out of his *mig* and *arc* welding dexterity. Poised to produce ornate form from carefully selected jettisoned alloy materials, Dotun, a workaholic, once again has displayed unmatched prowess in the manipulation of unimaginable materials repurposing them into elaborate chromatic sculptures. His recent exploration of aluminum stainless steel metal is outstanding and laudable. The icing on the cake is the deliberate introduction of colours on his collection. Out of the fumes, Dotun has found a voice with which he sings sweetly like the Nightingale. In the same vein as one his oeuvre in this show titled "*Eja Nla*" (Big Fish) (see page 16), cognizant of his standard, it is no gainsaying that Dotun Popoola is a big fish in the ocean of metal sculpture practice globally.

Steve Ekpenisi (b.1978) the "weaver bird" is unarguably the best alloy knitter as evident in the use of strips of metal, a dominant feature that defines his artistic signature. A distinction graduate from the Auchi Polytechnic has esteemed himself with the obvious distinction that characterize his bewildering welding acumen. His last solo exhibition "Dairy of the Iron Bender" held at the Signature Beyond Gallery prior to the pandemic outbreak earlier this year and his participation in this outing speak volume of his resilience and prolificacy. Steve's

adherence to entangled details and symmetry of form individualize him as an artist of enviable repute. His mastery of human anatomy is outstanding. His patina finesse in the works titled "*Enigma*" (see plate 5) and "*Circle of Abundance*" (see plate 8) is heuristic, a pointer to a greater dimension in his artistic voyage.

Odogwu Fidelis (b.1970) is famed as the King of Metal. His tutelage at the Auchi Polytechnic, Edo State and the informal training under the renowned sculptor, Ben Osawe in the late 80's contributed immensely to his mastery of metal as a means of expression. Odogwu derives solace in elaborate figurative compositions especially in two-dimensional format. His orchestration of colour reveals his deftness and understanding of chromatic orchestration. His offering in this show is a testament of his unmatched passion for alloy manipulation in his bid to document the outgoing pandemic year in a visual language.

Abinoro Collins (b.1984) is a seasoned and unusual metal sculptor who repurposes assorted stainless steel cutlery. His medium is unique and inspiring. His piece titled "*Warrior Queen*" (see plate 13), a larger-than life size sculpture produced from tons of stainless cutleries. Abinoro's exploration of cutlery is avant-garde, his inspiration from the dining table has engendered the aesthetic collection on display.

Adeola Balogun (b.1966) is a seasoned sculptor and scholar of repute. His training at the Yaba College of Technology, MFA from University of Benin and a Ph.D. (Studio) in Sculpture in Delta state University, Abraka attest to his consistency both as a scholar and resilient studio artist. His exceptional exploration of disused objects especially the panels obtained from electronics devices are remarkable and relevant in the new normal era. Beyond aesthetics, Balogun's oeuvre covers a gamut of subjects which includes nature, politics, livelihood and subsistence. His interpretation of form in his rendition is sublime; an uncommon trait of a lateral thinker. His work titled "*Drum of honour*" (see plate 11) and "*Electrifying Dance*" I & II (see plate 10) are glaring evidence of his craftsmanship in repurposing disused objects.

"And the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehend it not" (John 1:5, KJV)

Out of gross darkness occasioned by the pandemic, ruins and discarded metals, these creative luminaries have reproduced enduring and aesthetic repertoire that chronicles the Socio-political engagements that permeate their milieu and reflect


the times they live in. As we savour the visual delight offered by the oeuvre on display and seek survival in the tunnel of Covid-19 Pandemic we are sure there will be light after the tunnel. Ajoin Dancemetalphor is the first of its kind but certainly won't be the last. In the words of The Ghanaian author, Ayi Kwei Armah, the beautiful ones are not yet born, the biggest spark of this alloy luminaries still lie ahead. The best oeuvre of these best artists is yet to come. However as we bask in the euphoria of this maiden edition, we look forward to seeing greater works emanating from the glimmer of these iron-men.

Bolaji Ogunwo, PhD
Department of Creative Arts
University of Lagos.

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The Holy Bible, King James Version



“ You have to feel the work in your soul
to know if you are achieving the image
in your head. ”

- Steve Ekpenisi

ARTISTS AND WORKS ▶

FIDELIS ODOGWU
STEVE EKPENISI
ADEOLA BALOGUN
COLLINS ABINORO
DOTUN POPOOLA



FACES OF THE
metalians



FIDELIS ODOGWU

The King of Metal

Odogwu Fidelis Eze is a prolific artist whose knowledge of metal twisting and fabrication has earned him a household name - The Prince of Metal. Some are of the opinion that he is now The King of Metal. Fidelis is one peculiar Artist who is true to himself and equally loyal to his Art.

Odogwu Fidelis Eze {b. November 17, 1970} in Agbor, Delta State. He completed his Higher National Diploma in Sculpture from the famous School of Art and Design, Auchi Polytechnic, Edo State {1991}.

He has worked with a renowned Nigerian Master Sculptor - Ben Osawe between the period of 1988 to 1989. Odogwu's inborn ability to transform metal and make it look like paper has singled him out as a favorite of numerous Art Collectors worldwide. He is a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), Guild of Professional Fine Artists of Nigeria (GFA), and African Artists Foundation.

Solo Exhibitions: Tenacity, OM Gallery, Victoria Island, Lagos {2019}; and Square Pegs in Round Holes, Omenka Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos {2012}.

Group and Joint Exhibitions: Expressions Africanes, Caracas, Venezuela {2008}; ArtHouse Auction, Lagos {2008-till date}; Transcending Boundaries, Cork Street, London {2013&2014}; African Now, Bonhams Auction, London {2012&2013}; Italian embassy, Abuja, Nigeria {2012&2013}; Art Expo New York {2010}.

Charity Exhibitions: Nigeria and the UK; Black History month, Los Angeles {2014}.
Delivered Lecture: The Trends in Contemporary Art Practice in Nigeria, SOAS University, London [May 2013].

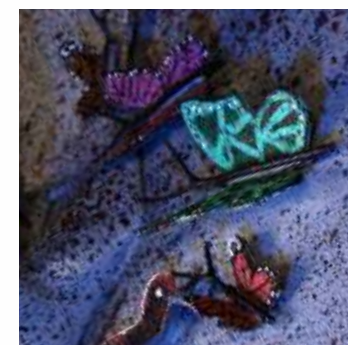
Art Residency: IFITRY Artists Residency, Morocco {November 2013} where he met the likes of Rachid Koraichi and Chris Spring.

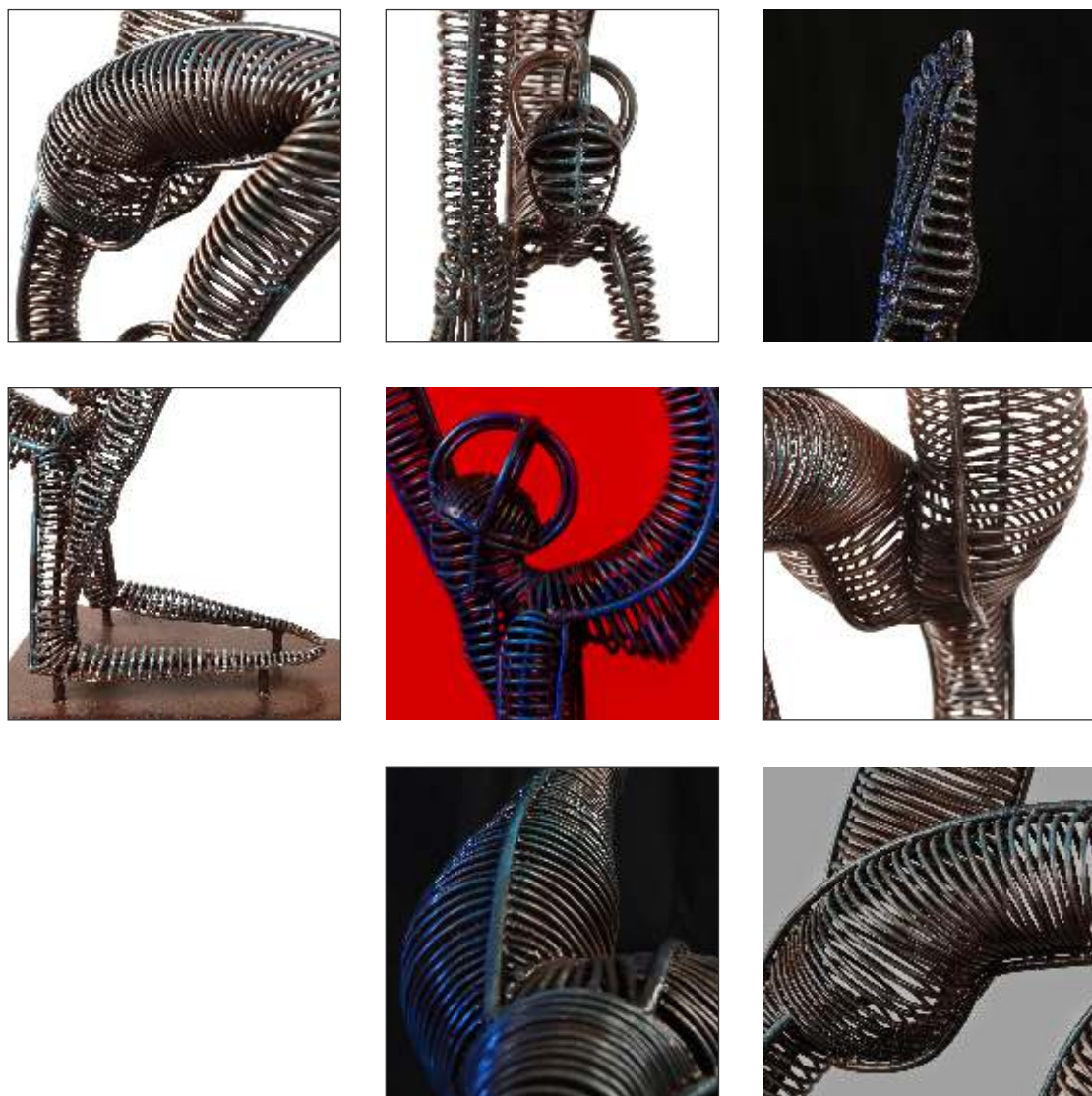
Awards: Third prize winner, Nigerian Breweries Limited (NBL)/African Artists Foundation Art competition {2010}; Certificate of Merit, Guinness Nigeria PLC Art exhibition, Lagos {2004}.



"A Triumphant Shout"
Metal, 150cm(H) x 51cm(W) x 130cm(B), 2020

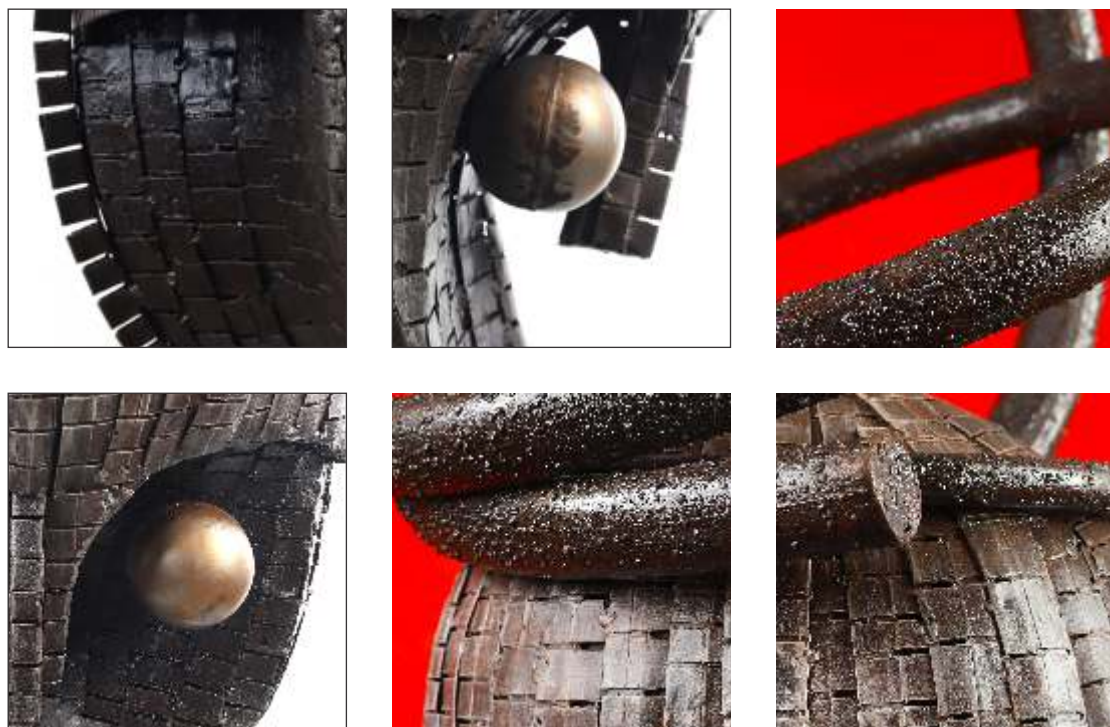






"Gymnast" (Series)
Welded Metal, 230cm x 34cm, 2020

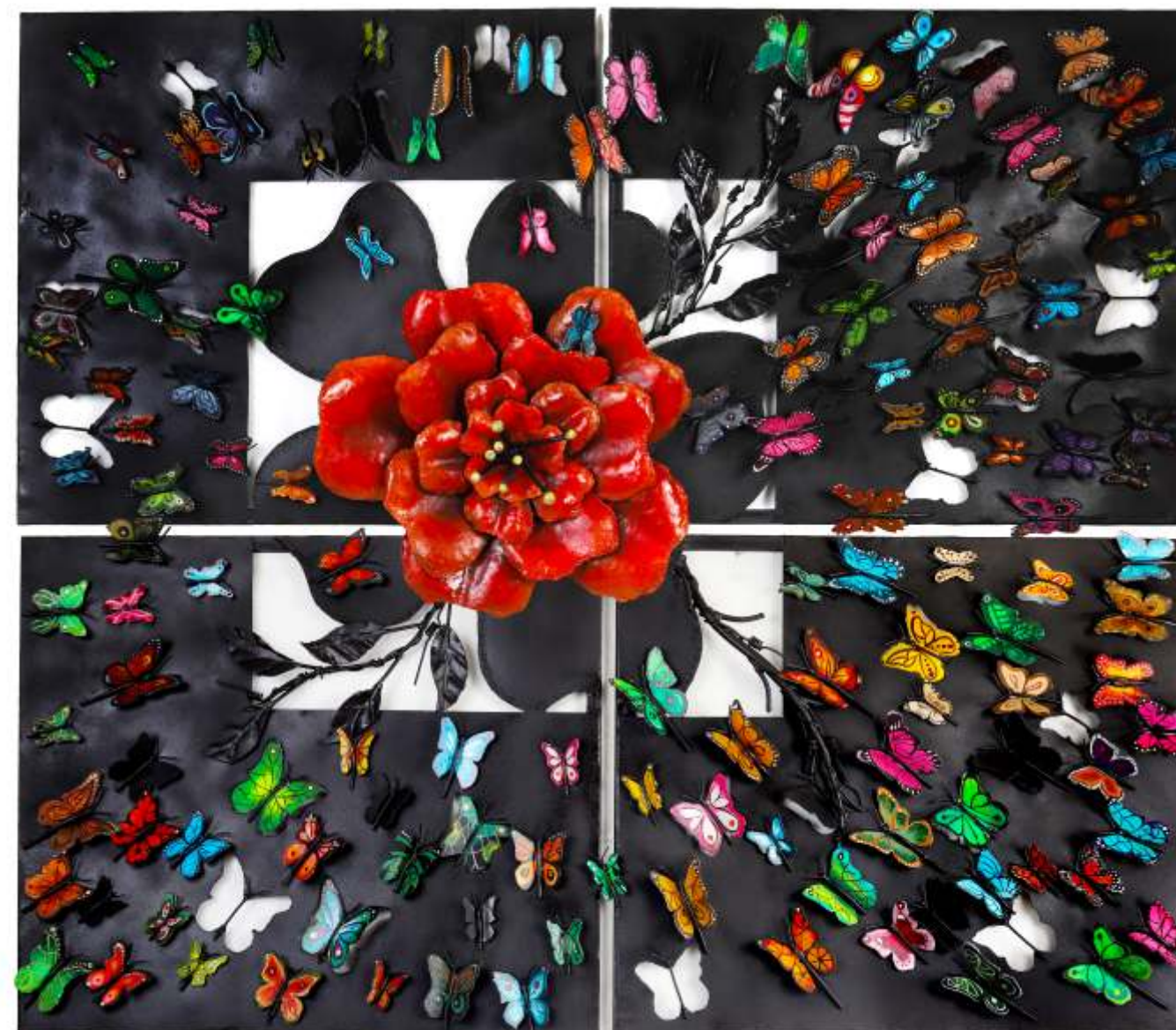
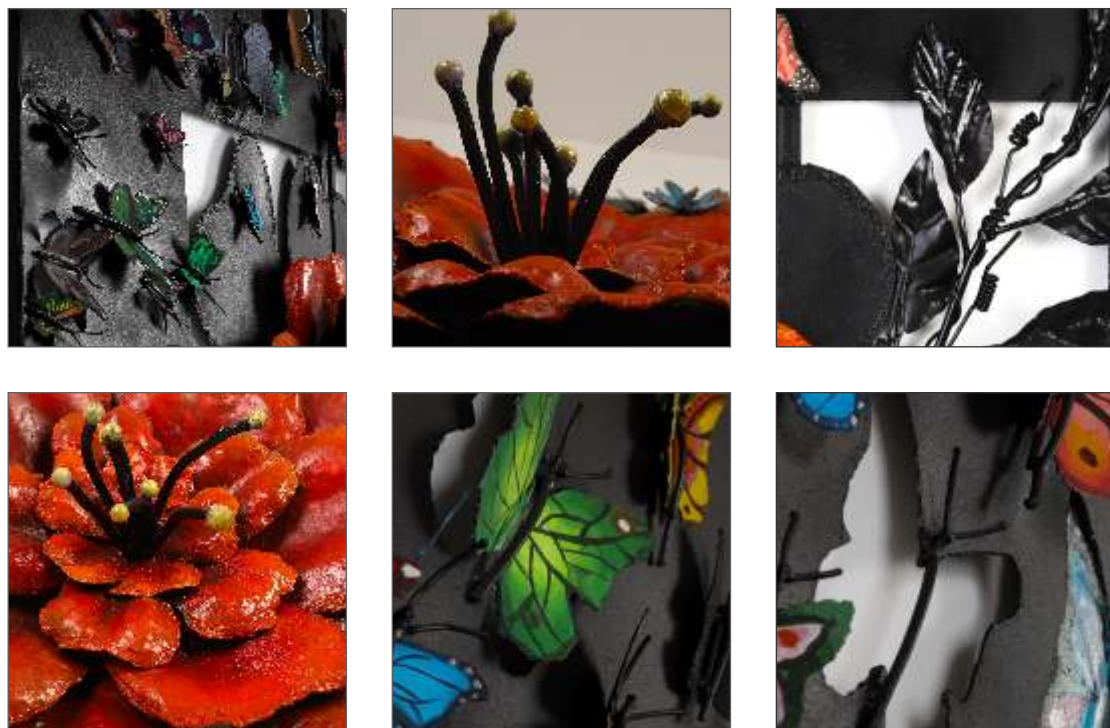




"Ndi Ngba Obi"
Welded Metal, 203cm x 57cm, 2020







"The Law Of Attraction"
Metal, 216cm x 187cm, 2020



STEVE EKPENISI

THE IRON BENDER

Steve Ekpenisi {b. 13th of August 1978} in Abavo, Ika South Local Government of Delta State, Nigeria. He had his early education in Nkwo Primary School, Udomi, Abavo, and post-primary in St. Charles College, Abavo. Studied sculpture in Federal polytechnic Auchi Edo State where he graduated as the overall best student with distinction in the 2007/2008 academic session.

Steve's journey as an artist began at the age of five. He spontaneously engaged himself in training without knowing what and where it will lead him. Most times, his parents get angry at him because he destroys and uses their electronics and other gadgets for his artistic exploits.

The common denominator in his works over the years has been the strict attention to intricate details and elegant features that lead to perfect treasures. His sculptures in all forms of the metal medium have evolved with regard to the socio-economic determining factors because we live in an ever-changing society. His works have maintained constant perfect craftsmanship which emits power, strength, and wealth.

One of his greatest inspirations is his stature, as he is fondly called small body big engine . He creates extraordinary sculpture that does not equate with his body size, thereby proving that we can do anything when we actually determine to. Over the years, he has taken metal as his medium of expression. He meticulously works with discarded metal plates, rods, stainless steel, mild steel, scrap metal, and disposed cans. His sculpture is usually life-size or larger than life in both figurative, imaginative, animal, and semi-abstract. His creations are of global contemporary standards.

Watching Steve work in his studio is a delightful theatre. He wrestles with metal, cuts, bends, and weaves it into artistic precision. Then the sparks from the welding machine. It is evident he derives the utmost satisfaction when the creative drama progresses.

Membership: Society of Nigerian Artists {SNA} ; Universal Studios of Art , National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos; Sculptors Association of Nigeria (SCAN) .

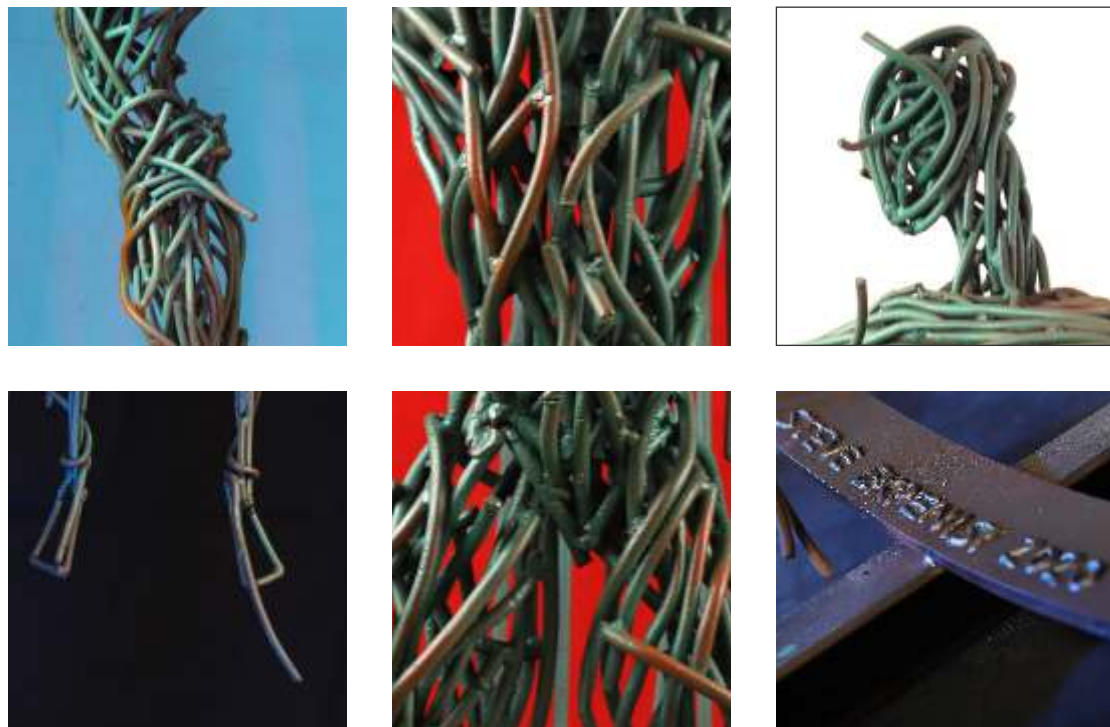
Solo Exhibition: Diary of the iron bender {2020}

Group Exhibitions: Oreze 5 and 6 { 2018&2019}; Faces and Phases 6 {2018}; Saving the Earth, Workshop/Exhibition Abuja{2018}; Illumination 3, Lagos {2018}; Exploring Nigeria-Korea Visuals , Abuja{2017}; Ambassador's Night, Abuja {2014}; Re-Integration of the Roots , Badagry Festival{2014}; Illumination [Illuminating the World via Art], Lagos{2013}; Aesthetic Bonds ,(2007); Select Fellow Artists , Auchi, Edo State{2003}.



"Enigma"
Metal (Mild Steel), 220cm x 46cm, 2020





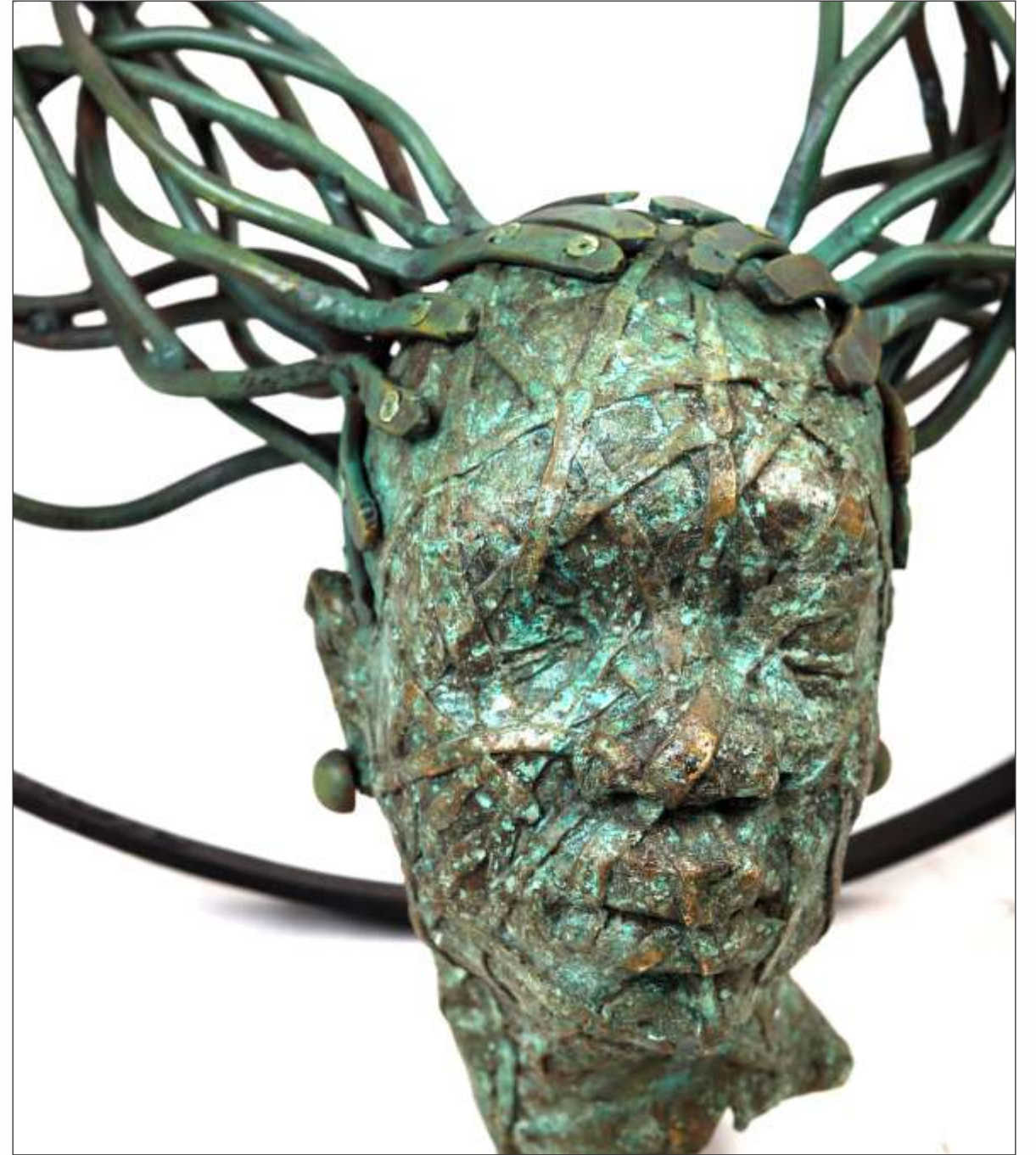
"Decadence Of The Society"
Metal, 224cm x 185cm, 2020

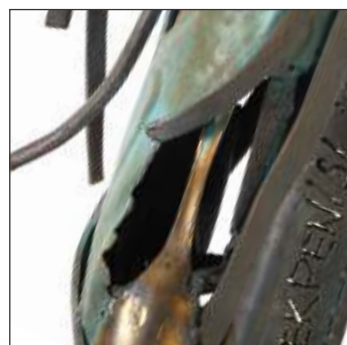
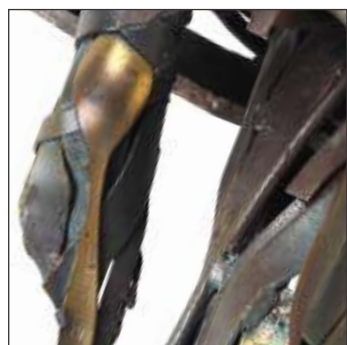






"Symbol Of Honor" (Series)
Metal, 123cm x 172cm, 2020





"Circle Of Abundance"
Metal (Mild Steel), 160cm x 88cm, 2020





ADEOLA BALOGUN

Master Of The "labyrinthine Morphology" Concept

Born November 17th, 1966 at Ota in Ogun State, Nigeria, Adeola Balogun combines a fully engaged studio practice with an academic career at Nigeria's premier tertiary institution, The Yaba College of Technology. He graduated from Yaba College of Technology, with specialization in sculpture (1993/94) and Masters in Fine Art (MFA, Sculpture) at the University of Benin (2001/4), Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. He also has a PhD in Sculpture (2020) from the Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State.

After his National Youth Service in his alma-matter (Yaba College of Technology), Balogun was immediately reabsorbed as an academic staff into the institution in 1995. He won the awards as a student for Best Student in life-drawing and sculpture in 1993/94 set. He also was presented the Faculty award of Visual Experimentalist of the Decade (2011) in view of his visual explorations.

Adeola Balogun has staged several solo exhibitions such as Current Rhythm, CAMAA (2019), Institute of African studies, University of Ibadan, Tribute to Fela (2019), Galleri Astley, Uttersberg, Sweden, Bubbles of Emotion(2017), Omenka Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, Connections I & II (2015), Galleri Astley and Galleri Pumphause, Uttesberg and Trollhattan, respectively, Sweden, Mirage I (2014), ArtHub, Abudhabi, Mirage II (2014), Quintessence Gallery, Lekki, Lagos, Matter Redirected I & II, Galleri Astley, Uttesberg and Galleri Pumphause, Trollhattan, Sweden (2013), Soundspiration, Omenka Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, Ants and Giants (2011), Quintessence Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos, Infinite Patterns (2009)), Nike Art Gallery, Lekki, Lagos, The Seed Phenomenon (2006) amongst others. He has also participated in several group shows and a number of commissioned projects within Nigeria and beyond are to his credit. He was artist-in residency in 2013 and 2015 in Ashley Gallery, Uttesberg, Sweden, artist-in residency, ArtHub (2014), Abu Dhabi, UAE amongst others.

Some of his selected public commissioned works include the late Michael Ibru statue (bronze, 2017), at Michael & Cecilia Bru University, Delta State, The late Ayangburen of Ikorodu statue (2015), Ikorodu, Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo (19ft) statue, at Allen round-about, Ikeja, Funso Williams bronze statue (18ft), at Western Avenue round-about, now named after Funso Williams, and Sir John Glover and Madam Tinubu's bronze busts, at the foyer of Union Bank building in Marina, Lagos, Nigeria. Also are the Towards Achieving

Distinction, (welded metal sculpture, 25ft) and Symbol of Justice and Culture statue (bronze sculpture, 26ft), commissioned by Omooba (Egnr.) Yemisi Shyllon, for the University of Ibadan campus, Oyo State (2009) and University of Lagos (2015), Nigeria respectively. His works History (2015), welded steel sculpture (11ft) and Outflow, an installation, are both at Galleri Ashley collection, Uteshberg, Sweden.

Balogun has participated in several seminars and conferences both within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. He also has contributed to journal publications. He has facilitated and/or participated in several creative workshops such as the Harmattan Workshop, Nigeria, Quintessence Nigeria Limited/ Galleri Astley, Sweden and Fist Upcycling, Art Hub, Abu Dahbi, UAE. A large body of Balogun's life-size bronze sculpture and tyre works can be found in OYASAF collection, a private art foundation, established by Omooba (Engr) Yemisi Shyllon. Other notable art collectors and institutions in possession of his works in Nigeria and in the diaspora are: Galleri Asley, Galleri Trollhattan, and Kulturhuset Koren in Sweden, ArtHub, AbuDhabi, UAE, Ford Foundation, Pan African University, Nigerian Breweries, American International School amongst several others.

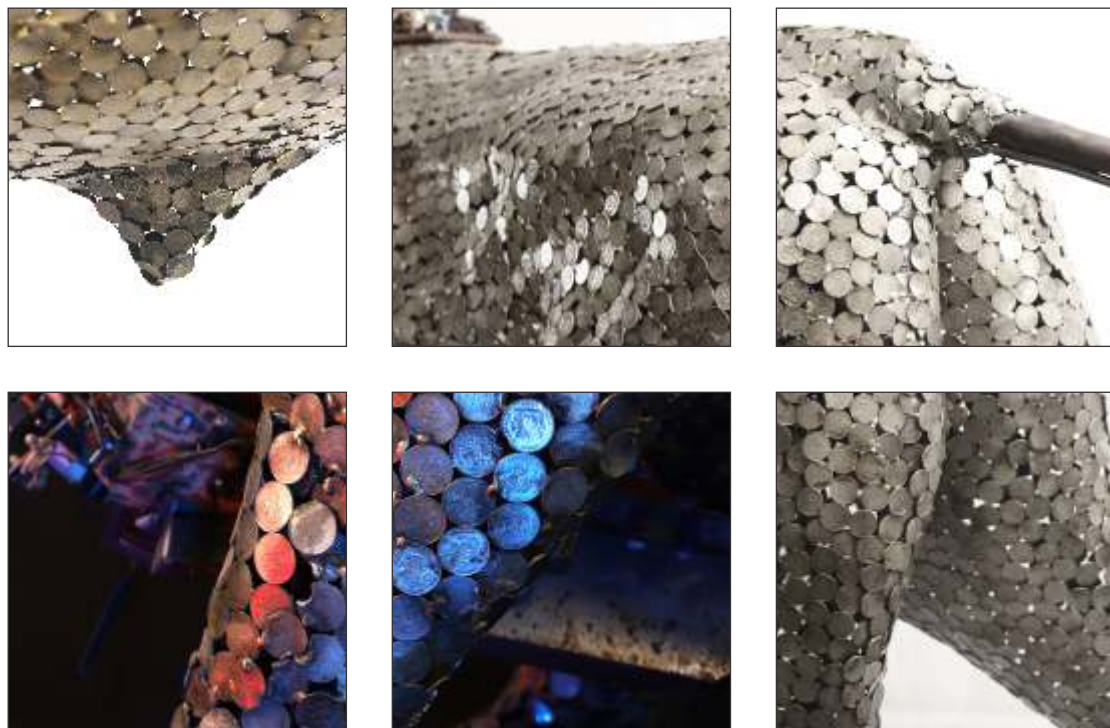
Artist's Statement

Discarded or found objects though generally considered to have seemingly lost their primary usefulness are laced with robust history of previous usefulness pulsating with immense possibilities. These possibilities are of immense intrigue for exploration to me. Aside from the environmental consciousness and responsibility involved in attending to materials lying in wake, I consider it important to collaborate with the environment by reviving the encountered materials in a process of 'rebirth' that imbues them with new meaning in relation to my subject of concern. They become new life in the environment that housed their old lives. The subject matter in my work is typically steeped in interrogating existential questions and challenges that make up our social navigation. This is usually spurred by personal experiences and memories which here culminate in the concept themed “Labyrinthine Morphology”.

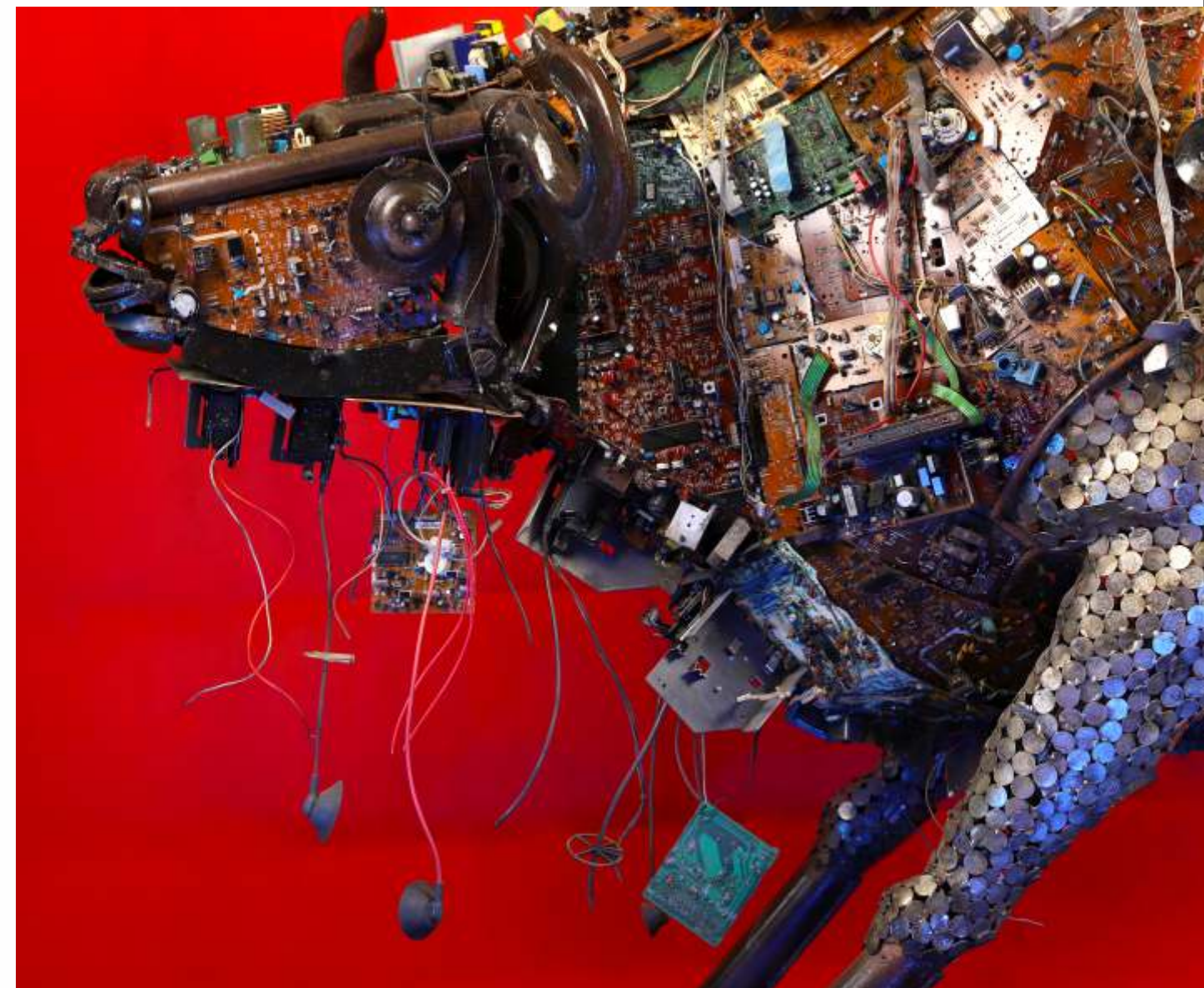
My creative trajectory straddles diverse media, processes and concepts in sifting and espousing the essence of the morphing of my subject. In this regard, discarded objects, such as metal scraps, rubber tyres, horse shoes and sundry discarded materials are explored to engage subjects as diverse as socio-political, culture, nature, humanity and survival in multi-layered dimension.

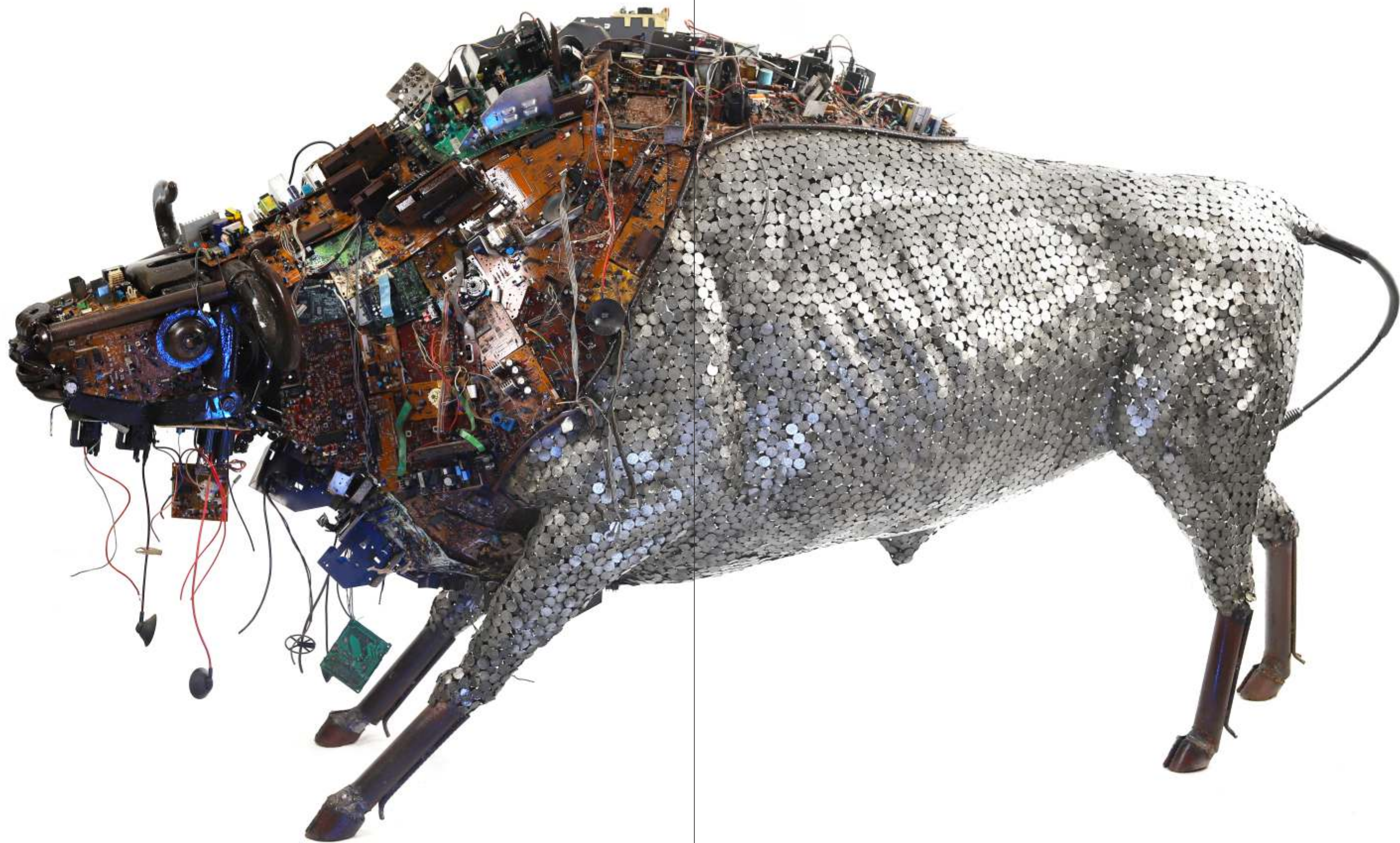
Recently recurring in my creative explorations is the employment of electronic panels. These are engaged through their characteristic of being integral components in technology and here applied as a universal metaphor that highlights the profound impact of contemporary material waste. This disposal by the modern man could be deployed lethally or benevolently. Technology actually defines the quantum advancement and sophistication of the modern man in various aspects of life. The waste produced and the use of it implies the influence and impact of the materials in the life of modern man. This body of work is centered on metaphorical associations that also reference the living conditions these materials come along with and the gapping contradictions in the society through technological influence.

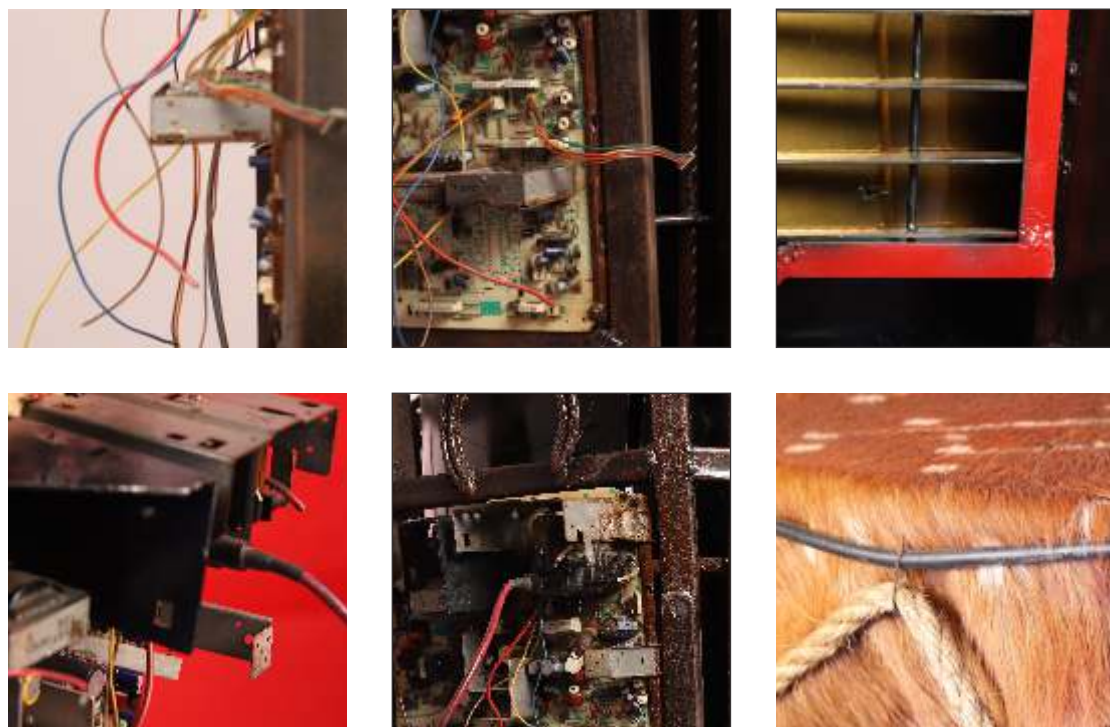
The works also address the need to recognize and respect the inherent value of every material. By so doing, transmute it in the creation of objects of contemplation and critical engagement without being devoid of aesthetic value. My technique of exploring each material is usually informed by its nature and morphology; could be additive, subtractive or combined. I also follow trajectories that my explorations open for me. I follow the concern about what is next in manipulating and exploring what I am working with. Each work is usually a gateway into a new narrative. In reference to content, a wide spectrum of influence matters contribute to my self-imposed explorative tasks which include people, places, books, music, myth, folklore and encountered material itself.



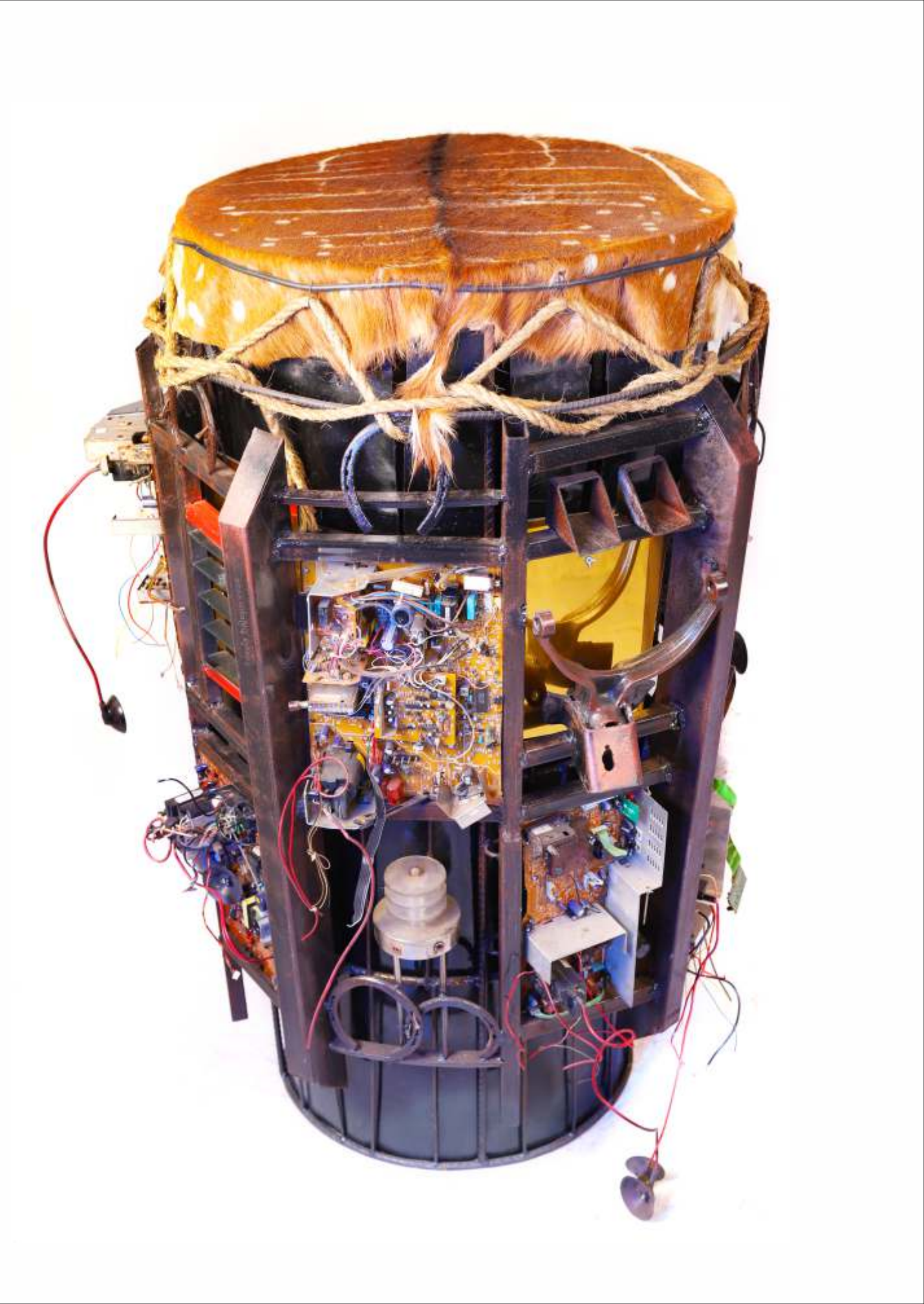
"Supreme Mechanism"
Steel, electronic panels, coins,
150cm(H) x 270cm(L) x 110cm(B), 2020

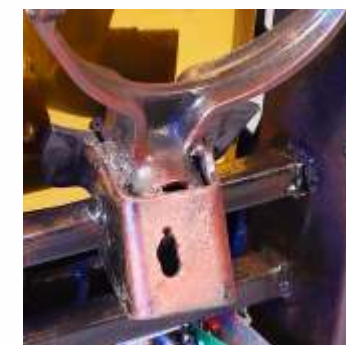
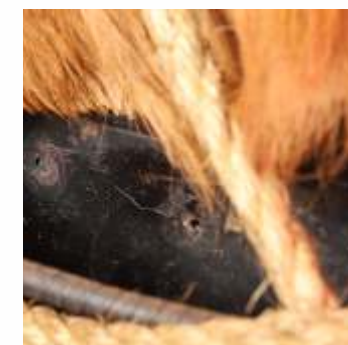
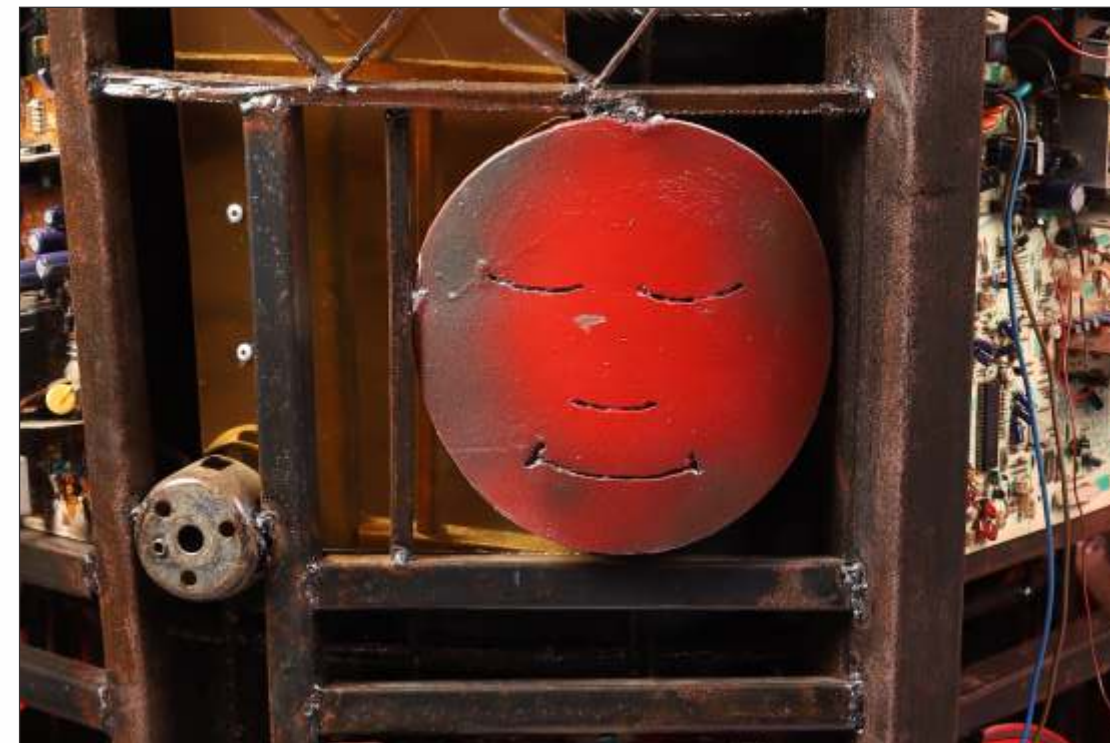


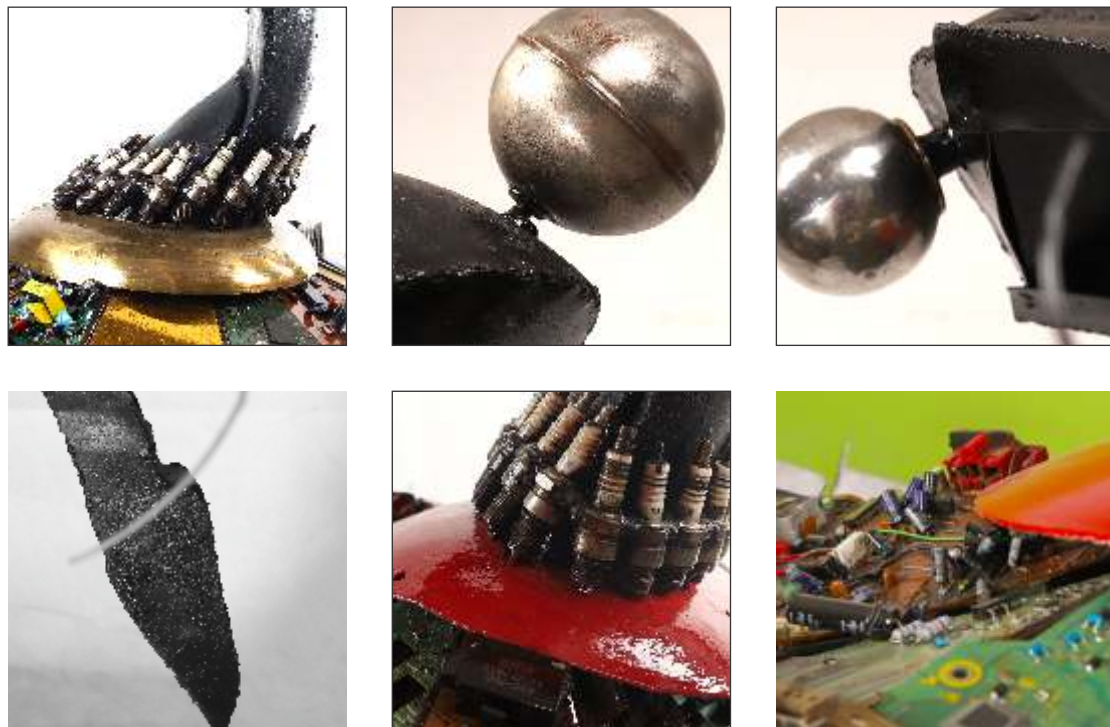




"Drum Of Honour"
Welded metal, electronic board, antelope skin
135cm(H) x 88cm(L) x 86cm(B), 2020

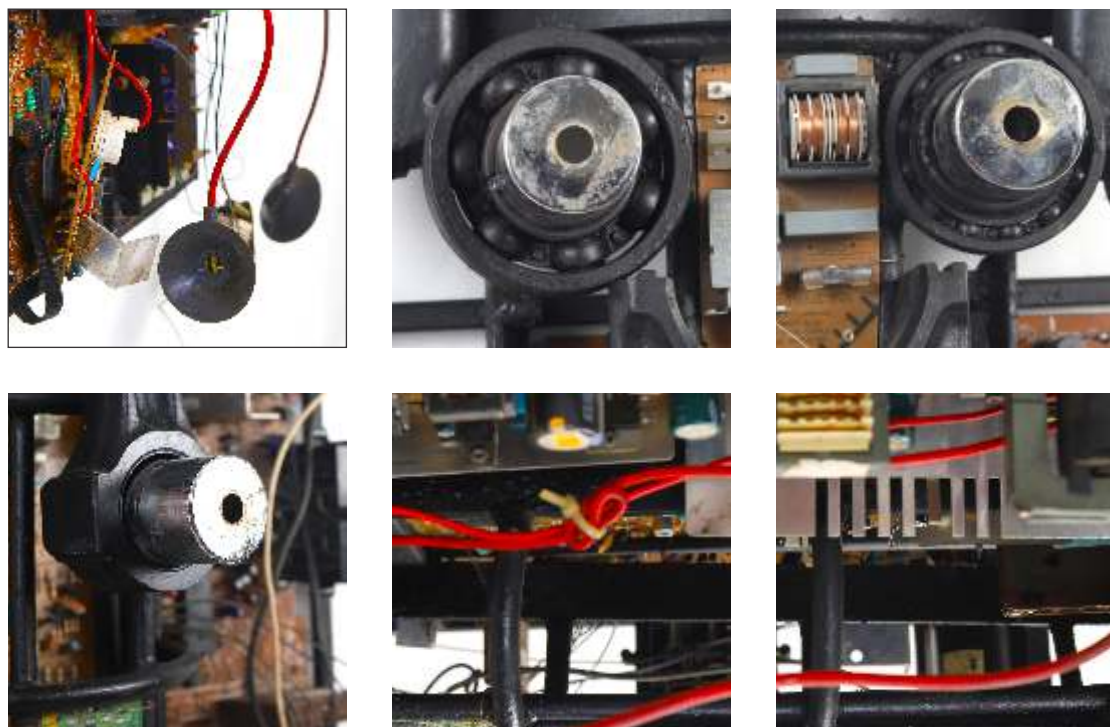






"Electrifying"
Mixed welded metal, electronic board, plug,
150cm(H) x 79cm(L) x 82cm(B) EACH, 2020





"The Shield"
Steel, electronic panel, 76cm x 45cm, 2020





ABINORO COLLINS

The Greatest Spoon Sculptor

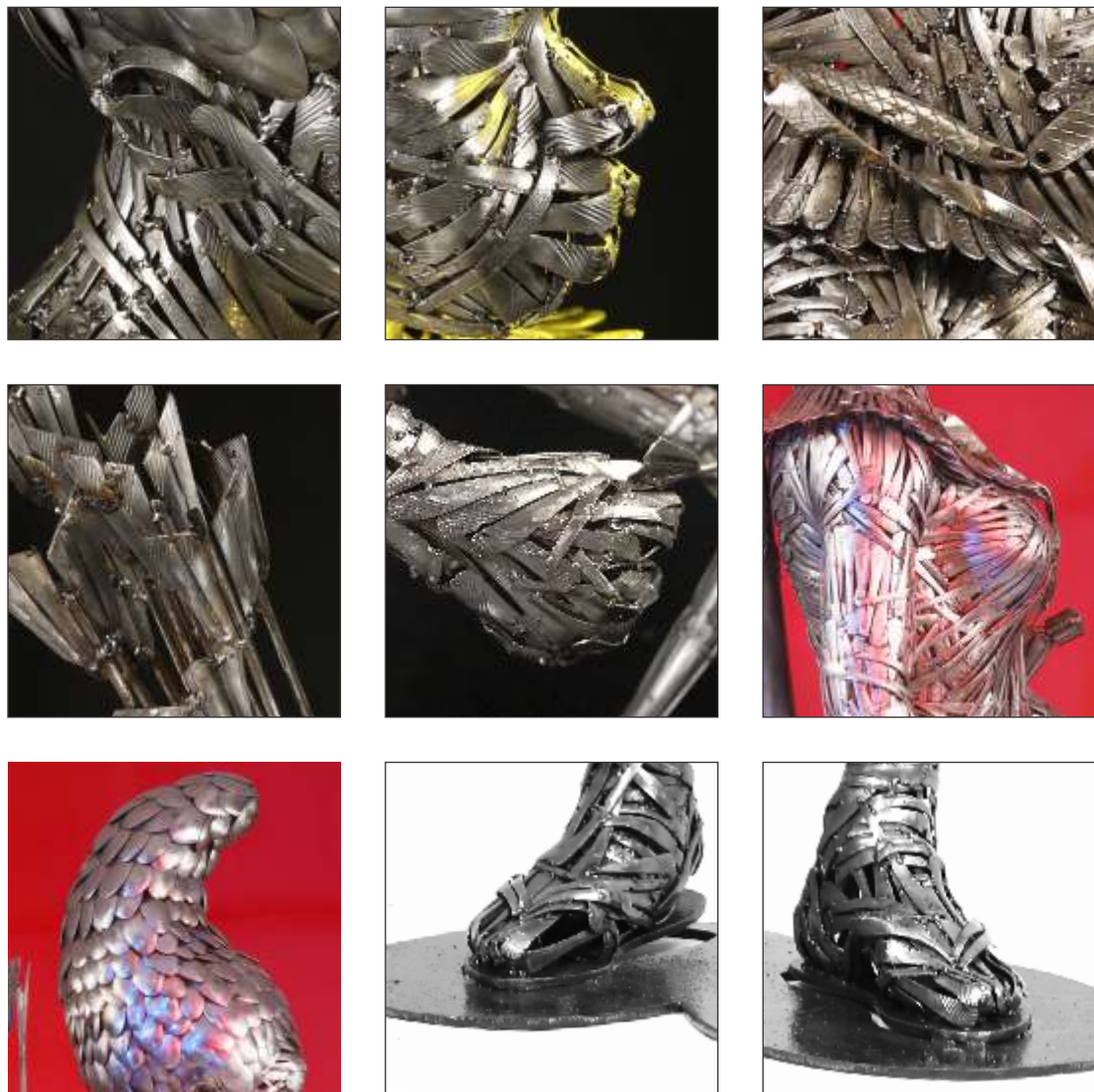
Abinoro Akporode Collins (b. 1984), attended the School of Art and Design, Auchi Polytechnic in Edo State. There he obtained his National Diploma (ND) in painting and general art (2009). Then graduated with a Higher Diploma (HND) in sculpture (2012) as the overall best graduating student.

Cutlery (spoons and forks) has constantly been a medium he experimented for 8 years. With it, he has achieved unimaginable sculptures clearly depicting mind blowing forms and details in his work yet been able to twist his subjects to engage issues in his environment. He draws inspiration from his environment, depicting these experiences with his sculptures rendered in stainless steel cutlery, fire glass and bronze. His art is a mixture of both classical, highly conceptualized and repurposed materials. By repurposing materials, he gives new meaning to the materials without having to allow them to be worn out or discarded.

Solo Exhibition: *Raptured* {2019}

Group Exhibitions: Guest artist in the king Abdulazeez Camel Festival, Saudi Arabia alongside 43 international artists {2019}; and *Material Time* , Rele Art Gallery , {2019}; *Mississippi* USA {2018}; Retro Art Gallery, Abuja {2018}; African Art month Residency and Exhibition including the Historical Festival by Art Hub , Abu Dhabi UAE {2014}; and Grand finale of Life In My City Competition , Nigeria {2013} amongst other prominent exhibitions within and outside Nigeria.

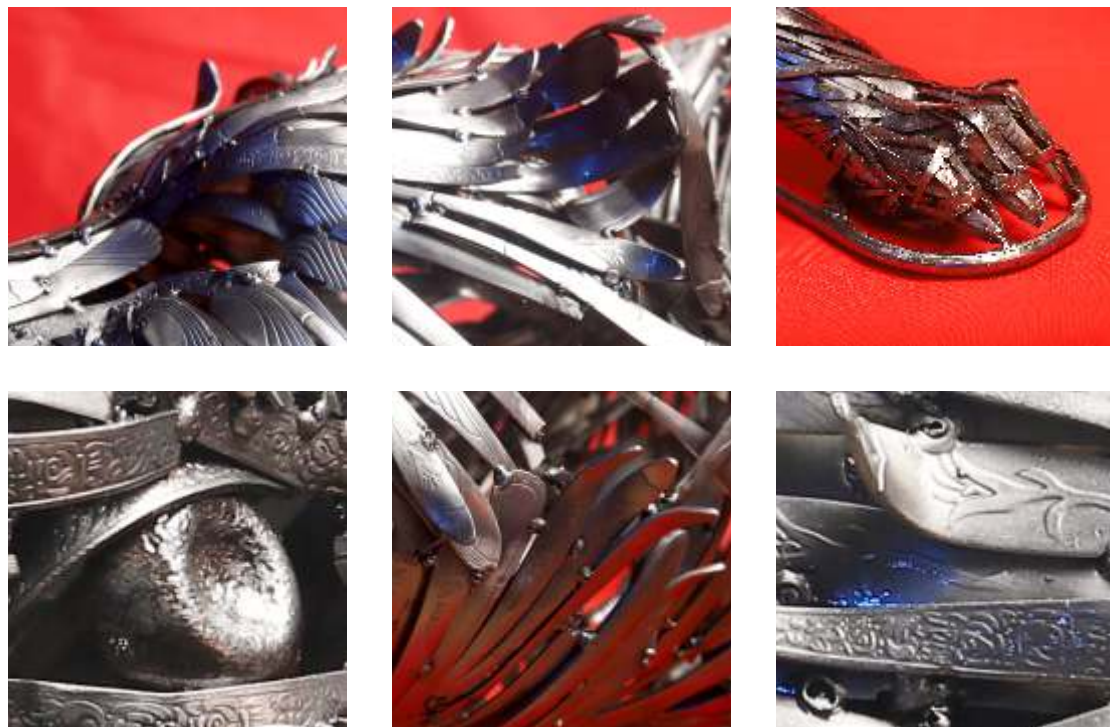
Recognition: The artist was recently acknowledged and featured on BBC News for his impressive art pieces created with spoons.



"Warrior Queen"
Stainless Steel Cutlery, 214cm x 110cm, 2020

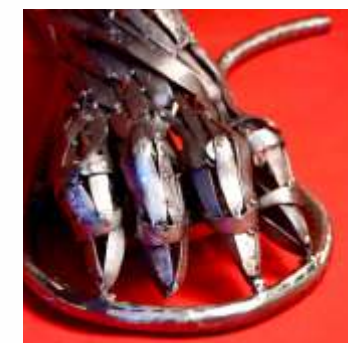
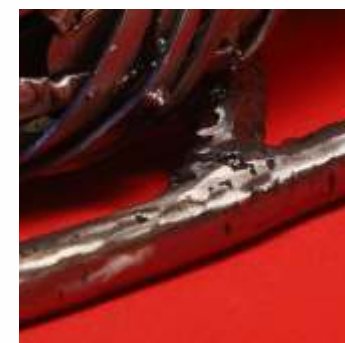






"All For Greater Good"
Stainless cutlery, 86cm x 81cm, 2020







"The Guardian"
Stainless Steel Cutlery, 180cm x 110cm, 2020





DOTUN POPOOLA

Artist of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

DOTUN is a synergetic metal sculptor who has carved a niche for himself with his monumental metal sculptures. He had his first and second degree in Fine and Applied Arts with a specialization in sculpture and painting respectively in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. He is passionate about touching lives through his artistic and leadership skills; turning trash to treasures, rubbish to rubies.

Exhibitions: West Africa International Art Fair “ARTX Lagos” {2018}; maiden scrap art exhibition, Qatar {2019}; and Global Art Festival, Gujarat India {2020} . Overall, Dotun has participated in twenty-nine (29) group exhibitions, fourteen (14) joint, and five (5) solo exhibitions. Dotun facilitates art workshops for students, professionals, NGOs, healthcare institutions, hospices, orphanage homes, rehabilitation centers, and schools locally and internationally. Dotun has equally executed several monumental sculptures and large murals both in Nigeria and the United States of America.

Dotun continues to provide landmark mentoring opportunities for professional development, local and international artists in his studio in South-West Nigeria. His Immense contribution to the growth of Art globally has been featured in over 40 newspaper publications and TV stations both locally and internationally. This includes the New York Times, BBC, CNN Africa, BBC pidgin, Reuters, Aljazeera, and channels Television to mention but a few.

Artist’s Statement:

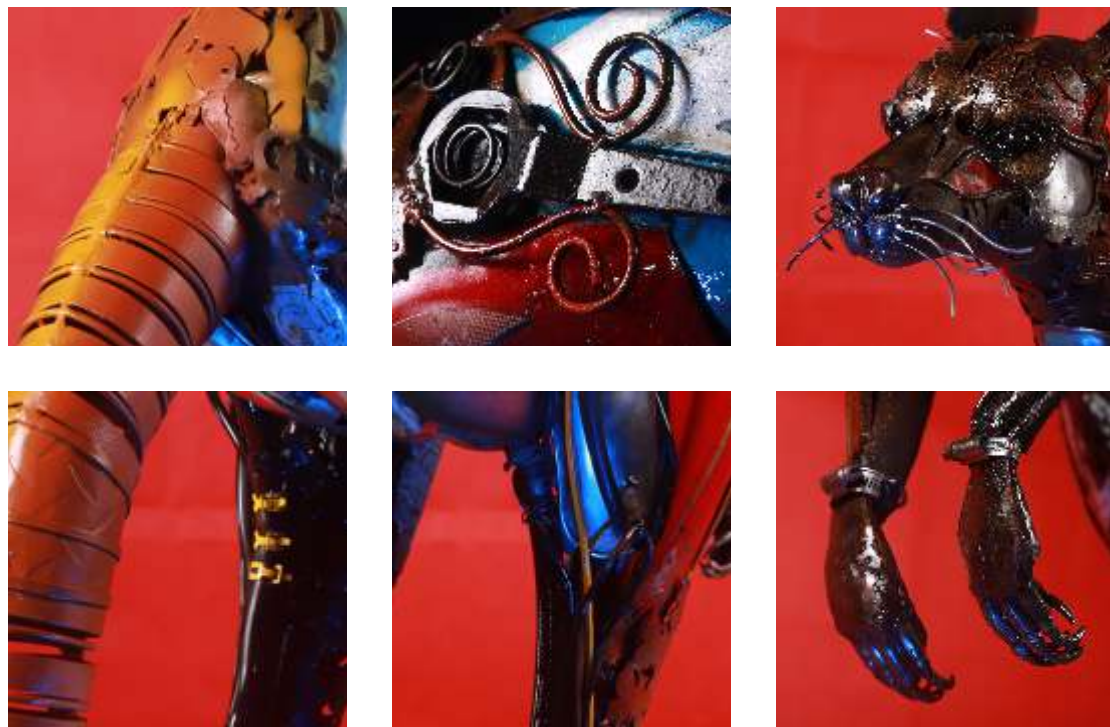
My artistic practice is based on a personal philosophy that art should be explored as an agent of change, and as a tool of social review, re-engineering, and protest against environmental decadence. My body of works has addressed the issue of waste management and conservation, infrastructural decay, and the need to repurpose and reuse the large army of wastes that make our environment unsightly and threaten the ecosystem. My goal, then and now, is aimed at creating a luxury brand from discarded materials



"Eja Nla"
Metal Scraps,
274cm(H) x 122cm(L) x 92cm(B), 2020



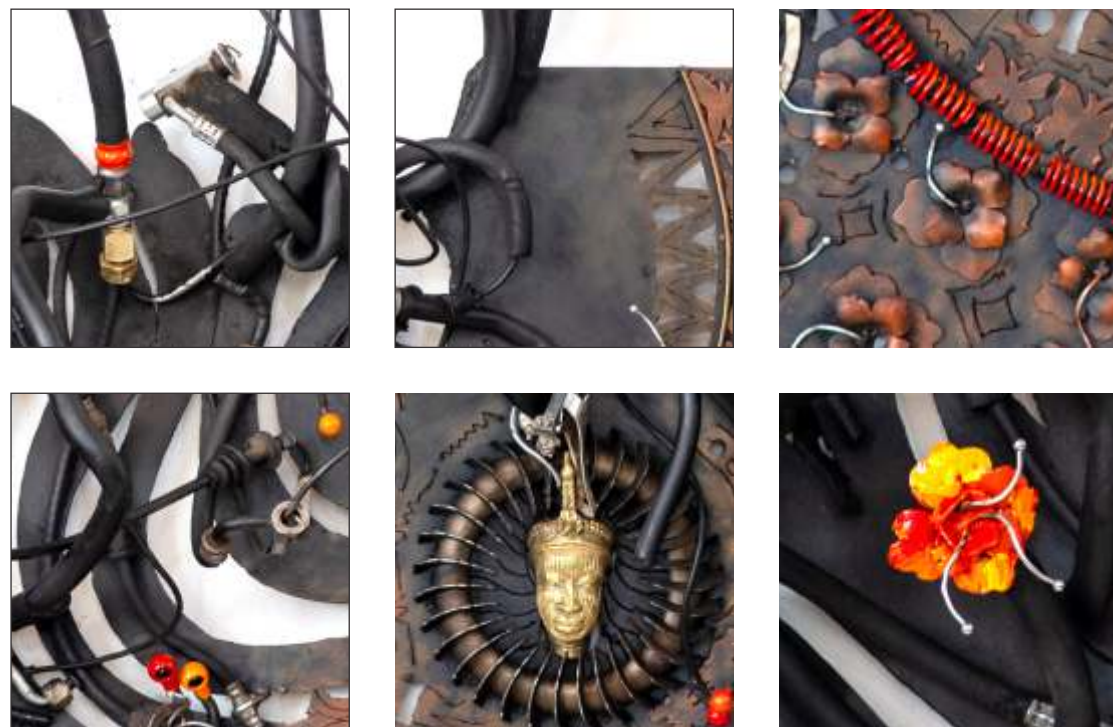




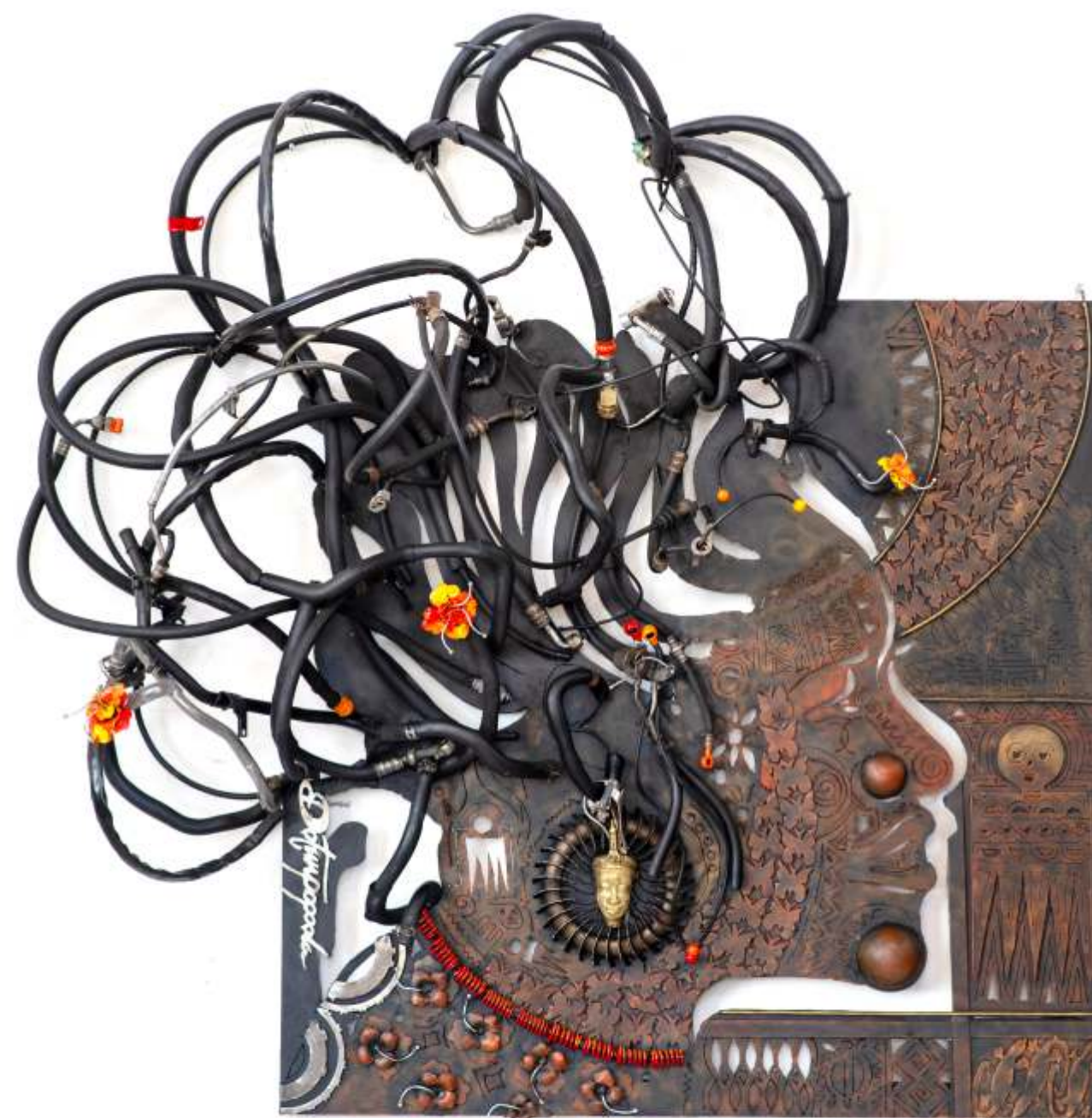
"Kangaroo"
Metal Scraps,
158cm(H) x 163cm(L) x 45cm(B), 2020





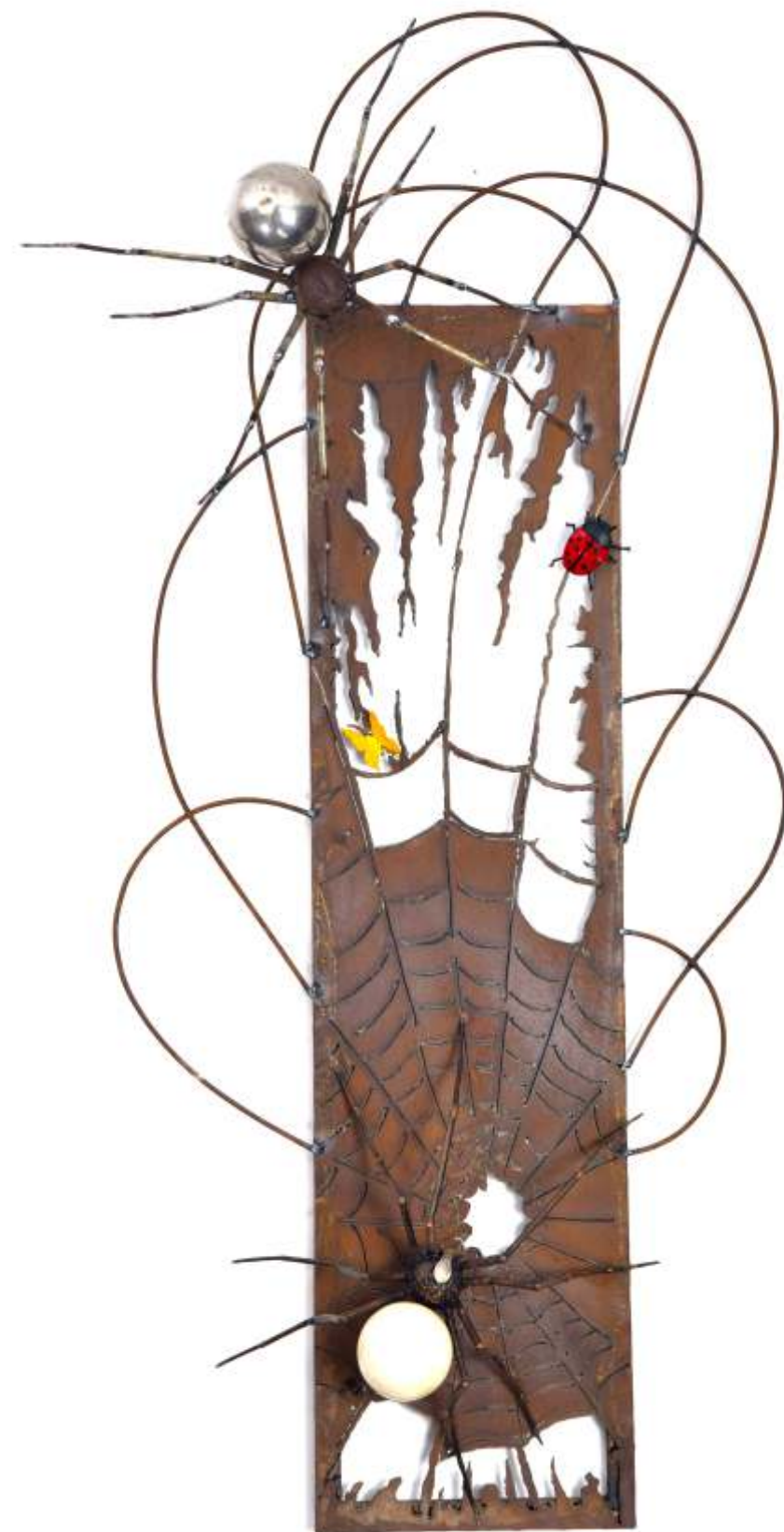


"The Wiring Of Woman's Brain"
Mild Steel, Metal Scraps Auto base
and Acrylic, 168cm x 168cm, 2020





"Alantakun"
Mild Steel, Metal Scraps Auto base
and Acrylic, 153cm(H) x 71cm(L) x 23cm(B), 2020



Creative Exploitation of Metallic Expression in tune of Appreciation



Edward Everett Hale said *"coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success"*. I can't but totally disagree.

AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor as a paradigm shift testifies to the fact that creative and genuine collaboration is the root of all success. There is no doubt that the era of individualism is fading off.

In this era of technology, we must all begin to realize the need to unite for better results. Only a deep thinking creative mind can understand the processes we have scaled through on this journey. But teamwork has been the secret to this achievement.

Not so much could have been achieved without the stakeholders and staff of Thought Pyramid Art Centre, Lagos working around the clock with Mr. Ovie Omatsola. There would have been nothing without the cooperation and professionalism of the five Artists and their luxury metalworks making history here today.

These artists with their courage, passion, and artistic ability have been able to utilize metals to benefit the environment. They have creatively explored metals to communicate their deepest desires and intelligent thoughts which continues to inspire and open our eyes to the world as it is.

The mind blowing pieces of Fidelis Odogwu, charming life-like works of Adeola Balogun, energetic and magnificent works of Dotun Popoola, dynamic interpretation of rod (metal) by Steve Ekpenisi, to the intricate rhythmic approach visible in the unique works of Abinoro Collins. We can't adequately appreciate these ingenious minds and their therapeutic pieces because we have confirmed first hand, the rigorous stages it required to create these unique treasures.

We can't thank our sponsors enough for believing in this vision. Indeed, this exhibition couldn't be this glorious without their reliability and assurance: Nigeria Machine Tools, VBank, Elegance Gallery, and Thought Pyramid Art Centre.

Words cannot describe our gratitude to members of the AJÓRIN Dancemetalphor crew for their dedication and sacrifice to this historical event. From the moment the idea was conceived until now that it has been actualized.

The audience (You) remain the most essential part of this actualization. There would be no history to set if you had refused our invitation.

This is backed by the popular statement made by late Lamidi Fakeye (a renown Nigerian carver) who says "GBEGI GBEGI TI GBEGI TAN, O KU GBENU GBENU." The process is always incomplete without you: our esteemed and most loyal audience.

Appreciation is an empowering factor that fosters the energy in man. Definitely, there is so much stakeholders, artists, and art fanatics can achieve together if we all hands continue to be on deck. Collaboration is the key in this present time.

Overall, I am most honored to have worked alongside the entire crew and seasoned artists whose works exhibited.

Most importantly, I am glad that we have all come to make history together.

For that reason, I raise my glass and cheers to all of you.

Yusuf Durodola
Branding Consultant/Co-curator



Detailed view from "Warrior Queen" Abinoro Collins, 2020

PLATES



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19



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