

SUSA R6  
SUSA RODRIGUEZ-GARRIDO



# BLACK OUTS

BY CHIKE EMEMBO

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**CURATOR**

Susa Rodríguez-Garrido

**GRAPHICS**

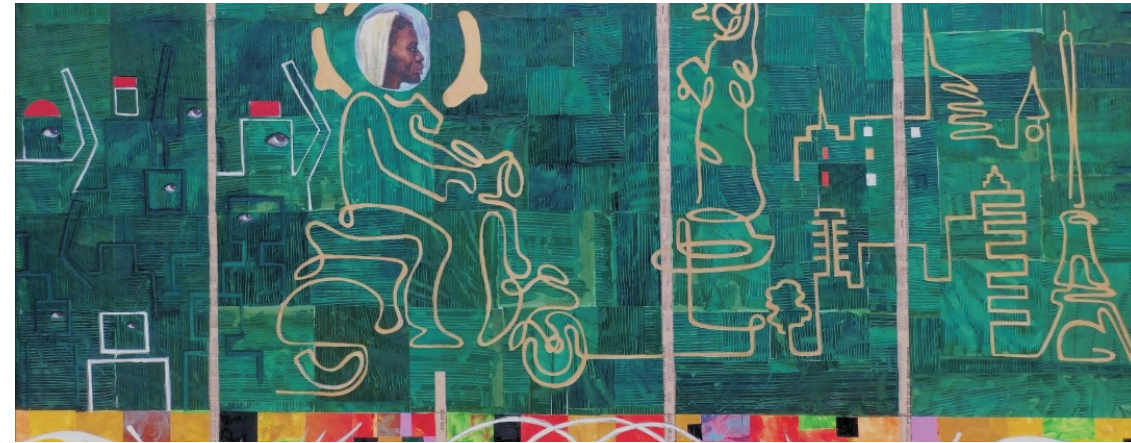
Sola Abimbola Odulusi

**PUBLISHER**

Agama Art Publishing & Agency

**PRINTER**

Most Higher than Entertainment



ORISUN GALLERY IN COLLABORATION WITH AGAMA ART PUBLISHING & AGENCY PRESENTS

## BLACKOUTS A SOLO ART EXHIBITION BY CHIKE EMEMBO

CURATED BY SUSA RODRÍGUEZ-GARRIDO

24th - 26th JUNE, 2022 (OPENING DAY AT 6:00PM)  
 ORISUN GALLERY, TROPIC GALLERIA  
 PLOT 269 MOHAMMEDU BUHARI WAY, (NEXT TO GRAND SQUARE)  
 ABUJA - NIGERIA



**SUSA R6**  
 SUSAN RODRIGUEZ-GARRIDO



## FOREWORD

Chike Emembo and I started working together on this exhibition at the beginning of 2021, from then on we thought about everything from the style of his latest works to the space where his works should be exhibited.

Taking care of everything with diligence was one of Emembo's priorities especially after his last individual exhibition in 2010. I have to say that the result is spectacular and the dedication to the theme of the exhibition is evident. All the research that he has invested is transmitted in each one of the works that belong to the exhibition, **Blackouts**.

The exhibition consists of 22 works that touch on theological themes interspersed with socio-cultural content. Some of the interesting points that the theme of this exhibition highlights is the importance of retelling history from an African point of view, not a Western one and bring to the surface what has been hidden for a long time.

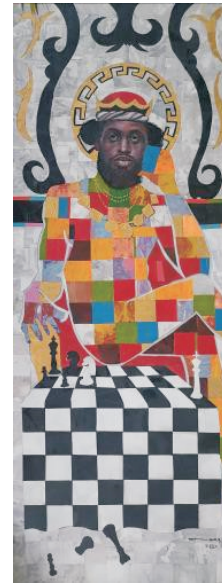
As Mwalimu Julius Nyerere says “Africans all over the continent, without a word being spoken either from one individual to another, or from one country to another, looked at the European, looked at one another, and knew that in relation to the European they were one.”

It is time for Africans to define themselves rather than compare themselves to something from the outside, and art events like **Blackouts** are a good opportunity to reflect and debate crucial arguments like this one.

The exhibition will be from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th June 2022 at Orisun Gallery, Abuja.

### Susa Rodríguez-Garrido

Curator of **Blackouts** Exhibition  
Artist, Publisher and Founder of  
Agama Art Publishing & Agency  
[www.agamaart.com](http://www.agamaart.com) | [www.susargart.com](http://www.susargart.com)  
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Solomon: Checkmate Player!  
Mixed media  
57.5 cm x 137.5cm  
2022

A more accurate depiction of the personality of the biblical King Solomon, who is described as dark skinned in the holy books but erroneously depicted as light skinned over the centuries. It makes sense as his father David is dark skinhead. He is dubbed to be very tactful and wise as you can see him closing up the game of chess. However, in the multitude of his wisdom and grandeur he played many women too (700 wives and 300 concubines) this led to him losing focus and inadvertently losing half the kingdom albeit not in his time but in his son who succeeded him. You can see the game board folding up and all the pieces falling off. Therefore, while he played others he ended up playing up himself.



Lust of the Eye Series #3  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



David  
Mixed media  
60cm x 137.5cm  
2022

A little known boy, without experience defeats a battle tested giant with a sling and stone. That seems very improbable just as local Nigerian fashion designers have also risen to displace foreign heavy brands like Versace, which we see as the Medusa head is replaced with a black boy head while the boy holds the Medusa head in his hand. In true essence, David is described as being dark skinned in the holy books, but has been showed as light skinned over the centuries, so borrowing the classic structure of popular David's sculpture, the appropriate skin tone and age is rendered in the attributes of the subject.



Love Means Giving  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm

Loving is an action word, it is not passive. You cannot say you love without backing up the statement with offering something, something that cost you something, something that holds value for you. The figure offers bread and wine which in Christian Dom represents blood and body - the highest form of sacrifice done out of love as demonstrated with the flower it also presents with the other hand.

## ABOUT ORISUN GALLERY



We are Orisun the source for a plethora of subliminal art spanning exquisite paintings and sculptures from oil, acrylic, charcoal & other mixed media forms, to a vast array of bronze, metal, wood, stone, tapestry work and relief etchings. We exhibit the visual arts of African Masters, contemporary and emerging artists from all the major art schools of sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region.

### Our Outlook

is the creation of a cultural ecosystem where art is sourced, sold and savored. We are building a unique experience for the confluence of visual, literary and performing arts for connoisseurs and all lovers of art, covering classical and intellectual to modern and popular art trends.

### Our Origins, Our Emergence

as an art gallery spans over three decades of painstaking collecting and commissioning of art from all over Africa. Over the years, we have also engaged in the appreciation and study of antiquities through interactions with curators and custodians of ancient cultural heritage sites such as the Osun-Oshogbo Grove and the Bronze Casters of Igun Street, among many others. Our aspiration is to achieve an aggregation of a rich diversity of masterpieces and antiquities that reflect the essence of African aesthetics and appeal to a global audience of art lovers.

As one of the core objectives of Orisun Art Gallery is to deploy our veritable platform in supporting and showcasing the depth of the talents, imaginations, knowledge and experiences of Nigerian and African artists and also by championing the artists, as the protagonists of our narrative.

**Blackouts** gives an apt credence to this, because the true African stories should be restored and be told in an objective way by Africans, mainly, but also with the contribution of people of other races, who have the conviction to let truth be their guiding light and compass. Because African history has been dominated by the western narrative, despite our outstanding roles and contributions to civilization and our advancement in all strata of life.

Our history should be celebrated, acknowledged and readdressed in a careful and researched manner to bring to the table important discussions such as the impact of transatlantic slave trade in our culture.



**Blackouts** is a bold and courageous approach by Emembo to highlight visually, through his rich and deep use of colours, style and approach to project these experiences, imaginations and knowledge and the need to call to attention the role for us as Africans to rewrite history. Furthermore, we need to challenge the status quo, to liberate our minds and contribute to the discussion and expedition of the African renaissance and to promote the consciousness of being proud to be an African with the ideals and values that set us apart as a unique people.

This exhibition is a true tribute to the irrepressible African spirit, championed by the greats, such as Aina Onabolu, Ben Enwonwu, Lasekan, Grillo, Onobrakpeya... Chike Emembo is becoming one of the great!

It gives Orisun Art Gallery immense pleasure to collaborate with Agama Art Publishing & Agency, founded by Susa Rodríguez-Garrido, an artist, curator and publisher, who is curating this exhibition, to display the works of this exceptional artist, Chike Emembo in an exhibition at Orisun Art Gallery in June 2022.

**Femi Coker**  
Manager

**Adebola Adetunmbi PhD**  
Executive Director

## ABOUT AGAMA ART PUBLISHING & AGENCY

Agama Art Publishing & Agency Ltd. was founded by artist, curator and publisher, Susa Rodríguez-Garrido, in 2018, to promote African artists and to encourage them to express their enormous talent and creativity.

Agama Art Publishing & Agency Ltd. is an independent publishing and agency that promotes African Artists through books, e-Books and catalogues about African art, photography, architecture, sculpture, design and fashion that irradiate creativity, imagination, thoughts and education.

We also represent artists endorsing them through exhibitions, events, seminars, talks, etc. We select and publish the most brilliant African artists, bringing them to life in dynamic ways, print and digital, for readers all around the world.

### Our Culture

We believe in these artists and their ideas and therefore we think that what we do matters.

It takes a lot of hard work and research to represent artists and publish these books, e-Books and catalogues, and we care about these artists, their ideas and talent. We are committed to making a difference and work with these artists in order to achieve this.

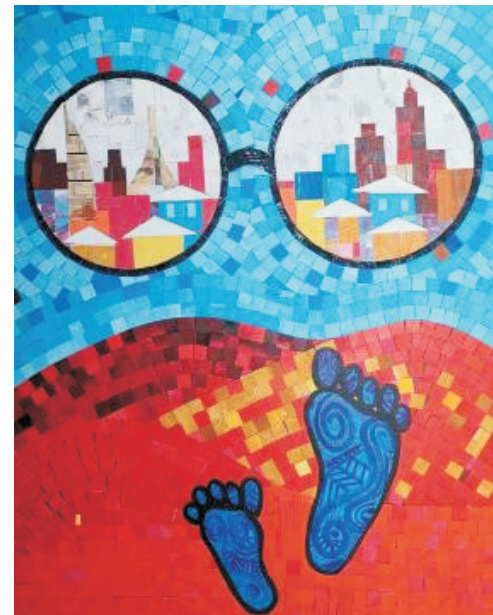
We work in collaboration with different women's organisations, diplomatic missions and other artists associations. We work together, among other things, to find new talent, encourage established talent, record young and long established artists, set up exhibitions, provide workshops, seminars and talks to underprivileged and disadvantaged female artists who want to start or continue their art career.

Untitled  
Mixed media  
60cm x 142.5cm  
2020



The Crooner 2  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2022

Master Class  
Mixed media  
150cm x 180cm  
2022



Take Steps  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



Wise Men Still Come From the East  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2022

One of the most popular theme of the Byzantine to the Renaissance eras is "the adoration of the Magi". Where The Three Wise Men traveled from the east (Babylon or Mesopotamia) to pay respect to a newborn king. This lends itself to the political state of Nigeria today, with special regards to the upcoming presidential election, with one particular candidate from the east generally touted to be the messiah, though everyone believes the big wigs and the corrupt system will not allow for easy passage. Much like the baby born as king but in a manger with seemingly poor chances of ever becoming king, he somehow managed to survive the odds just as everyone is looking up to The Three Wise Men from the east albeit with narrow odds. The painting is blacked-out to show the hopelessness with the only colour in be square shaped reds, which stands for the red-capped chiefs from Eastern Nigeria.



Master Class, mixed media, 150cm x 180cm, 2022

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Chike Emembo is an Abuja based multi-disciplinary fine artist that uses his art to explore issues that border on faith, and spirituality. These broad themes are often brilliantly overlaid with socio-cultural axioms in a relatable contemporary fashion. He started his training in 1998 enrolling in Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, majoring in sculpture and graphics.

He subsequently got his BA (Ed) from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Since 2007, he started producing and exhibiting only works of art that are faith based.

These themes seeks to interrogate the status-quo on religious imagery in a manner that educates, encourages, uplifts and strengthens the faith of the audience. This increases the functionality of the work from not only being aesthetically appealing but also spiritually uplifting.

Chike is also the convener of **ARTASTE: the Plates and Palettes Project**, which is an annual travelling art exhibition, aimed at exploring alternative art spaces. The exhibition which will run its 9th Edition, sweeps through three select prime locations usually a restaurant in a space of three months bringing the artworks of great artists to people who need to see them and can afford to buy them. The show has held in Missouri Hotel, 805 Restaurant, Charcoal Grill, Waffle Stop and Signature Restaurant (all Abuja) and The Traffic Restaurant/bar in Ikoyi, Lagos. He loves to create this platform where not only his works will be seen but that of other artists, especially of female artists.

He was the Chairman of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) Abuja in 2021, having previously served the SNA in various executive capacities. He is the art director at **Xchange Faces** and his works are highly sought after.

- Two solo exhibitions, **The Contagious Gospel, Spreading the Infection, 1 & 2**, Ceddi Plaza and Transcorp Hilton (2009 and 2010 respectively).
- **Road less Travelled**, Agama Art Publishing & Agency and Nordic Hotel Abuja, 2022.
- **African Fashion Show Geneva**, Grand empiski, Geneva, Switzerland, 2016.
- Opening ceremony of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International Convention, Leon, Mexico, 2010.
- **CREO**, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 RFA Family Worship Centre, Wuye, Abuja.
- **ARTASTE: Plates and Palettes Project** (2015-2021), Missouri Hotel, Traffic Bar, Waffle Stop, Dunes Centre, Chacoal Grill, Signature Restaurant and 805 Restaurant, Abuja. Traffic, Ikoyi Lagos.
- ALL Society of Nigerian Artists exhibitions from 2009 to present.

### Artist Statement

Historically dark skinned people have been under represented in biblical iconography, I find it imaginatively conflicting to juxtapose obvious dark skinned subjects with inaccurate light skinned ones presented over the ages. Hence the need to tell our own story.

I approach the easel everyday consummating my passion for traditional figurative art with my interest in rocks and stones, giving birth to austere but relatable works with a dash exciting fun colours.

The works which usually spins off from social contexts, simultaneously amuses and interrogates preconceptions in biblical iconoclasm. Delivering this baby on a bed of " tile-like" square foam boards with a faux finish of white Carrara marble is nostalgic of my early work experience in a floor finishing company in Abuja.

It is important that we recognise the Bible as a multicultural book and accurately presenting the icons provides some form of acceptance and closure for the underrepresented.

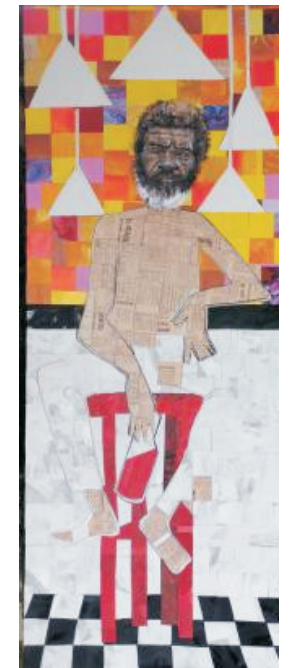


It's Positive, Who Will Tell Joey?  
Mixed media  
52.5cm x 137.5cm 2022

The story is told of a virgin who became pregnant and bore the savior of the world. Given the society in which the story is set, girls are given out in their teenage years, hence the proper depiction of her age at that time of her life. Her gait and posture shows her fear and vulnerability, as she has to communicate to her betrothed husband how she got pregnant. She got a cape like a superhero to depict her bravery, not of physical strength but of character, faith and resolve.

Noah Lonely Barman  
Mixed media  
57.5cm x 137cm  
2022

Background story is the biblical account of how Noah planted a vineyard and got drunk after surviving the flood. The other tangents the work touches on is the wrong representation of Noah in the arts not just visual arts but also in the art of film making. According to the story, He was the father of Ham (whom is generally accepted as black) he certainly has to be coloured but he is at the bar now, perhaps miserable from losing his friends or burdened with repopulating the world and he gave in to drinking. It is indeed lonely at the top.







The Triumphant Entry  
Mixed media  
120cm x 240cm  
2022

Culled from the biblical story of Jesus entering amongst cheers into Jerusalem. They were cheering him in hopes that he will rescue them from the hands of their Roman colonizers, but instead of charging in with a horse, he strutted in on a donkey. Almost everyone, whom is successful, started small, whether it was raising a family or starting a business. You probably started out on a scooter, a cheering crowd might be there but you face your risks alone, as we know a few weeks after Jesus made that entry he was murdered and the same crowd that cheered him on joined to pull him down. On another tangent, the work also speaks of the global issue of migration, with Nigeria accounting for the highest numbers from Africa, which is why the work is in our national colours: green with pockets of white. The easterners have proven to be probably the most fluid in terms of movement as you see The Three Wise Men with their red caps among the crowd.

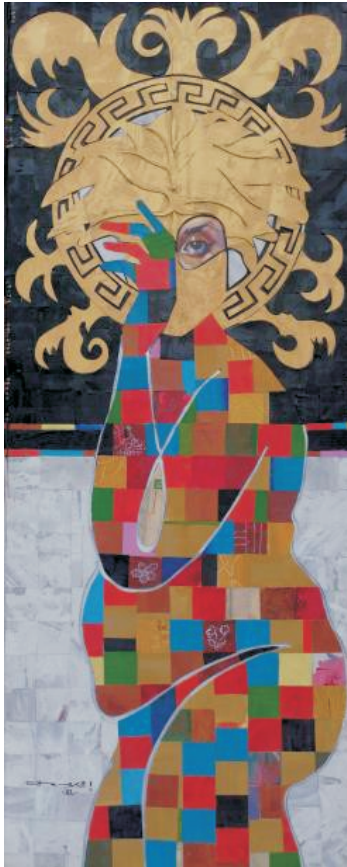


Sunday-Sunday Medicine  
Mixed media  
108cm x 142cm  
2022



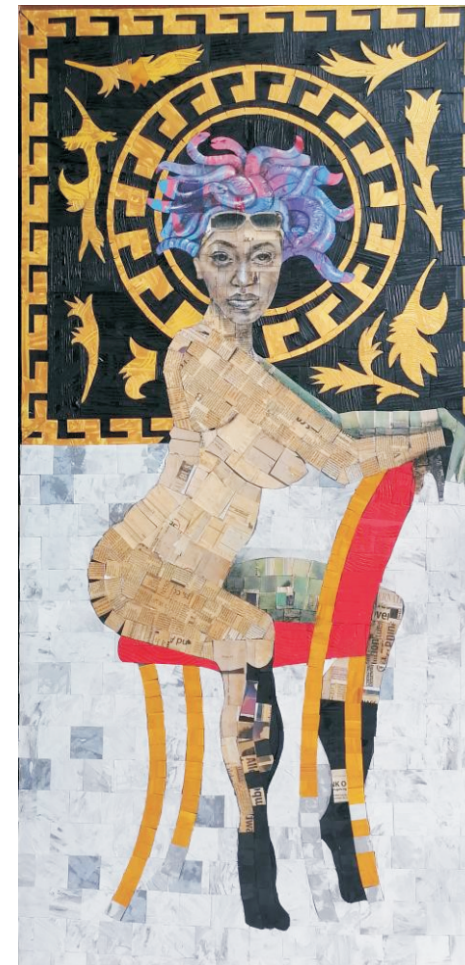
Frenemy  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021

It was a popular sad love story of betrayal between Samson and Delilah. While people have vilified Delilah over the centuries, but in the story she was operating under duress, bearing threats from her relatives to destroy her family. That is why she is caught in contemplation before betraying her boyfriend. Perhaps not this grave but as individuals we always come to this point where we are cornered and have to run opportunity cost over our prevailing circumstances. Furthermore, it is important to define boundaries, apportion the appropriate level of commitment, and not just be entangled with anyone without establishing whether they be friends or foe.

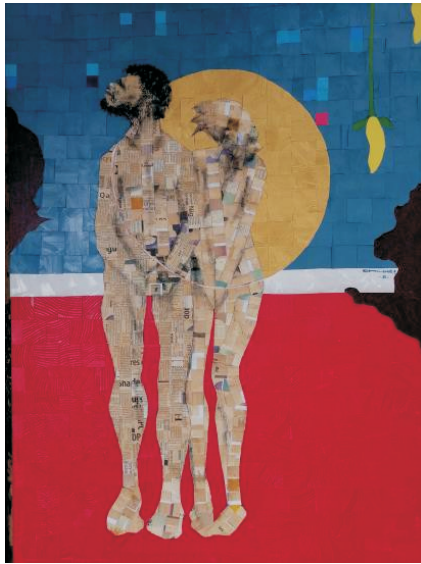


Bathsheba (Lust of the Eyes Series #4)  
Mixed media  
57.5cm x 137.5cm  
2022

Story has it that the woman David had his infamous adultery with was beautiful. The concept of beauty is as relative as they come, especially as regards seduction. She has been depicted by artists as slender without taking into account the taste buds of some other men. Hence her voluptuous size and a protruding stomach possibly from childbirth (at we were not told whether she has had a baby before or not). Married women with children can be sexy too and one should not expect that sparks would not fly just because she is married with kids. I hope that this irk will take a dig at the global subtle body shaming of women and inspire confidence in women to be comfortable in their own skin.



Lust of the Eyes Series #2  
Mixed media  
60cm x 150cm  
2022



Once Bitten, Twice Shy  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



Reach for the Sun  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



Yarning in Correct Tenses  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



Cornered at the Borehole  
Mixed media  
90cm x 120cm  
2021



Follow-follow  
Mixed media  
107.5cm x 123.2cm  
2020