

# decolonizing history: reclaiming nigerian identity

curated by susa r. garrido  
elbowroom art movement

elbowroom / agama art publishing & agency  
didi museum, lagos



17th-24th june 2023

didi museum  
175 akin adesola street,  
victoria island, lagos  
17th-24th june 2023



AGAMA ART PUBLISHING AND AGENCY



ELBOWROOM



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SUSA RODRIGUEZ-GARRIDO

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Elbowroom

**IMAGE (FRONT COVER)**

Kenan M. Peter

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Tewasi  
Jonah

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Another wonderful exhibition by these incredible artists from the ELBOWROOM Art Movement, that I have the honour of representing and curating.

This time the theme is **Decolonizing History: Reclaiming Nigerian Identity**, which is a thought-provoking topic. Since the early 1980s, there has been a number of experts, academics and scholars who have been calling for change to acknowledge modern and contemporary art produced by artists in different countries around the world. It is not an easy process and one that requires commitment, robust data and critical analysis, among other things.

According to Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, there is a vital need for new research “the historical, socio-political and cultural differences depicted in art all create countless “borders” in the making of meaning. These matters demonstrate just some of the ways in which the discipline is still deeply rooted in colonial art history and the English-speaking world, indicating the crucial need for new research to further challenge and structurally intervene in art history” [Price & Grant eds., Decolonizing Art History, February 2020].

I am so proud to be working along side these artists who are not only talented but committed to contribute to reclaim their history in their own terms and not through the glass of colonial art history.

**Susa R. Garrido**  
**Artist, Curator, Publisher and Founder of Agama**  
**Art Publishing & Agency**

foreword

# DIDI MUSEUM

Once national museums in Nigeria became the sole responsibility of government, which therefore became synonymous with government patronage. The collective input and impact of these non-national museums have remained only marginal. In most cases, they have had little or no recognition even within their own geographical locations.

Until 1983, there were few indigenous efforts at patronage for the visual arts, but there were no coordinated attempts to re-educate the audience and focus their interest not just on the heritage art but also on the contemporary.

On 11th May 1983, DIDI Museum was officially inaugurated within the private house of the founder, Dr Newton Jibunoh. The museum was founded in memory of Edith Jibunoh (DIDI), late sister of the founder who died at an early age. The institution was inaugurated by His Royal Highness, Alhaji Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano who was also the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

The inaugural exhibition featured two painters, Kenny Adamson and Adamu Ajunam, both exhibiting over 75 works in the five-day exhibition which was attended by a large number of people. In the words of the then Director-General of the National Commission of Museums and Monuments, Dr Ekpo Eyo, "it was an excellent first attempt of this kind of venture by a private citizen".

Forty years later, with over 200 art exhibitions held, book readings, art workshops and seminars, DIDI Museum still stands as one of the heritage organisations that provide support for indigenous and contemporary art, history and sustainability.

# ABOUT

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

Agama Art Publishing and Agency Ltd. is an independent publisher 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.

## AGAMA ART PUBLISHING & AGENCY

# theme

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The art exhibition theme of **Decolonizing History: Reclaiming Nigerian Identity** aims to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria while addressing the negative stereotypes and misconceptions that have been perpetuated about the country and its people. It is an opportunity to showcase the resilience of the Nigerian people in the face of colonization and to highlight the contributions of Nigeria to the world economy.

Nigeria, a country known for its diverse culture, rich history, and abundant natural resources, which, unfortunately, has often been portrayed in a negative light due to a limited understanding of its history and the complex challenges it has faced in the past. The theme of **Decolonizing History** seeks to correct these misconceptions and provide a more nuanced understanding of Nigeria and its people.

The exhibition will showcase various works of art that explore Nigeria's history, culture, and identity. This includes works that highlight the country's pre-colonial history, as well as pieces that explore the impact of colonization and how it has shaped the country's identity. The exhibition will also feature contemporary works that speak to the challenges and opportunities facing Nigeria today.

One of the main goals of the exhibition is to showcase the many contributions Nigeria and Nigerians have made to the world economy.

## DECOLONIZING HISTORY Reclaiming Nigerian Identity

Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa and is known for its abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and solid minerals. The country is also a major player in the agricultural sector, with exports of cocoa, rubber, and palm oil.

Despite these significant contributions, Nigeria's story is often overshadowed by negative stereotypes and misconceptions. This exhibition seeks to correct this by presenting facts and figures that showcase the country's achievements. For example, Nigeria is home to some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, including Aliko Dangote, who is currently Africa's richest man. The country is also a major contributor to the entertainment industry, with Nigerian films and music gaining popularity around the world.

In conclusion, the art exhibition theme aims to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria while addressing negative stereotypes and misconceptions. By highlighting the contributions of Nigeria and Nigerians to the world economy, the exhibition seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the country and its people.

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Bolaji  
Anaol-  
apo

ELBOWROOM Art Movement is a Nigerian art movement founded in 2016 in Abuja, Nigeria, by Olorunyemi Kolapo as leader with 7 other artists as members: Olasumade Olamide, Oluwole Olawuyi, Bolaji Onaolapo, Adeshina Adeodu, Opeyemi Olukotun and Imo Chigboromogu (in blessed memory). ELBOWROOM was born out of same purpose, orientation, aim and objective of setting a pace aimed at the acquisition of freedom of expression.

This unique art movement is set to make a great addition to the world of art and is set to change the narrative of how art and artist should be seen in Nigeria and globally. ELBOWROOM can as well be simply illustrated as a “room” which serves as a junction point of views and orientation just as the human elbow is a junction where two bones meet to grease each other seamlessly and even make functional impacts. The “room” is a meeting point of ideas, experience, artistic optimism so as to create a balance towards attaining freedom as its illustrated in their logo where birds can be seen flying out of a box.

The aim of the ELBOWROOM Art Movement is to promote freedom of expression without borders in art, with a focus on realism, and to establish a vibrant artistic community in Nigeria.

# elbowroom



Taiwo  
Olamide  
Olasun-  
made

Our objectives include encouraging artistic freedom, providing a platform for artists to explore their creativity and expressing themselves without limitations or constraints, promoting realism through fostering the appreciation and practicing of realistic art techniques, emphasizing the importance of skills and craftsmanship. We facilitate artistic exchange, establish collaborations and interactions among local and international artists to share ideas, techniques, and perspectives.

Our main goal is to create a supportive network, develop a strong network of artists, collectors, curators, and art enthusiasts who actively support and promote the Elbowroom Art Movement and its artists.

Our matron is Susa Rodríguez-Garrido and our current members include Olorunyemi Kolapo, Iloanya Onyekachukwu, Onalapo Bolaji, Olawuyi Oluwole, Adeodu Adeshina, Olasunmade Taiwo, Angello Awosola, Kenan M. Peter, Eneji Peter, Fidelia Unongo, Temitope Ojuromi and Tewasijo.

# elbowroom





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**THE RESILIENT SPIRITS: Awelewa Awakens Series**

Oil on canvas  
30cm x 91cm  
2023

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The work of Nigerian artist Olorunyemi Kolapo is mainly on connections that human beings make or do not make through language, gesture, look, expression, physical placement, cultural values and more.

The Abuja based self-taught artist marries art and science (physics) to investigate and illustrate emotions through portraiture using oil and charcoal with the science knowledge he gained after graduating with BSc in Applied Physics at university.

He has participated in both local and international exhibitions and residency programmes like Modzi Art in Zambia, World art Dubai, Art Expo New York, Last Image Show Tanzania, Malta-Nigeria Exchange Exhibition Malta with four successful solo exhibitions and many collective exhibitions, including one in Vigo, Spain and another one in London, UK.

**kolapo**

**OLORUNYEMI**

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Adeshina Adeodu is from Ojigibo in Osun State, Nigeria. He started his art career in 2009 training under the supervision of Mr Botor Atsou. He is a full-time studio artist based in Abuja and member of Society of Nigerian Artists (Abuja Chapter).

Adeshina has participated in many exhibitions and competitions in Nigeria held by local and international organisations including the Visual Art Competition by the Turkish Embassy held in Abuja, the National Visual Art Competition 2015 organised by National Gallery of Art.

He was voted one of the Top 25th Artist and won the Best Entries from Abuja at LIMCAF 2016 and 2018. His works can also be found nationally and internationally.

adeodu

ADESHINA



18

UP  
**DEEP REVERSE**  
Acrylic on canvas  
120cm x 90cm  
2023



19

UP  
**THE FENCE III**  
Charcoal and acrylic on canvas  
92cm x 122cm  
2023

DOWN  
**THE FENCE IV**  
Charcoal and acrylic on canvas  
92cm x 122cm  
2023



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Bolaji Onaolapo is a talented Nigerian visual artist. He attained a BTech (Building) from the Federal University of Technology Minna in 2014.

He is a self-taught studio artist from Kwara State, who resides in Abuja.

His works center around humans and animals using their expressions/postures to tell untold stories. He has participated in several exhibitions locally and internationally.

onaolapo  
BOLAJI

Kenan M. Peter, also known as Kaynan Kayphas, is a Nigerian artist based in Abuja, born in Jebba, Kwara State.

His journey began in 2018, and he has since participated in various exhibitions, including the Reflection Exhibition, Road Less Travelled Exhibition, Let's Go Pink (Breast Cancer Awareness) Exhibition, CREO Exhibition, Art Fair Exhibition (London), Art and Human Right Exhibition (Canada), Elbowroom Pop-Up Exhibition.

Kaynan's work is characterised by the use of oil paint and the depiction of figures, nature, and symbols. He is inspired by his daily experiences and the truth and realities he encounters, and his unique style has garnered attention from collectors and galleries around the world. In December 2022, his piece titled *Cyber Sickness* was included in the ARTVIA YOU Art Gala Auction in London, and he is presently signed by ArtViaYou Gallery.

Kaynan cites his mentor, Kolapo Olorunyemi, as a major influence on his work, along with other artists such as Marco Grassi and Kelvin Okafor.

# peter

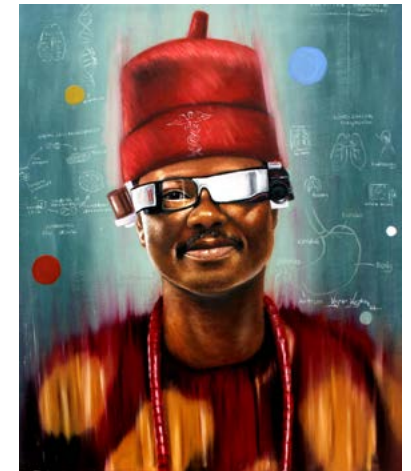
## KENAN M.



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UP  
**OBA OVARANMI AND THE  
GREAT CITY WALL OF BENIN**

Oil on canvas  
86cm x 100cm  
2023



DOWN  
**REIMAGING LEGACIES: Prof. Samuel Achilefu**

Oil on canvas  
71cm x 86cm  
2023



23

UP

**ADUKE: Resurgence of Identity**

Charcoal and pastel on canvas

91cm x 91cm

2023

DOWN

**FOLAKE: Identity echoes or Resilient Echoes**

Charcoal and pastel on canvas

91cm x 91cm

2023

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Taiwo Olamide Olasunmade is a Nigerian humanitarian visual artist, providing in-depth instructional experiences with a focus on creativity and expression. He is also an art educator and presently working as a co-ordinator for Arts In Medicine Projects, Abuja Chapter.

He is unique for his realistic art and versatility in art representation through various medium including oil, pastel, pencil, mixed media, watercolour and ink. He holds a BA in Visual art from the University of Lagos in Nigeria where he began his professional arts career in 2009.

He is the founder of **Tstrokes by Olamide**, his arts business specialising in the production of art pieces and mentoring of young children in the field of arts. He has participated in various national exhibitions and competitions, volunteered in various arts, health and wellness organisations, outreaches and workshops, which have earned him recognition in the Nigerian art space and internationally.

Olamide believes that realism, his major style of art speaks to the world in a universal language, and based on this philosophy has created prominent art pieces which talk about social issues, portray the beauty of nature, Africa and its cultural heritage.

olasunmade  
TAIWO

Peter Eneji grew up in a residential area that degenerated into a slum in Abuja. He saw life from the eyes of a semi-average Nigerian child which immensely influenced his art themes and philosophy. Peter has a BA in Painting (Cross River University of Technology, Calabar).

Peter was mentored by artists like Abiodun Olaku, Wallace Ejoh, Joshua Nmesirionye, their influences not only amplify his skills and proficiency, but changed his paradigm towards how he creates art.

He was the winner of the Painting category of the Afi Ekong Visual Arts Competition (2018), Top 25 artist in the 2021 edition of the Life in My City Art Festival. He participated in the group Exhibition, *Becoming* (2021), Terra Culture Art Gallery, Lagos; *Being Together* Exhibition (2021), Vivid Exclusive Gallery, Lagos; *Resilience Art Exhibition* (2020) Residency Museum Calabar (aegis of The Art Incubators).

He captures contemporary life in Nigeria, in relationship to social change, the dynamics of human emotions and their rippling effects on society. He tactfully captures this using the human figure and facial expression as his tools of visual communication; painting majorly in acrylic and oil mediums with bold expressive strokes.

# eneji

## PETER



26

UP  
**BEHIND THE VEIL II:  
The Checkered Stage and  
the Maiden in Distress**

Oil on canvas  
123.19cm x 100.33cm  
2023



DOWN  
**BEHIND THE VEIL I: The Weaver's Dirge**

Oil on canvas  
121.92cm x 97.79cm  
2023



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UP  
**KING SUNNY ADE MELODIC REIGN**  
Acrylic on canvas  
90cm x 120cm  
2023

LEFT  
**HARMONY AND DISCORD**  
Acrylic on canvas  
120cm x 90cm  
2023

RIGHT  
**VOCAL EMBRACE**  
Acrylic on canvas  
90cm x 120cm  
2023

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Tewasi Jonah, known as Terry, is a Nigerian visual artist inspired by colours and culture, born in Makurdi Benue State.

He is currently based in Abuja, where he studied at college and worked as a professional artist since 2013.

His unique style of art includes pouring of different colours to create a piece of art. He belongs to the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) and is also a member of the ELBOWROOM Art Movement.

Terry has participated in several group exhibitions and solos too.

JONAH  
TEWASI

# elbow room

decolonizing history:

reclaiming nigerian

identity exhibition

curated by susa r. garrido

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