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A Review of the Art Exhibition to Commemorate the Celebration of University of Jos at 40

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ABSTRACT
Art exhibition is collection and display of art works for public engagements and dialogues. The exhibits and memoirs here presented represent the thoughts, inspiration and the artists' reaction to societal issues. The analysis of the paintings, and ceramics exhibited bear the imprint of astute scholars of art in the University of Jos, Nigeria. The dexterity of the artists and how they manipulated various media of expression to create aesthetically pleasing compositions is winsome. The article is multifaceted, dealing with various issues and concludes with recommendation of periodic exhibitions for institution offering art based courses and the need to develop entrepreneurial skills.
Key words: University of Jos, Art, exhibition, painting, ceramic.

INTRODUCTION

This art exhibition is specially staged to celebrate the University of Jos at 40(18^{th} – 28^{th} September, 2015 at the Library Complex, University Of Jos main campus, Jos- Nigeria) . This great Institution has produced great scholars in various disciplines, and the commencement of the Fine and Applied Arts programme is adding the long awaited missing spice to the existing programmes of study in the University of Jos. Art reflects the society, and records human activities, cultural practices and innovative advancements in visual forms of painting, sculptures, ceramics, textiles, graphic designs, ornamented jewelry and a host of other aesthetic ensembles. John Keats states that, "The excellency of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with beauty and truth". The art exhibits reveal various aspects of truth in the society and the pleasant aesthetic pleasures from the astute scholars who created them.

The highly philosophical ceramic pieces of Gukas and Datiri, The definite brush strokes/ pallete knife of Oyedemi paintings, the free spirit of expression of Dankyes, the impressionistic Landscapes of Onoja and a myriad of expressions grace this exhibition. Count Leo (Nikokaevich) Tolstoy opines that "Art is not a

handicraft, it is a Transmission of feelings the artist has experienced". These experiences are here displayed for the University and outside communities to engage with in a diarthrodial discussion.
Enjoy the exhibits, and collect remarkable piece for posterity.
Shalom.
Jacob E. Onoja (Curator)

THE ARTISTS AND EXHIBITS



Jacob Enemona Onoja
Jacob Enemona Onoja was born on the 14th of September, 1975. He hails from Ogugu district of Olamaboro Local Government Area of Kogi State. He studied Fine Arts at the prestigious Art School of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU- Zaria), Zaria, Kaduna State in Nigeria and graduated as the best student in his Class. He obtained his Master degree from the same Institution, studied 3-D Animation at the New York Film Academy, Harvard Campus programme and currently on a Ph.D. programme in Arts History in ABU- Zaria. He has attended several exhibitions, workshops and conferences locally and internationally. His passions include landscape painting, photography and gospel flex designs. His Landscape paintings in the exhibition are reflections of his most practiced genre of expression. His works are inspired by his principle of serenity and peace in the society; he was inspired by the paintings of William Turner, a master landscapist. In a BBC online article, "Joseph Turner was one of the most original painters of landscapes and seascapes in Europe. He invented new techniques to make skies and clouds look luminous and expressive. People at the time thought he might be insane because his pictures were so different from what other artists were doing". The landscape exhibits of Onoja carry deep etched meanings; they include *Free Flow, Fortress and Panorama* (Plate I, II & III) among other works produced by the artist.

Free Flow
Free Flow (Plate I) is an allegorical painting depicting the freedom of the human spirit. Like the coursing water, breaking through barriers and obstacles, and daring all odds to get to its destination. Water is life giving and also disastrous in flood, tidal wave or other water related disasters. The painting explored the textural import of palette knife and brush on canvas and the dexterity of forms in space.



Plate I. Onoja Jacob, Free Flow, Acrylic on Canvas, 60.9 x 91.4 cm. 2015

Fortess

Fortess (Plate II) is an oil on canvas painting. The impasto method of painting was used and the artist used the palette knife to apply the colours. The tactile quality of the painting and the solidity of the colours applied give credence to the title. The painting celebrates the Plateau landscape, the uniqueness of the rock formations, and mining ponds close to human settlements. The picturesque views are breath taking and the painting simply records a moment in history.



Plate II. Onoja Jacob, Fortress, Oil on Canvas, 60.9 x 91.4 cm. 2015

Panorama

Panorama (Plate III) is an advanced experimental study on misty effect. The beautiful weather of the Jos-Plateau in Nigeria is the inspiration for this painting. The painting is wet-on dry technique, using air brush technique to achieve the effect. Improvisation can be achieved with Spray can.



Plate III. Onoja Jacob, Panorama (Triptych), Acrylic on Canvas, 114.3 x 25.4 cm. 2015

Ephraim Dankyes

Ephraim Dankyes holds a Bachelor of Art, Fine Arts (Painting) 2001 from the prestigious Zaria Art school and graduated in drawing and painting. He afterward attended University of Abuja to train in Theatre design and performance and obtained Master of Art, Theatre Arts (design and performance). Dankyes' interest is exploration in painting on canvas of the verse tourism potential of the Plateau in Nigeria. The rarest rock formation on the Plateau greatly inspires his psyche.

He has attended exhibitions across Nigeria and featured in joint online art exhibitions as well. He is lecturer in drawing, painting, scenic design and stage management acts. In this article, he gives snippet on Romance of the Headload, Culture and Heritage and Plateau the Beautiful. (Plates IV, V & VI).

Artists as reporters represent their world and as experiencers, give tangible form to their feelings about their world. As analysts, they look beyond the immediate to reveal hidden or universal truth. The artist even expects you to see the world in a new way. Question of aesthetics resonates with the artists' gesture of art appreciation which filters through the minds eyes to locate the very meaning of art as it speaks.

These contributions define the creator's will that inhabits the individual artist as demonstrated in these paintings exhibited.

Romance of the Headload



Plate IV. Ephraim Dankyes, Romance of the Head load, 2014 Gouache on paper, 40.6 x 50.8 artist's collection.

In looking at a work of art and trying to determine its subject matter, we find that some works are easier to 'read' than others. Some objects look like things we see in the 'real' world, whereas others do not

resemble anything we have ever seen. To explain the differences in art terms between these types of approaches, art works are described as being representational (figurative) or abstract/non-representational. Romance of the Headload is an art which falls under the representational art type, because it has a recognizable form. It is a young Northern maid carrying a tray on her head with two types of fruits. She hawks banana and tomatoes in a tray. She wears an unusual facial smile typical of a fruit seller who has been beckoned on by a customer or a buyer. Complementary colour scheme is the dominant approach of the painting, basically, the cool and warm colour are variants. It is a story of the contemporary Northern Nigerian woman whose predominant commercial activity includes buying and selling of food items.

The idea revolves around the daily provisional circle of family demands. Sometimes the buyer buys in whole sales and retails it until the chain is complete at the consumer state. She wears such smiles most times, but unusually so when a customer demands to buy and makes a call out to her. She may have sold a little or none. The customer is always right anyway. This however does not exempt the sellers from being molested by such debased and immorally infested customers. The prideful nature of the north boils down to its tireless efforts to provide and care for the immediate family needs. The work is imbued with other meanings relating to child labour and molestation.

Culture and Heritage



Plate V. Ephraim Dankyes, Culture and Heritage, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 60.9 x 91.4cm. artists collection

This is another work in the series of representational painting. There are two adorned figures, females and of course, maidens. The two seem to be looking left wards from my view as if in expectation or admiring a performance. Obviously, the figures also seem to have been cropped from a theatre of festival, a carnival of some sort or coronation of some king.

Culture and Heritage stems down to the intrinsic value of our existing cultural norms with the view to holding their symbols on pictorial forms. Colour plays relevant contributions to the costume of the north' hence you can distinguish the Fulani from the other northern tribes and the cultural pathos that define them. Culture is a way of life. Heritage means a right to a property or something that belongs to one by birth. We have been bequeathed a way of life and a tradition among which are marriage rites, wears etc. These are a part of our history as a nation in Nigeria. The maintenance of culture and its inheritable tendencies are a core value to be nursed.

Plateau the Beautiful (Plate VI)

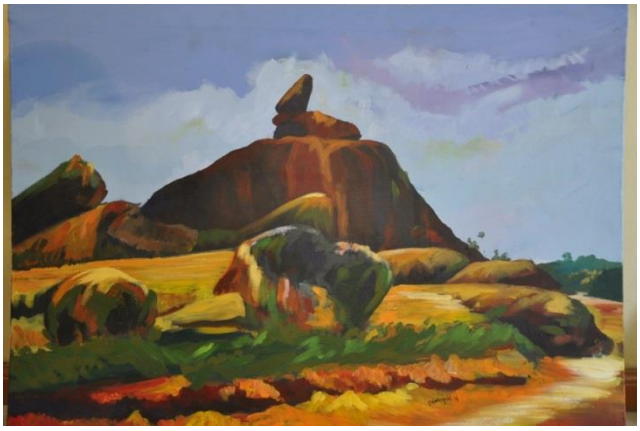


Plate VI. Ephraim Dankyes, Plateau the Beautiful, 2014. Acrylic on canvas, 60.9m x 91.4cm, artists collection.

The unusual miraculous Riyom rock formation at the outskirts of Jos, Plateau state- Nigeria has for many years remained the very focal point of Plateau pride with its unique and isolated placement on a plain, yet surrounded by rocks from a distance. Rocks that surround a city have historical connotation of protection, pride and benevolence from the God. Modern artists, tourists and archaeologists see most of these to be a unique way creating a distinction of a particular place.

Plateau the beautiful primarily derives its name from such features as this. A close look at these rocks as formed by nature gives one an awesome regard to the inventor of rocks, seas and winds.The artist is indeed an imitator of the creator. One recognizes however too, that he cannot specify the value of art works without references to the rich awareness of his environment, both natural and man-made.

Gukas H. Joel

Hand Built Pottery and use of Traditional Decorative Motifs

Professor Gukas H. Joel (Ceramist) was Born on the 25th December, 1948. He had his primary Education at EKAN Primary School Mupun between 1959 and 1965. He attended Gindiri Teachers College between 1968 and 1972. Thereafter he obtained his B.A, M.A. and Ph.D in Industrial Design at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria- Nigeria. He has twenty nine published articles in reputable journals, two chapter contributions and one published textbook. He has participated in ten joint local exhibitions and two international exhibitions.

He had worked with the Plateau State Cultural Centre and taught at Gindiri Teachers College (TC), Gindiri Demonstration School, FCE Pankshin, University of Maiduguri and now in University of Jos. He has held various administrative positions and a member of the following professional bodies: Craft Potters Association of Nigeria (CPAN) and Ceramic Researchers Association of Nigeria (CeRAN). His hobbies are photography, exhibiting and tourism.

Art to the African is part of life, for it has so much to do with his day to day lifestyle. Art no matter the form it takes touches the life of every member. Art is what helped the African keep records of events; since her members could not read or write. Art also serve as a means of maintaining social, economic and religious stability among members. It is not surprising therefore, that artists were in the past very much respected and taken with high esteem at any important occasion. Different materials were used to create the different art forms needed. These include iron, wood, marble, stone, calabashes, grass, cowries, bones, shells, fruit, hides and skins, leafs, human body, fibre, grass, and clay. The artists used these materials to perform, dance, produce musical instruments, and create assorted forms and sizes of utensils for their socio-economic and religious purposes. Some of which are temporal items but some are more or less permanent. The shape, size and decorations vary between the different cultural groups, because each

art work is guided by a set of taboos and religious believes. However, each art work served the purpose for which it was made and within its cultural setting everything was perfect.

Pottery in Africa

Pottery is one of the most popular crafts practiced in Africa; and Nigeria in particular. A pot could take any shape depending on the philosophy backing it. The common production methods are coiling, moulding pinching or scooping. However, some slit modifications exist among cultural groups; the method of learning has always been a family affair. It is usually from mother to daughter or father to son depending on the culture of the people; and the set of rules and taboo governing its production.

Gukas (2004) noted that among the Gwagi community, a young lady must learn the art of pottery from her mother before she gets married. Ahuwan (2004) opined that at Hunkuyi a pottery village in Katsina State of Nigeria (a Hausa tradition) a young boy was seen learning the art of pottery from his father, with the aim of maintaining the knowledge as a family trade. With this method of learning the shapes and methods of decorating pots remain the same for years without any significant changes. In addition to this, the art was practiced under strict rules and religious believes that prohibit certain group of people or gender from building pots. Igwilo in (Gukas 2004) noted that among the Igbos, young women who still observe their menstruations are prohibited from building ritual pots. Such pots he said are the prerogative of the old women who have passed their child bearing age. While among the Ngas people of Plateau State, men are prohibited from coiling clay for pottery. It is believed that doing so will affect the size of their manhood organ.

Pottery Decorations

Gukas (2004) opined that the motifs of the designs made on pots are not made only to decorate but to communicate essential ideas about the social changes and continuity in religion. Pottery decorations among Nigerians range from simple to elaborate. The decoration motifs range from simple geometric patterns to some sophisticated drawings of human or animals, figures. Some appliqué or knobs, roulette applications and slip decorations are also used. Every motif has its own meaning and guided by believes. The motifs also help to suggest the specific function of the pot. In most occasions, bold motif or sculptural relief applied on a pot signify that the pot is meant to serve a ritual function. The uses of bold motifs are to safeguard any one from miss using pots for other functions rather than their actual functions. The bold sculptured patterns on pots are visually effective in grabbing attention. It is based on this explanation that the Ngas, Mwaghavul, Mupun, Birom, Geomai and the Jarawa cultural groups apply clay knobs on some pots designed for some specific ritual functions.

The lines or dotted decorations round a pot represent a necklace or the waist beads won by ladies while roulette decorations stand for love. It represent the kind of shoulder tattoo, women are decorated with, just before they are married.

Surface burnishing stands for peace. However the decorative motifs that characterize African pottery are many, they include: burnishing, incise, etching, slip application, roulette and relief decoration. Each one has a particular message to pass to the communities the pot is meant to serve. This is further strengthened by the traditional believes surrounding each motif. It also follows, that if a particular motif is repeatedly used on different pottery shapes, it does not mean that there are no other motifs that could have been used, but it is because the potter understands that motif to be of great value in communicating the function of the pot to his community. The community will only have to judge its content; meaning and the quality embodied in the work (pot). Wrong interpretation of any motif within a particular community will lead to a wrong use of the pot. This is believed to be devastating; to the entire community the pot is meant to serve. In this case pottery shapes and the kind of decorations are strong means of communication.

The Guiding Concept

The artist's interest in African creative hand-built pottery is what has ascribed to his interest in study of the philosophy governing the shapes and decorative motifs used on traditional African pots. He has attempted using some self conceived shapes and decorating them with some traditional motifs that will

breathe life into the work to give it some emotional gestural meet the ever changing aesthetic feeling of contemporary Nigerians. Giving a cultural decoration, a pot will not only infuse life on the pot, but also gives it a subtle elegance that meets the needs of contemporary Nigerians.

Some of the tools used decorating the pots are locally made, but some are manufactured. The spoon used for burnishing is manufactured, but used to help convey the philosophy behind the creative work. As every traditional pot has its name, which in most case specifies its function, the artist has also titled his pots in similar manner.

Bumper harvest (Plate VII)

Bumper harvest represents three large fruits jointed together on one branch and each fruit is comfortable and loving. The motifs used in decorating the pot are the roulette decoration to represent tattoo decorations made on the shoulders or chest of ladies by their suitors to signify love and marriage. While the linear decorations are the types of motifs usually used on granaries.



Plate VII. Gukas Joel, Bumper Harvest, Ceramic, 24 x 23.1 cm.

The rest of the pot is simply properly burnished with a spoon to give the pot some kind of elegance and love.

Water Lily (Plate VIII)

The water lily and snails live within the same habitat. The snail eats the lily to grow into a mature snail to be eaten by man as sea food. The artist used the idea of a water lily, which is a plant with no deep and stable roots to design the base of the pot. To look more or less fragile to carry the entire large piece. This implies that the pot is fragile and should be handled with extra care. And since lily serves as food to snails, the shape of a snail is also used to build up the pot. The use of knobs as a decoration is to signify that as knobs are used on traditional potter to show that the pot is for ritual purpose, so it is use to show that the pot is not for social functions but secrete purposes.



Plate VIII. Gukas Joel, Lily, Ceramic,46 cm

The back and the two sides of the pot are covered with roulette decoration, to show that though the pot is sacred, it is for peace and love when lifted at its sides or kept to lie on its back. The linear decorations are symbols that are used on granaries; which is to say that water lily can also be harvested as food.

Isi-Ewu (IX)

Isi-ewu is an Igbo word to mean 'goat head". The Igbo serve goat head pepper soup in a small wooden bowl or clay bowls that looks like half of the shape of this pot. The inspiration for this pot is therefore drawn from the traditional isi-ewu bowl.



Plate IX. Gukas Joel, Bumper Harvest, Ceramic, 16.5 x 19 cm

Since African pottery can take any shape provided it communicates to the people correctly what the pot is made for, the artist has combined two isi-ewu bowls together rim to rim. The top one has been decorated with the shape of a goat's horn in relief, joining the two horns with an opening. At the back of the horns he has again made a relief decoration of a goat's tail on the first half of the bowls; to further communicate that the pot is for a ritual that has to do with goats.

The linear incision decoration on the frontal view of the pot together with the checked decoration signifies justice as a binding agreement.

This article contribution observes that, the freedom and restriction of the practice of traditional pottery among traditional potters in Africa was guided by their strong belief in traditional religion; which placed some restrictions on certain people and practices.

Pottery decorations among Africans where carefully selected motifs, that have some socio-religious significance to the communities; because any form of decoration, has its philosophical meaning. Decorations are therefore a means of communication about social changes and continuity.

It is recommended that with the continuous decline of traditional worshippers, among Africans, the values of certain pottery shapes and mode of decorations which used to be of immense important to the African may soon be forgotten with time. There is the urgent need for cultural studies in our schools. Museum studies should be part of what students should learn as a General Study (GS) subject in tertiary institutions.

Datiri Yohanna Chumang
The Birom Royal Pots

Datiri Yohanna Chumang was born on 1st November, 1961. His academic qualifications include: B.A; M.A; Industrial Design, from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria (ABU, Zaria). Ph.D. Industrial Design; from the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria (ATBU, Bauchi), and a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) Technical Education, from the University of Jos (Unijos). All the works exhibits are focused on royalty as it were in typical Birom palaces in Plateau State. The few glazed pots are adaptations from forms used by the royal fathers but improved upon for contemporary use.

Royalty has been defined severally by different people. Hornby, A.S. (2004), sees royalty to mean position, rank, dignity, and power of a royal person. In a typical African setting, the word royalty could be ascribed to positions of authority and dignity as those of the noble, the chiefs and the well - to - do in the society. Indeed, authority, power and dignity are synonymous to royalty. The royal are always honored and anything good is always associated to them.The Berom people are predominantly settled in and around the Jos plateau in central Nigeria; They are spread within four Local Government Areas of Barkin-Ladi, Jos North, Jos South and Riyom, all in Plateau state. A good number of Berom people are equally resident in the southern part of neighboring Kaduna state. (Ministry of Information, Plateau state, 2006). The Berom people have a very rich potting tradition that has existed for a very long period of time. Some of their works have been found to date as far back as between 1500 - 500 B.C. and belonging to the popular Nok cultural group. Their works were usually finished in similar terracotta fashion as most Nok terracotta works. (Yusuph, K.R. 2006). According to Gwom, S.L, (1995) and Jacobs, J.D, (1997), pottery works of the Berom people could be categorised conveniently into, Ancestral, Bridal, Initiation, Religious, Ritual, and Royal pots, in addition to the many domestic pots used in the day- to - day activities within every house hold. To them, life of the Berom people was connected to pots in one way or the other. As sadly observed by Datiri,Y.C, Yusuph, K.R, & Mwanse, R.K, (2014), several factors which include: Advancement in Technology, Modern Religious believes, Urbanization, Inter marriages, and even Democracy have negatively influenced this age-long potting activities of the Berom people. Indeed, there is the need to document, preserve and protect this long standing tradition. It is in attempt to document and preserve these potting traditions that the artist has focused specifically on Royalty as it were in typical Berom Palaces. While some of these works produced and exhibited are reproduced to replicate the original works that could not be released by custodians, some others, particularly the glazed pieces are adaptations from forms used in the royal palaces, but either improved or converted to make them suitable for contemporary use.

Royal Ritual Pot (Plate X)

Royal Ritual Pot is a replica of the original pot that would not be released by the chief - priest who is the custodian of this pot. The pot is 37cm tall, produced using the popular coil technique of potting. Decorated with elaborate embossed bead-like motifs, the pot assumes the form/ shape of a leopard. To the Berom man, the leopard symbolizes Power, Dignity and Authority- attributes associated to Royalty. This pot, it was the believe of the custodian, averts every calamity or epidemic that would have befallen

the community. As soon as a sign of any calamity or epidemic is noticed, a ritual was quickly conducted by the priest-chief using this pot and all such calamity or epidemic was totally averted. Pots of this category were highly valued by all chiefs for the mere fact that the pride of any chief was in the number of subjects he had. Calamities or epidemics that would reduce the population of a chief's subjects, or serve as a treat to the population of his domain were heavily resisted.



Plate X. Datiri Yohanna C. Royal Goblets, Ceramics,

Royal Goblets (Plate XI)

Royal Goblets as the case is with the Royal Ritual Pot, Inspiration for the production of royal goblets, stemmed from the prestige attached to vessels of honour used in all palaces in Berom land. Some of these vessels, though not ceramic, were highly dignified. Inspiration and concept of the royal vase was drawn from the shape of a calabash gourd used specially by chief of Berom land for serving drinks. In order to obtain shapes similar in appearance to that of calabash guards, the goblets exhibited were produced using the throwing technique of potting from the potter's wheel. Each goblet exhibited has an average height of 18cm and were glazed using ceramic glazes produced from volcanic materials. In order to achieve the glossy effects and tensile strength combined with the variety of colours, the goblets were fired to 1200°C.



Plate XI.Datiri Yohanna C. Royal Goblets, glazed Ceramics, 18cm

The Royal Vase (Plate XII)

The Royal Vase: The idea of the royal vase was conceived from the many special pots used in palaces for the storage of different, but important items. Valuables were not stored anywhere anyhow, but in vessels of honour made from clay. It must again be resounded that all these vessels of honour were finished in Terra cotta. The shape and function of the royal vase, unlike other Pots exhibited are merely adapted from the traditional storage pots, even though with modifications. Designed and thrown from the potter's wheel to project some elegance, the pot stands 35cm tall, well glazed with volcanic ash glaze and fired to 1200°C to give it the touch of dignity that is always ascribed to royalty.



Plate XII. Datiri Yohanna C. The Royal Vase, glazed Ceramics, 35cm

The Untitled Vase (Plate XIII)

The Untitled Vase: The fourth work exhibited is actually untitled. It is an art piece (vase) that is produced from combination of rolls and beads produced from clay which have been left undistorted in order to create a variety of decorations on the vase. The technique of production employed deliberately exposes the uniqueness of the qualities of clay as a material. It shows the plasticity and malleability of clay as it can be rolled, spun, flattened, or given any desired shape and the given shape is retained. Indeed, only the noble and those who value beauty deserve this piece of heavily decorated ceramic piece, even though finished in terracotta. This vase is 14cm tall.



Plate XIII. Datiri Yohanna C. Untitled, Ceramics, 14cm

John Oyedemi Joshua

John has participated in several exhibitions in and outside Nigeria for the past two decades with outstanding success. He has attended and presented papers at different art conferences and have published several papers on art in journals and books. As a professional artist and a teacher in painting and drawing for more than two decades, he employs the use of academic approach to depict the influence of everyday

life of the people and their activities in his environment. While at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France in 1995, several water colour paintings were executed showing movements of crowds and other historic places. These are captured in his paintings to reflect panoramic events in a narrative manner. His paintings *Lagos panorama, Commerce I and Commerce II* (Plates XIV, XV and XVI) bear credence to his dexterity of expression. John states that " I see visual arts as one of the major catalyst for development of a local economy when properly harnessed". The compositional arrangements, vigorous pallete knife strokes, vibrant colours, multiple figures and masterly application of the impasto techniques are the hallmark of John Oyedemi Joshua's paintings.

Lagos Panorama



Plate XIV. John Oyedemi Joshua, Lagos Panorama, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, oil on canvas

Commerce I



Plate XV. John Oyedemi Joshua, Commerce I, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, oil on canvas

Commerce II



Plate XVI. John Oyedemi Joshua, Commerce II, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, oil on canvas

CONCLUSION

The exhibition is a microcosm of the activities of the Fine and Applied Art Department of the University of Jos, the exhibits draw attention to the fecundity of practicing professional artists and their efforts to adding their voices to various societal issues, using paintings and ceramics as media of expression. The recommendations in the article are a wakeup call to all and sundry to encourage the viability of the visual arts and development of academic research into the production processes and encouragement of entrepreneurial ventures.



Plate XVII. Collage of various events during the 40th Anniversary Art Exhibition.

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