A SOLO EXHIBITION BY
Ebuka Pascal Agwudiegwu

OPENING
December 09 2023



In collaboration with

VOMNETWORK

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EXHIBITION STATEMENT

"No up no down no side to side" is an articulation of Ebuka Pascal Agudiegwu's lifelong experience with imagination and intuitive creativity. He likens the plasticity of his thought and imagination to the transitional nature of the sky: constantly embodying different shapes and forms. In this exhibition he merges elements from his childhood experiences, dreams and aspirations with the collective psyche of humanity. The signifier and the signified conflate, becoming an awareness, a mode of perception: a presence rather than an agent. As the theme of the exhibition suggest, the dreamscape he creates transcend spatial and temporal boundaries, where the concepts of directionality and orientation lose their meaning.

Depicting scenes in vibrant hues and vivid imagery, Agudiegwu introduces us to his protagonists. The figures exude ranges of emotions and being, surrounded by foliage, differing countenances and forms, interspersed within a symphony of colours. They are caught mid activity, a stilling of time, a testament to the diversity of the human condition. With this body of work, Ebuka Pascal Agudiegwu offers us a window into the profundity of his genius. A dreamscape aimed to transform artistic experience, while journeying phenomenally through the spatiality of existing in a body."

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Born in Kano, Nigeria in 1997, Agwudiegwu is a self-taught artist living in and working from the hills of Abuja, Nigeria. With a Bachelor of Science from the Imo State University, Nigeria, Agwudiegwu's artistic prowess embodies an innately unique style of expression, through colorful palettes, varying human expressions and an exclusive use of foliage, which he remarks to represent his great interest in the relationship between man and plants. A relationship which captivated his ever inquisitive mind as a young boy growing up in Ugwu Nchara, Abia State, Nigeria.

Since venturing into the art space in 2017, Agudiegwu works as a traditional artist who utilizes a wide range of media; from acrylic, to oil paints, charcoal, graphite, ink, pastel, salt and

candle flame soot. He attempts to express an ideal relationship between man and nature through figurative paintings embalmed in telling elements and dreamscapes. He elaborately challenges societal norms and traditions, while drawing attention to critical life issues.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY (CONTINUED)

Agwudiegwu has been featured in both local and international exhibitions. Some of which include; Exhibition for Contemporary Artists, National Gallery of Art, Enugu, 2019, Collect Call // Diaspora Dial Exhibition by Forme Femine Gallery, 2020, Obsidian group exhibition, Copeland Gallery, London, 2021, Under the Same Sky, Raina Raouna Gallery, Nicosia, Cyprus, 2022, No Prisoners, No Trophies by Eclectica Contemporary, Capetown, South Africa, 2023 and The Natural by Kiribaku Art, London, 2023, to mention a few. He has also been featured in several publications, including Artsy, Eclectica Contemporary and Waau Art.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am deeply fascinated by the mutual relationship between man and plant, and that ignited in me a sense of consciousness towards my environment. Ever since I was a teenager, I developed great interest in the interplay between man and plants and also the need to further highlight on the importance of sustaining these relationships. This fueled my subconscious mind in bringing to reality through my creativity what is to me a prefect visual representation of life. As an artist I see myself as a mirror and I perceive my works to be a visual reflection of my subjective view as regards to my environment in relation to both past and recent happenings.

My interest in connecting these two important entities and representing them as one has played a vital role in my creativity by influencing my artistic expression and as well enabling me to leverage on the eventualities of self discovery, absolute confidence, and genuine expression.

The prime focus of my works envelopes certain challenging issues affecting humanity such as, gender equality, racism, colorism, tribalism, societal neglect. My intention is to rejuvenate the consciousness of my viewers through my works thereby provoking their thoughts and adjusting conversations to redress these societal issues challenging humanity.

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE

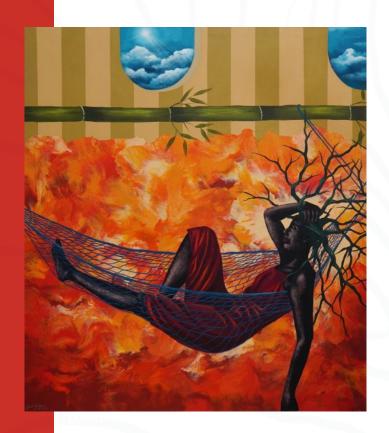


BENEATH THE BLUE SUN I

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 109 X 122 cm



BENEATH THE BLUE SUN II

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 109 X 122 cm



CORNERS OF CONTEMPLATION

YEAR: 2023

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 91 X 91 cm



FISHING FANTASY

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC AND PASTEL

ON CANVAS

SIZE: 76 X 64 cm



FRIEZE IN A MOMENT

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC AND OIL PASTEL

ON CANVAS

SIZE: 120 X 90 cm

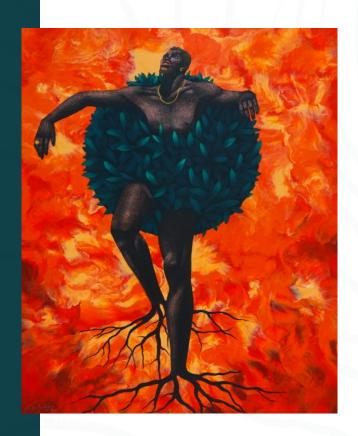


CHOKE ON MY SALIVA

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 47 X 57 cm

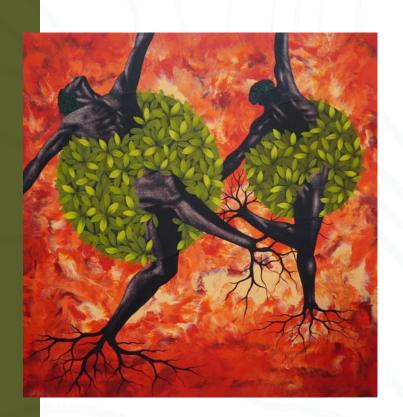


LEAVE THE NEST I

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 122 X 91 cm



LEAVE THE NEST II

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 122 X 122 cm



NOTHING IS BORN OLD

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC AND OIL PASTEL

ON CANVAS

SIZE: 60 X 48 cm



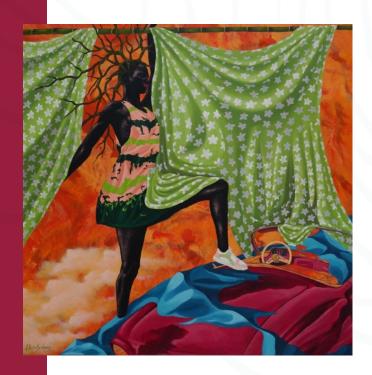
STEERING PAW PAW

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC AND OIL PASTEL

ON CANVAS

SIZE: 122 X 122 cm



THE OCEAN ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 91 X 91 cm



THE TRADITIONAL WAY OUT

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

SIZE: 49 X 40 cm



TWO CAN TANGO

YEAR: **2023**

MEDIUM: ACRYLIC AND OIL PASTEL

ON CANVAS

SIZE: 130 X 100 cm

For Ebuka Pascal Agudiegwu, Reality Exists As A Myth.

Art, for as long as the memory of the world lets it recall has always been a medium of communication. Whether it be music, painting, poetry, sculpture, or even architecture. Society stands as witness to the times in which ancient African collectives communicated with their kin through imagery, in the form of art, as was practiced through Nsibidi symbols in Eastern Nigeria, Adinkra symbols in Ghana, and ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. Art always communicates both simple and complex ideas and feelings, some of which we are unable to put into words because no matter how well we attempt to explain these forms, we fail to do the image and the feelings we have encountered in our imaginations any justice.

For Agudiegwu, the premise of his artistic expression remains his attempt to communicate. But this time, to communicate a fragment of the happenings of his imagination. The foundation of his art, for us viewers, is a guided path to the wandering locus of his ever-creative mindscape. In his first solo exhibition, No Up, No Down, No Side to Side, Agudiegwu gives a pointed commentary on the nature of existence, identity, and the universality of the human experience. How ideas do not belong to anyone, and how connected we each are, through our imaginative consciousness, to each other, more than we ever realize. Agudiegwu's choice of forms, figures, and colors give voices to his subjects in such a poetic

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE

manner. It feels like seeing poetry through the words of his mind's eye. The careful arrangement of hues, patterns, and forms shows the journey through years of masterful practice crucial to the progression of his craft, his love for detail, and his adeptness at expressing the workings of his mind.

A congregation of thirteen intricately crafted art pieces, Agudiegwu forges his relationship with nature, expressed via surrealism. Each piece tells a different story, drawn from a different time in Agudiegwu's history, past, present, and future. In a moment of breathless wonder, the protagonists like characters caught mid-moment in a moving picture are entranced by warmth and imminent disappearance. A telling of the temporality of our thoughts and ideas. A striking feature in all the paintings is the recurrent appearance of the bamboo stalk, which makes the collection all the more poignant. "My first experience with the bamboo plant was in a place called Ugwu nchara, in Umuahia, Abia state, which is pivotal to this body of work", Agudiegwu comments. Ugwu nchara, which translates to "rusty valley" in Igbo language was home to his grandmother, with whom his introduction into the arts began. Being a kid who was always on his feet, he encountered art initially on walls, in the form of graffiti. To him, art was everywhere, and the world presented a wild museum. For young seven-year-old Agudiegwu, the bamboo leaves of Ugwu nchara that he saw at the foot of the valley held a mystery at its floor, one he would come to unravel as a result of his inquisitive mind, finding that beneath what he saw as grassland on the ground's surface, was a whole new world to be discovered, with a life and heart of its own. The bamboo

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE stalk, owing to its anatomy of linkages represents the connectedness of humanity, as well as being a symbol of strength, flexibility, humility, and renewal, in spiritual parlance.

"We are linked by our imaginations, which exist outside us. We are all single realities floating in a space of imagination". This is the central statement that forms the lattice of "Fishing Fantasy", a painting that depicts two figures who seem to be dancing on the clouds, surrounded by fishes and linked by the similarity of thoughts and ideas. Like-minds, existing in different realities, separated by an arch. According to Agudiegwu, the arch, a recurring element seen in some pieces represents a separation. One might liken this to a portal that exists in between worlds, a point of spatial transition, and thus, has the characteristics of both a path and a place, an avenue for association and kinship. It is a testament to the unoriginality of genius. The fact that no one thought or idea belongs to one being, affirms how much connected we are by our imaginations. Turkish author, Mehmet Murat Ildan alluded to this same fact when he said, "Similar souls wander in similar places! They may not know each other, but often they touch the same winds, they step on the same leaves, their looks are lost in the same horizons!"

In "Leaving the Nest: I & II" Agudiegwu presents a note to self, as it connotes the extent to which an individual dreams. Agudiegwu, as a Nigerian man, and an avid dreamer offers a rendition of the versatility of hopes and dreams, unconfined to societal norms and expectations. He grants us permission to see

beyond the ordinary and lose our attachment to our immediate realities, especially as it pertains to the Nigerian experience. A push-forward, into the wild, and a peak over the fence, into the field of possibility that exists outside of society's limitations. An epitope for dreaming as a Collective. In "Leaving the Nest I", our protagonist, clothed in leaves takes the bold steps, an attempt at claiming a future, while hopeful. However, we encounter an accomplice in "Leaving the Nest II", as they embark on the journey of finding dreams to live in. A pilgrimage of some sort, with arms stretched beyond the frame, an inflection of the infinite possibilities beyond restraint.

Following the theme of dreams, we are introduced to "Steering Paw-paw", an ode to Agudiegwu's childhood dream of owning a car manufacturing company. Here, we are welcomed by two figures hovering and steering about themselves, in what looks like a display of the concept of Yin and Yang, the Chinese concept of describing opposite but interconnected, mutually perpetuating forces. This attests to the individuality of dreams and imaginations, exclusive of sex, gender, culture, or background. We have all been gifted the freedom of our minds. At the center of each steering wheel, we can see the purported logo of Agudiegwu's automobile company. An affirmation of his childhood, as well as an anecdote for his adult aspirations and endeavors. His adult selves hold on to their respective interpretation of his dreams. The key narrative behind the painting, Agudiegwu had to say was, "how we lived in houses we didn't have, drove cars we didn't have, all in our minds as kids."

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE Having the opportunity to have one's work shown across the world is the aspiration of every painter, one would imagine. This, as a mark of success cements the painter or artists as a formidable partaker in shaping the thoughts of the world through their art. In "Frieze in A Moment", Agudiegwu who is unable to hide his bias regarding his love for this particular work of art, shows us a glimpse of what the future holds for him. The title reveals a play with words, and an acclaim to the future in which he shows at the biggest art showcases all over the world. Our relationship with the painting is established when we meet the artist's alter ego, who relaxed and adorning gold jewelry represents the artist's present state, without missing out on the paint cover that rests on his thighs, his preferred medium for mixing his paints. A reason he attributes to sustainability. Just beyond the arch, we step into the artist's prospects, a burgeoning potential, and a future subject to a change from the current art form. He likens this change to Picasso, who he states, "got wilder with his art as he aged."

"We make art for ourselves, and then it resonates with others", Agudiegwu remarks as he tries to drive home the point of subjective perception of artistic expression, starting from the artist himself, and then to the viewer.

The multiplicity of human experience describes the ability of a single human being to display and experience multiple personalities, selves, or identities in one mind and body, each with their thoughts, emotional reactions, preferences, behavior, memory, and sense of self. Our eyes are met, in "Two Can

Tango", by two gymnasts, the characters of this image. Here again, we find ourselves being directed by the bamboo stalk which represents a stream of ideas making its way in and out of this realm of consciousness, but being felt first, before making its exit through the widow that begets the clouds, just beyond. "The window suggests reality, the outside world. The information [the bamboo] comes from outside, gets processed inside, and then goes out again. ", Agudiegwu confirms. He attempts to illustrate how connected our realities are to our imaginations. How a meeting of our different selves culminates to shape the reality of our lives.

"Nothing Is Born Old" is borne out of the rhetoric that no idea belongs primarily to anyone. "No idea comes to you fully formed", says Agudiegwu. The form can be seen levitating, almost between disappearance and presence, and we see the resurfacing of the arch as earlier described, with the figure caught in the in-between. Not exactly here, and not exactly there. In addition, a train runs on its tracks, going around the portal in which the character exists. The train and its tracks Agudiegwu says, implies the fast-paced nature of how our thoughts come and go, how our thoughts surround reality, and how fragmented ideas become when left without tending. The concept of the train according to Agudiegwu was inspired by the trains he has come to associate with his place of residence in Kubwa, Abuja.

Agudiegwu explores identity and form, in manners akin to thought and concept. In all the pieces, we have encountered the different transitions between what is real and what isn't, what is yours, and what is owned by the collective. Identity is very much at the core of every artistic practice, be it architectural photography, sculpting heads, or exploring one's politics or culture. Isn't art in itself personal? And isn't the personal political?

In defiance of the workings of reality, Agudiegwu confronts societal norms in "I Choke on My Saliva". The composition begs to question of why we do the things we do, what we perceive as agreeable, and what is unusual. A ladder travels horizontally, from side to side, as opposed to vertically, as we have been accustomed to. Agudiegwu emphasizes the notion that realities are tailored based on individual experiences. The duality of logic is put to the test, as what it is that defines direction for you may be different for him. The character is willed to the ladder by the bamboo stalks, a reminder that our fates are sometimes a conspiring that results from our connection to the universe, and how flexible reality may become.

"The Traditional Way Out" paints an alternate reality for Agudiegwu. We create whole worlds and lives within the confines of our minds. Lives that parallel our current capabilities. But, beyond the walls of restraint, exists the freedom of our thoughts and aspirations to roam free. Everyone has the freedom of thought and conscience, and this is illustrated by Agudiegwu's ability to conjure form (our protagonist) in the most unusual setting. He also affirms that in dreaming up the most unlikely realities, we are not alone, and we are allowed to revel, for however long we please.

"The Ocean Isn't Going Anywhere" was a response to a question that found Agudiegwu when someone asked, "Where can you find the greatest of all treasure?" to which he retorted, "In the graveyard." A concept Agudiegwu disagrees with, citing that, "Nature would be unfair, as we are not the source of the things we know. So if you don't explore these ideas, somebody else will (in favor of humanity)." He believes that it is the responsibility of nature to leave some things buried and others found. He asserts that things appear lost, not because they are absent, but because we have yet to discover them. He analogizes ideas to oceans, having existed from the beginning of time. In the painting, we see a poetic, figurative depiction of the blue ocean as the dunes of the desert, "covering" up the treasure, the car, which when paid close attention is the car of his childhood dreams, as we encountered earlier. A succinct denotation of where the treasures of mankind lay, beneath the dirt of the earth, and in the deep of the ocean.

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE In the Middle Ages, panels were introduced into the visual arts. While the panels may form a single scene, they sometimes are stand-alone pieces that are linked through visual coherence. Agudiegwu embodies this in his diptych, "Beneath the Blue Sun", a painting that centers on the individuality of perspective. Reminiscing on a childhood memory that inspired the painting, Agudiegwu takes us to the moment shared between him and his younger brother, on their way to purchase akara (a Nigerian street snack made from bean flour). In this memory, his brother is fascinated by the movement of the moon above them and is enthralled that he is being followed by the moon. This formed the basis of the panel. Perspectives on life and living differ, based on age, gender, privilege, and maturity. The diptych interprets the connectedness of the human condition, as we see that branches that make for the hair of the characters continue into both paintings. However, both figures are seen gazing at the same sky, through respective windows, at different angles. And so, they get a feel of what reality looks like from their personalized vantage point.

This collection will not be complete without a tribute to the place that inspired a lot of the creative process behind this exceptional body of work. "Corners of Contemplation" pays homage to Agudiegwu's experience of Ugwu nchara, his hometown as a young child growing up. It represents fragments of nostalgia and presents the hidden parts of man and nature, that can only be accessed by a love for learning and honing our childlike curiosity. The painting is an abstract performance of the phrase, "More

than meets the eye." To Agudiegwu, the painting translates to how our outlook on living is subject to change, based on what experiences offer us.

In this exhibition, Agudiegwu offers us a window into the profundity of his genius. A dreamscape aimed at transforming artistic experience, while voyaging through the spatiality of what it is to exist in a body, and live through imagination.

Ujah Godwin Ujah

Photo-journalist, and Culture writer.

Agudiegwu's Imagination: Transformative Narratives.

In the kaleidoscopic universe of art, there exists a collection that unfolds like a symphony of dreams, an ode to the boundless realms of imagination. This ethereal tapestry bears an indelible mark of Ebuka Pascal Agudiegwu, an artistic alchemist, whose brush strokes transcend the ordinary, and beckon the observer into the mesmerizing dance with the extraordinary. In a spirit similar to Ben Okri's evocative prose, we embark on a luminous exploration of Agudiegwu's collection – an odyssey through the realms of the fantastical and the profound.

Agudiegwu catapults us into a luminous constellation, each piece a celestial body pulsating with the vibrancy of the artist's imagination. Colors cascade like poetry, and forms emerge as whispers from another dimension. The canvas becomes a portal, inviting the observer to step beyond the confines of the known into a dreamscape where reality intertwines with the ineffable. It is a visual incantation, a spell cast by the artist to transport the onlooker into the inner sanctum of creativity.

Much like Okri's literary tapestry, Agwudiegwu's art transcends the limitations of traditional mediums. Words pirouette across the canvas, weaving in and out of the visual tapestry. The fusion of hidden,

NO UP NO DOWN NO SIDE TO SIDE

unspoken fragments with the visual creates a poetic dance – a dance where unspoken words and imagery entwine in a seamless embrace. In this symbiotic relationship, Agudiegwu invites the observer to not only see but also read, to decipher the cryptic messages embedded in the brushstrokes and emanating figures.

Statuettes emerge as the hieroglyphs of Agudiegwu's visual language, each symbolic, and pregnant with elusive meaning. Almost mythological motifs and cultural history, like ancient echoes, resonate across the canvas. The observer becomes an archeologist of Agudiegwu's imagination, excavating layers of meaning and symbolism to unearth the stories concealed within each artwork. It is a testament to Agudiegwu's mastery – his ability to communicate profound narratives through the enigmatic language of forms, figures and color.

The collection unfolds as a dreamscape – an intricate labyrinth where the linear constructs of time dissolve. Past, present, and future coalesce in a non-linear articulation, mirroring the capricious nature of the human mind. Agudiegwu the weaver of dreams, requests that the viewer relinquishes reality, the constraints of chronology, and to embrace the fluidity of an imagination, unshackled. In this dreamscape, the observer becomes the traveler and the dreamer, navigating the contours of the mind.

Characters, enigmatic and ephemeral, traverse the visual narrative of Agudiegwu's collection. They are spectral wanderers, their presence evoking echoes of untold stories. In this visual incarnation, the characters become archetypes – symbols of universal human experience. The artist beckons us to recognize the familiar within the unfamiliar, to discern the collective resonance of shared experience that transcends the boundaries of time, culture and idiosyncrasy.

Agudiegwu's multi-hyphenate mastery is evident in the dynamic interplay of diverse elements. Collages meld with creative acumen, and the viewer is transported into a kaleidoscopic feast for the senses. The collection is a living organism, evolving with each artistic experiment. It confirms Agidiegwu's willingness to push the boundaries of creativity, to engage in a perpetual dialogue with the evolving landscape of artistic expression.

Spirituality permeates Agudiegwu's art – an unseen current that connects the observer to metaphysical dimensions. Every piece in this collection is connected, represented by the recurrent appearance of the bamboo stalk, they tell separate stories, but culminate into an ongoing prose, independent of each other. The paintings become sacred scrolls, their surfaces inscribed with the artist's contemplation of existential questions. Agudiegwu, the seeker of truths, asks that you embark on a metaphysical pilgrimage – a journey that trespasses the intangible and ventures into the indescribable. It is an exploration of the

sacred within the profane, a communion with the mysteries that dwell in the spaces between the visible and the unseen.

The vibrancy and the dynamism of Agwudiegwu's artwork pay homage to his Nigerian heritage. Most of which is inspired by his time in Ugwu nchara, a town in Abia state, Nigeria, as it evidently holds so much space in his heart. The pieces in the collection resonate with the rhythmic pulse of African aesthetics – its bold colors, intricate patterns, and rich symbolism of identity. Agudiegwu becomes the custodian and negator of cultural and societal narratives, weaving threads of heritage, and finishing with the freedom that begets the power of imagination. In this celebration of diversity, the observer becomes the observed, a traveler through the landscapes of collective cultural identity.

Emotions, those elusive phantoms of the human experience, are encapsulated in the strokes of Agudieg-wu's brush, and laid to rest on canvas. Joy commingles with melancholy, wonder intertwines with contemplation, and the entire spectrum of feelings converges in a visual symphony. The collection is an emotional palette, a corroboration of the artist's ability to translate the nuances of the human sentiment into a visual language with the viewer's own miscellanea of feelings.

Agudiegwu reinforces that the observer is not a passive onlooker but an active participant in the unfurling. The collection is by extension an open hand that wills one to co-create, to infuse the visual poetry with personal reflections and interpretations. The collection exists without stasis; it is a perpetual dance between the artist and his audience within the endless corridors of the imagined.

Ponchang Rindom Kumven

Co-founder and Director
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