

## Research article

---

# Breaking away from Conventions in Ceramic Production by the Nsukka School, Nigeria

Martins N. Okoro

Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Email: [martins.okoro@unn.edu.ng](mailto:martins.okoro@unn.edu.ng)

### Abstract

Over a decade, a radical force of creative experimentation and exploration has considerably revolutionized and changed the direction of art development in Nigerian. Art production has been witnessing a dramatic paradigm shift, embracing the postmodern ethos. This is evident in the couching of themes, choice of media and their technical manipulations towards creating highly evocative works by artists in Nsukka School. Critics have expressed fear over its negative implications that they have unequivocally, termed it anti-art, querying the commercial value of the artworks being produced. This paper addresses these issues by engaging the postmodernist works of selected ceramist artists to show that their visual richness and eclectic stylistic diversity attract patronages and significant media attention and expose the artists involved in this creative enterprise to the international scene. The study relied on extant literature, studio visitations and personal interviews with the artists as useful methods of data collection. Data collected were analyzed, employing historical, philosophical and analytical methods. Photographs of works as visuals have been included to back up the points being made.

**Keywords:** postmodern, ceramics, Installations, artists and Nsukka art school

---

### 1.1 Introduction

Nsukka School is a term used to distinguish artists who have studied and/or taught at the Fine and Applied Arts Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in Southeastern Nigeria, who share a critical engagement in their visual and theoretical fields. As a descriptive label, the Nsukka School refers to a stylistic heritage whose aesthetic codes draw from a creative ideology that is conceptually idealized, experimentally driven and intellectually grounded.<sup>1</sup> The formalism and aesthetic predilection infused into the art culture of the Nsukka School strongly impact the department's creative trajectory and stylistic identity (Odoh et al. 2019), because the appropriation

---

**Article History:** Received: 11 June 2023. Revised: 12 August 2023. Accepted: 14 August 2023. Published: 14 August 2023

**Copyright:** © 2023 by the author/s. License Aesthetix Media Services, India. Distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Citation:** Okoro, Martins N. 2023. Breaking away from Conventions in Ceramic Production by the Nsukka School, Nigeria. *Chitrolekha Journal* 7:2. <https://doi.org/10.21659/cjad.72.v7n202>

of *Uli* symbols became a viable basis for creating works of art since 1970, such that every work of art produced anchored on *Uli*<sup>2</sup> ideogram, a “feminine, cosmetic art that was, until recently, very popular” (Ikwuemesi 2012, p. 5) in Igbo land and has been transformed into a contemporary art lexicon. Nsukka School’s art lexicon became more expanded and redefined. One of the main factors surrounding this is the introduction of mixed media by Chike Aniakor (1939-present) in the 1970s. According to Aniakor (2015), “I began to teach African art and mixed media painting to our post-war students in 1970 by empowering them through seminars and field work...” The outcome of this was the execution of paintings with beads (*Jigida*), among other media.

However, in the mid-90s, a radical new departure from modernist aesthetics to the postmodern occurred and changed the creative direction of the Nsukka School. Materials sourced mainly from the environment were used in the execution of artworks, relying on different handling techniques that brought about the skillful integration of sculpture, painting, textiles, photography and ceramic elements in the execution of works, causing the boundaries between the different genres to increasingly thin out, leaving where they exist at all, only a lean thread of demarcation (Onuzulike, 2001). Since then, this has yielded evocative works that anchor on assemblage, grouping and installation, whose embodiment is El Anatsui, an internationally renowned sculptor who is “possibly the most relevant living African artist of this time” (Morgan, 2016). According to Onwuegbucha (2015), it brought about “radical aesthetics that have come to be synonymous with Nsukka school art” today. Anatsui popularized the strategy of composing installation using multiple units of materials sourced from the environment (Onuora, 2021, pp. 22-23) and influenced students to develop a new attitude to repurposing and transforming commonplace materials towards making artistic statements and in so doing, articulated a shift in the creative direction of the art department. Until his retirement in 2012, his creative tutelage exposed students to making use of cheap materials sourced from the environment in creating thought-provoking and evocative artworks. And by encouraging his students, they became aware of the changes in global art trends and attuned themselves to its varying modes of presentation (Odoh, 2011, p. 30 & 31).

The adaptations, appropriations and skillful use of down-to-earth materials in Nsukka School have changed the course of modern Nigerian art entirely, diversifying its frontiers. This has brought about a paradigm shift in the artistic production and execution, otherwise known today as postmodernist art in Nsukka School, in which critics have expressed fears, terming it anti-art. It is in light of this; therefore that the study discusses the works of some adventurous Nsukka ceramists, namely, Chris Echeta, Ozioma Onuzulike, Ngozi Omeje and Causi Onu to articulate the aesthetic richness, functionality, as well as the commercial value. Looking at it from this perspective, this article engages with the key questions: How have these ceramists embraced and assimilated postmodernist dialectics into the art historical narratives of modern Nigerian art? How have their works fared, in terms of acceptance and sales? Have these works featured in exhibitions and have the artists gained residencies? In attempting to provide answers to the above questions, this article critically discusses the above Nsukka ceramists and their postmodern works. As a historical investigation, this essay used data collected mainly from extant literature and employed the historical narrative method in the analysis and interpretation of the data so collected.

## 1.2 Nsukka Ceramists and their Postmodern Ceramics Installations

It might be helpful to briefly provide the reader with the meaning of art postmodernism. Therefore, it is a shift away from the paradigm of modernism. It is boundary-less and involves installation art, techno art, video art and performance art. In the field of visual arts, it is the inclusion of styles, approaches to art and handling of its theories. Postmodern art rejected the traditional values of modernism, and instead embraced experimentation with new media and art forms including intermedia, installation art, conceptual art, multimedia, performance art, and identity politics. Using these new forms, postmodernist artists have stretched the definition of art to embrace the idea that "anything can be art."<sup>3</sup> In his book "Meaning and Memory: The Roots of Postmodern Ceramics, 1960-1980," the ceramic historian, Garth Clark (2001), writes that "postmodern ceramics has its roots in the USA during the 1960s and in Britain during the 1970s" (p. 3) and that the open-minded spirit regarding materials has encouraged several leading postmodernists like Arman, Miquel Barcelo, Tony Cragg, Thomas Shutte, Siah Armajani, Antony Gormley, Keith Haring, Jeff Koons, and many others to bring ceramics into their orbit by using the materials to create major works that are as important in their oeuvres as any other medium. He further states that "while some use the material on its own, others such as Anthony Caro have made it part of a multi-media partnership of which example can be glimpsed from his gigantic, heroic, narrative installations entitled *The Trojan War* (1993 - 94) and *The Last Judgment* (1995 - 99)" (p. 15). What these installations offer is the skillful integration of metal, wood and clay in equal parts.

Evolving from a traditional art practice into what is termed contemporary ceramics; ceramic art in Nigeria is a continuum of its predecessor and the set of factors superintending it, is new and entirely different from the traditional, making this art idiom anchored on modern sensibility (Ene-Orji, 2005). Ceramic art in Nigeria has come a long way. Its inclusion as an area of specialty in the curriculum of some higher institutions in Nigeria brought about its expansion from the foundation that was well laid by Michael Cardew in 1951, at the Pottery Training Center, Abuja. From its inception, ceramics as an area of specialty in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka had, according to Onuzulike (2001), "clutched somewhat dogmatically to long-held convention" (p. 8), wherein the production of ceramics, clay was used extensively to produce ceramic wares that mainly served both functional and utilitarian purposes.

However, in the late 90s, there was a twist. Some ceramists such as Chris Echeta, Ozioma Onuzulike, Ngozi Omeje and Caius Onu started breaking the age-old conventional ways of ceramic production. Spurred by the dynamics of clay, Chris Echeta specialized in ceramics. Informally, Venerable J.D.J. Onyereri taught him the dynamics and drama of ceramics while formally, he trained under the creative tutelage of Benjo Igwilo, at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka between 1975-1979. I was in the period; El Anatsui was pushing and exploiting clay's boundaries while seeking creative freedom. El Anatsui's studio practice was purely on experimentation and installation and this influenced and emboldened Chris Echeta to delve into experimentation and installation aspects of ceramics. Supporting this, Onuzulike (2005), writes that "the inspiring creative atmosphere within which Echeta trained accounts for his artistic 'exploration', even while still a student in 1978, he invented sculptural ceramic using clay slab (p. 70).

While exploring and extending the creative limits of clay, Chris Echeta has remained faithful to it as a creative medium, not combining wood, metal, among other media with it in the execution of his works. Also, his steadfastness to clay has been tied to the use of clay slabs in innovative ways. In addition to this, he is one of the Nsukka artists who believe poetry to be akin to art and should serve as a vehicle in which societal change will be transported and facilitated. He achieves this by activating the surfaces of his works with curving and twisting lyrical engobe lines. According to Kingsley Ene-Orji (2005), "his manipulation of formal aesthetic binary form and space, the real and the imagined, lend poetic dimension to his work (p. 49).

Thematically, Echeta's work anchors and gears towards national issues, particularly politics. This is exemplified in the work entitled *The Sacking of a Generation* (Fig. 1) which interrogates the present-day idea of leadership in Nigeria. It is a composite installation of hundreds of terracotta figurines that suggests a mass exodus of people out of a city gate. In what appears to be a tormented landscape, a figure guides her family away; to borrow from Buhari (2015). It creates an illusion of distance, perspective and motion, drawing the beholder into its symphony of movement. What *The Sacking of a Generation* depicts is the cumulative effects of bad leadership, as well as failed economic policies of successive Nigerian leaders. It illustrates the long and twisted queues of a mass of desperate citizens who patiently wait to pass through the screening gate, a kind of stone-and-lintel gate-way that reminds one of metal detectors and scanners installed in many embassies, airports, and border posts. In the work, hapless citizens as clay forms, move through a gateway into uncertain territory, of a covered clay bowl (Ene-Orji, 2005).

In *No Place to Hide* (Fig. 2), the disposal of three pots that were broken, fragmented and turned upside down on their rims, with inscriptions and engobe decoration on their domes of which several knobs transform into stooping anthropomorphic figures trying to force themselves into a dark cave. These dominant forms are accompanied by other smaller forms with the same purpose of finding solace in this sanctuary (Ene-Orji, 2005, 27).



**Figure 1: The Sacking of a Generation, clay and Engobe, 2001. © The artist**



**Figure 2: No Place to Hide, clay and Engobe, 2001. © The artist**

Though Echeta has not combined clay with any other medium in executing his works, except engobe, as exemplified in figures 1 and 2, he has crossed the modernist boundary, because he installs, assembles, groups, and decorates – the hallmarks of postmodernist art.

Having specialized in ceramics under Benjo Igwilo and graduated with first-class honours from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 1996, Ozioma Onuzulike became fully energized and developed an inquisitive mind to the extent that during his Master's of Fine Art programme between 2001 and 2003, he explored with unconventional media, introducing sculptural elements in his works and in so doing, pushed the boundaries of ceramics beyond the frontiers. Ever since then, Onuzulike has held on tenaciously to his vocation, as he continues to search for new idioms to enrich his vocabulary in the perpetual dialogue with life, which art represents (Ikwuemesi 1999). His main focus is on the theme of violence, war, terrorism and other issues of global concern. With the combination of clay and all sorts of rejected things around him, he interrogates human conditions and creates works that are totally in violation of conventional ceramics production. Examples of these are found in wood, cans, discarded television set, metal, colour, grass, paper and so on. Combining these media, he subdues clay, proving beyond reasonable doubt that clay is not the only idiom for ceramic expressions. In his words:

I find clay alone unable to carry the full weight of my recent artistic inquiries and strategies. And so, I now seek to expand the 'horsepower' of clay with idioms, symbols and metaphors readable in materials found around my immediate Nsukka environment – spent cans, biscuit wrappers, pure water sachets, chicken mesh, etc. With these, I explore questions of identity and (im)morality, armed conflicts and environmental abuses.(Onuzulike, 2002, p. 190.).

An installation titled *National Cake* (Fig. 3), is a useful example of how clay, tree trunk, charcoal, light metal and coloured electric bulb have been combined skillfully. On a tree trunk is placed a perforated terracotta bowl with light metal tied around it, containing terracotta bones and a

shining coloured bulb, showing the artist's ability to combine incompatibles in a compatible manner.

Aniakor (2000) writes that "the word environment is a fit metaphor for the limitations of the clay medium if its formal horizon is not extended to include non-clay media; an apt metaphor for the crises of the human condition as well as the scorched and scorching earth, burning bushes, explosion and other aspects of nature's uneasiness" (p. 1). Encompassing African natural resources in his artworks, his *Palm Kernel* (Fig. 4) is one of the *Shell Beads series* that explores the aesthetic qualities and historical significance of the palm kernel. And recognizing the cultural and economic value the palm kernel held in West Africa during and after the slave trade, he translates the palm kernel as a historically charged site within his artwork, weaving mixed media ceramic structures that resemble Africa's prestige cloths – such as the Nigerian *Akwete* and *Aso Oke* or imported ones such as the lace fabrics that are also highly regarded in Africa as markers of social status. His work engages in conversations around the issues of social change that have remained in flux.<sup>4</sup> Technically, *Palm Kernel* is a piece executed with ceramic shell-like beads of earthenware, stoneware clays, glaze and glass skillfully interlaced together with copper-coated aluminum wire. Out of hundreds of small clay beads, it is a woven gown whose centre of attraction is an applied 'M-like' shape of brown dotted here and there with ash colour beads for highlight, lending it a rich tactile quality and aesthetic richness.

*Suyascape III* (Fig. 5) is a true representation of barbecue prepared by the Hausa<sup>5</sup> people. It is usually prepared with slices of meat, carefully pierced with sticks and then roasted over the fire to get appetizing shapes. They are showcased for passersby to buy. With the suya-like shapes formed with clay that are pierced with sticks and skillfully stuck on wood, the artist raises questions relating to man's inhumanity to man, interrogating issues relating to bombing, maiming and butchering of men by fellow men in different parts of the world, as well as their roasting in the fire, as has been demonstrated, for example, during terrorist attacks. 'Suyascape' subtly references accident scenes caused by bad roads in many African countries. It portrays most roads in Africa that are currently punctuated by the charred remains of crashed vehicles that must have sliced human flesh into bits like 'suya' and also roasted them in fire (Onuzulike, 2009).

In the seascape, the suya-like forms appear in the brown colour of clay and the ageing effect of the wood, the artist achieved pyrography technique lends the piece an aesthetic quality. Technically, it seems the artist prepared a clay slab from where he cut out small pieces; pressed/squeezed and passed through them iron rods which were then, perforated into tree trunks whose surface was burnt and sandpapered for tonal effects.

Apart from his solo exhibitions, Onuzulike has participated in numerous group exhibitions which include *New Energies*, curated by El Anatsui and *Changing Attitudes*, the Biennale of the Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA), among many others. The artist has won prizes and awards, including the UNESCO-ARCHBERG Bursary for the Visual Arts in 2001. He was an artist-in-resident in Italy and the United States of America precisely in Showhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Showhegan, Maine.

The above efforts and the eventual success recorded so far by Onuzulike, no doubt, provide ample testimonies of an Nsukka artist who has unequivocally and unapologetically, embraced postmodern ceramics that are within the confines of installation and conceptual art.



**Figure 3: National Cake, terracotta, wood, charcoal, light metal, and coloured bulb, 1999. © The artist**



**Figure 4: Palm Kernel, terracotta, 2022. © The artist**



**Figure 5: Suyascape III, terracotta, metal, wood and acrylics, 2003. © The artist.**

Another Nsukka ceramist who, following this part is breaking new ground is Ngozi Omeje. In the face of the high cost of production, a few artists like Omeje have tried to circumnavigate this challenge by engaging in an exploration of the clay medium in a broad range of unconventional adaptations (Onuora et al., 2021, pp. 22-23). Her thought-provoking ceramic installations endeared her to Dionne Haroutunian, a Seattle artist, Sev Shoon Director and the State Department Envoy to Nigeria, who came to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for a printmaking workshop in 2009, during the period Omeje was doing her Master's of Fine Arts (MFA) programme. She became interested in her explorative installation, to the extent that facilitated her travel to the United States of America for an artist residency at the Sev Shoon Arts Center in Ballard in June 2010.

Having been exposed, she has been working and creating a lot of works that transcend beyond all known creative boundaries, using clay, ropes, and rubber sandals which she cuts into small pieces and suspended in the open space. An interesting technique which she employs repeatedly to execute different installation works is "stringing." According to Omeje (2010):

The art of employing the string technique of arrangement of coloured threads with the coloured clay or smoked clay strung in holes to form ceramic wares has been according to her, a rewarding technique. This art cushions the effect of breakage of wares or cracking



during firing by means of firing little bits and pieces of clay to form a whole by the new technique, no matter the size of the artwork. However, this string method employs the use of strings, wire or twine wound around a grid of holes into Pespex or framed walls of lines with the clay bits to generate ceramic wares. The mobile ceramic installations produced through this technique can be made to be enlarged depending on time and the desire of the artist (134).

*Imagine Jonah* (Fig. 6) and *She Bleed* (Fig. 7), are among many other works that fall into this series. While *Imagine Jonah* is executed with coiled clay and spread on the floor and thousands of red, blue, green, yellow and orange colours of flip flops attached on the ceiling with strings to form a hanging whale-like shape whose mouth is agape showing its sharp teeth, *She Bleed* is formed with clay balls that were passed through with strings and hung on the ceiling to dangle. In other to depict a woman's placenta, some of the balls are painted with engobe. According to Keran Law, *Imagine Jonah* "depicts and interprets the Biblical story of Jonah and the whale. The dangling pieces in the work form a whale in an ocean of strings, casting its shadow in circles of clay and emerging from inside the whale is one pair of sandals, whole and unbroken."

*She Bleeds* is about the earth which humans have kept hurting and yet it seems stoic and calm and yet bleeding. Speaking with Enekwachi Agwu the artist says: "I related the bleeding earth with the monthly cycle of a woman which is a telling symbol of fertility for any woman. Even with the monthly discomfort, it offers hope each time it is experienced. Bleeding could be seen as the pangs of mother nature which could be related to the sufferings and sacrifices of humankind." With titles like *She Bleeds*, she engages issues of pregnancy and childbirth. With three children, it is not surprising that the artist engages with such a theme as a 'placenta' as she is fascinated by the mystery of pregnancy (Onuora et al., 2021).



Figure 6: *Imagine Jonah*, clay, rubber sandals, and strings, 2009. © The artists



**Figure 7: *She Bleeds*, clay, strings, and engobe, 2011. The artists**

In 2019, her ceramic installations of globular clay units, rings, leaves and re-purposed plastic flip-flops suspended on a hanger with hundreds of nylon threads have been shown at the Korea Ceramics Biennale and Cheongju Craft Biennale in South Korea, the Dakar Biennale in Senegal, the First Central China Ceramics Biennale in China, and at the inaugural ArtXLagos Art Fair in 2016. Numerous international and local exhibitions enrich her profile. One such is the Connecting Deep 10th anniversary exhibition of CCA Lagos in 2018. It is to be noted that SMO Contemporary Art exhibited her work at the Saatchi START Art Fair in London in 2018 and at the Standing Out all-female artist group exhibition at the Wheatbaker in 2017. In 2014, she won the Overall Winner of Life in my City Art Competition award in Enugu, and in 2015, an Outstanding Concept at the National Art Competition in Lagos. Also, she won the Most Creative Potter from the University of Nigeria Nsukka award in 2005 and an art competition organized by *Life in My City* in 2015; she won the first prize award.

Undoubtedly, with this no mean feat, she has cut her creative teeth and as such, belongs to the crop of Nsukka artists who have embraced postmodernist ceramics. It is to this extent that Kidari Iyabo (2011) writes, "Having carefully exploited the limitless opportunities and explored a good number of cultures locally and internationally, Ngozi Omeje has become a force to reckon with in the production of uniquely classical works of pottery, ceramics and so on" (p. 55).

Caius Onu is not left out while studying the postmodernist ceramicists. He graduated from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1998, majoring in ceramics. He completed the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree programme in 2005. Believing in the cliché that "necessity is the mother of invention" he veered off from the conventional method of ceramic production and engaged himself in creating highly conceptual and abstract works with down-to-earth materials which according to him "helped disentangle his pottery from the shackles and

limitations of clay and spoke his idioms with materials already locked up with meanings” (Onu 2008, p. 123).

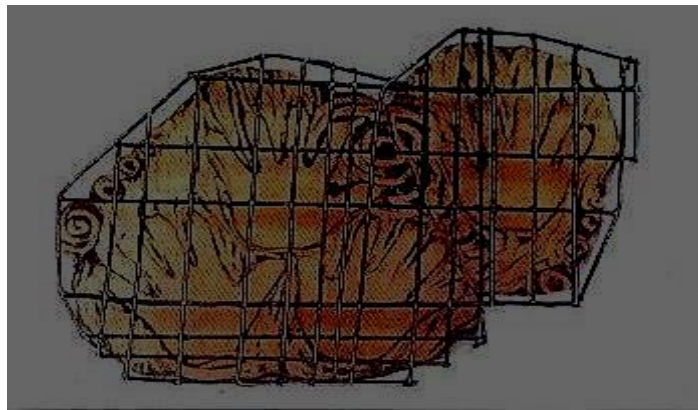
Again, Onu’s shift from modernist aesthetics to postmodernist creation was informed by the socio-political situation in Nigeria. Buttressing this, he reiterated that:

...hard time and the unbearable stench of corruption woke me up from my creative slumber. In a dream, while the slumber lasted, I saw a pile of firewood and each log striving for the top, a mountain of refuse dump as each victim looks hopeless and helpless and dry season bush burning as dry leaves, trees, grasses and sticks squeak in anguish as they are ravaged by the blazing inferno. These are the metaphor that defines very realistically the real situation of our time and which lend the fibre that warps and wefts of this fabric that encapsulates my creative idioms in this artistic sojourning (2003, p. 1).

According to his teacher, Okpan Oyeoku (2003) Onu “not only used clay to produce utilitarian objects, but also displayed creative and aesthetic marriage of clay work, metal and wood” (p. 7). For example, *The Less Privileged* (Fig. 8) and *Survival of the Fittest* (Fig. 9) are executed with the skillful combination and manipulation of clay, metal, wood and rope. He proved through these works that clay as a medium can be used alongside other non-clay materials, such as iron rods, condom packs, ropes, cowries, syringes and needles, capsules and sticks, among others to interrogate socio-economic issues.

In *The Less Privileged* (Fig. 8) the artist used crisscrossed iron rods to trap a well-designed clay slab, engraved with human palms and some *uli* symbols. Metaphorically, it portrays the five fingers, admonishing that in life's struggles; one must remember that God created our five fingers unequal. And as such, he made this world for us all, the big, the small, the rich and the poor (Oyeoku, 2003). *Survival of the Fittest* (Fig. 9) The artist used clay to form human image imageries trapped in different zones of three circular iron shapes. Hermeneutically, it is a reflection of our society where the rich is getting richer and the poor getting poorer. It shows that Life is full of struggles, where all through his life; man continues to fight for survival.

One has so far had a solo exhibition *The Spy Hole* and has also participated in some group exhibitions including *Changing Attitude*, the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Pan-African Circle of Artists in 2002 that showcased his exploratory and experimental postmodern works.



**Figure 8: The Less Privileged, iron-rods and clay, 2003. © The artist**



**Figure 9: Survival of the Fittest, iron-rod and clay, 2003. The artists**

### 3. Conclusion

Ceramic art is art made from ceramic materials, including clay. It may take varied forms - pottery, tableware, tiles, and figurines, among others. This is no longer the case in Nsukka School. There is a paradigm shift. Ceramicists have been infected with the postmodernist virus, bringing about creative outbursts that have culminated in enchanting works, executed with multiple media mainly sourced from the environment. With these thought-provoking works, they have made giant strides, having been exposed to the global art terrain through international art exhibitions and artist residencies. Some of these works have found their way to galleries and auction houses, attracting significant media attention. To these ceramic artists, postmodernism has become a marriage made in art world heaven, to borrow a leaf from Garth Clark (2001). Engaging in massive experimentation on the possibilities of deploying textures on wares to achieve unique results (Onuora et al., 2021), Chris Echeta, Ozioma Onuzulike, Caus Onu and Ngozi Omeje have continued to create works that hinge on a return to the pattern, as well as decoration, appropriation, allegory and figuration. A reading of their works from any historical perspective to decode visual meaning qualifies them as documents (Egonwa, 2012, p. 12). A new artistic trend/style has emerged from the Nsukka School outside of the *uli* aesthetics for which it was previously renowned (Onwuegbucha, 2015).

Undoubtedly, with the success recorded with these works so far, it will not be out of place to argue that this creative shift is capable of stirring the future direction of art production and bring about change in the creative consciousness of Nigerian artists, especially those specializing in sculpture, painting, textiles and visual communication design who have clutched unto modernist aesthetic.

#### Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

#### Funding Disclosure/Acknowledgement

No funding has been received for the publication of this article.

## Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the ceramic artists who are the subject of this study.

## Notes

1. For more insights on this, see About the New Nsukka School Exhibition Series. In *ko-artspace.com>exhibitions>14-...*
2. For a better understanding of how *Uli* symbols have been appropriated in the works of Nsukka artists and how the Nsukka art department is known internationally for *Uli* art, Simon Ottenburg's book *New Traditions from Nigeria: Seven Artists of the Nsukka Group*, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1997, is a formidable index.
3. See Eden Gallery (2021). In [www.eden-gallery.com](http://www.eden-gallery.com)
4. See Afikaris, Ozioma Onuzulike. In <https://afikaris.com/artists/48-oziuma-onuzulike/>
5. Hausa is a native ethnic group in Nigeria, numbering around 76 million people, who speak the Hausa language.

## References

- Aniakor, C.C. (2015). Art and the village square: Krydz Ikwuemesi's creative explorations into the *Uli* art pedigree. In *The Village Square*, Abuja: The PanAfrika Press, p16-20.
- Buhari, J. (2015). From the studio to the village square. In *The Village Square*, Abuja: PanAfrika Press, 12.
- Clark, G. (2001). *Meaning and Memory: The Roots of Postmodern Ceramics, 1960-1980*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Egonwa, O. (2012). *Research Methods in Visual Arts*. Ibadan: Ababa Press Ltd.
- Ene-Orji, K. (2005). *A new departure in contemporary Nigerian ceramics: The works of Chris Echeta, Tony Umunna and Ozioma Onuzulike*, (B.A. Project). Department of Fine and Applied Arts: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, p. 49.
- Ikwuemesi, K. (2012). Forward to the past: *Uli* history, essence and new possibilities. In *Forward to the Past: Uli and the Challenging of Modernity* (pp. 5-12). Enugu: The ULi Art and Craft Foundation.
- Ikwuemesi, K. (2001). Ozioma Onuzulike: Redrawing the frontiers of ceramics. *Ijele: Art eJournal* 2 (1), on page number.
- Kadijah, Iyabo (2011). Ngozi Omeje: Charting a new course in ceramics at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Art and Artists: Culture, Creativity and Innovation*, 1. (3), p.55.
- Law, Karen (2010). Long Journey for Nigeria Artist Bringing Work to Ballard.  
Retrieved from <http://www.westseattleherald.com>
- Morgan, T. V. (2016). Anya fulu ugo: Exhibition review in honor of El Anatsui and Obiora Udechukwu. *African Art*, 49 (3), 86-89, [https://doi.org/10.1162/AFAR\\_r\\_00304](https://doi.org/10.1162/AFAR_r_00304)
- Odoh, G. and Odoh, N. (2021) *Igwebuiké*: Exhibition of sculpture in honour of El Anatsui at 75 years. *African Arts* 54(3): 88-91. doi: [https://doi.org/1162/afar\\_r\\_00604](https://doi.org/1162/afar_r_00604)

- Odoh et al (2019). Ethnoaesthetics and conceptuality in the post-civil war drawing tradition of the Nsukka art department. *The Artfield Journal of Art and Visual Culture*, 1(2), 76-91.
- Odoh, G. (2011). Uli and the danger of creative stagnation: The need to explore new creative pathways. In K. Ikwemesi (Ed.). *Forward to the Past: Uli and the Challenging of Modernity*, Enugu: The ULI Art and Craft Foundation, 29-33.
- Okpe, Tonie (2005). Interrogating the human figure in bridging the ceramic sculpture divide: Practice in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.interpretingceramics.com/issue008/article/18.htm>
- Oloidi, O. (2006). Philosophical and ideological triumvirate schools, discourse and styles in modern Nigerian art." In *Styles, Schools and Movements in Modern Nigerian Art*, Abuja: National Gallery of Art, 1 - 14.
- Oloidi, O. (1995). Three decades of modern Nigerian art (1960 - 1990): General observation and critique. *USO: Nigeria Journal of Art* 1 (1), 67.
- Omeje, N. (2010). A new technique in ceramics production "stringing." In M.I. Uguru & I.M. Ezeonu (Eds.). *Research and the Realization of Vision 20-2020*, Nsukka: Nigerian University Research and Development Fair, p. 134.
- Onu, C. (2002). Artist's bio-bibliography. In *Changing Attitude*, Enugu: The Pan-African Circle of Artists, p. 183.
- Onu, C. (2003). Artist's statement. In *Spy Hole*, Lagos: Maison De France, p. 1.
- Onuora, C. et al. (2021). Contemporary exploration of ceramics in Nigeria: Ngozi Omeje's connecting deep exhibition at the centre for contemporary art, Lagos. *Ceramic: Art and Perception*, 117, 20-27.
- Onwuegbucha, I. (2015). *Transformation of the commonplace in Eva Obodo's sculpture, 1997-2015*, (M.A. Thesis), Department of Fine And Applied Arts: University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Onuzulike, O. (2009). Pushing the boundaries of ceramic art tradition in Nigeria: Notes on the 'suyascape' project. *Interpreting Ceramics 11*, no page numbers.
- Onuzulike, O. (2005). *Uli* as a paradigm of art and creativity: Reflection on Inyi traditional pottery and two ceramic artists of the Nsukka School. In C.K. Ikwemesi & E. Agbaiyi (Eds.). *The Rediscovery of Tradition: Uli and the Politics of Culture*, Lagos: Pendulum Centre for Culture and Development, p. 70.
- Onuzulike, O. (2002). Some artists' statements. In *Changing Attitude, 4<sup>th</sup> Biennale of the Pan-African Circle of Artists*, Enugu: The Pan-African Circle of Artists, p. 190.
- Onuzulike, O. (2001). Representing art: Nsukka student' art 1993 – 2000. In K. Ikwemesi & A. Adewunmi (Eds.). *A Discursive Bazaar, Writing on African Art, Culture, and Literature*, Enugu: The Pan African Circle of Artists, p. 8. Ozioma Onuzulike, Retrieved from [www.criticalceramics.org/oldsite/articles/echeta.shtml](http://www.criticalceramics.org/oldsite/articles/echeta.shtml)

Martins N. Okoro, Ph.D, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A painter, an art historian, his research interest is in postmodernist art, visual culture and heritage studies. He has published in national and international journals. E-mail: ([martins.okoro@unn.edu.ng](mailto:martins.okoro@unn.edu.ng)).