

2014

Oeuvre

by Aiyesan

A solo exhibition of exquisite works of art from segun Aiyesan

Oeuvre (the Statement)

Oeuvre is a reflection of my restless nature and a glimpse of my thoughts and preoccupations. I am not one of many words and so I let my art do the talking. More often than not my work takes a detour away from the original path of guidance to somewhere or something somewhat different, or even totally contrasty. I enjoy the art a lot for several reasons; firstly the idea of being able to create or innovate has always excited me since I was a child. I love colors. Also very importantly, it has been my loyal companion, giving solace, through many grey days I have had to sojourn through in life.

I love diversity and I find myself expressing that in my works in terms of techniques and subject matters. The truth is, this is also the way I validate my claim to being a creative artist. I love exploring the human condition, the spiritual aspects of our existence and the beauty of life, among other things.

Oeuvre attempts to capture a few shades of my interest and complexities, as it peers into my infirmities, strengths and resolve. It also expose aspects of my fears and apprehensions regarding the fallibility of our world system which decimates the one true jewel we all possess (albeit in disproportion) - Time.

My narration, despite being modern and contemporary, still echoes tones of traditional African influences in some color choices and motifs, but the responsibility to be unique in my approach has devolve on me over many years of adventure.

Oeuvre is my state of joy and despair, my unending search for the grail. It is my uncompleted image of self, my loose grasp on the objects of loathe and the fleeting moments of clarity. My purpose, my reason, my love.

Segun Aiyesan





OEUVRE

@

*Signature art Gallery
107 Awolowo road, Ikoyi, Lagos
Signaturebeyond@yahoo.com*

28th June - 7th July 2014

10am - 6pm

STILL ON THE TRACK OF ELOQUENCE

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), the Italian artist, a noble man whose reverence for the form of the human figure, was once evaluated thus, that his figures weather sculpted or painted were all eloquent hymns in praise of humanity. 450 years after, not even after the baroque tradition with Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598 1680) and the revival of a stupendous humanistic tradition of Christianity, which the Baroque tradition served, can one recall any detailed attention to grandeur that so defines the human form as Segun Aiyesan's work stands in appreciation. This is my submission over seven years of interaction with the artist Aiyesan and his work, as he entitles this exhibition "OEUVRE". Usually the complete body of work of an artist is usually related to as oeuvre. In this exhibition then, is Aiyesan simply letting us into what characterizes his thoughts and confrontation with our physical world? Or is he hinting at the spiritual dimensions that usually direct the intuitive insight from where the work of art emanates in the artist?

Aiyesan is an electronic engineer. It does appear that he is keeping fate with the spirit of humanism upon which the creative exploits of the renaissance artists is hinged (and where Michelangelo belongs) to help humanity cope with its past and present. In this regards he is engaged in this task, as an artist, from a provincial suit in Nigeria, seeking solutions to the problems that confront his immediate humanity in these metaphors. The artist is the individual who relentlessly midwives images as symbols that allow us to appreciate who we are or what we desire to be. What we desire to be, often different from what we are remains the business of the artist to call upon or summon. Thus the artist becomes valuable to humanity if only we can see through the depth of meaning encoded in the work of art. In other words, the works for which these words are laid out here hold their appeal as metaphors that belie humanistic and social engineering. And the agenda is to seek them out as we confront them.

Trends in contemporary art show that the narrative or symbolic image is gradually being given up for the abstract and conceptual art forms. This option calls for a synthesizing will and ability, often to come to terms with an artist's supposed intention or message. It usually summons the will power on the artist's audience to hazard guesses on what an artistic metaphor instructs along with other values of the work of art. In the works Aiyesan presents we are confronted with a mixture of the familiar world of images and the unfamiliar world of the conceptual. In this mix the recognizable and the symbolic invariably lead to the appreciation and acceptance of the unrecognizable aspects of his work. The nature of such acceptance and appreciation is facilitated all the more by the captions and titles the artist provides of his works. This gesture where the artist provides a lead to his thoughts and insights will form the fulcrum for the interpretation I impose on some individual works and how they provide a collective identity to the works in this exhibition the artist entitles "Oeuvre".

Aiyesan's composition in this exhibition is studded with the feminine motif in diverse cultural, social and emotional configurations. What does the female subject hold for this artist, we are bound to ask? Does it relate to the male obsession to find completeness in his other-self within a Freudian psychoanalytical rhetoric? Is there a way the artist is obsessed with the native and atavistic recasts on the survival of self and specie; on the other hand the continued propagation of the human family? The work that heralds this focus on femininity in its diverse attributes, but one that is central to the quest for the continued sustenance of the human family is entitled "Hatchling". The central object in this painting is an egg that is presented with lines of crack and installed on a pool of blood that runs down its pedestal. Stunted pillars frame the pedestal on its recesses. On the right post is an evacuated or probably half segment of a hatched egg with its whitened interior shell. On the opposite side of this, to the left is the image of an attentive child whose gaze is on the figure of the crackled egg. These symbolizations put together reference femininity and the intensification of life. The child is a product of human "hatching". In the idealistic philosophy on which the African worldview is grounded the child is recognized as the father of the adult human. Such names as *Iyabo* (Yoruba – mother has come), *Nnenna* (Igbo – father's mother), or *Nwabuzo* (the child comes first) or *Omorodion* (Edo – the child is the elder) give prominence to the status of the child as the father of humanity in African cosmology. The woman begets the child and the child begets humanity.

In this body of work, reality is made palpably real in the diverse titles in the compositions that involve feminine figures. Consider then such suit as the "Omoge Series" and titles such as "Young women", "Femme Fatale", "Femme", "Blue Lounge", "Mirror Image", "Dreaming" etc. These remain various depictions of feminine figures and the way they suggest fecundity through lust-inducing poses. Where this is not the case they remain significantly in brooding frame of mind. On the other hand his men appear emasculated by being sequestered in confinement. It appears the men are not to be seen in the business of sustaining life as a vocation. Yet, "Wilt" (a title in his oeuvre) implies a loss of spirit and the will to go on. But in the same token there is a declaration that "I am" (in another title): these are two compositions that share same design format. Hence in the "Mad Dog series", a portrait of the artist yells at fate? Yet reality constructs for humanity each a "World Within" where the man will continue to engage his "Ancient trail" – to labor through time and time and time again.

The spiritual depth from where the oeuvre comes is to be appreciated in the grandeur with which Aiyesan addresses his subject. Humanity becomes marbled in his hands. His eloquent figures, as ideal creations, emerge as strong and struggling characters from the ground they are trapped supposedly as metaphors. As frigid as the figures appear they bear the image of the gods; the faces they are adorned with remain ambivalent – without betraying emotions except in the un-marbled figures where the resemblance of the artist can be deciphered. And probably as an unmasked persona is his reaction directed at human frailty, pains and uncertain future? In these humanistic images Aiyesan calls on us to appreciate as well as re-examine the nature of human existence, and to come face to face with its challenges in restrained attitudes. It is probable that man as a male is the tragic hero of humanity. He will continue to engage his ancient trail. After all it was the reggae artist Peter Tosh who admonished that “man was made to suffer and the woman was made to feel the pain.”

The artist as a diviner and the conscience of humanity will always remind us of the reality that frames our collective humanity, which we often lose consciousness of. Oeuvre remains the load Aiyesan has borne for humanity. Unloaded, it instructs humanity on the appreciation of our world with the human’s severe limitations in spite of efforts to come to terms with it. This is more so with the uncertainties that encircle existence.

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TRANSCEDENTAL MUSSINGS: AIYESAN'S KNOTTING OF SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL WORLDS INTO PLASTIC REALITY.

It is not common for a viewer in an art exhibition space to encounter an increasing pulsation of breath or be spellbound if not by standing face to face with an awesome piece of a transcendental experience imbued with either a *deja vu* connection or in some very rare cases the viewer finds self in a portal of some otherworldly experience through the contact of an artwork. Aiyesan b1971 had his training as a Electronic Engineer at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, but seems religiously attracted to expressing himself in the visual art. This predilection has seen him with more laurels than even the formally trained artists can lay claim to. Among many of these accolades of note includes making the finalist list of the first Nigeria Art Competition coordinated by the African Artists Foundation and sponsored by Nigeria Brewery P.L.C. in 2007. His works also command very good ratings in art auctions in Nigeria, a typical example is making the top ten sale in 2013 at Terra Kulture-Mydrim art auction and other international auction venues, but beyond its collector allure Aiyesan is building a pedigree for serious talks through his art which makes his art relevant for documentation of today's events and continuous re-reading by posterity for a proper deconstruction of our society and humanity.

Aiyesan as an artist is confounding when we think as Nigerians but normal in the world of art or art world. The likes of Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, M.C. Escher, Wassily Kandinsky just to mention but a few are all typical examples of artists that have done creditably well even when they did not receive a formal training through apprenticeship or in any art academy. In contemporary Nigerian art scene there are also creative artists who didn't go through the formal training in art from a tertiary institution and are self taught. The likes of Aiyesan, Kelechi Amadi Obi, Obinna Okeke-Ofoedo, Oliver Enweonwu will suffice as typical examples of great artists this country can boast of locally and internationally. This group with many others not mentioned in this text proves that art is sustained primarily by the passion of the artist. There exist commonalities in their history among which is that, most of them studied in other well coveted disciplines but chose to express themselves in the art with unbridled tenacity. How else can the id assert itself in a sociable system or be recorded for posterity to process if not through a language that transgresses verbal or clannish barrier as art.

Art therefore, is the movement of the spirit within its age. The spirit in turn endlessly tries to be felt in the same age and thereafter. The above movement evolves a system that allows an extra-ordinary copulation between physical and spiritual aspects of being human to form paradigms of communication between humans. Art connects these extremes into an admissible whole, as I have written elsewhere, it confirms the sociability of man and its foundation resides in taste which is aptly located within an 'I' the work of art therefore, as axiology is a repository of values. It always demands interrogation and re-interrogation in order to keep its flame alive within the neighborhood of consciousness. A work of art, no doubt, is a multi-layering of meaning that requires a balance of interpretation between its form and content. It is maybe this strong desire towards expressions beyond the articulate speech that makes things be which would have ordinarily remained vacuous hence an endless chasm. In this concatenation of events therefore, Aiyesan and his likes are contributing to genuine voices from pristine origin of human development as abiding documents for appreciation and sympathy of self. Aiyesan's creative direction in *Oeuvre* readily calls to mind Langdon's assertion that:

Art opens up the truth hidden behind and within the ordinary; it provides a new entrance into reality and pushes us through that entrance. It leads us to what is really there and really going on. Far from subjective, it pierces the opaque subjectivity, the not seeing, of conventional life, of conventional viewing, and discloses reality.¹ (70)

Or like Wassily Kandisky observes art as possessing the power "to send light into the darkness of men's hearts."²

Considering our current materialistic attachments to mundane desires of quick money, prefixes and titles one is apt to wonder what such professionals as the above mentioned are doing in the art. I may dare say here that a genuine search for the self is an overwhelming drive to develop a voice that will be heard by others. Also, beyond the common practice by artists to cluster around Lagos being the cultural capital of Nigeria with its antecedents of hosting the greatest number of serious art; collectors, galleries, informal art platforms and hence attractive to professional artists from all over the country. Aiyesan, like El Anatsui have decided to stay outside Lagos in areas not readily associated with art businesses but unlike Anatsui's Nsukka, Port Harcourt is famous for its rowdiness and electric power outages. Metaphorically they dwell in the fringes of the city while throwing their creatively charged stones at the core of the city. They are not isolated to contributing to the growth of the nation within this sector. There are definitely advantages to be derived from the above situation being that one avoids the noise that is part of the fluxes of over population. Also the cliché of such influences as the market driven direction that produce works with homogeneous identity and sometimes lacking in depth or content is spared artists like Aiyesan. To mediate the geographical experience of living outside a city like Lagos, Aiyesan regularly features in art programs, art auctions, and exhibitions and by so doing brings Port Harcourt's presence to Lagos. Working beyond these challenges is onerous as it is gentrifying. From the forgoing one readily sees in Aiyesan, a born artist with strong streak of idiosyncratic predilection. It is this resolute conviction to his belief system that drives the strong character in the works of Aiyesan.

Through mastery of technique and an uncanny mode of presentation of very serious issues of humanity, Aiyesan provides a denouement in plastic form as handle to understanding the numerous human mysteries. This is enhanced with the multi layering of appropriate content, context and form in the Oeuvre as presented in this solo exhibition. His work profiles the consciousness of the philosophical yet metaphysical. He uses that as an anchor to process physical manifestations of our daily existence.

His figures are rotund with epic-like characters. One can easily call him a painter of giants and warriors. His colours are dominantly tilting towards monochrome and his skillful manipulation of nuanced monochromes creates a strong feeling of a free standing three dimensional sculpture. Many of the work in Oeuvre share this quality with exception to the "Mad Dog" series which I believe alludes to the depth of human bestiality as was typified in the movie 'Jonny Mad Dog'. The series has such titles like "Angry Man" and "Ire", both refer to the same concept of rage or unbridled fury as was expressed in the Liberian war of 1989 – 96 and later in 1999 to 2003. Consider also the stylistic similarity of this series with the fauvist movement of early 20th century whereby the wild and intense colours is alluding to the intensity of human wildness and tendency for the absurd. In "Alter Ego" the artist wraps his thesis of the symbiotic relationship between the two worlds of physicality and spirituality which produces a third in the world of art. Consequently the above forms a trinity of existence. Here he writes that "my amigo in fate with whom I have a never ending discuss that sometimes trail into illogicalness, yet his presence affords a Cornucopia of intimacy and fellowship in the similitude of the holy trinity, the work is a diptych of 3ft x4ft each. Here the artist paints self in a very introspective mood which may as well suggest the pervading mood of most of the works in Oeuvre; one of self reflection and autobiographical references. Yet in another work he exteriorizes his understanding of what many term to be contradiction in existence by illuminating on the subject of duality and its complimentary function. "Anthropomorphic Reflexive 1 and 2" depicts the divine balance in our existence that is peripherally interpreted as good and evil. This he says brings the "fullness of our being through which all our judgments and emotions express" the subject is actually a male form with its other in an eternal fisticuff, definitive of the many personalities within the individual that are in perpetual conflict with the other. However in this piece, the mode of resolution defines an individual's personality and destiny.

"Event Horizon" is yet another work with cryptic undertone, it vacillates between surrealism and minimalism but apt in its thematic reference to human fate in a transient world whereby human beings are cocooned within a tree of life that grows irrespective of human conditions of; activity or inactivity, inertia or moving, rich or poor, sad or glad, mobile or immobile and the gamut of those states that can be located within the human experiences on earth. In this work, the tree of life grows unobstructed and humans are compelled to comply with its dictates. In "*I Am*" Aiyesan investigates the core of his existence, by extrapolation our collective being. In his interrogation of beingness he is not mundane or banal rather his' is a modest positioning of himself as a product of indefinable nature with a purpose that is only clear to his makers. The piece is a square panel with a spatial setting of a golden yet rusty wall which appears hanging on an ominous crevice inviting ones curiosity beyond the surface of the wall. It has become trendy in Nigeria to rephrase *Rene Descartes'* often referenced cogito ergo sum " I think, therefore I am" to such banalities like: I spend therefore I am, I have therefore I am, I am corrupt, therefore I am or I embezzle therefore I am.

The history of leadership and subsequently followership in Nigeria since after 1983 has been anything but civilizing with a concomitant upturning of a people psyche to accept anything corrupt or unethical as standard practice and revel in the consolation that we have a resilient spirit. "*I Am*" seems to be asking the viewer 'who are you?' 'what are you?'

To do justice to the variety of works represented in '*Oeuvre*' will demand another space but I can say that there are three major templates in which to situate the works on display considering their thematic, stylistic and philosophical leanings. Within the first templates are to be found works that deal with human spiritual conditions like: "*Ancient Trail, Anthropomorphic Reflexive, Alter Ego, Hatchling, Mirror Image, and The Confinement*". The subject matters are intangible but felt in human life more strongly than any corporeal event. The second template holds works like; "*Haven, I Am, The Obscurantist, Temptation, Wilt, Once Upon A Time*" and the "*Mad Dog*" series, mediate the intangible abstractness of the former with the work in the later template. They are predominantly philosophical conditions. The third finds work that are however sensuous somewhat mundane like the *nude series, the Peacock Party series and others*. These to a large extent falls within the regular cliché of artworks for mercantilist interest but the beautiful thing about the pieces is his ability in unifying these supposedly disparate styles and technique into one identifiable mould that is Segun Aiyesan.

The encounter in Segun Aiyesan's "*oeuvre*" is akin to what the Spanish will call a *nochez estraladas* or a star studded collection in English. Through its scope, style and dexterity in understanding of medium, Aiyesan has gone beyond the regular voyeuristic search to present before humanity a mirror of uncommon hidden truth. It becomes a gentrifying experience for the emergent contemporary art scene of Nigeria. He is also carving a niche for himself in the international art landscape. What Aiyesan has succeeded in achieving by weaving an extant *Deja vu* experience with an intractable and indefinable otherworldly glimpses is actually the art while his show of dexterity is an act in painting. The work on show for *Oeuvre* becomes a valid document in the study of the nexus between human physical and its spiritual other which demands a proper understanding and sympathy.

By Ikechukwu Francis Okoronkwo
Painter/poet. University of Port Harcourt 2014.

ENDNOTES

1. Wassily Kandinsky "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" in *Art Creativity and the Sacred*. Apostolos-Cappadona(ed.) 1984. P5
2. Langdon B. Gilkey."Can Art Fill the Vacuum?" op.cit p188-192

References

- Apostolos Cappadona, Diane. (ed.) *Art, Creativity and the Sacred*. New York. 1984
Okoronkwo, ikechukwu Francis. (Curatorial note) *Totems of Candor*. An inaugural Exhibition by Prof. Frank Ugiomoh. University of Port Harcourt. 2012.

THE COLORFUL AND THE PROFOUND: SEGUN AIYESAN'S RECENT WORKS

Segun Aiyesan's creative antecedents have made significant imprints on the aesthetic corridor of modern Nigerian art. I first encountered his works in 48 Hours with the Children of the Turtle, catalogue of a group exhibition held in Paris, France, in 2004. I was completely enthralled by the distinctive formalism of his compositions. Afterward, our paths crossed in October, 2013, during my fieldwork for a doctoral research project on Selected Self-taught Nigerian Artists. This afforded me a closer insight into his personality, creative philosophy and studio work processes. Of the various attributes that define Aiyesan's personality, his intense passion for, and commitment to art, stand out as major factors that drive the eclectic and experimental nature of his art practice. The varied creative outcomes which characterize his prolific studio programme, provide compelling evidence of the resilience, resourcefulness, and dynamism of Segun Aiyesan's creative spirit.

"Oeuvre", Segun Aiyesan's current solo exhibition, comes four years after his last one of 2010. Considering his prolific nature, this is not due to lack of works, but, perhaps, arises out of the artist's resolve to allow emergent stylistic brews to further ferment and mature. Therefore, the works on display reflect the current direction of his studio engagement. In their varied outlay, they illustrate a progressive and sometimes radical stylistic shift. The assessment of his works also show that colour enunciation, texture and compositional re-configuration are effective creative highways for his relentless search for new creative idioms. Taking this further, Aiyesan understands the physiological and psychological properties of colour. These are creatively manipulated to weave interesting narratives that are as compelling as they are alluring. His palette can shift swiftly from being expressionistically exuberant to one of austere disposition. In addition to his fervent experimentation with a resin compound that is thickly applied on his painting surfaces, as well as the use of unconventional painting supports, the sculptural manner in which forms are sometimes rendered imbues his works with three-dimensional effect.

Texture also plays a significant role in his art. Not only does this enhance the three-dimensionality of his compositions, it also introduces a tactile quality to the works as well. Another recurring denominator in Segun Aiyesan's art practice is his engagement of particular themes using different compositional frameworks and viewpoints. As a result, most of his works come in series. These include such series as "the Men in Boxes", "Omoge", "Voyeur", "Mad Dog" and "Femme Fatale". This multiplicity of viewpoints aligns with the views of the eminent Nigerian art historian, Chike Aniakor, who argues that "there are many sides to reason, truth and even phenomena."¹ - According to Aniakor, "every truth has its shadow... There is no centre or privileged truth."² - The artist's exploration of multiple viewpoints in his paintings also visualizes the notion that for one to have a wholesome view of a masquerade dancing in the arena, one need to continually adjust his viewing position.

Aiyesan employs various stylistic modes of pictorial configuration. Realism, Surrealism, expressionism and stylization are creatively deployed to satisfy formalistic and thematic needs. This is very pronounced in his rendition of human forms that invite aesthetic contemplation and empathy. In certain instances, he creates a hybrid by synthesizing two different stylistic modes. This is perceived in the handling of works that constitute the Omoge series. The artist's ability to successfully navigate between these stylistic modes without losing clarity of vision, stamps on his art the seal of creative ingenuity. It also initiates the platform for multiple levels of aesthetic engagement.

Segun Aiyesan's art is essentially humanistic. His belief that the role of the artist is to be vigilant and committed to exploring the transient nature of the environment has made him to locate man and his experiences at the centre of his creative inquisitiveness. He engages the physical, the philosophical, the psychological, the spiritual and the esoteric. For example, while works like "Anthropomorphic Reflexive", "Hatchling", "I Am", "Wilt", "Event Horizon" and "World Within", express philosophical musings, "the Mad Dog Series", "Mirror Image", "Alter Ego", "Men in Boxes Series", "Dreaming" and "Obscurantist", have psychological undertones. Collectively, the slants of his conceptual ideations show that the artist is highly perceptive and acutely sensitive to his environment.

Segun Aiyesan's art career has attained a certain level of professionalism that can only be achieved through passion, commitment and pragmatic approach to art production. Given the eclectic and experimentalist predilection of his studio programme, I have no doubt in my mind that the creative feast which he has prepared, and which he invites us to partake in, will provide ample nourishment for our collective well-being, both aesthetically and intellectually.

George Odoh

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3rd June, 2014

Note

1. Chike Aniakor. 2012. "Africa and the Politics of Postcoloniality: Knowledge, Its Production, Commodification and the Music of Violence." Africa and the Politics of Postcoloniality (exhibition catalogue). Enugu: Pan-African Circle of Artists, p 12.

2. Ibid.



3.5'x4'x3" block
Acrylic and Texture
2014



Alter Ego

My Amigo in fate with whom I have a never ending discuss that sometimes trail into illogicalness. Yet his presence affords a cornucopia of intimacy and fellowship in the similitude of the holy trinity.



3.5'x3.5' x3" (x2) acrylic and
texture on wood block
2013



Ancient Trail

The path has remained unchanged by the passage of time and generations. Even when the act of traversing the trail has remained condemnable, and denounced all over the world. The conundrum-like scenario is quite plausible, given that the former exodus was of people displaced against their will, while the latter is Wholly a self-preservation pursuit of panacea.



5'x8' Acrylic on textured canvas 2013

Anthropomorphic Reflexive 1 (Yin Yang series)

In this act, the subject is one individual whose duality is manifested as a struggle between the two elemental forces of his existence. Neither is good nor bad. Neither is superior to the other and neither can exist without the other. They constitute the complementary full-ness of our being through which all our judgments and emotions express. The quest for self discovery is an attempt to understand the dynamics of these forces and to broker an equilibrium which consequently gives a pacific wholesomeness.





Anthropomorphic Reflexive 3 (Yin Yang series)

5'x6' acrylic on textured canvas 2013



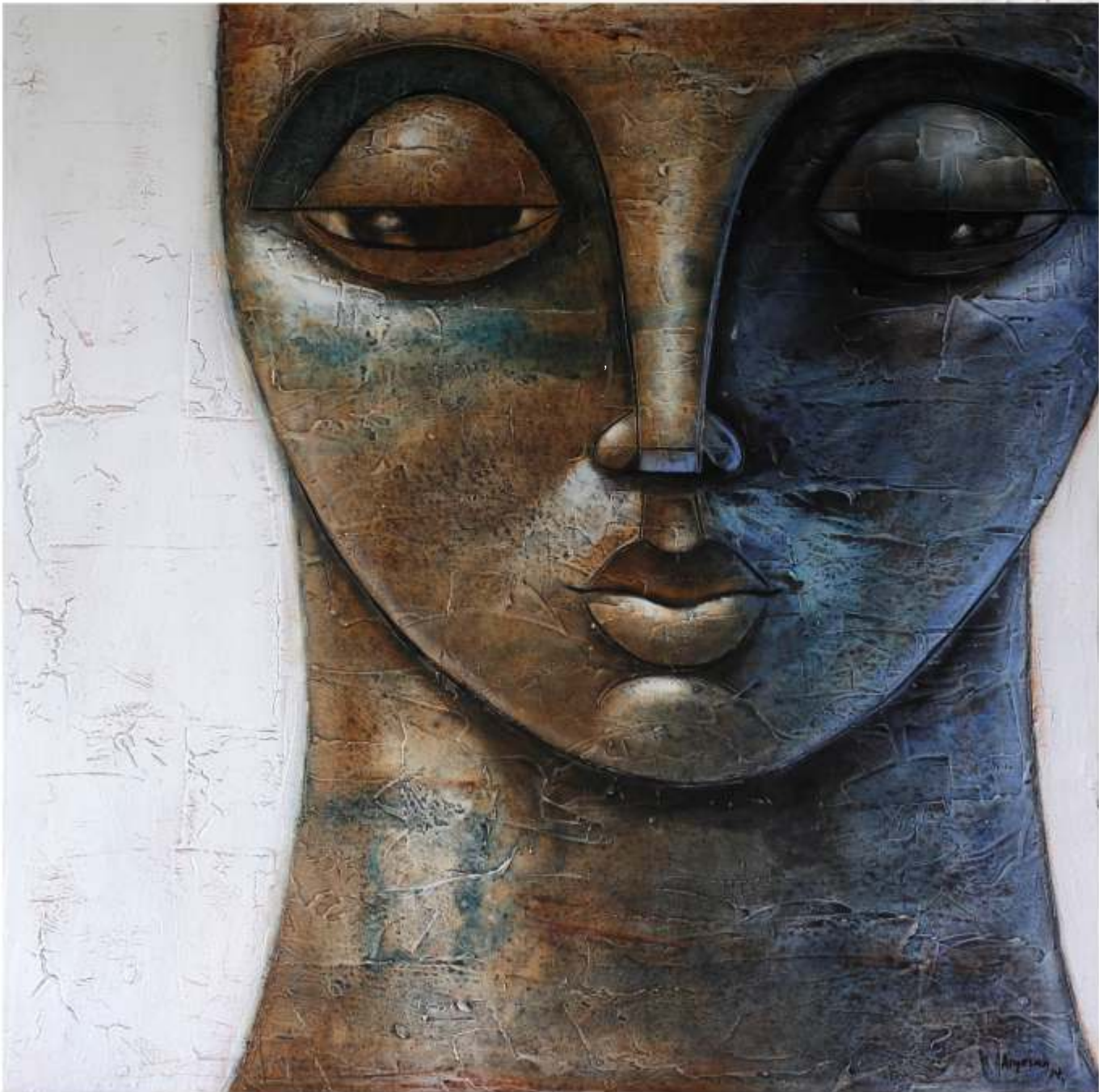
4'x4' acrylic on textured canvas 2014

Hatchling

Anticipation has never ebbed and expectations have been in a state of constant ascent as the human condition becomes increasingly precarious. The fabled advent of a piety catholicon has become a faith practiced for the glimpses of hope proffered. Sundry postulates are theologized to support the pursuit and even when cracks emerge to instantiate a fallibility in that belief, many still cling to the hope of an elysian field where everything is made right.

Mirror Image

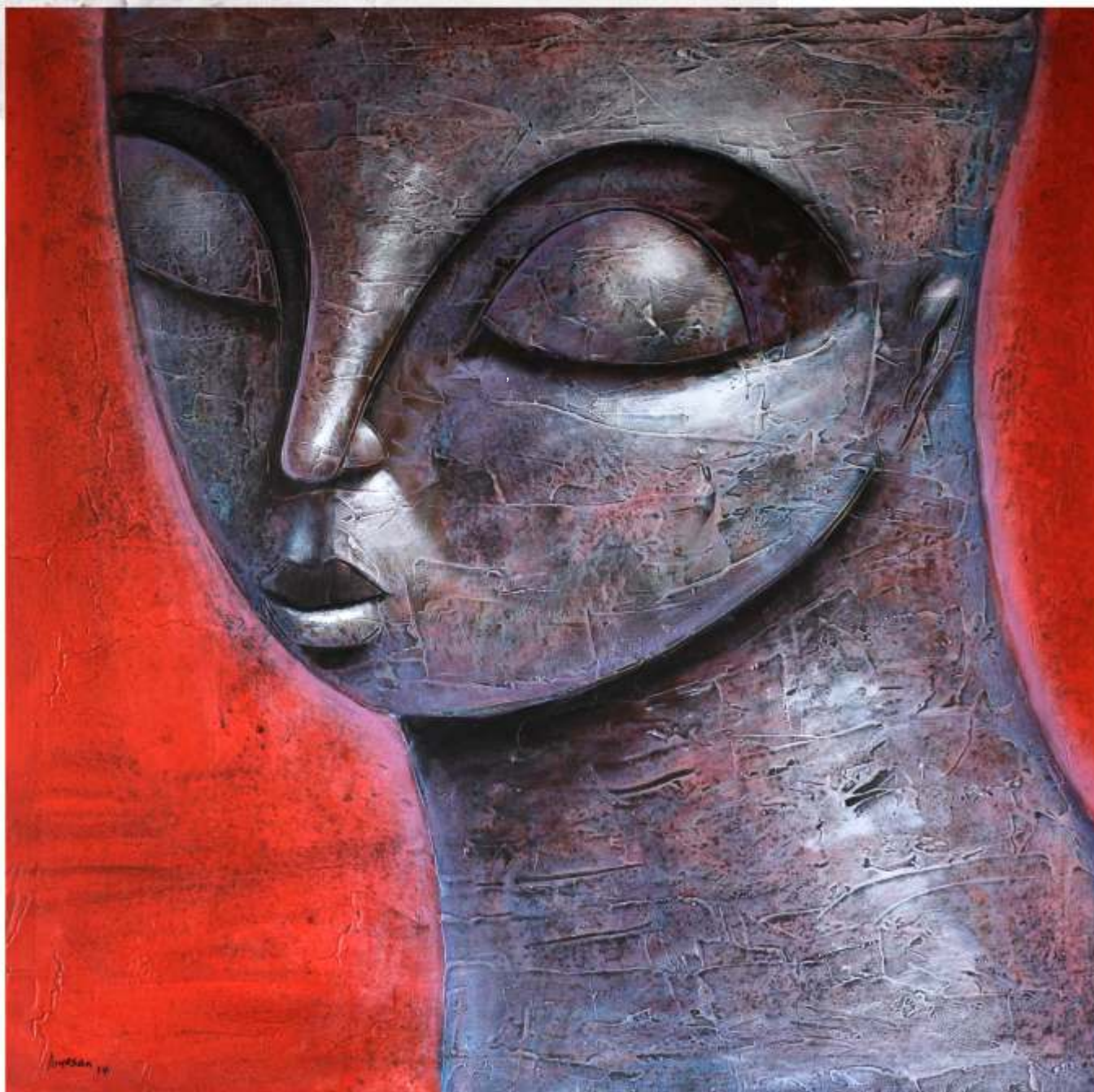
I am tarnished, I am broken and I am scarred from the unending barrage of earthly meteorites. I carry a cross as an evidence of my being and am beheld by men as a product of the carnage of fate. Yet I am golden within, pacific in nature, and desirous to bring Joy to my world. The mirror can only glean but a glimpse.



4'x4' acrylic on textured canvas
2014

Dreaming

Sailing forever in the unbounded celestial plains of trans-universal in-ordination and mingling with Fairies and Cacodemons from diverse dimensions. Nothing means something and, something means nothing, yet all seems to work as a whole. A talking dog, a beast with the face of a virgin, a pit without bottom, a meal, images floating around, a word emblazoned in the sky. Maybe it is a message, a warning. To who, from who? Why? A gust of wind blew past and I was a child again.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014



Confinement 1 (Men in Boxes series)

4'x5' acrylic on textured canvas
2014



Confinement 1/2 ((Men in Boxes series)

The Scope and Scale of the mind gives dimension to the amplitude of perception that an individual musters and often times, this predetermines the path the individual takes. His entire lifestyle is premised on the content of his psychological disposition and anything outside of that is strange and alien. He becomes well habituated to the world within his walls of confinement, that any intrusion or attempt to burrow into his solitary and depthless labyrinth is met with utter resistance. Within these flaccid walls, he reckons a fortress of security from the ever evolving challenges of time, yet his confines fails at every tug and test. Whilst ignorance can offer some bliss, an inkling of the big picture will bring unbridled liberation.

Confinement 2

4'x4' acrylic on textured canvas 2014



4'x4' acrylic on textured canvas 2014

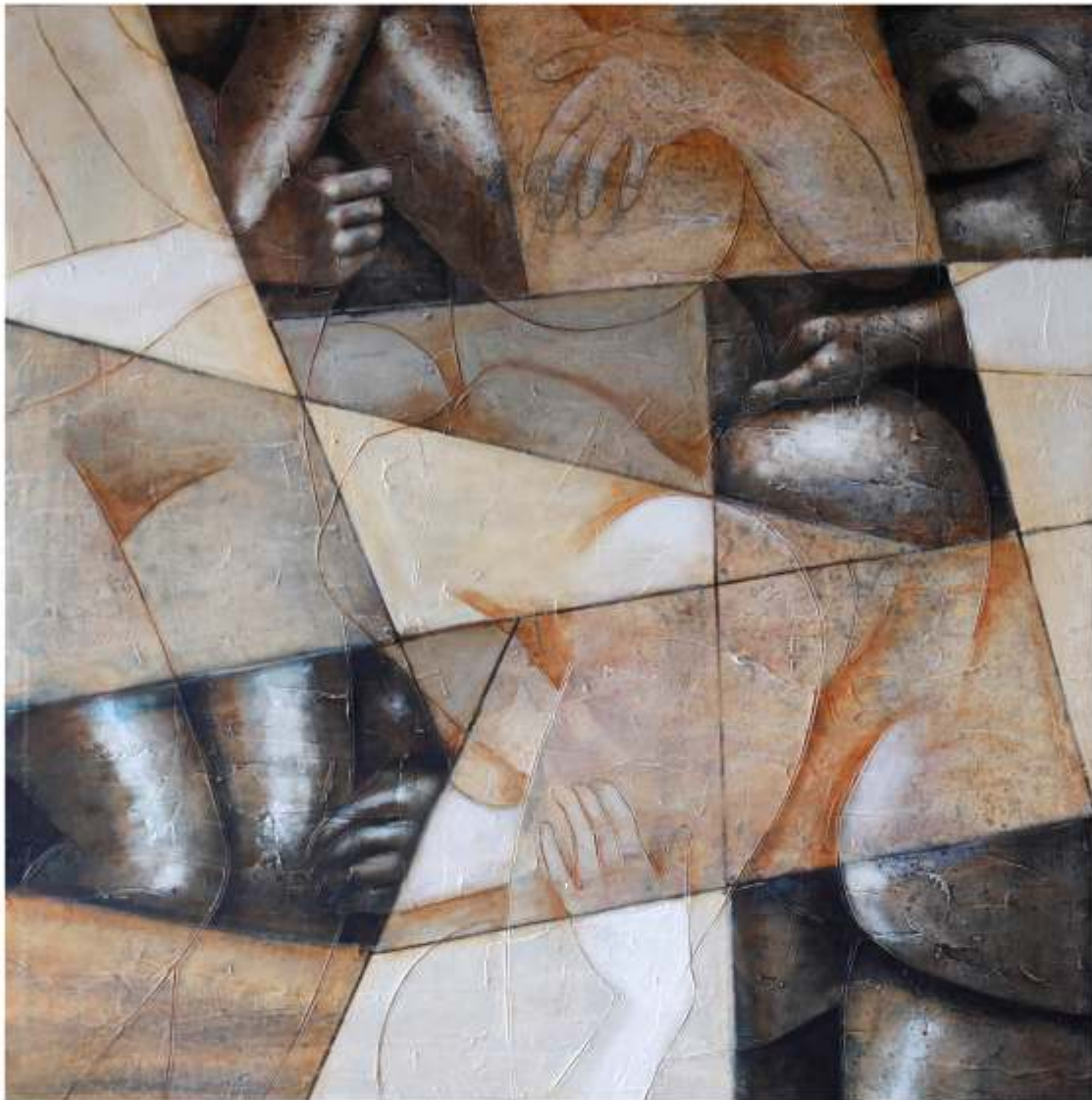
Haven (Voyeur series)

The search has been long. Our arrival seems to have become belated and options are few. We are viciously flung together into this gregarious fold of getaway survivalist. In a shelter suffused with the acrid pungency of human apprehension and foreboding. Speeches are hushed in ominous tone, while juggling for space in this decrepit Hidy-hole. The common goal is to subsist and bear tales for another day. Like voyeurs, turns are taken to do sentry; observing the passage and examining the intents and acts of the "others". "Others", outside of the fold, who might choose to scatter and lay desolation to the humble abode. For now, it is safe, though a tinge of uneasy unquietness pervades the air of flatulent trepidation, it is safe for now.

Masques



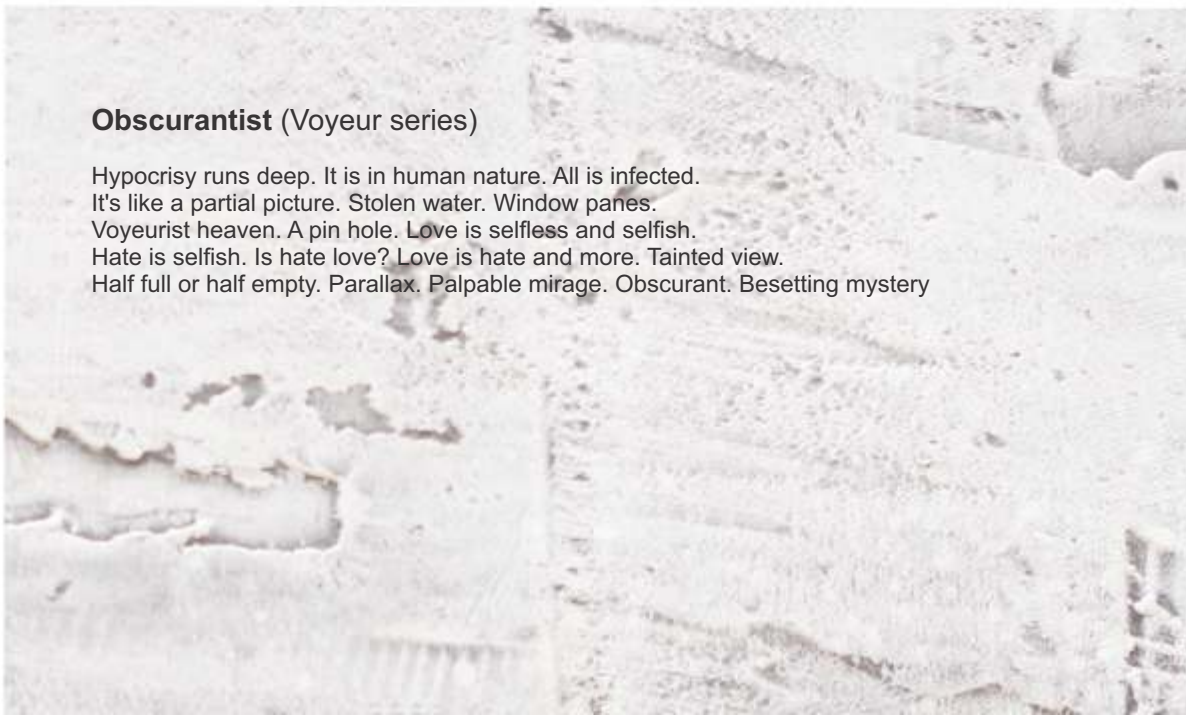
3'x3' x(3) Acrylic on textured canvas 2014



4'x4' acrylic on textured canvas 2014

Obscurantist (Voyeur series)

Hypocrisy runs deep. It is in human nature. All is infected.
It's like a partial picture. Stolen water. Window panes.
Voyeurist heaven. A pin hole. Love is selfless and selfish.
Hate is selfish. Is hate love? Love is hate and more. Tainted view.
Half full or half empty. Parallax. Palpable mirage. Obscurant. Besetting mystery





4'x5' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014



Blue lounge

The anticipation is reaching a crescendo as the cozy blue haze of the love nest beckons for the rituals of consummation. Regaling with the sumptuous feast laid before the feral raunchiness of hungrier hombres. The invitation to traverse the undulating landscapes of this unfettered pleasure trove can become a perpetual exploration of places often concealed and reserved, but laid bare for the roam of a hero as he possesses the spoil of his hedonistic triumph.



Femme 1 4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas 2014

Femme

The beauty of the body of a woman being is unassailable, and without question the most pleasurable evidence of Divine creation. The soft glowing skin that lights up the room as she saunters in, causing instant attention spiral. Her head rises majestically between perfectly sculpted shoulders and as she gently swings her head around, all is visibly bedazzled by the enchanting radiance of her oval shaped face, with the big dark forget-me-not eyes, shaped like almond and lined with long dark lashes. The high cheek bones, reminiscent of an Ashanti queen; perfect straight nose and the big full pouty lips, colored in pink, all set in a face of flawless symmetry. Her long slender neck cradles her head in grace and elegance and her smooth flowing long raven dark hair embraces her visage like a soft frame to harmonize her quaint features into a delectable whole. If her head was a crown, her body is the kingdom.



Femme 2

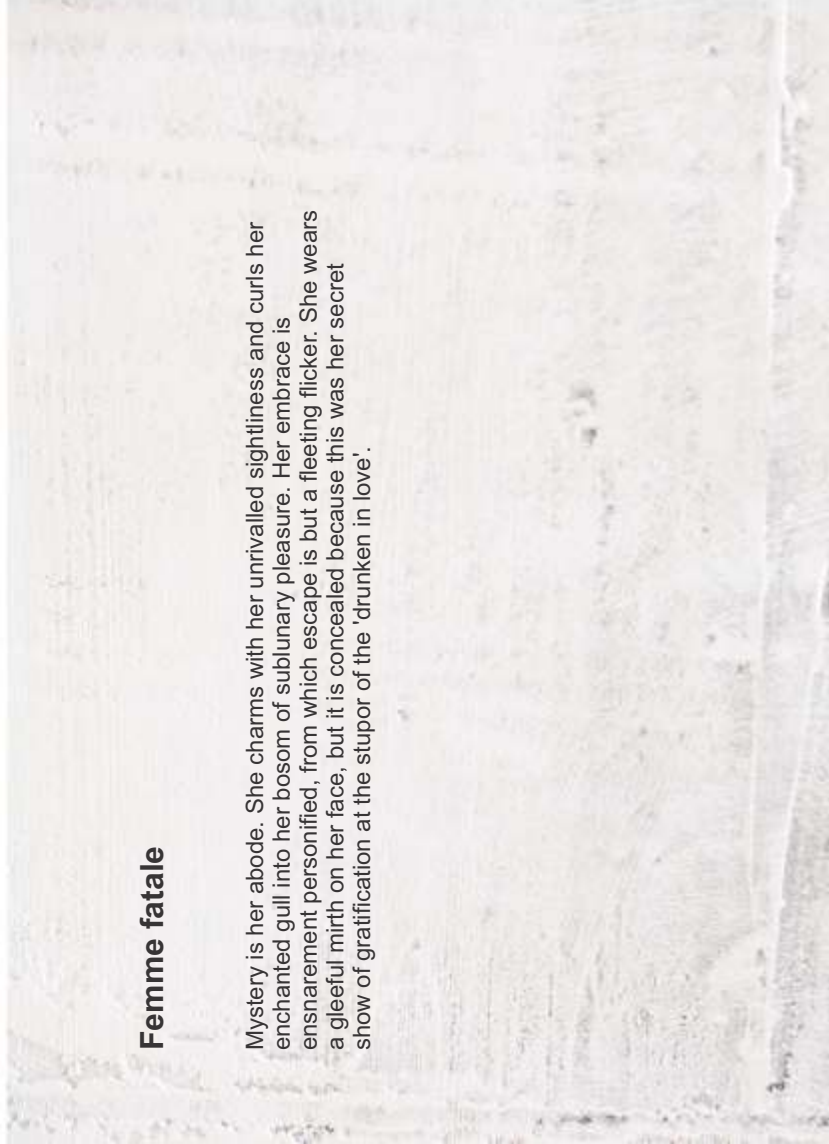
4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

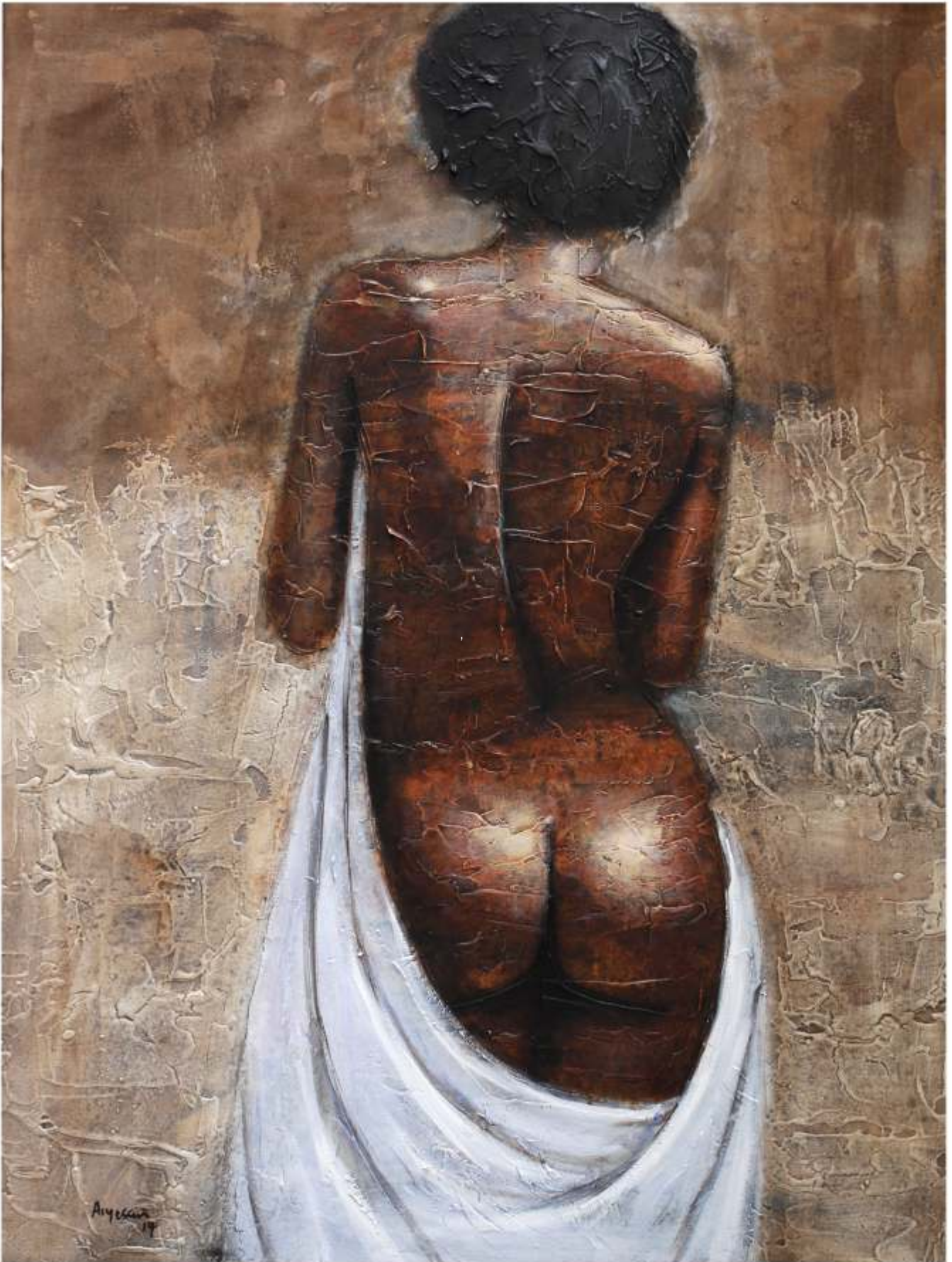


3'x8' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

Femme fatale

Mystery is her abode. She charms with her unrivalled sightliness and curls her enchanted gull into her bosom of sublimary pleasure. Her embrace is ensnarement personified, from which escape is but a fleeting flicker. She wears a gleeful mirth on her face, but it is concealed because this was her secret show of gratification at the stupor of the 'drunken in love'.





Femme Fatale 2

3'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

I am

I am who I am. I know nothing else. I am the sum of a past and the behest for a future. I have no perception of what I was in a darker deeper past, but I am the result of destiny, a spark in a complex multi- stringed existential system. I am great, I am small but relevant to everything that is. I am, for a purpose beyond my comprehension, for I am filled with questions and queries. I am the absolute answer to a puzzle which I know nothing of, other than its existence. Yet I doubt my existence, because the line between my wakefulness and dream is blurred. My dream begat dreams that question the actualness of reality, but I am here right now, at this moment, and I think and I judge and I doubt, and that's all I know.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

Temptation

Thou doth bring afore the scum of the heart, entrapping in thy bosom o' anguish. Whither thus wilt I eschew my being? Thou cast a long shadow in my way, enveloping me in a haze of despair, wherefore I forsake the path of honor. Whither will I go to be alone, for ye lurk at every corner I tread. Thou hath not palpable that I might wrestle with thee, and break, yet thy tangibility is undeniable and thy familiarity transcends the entire fabric of consciousness. Thou hath the path of my trial and the tool of my tempering. My destiny beckons, so I must brazen thy seduction.



Wilt

4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

The "will" is that element of our being, which brings forth our innermost desires. The vehicle of our meaningfulness, as we strive against the forces of bondage and passivity, to make meritorious, our sojourn in this transient space of time. The "will" is delicate, yet tensile, becoming a colossus of change if nurtured properly and directed resolutely toward the perplexities of life. Still, the will of man is largely subjugated as people are confined and restrained by a system designed to control and define the limits of free expression and aspiration



5'x5' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

Event horizon

We are all automatically programmed to move forward. To exhaust time, to infect and affect as we approach an omega point, from where nothing can return. It does not matter, the path or method of approach, though we sometimes linger and dawdle, but we cannot stagnate because we are hurtled on by the flood of time and the decay of corruption. What we transmogrify into is beyond human imagination or comprehension, but we will at last be free from the basal wrangling of elemental life.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas 2014

Young women

The daughter of eve does not fail to beseech our sensibility. She is like the morning rose, dispersing the alluring scent of enrapturing pleasure. Her eyes are like water in bright showers of sunlight in its entire glorious splendor. And the ivory black skin glistening with lustrous glow. The gait of her majestic stride as she walks by is mildly put, seductive, entrancing and simply breathtaking. Her beauty makes pale, the embellishment of golden ornaments and makes ordinary, the aesthetics of emerald. Surely, she is the bride of gods.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2013

A lucid day

A lucid day is one in which I am fully alive in all my faculties as I make my way through the myriads of daily necessities and expectancies. I am in tune with the pace of passing time and having in control all the rudiments of free-willing to do the rationally wise things. There, of course, is the occasional puncture of the swelling uncertainties that constantly surrounds me and threaten to color the day in awkward hues, but I fill my space with positive energies and vehemently resist the whelming incursion, to maintain the integrity of my lucid day.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2013

Northern belle

I think it's the eyes. An exquisite reflection of the soul residing within. Soft and beautiful. And when I look her in the eyes, I forget to breathe. I am drowning in the glistening allure of those huge, provocative eyes! I have to look away. Her face is etched in my memory forever and each time her thoughts drift by, it wells up as pristinely as though she was right there. What stunning work of art, which even a covering cannot deny or disaffirm.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2013

Window view (Omoge series)

Sitting at a vantage corner beside the window, the entire gamut of the expansive view can be garnered as the soft reflection of overcast light suffuses the landscape in a soft gleam of slightly grayed down sunlight. The saunter, to and fro, of beautiful damsels is well served, and the brilliant attires with their colorful and intricate patterns, well suited for the slender frame of the damsels as they move in leisurely jaunt.



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas
2014

Fair lady (Omoge series)

Milady's virtuosity at choosing the right apparel to suit the occasion leaves you awestruck with little else to say other than an undisguised show of approval. Enrobed in intricately patterned exotic regalia, with a matching head gear that crowns her head, Her dainty face, accentuated by the brilliant colors of complementary hues seems embraced in an aura of gracefulness.

Village trail (Omoge series)

The path to the village is regarded sacrosanct to many because it plays a central role in the diverse stories of life in its certainties and misgivings. It is the way traversed, to venture out into new frontiers and the passage for return to origin when the allure of home beckons. The trail must remain hallowed for the integrity of ethnic uniqueness to persist through generations of perennial perambulations.





3'x6'x3" (x2) Acrylic on textured box 2014

Peacock party (Omoge series)

An ostentation of peacock-like ensemble have beset our sensibility yet again as they amble around in the attempt to display the astonishing flamboyance of their exotically rich habiliments in unpretentious mannerism. An atmospheric wellness pervades the air as they gracefully settle into a pose and a kaleidoscope of refreshing complementary hues tinctured the ambience. Yes, the merriment is set to proceed. The air is agog with anticipation.



4'x4' (x2) Acrylic on textured canvas
2013

Once upon a time (Mad Dog series)

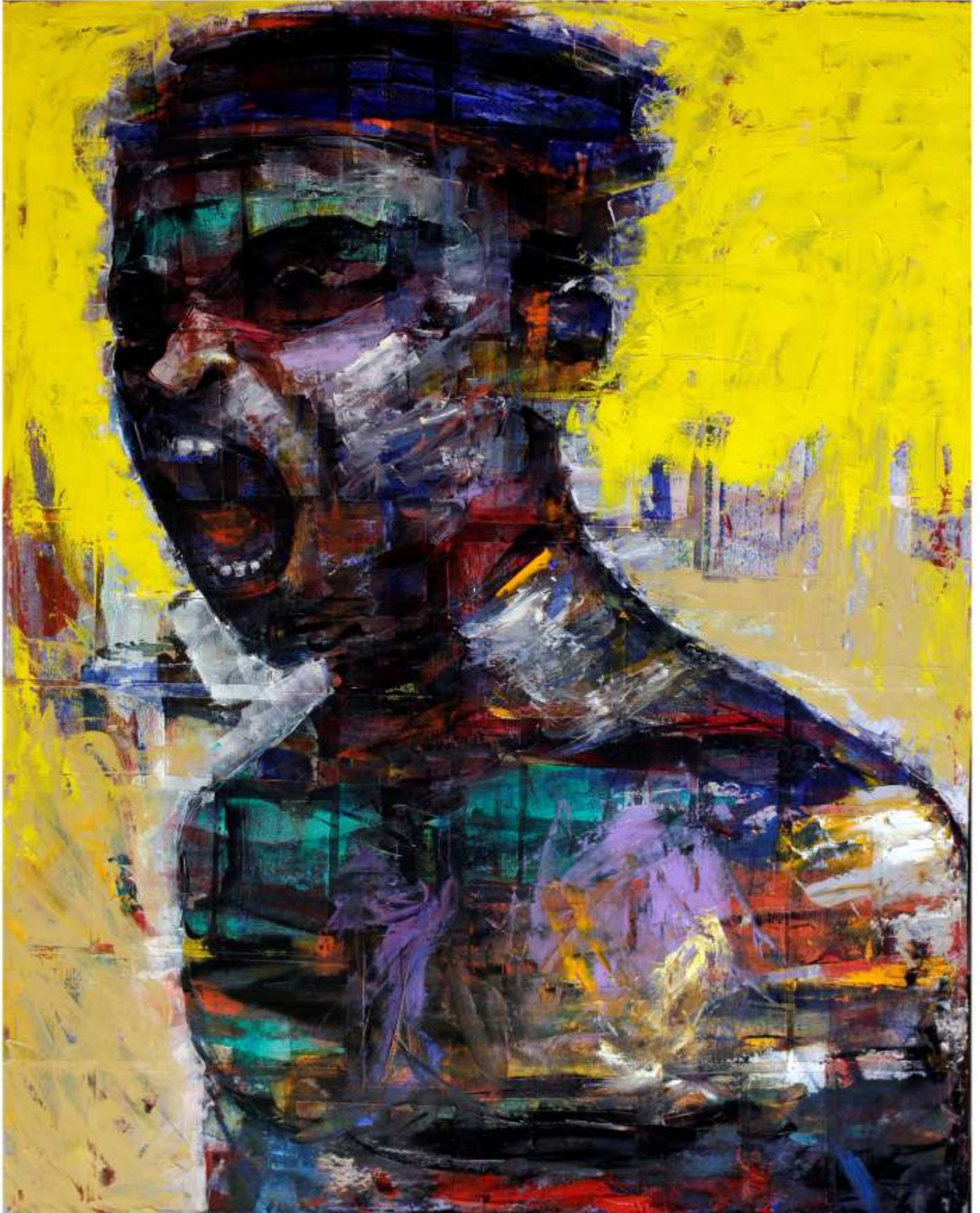
In living memory, humanity have witnessed the advents of ideologically totally contrasting regimes that have shaped, battered, molded, and transmogrify our lifestyles, changing the way we think about, and perceive civilization forever. A poignant reminder of a dark passage was the rise of Hitler, who through coercion, brute force and genocidal cleansing, attempted to propagate the most bestial, murderous and inhuman code of order the world has ever seen. He succeeded and subsisted for the length of time that good men failed to act. In contrast, the world was also blessed with a special spirit in Mandela, who through his resolute and relentless fights against a highly oppressive aberration of civilization in the dogma of apartheid, conquered and received the prize of honor. He liberated his people and blazed a trail for many in the fight for freedom and self-determination all over the world. He became the beacon of hope to many causes and remained an ambassador of peace and reconciliation through the rest of his life. He was a good man who spoke

**Ire**

4'x4' oil on canvas 2014

Ire / angry man (Mad Dog series)

Pacing back and forth in the iron clad quarter, the irascible mad dog growls wolfishly under his breath. He turns his gaze to the tiny holes that serve as little windows to allow air spill in and out of the enclosure. This, he has done countless times. And as usual, he turns sharply away in frustration as the illusion of hope fizzles out almost as quickly as it forms. Another day just slipped by and he bemoans his ill-luck at the realities of his present circumstance. His nose begins to twitch, his body stiffens as sinews threaten to bust through his skin. He cups his fist in a deathly clench as he tries to keep the surge of adrenaline at bay. It does not work. Suddenly, a loud guttural shout penetrates the often low tone hum in the chamber. It cuts through all the emotional build-ups, the frenzied hyper-activity, the delusions and the raging sense of anticipation. The scream persists for a while and then tapers off, carrying with it, the pressure and stress of helplessness into the cycling stream of forgetfulness. Yet again, the mad dog is calm and he tries to settle into his habitual state of wakeful dreaminess, his state of peace and tranquility. His cornucopia of unrestrained possibilities, where he makes his rules and achieve actualization. He is happy here, but it is unreal. He falls asleep and drifts away into his private world of Elysian bliss. And then the crow of a cock shatters through the walls of his illusory phantasm and he is rudely shot back to a familiar reality. He looks over at the windows, mentally counting the seconds slipping by as he craves for liberation, and his mien begins to yet again contort.



Angry Man (Mad Dog series)

4'x5' Oil on canvas
2014



4'x4' Acrylic on textured canvas 2013

Igboro





4'x5' Acrylic on textured canvas 2013

The conversation

It was a controlled space with no clutter or engaging distractions. Nothing is known beyond the room. This was the whole world, the limit of horizon. Everything was in perfect harmony within the ambit of consciousness. Yet a nagging suspicion that there are possibilities beyond the walls never abated. The wall looms large like a concrete monolith, overwhelming, impenetrable, security, and protection. Suddenly, a crack, the wall is breached and the harbinger of unwholesomeness creeps in, clad in deceit, envy and jealousy. The conversation follows.



3'x3'x3.5"
acrylic
on textured
box mixed
media 2014



World within (Voyeur series)

The unbounded landscape of the inner space is perhaps the most under-appreciated and under-explored frontier of human existential forage. We belong there; because therein is our home, but we are preoccupied with fiddling the outer extensions where we are but strangers and foreigners vying for relevance. We seek definition by things or people who have absolutely no clue about the richness of our inner self, the depth of our being and the vastness of our intelligence. Our inner self begets the things that are borne by us into reality. Just as God, who created everything from nothing, we bring forth the outer space from the harvests of the inner space.



4'x4.5'x3.5" acrylic on
textured box mixed
media 2014

Haven 2 (Voyeur series)

It is the third day or maybe the third week. It does not matter, time drags on forever now. Everywhere is shrouded in thick acrid smoke and you couldn't see the advance or foray of the 'others' anymore. The air outside is agog with the staccato of loud exchanges as the 'others' continue to run amok on our collective assemblages of civilization. All that's left is to keep constant vigil and hope this exacerbating nightmare does not distend further.





3'x3'x3.5" Acrylic on textured box
mixed media 2014

Manna

And manna rained forth from heaven and the people ate and were preserved. It is a gift from God, not only to fill the stomach and nurture the body, but also to bestow a spiritual wellness, virility and soundness of mind. The manna carries a message of hope that God will not abandon and forsake his own in the times of need, but will carry them through the dark and complex catacombs of life. Manna is the food of heaven.





4'x4.5'x3.5" acrylic on
textured box mixed
medi 2014



The green house (Voyeur series)

So, a guy comes into the hallowed chamber and asks God to change his 'cross'. He says it's too heavy and he cannot survive carrying it any longer. God instructs an angel to receive it from him and asks him to step into the room of second chance to pick a suitable one from amongst the ones others have dropped. He steps in, browses around, weighing each cross and saying to himself, he couldn't believe the weight others have been carrying around. He sees really nice looking crosses, beautifully shaped and embellished with the most sparkly gems imaginable. He also sees some crazily shaped odd looking crosses too, that are broken and battered from long use. Unfortunately, they are all too heavy for him to carry, and he becomes desperate and disconsolate. He scampers across the room for anything manageable and suddenly, he notices a modest looking cross that exudes the odor of fresh paint, laying inconspicuously by the corner of the room. He picks it up, it is well within his quarters, even though he would prefer it with a 'cooler' looking finish; still he can live with it. He steps out of the room and tells God he found exactly what he needed and God says fine and He blesses him, but as he is about to exit the chamber, God suddenly stops him and says " hey, that is the cross you just brought in". Moral of the story? Be content!!!



4'x4.5'x3.5" acrylic on
textured box mixed
medi 2014

Conciliabules (Voyeur series)

Behind closed doors, in a room bereft of any inkling of morality or humanity, they gather to conspire against the goodness of society. The desperation in there hushed whispers is palpable across the darkened recess of their secret lair. Nothing virtuous can be borne from there nefarious scheming as they machinate the evil to befall there perceived opponents. Men of ignoble faculties that act solely on their animalistic instinct once threatened with competition. They watch society devolve into chaos with a glee as they profit from the ill fate brought about by their irredeemable greed and implacable wickedness. Such is the lore of politicking in our third world.



SELECT EXHIBITIONS

Solo :

Epiphany - Signature Gallery, Lagos - 2010
Mind of his own – Eko L'Meridien Hotel, V.I. Lagos -- 2003
Translation – Signature Gallery, Lagos – 2002

Group :

The Future - Eko hotel and Suites - 2014
Unspoken Words – Terra kulture, Lagos - 2011
Colors of the Delta – Genesis Centre Port Harcourt - 2010
Diversity - Total village, Port Harcourt – 2010
Florence Biennale, Firenze, Italy - 2009
Chronicle of Intrigues - Eko Suites, Lagos - 2008
The Unbreakable spirit of Nigeria, African Artists Foundation competition exhibition
– Abuja and Lagos, Nigeria – 2008
The Unbreakable spirit of Nigeria - Gallerie 23 Amsterdam, Holland - 2008
Art Expo 2007, Elf village, Port Harcourt, Nigeria – 2007
Atmosphere II – Elf Village, Port Harcourt, Nigeria – 2005
Reflex – Sandton Convention & Exhibition Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa - 2004
48 Hours with the Children of the Turtle – Espace Alberica, Paris - 2004
Expressions – Totalfina Elf Complex, V.I., Lagos - 2003
Pastel Aficionados – Mydrim Gallery, Ikoyi, Lagos - 2003
Art Expo 2002, TotalFina Elf complex, V.I., Lagos - 2002
Expo -Elf Village , Port Harcourt 1998

Acknowledgments

In getting here. i did not do it on my own, so i will do some acknowledgments here. Firstly, God gave me life and this gift, Jesus taught me how to use it and the Holy spirit guided me through. I am eternally grateful

My wife Chizo is the best ever. The firm balance in my life and quest. My four boys are the source of energy and inspirations in the home. they keep me going and the glitter in their eyes as they admire my creation is just simply ethereal.

I also owe immeasurable gratitude to my cohorts like Ike Francis, great guy, insightful, intelligent George Odoh, a demure fella with uncanny abilities. inspiring, Perrin Oglafa, extraordinary guy, a friend indeed, Johnson Uwadinma, i see you and i am proud, Tunde Aiyesan, unrelenting and a witness, Kpodoh Michael, the torch -carrier, let it burn still. Professor Frank Ugiomoh, an exceptional individual, a great teacher and a friend indeed.

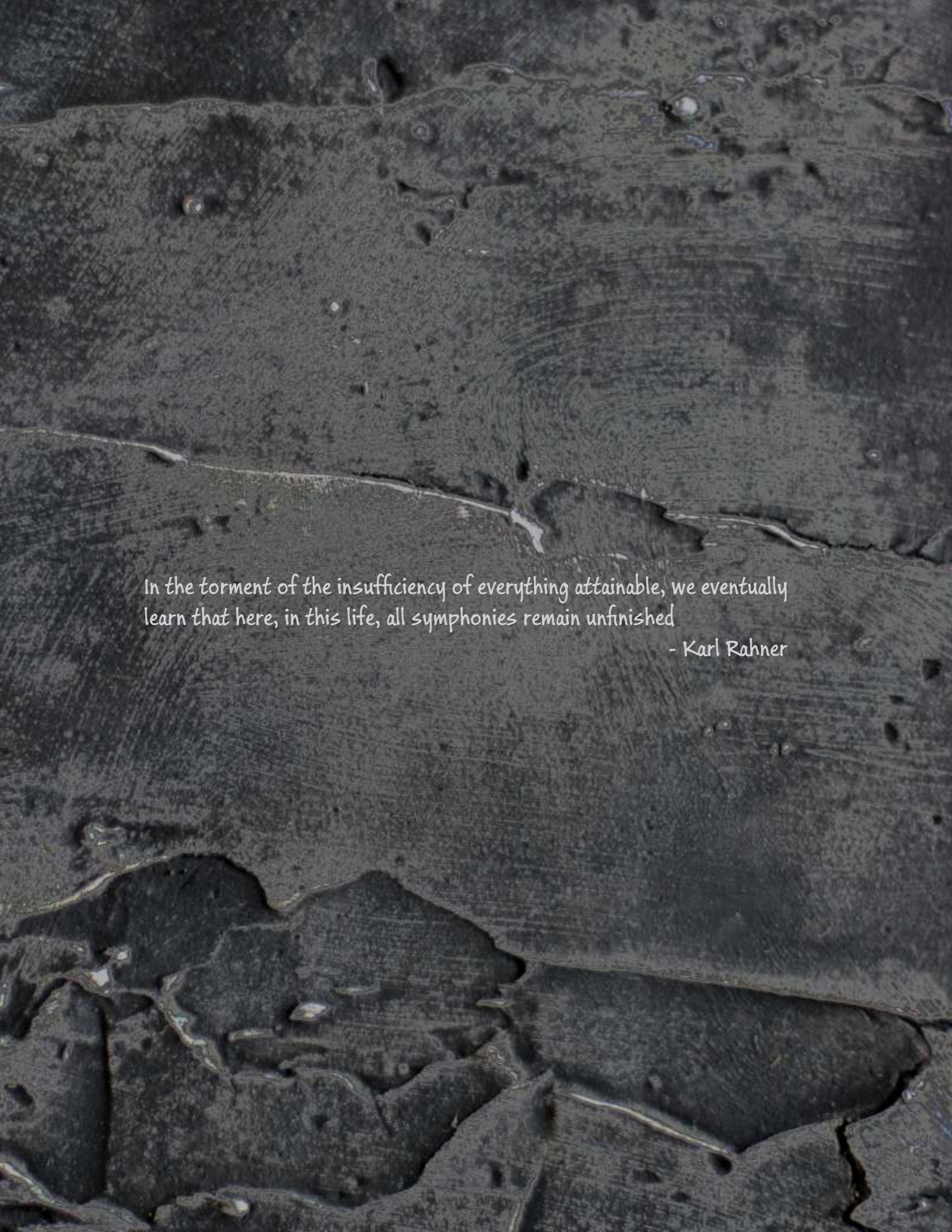
There are so many others and if i did not mention your name, its not because i forgot, i just got drained out and had to stop. Thank you so very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'J. O.' or similar initials.



A Short Story – Segun Aiyesan

I was born in Benin City, Nigeria on March 18 1971. The second child among seven children. I guess I was born an artist. My fascination with nature and colours started quite early. I can recall myself fiddling with drawings and paints as early as four years old. As a young boy, my favourite hobby was collecting comics and trying to draw the characters. I cannot remember my parents helping to develop my talent at any point, so it was particularly difficult for me since I did not get much encouragement. They, on the other hand tried to steer me in a different direction. I love art. It propelled me to be better at many other things I had to do alongside, since I was free to indulge in it, as long as nothing else suffered. My folks were glad it kept me busy and around. I never really realised a living can actually be made from art, so my development was actually channelled towards self-fulfilment rather than perpetuating a career direction. I went on to study Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Nigeria. While there, I was at the same time keeping myself busy making and enjoying art. I inadvertently was preparing myself for a life as a professional artist, because by the time I graduated I was quite advanced in skill in artistic depiction. I am a totally self-taught artist and I have been at it professionally since 1997. I am resident and based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

The background is a dark, monochromatic image of a textured surface, possibly stone or wood, with prominent horizontal and diagonal cracks and crevices. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the rough, uneven texture and creating deep shadows in the cracks. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

*In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we eventually
learn that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished*

- Karl Rahner