

The ARK OF META-ART



Metal Sculpture Exhibition By Oladele Ogbeyemi

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ARK
of
META-ART

Metal Sculpture Exhibition by

Oladele Ogbeyemi



Signature Beyond Art Gallery
107, Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.



The Ark of Meta-Art | 22nd May-12th June, 2021

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FOREWORD

Oladele Ogbeyemi was my former student of construction and advanced general drawing class. At the 300 level was the beginning of sculpture students' specialization wherein they would start practicing or pretending to be sculptors in the real sense. The program combined students of drawing and sculpture construction simultaneously for three hours weekly for twenty-eight weeks. My workload compelled Oladele and his course-mates to take sculpture construction at the 300 level and advance general drawing at 400 level for two years and every Friday for three hours starting from 8 am and ending at 11 am. Oladele's set turned out to be the last set of students under my mentorship/teaching during my thirty-two years of service. My teaching philosophy focused on the process rather than the product because it allowed me to reinvent myself and remain relevant.

Although this was a studio program, it was practically meant to conduct studio sessions. For almost the fifteen years I taught this program, I could count on my fingers the times we had power supply in the welding workshop. For an effective means of imparting knowledge, one had to give take-home instruction and see the product without adequate input in the work. It became an unintentional correspondence program that necessitated the shift in my teaching philosophy. Focusing on the process, the student were able to give an insight into the product supported with 2 and 3 D sketches and short notes.

In a semester, I made the students listen to mainstream artists, professional photographers and lawyers as guest speakers. We also watched movies on the works and life of the masters. Students were relaxed and bonded during the sessions, and they freely expressed their career's desires and pains with an open mind. After all, it was a Friday class, marking the beginning of the weekend, and the mood was like TGF. Sometimes, it felt like a therapy session where the artists would pour out their minds one everything. The roles of the teacher and students were interchangeable in this class. Though I conducted the course, I enjoyed being part of the student audience when a student took to the stage. How can a teacher impact on the students if they do not trust or admire his intellect? I earned their trust, and every Friday, I learned something new about my students. Those who helped move my gadgets to my car occasionally had free lunch with me at 'Viginigs', a restaurant just outside the campus. Oladele bared his mind during one of such sessions on how his not being a graduate of sculpture inhibited his creative voice. No rule or law regulates who should and

when one should exhibit. Yet, most students never saw the need to work towards an exhibition for two reasons: the first was the fear that the odds would be against them if they fell short in meeting up with the rigors of academics. The second was that most of their works were sold to raise money for their upkeep. Our student's life in the School of Art, Design, and Printing of Yaba College of Technology was shrouded in secrecy, akin to an academic fortress. As a result, there were many things about students' life that most faculty never got to know about.

To know them, I would sometimes pay an unannounced visit to the studio or request for personal studio visit where an artist could have a creative chat on his portfolios. One successful studio visit would usually open the floodgate for others, requesting to be accorded similar opportunities.

Every artist, budding or professional, is in no small measure a hermit but cherishes a visit from a trusted art critic, professor, collector, gallerist, or journalist. Oladele would extensively talk about peer pressure and the fear of losing creative grounds just for not having had any solo exhibition in a commercial gallery or successful outings at auctions and gallery/studio sales.

The pressure seemed more intense with the success in gallery and auction sales, making him draw parallels between him and other young artists enjoying the spotlight. Part of my course requirements was for students to see as many exhibitions as possible in Lagos. I intentionally threatened nominal roll calls at exhibition openings to enforce attendance. I tried to instill the importance of attending exhibition openings in the students and how they were, and still are, one of the specific benchmarks for artistic growth.

**“Seeing what is possible
and is accepted by the larger society
helps the artist-hermit breathe fresh air
into his creative lungs”.**

I referenced this practise as my story after graduation, and it paid off. There is, however, the downside of attending exhibition openings. And this applies to those who assess the price of an artwork and the unintended consequences of commodifying the piece of art—red tags.

Writing this foreword allows me to share the context and content of Oladele's immediate environment in his early works with his audience. To put it in perspective, allow me to share an experience during my residency at Villa Arson in Nice, France. The students always measured what was acceptable by scoping on the internet to ascertain if some artists out there had done, or was about doing similar works. The result was usually a resounding yes. Ideas fly around, and most artists globally respond to the same artistic stimuli. The difference is the context, not the content. Very few students and budding artists in Nigeria care less about the precursory look into their new explorations. They are not sensitive to plagiarism, inspiration, appropriation, similitude because no one told them about the implication. Art magazines were banned in the painting studio even when the enforcers were guilty of the same crime for want of a better word. Phones were confiscated for a whole semester if a student appeared to have copied from an unknown artist's painting. The battle for originality in art schools is lost before it started, and with social media and the internet, no art school can come close to winning it.

What is Originality? The definition itself is very compounding. Originality is the ability to think independently and creatively, also being novel or unusual. This very definition seems the antithesis of creativity.

In my opinion, the component of unusualness is the giant pit a creative endeavor crawls out from to it make one's creation. The average student or budding artist in Nigeria cares less about the jargon of plagiarism, inspiration, appropriation, or similitude because no one tells them of fairuse possibility in academics.

Just as the students in Villa Arson, Nice were astonished at the number of similar works in their Google searches, the Nigerian situation rests squarely on Pinterest. Pinterest is one of the recommended online reading lists. My relevance diminished, and Pinterest replaced me. Unlike the Villa Arson students, the Nigerian students and budding artists are full-time Pinterest engagers. Pinterest is the library and studio with no walls and artists globally are working and gladly uploading images every second of the day.

For students to find their voices, I conducted a session during which students would start the presentation from family backgrounds. At one of these sessions, Oladele

disclosed that he is a proud son of an auto mechanic and lives close to the metal scrap market. His affinity to metal could be linked to his early part-time apprenticeship under his father. Dismantling and reassembling car parts came naturally to him. Every piece of a car is meticulously put together for the engine to run smoothly. Oladele carried over this skill in repurposing auto parts in his sculptures. He would engage his father on the issue of titling his work occasionally, he told me.

While his father is publicly shy about attending his exhibition openings, he was part of the studio cabinet that supported every step of his creative journey. Oladele's work mirrors the biblical story and its intersection with Nigerian socio-political issues based on his Christian exposure.. He may not have visited the Fela's Shrine or attended his concerts. But like every young man growing up in today's Nigeria, he listens and dances to the lyrics of the hits songs, which help him process issues and live through their lenses, making them his reality. The unique interpretation of the unusual of Oladele's creations makes him different from his peers. Happy viewing.

Olu Amoda

GALLERY STATEMENT

Oladele Ogbeyemis is a young man with a heart of Gold. After training under Odogwu Fidelis Eze, we decided to give him the opportunity to showcase at Signature Beyond purely based on his humble personality and determination to break into the challenging world of Art. The works on display were scrutinised thoroughly by myself, Henceforth we can vouch that “specifically” the Car, the Dinosaur, and the crocodile, 3 major pieces in his show are must haves for those that know the art of collecting.

-Rahman Akar
Executive Director, Signature Beyond

Oladele Ogbeyemi: Charging Metal Discards with Zoomorphic Morphology. Welded metal sculpture, realized with metal scraps or of fresh materials, unequivocally, has a pride of place in the annal of contemporary sculpture in Nigeria. The upcoming sculptor, Oladele Ogbeyemi is carving a niche for himself in this genre of art. This rising star was born in 1992, in Lagos. He had his Ordinary National Diploma (OND) at Lagos State Polytechnic in 2015 and graduated in 2018 from Yaba College of Technology with a specialization in Sculpture. As one of my mentees, you can hardly catch him working on any other medium but metal junks. His relationship with discarded metals was triggered off at his father's mechanic workshop at a very impressionable age. This space offered him myriads of discarded mechanical parts to juxtapose according to his whims and caprices. In 2013, he had some months of studio experience at Universal Studio under the tutelage of Fidelis Odogwu, a welded steel sculptor of note. This early stint with welded steel sculpture had a profound impression on him and could be attributed to his choice for welded sculpture as an area of focus.

Metal junks are often already laden with histories and forms that could evoke clues on the direction of engagement to the artist. Sculpture, as a genre of artistic practice in contemporary trend, has enormously benefited from a wide range of material applications. Notwithstanding, its capacity to accommodate diverse materials continues to grow in leaps and bounds. Picasso pioneered the practice of appropriating pre-existing objects or images with little or no alteration in the creation of new images or forms in a new context. This radical approach to visual art production revolutionized the modern art terrain.

Nigeria's visual art space is ever alive with numerous upcoming and established art masters who never rest on their oars. This trend has been attributed to the vibrancy and the diversity of styles in this part of the globe. A substantial number of artifacts, in various media, abound to confirm the distinctiveness in the art, culture, creative ingenuity, and techniques of the Nigerian artists. The ornate bronze casts of Igbo-Ukwu archeological excavations from the East with their intricate designs still confound the understanding of the West. The fact that the Ife art could achieve the lofty height in bronze casting artistry as exemplified in Ife heads which compete favorably, and at par with classical and Renaissance art remains intriguing to the Occidental understanding. The phenomenal skill deployed in the realization of Nok art remains ingenious and breathtaking.

Through the ages, orthodox sculpture media, such as wood, marble, and bronze have significantly served artists in the externalization of their thoughts and ideas in tangible form in time past. However, due to the industrial revolution which took place in Europe and the United States from 1760 and extended between 1820 and 1840, myriads of other materials have emerged as new media in sculpture expression. With industrialization, the list of materials with potential for the production of sculpture continues to grow in leaps and bounds. This informs the general notion that virtually, any material, be it enduring or ephemeral could be applied in the realization of contemporary sculpture.

The industrial age of the mid-eighteenth century, propelled by steel, changed the narrative of a contemporary sculpture practice, profoundly. In material use, availability inspires appropriation and exploration. Heidegger (in Hainic, 2010) asserts that it is a natural propensity for artists to engage available materials in their vicinity in the interpretation of their forms and ideas. After all, “Art is the stimulation of an experience informs and images with materials that can be seen.” (Egonwa, 2011). It is on this background that one would understand the affinity of Ogbeyemi for the manipulation of metal discards for his visual deliberations. He is surrounded by junks!

The interrogation of discards as the medium of sculpture is becoming so powerful that other materials seem to be drowned in aesthetic dissent (Hughes, 1990). Through the practice of recycling of materials by some contemporary artists, the service life of materials, not necessarily for its prime purpose, is stretched and reactivated in an aesthetic dimension. Oladele, through the application of discarded metal cum welding technique of working metal creates thought-provoking, at the same breath, stunning metal sculptures.

The true test of a man is in the ability to irreversibly and firmly commit himself to a chosen path regardless of the roughness of his path. A visit to Oladele’s studio/ apartment at Orile Iganmu, Lagos, revealed a prodigious amount of exquisite sculptures that attest to his prowess in the realm of welded configurations. The works are stacked on shelves and in corners of the workspace. Oladele is determined and remains

acutely focused on his goal in the face of dream shattering environment. This purposeful energy, thus channeled by Oladele has yielded a beauteous flower and it is right before our eyes. We wish him more years of boundless creative energy.

Congratulations!

Adeola M. Balogun, Phd.
HoD, Fine Art Department,
School of Art, Design & Printing Technology

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OLADELE OGBEYEMI

Oladele Ogbeyemi (b.1992) was born in Lagos State. He fell in love with art from his secondary school days, Imoye Senior High School Mile 2, Amuwo-Odofin, Lagos State. After secondary, he had informal training from different platforms before he went to the Lagos State Polytechnic Ikorodu, Lagos in 2015, where he received an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) certificate with upper credit. And in 2018, he acquired a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Fine Arts, Sculpture Major from Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, with upper credit.

He started his career with the Young Artist Citadel, where he met other talented young artists, who motivated him to a large extent. In 2013 he went to the Universal Studios of Art at the National Art Theatre, Iganmu in Lagos State, for an apprenticeship. While he was there, he was under the watchful eyes of Fidelis Odogwu Eze, a sculptor.

His ardent indulgence in the art profession as a metal sculptor the recognition of his chosen materials, the use of junks found objects, and scrap metals collide with his passion for drawings, painting, and mix media in different areas of interest, which has given him an edge to experimental and also create activities to be celebrated as an environmental artist. Most of his works have been sold within and out of the county. Oladele is a Lagos-based full-time studio artist and a member of the Society of Nigerian Artist (SNA).

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I have come to understand that everybody is a victim or disposal of waste, and waste is the material that the user feels has no further use. Discarded objects have always constituted a nuisance in our environment, which I chose to explore as a medium, recycle them to create my work of art, and reduce waste and environmental pollution.

The artist in me is so much attracted to the wastes generated from my surroundings, and I feel like the reason for my existence is to explore and create art from waste to harness my experimental appearance as well as contextualizing of metal assemblage to create sculptures out of nothing to something which would also serve as documentation and beautification from my aesthetic view.

As an artist, I need to use my creative talent to solve the environmental problem in my environment by recycling discarded material into colorful sculptural pieces, educating people, and harnessing the economic potentials of waste.

I have moved further into research on waste materials and also recycled trash, and discarded items in my immediate environment, roadside, mechanic village, and 'Bolla' generally known as discarded junk area market, refuse dump, as well as reduce health hazard, climate change, promote healthy atmosphere and a safer environment.

Also, telling stories, engaging the audience in conversation through my artistic skills to change the orientation of the viewer's state of mind towards waste materials, creating awareness of what impact inappropriate waste management can do on the environment, as well as turning waste into wealth, are my main focus. In this exhibition, I am delighted to use trash and discarded material such as junks, scrap metal, plastic, rubber, glass, car pointer light, jewelry, cutlery, beads, paint, metal, and found objects in contextualizing META-ART assemblage to express my concept thought and to create three-dimensional sculptures.

Furthermore, the ARK OF META-ART, the theme for this exhibition, is crafted out from the word metal art, creating another new metabolic meaning to my work as an artist. The interpretation of the acronym meta is my experimental technique approach, which elaborates on the reality of having my style of creativity imprinted on my approach to art.

META (My Experimental Technique Approach) is inspired by Noah's Ark. It is my perspective from the biblical story of the Ark of Noah, which depicts my artistic expression, thoughts, and ideas, which I structured out from my professional approach to identify my achievement. It is also the documentation and my reflection of Noah's Ark in contemporary time.

I see myself as a contemporary Noah, who diligently obeyed the prophecy to build the ARK OF META-ART and indulge with the scrap materials that were capable and willing to listen to me will be gladly saved to the ARK creation.

This exhibition strictly focused on animal extinction and development, social development, interpreting them with my newest idealistic approach. And I am happy that I have given waste materials the chance to breathe and speak to viewers directly or indirectly.

MY PHILOSOPHY

My vision in art is to explore and expand the scope of META-ART sculpture beyond the modern art market strength, and to build up the rationality of conceptual idea towards the upbringing of contemporary art, creating different approach of all kinds of media of choice, expressing my thoughts in the art scene.

Also, I want to leave my footprints on the sand of time as one of the artists who turned waste into priceless objects.

INFLUENCES FROM MY FATHER'S MECHANIC WORKSHOPS

Working with my father in his mechanical workshop as a young child, I would say is one of the things that influenced me to fall in love with metal and found objects. Later in life when I was about to embark on my chosen career, my father gave me the freedom of choice to decide in the field of study I want-

ed even when he wanted me to study Engineering as a career due to the auto-mobile mechanical job experience he had over the years.

My father also instilled in me positive specific contributions that influenced my career as a young upcoming artist when I first started. Giving me access to some of his abandoned mechanical spare parts from his mechanic workshop in 2013. I was inspired to see the reason behind environmental sustainability and the ability to recycle scrap metals for the use of art and craft.

His financial support towards my education and career cannot be over-emphasized. In addition, his lifestyle and values such as resilience, tenacity, integrity at work, faithfulness, and creativity that he displayed while he was still the chairman of the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA) Badagry Expressway, Iganmu, Lagos, Nigeria, has constantly encouraged me to work towards attaining such values in my career as an artist.

-Ogbeyemi Oladele

WORKSHOP

- Art Cafe, 2014
- Drawing workshops organised by CCA Yaba, 2017
- Upcycling the New Economy II workshop, Abuja Centre, 2019



AUCTIONS

- Sogal Art Auction 2017
- Sogal Art Auction 2018
- Sogal Art Auction 2020



EXHIBITIONS

- Children Art Talent Hunt Exhibition, 2010
- SNA October Rain, 2016
- Africa Art Talent Exhibition-TY Art Space Gallery, 2018
- Iganmode Art Exhibition, 2018
- Iicdcente Abuja Art Exhibition, 2019
- Life in My City Art Exhibition, 2019
- SNA October Rain, 2019



WORKS IN PUBLIC/PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- Collection by Belgium Ambassador to Nigeria,
- Collection of works featured in October Rain Exhibition, organised by the Society of Nigerian Artists, acquired by the King of Morocco
- In the collection of Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja in 2016



AWARDS

- The First Prize Winner in Sculpture, National Gallery of Art Lagos, 2009
- Overall Winner in Children Art Talent Hunt Exhibition, 2010
- The Ben Enwonwu Foundation Award in Sculpture (BEF) 2011
- The Second Runner and Up the prize-winning at the (GCGT) season III. 2013
- The Margine Artist Award by the Society of Nigeria Artist (SNA) Lagos State Chapter, 2018
- Second Runner Up the Nigeria Student Art Competition (NSAC), 2018



WORKS

GOT TALENT: MIMICKING



153×23×40cm



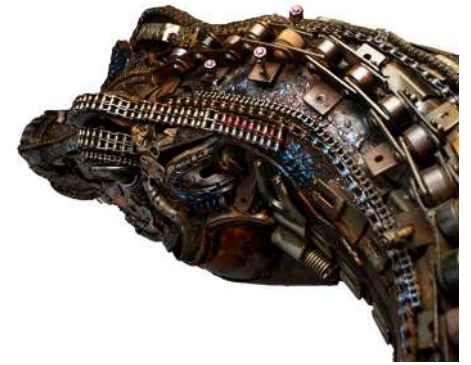
REGAL CREATURE

73×18×52cm

11 | THE ARK OF META-ART

CAUGHT UP

The correlation between my choice of materials and these dinosaurs (T-rex, Triceratops, and Spinosaurus) is the fact that they share one thing in common, that is, "EXTINCTION".



Caught-Up I

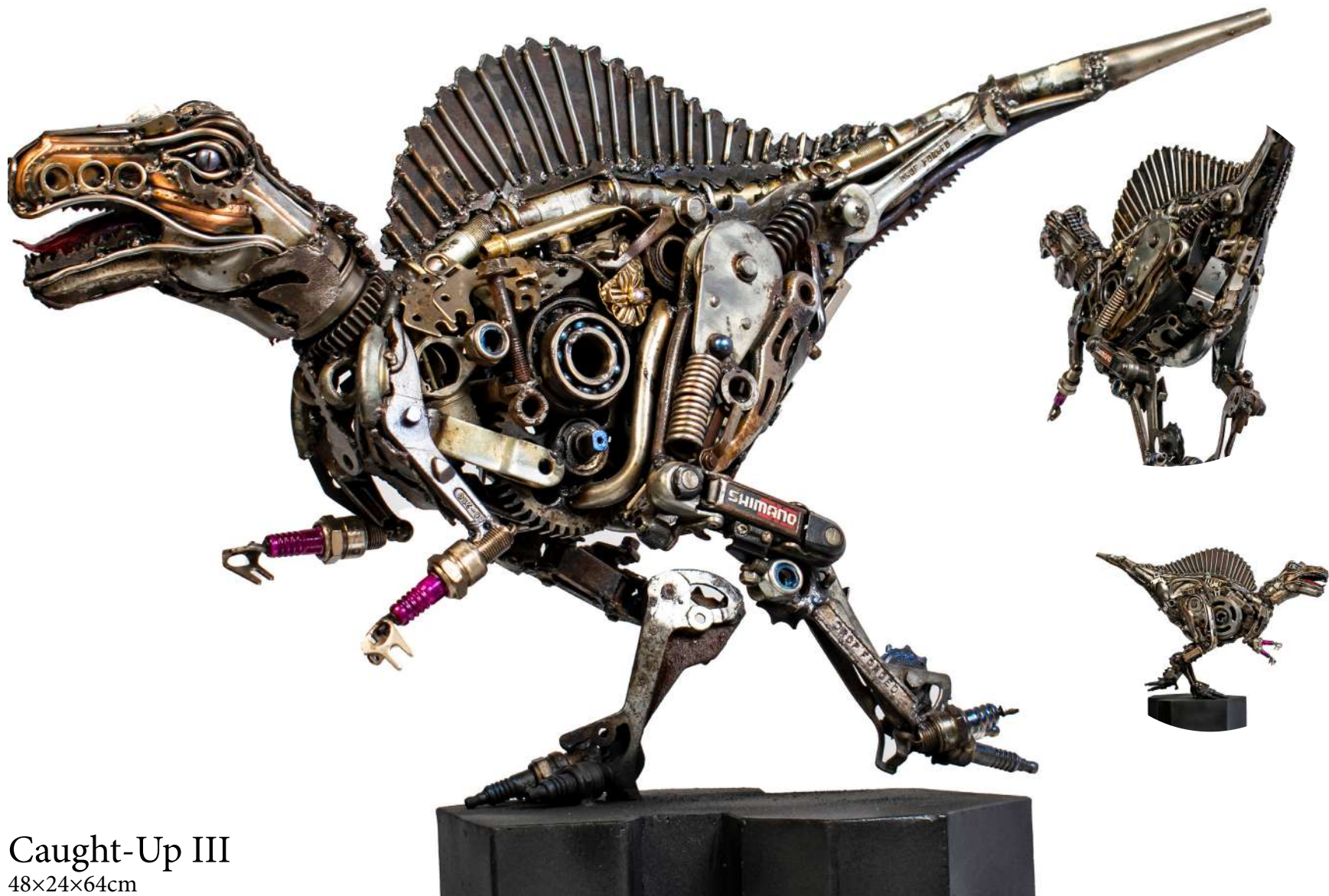
165×110×214cm

12 | THE ARK OF META-ART



Caught-Up II

40×18×68cm
13 | THE ARK OF META-ART



Caught-Up III

48x24x64cm

TIMEKEEPER

For ages and before the invention of the clock, the cock was filling this gap by taking full responsibility for waking the entire community even without being paid. There is something unique about the natural sound of a cock (alarm) that inspired and integrate our hearts to wake up and set for the business of the day.



163×31×54cm

15 | THE ARK OF META-ART



RHINO

Rhinos have become critically endangered species .They are one of my favorite animals and it saddens me deeply to see them poached.

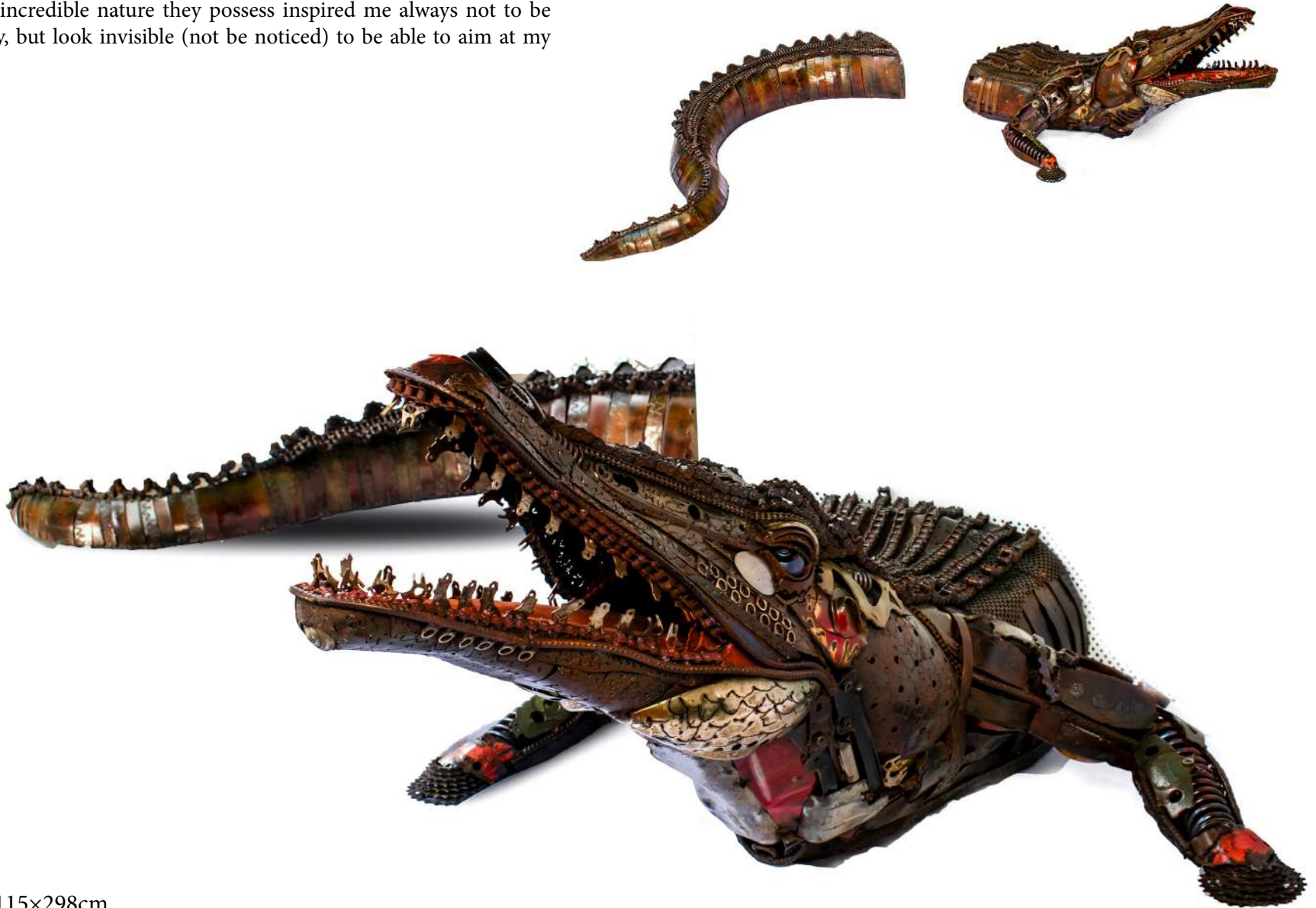


38×20×54cm

INVINCIBLE CROCODILE

Incredible footages have revealed how crocodiles can become invisible under still, running, thick, slimy waters and then in one quick bound emerged almost out of nowhere with their incredible strength to hold down their prey.

This incredible nature they possess inspired me always not to be flashy, but look invisible (not be noticed) to be able to aim at my goal.



68×115×298cm

17 | THE ARK OF META-ART



ANCESTORS?

168×30×50cm





PEGASUS

115×37×68cm

19 | THE ARK OF META-ART

META-ARK

My inspiration in converting my car into this stunning art piece was as a result of breaking out of my barrel or mental limit. During the lockdown of Covid-19, it was like everything was coming to an end, every inspiration and dream was threatened by the outbreak of this Virus. But I had to break out from that limit, that was how I decided to take the bull by the horn by taking all risk to create this unique piece of art.

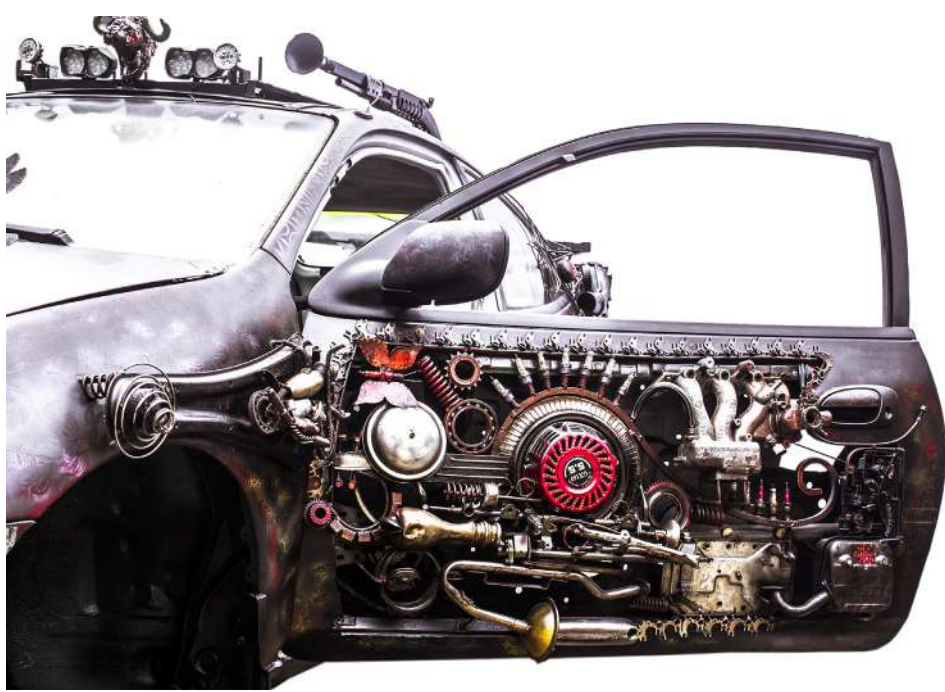
Although it was a difficult task for me due to the cognitive and economic challenges that encompass the project.

Gathering these materials, which consist of scrap metal, plastics, spoilt generator parts, retired tools to refashioning this car brought some sense of fulfillment to my heart. I have been able to see my present strength from when I started. This piece of art is a combination of sculptures I made five years ago in harmony with my recent sculptures in creating this stunning art piece. Yet, this lockdown helps me to realize that this is just a glimpse of what I have inside of me.

This art piece has been featured by Arise News, BBC, TVC, Autojoshng, Opera News, My Media Africa, African Report Files, Etam Global News, Scooper, Goodnigeria.com Tuko. co.ke, Mgists, Naijauto.com, Legit.ng and many more.



173×190×450cm



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to God Almighty for the gift, strength, wisdom and knowledge he bestowed on me. He's the author of this exhibition.

My sincere appreciation goes to my beloved family (The Ogbeyemis).

I also extend my warm appreciation to people who in one way or the other contributed to this dream- Ark Of Meta Art. A very big thanks to Strokes Production, Samuel Madu, Goldentflamez, Director Ekoboy, Christopher Rachael, Udemma Chukwuma, Signature Beyond, Mr Odogwu Fidelis, Steve Ekpenisi, Jide Martine, Universal Studio of Art, and to all my friends and colleagues that have helped me come this far, I say a very big thank you.

SIGNATURE African Art.



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